AMERICAN HMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION

by

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This study examines the relationship between communicative events (both speech and extralinguistic forms of communication) and cultural adaptation for a small population of American Hmong high school students and their educators. The Hmong are a Southeast Asian tribal population that have immigrated to the United States in sizable numbers (presently between 70,000 and 80,000) and have had to adapt to various aspects of North American life. This particular study focuses on Hmong student/educator adaptation as a function of the mitigation of communication barriers existing in an American high school. Dimensions and operant conditions of both speech and extralinguistic events are described and subsequently analyzed through "discourse analysis." Results show that Hmong students,

teachers, teachers' aides (both Hmong and non-Hmong), and administrators, have developed specific strategies for overcoming communication barriers; yet, despite the existence of these strategies in some situations, obstacles still remain.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s the United States witnessed a significant number of Southeast Asian refugees cross its borders. One particular group, the Hmong of Laos, have immigrated to the United States in relatively large numbers (estimated to be between 65,000 and 70,000 by the mid-1980s; Olney 1986). The presence of the Hmong has engendered a great deal of interest for researchers concerned with Southeast Asian resettlement, especially those researchers concerned with difficulties associated with culture contact and change (see, for example, Deinard, Downing, and Hendricks 1986, Knoll 1982, Proudfoot 1990, Quincy 1989).

For many Hmong, like other Southeast Asian immigrants, adjusting to life in North America has been fraught with difficulties. They have had to learn to adjust to life in a complex and rapidly changing society. They have found that their traditional life-ways are being threatened by changing attitudes of younger Hmong (many who were not born in Laos). Moreover, for many of the situations they face there is no preexisting experiential base to draw on for guidance.

Hence, it has been imperative for the Hmong to meet these challenges by learning to adapt by interpreting cultural behavior that is, to them, often confusing and incomprehensible.

This study focused on two specific aspects of this adaptation process: (a) the mitigation of culturally regulated communicative and participant structures for Hmong students who are attending an American high school and, (b) adaptations made by various educational personnel to accommodate the presence of these students. The emphasis in this study was not on "difficulties" per se; it was, however, centered on descriptions of specific aspects of the cultural adaptation process (i.e., recording how Hmong students mediated both cultural and communicative barriers as these obstacles were encountered in an American school setting, and to describe how educators modified their activities in order to expedite Hmong student adjustment).

To carry out the central aim of the study the dynamic interplay between aspects of Hmong "home culture" (traditional Hmong culture), Hmong culture in transition, and that of communicative structures operating as a function of "school culture," was described. The relationship between school and community was an important consideration insofar as communicative behavior at school is highly influenced by Hmong home life and by sociocultural processes occurring in the larger community.

To accommodate change in their community the Hmong have had to learn to communicate in social situations unfamiliar to them. On the whole, adjusting to cultural rules that regulate communicative exchanges in new social environments requires engaging in speech; speech forms such as conversation, storytelling, questioning, narration, and so forth. In addition to verbal communication, learning to interpret nonverbal communication is an important feature of this adaptation process. Subtle shifts in voice, slight hand gestures, or the way a person stands can convey significant culture-bound messages. The ability to adapt (as a function of the acquisition of both broad cultural patterning and more specific features of communicative competence) depends in part on how well an individual functions in various social surroundings. Moreover, success in adaptation may rest on developing the ability to apply tenable cultural knowledge and newly acquired communicative skills to emerging social situations. For example, every individual brings certain cultural predispositions to their experience at school. These predispositions, coupled with the acquisition of new cultural standards, are essentially transmitted through socially structured means of communication. As these students become more familiar with tacit rules which regulate behavior (especially as these rules affect communication and social interaction), they will become better able to interpret and operate in a

broader range of social situations. To do this is to adapt. Thus it is crucial for these students to rely upon their ability to use and interpret social situations to make sense of school culture.

The Problem

The central aim of this study, therefore, was to describe the communicative interactions between several Hmong students (students selected for the study), other Hmong, and non-Hmong people (e.g., students, teachers, administrators) as these transactions were carried out during the course of daily routines in an American high school ("Sierra High School," a pseudonym). Also, that descriptions of these interactions, and Hmong student responses to these experiences, be analyzed and understood as a function of cultural adaptation. Specifically, the pivotal task was to describe participant and communicative structures operating in secondary classrooms as these structures were influenced by the actions of educators and by Hmong normative and transitional cultural styles of communication. Furthermore, perceptions held by Hmong informants and Hmong students regarding the dynamics of communication were an important consideration.

By focusing on social/communicative behavior as a function of cultural adaptation, other aspects of the adaptation process became apparent. For example, much of

the characteristic behavior observed at school and in the community at large involved the use of informal protocols for communication (e.g., the use of cultural brokers or key people to interpret social and communicative behavior). Thus, communication depended a great deal on particular types of social relations which were formed informally at school and elsewhere. At school, for example, I was able to identify numerous social and institutional barriers to communication, barriers which have raised particular pedagogical issues for educators. I was also able to describe specific adaptive responses taken by Hmong students and by educators to overcome these obstacles.

In setting up the initial conceptual framework for this project I was guided by four research objectives: (a) to describe and analyze communicative interactions experienced by Hmong students in situ in an American high school, (b) to describe and analyze these communicative transactions in view of school community dynamics (i.e., with attention to Hmong cultural predispositions toward communicative interaction), (c) to record social strategies employed by Hmong students and educators to mitigate communication barriers existing at school, and (d) to elicit Hmong perceptions of how the communication process works in both home and school situations.

This study was not meant as a comprehensive summary description of all aspects of American Hmong cultural

adaptation. My bent was clearly directed toward communication. These objectives provided a workable framework for describing Hmong student behavior; especially behavior relating to the acquisition of tractable communicative skills and interpreting school culture.

Approaches to achieving these research objectives must, in my view, assume a dynamic view of culture through an understanding of culture change. In order to comprehend how the adaptive process is occurring, cultural adaptation must be framed by grasping the essentials of culture in transition. Personal life history data, changes occurring in the American Hmong community, and changes taking place in the surrounding non-Hmong community must be taken into account before an understanding of more specific aspects of school behavior can emerge. Hmong students in American schools reflect these changes in many ways. Issues concerning literacy, cultural identification with different subcultures within schools, variation in academic performance, and other means of assessing the dynamics of culture change have been researched (Downing 1986:213-216, Dunnigan 1986:41-54, Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton 1990). To establish meaning for specific goals outlined for this study, these broader considerations were incorporated.

Most observational data are comprised of descriptions of speech events and tacitly organized social activities of the sort Philips refers to as participant structures (1982

[1970]). In any given classroom setting, communication is carried out at two levels: explicit, and implicit. At the explicit level, or what Brown and Yule (1983) call "phatic communication," content, variously communicated through verbal lessons, textbooks, handouts, and other materials, can, even with language barriers, be systematically decoded by Hmong students. At this level the problem is one of development of formal linguistic competence. Other problems, however, tend to emerge as Hmong students attempt to translate and utilize more subtle, tacit cultural messages--especially as these subtle cues are conveyed in, what is to Hmong students, context reduced-situations or linguistic environments that provided few tangible associations with social realities (see Cummins 1981, 1982, 1983 for a discussion of context-reduction). Here problems associated with "hidden barriers" become a crucial issue at the pedagogical level in that teachers and non-Hmong students have difficulty recognizing their own implicit behavior. Formal instruction does not usually function to facilitate the decoding and translation of "implicit" cultural behavior. The problem is particularly acute for language minority students (with some notable exceptions; see discussion of "key personnel" in Chapter VII). For example, communication is difficult in situations where speech is "context reduced"--or through what Bernstein describes as communicative constraints resulting from

"restricted codes" (1964:55-69). Context reduced linguistic environments represent a difficult challenge for limited language speakers (in this case limited English speakers). Interpreting social implications of communicative interactions tend to proceed heuristically, where actors rely on the availability of extensive social context, or what second language acquisition specialists refer to as "comprehensible input" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, Rivers 1987, Wells 1981). In this sense an understanding of communication as a function of adaptation involves an analysis of the particular linguistic environment in which speech is taking place (i.e., interactional analysis).

In this study "communication" implies more than a mere analysis of content exchange through linguistic utterances. It requires that the individual be able to negotiate social meaning across various social situations, and make sense of specific context bound speech utterances through interaction. Therefore, meaning can be understood to be communicated either verbally or nonverbally (at the "meta" level or what Bateson has termed "paralanguage," 1973). Here communication also implies the ability to interpret and translate "cultural meaning" through the process by which cultural rules and standards for behavior are eventually acquired by an individual. Viewed as such, communication is not seen as merely the two way exchange of discrete or context free information (the conduit model); it involves

exchanges and interactions which are embedded in "social discourse."

In a similar study to this one, Philips (1982, 1985) has recognized the importance of identifying cultural orientations toward participant/communicative styles. Her study describes difficulties which arose for a group of Oregon Native American students as these students encountered Anglo teachers in reservation schools and classrooms (see Chapter II). By focusing on "patterns of speech usage," operating concurrently in the Native American community, and in reservation schools, Philips was able to identify fundamental communication problems between students and teachers. She also observed problems that were essentially culturally based. My study follows Philips' basic framework but also considers how Hmong students ameliorate cultural misunderstanding through the use of cultural brokers.

Key Concepts

This study makes use of a number of concepts used throughout this document. Therefore, some definitions and elaboration of a few key terms and ideas will be of some use.

Hmong

The term "Hmong" literally means "Free People" (Knoll

1982:236). The Hmong are sometimes referred to as "the Meo" (a Lao term) or "the Miao" (a Chinese term). Both "Meo" and "Miao" are derogatory names used by the Lao and the Chinese to refer to "wild" or "raw" Hmong--that is, those Hmong that refused to be assimilated into the dominant culture. At a connotative level, English equivalents for "Meo" and "Miao" would be "savage" or "primitive people." Although readers interested in Southeast Asian studies may encounter both terms in the literature, they are words to be avoided. "Hmong" is the proper designation of these people and is the term sanctioned by the Hmong themselves.

The Hmong are an Asian people. At present there are approximately three million Hmong living in China and several hundred thousand (demographic figures are highly variable) currently living in Southeast Asia. Since 1975 many Hmong (primarily Laotian Hmong) have immigrated to the United States, Australia, Canada, and Europe. In 1986 there were approximately 65,000 Hmong living in the United States (Olney 1986). (See Chapter IV for a more comprehensive discussion.)

The Hmong have been characterized by North Americans in a number of ways. Such labels as industrious, motivated, and achievement-oriented have been common. The Hmong have also been victims of stereotypes: lazy, backward, illiterate are a few salient examples.

Through my research, and through informal associations

with the Hmong, I have found them courteous, shy (especially the girls), talkative (in some contexts), creative, insightful, and for the most part motivated to learn.

Cultural Adaptation

Adaptation is a concept often employed by social scientists. Its origins are in biology--specifically in the biology of evolution and ecology. Adaptation refers to the process by which an organism alters either its biology or behavior in order to meet the requirements of a new or changing environment. For cultural anthropologists (especially cultural ecologists) cultural adaptation refers to cultural adjustments made by people to facilitate living in new or changing natural and cultural circumstances (see Butzer 1971:vii, Cavalli-Sforza 1983:103, Hansen 1990:63). For the Hmong, cultural adaptation represents the sum total of alterations made to accommodate North American cultural standards. This would involve language acquisition and becoming functionally competent in American culture. Thus, the ability to attain a working knowledge of cultural rules and standards at various levels of adequacy is a direct function of cultural adaptation. Viewed as such, much of adaptation requires learning how to communicate across a multiplicity of social situations.

To understand how this type of adaptation occurs it is necessary to employ methods of data collection and analysis

that derive from sociolinguistics, or what Hymes and Gumperz have termed "the ethnography of speaking" or the "ethnography of communication" (Gumperz and Hymes 1972 [1964]). Thus, social dimensions of language are seen as subsumed under the broader adaptation process.

Any study of adaptation must also include descriptions of the environment in which the changes are occurring. For this project, I recorded how Hmong students adjusted to cultural/communicative structures at Sierra High School. Hence, descriptions of the behavior of non-Hmong teachers, students, administrators, and so forth, represent an essential part of the descriptive text. These observations included recording adaptations made by non-Hmong; that is adaptations made to accommodate Hmong students. In this sense adaptation is viewed as a two way process. In this study, however, more emphasis was placed on adaptive responses taken by Hmong students. The actions of others (non-Hmong actors) were viewed as descriptions of contextualized background or as an aspect of the social environment in which Hmong students were adapting. A comprehensive description of how schools in general are adapting to Hmong students, or other Southeast Asians for that matter, would be an extensive research project in its own right and would go beyond the scope of this study. However, it was impossible to ignore altogether the adaptive strategies employed by non-Hmong educators; especially as

these behaviors were observed in classrooms. Thus, strategies used by educators in classrooms, and modifications employed through school and district level curriculum and tracking design, were included as part of the basic data on adaptation.

Five Concepts from Sociolinguistics

The discipline of sociolinguistics provides a major conceptual and methodological foundation for linguistic aspects of this study. Sociolinguistics is the study of language and communication in socially embedded context. This approach to data collection and analysis is important, it will be useful to engage a discussion of some of the basic concepts and terms which derive from sociolinguistic analysis. Five key sociolinguistic concepts used throughout subsequent portions of this document are: "discourse," "context," "speech community," "participant structure" and "communicative structure."

Discourse

Some sociolinguists define discourse in a narrow sense. Loflin, for example, refers to discourse as "connected symbolic strings longer than a sentence" (1978:3). To others, however, discourse encompasses more than extended verbal utterances. In the field of social semiotics discourse can take the form of communicative sequences

(texts) conveyed through a wide range of symbolic mediums; extending discourse to include what Bateson called "paralanguage" (1973). Hodge and Kress refer to discourse as "the social process in which texts are embedded" (1988:6). Thus, verbal utterances and extended repetitions of other forms of communication are texts. The relationship of texts to their social context is discourse.

I am inclined to take this broader view because it allows me to integrate a larger array of social/ communicative activities and behaviors. Taken this way, specific speech events, nonverbal cueing, and ambient material culture can be viewed as component features of discourse.

Context

As sociolinguists use the term, context refers to integrated features of language, social situation, and cultural meaning; or simply the "environment or circumstances in which language is used" (Brown and Yule 1983:25). Often sociolinguists analyze extended discourse in order to understand the relationship between particular cultural antecedents, social settings, and how implicit communication is taking place in such situations. Using this approach, communication is viewed as situated in social context. This contrasts with formal information theory, although some sociolinguists use formal methods for analysis

(e.g., defining rule-specification and normative standards for linguistic exchange,[Grimshaw 1977:423]). Formal information theory assumes that communication is carried out through linear/reciprocal exchanges of discrete messages. For sociolinguists the explicit message or intended content may only be secondary. Other relevant cultural messages may be communicated in unintended ways. Hence, the meaning of a message may be a product of the context in which the communicative event occurred.

The Speech Community

Hymes suggests that the best starting point for collecting, organizing, and interpreting sociolinguistic data is the "speech community" (Gumperz 1973, Hymes 1974a:433). Hymes defines the speech community as "the organization of diversity." By this he means that diverse cultural knowledge becomes organized or regulated by constraints operating in particular speech environments. This is similar to Bernstein's definition of code (see 1990:14). Spradley and McCurdy have defined the speech community as: "a community that shares a specific linguistic code and the sociolinguistic rules for using and interpreting the messages generated by that code" (1975:386). For example, a school classroom can be viewed as a speech community. There are cultural rules regulating the range of speaking styles that can (given prescribed

normative rules for speech) occur there. Within speech communities are subcommunities. To illustrate, imagine in a classroom two students who talk to one another in hushed voices. They are forming a speech "sub" community within the context of the larger speech community (the classroom). Constraints on speaking which are a product of implicit rules for the classroom speech community, are influencing speech patterns operating in the subcommunity (i.e., the students must use hushed voices to either avoid a conflict with the teacher or in order to not disturb other students). The idea of speech community was useful for this study in that it allowed me to recognize the presence of certain boundaries that constrained the range and types of speech events that could take place in specific situations. By describing each speech community and its associated subcommunities I was also able to illuminate contextual as well as particularistic influences on actual speech events.

Participant Structures

Within each speech community, activities and ideas regarding social relations were carried out. The relationship between speech and socially recognized rules for interaction have been termed "participant structures." Participant structures refer to tacitly organized ways to structure and regulate the social behavior of individuals through the use of particular ways of speaking (Philips

1985). This view of speaking assumes that cultural rules of behavior are being conveyed through the structuring and organization of speech events. For example, hierarchical distances between students and teachers can be adjusted through changes in voice (i.e., shifting from formal to informal voice). By using the formal voice, a teacher is communicating formal distance from students. When a teacher shifts to an informal voice, the teacher is demonstrating a degree of familiarity with students. Hence, the formal distance between teacher and students will be lessened.

Communicative Structures

Communicative structures refer to specific modes of communication used by people to convey social meaning and are more closely associated with specific aspects of speech, nonverbal communication, and the messages being sent through these mediums. Sociolinguists use a number of terms to refer to elements of social communication. Subsumed under the general rubric of participant/communicative structure are a number of basic or key concepts. They are: (a) codes (as regulating mechanisms and as particular speech forms), (b) code-switching, (c) turn allocation, (d) cultural agendas (referring to predisposed cultural rules, e.g., the division of labor by gender and age, deference to authority, personal identity structures, and so on), and (e) linguistic and social competence.

For nonverbal communication, Bowers and Flinders have organized a list of concepts and terms which have been used by researchers when applying sociolinguistic analysis to research in education (1990:Chapter 3). In this section of their book they discuss such concepts as: (a) proxemics, (b) kinesics, and (c) prosody ("paralanguage").

A more detailed discussion of sociolinguistic terms and concepts are provided in Chapter III of this document.

The Setting

The setting for this project was a small semi-rural community in California. I have called this city Sierra. In the past few years (1984 to 1992), Hmong families have been moving to Sierra, and Hmong students at all grade levels are now enrolled in several of Sierra's public schools. The specific school setting chosen for this study is one of Sierra's two senior high schools (Sierra Senior High). In many respects it is a typical American high school; students move noisily in the hallways as they go from one class to another; there are the typical posters advertising football games and other school events; student art work and official notices are posted on most of the walls; and the ubiquitous teachers and administrators go about their daily routines.

There is a relatively high degree of cultural diversity at Sierra High (Table 1). There are Black, Cambodian,

TABLE 1. Distribution of Sierra High School Students Grouped by Ethnicity, 1991

Ethnic Group	Male	Female	Totals	Percentages
White	450	457	907	78.87
Black	13	5	18	1.57
Hispanic	57	53	110	9.57
Asian	56	35	91	7.91
Pacific Island	3	4	7	.61
Native American	8	7	15	1.30
Filipino	0	2	2	.17

The Asian category includes: (a) Chinese ethnic, (b) Lao, (c) Khmer (Cambodian), (d) Japanese, (e) Korean, and (f) Hmong.

ethnic Chinese, Filipino, German, Hindi, Hispanics, Hmong Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Native American, and Syrian students and others. In addition, Anglo American students are represented from a fairly wide band of the socioeconomic spectrum.

Sierra is a college town which supports the families of college teachers, various other professionals, a fairly large middle-class, as well as welfare recipients. Students from all of these family backgrounds attend classes at Sierra High. With such diversity in the community, and with the student population reflecting that diversity, teachers and administrators are quite used to issues of cultural plurality. In fact at present much of their curriculum

emphasizes issues of cultural awareness.

Study Population

Students who participated in this study can be organized into three general categories: (a) primary participants (Hmong), (b) secondary participants (Hmong), (c) secondary participants (non-Hmong). Primary participants include Hmong students that were systematically observed during their daily routines at school (going with them from class to class), and Hmong students who were formally interviewed. Secondary participants (Hmong) were those students who were observed indirectly as a consequence of my observations of primary participants. During a typical day of observation, I would accompany one student to his/her classes. In many of the classes there would be other Hmong students; particularly in ESL and "Sheltered" classes (ESL classes across various content areas other than English, i.e., history, science, and math). It was important for me to not only record the behavior of the primary participants, but also to observe interactions taking place with other Hmong students. Other secondary participants included adult Hmong informants. The Sierra school district had employed several young adult Hmong teacher's aides. These people became key informants for my study because they were able to describe cultural gaps and communication barriers existing between the Hmong community

and the schools (see discussion of key people in Chapter VII). Secondary (non-Hmong) participants included all non-Hmong students as well as teachers, student teachers, teachers aides, and administrators.

Selection of the students was not random. Four criteria were used: (a) degree of English fluency (Vu could speak English and Lu was at the early stages of the acquisition process), (b) gender (two boys and two girls were selected), (c) age (Lu was 14 and Vang was in his late teens), and (d) individual personalities (Vu was more talkative than the other three students; Ngao carried herself more like an adult; Vang and Lu were quiet and less eager to open communicative exchanges with strangers). Also, in selecting these particular students I was looking for access to a variety of speech environments (i.e., classrooms, between classes, after school), in order to collect data in differing academic and nonacademic situations.

From the perspective of quantitative research, using a population of four might seem low. For qualitative research, however, four primary subjects is nearly ideal. By using a small population I was able to spend considerable time with each student to: (a) gather detailed life history data, (b) focus on specific behaviors occurring over a protracted period of time, and (c) observe subtle nuances of communicative behavior in specific contexts. The four

students also provided me with inroads into the Hmong student population at Sierra High School as well as to members of their families; therefore, at least indirectly, I had access to nearly all Hmong students who were attending Sierra High School at the time of this study and to members of the Hmong community outside of the school context.

Vu, Lu, Vang, and Ngao

Four students were observed and interviewed for this study. Vu and Yang (males) and Lu and Ngao (females) were the primary students with which I worked.

I first met Vu on my first day of observations at Sierra High School. He was sitting in his ESL class, making occasional jokes about what was going on in class. His affable nature is what immediately caught my attention. His ability with English also drew my interest. Three days later I sat down with Vu and, after explaining as best I could the reasons for my being there, I asked him if he would like to participate. "Yes," he said. He then proceeded to tell me a little about his life history, some of which was subsequently included in a profile of Vu in Chapter VI.

I first met Lu while I was talking with an adult Hmong aide (Bao). I asked Bao to explain my research to Lu and to ask her if she would like to participate. Lu was sitting with three other Hmong girls including Ngao (who also became

a participant). Lu told Bao (in Hmong) that she did not have time, her school work was too demanding. When Bao asked Ngao the same question, her reply was similar: "No, she doesn't have the time either," said Bao.

Vang was one of the first Hmong students I talked to when I began observations. After several days of getting to know him, I asked if he would like to participate in the study. He agreed and, like Vu, told me a little about his life history. Vang, I have found, is quite talkative and outgoing in certain contexts. In others, however, he is quiet. For example, outside of his ESL classes (in regular classes) Vang rarely speaks and if approached by a school official Vang typically lowers his eyes and replies in short responses.

Ngao was older than the other Hmong girls (i.e., the girls in ESL classes). Ngao carried herself with a sense of dignity and strength. The younger Hmong girls often deferred to Ngao concerning a variety of issues. Ngao was also married and had two children. In addition to child rearing constraints and her school work, Ngao maintained a job at a local fast-food restaurant. Despite minimal English, Ngao was able to memorize the entire menu and she knew which keys on the register corresponded to each item.

In setting up my research I had originally planned to hold a general orientation for Hmong students and ask for volunteers. Several Hmong aides suggested that that would

be a bad idea. "No one will volunteer. It would be better if you worked with them at school first so they would feel comfortable with you." I took this advice. Although at first Lu and Ngao did not wish to participate in the study, they eventually volunteered.

Through the months of research these students became more than participants, they have become my friends.

Significance of the Study

This study suggests a number of implications for education and for anthropological studies of communication. As a cross-cultural analysis of communication it might assist educational administrators, teachers, and counselors with their attempts to better understand fundamental problems which face language minority students. Moreover, teachers might become more aware of the implicit nature of communication in their classes, and take measures to allow Hmong students, and other minority students, more openly to address issues and problems which have some relevance for them. The study provides relevant data which might be used to develop criteria to assist teachers and academic counselors in placing Hmong students; and help students with academic and personal adjustment. In addition, the study might allow educators to heighten their own understanding of cross-cultural affects on learning in that the study provides a salient and detailed example of intercultural

communication and pluralism as it exists in an American educational setting. Finally, on a more theoretical level, the study will provide insight into the relationship between culture, language and social/cultural adaptation.

Hmong students are being socialized into a North American cultural milieu, yet they strive to maintain some sense of their traditional culture, a process that Gibson calls "accommodation without assimilation" (1988). The dynamic tension between assimilation into North American culture and maintenance of traditional culture represents a significant challenge for the Hmong community. Thus, it is hoped that a more detailed understanding of how this process is taking place will be useful to both American educators and leaders of the Hmong community; especially as more recent Hmong arrivals enter American schools. It should be pointed out that the Hmong themselves might benefit from this study in that it will contain information that would mediate problems stemming from cross-cultural misunderstanding--thus, it is hoped, the Hmong community and school can develop a closer more meaningful relationship.

Preview

This study is organized into eight chapters. Chapter II provides a review of relevant literature. Studies that pertain to the relationship between community and school are discussed. These studies assume that an important dynamic

link between home/community culture and cultural process in schools exists. In addition, a discussion of microethnographic studies of classroom interactive behavior is provided. These studies stress the importance of describing details of specific interactive and communicative patterning as these behaviors are carried out in classroom settings. Two other areas of research complete Chapter II. Studies of social communication are covered in some detail. Sociolinguistic and ethnographic studies of communication, as these research genres have been applied to education, and intercultural communication, are summarized and used to form a basic conceptual framework for this study. Finally, research conducted with Southeast Asian immigrants has been cited and reviewed along with studies conducted on Hmong adjustment to American schools.

Chapter III is a summary of methods. Qualitative research is defined and applied to specific methodological issues raised by this study and by educational research in general. Through this discussion the qualitative foundations are established and justified. Also, the degree to which this project is "anthropological," by way of assessing how it may or may not represent "ethnography," is discussed. Chapter III also provides a summary of field methods: how the data were sorted, analyzed, and organized into a conceptual framework for the final document.

Chapter IV is a brief description of Hmong

ethnohistory, basic cultural organization, aspects of Hmong culture as it relates to communication, and how a Hmong student association is attempting to bridge communication gaps between the Hmong community and Sierra's schools. The section on communication focuses on the dynamics of communication and interaction in Hmong households and how these patterns affect communication at school. In addition, attempts on the part of Hmong students (through this association of Hmong students) to ease communication barriers between the Hmong community and Sierra's schools are briefly discussed. The primary purpose in this chapter is to provide the reader with an understanding of both the historical and cultural experience the Hmong bring to their "new situation" in the United States. Possessing some background information on Hmong culture the reader should be able to establish a context for understanding Hmong student interactive behavior at school.

In Chapter V brief anthropological life histories are presented for four Hmong high school students, two boys and two girls. These profiles provide descriptions of early life experiences, the conditions under which these students and their families immigrated to the United States, as well as their present family and household situations. In addition, these student's comments regarding school experiences have been included.

Chapter VI is comprised of vignettes that describe the

daily routines of these four Hmong students. These composite vignettes were constructed from raw data and organized to provide the reader with a sense of an actual school day for these students. Close attention was paid to communicative interactions between Hmong students and other people (including other Hmong students, teachers, teacher's aides, and non-Hmong students).

Chapter VII offers an analysis. Utilizing methods derived from sociolinguistics and ethnographic studies of communication, data collected for this study have been brought together to provide a partial picture of cultural/communicative adaptation. Speech events were examined in terms of their social context. Also, various strategies employed by Hmong students to negotiate communication barriers were collected and analyzed to gain insight into specific aspects of the adaptive process. The emphasis in this chapter is twofold: (a) to provide an understanding of participant/communicative structures as these cultural features were encountered by Hmong students, and, (b) to gain insight into how Hmong students and educators responded to constraints set up by prevailing communicative structures.

The final chapter (VIII) is a general discussion of the implications of the study. Questions are raised regarding the worth of studying communicative patterns from a social perspective. Also, methodological issues regarding

difficulties in obtaining linguistic and interactional data are discussed. Possible benefits to educators and to the Hmong are suggested under the heading of "pedagogical issues." A number of specific suggestions are included for educators who have Hmong students in their schools; suggestions such as: (a) making use of cultural brokers and interpreters to enhance communication between Hmong and non-Hmong subjects, (b) development of strategies which identify cultural and linguistic barriers, and (c) teaching strategies which increase the richness of classroom communication (context enhancement). Finally, intercultural communication is discussed in light of inferences drawn from these data.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Four general areas of research are directly relevant to this study: (a) anthropological studies of schools and communities; (b) microethnographic studies of classrooms; (c) studies of sociocultural communicative patterning occurring in both school and community settings; and (d) research on Southeast Asians and their adjustment to North American culture and schools (particularly studies of the Hmong).

Community School Studies

Peshkin is perhaps the best known researcher whose work has been concerned with the relationship between communities and schools (1978, 1988). In his study of a midwestern community and its schools, Peshkin comes to understand that, in many ways, schools reflect the cultural values and orientations of the surrounding community. In fact, as Peshkin points out, schools tend to socialize students to "localized" cultural values and predispositions (Peshkin 1988:60). Peshkin goes on to describe problems that arise when essentially homogeneous rural communities undergo

integration. This has been the case in central and northern California with Hmong resettlement.

My own research experience was concentrated on cultural predispositions established in the home and how, under various conditions, these predispositions affected behavior in school (in this case Hmong and non-Hmong interactions). Through his work Peshkin raises several relevant points worth consideration for my study: (a) that schools serve a basic "communal function," (b) that communal functions can contain elements of both overt and tacit racial discrimination, and (c) that cultural predispositions are part of the schooling process.

More closely aligned with my study is Susan Philips' work, which examines the relationship between culturally organized attitudes and protocols, toward the structure of speech events (1985). In her study of the Warm Springs Indian children, as mentioned earlier, Philips found that children are enculturated to respond to cultural norms operating in the home culture, and that it is often difficult to translate those normative rules across culturally different settings. Philips observed that Warm Springs children had difficulty with people who monopolized speaking time. These children had been implicitly taught to organize "speech time" in such a way as to prevent any one person from talking too much. Problems arose when these students attended school and found Anglo teachers dominating

the distribution of speech time. Moreover, this disunity between the Native American communicative style and that of the teachers produced problems related to deference to authority. Through the use of tacitly organized communicative structures, relationships are constructed either laterally or hierarchically. By dominating speech time, and using the formal voice, teachers are, according to Philips, establishing a dysfunctional communicative distance between their Native American students and themselves.

Philips' study has more direct utility for my study as a basic conceptual and methodological framework. However, her study does raise an number of important questions concerning culturally based deference to authority and student reactions to "teacher talk." In terms of the Hmong, hierarchical, or vertical relationships between students and teachers sometimes represent a significant problem due to the prerequisite nature of deference to authority in Hmong households (Hvitfeldt 1986; Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton 1990). Other problems stem from difficulties in translating subtle verbal and nonverbal cues elicited by teachers and administrators. For example, often teachers indicate the relative importance of certain tasks through emphases conveyed through changes in voice or through subtle use of nonverbal channels (which homework is more important, the relative importance of class participation, and so on). Hmong students might not be able to read these subtle cues

and may suffer for it.

In a similar line of research to Philips, Heath has looked at questioning styles and strategies employed by black mothers with their children (1988:103-131). Heath describes questioning styles and speech interaction which occurs between white teacher-parents and their own children. By recording actual speech events and interactions as they unfold in both the school and at home, Heath is able to point to culturally specific modes of communication as problematic. She suggests that social relationships between black pupils and white teachers are often strained because questioning styles engaged by white teachers seem strange to black students. White teachers were modeling their classroom speech interactions the way they would with their own children and, consequently, could not understand why black children had trouble responding to speech routines taking place in their classrooms.

The above-mentioned article grew out of an earlier more broad-based study. Heath (1983) was looking at three southern communities that, during the 1960s, were mandated to integrate. Roadville (a White working-class community) and Trackton (a Black working-class rural community) were brought into contact with one another through the integration of a nearby school system (which Heath refers to as "the Towns people"). Heath was interested in recording variations in how children from these culturally different

communities used language at home, in their communities, and at school. She also noted that teachers who used ethnographic techniques for describing their students' speech were able to incorporate an understanding of both speech and cultural differences into their classrooms, thus reducing intercultural conflicts and developing in their students a tangible sense of cultural awareness.

Also at the community/school level, Blakely (1983) has described the reluctance of Southeast Asian parents to get involved with school activities and concerns. Blakely's discussion demonstrates the importance of understanding school community dynamics. Middle class American values place high regard on teacher/parent interaction. The fact that Southeast Asian parents express reluctance to get involved with school functions has created a certain degree of misunderstanding for all parties. Thus, in order to facilitate better relations between the Southeast Asian community and schools, a more careful understanding of the specific sociocultural dynamics between the two domains is needed.

John Ogbu (1978) points to specific cultural-historical differences between groups as a source of problems related to perceptions of minority students and variation in student academic performance. Ogbu has observed that American researchers have had a tendency to focus on generalized social features of "minority problems" in education, instead

of drawing distinctions between various groups as defined by their unique historical, cultural, and economic experiences. Minority groups, from Ogbu's perspective, can be roughly divided into two categories: (a) caste minorities, and (b) non-caste minorities. Caste minorities come into the United States with preconditioned "lower-caste status." The level of expectations for caste minorities have been "preset" within the contexts of socioeconomic class status structures that existed in their homeland. Non-caste minorities, in contrast, are able to adapt more easily to American life in that they have not been culturally predisposed to lower caste status--social mobility, for non-caste minorities, is seen as realizable and necessary.

Ogbu's analysis has direct relevance to this study in that the Hmong community in many ways posit characteristics of "non-caste" minority groups. As Quincy (1989) and others (e.g., Knoll 1982) have noted, the Hmong have always valued their autonomy and do not perceive themselves as members of a caste system.

Gibson, in a study of a Sikh community in northern California, has examined the relationship between cultural continuity and culture change (1988). She has noted that the Punjabi (Sikh) community in which the study was conducted, had developed an adaptive strategy for protecting traditional culture while at the same time accommodating fundamental rules and regulations of the dominant culture.

She also pointed to important "home-school-community linkages," observing that Punjabi children were able to attend to school obligations (i.e., abiding by school rules and academic demands) without subverting basic Punjabi cultural customs. Gibson's thesis is important in that it suggests that minority populations can accommodate North American laws and customs without complete assimilation. This basic idea represents an important consideration for my study in that Hmong I have talked to are very concerned about maintaining key elements of their traditional culture. At the same time, however, most Hmong feel the need to comply with formal US laws and regulations, and other North American cultural standards. This idea of "accommodation without assimilation," as it relates to the Hmong, will be discussed in some detail. It is important to note here, however, that the idea that a minority group can maintain a sense of cultural continuity and be functional in another, represents an important breakthrough in studies of pluralism and cultural diversity--especially as this theme relates to minority-majority relations in schools.

Wolcott has conducted an ethnographic study of community school dynamics in a Kwakiutl village in British Columbia, Canada (1989[1967]). His descriptions enumerate the many cultural barriers that impede "formal" education in this rural native village. This study points to the importance of understanding cultural predispositions and

their ramifications in both formal and informal community school settings.

Microethnography of the Classroom

Other studies have concentrated more closely on specific interactive structures and processes in classrooms. Erickson and Mohatt (1988) has produced several studies focusing on specific, highly detailed behavior in various classroom settings. By using direct observation, videotaping, and various forms of interviewing, all which directly relate to classroom behavior, Erickson is engaging in "microethnography." For example, Erickson and Mohatt (1988:136-74) describe two classrooms where the student populations are culturally similar--Odawa, Ojibwa and Northern Ontario Native Americans. Erickson and Mohatt stressed the importance of "proxemic relationships" by keeping track of the spatial placement and movement of teachers as they conducted activities in their classrooms. One teacher, a Native American, tended to organize her behavior in ways culturally familiar to her Native American students. She tended to move slowly, deliberately, and she made sure that her interactions with students were kept on a personal level. The other teacher, a non-Native American, moved quickly around the room, giving out commands to her students in the form of sharp impersonal directives. According to Erickson and Mohatt, the children in the first

classroom tended to respond more positively to their teacher because interactions and communicative structuring followed patterns which were culturally familiar to them.

This type of study (studies conducted at the microethnographic level) has direct significance for my study in that much of the data collected on Hmong student behavior was obtained through direct observations of interactions in classrooms.

Sociocultural Dimensions of Communication

To this point I have been concerned with research problems associated with dimension and scope (i.e., school community studies and microdescription of classroom behavior). Now I would like to shift the discussion to conceptual systems of analysis.

Sociolinguistics is central as a basic framework to both method and theory in this study. I have already mentioned the work of Philips (1985) and Heath (1988) as products of community school studies. Gumperz (1971, 1972, 1973, 1977, 1982a, 1982b,) has also made significant contributions to sociolinguistic analysis of minority/ethnic communication in community and school situations. As these studies rely heavily on sociolinguistic analysis, some mention of important works in this area will be useful (especially as they relate to education).

In Philips' Warm Springs study she focused on

"participant structures" as constructed and maintained by culturally organized regulation of speech events. Her descriptions of teacher generated speech structures, characterize Anglo teachers as "speech monopolizers". Thus, through the organization and manipulation of speech exchanges, teachers communicate (tacitly) cultural rules regarding social roles--in this case formal distance between teachers and students. Philips, and other sociolinguists, point out that linguistics is not merely concerned with descriptive and semantic relationships, but, is also interested with how social roles are communicated through daily speech routines.

Heath also reinforces this idea that through speaking styles people are communicating and patterning normative culture (1988:103-129). Both Philips and Heath point out that when two essentially different cultural systems are involved (for Philips, Native American students and Anglo teachers; with Heath, Black students, members of the adult Black community and Anglo teachers), communication and the carrying out of classroom activities become problematic.

In her study, Heath examines cultural predispositioning toward questioning style and content for Anglo White teachers, and members of a Southeastern (United States) Black community. Students from this Black community, it was noted, quite often did not respond to questions put forth by White teachers. The teachers could not understand why these

students were not responding as they should (according to Anglo cultural rules for question and response patterning). Heath points out that the problem was essentially cultural in that these children had been socialized to respond to communicative styles typical of their home community. Anglo teachers would ask Black students to identify discrete objects or ideas; that is answers to questions which were abstracted from any recognizable social context. This article points to real problems; difficulties stemming from barriers set up by fundamental misunderstandings of the relationship between cultural style and communicative structuring.

Gumperz (1972:introduction) has emphasized the crucial link between social categories, social norms, and language behavior. This relationship he terms "correlational sociolinguistics;" that is, linguistic behavior cannot be viewed as a separate non-context bound set "fixed of jural rules." How something is said is as important as what is being said. For example in a study conducted by Gumperz and Hernandez (1985:84-110), differences in cultural background and variability in social/dialectical style are described for Spanish/English speaking students in Texas. Their analysis underscores the importance of "the juxtapositioning of private and public language"--especially in culturally diverse settings. Gumperz and Hernandez-Ghavez recommend that, in order to enhance their communication with these

students, teachers must become sensitive to rules governing "code selection." Differences in code usage (and mechanisms regulating code-switching) are used by students as identity markers (i.e., "in-group" "out-group" identifiers). Thus an understanding of student culture should entail knowledge of linguistic variation. This is crucial if educators want to know something about linguistic influences on student behavior in class, in and around school grounds, and at home.

One common theme which connects the above mentioned studies with mine is the role of cultural agendas (cultural predispositions) as speech related process. For Hmong students the task is not only to interpret manifest or explicit information (what Brown and Yule call "transactional language" 1983:2), but to decode (translate or interpret implicit speech codes) the many subtle rules of social conduct and information coded at an extra-linguistic level. In order to understand this process it has been useful to examine more closely the concepts of 'code,' 'code-switching,' and 'speech community' (see Hymes 1974 for a discussion of 'speech community,' Bernstein 1973 for definitions and examples of 'codes,' or, see the introduction).

Other disciplines have been concerned with issues of culture and communication in educational environments. In the field of "Communication," for example, "intercultural

communication" has become an important area for research and dialogue. Anderson and Powell (1991) have outlined some of the more important cultural factors influencing communicative functions in American classrooms. Their emphasis has been on cultural predisposition/tradition, on specific actors (i.e., teachers, students, and parents) and the institutional systems that attempt to regulate cultural process in schools. Although somewhat general, the article notes the importance of culture and its influence on communication within the context of formal education.

Another work deserving mention here is Functions of Language in the Classroom (Cazden, Hymes and John 1985). This edited volume contains articles ranging from studies on nonverbal communication, to analyses of cultural influences on speech patterning. All of the articles deal with functional, or pragmatic aspects of language. For this study it has proven useful as a resource for the development and use of numerous methods and conceptual approaches to language function in educational settings (some of the articles contained in this volume are cited in this document).

Southeast Asians in America

Synthesis Literature

Following the Vietnam war a significant number of

Southeast Asian refugees immigrated to the United States. Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and numerous groups from the highland regions of Southeast Asia, known collectively as "the Hill Tribes," have resettled in the U.S. in sizable numbers (Knoll 1982, Proudfoot 1990). The literature on how these groups are adjusting to life in the United States is growing rapidly. To cite all or most of this substantial literature would go beyond my purpose here. However, a number of significant studies warrant mention.

Three synthesis works on Southeast Asian immigrants in the U. S. have had a major influence on the organization of background information for my study. What follows is a brief discussion of each.

Knoll (1982) has brought together a significant amount of data concerning the Southeast Asian immigrant experience in the United States. Her discussion ranges from basic background information on various minority groups (e.g., Mien, Khmer, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Laotian ethnic) to specific features of their cultural systems. Basic themes that run through her book are concerned with such matters as changing patterns of traditional Southeast Asian culture, economic adjustment to life in North America, American attitudes toward Southeast Asian immigrants, and consideration of future conditions. Although general in scope, Knoll's book provides useful background information on the Hmong (236-255).

Proudfoot (1990), has pooled a significant body of ethnohistoric data on Laotians now living in the United States (particularly in Oregon). Proudfoot spent five years (1980 to 1985) living "the experiences of Laotian refugees who had come to one small corner of the United States [Oregon]" (1990:14). Proudfoot had spent time in Laos and Thailand tracing the forces which led Laotian refugees to immigrate and subsequently resettle in the United States. Proudfoot provides a historical context for the migration of numerous minority groups out of Laos (including the Hmong). Much of this history is concerned with the U.S. "Secret War" in Laos. This Secret War, and the entailing migration of minority hill groups out of Laos, will be discussed here in more detail.

Deinard, Downing, and Hendricks (1986) have compiled an extensive set of articles on the Hmong. Most of the articles deal with transition and adjustment to life in the United States. These articles range from analyses of changing demographic trends (Olney 1986), to altering patterns of attitudes toward marriage practice (Meredith and Rowe 1986), to problems connected with English language acquisition (Downing 1986). In the section that follows many of these articles will be reviewed.

Studies of the Hmong in the United States

Many problems associated with adjusting to a new

cultural setting have plagued the American Hmong. Most of these difficulties result from fundamental misunderstandings arising from differentials between the dominant North American culture and traditional Hmong culture. In this section I review a number of studies which address various aspects of this transition process.

Various researchers have focused their attention on the difficulties faced by Hmong immigrants. One such problem area has to do with conflicts stemming from differences between North American and traditional Hmong worldview. Dunnigan, for example, has observed that conflicts exist between traditional Hmong views of personal identity and those of American children (1986:41-54). The Hmong tend to see themselves as members of groups (e.g., extended family, clan association, and other cultural affiliations) before they acknowledge their "individualism." Differences in how Hmong and Americans view self identity have produced tensions between the two groups. Also, tensions between older and younger Hmong have arisen as a result of changing perceptions of self identity in Hmong families. From Dunnigan's perspective it is difficult to predict what will become of the Hmong as the assimilation-acculturation process reshapes the ways in which Hmong view themselves. Dunnigan does note, however, that many other minority groups have been successful at altering aspects of their culture without losing their traditional sense of self identity (see

page 50 of Dunnigan's study for a discussion of Yaqui and Hawaiian views on self identity).

A more immediate problem for the Hmong has to do with employment and changing patterns in the division of labor in Hmong households. Mason has looked at how various agencies have brought Hmong women out of their traditional roles of "house-mothers" (1986:99-120). These agencies (referred to as "Mutual Assistance Associations" or MAAs and "Hmong Family Assistance Associations"), variously funded by the government and by private donations, have sought to place Hmong women in the mainstream work force. While this may be beneficial for household economy it has produced stress on traditional gender roles. As Hmong women have begun to join the work force, Hmong men have expressed their displeasure with these changing roles. The problem becomes particularly acute when Hmong women work while their husbands are unemployed. Hmong men see this as a threat to patrilineal authority. The men also feel that it confuses the transfer of traditional Hmong rules for gender differentiation to Hmong children.

Mason has also noted that these assistance programs (e.g., MAAs, voluntary agencies, adult education programs and centers) have been helpful, however; more integration and coordination between these programs is needed if they are to increase their effectiveness.

Another problem facing American Hmong comes from

conflicting views between Hmong and American rules for regulating marital courtship. Meredith and Rowe (1986:121-129) have studied changes occurring in Hmong communities in terms of evolving attitudes on marital courtship patterns. For example, the Hmong traditionally arrange marriages. It is rare for Hmong to marry out of a sense of "romantic love." The Hmong have developed a number of strategies for arranging marriages. Often, the parents of two potential spouses will settle on a bride price, a date will be set for the marriage ceremony, and after coaching the bride and groom-to-be, the ritual will be carried out. Occasionally, the potential bride is left out of the negotiations and may know nothing of the arrangements. According to tradition, if this is the case, a male suitor has the right to kidnap the girl. In the United States this would bring the Hmong community into conflict with existing American laws. To moderate these types of situations, cultural brokers have been used (as, for example, in Oroville California). Generally, the courts grant clemency and use these brokers to explain to Hmong defendants how the North American courtship system works (not an easy task). Furthermore, the problem with kidnapping is explained to Hmong parties involved in terms of possible legal ramifications with regard to American laws on individual rights in this case, the rights of the abducted girl. Meredith and Rowe have observed that younger Hmong prefer the American form of

courtship over traditional Hmong forms. They also note that problems tend to arise when older Hmong men, operating from the perspective of Hmong tradition, attempt to take younger potential brides. These younger females often do not abide by conventional Hmong courtship rules. According to Meredith and Rowe, as the Hmong continue to adapt to the American system of courtship, kidnapping incidents will likely become rare.

Another serious problem facing American Hmong stems from numerous impediments to economic development. A significant number of Hmong are unemployed, drawing welfare, or both. Various assistance agencies (previously mentioned) have been trying to help the Hmong establish a basic starting point for achieving economic viability. Fass has conducted a comprehensive study of such programs and has assessed the current state of the American Hmong economy (1986:202-209). These projects were designed to familiarize the Hmong with the American market system. For example, those Hmong who wanted to market needle-craft, were provided with a basic knowledge of: (a) cash-monetary exchange, (b) where to market their goods, and (c) how to use simple forms of advertisement. They were also taught to adjust prices on their goods. The Hmong had previously been selling their products for little or nothing by American retail standards. Now, however, the price of Hmong goods has gone up enough for reasonable profits to be made.

Fass has also noted that most Hmong are farmers. During the mid to late 1970s, when Hmong immigrants first began to arrive in the United States, they had expectations of growing rice for commercial profit. Unfortunately for these Hmong, places like California, through corporate farming through the use of intensive agricultural techniques, produce large amounts of rice; California is the third largest producer of rice in the world. Hmong farmers could not realistically compete with these large farm enterprises. Fass has observed that a number of locally based self-help projects (in a number of states) have encouraged the Hmong to grow small-scale gardens to produce specialty crops (1986:204). These crops are generally sold at farmer's markets and to local produce stands. The intent of these projects is to foster the early stages of entrepreneurial enterprise which, it is hoped, will allow the Hmong to establish some degree of economic stability.

Donnelly, like Fass, has looked at the evolving Hmong economy. Her emphasis, however, was focused more closely on the evolution of clientalistic needlepoint cooperatives (1986:159-174). Early in the resettlement process, American women helped the Hmong to establish a needlepoint cooperative ("Asian Needlepoint" or AN). Since that time conflicts have arisen as a result of disagreements over the original intent of the cooperative, and over who should control the organization. Donnelly points out that this

split is indicative of underlying problems emerging from both increased divisions in the Hmong community and growing tensions between Hmong and non-Hmong people. Despite such problems, according to Donnelly, the projects have had a generally positive affect on the Hmong. Moreover, the distribution of Hmong art work has contributed to a growing positive image of the Hmong.

Many Hmong remain on welfare. This dependency has not been an easy condition for the Hmong to accept. In 1981, for example, a Hmong man hanged himself because he was unable to get off of welfare (Knoll 1982:144). The degree to which Hmong families depend on welfare varies from state to state. Knoll has observed that quite early in the resettlement process, Hmong leaders sought ways to get Hmong families off welfare (1982:144). For example, in 1980 a Hmong accountant formed a credit union called the "Lao-Hmong Security Agency," which was designed to help Hmong families pay for basic necessities and to obtain small loans. Knoll has noted that as the Hmong become more self supporting (with help from various agencies), dependency on welfare will likely be reduced. However, many of the economic problems which the Hmong face are connected to problems of disparities built into the American class-economic system. Hence, Hmong economic problems, despite some particularistic aspects, must be viewed as connected to world level economics.

Medical problems have also plagued immigrant Hmong. Some of these difficulties are due to socioeconomic deficiencies and cultural isolation, while others are congenital. One such congenital problem is "Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome." This affliction mainly strikes Hmong men. Bliatout has observed that in most cases death results from cardiac arrest while the victim is sleeping (1982). Bliatout, along with other researchers, believe the condition is genetic but may be triggered by cultural or environmental stress. This might include anxiety or cultural shock produced by adjusting to new cultural surroundings. Bliatout also points out that despite ongoing research, little is known about this illness.

Other medical problems have been associated with poor living conditions. The Hmong share these conditions with other Southeast Asian refugee groups. Proudfoot has described a number of conditions and afflictions which have plagued these groups (especially Laotian ethnics) (1990:128-129). Malaria, Hepatitis B, intestinal parasites, T.B., and iron deficiencies, among other pathological conditions, continue to affect Southeast Asian minority populations (including the Hmong).

A number of attempts have been made to reduce the extent of these medical problems. Hurlich, Holtan, and Munger (1986), have suggested that many of the medical problems faced by Hmong immigrants could be mitigated

through understanding limitations and misconceptions in both Hmong attitudes toward western medical practice, and American perceptions of Hmong medical problems. By investigating the affects of a social-medical research project, the authors were able to describe a number of Hmong attitudes regarding specifics of the research project as well as general attitudes concerning western methods of medical care. The authors note that Hmong patients were generally willing to accept the efficacy of western medicine, despite its impersonal nature, but they were not willing to abandon many traditional healing practices.

Three other works are worth noting here. Olney (1983) has compiled a comprehensive bibliography entitled A Bibliography of the Hmong (Miao) of Southeast Asia and Hmong Refugees in the United States. Although dated, it has served as a valuable resource for articles recording the initial resettlement undertaking. In addition, Smalley (1986) has organized the various stages of Hmong adaptation into a historical sequence. He traces the events which led to Hmong immigration starting with historical developments in Laos. This article provides a basic outline of recent Hmong history, but lacks detail.

Of more importance to my study is a recent project which looks at Hmong children and the conflicts they face as they attempt to adapt to American communities. Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton (1990) have compiled data on problems

faced by Hmong children as they encounter conflicts in an American community and its schools. Much of this study involves investigations into community dynamics, Hmong resettlement, and difficulties in communication with the dominant culture. In addition, Trueba and his associates concentrated on problems experienced by several young Hmong students. As these problems involved discussion of culture change in schools, I will provide more detailed comment in the next section.

The Hmong Community and American Schools

It has become apparent to researchers, and to the Hmong themselves, that schools can play a central role in the future of the Hmong community. Although the number of studies of Hmong in American schools is still relatively small, there are a few studies worth discussion here. In this section I summarize and review several important studies concerning Hmong/school issues.

Perhaps the most important culturally derived feature of Hmong learning style is cooperation (Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton 1990:77-78). Learning tasks in Hmong society are not viewed as actions to be performed exclusively by individuals. A tacit tenet of Hmong culture assumes that people should help one another and work collectively toward common solutions to daily problems. In terms of educational dynamics, cooperative learning, as well as collaborative

task management, represent a significant cultural predisposition. Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton, have noted that in many educational situations cooperative behavior is beneficial. However, in other situations it can be a detriment. For instance, many teachers use individual math assignments to evaluate the individual performance of children. If a group of Hmong students are helping one another it becomes difficult to differentiate between those students who are struggling with math and those who are not.

Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton have found that Hmong students face other problems in schools as well (1990:1-15). Many of these difficulties are compounded by fundamental cultural barriers that exist between Hmong home life and school culture. To illustrate, these researchers observed one young Hmong student who was having trouble with his course work. This student's teacher and the school psychologist contacted his parents and arranged several meetings. At one of the meetings an interpreter was used and, although communication was difficult, the teacher and the school psychologist were able to communicate their concern. At another meeting, however, an interpreter was not present, and communication was nearly impossible. Out of this meeting the teacher and the school psychologist opted for a conventional diagnosis and concluded that the student had a learning disability. This conclusion was based on a misinterpretation of a statement made by one of

the parents. Instead of investigating the possibility of cultural/language problems, the teacher and the psychologist appealed to models which did not take into account cultural/language differences. Thus, their rationale for placement of the student in learning disabled classes was based on a faulty diagnosis.

One of the most imposing barriers for Hmong learning in American schools is language. Acquiring a second language and attempting to decode the complexities of English grammar and semantics represents a major stumbling block for Hmong students. Downing (1986) has studied various aspects of the language acquisition process for Hmong students. By observing Hmong students in different age cohorts, and through the development of a list of personal history characteristics for these students (i.e., previous time in schools, exposure to other languages, age, gender, and so on), Downing was able to organize segments within the Hmong student population in terms of varying levels of language competency. In the same study Downing was able to obtain data on how the Hmong view the English language acquisition process and what English means to them in their daily lives. He concluded that the Hmong see English as virtually synonymous with economic success. Moreover, the Hmong themselves were able to identify specific barriers to English acquisition. The problems they identified were: (a) social isolation, (b) no language instruction on jobs, (c)

few programs available for Hmong adults, and (d) classes that are available quite often are not geared toward practical language (many are literature based).

In a similar study to Downing's, Green and Reder (1986:299-330) developed a detailed and systematic description of factors which could either promote or impede English acquisition for Hmong students. Using the B.E.S.T. test, and a Pearson's coefficient correlation, they were able to determine that Hmong with previous formal schooling, and those who could speak more than one language already, generally developed a better command of English. However obvious the results of these studies may seem, they indicate the importance of paying attention to detailed variation within the Hmong student population in terms of language acquisition differentials.

In another study dealing with differences in levels of language proficiency, Cohn identified three groups of Hmong students (1986:197-201). The first group is comprised of younger students born in the United States. These students are generally fluent in English and are adjusting well to American schools. The second group is made up of younger students who are limited English speakers. For these students difficulty with English represents a serious impediment to learning. Their adjustment to American schools has been problematic. The third group is comprised of older (adolescent) Hmong students. These students

generally have some difficulty with English. For these older students adjustment to American schools has been a mixed experience. Cohn noted that many adolescent Hmong have either dropped out of school or have contemplated dropping out. Others tend to do quite well. Cohn indicated that a significant number of older Hmong students are highly motivated. These students also readily recognize higher education as a realistic life goal. Cohn has pointed out that each of the three groups have specific sets of problems to overcome. It would be unwise to assume that the language acquisition process is going to be the same for all students at all levels even given common language and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, if such studies as Cohn's, Green and Reder's, and Downing's are sufficiently utilized by educators, more sophisticated and detailed strategies for placement, instruction, and curriculum might be developed to accommodate differences in language proficiency.

The Hmong have also begun to form particular attitudes toward American education. In a panel discussion, Blakely (1984a) has looked at Hmong (as well as other Southeast Asian groups') attitudes toward the American school system. Blakely states that many Hmong have developed a positive view of American schools and that they tend to associate school with economic success. She does state, however, that some students have demonstrated frustration with many of the formal and informal (peer pressure) constraints of school

life. Some Hmong students, for example, feel that there is little support from teachers and administrators, and, as a result, some of these students had thought about leaving school.

Another problem stems from a lack of communication between school administrators, teachers, and the Southeast Asian community (the Hmong share this problem with other refugee groups). Blakely (1983) has indicated that many Hmong parents are hesitant to communicate with school officials, or get involved with school activities. Some administrators and teachers have interpreted this as a general lack of motivation on the part of Southeast Asian minority parents to get involved with their children's education. Blakely has observed that the problem might be, to some extent, cultural and historical. The Hmong have historically been suspicious of officials of any kind. In the past, the majority of their relations with institutions and bureaucracies have been extremely tragic and wrought with malice and deceit. Also, the Hmong and other Southeast Asian groups feel that educating the young should be left to teachers. Hence, teachers are viewed as caretakers. Southeast Asian parents' reluctance to get involved with school activities, therefore, is their way of staying out of someone else's business. Blakely notes that even though the Hmong value education, this type of problem is likely to persist without more effort on the part of educators to

communicate the basic underlying intentions and goals of school/parent programs.

In considering academic performance, Blakely (1984b) found that Southeast Asian students (the Hmong included) tend to perform better in classes that are "context-rich" (also see Cummins 1981, 1982, 1983). The depth and richness of the learning context is directly related to the teacher's ability to vary lessons, use different forms of informal speech, and develop skills for varying learning paces for different types of students.

Hmong cultural predispositions have also played a central role in Hmong adjustment to American schools. Hvitfeldt (1986) has studied traditional perceptual style in the classroom behavior of Hmong adults. She has noted that the adults need to be emotionally comfortable with the person teaching the class before they actively engage in course work. Thus, much of the first few days of class is spent talking informally, reading social behavior and generally warming up to the teacher. It is possible that this "personalization" of the student-teacher relationship might be applied as an instructional strategy for Hmong students at all grade levels. Hvitfeldt also points out that through this process of informalization, larger networks and channels of communication with the Hmong community are opened.

Another interesting aspect of Hvitfeldt's work has to

do with her observations of the formation of Hmong informal communicative hierarchies. These hierarchies were formed "ad hoc" in class among adult Hmong students. Those students that excelled at particular subjects automatically and informally became tutors for the other students. These "informal tutors" would move about the class freely and students having problems in certain subjects would look to these people for help. Hvitfeldt observed that these organizational structures were formed informally and, based on her interviews with Hmong subjects, seem to represent a normative pattern of behavior for Hmong adults.

Some studies have looked at how Americans have viewed the presence of Hmong in the schools. Garton (1982:47-48) has described the effects of sizable numbers of Hmong students in American classrooms on the changing image of school. Garton explores how the presence of Hmong, and other Southeast Asian minorities, has transformed how educators view their own schools and communities. Garton points to a growing schism between educators who welcome diversity and those who feel threatened by it. Her article is a sensitive treatment of the subject of subtle discrimination and has implications for education and ways of negotiating diversity in American schools.

Hmong Communicative Style

A few studies have explored the cultural organization

of Hmong communicative style. Shuter (1991), for example, has characterized "oral Hmong" (older, traditional Hmong) as "narrative communicators." Shuter draws a sharp distinction between "oral" and "literate" societies. For oral communicators, according to Shuter, individuals communicate information through situation oriented narrations which focus on relationships between individuals, on specific events, and how people in the community respond to such events. With this form of communication little or no attention is paid to the chronological sequencing of events, placing occurrences at specific times and places, or using abstract concepts to convey details. In addition, Hmong speakers do not differentiate between words and the realities words depict (as is done in literate societies). Also, Hmong who are adjusting to life in literate societies (i.e., the United States, Europe, and so forth) demonstrate what Shuter has termed "residual orality." Residual orality refers to the continued use of oral narrative structuring of speech in new or transitional contexts. To illustrate, an older Hmong individual, speaking minimal English, would still relate events in a non-sequential format, focusing on people's actions and other's responses to those actions.

Although this article points out general patterning in terms of culturally organized communicative style, Shuter's dichotomy between oral and literate societies begs a few questions. First, his thesis implies that Hmong

communicators do not make use of highly abstract symbols. Second, that traditional Hmong are not able to convey time differences and chronological sequencing in a highly detailed manner. Finally, that the inability to distinguish spoken reality from physical reality is purely a feature of oral societies. On the use of abstract symbols, the Hmong have an extensive tradition of oral narratives, stories and legends, that incorporate a rich use of metaphor and other abstract communicative devices. Furthermore, much of Shuter's data derive from recordings of conversations. Even in literate societies, informal conversations sometimes lack linear organization and references to specific details. It must also be pointed out that in using these stories the Hmong have been able to preserve much of their history. Both chronological sequencing and reference to specific time periods are present. Finally, the inability to separate spoken realities from real experience is not exclusive to oral societies. Many people living in highly literate societies are unable to understand that language is shaping how they view the world. Despite these problems (which essentially stem from a dichotomy too sharply drawn), Shuter has indicated that cultural differences must be taken into account in order to make sense of communication taking place in culturally diverse settings. There are differences in the ways in which Hmong communicate with each other and with non-Hmong communicators. Some of these differences emerge

out of general variability in communicative orientation stemming from differentials between small-scale traditional and large-scale mass-communication societies.

Other studies have examined the specific ways in which primary Hmong speakers have acquired English. One such study detailed how (at a micro-level), and in what order, syntactic rules for English were acquired by a single Hmong adult (Huebner 1983). Huebner describes how this individual engaged social discourse in various linguistic environments, and how this experience influenced his acquisition of specific rules governing English grammar. This researcher noted that the process involved generating incorrect rules first, the subsequent neutralization of the incorrect rule, and the eventual adoption of the correct rule. It is important to note that Huebner recognized the importance of discourse as influencing more specific aspects of language acquisition. Despite the micro-level analysis of the study, broader level dimensions of language acquisition and communicative style were incorporated. Huebner's study has some relevance for mine in that highly specific details of language acquisition functions could be included as facets of social discourse (for example, see discussion of shifting phonemes in Chapter VII).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This is a qualitative study. Eisner defines qualitative research as "seeing qualities, interpreting significance, and appraising their value" (1991:1). With the exception of relevant descriptive statistics (e.g., demographics and recorded frequencies of certain specific types of interactive behavior), there was no attempt to quantify, test, or in any other way measure or manipulate the process by which Hmong students conducted themselves in their daily routines. My primary concern was to observe, describe, and analyze how Hmong students acquired and utilized social meaning in an American high school. Moreover, I was concerned with observable qualities made apparent while observing how this process unfolded. In addition, the study is ethnographic. Although I cannot claim the study to be a comprehensive "ethnography," it is ethnographic in that I utilized basic field methods traditionally employed by anthropologists (i.e., participant and direct observation, and various approaches to interview) and I interpret culturally derived behavior.

In this section I outline the basic methodological

procedures followed for this study. In turn I discuss: (a) qualitative research in education, (b) the extent to which this study is "anthropological," (c) actual field methods to be used, (d) sorting and analysis of data, and (e) a conceptual framework which derives from functional theory, pragmatic linguistics, and models of intercultural communication.

Qualitative Research in Education

Research in education has always been dominated by quantitative methods. In the last 10 years, however, research with qualitative leanings has gained significant respect in various research fields concerned with educational processes. In education, more so than in other disciplines, the tension between quantitative and qualitative methods has been more apparent. This, in part, has resulted from the predominance of psychological research in education. In this tradition the emphasis has been on discovering underlying principles influencing learning. To do this psychologists applied methods that could document tangible findings (making "learning" demonstrative and definable). Data meant observing and recording frequencies or recurring patterns of human behavior under "unobtrusive" conditions. With these approaches the basis for understanding human learning ("learning theory") quite often did not take into account social context. In fact much of

the data were stripped of social context. The task, from the psychologist's perspective, was to discover how the mind developed (cognitive development) and how the mind regulated the learning process from the inside out.

Qualitative research concerns itself with observing and interpreting "qualities." Qualities are context bound and cannot be abstracted by numeration without losing, to some extent, their social meaning. Enterprises which attempt to describe these qualities have been variously termed: "naturalistic inquiry" (Lincoln and Guba 1985), "contextual analysis" (Hansen 1990 [1979]:vi), "discourse analysis" (used by sociolinguists [Brown and Yule 1983]), "thick description" (Geertz 1973), or "ethnography." Geertz's notion of thick description is particularly appropriate for understanding the characteristic nature of basic data obtained for this study. Thick description refers to the situations of an observation in multiple layers of social meaning. For example, if someone raises their eyebrow, a quantitatively oriented observer is likely to describe the raised eyebrow as "a mechanical contraction" of the eyebrow; then proceed to record the number of times a subject raises an eyebrow. In Geertzian terms we would situate the event in the context in which it occurred. For example, perhaps the raising the eyebrow was a nonverbal response to a particular person's questions--thus the motion might be communicating doubt or confusion. The raising of the eyebrow

might also be used to manage time to formulate an astute answer (in western societies, the raising of the eyebrow can be associated with intellectual thought). In any case we would need to know more about the particular situation and the various cultural connotations associated with raising one's eyebrow.

Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez have noted that qualitative methods are particularly appropriate in conducting analysis of sociolinguistic data:

> The relationship of such social factors to speech form is quite different from what the sociologist means by correlation among variables. One could not take a rating of, for instance, ethnicity or degree of solidarity, as measured by the usual questionnaire techniques or other scaling devices, and expect this rating to predict the occurrence of Spanish or Black dialect [or Hmong in this case] and Standard English in a text (1985:98).

Cultural experience, as it relates to language behavior, would be difficult to frame in terms of quantifiable measures. Frequencies of specific features of linguistic behavior could be generated through counting and correlating co-occurrences of social behavior with specific linguistic behaviors; but, such analyses could not take into account the many subtle and improvisational aspects typically found in daily communication interactions.

In this study I am concerned with qualitative distinctions between external social events (speech events), and aspects of the adaptation process for these Hmong students. Recording the data and subsequent analysis,

therefore, required that qualitative distinctions be made with respect to various observations. Like the raising of an eyebrow, the contextual dimension of the descriptive data gathered for this study had to be situated in a recognizable sociocultural context.

To carry out this task, direct observation of social interactional behavior and in-depth interviews with key informants were conducted. The baseline data consisted of two types (a) descriptions of speech events, and (b) interview data regarding personal life histories and Hmong perceptions of communication, school and learning. By limiting the study to recorded verbal interactions and the elicitation of student experiences and perceptions, I have focused on two important and salient domains of cultural adaptation. Hmong students must adapt to participant structures as these structures are encountered in various classrooms and throughout the school environment. They must also develop working models to assist them in navigating aspects of the American educational system. They may also rely upon existing traditional cultural predispositions to assist them.

For Hmong students, the process of cultural adaptation to American schools is embedded in "thick" layers of social context. For example, describing how these students negotiate various types of "in-class" speech events requires that the observer know something about the richness of

nuance and communication patterns typically found in American classrooms. Furthermore, the adaptation process itself represents the acquisition of competence in interpreting multiple facets of culturally bounded social meaning. How Hmong students acquire this knowledge can only be described by recording social behavior as these data occur in real sociocultural networks of meaning, or what Geertz calls "webs of significance" (1973:5). A significant body of descriptive data was obtained in order to establish a contextual backdrop for understanding Hmong student adaptation.

On the whole, qualitative research, like ethnography, occupies the middle ground between science and literature (Peacock 1988:61). The data presented here, as is the case with literature, should put the reader in touch with the personal lives of various people who participated in the study. These people are not subjects randomly selected for purposes of quantitative sampling. Descriptions of these people's actions and ideas are presented in a way, as Sanday has put it, that "highly sophisticated, thinly veiled quantitative methods of description cannot do" (1976:114).

The "Anthropologicalness" of the Study

In circles concerned with the anthropology of education, there has been some discussion as to what comprises "ethnography." Anthropologists working under the

leadership of Franz Boas in the early part of the 20th century used "ethnography" as the primary medium of expression for communicating the findings of their fieldwork. Since that time ethnography has been used to refer to both actual fieldwork and the final written product. Traditionally, ethnography and cultural anthropology have gone hand in hand. Today, sociologists, psychologists, and others, also make use of ethnographic methods. Despite the present eclectic nature of ethnography, it is still largely an enterprise comprised of research and writing conducted by cultural anthropologists working in the field. In this study I rely upon common or fundamental ethnographic techniques for data collection and analysis.

Spindler (1988a) has generated a list of criteria suggesting what a well rounded ethnography should entail. What follows is a paraphrasing of his list:

1. Observations should be contextualized. They should be made in their naturally occurring surroundings.

2. Hypotheses and questions are generated in the field.

3. Observation takes place over extended periods of time.

4. A primary goal is to present the "native" perspective as much as possible.

5. Record what sociocultural knowledge participants

bring to the social setting being studied.

6. Instruments for study (codes, questionnaires, interview questions, and so forth...) be generated in the field.

7. A transcultural (or cross-cultural) perspective must be present.

8. Implicit (or tacit) cultural knowledge should be recorded.

9. Observations must be as unobtrusive as possible.

10. The ethnographic interviewer must not predetermine responses (if the "emic" [the native's point of view] perspective is to be maintained).

11. Technical equipment (cameras, tape recorders, and videotapes) can be used to obtain ethnographic data.

Despite such lists, there is still disagreement (especially as one moves farther away from anthropology) as to what ethnography actually is. Wolcott (1988) provides some suggestions which might help formulate a better understanding of what ethnography is, how it is used in education, and how ethnographic techniques might inform studies like this one. Wolcott differentiates between "doing ethnography" and "borrowing ethnographic technique" (201). Ethnography is, according to Wolcott, a "picture of a way of life" (188). This implies that ethnography should involve a comprehensive description of the life ways of a given group of people. By definition, moving beyond the

boundaries of a defined sociocultural group would place us in the realm of ethnology (comparative ethnography). For a work to be ethnographic it must merely employ techniques traditionally used by anthropologists in the field.

This study is ethnographic to the extent that direct observation and interviewing have been utilized to obtain basic data for interpreting specific aspects of cultural adaptation. I cannot claim that this study is an ethnography per se because it does not attempt to describe Hmong culture and community in a generalized and "holistic" manner. If I were presenting a comprehensive array of data on Hmong kinship, worldview, subsistence, and so on, I would be inclined to call the study an ethnography. Due to limitations of my focus I refer to the study merely as ethnographic (ethnography like). Thus, the degree to which this study is anthropological is a product of specific techniques being employed, and is to some extent determined by the actual scope of the inquiry. It is anthropological in that the focus is on culture and cultural process. It is also anthropological in that the basic methodology falls within the framework of traditional anthropological field methodology.

Field Methods

Unlike settings normally associated with anthropological fieldwork (tropical jungles, forested

mountains, vast deserts, or more recently urban centers, to reinforce a few stereotypes), this study was carried out primarily in an American high school. A substantial portion of the baseline data was obtained from observations collected in various secondary classrooms and from interviews conducted with various participants. Although some data are comprised of descriptions of communicative and social structures in Hmong households, the bulk of the data came directly from observations of speech events made in classroom settings, and from formal and informal interviews with Hmong students. Thus, the design for this study relies on two basic anthropological approaches to fieldwork: (a) observation, and (b) interview. To a lesser degree, participant observation and focus interviews were used.

Research Design

In framing the basic ethnographic/descriptive design for this study I was influenced by Agar (1980, 1986), Spradley (1979), Van Maanen (1988), and Wolcott (1988). In addition to these ethnographic approaches to fieldwork, the framing of my conceptual analyses was particularly guided by sociolinguists using "discourse analysis" (Berns 1990; Brown and Yule 1983; Clyne 1981; Freeman-Larsen 1980; Gregory and Carroll 1978; Gumperz 1977, 1982a; Hatch 1978), and researchers working in the field of "social semiotics" (Hodge and Kress 1988).

Agar (1986) describes the ethnographic process as a function of "funneling down," where in the early stages of research, the ethnographer gropes for meaning in a kind of exploratory, trial and error fashion. As the researcher becomes more informed, questions for interviews and what is actually being noted in observations, become more refined and contextualized. In this way ethnographic research provides a way of acquiring the nuances of both the research experience and subtle differences in the worlds of informants and participants simultaneously.

Discourse Analysis

In addition to being ethnographic this study focused on specific aspects of speech and communication. As part of the research design, therefore, I had to employ methods specifically derived from sociolinguistic analysis. In that a major portion of data obtained for this study was comprised of observed speech behavior, analysis of linguistic data was conducted using a simplified version of discourse analysis. It will, therefore, be useful to outline and summarize fundamental assumptions and procedures involved in discourse analysis.

In formal or classic linguistics, utterances are usually isolated for purposes of defining internal structure. Syntactic structural units or constituent units for semantic analysis are typically isolated in order to

discern universal patterns of language structure. In sociolinguistics, however, the primary purpose of analysis is to situate an utterance in its social context, and to determine its social function. For example, two strangers are standing next to one another at the end of a pier fishing, and after some time one says to the other: "Boy, fishing sure is slow!" (both had been fishing for more than an hour and had caught nothing). The meaning of the utterance would appear to be straightforward. In analyzing the comment ("Boy, fishing sure is slow!") using formal analysis, the utterance would be broken into discrete linguistic units in order to determine whether there were rules regulating how the utterance was structured (either grammatically or semantically [i.e., employing isolation of morphemes, lexemes, and so forth]). Using discourse analysis, we would want to know something about the particular situational context in which the statement was made. In this case the explicit content of the statement (without knowledge of the context) seems straightforward and easy to understand. However, given the fact that both fishermen had been there awhile and had caught nothing, indicates that the statement must have some other function than to merely convey the message that fishing was slow (both fishermen knew that fishing was slow). In using discourse analysis, discovering the underlying function of speech events is what is important. In this hypothetical

case we might discover that the statement was used as a means of opening an channel for possible conversation. One does not normally walk up to a stranger and say "lets have a conversation." An informal social bond must be established before a conversation can take place. Thus, the importance of social interaction and situational dynamics are highly influential factors when considering analyses of specific linguistic utterances. Correlating both social dimensions of communication with specific utterances is discourse analysis. More will be said about the discourse method of analysis and how it was used to organize and interpret linguistic data collected for this study. Before such a discussion, however, some mention of field methods used to obtain both linguistic and extra-linguistic data will be useful.

Most linguistic data came directly from observations made in classrooms. Generally, I would "shadow" a particular student through their daily routines; going from class to class, writing notes in a notebook as I went. During the early stages of fieldwork my notes were filled with general descriptions of behavioral occurrences in various classrooms. These observations included interactions between Hmong students and their teachers, other students (non-Hmong), teachers' aides, and student teachers. As the project progressed I began to concentrate more closely on specific speech exchanges and discourse in

general. Observations in classrooms concentrated on how teachers regulated speech usage, how non-Hmong students influenced communication and participant structures, and how Hmong students responded to these organizational constraints on speaking behavior.

Informal observations between class periods were also carried out. Although I did not conduct systematic note taking during these periods of time, I would generally record my observations whenever I got a free moment, which was usually at the beginning of the next class period, or at lunch. I treated some of the comments made by Hmong students (in the hallways between classes) as interview data.

The primary instrument for collection of linguistic data, therefore, was direct observation and audio recording. Participant observation also became an integral part of the data collection process. This form of observation usually took the form of one-on-one tutoring sessions that I conducted at various times with Hmong students. Shortly after each session I would record in my field notes as much of the sessions as I could remember. Participant observation allowed me to describe in detail many of the specific problems faced by Hmong students within the context of specific conversational lessons. For example, by mere observation it was difficult to ascertain what specific aspects of language acquisition were problematic. Through

tutoring I became aware that limited English Hmong students spend much of their time on practicing sounds rather than matching vocabulary words with the meaning of the word. Whether this is good or bad is not at issue, for acquisition is occurring, but as descriptive data it could only be obtained through close interaction with the students.

Interviews were also used. Interviewing was conducted in three different ways. First, I made use of "structured in-depth interviews." These were interviews that were prearranged and carried out in a formal systematic fashion. Specific sets of questions, in the form of an agenda, were organized and outlined in advance. Questions used for this type of interview were not, however, highly specific. I generally employed what Spradley calls "Grand Tour" questions (1979). For example, instead of starting an interview by asking "What were your favorite subjects in school in Thailand?" I might start with: "Tell me a little about the schools in the Thai refugee camps." I would generally allow my informant to guide his or her own course for answering the question, always after establishing certain boundaries (in this case descriptions of school experiences in Thailand). More specific questions could be generated from the student's responses.

Informal interviews were also used. Informal interviews were more like continuous dialogues which were maintained with each of the Hmong students as I worked

through the entire project. With this approach I was trying not to have an obvious agenda and would merely let conversations flow. At the end of the day I would reconstruct as much as I could remember of the conversations. I would also, at times, meet with Hmong students and key informants and have them help me reconstruct conversations. This was done to (a) fill in gaps (especially if Hmong was being spoken), and (b) to obtain Hmong perceptions of specific communicative events.

I also employed focus interviews where a group of Hmong students were brought together to discuss school matters. This was done only on a limited basis. My primary objective here was to initiate discussion on Hmong attitudes regarding school and to observe group interaction. It was hoped that through this type of interview I would be able to break down the formalities of traditional interviewing by allowing for more open ended discussion. In the final analysis, focus interviews proved to be marginally useful, although I was able to collect some interesting observations on gender interaction (i.e., females tended to use males as go-betweens when they wanted to communicate with me)

Finally, the primary purpose of interviewing was to obtain life history data and cultural perceptions of communication. It was my intention to elicit and record various interpretations made by Hmong students regarding their experiences at school, and to learn how these

interpretations were employed across different social and educational situations.

Analysis

Sorting and analyzing the data was conducted by drawing out relevant conceptual themes from raw data. For linguistic data, primary units of analysis were "discourse units" (i.e., conversation, story telling, lectures, and so on, [see Brown and Yule 1983]). From this initial foundation, a rudimentary discourse analysis was carried out. To illustrate, observational data on speech events was organized according to thematic codes (discourse units, examples of nonverbal communication, and so on) which I subsequently recorded in the left hand side margins of my field notebooks; or in the form of transcriptions of audio recordings and interview material into separate notebooks. I color-coded each thematic code so retrieval and analysis of specific examples of speech events could be made. I also arranged quotes (obtained "on the hoof") on 4x6 note cards and filed them by thematic code to expedite sorting.

After the data were subjected to an initial sorting, I began the task of writing up preliminary analyses. This involved working from specific utterances to larger dimensions of social communication; or, in reverse order, working from a social event to specific utterances associated with the event. For example, a set of utterances

might belong to a conversation; the conversation might be set within the context of a class lesson; the class lesson might be set in the context of an ongoing curricular unit; or, as was often the case, the utterances had nothing to do with school at all--and the order of analysis could proceed in both directions. At this juncture I was also concerned with synthesis. For example, a typical code for teacher speech might be "Formal Voice." I would select from the data examples of "Formal Voice" and then, again employing discourse analysis (analysis and writing are considered part of the discourse, see Brown and Yule 1983), would build a short essay around various examples of this code--keeping in mind other aspects of the study. These essays would then become topical vignettes which could later be organized into more polished pieces or essays to be placed in the final manuscript.

Interview data were organized in a somewhat different fashion. These data were organized according to "key quotes." Whenever a student said something that reflected an attitude toward school or learning, or a key informant commented on a particular aspect of Hmong normative communication, that quote would be placed on a 4x6 card along with its provenience. For example, if a student said: "Mrs. K. . . . is easy to understand. She come around and talk slow to us." I would place that quote on a card and file it under "perceptions of teacher communication" and

abbreviate in some way (e.g., PTC "perceptions of teacher communication"). The card would serve the dual purpose of a heading code (for organizational and retrieval purposes) and a thematic code (for analysis). Quotes from students that reflected ideas regarding Hmong student perceptions of teacher communication would be filed under that particular heading.

Writing up observational and interview data was initially conducted separately. As the overall work began to take shape, however, boundaries between the two types of data became less distinct and a fuller understanding of cultural adaptation for these students became apparent.

Procedures for Discourse Analysis

From a procedural standpoint the single goal of discourse analysis is to determine language function. As has already been mentioned, discourse analysis is a method of linguistic analysis for situating linguistic/ communicative material in its social context. What follows is a detailed summary of procedures used to carry out a discourse analysis of raw data obtained for this study. In turn I discuss: (a) analytic procedures, (b) discourse units, (c) common concepts and terms employed by socio-linguists, (d) categories of non-verbal communication, and (e) discourse and social meaning.

As a formal approach to sociolinguistics, discourse

analysis is a complicated and rigorous methodology. My use of discourse analysis has been rudimentary at best. I have chosen a more simplified approach to avoid much of the technical terminology. This, I hope, has made the study more accessable to those unfamiliar with formal socio-linguistic concepts.

Analytic Procedures

Sociolinguists using discourse analysis work with texts. Texts can be verbal, nonverbal (paralanguage) or written. Because of my interests in informal exchanges, I have confined myself to analyses of oral and paralinguistic texts (with the exception of my own written texts, i.e., field notes, transcriptions of interviews, and formal texts for the dissertation). Various texts involved in this study, as mentioned above, were recorded in field notes and by tape recorders. For example, consider the following entry in my field notes:

Hmong Teacher's Aide: I have a question. [Vang] says he is ready. (Vang looks embarrassed) (The class encourages Vang)

[Vang] Ok. I do it.

This exchange is given exactly as it was written in my field notes (brackets indicate use of a pseudonym). What was also recorded in the field notes was the context in which the speech event took place. On this particular day, students were to present autobiographical speeches (formal

speeches addressed to the rest of the class). Vang is a Hmong student. Before he gave his speech, his teacher had been asking for volunteers. Six Hispanic students had volunteered to give their speeches and not one Hmong student had indicated a desire to give theirs. On behalf of the Hmong student (Vang) the Hmong aide intervened in order to break the pattern of selection. The teacher immediately recognized this comment ("I have a question. Vang says he is ready.") as an opportunity to include this Hmong student in this particular lesson.

Thus, this event could be examined as both a speech and a social event and the two levels of analysis need not be considered exclusive. To analyze the event I followed the following procedure: (a) after extracting the data from my fieldnotes I placed the utterances on a 4x6 note card, and (b) wrote on the back of the card factors influencing the form and function of the exchange (including the specific structure of the exchange, who was involved, class/lesson context, cultural patterns of discourse, possible underlying functions, and general notes regarding broader level interpretations, and quite often sketch maps). For this particular speech event the analytic procedure was as follows:

1. The speech event was written in field notes in conjunction with other, surrounding events, occurring in sequential order.

2. The utterances were pulled from the raw data and recorded on 4x6 note cards with influencing factors recorded on the back of each card.

3. The card was catalogued according to particular codes (code which were both predetermined and generated in the field). In this case the thematic code was "cultural broker" or CB. The speech exchange was initiated by a person whom I had labeled as a cultural go-between (i.e., someone who was sensitive to gaps created by cultural differences).

4. The exchange was written up in the form of a vignette and eventually included in Chapter VI (Daily Routines.)

5. The formal analysis of this exchange, and speech events like it, was conducted prior to writing Chapter VII (Analysis). In doing this, all important factors were brought together in order to form a more conclusive understanding of the underlying function of that speech event, especially if it represented a form of cultural adaptation.

To carry out the procedures stated above, particular concepts and units of analysis were employed. "Discourse units," various other concepts used by sociolinguists including categories for non-verbal communication, formed the language by which I came to understand how social meaning was being used and acquired by these students.

Discourse Units

Various sociolinguists use different units of analysis (cf. Brown and Yule 1983, Kramsch 1981, Loflin 1978). Discourse units merely refer to the type of discourse being used by the various people being observed. In this study I concentrated on (a) formal lecture lessons, (b) informal conversations, (c) extended narrations, (d) questioning strategies, and (e) brief utterances.

At a more refined level sociolinguists make use of a number of specific concepts to assist them in their attempts to understand broader aspects of social discourse. What follows is a brief summary of terms and concepts which I have incorporated into descriptive and analytical sections of this study.

"Codes" are often a central unit of analysis for sociolinguists. Bernstein defines codes as "different speech forms" (1973:161). He organizes codes at two levels: (a) "linguistic codes," which correspond to regional or ethnically linked dialects (what British sociolinguists call "registers"), and (b) "speech codes" representing varieties of speech generated by, or subsumed under linguistic codes (e.g., using an informal voice as opposed to a formal or "stilted" voice). Thus, if a classroom teacher uses Standard American English (SAE), this would be an example of a linguistic code. If, while talking to the class, the

teacher switches back and forth between a formal and informal voice, two varieties of the same linguistic code are being used, hence, two speech codes have been employed. The identification and analysis of codes is important for this study in that implicit cultural information regarding the formation and regulation of social relationships, and how interaction can be transacted, are often communicated through subtle changes in speech and context ("code-switching"). By using a formal voice, for example, a teacher is structuring (either permanently or temporarily) a formal distance from students. When a teacher says "Class, that is not appropriate behavior; and I do not wish to see you behave in such a way," the teacher is not only sending an explicit message (i.e., "you are misbehaving and I want it to stop"), an implicit message is also being utilized to reinforce the teachers status as an authority figure. On the other hand, when a teacher uses an informal voice, solidarity with students is established through construction of a tacit social contract. In this sense an implied hierarchically based social system is being maintained between students and teachers, and this system can be modified to either create more social distance or lessen it simply through shifts in voice. The relationship between speech context and social ordering is regulated by culturally-structured codes (Bernstein 1990:14-15).

A student who is unable to decode such shifts is going

to have difficulty interpreting these socially structured relationships and will be forced to make interpretations based on prior cultural knowledge, cultural knowledge which may conflict with the dominant cultural rules regulating communication in the classroom. Parenthetically, quite often informal codes make extensive use of idiomatic language (language making use of subtle highly localized meaning), and may present even more complex decoding problems for non-fluent students.

The cultural organization of how speech is distributed in any given speech community has also been an important consideration for sociolinguists. Cultural rules regulating who speaks and under what circumstances someone may speak is called "turn-allocation." In classrooms, for example, teachers have a great deal of control over who is talking and how much they are allowed to talk. Culturally based generalized rules regulating turn-allocation are also brought into classroom situations by students and teachers. Cultural differences existing in the classroom in terms of distribution of speech can affect how much attention students will get from the teacher and how much interaction can occur laterally (student to student).

Students bring to school cultural predispositions which significantly influence their behavior. The cultural motivations behind their actions are sometimes called "cultural agendas" (literally what is wanted and how

motivations are carried out according to preexisting cultural standards). To illustrate, Hmong students have been characterized by teachers and other non-Hmong students as "shy." By focusing on the surface behavior the cultural agenda operating behind the overt "shyness" is often ignored. The cultural agenda structuring shyness will be discussed later in some detail; however, some mention of it here will contribute to an understanding of cultural agenda. In dealing with adults and with strangers, the Hmong have two cultural agendas operating simultaneously: (a) adults must be treated with respect and deference at all times; (b) when in the company of strangers one should act modestly and not boast or brag. Although put in simple terms, these are powerful cultural agendas which influence much of the interactions that occur between Hmong and non-Hmong people.

Cultural rules which organize "talk time," and the form and style of speech can be considered a function of code generation, turn-allocation, and cultural agenda. It is important to note how codes, the distribution of speech, and cultural agendas function together to form holistic patterns of discourse. As this relates to method, all of the above mentioned concepts were recorded with attention to how they helped to shape the culture of particular classrooms and as a method for describing certain factors influencing Hmong student adaptation. These basic concepts also represent the basic tools (put in the form of thematic codes) by which

analysis of speech data was organized.

Nonverbal Communication

Bowers and Flinders (1990:Chapter 3) have organized a discussion of a number of categories for developing an understanding of nonverbal communication (categories used by other researchers; see Hall 1959 and especially 1969). Based primarily on the work of Hall, Bowers and Flinders (1990) have outlined three dimensions of nonverbal communication which warrant some discussion: (a) proxemics, (b) kinesics, and (c) prosody.

Proxemics refers to "how space is used as part of the language system of a culture" (Bowers and Flinders 1990:65). These authors go on to say that "spatial changes give tone to a communication, accent it, and at times even override the spoken word" (Bowers and Flinders 1990:65). Various cultures organize the use of space in different ways and, as Bowers and Flinders have pointed out, this has direct bearing on how communication may be carried out. As a concept employed in this study, proxemics was useful in noting differences in spatial patterning between Hmong and non-Hmong subjects (see Chapter VII for a discussion). For example, Hmong use of classroom space differed markedly from the way in which Hispanic and other non-Asian students tended to made use of it. Patterns of space usage originating from gender differences were also noted.

Descriptions of kinesics (body language) were also made. Teachers tended to use a different set of kinesic cues for various subgroups of students. For instance, in the ESL classes some teachers used a great deal of overt body language when communicating with Hispanic students (see Chapter VI). When these same teachers had to communicate a message through nonverbal channels to a Hmong student, a much more subdued form of body language was often utilized (e.g., a subtle hand gesture, or a slight head nod). These behaviors were duly recorded and subsequently included as part of the final discourse analysis.

Prosody is another important form of nonverbal communication. Prosody refers to subtle shifts in voice that are not part of the overt language system (what Bateson called "paralanguage") (Bowers and Flinders 1990:69). This idea overlaps with Bernstein's concepts of "speech code," although speech code is the more inclusive term. As prosody was applied to this study, "prosodic cues" were usually recorded in my field notes as simply nonverbal voice codes (e.g., FV=Formal voice or IV=Informal voice). Prosodic cues represent an important, yet often overlooked form of communication. How students and teachers alter voice usage may determine what the actual meaning of an utterance is going to be--sometimes inspite of what is actually said. Thus, it becomes imperative for students to be able to interpret these prosodic cues if the meaning of a

communicative exchange is going to be understood. Again, as with other units of analysis, prosodic cues were noted and included in the final discourse analysis.

Discourse and Social Meaning

Following the sorting and analysis of the data, the task became one of organizing the material into a coherent whole. Normally, for cultural anthropologists, culture theory is used as an overarching framework for developing a synthesis. This was, in part, the case for my handling of refined materials; materials subsequently used to form the interpretive section of this study. I was also interested in particular aspects of culture process. For example, as a function of the original set of objectives for this study, I was concerned with cultural adaptation. Thus, instead of attempting to place the core set of data, and aspects of the subsequent analysis in "holistic," "ethnographic" terms, I sought, rather, to frame the synthesis in terms of the acquisition of social meaning. To do this I opted for a "functional" approach.

Functionalism, despite its limitations (cf. Beals 1982:5-6, Peoples and Bailey 1988:91-93 for a discussion of 'Functionalism') has served the dual purpose of integrating cultural adaptation with linguistic pragmatics. Malinowski used functionalism to refer to culture as an integrated social/symbolic system of knowledge used by a group of

people to maintain survivability through the servicing of basic psycho-biological needs (Malinowski 1960:118-119). Although humans do not always behave in optimal or functional terms, enough of their day to day behavior is geared toward solutions to practical problems to warrant my use of functionalism as a viable (albeit highly general) theoretical framework.

Linguistic pragmatics fits nicely into this approach in that sociolinguistic materials are viewed as functional components of social behavior. Social function, as previously mentioned, is the primary goal of sociolinguistic analysis. Thus, social meaning is understood by way of analysis of communicative discourse.

The combined usage of Functionalism with linguistic pragmatics still represents a somewhat static or synchronic model. Adaptation, as a conceptual tool, forces these models to be set into motion. Communicative behavior, then, can be viewed in light of ongoing adaptive behavior. Taken as a whole the combined synthesis of the above stated models comprise, at least as they relate to this study, an operational approach to "intercultural communication."

CHAPTER IV

THE HMONG COMMUNITY

In this chapter I provide background information on Hmong history and culture. An account of Hmong early ethnohistory as well as a summary of more recent historical/political developments (including Hmong resettlement in Sierra) are briefly discussed. In addition, a short profile of general features of Hmong culture is included along with some comments concerning Hmong resettlement in Sierra. In order to better comprehend the nature of communication taking place at Sierra high, a discussion of cultural patterns regulating traditional and transitional Hmong communicative style has been included. I have also provided a brief discussion of the Sierra high Hmong student population. This includes a general description of subgroup identification, general behavior in classes, how they have been placed in the educational structure of the school, and a break down of language proficiency (as the school categorizes students according to language fluency). Finally, I describe a local organization of Hmong students (the Hmong Student Association). I also detail how this association has put forth an intentional

effort to develop better community school relations and how their efforts have been impeded by larger problems associated with cultural transition.

What emerges in this chapter is a picture of a community undergoing change. By focusing on culture change a number of paradoxical themes emerge; themes which indicate conflict and tension as well as adaptation for the Hmong community. For young adult Hmong there is a willingness to embrace the new along with preserving selected aspects of traditional culture. For older Hmong, change is viewed with suspicion and even contempt. For the youngest Hmong, change comes easily, perhaps too easily from the perspective of their elders.

Hmong Ethnohistory

Early History

The Hmong are an Asian people. Many North Americans associate the Hmong with Southeast Asia but the majority of Hmong historical and cultural development lies deep in central Asia. Quincy has noted that the Hmong share some general cultural features with the Yangshao, an ancient group of Chinese that occupied northern China and the Siberian steppes circa. 4,000 BC to 3,000 BC (Quincy 1989:26). Although the true origins of Hmong culture may never be known (there has been some speculation that the

Hmong may have had their origins in Siberia or even Europe; see Quincy 1989:25), it has been fairly well established that early on, sometime between 2,000 BC and 1,500 BC, Hmong people were well established in northern and central China. It is also possible, as some archaeological evidence suggests, that nomadic groups of Hmong began to migrate south from Siberia into China in significant numbers as early as 2,700 BC. In a Chinese legend that dates to this period, reference is made by Emperor U-Wang to the "Miao," or "Savages," a term used later by the Chinese to refer specifically to the Hmong (Quincy 1989:30-32). Both Chinese writings and Hmong legends refer to these early time periods and hint at the beginnings of conflicts between the two societies (Knoll 1982:236).

The long period of Hmong history in China is characterized by struggle and numerous conflicts between rural Hmong peoples and various Chinese emperors. As the Chinese developed a state level of sociopolitical organization, they sought to standardize "high civilization" through the implementation of formal civic laws and through the forced assimilation of non-Chinese minorities. From the Chinese perspective the diffusion of their civilization meant either assimilation or complete annihilation of minority non-Chinese people. Resistance to these attempts at absorption created in the Hmong a strong sense of solidarity and a spirit to fight.

From AD 400 to AD 900 the Hmong of central China had their own Kingdom. The presence of such a Kingdom represented a threat to Chinese domination so in AD 618 and again in AD 907 the Chinese attacked. The Chinese encountered fierce resistance from the Hmong in both conflicts. In the years that followed these wars the Chinese were able to destroy the Kingdom but were unable to completely subdue and assimilate the Hmong people. The Hmong retreated into the mountainous regions of central southern China and developed a way of life which exist there today.

Despite their retreat into the highlands, conflicts with the Chinese persisted. During the 17th and 18th centuries Hmong resistance to Chinese domination took the form of isolated and scattered rebellions. These rebellions culminated in a series of wars fought in AD 1698, 1732, and 1735 (Knoll 1982:236). These wars, and subsequent persecutions at the hands of the Chinese, eventually led to a forced migration of several hundred thousand Hmong out of China into Southeast Asia (initially Vietnam and later Laos and Burma [now Myanmar]). Most Hmong, however, remained in China.

Recent History of the Laotian Hmong

In Laos, as was typical in China, the Hmong found themselves living in the most remote highland regions.

Although the Laotian Hmong remained relatively isolated during the 18th and 19th centuries, global political tensions and conflicts in the 20th century (festering in Southeast Asia) drew them into confrontations that would prove to be nearly fatal.

Although the migration out of China situated the Hmong outside of the reach of Chinese domination, for Laotian Hmong newer problems with non-Hmong people arose. For example, the Hmong were viewed by lowland Laotians and northern Tais as an inferior minority population and, thus, drew a great deal of discrimination. The Hmong were referred to by the Laotians as backward, primitive, nonliterate savages (Quincy 1989:163). Despite discrimination, the Laotian Hmong were able to maintain a high degree of political autonomy and, through kinship ties, they also managed to maintain a strong sense of cultural unity.

Prior to the major conflicts of the 20th century, the Hmong continued to abide by traditional Hmong/Chinese cultural practices. Subsistence, for example, consisted of dry rice cultivation, raising pigs and various types of fowl, and hunting and foraging. All of these basic subsistence strategies had been acquired or developed in China. Also, these basic subsistence strategies allowed the Hmong to maintain a dependable localized economy which helped to sustain their cultural autonomy.

The Hmong also grew opium, a cash crop introduced by the Dutch and the British in the 17th century. For the Hmong, opium had medicinal value (used by shamans as a pain reliever and for contacting the spirit world), and as a cash crop for export. As the Hmong rarely viewed opium outside of a localized Laotian context, and did not manufacture heroin or other opium derived substances, addiction to the drug for the Hmong was uncommon (Knoll 1982:163). Opium did, however, tie the Hmong to external markets and, given the illicit nature of opium distribution and use in many parts of the world, associated them with powerful political factions operating outside of the traditional Hmong cultural context.

Some of these developing connections with external affairs took the form of political/military alliances. As early as 1959, Laotian Hmong leaders were contacted by the United States CIA (Proudfoot 1990:9, Quincy 1989:161). The U.S. government wanted to secure Hmong support in a "Secret War" against communist factions in Vietnam (the Vietminh) and in Laos (the Pathet Lao). In exchange, the CIA would help expedite the exportation of Hmong grown opium. Hmong leaders such as Vang Pao agreed and thus obligated the Hmong to fight on the side of the U.S. during the Vietnam war.

The results of Hmong involvement in the Indochinese conflict proved devastating. During the years of the war the Hmong lost a large number of people. Proudfoot has

estimated that "by 1971 35% of the Lao Hmong population were dead" (1990:16). This devastation occurred as a direct result of the Hmong having participated in the war on the side of the U.S.

In 1975, with the withdrawal of U.S. forces, North and South Vietnam became unified under Ho Chi Minh's leadership. At about that same time in Laos the Pathet Lao took control from the Royal Laotian government. The new government immediately targeted the Hmong and the Mien (as well as other minority hill tribes) as collaborators with the enemy. This produced one of the most tragic and underpublisized mass migrations in history. During the years of U.S. involvement in the Indochinese conflict (1959 to 1975) and following the Vietnam war (1975 to 1979), it has been estimated that the Laotian Hmong may have lost as much as 50% of their total population--most of them killed in combat or while trying to migrate south across the Mekong River into Thailand (Knoll 1982:243).

At that time the Laotian Hmong who were able to escape were relocated in refugee camps in Thailand. There they awaited immigration status in order to resettle in Australia, Canada, parts of Europe (especially France), and the United States. Life in the refugee camps was relatively harsh. The Thai government initially tended to treat refugee populations as though they were all members of the same tribe and placed various groups close together in camps

indiscriminately (sometimes traditional enemies were placed together). Sanitation was poor and health problems became a serious ongoing concern (Hurlich, Holtan, and Munger 1986:427-439). The United Nations, the Worldwide Christian Relief Organization, and other international agencies provided some food and medical assistance, but problems stemming from various diseases and malnutrition were overwhelming.

Schools within the camps were set up by various international agencies, the Thai government, and by the refugees themselves. English, French, and various Asian languages (especially Lao, Tai, Mien, and Hmong) were taught in the camps. Math, reading and writing were also taught. Although formal education in these settings was difficult, many refugees came away from the experience speaking several languages.

Although these agencies helped to reduce the level of poverty in the refugee camps, life there was still difficult and the Hmong, along with other refugee groups, sought to obtain exit visas to other parts of the world. For those Hmong who could produce records of their having served in the Vietnam war the process of immigration into the United States was relatively successful. As a result the majority of Laotian Hmong have subsequently resettled in the U.S. Still, many Hmong remain in refugee camps in northern Thailand awaiting clearance to immigrate (Olney 1986:179-

184).

Resettlement in the United States

It has been reported that nearly 80,000 (U.S. Census 1990) Hmong now reside in the U.S., with a few more thousand likely to immigrate by the turn of the century. Olney (1986:181-182) has noted that over half of the Hmong who have resettled in the United states reside in California; and of that population two thirds reside in California's Central Valley. For the Hmong much of the logistics of relocation has been orchestrated by General Vang Pao, an important Hmong war leader, U.S. ally, and patriarch of American-Laotian Hmong. Through "Mutual Assistance Associations" (MAAs), and the "Hmong Family Assistance" program much of the initial relocation and resettlement process has been mitigated. Although Vang Pao generally does not support cash assistance programs, he has set up community based relocation centers for Hmong resettlement. These centers have been established in Montana, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and in a number of relatively large communities in California. Hmong communities in these states continue to grow. As they do, problems stemming from the inevitabilities of minority-majority relations arise. Cultural misunderstanding, racial stereotyping, language and communication barriers, and economic problems have all been part of the Hmong experience

since their arrival in the U.S.

Hmong Culture

In this section I briefly summarize fundamental characteristics of Hmong culture. Three general areas of Hmong culture are covered: (a) subsistence, (b) social organization, and (c) worldview and religion (the bulk of cultural background information come from Geddes 1976, Knoll 1982, Quincy 1989, Tapp 1989 and my own field notes).

Subsistence

The Hmong possess many of the generalized cultural features of small-scale traditional Southeast Asian minority groups. Like many Highland groups of Laos, the Hmong traditionally practiced slash/burn (swidden) agriculture. Subsistence crops consisted of rice (dry rice cultivation), corn (introduced in the 18th century), various types of squash, peppers, beans and other cultigens. Opium poppies were also grown as a cash crop for illicit exportation. Men, women, boys, and girls all hunted small game. In addition, most members of Hmong society knew how to collect wild plant materials, which was done to supplement various domestic crops grown in Hmong gardens. In addition, pigs, chickens, ducks, and other domesticated animals were used for both food and ceremonial purposes (Doua Yang, personal communication). In terms of subsistence, Hmong traditional

practices allowed for ample food surpluses and, despite some lean years, provided a relatively high degree of over-all economic stability.

Social Organization

Traditional division of labor was organized on the basis of gender and age criteria. Women had more power and influence in the domestic sphere while men controlled events in the public domain (Knoll 1982:249). Furthermore, children at various ages had certain responsibilities. For example, older children were often expected to take care of younger children, especially while older women worked in the gardens. Children could also participate in preparing and serving food. These culturally assigned tasks represent "ideal" Hmong division of labor; however, Rosaldo (1974) and others have pointed out that these rules, cross-culturally, are seldom followed to the letter and the Hmong are no exception.

Traditional Hmong sociopolitical organization was structured around patrilineal hierarchies (or male lineage segments). Like most small-scale traditional societies, kinship provided the underlying model for the formation of larger social and political structures. Kinship also provided the means by which an individual could determine his/her place in society. One would know one's place and status in Hmong society by being cognizant of how one is

situated in the extended kinship system. Transfer of property rights, deference to authority, and connections to other individuals, are typically traced through the male line. Political power, therefore, was concentrated and distributed according to patrilineal kinship criteria.

The Hmong also abide by patrilocal residence rules (May Lee, personal communication). After marriage, or sometimes just before a marriage ceremony, a couple typically moves in with the family of the groom. After an extended period of time (sometimes several years) the couple can establish their own household. In most cases the newly established households are built next to or near the groom's father's house.

The Hmong also practice a form of levirate marriage. After the death of a husband, the widow is expected to marry a brother of her deceased husband. If this occurs, the wife must move her material belongings and her children into the new household. In many instances, however, brothers of the dead husband may already be living in the same household and so a move for the wife would not be necessary.

The Hmong look to patriarches for official leadership. The patriarchal system is organized at both local and regional levels, according to recognized hierarchies based on age and achievement. Vang Pao, for example, is a major patriarch for most Hmong now living in the United States (although some smaller groups have fissioned off to form

their own centralized patriarchies). In each Hmong community there are elder males who will act as village or community patriarches. Their responsibilities include: making decisions regarding group movement, arranging marriages, resolving internal disputes, and so forth. At lower levels of the hierarchical system is the male head of each household. He performs the function of "family patriarch" and, as such, stands as the official head of the household. Most duties associated with this position take the form of explicit or public decisions and formal announcements. However, political power in the household can also be tacitly communicated, and can be seen as regulated more by age than overt reference to gender.

Also, although the Hmong appear to be a male dominated society, it would be misleading to deemphasize the role of women, especially in terms of household politics and economy. Hmong women exercise considerable influence over various aspects of cultural process in Hmong society. The primary seat of their power rests in the domestic sphere with household economics and in orchestrating much of the transmission culture to younger members of Hmong society. Women generally regulate the division of labor in the family through assigning specific tasks to children and young adults. Through their extensive contact with younger members of the community, women are the primary transmitters of normative Hmong culture. Although they share this role

with men, it is the women who are most actively engaged in interpreting and conveying cultural rules for correct behavior and thinking. For example, it is usually the women who explain to a child how the Hmong kinship system works; children are told who their relatives are and what the specific relationship happens to be. Through interacting with mothers, mother's sisters, and other adult Hmong women, children will learn their proper place in society.

Also, although not always publically acknowledged, women exert influence over community politics. Often the needs of specific households are connected to larger public issues and women can usually express their concerns either through their husbands or by way of direct appeal to clan patriarches. Power, therefore, must be viewed in light of both publicly acknowledged authority and as a product of indirect or implicit authority associated with the domestic sphere. In the U.S. these traditional patterns of gender and authority are currently undergoing significant modification. Underemployment, exposure to the English language and other factors are contributing to a deterioration of traditional male/female roles with regard to overt recognition of authority. Only time will tell how the Hmong will survive these conflicts.

Despite such difficulties the Hmong have sought, and with some degree of success, to maintain the traditional extended kinship system. There are between 8 and 13 Laotian

Hmong clans. In China there are many more clans represented, although consistent figures are difficult to come by (see Schein 1986:73-86 for a discussion of census/demographic problems in China). These clans recognize patriarches as important politicos at various levels of the sociopolitical system. This fusion between traditional kinship and male authority functions to maintain this regional (and now global) clan system. At the inter-clan level obligations and duties regarding official matters, as is the case in Hmong households, are seen as part of the jurisdiction of leading patriarches. For example, disputes that fall outside the immediate jurisdiction of the family or involve conflicts between clans would usually be settled at a higher level by male clan leaders (often referred to as "clan elders"; Yee Xiong, personal communication).

Hmong clans are differentiated by family name (e.g., Lee, Xiong, Yang, Her, Thao, Lor). Larger group distinctions are organized according to dialect and style of dress (e.g., Green Hmong, White Hmong, Flowering Hmong, Stripped Hmong). The Green (Hmong Njua) and White Hmong (Hmong Daw), for example, speak different mutually intelligible dialects of the Hmong language. They can also be differentiated by distinctive styles of dress. For formal occasions the White Hmong usually wear purple and white striped head wraps. Head wraps for the Green Hmong

are typically green and red. Each group can also be identified by the color of the sashes they wear.

These culturally based identity markers had their origins in China where Chinese rulers sought to use the distinctions as a means of social control (Quincy 1989:43). The Chinese separated the Hmong by clothes color in an attempt to create rival factions or divisions between Hmong living in various regions of China. The Hmong incorporated the labels into a kind of totemic system that assisted in the symbolic grouping of large extended cultural units that were already distinctive in terms of language. Presently, these designations are still being used; their future use, however, will depend on the extent to which the Hmong kinship system, and dialectical differences between these subgroups, survive.

Religion and Worldview

Another important area of consideration for understanding Hmong culture is religion. The Hmong, as Moore-Howard points out, are animists (1982:37-38). They believe in the existence of many types of supernatural spirits. These spirits can be roughly divided into two major categories: (a) nature spirits (beings associated with natural phenomena such as trees, animals, clouds and so forth), and (b) ancestral spirits (the spirits of dead ancestors). The Hmong will sometimes refer to themselves as

"Taoists"--but this does not refer to pure Chinese Taoism, it refers to "traditional Hmong religion" as opposed to the religious systems of the west (i.e., Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). The belief in spirits has been, at times, combined with other non-Hmong belief systems. For example, Christian missionaries have had at least 200 years of contact with the Hmong and this contact has produced an interesting religious syncretism based on animistic and monotheistic concepts of supernatural power. For instance, some Hmong will tell you: "I am Christian," and later mention that they are having trouble with mischievous spirits who are wrecking havoc in their garden.

The Hmong have also been influenced by great traditions practiced in various parts of Southeast Asia. For example, elements of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism have been incorporated into Hmong rituals.

In most small-scale traditional societies little distinction is made between traditional healing and religion. Religious functionaries are often healers. In Hmong society the central functionary who performs both religious and healing rituals is the Shaman. His or her role (men and women can be shamans) is to act as a broker who manipulate the transfer of power between the real world and the spirit world. Their primary function is to "use" or "borrow" supernatural power in order to cure clients. Sometimes the Shaman's role is extended beyond curing and

they may engage in manipulations of community dynamics (e.g., arranging marriages, working intrigue between various parties, or influencing political decision making). The Shaman also acts as a kind of interpreter, explaining the nature of the spirit world to members of the community. A Shaman will tell you that they actually go to the other world and experience events occurring there.

Hmong worldview contains many generalized features shared by most small scale traditional societies. The world is seen as essentially a capricious and sometimes dangerous place. Everything in the world is thought of as being in a constant state of flux--the world is an ongoing dynamic system. A cultural ethic stemming from this view maintains that a person must act with caution, make careful choices, and perform daily routines with a high degree of integrity at all times. This overarching view of the world has also helped to shape a cultural ethos that stresses hard work, industriousness, and attention to detail. In Hmong art, for example, careful attention to detail has become a cultural imperative (see Moore-Howard 1982:47 for a discussion of Hmong needlepoint).

Hmong values have played a significant role in the process of adjusting to North American life. One important cultural value for the Hmong is their traditional reliance on "interdependence." A person is seen as a member of the group before she and he is seen as an individual (Dunnigan

1986:41-54). This cultural pattern has produced in the Hmong an ethic of cooperation which places them in direct conflict with predominant North American values of individualism and self-reliance. For the Hmong, survival is closely connected to maintaining values of cooperation, group effort, and a willingness to maintain cultural identity. This is one of the most important features of Hmong culture, a characteristic they share with many Southeast Asian minority groups. It also represents a strong force for regulating communicative interactions between members of the Hmong community.

Hmong Communicative/Interactive Style

With only a momentary visit to a classroom where Hmong students are in attendance, it becomes apparent that cultural predispositions toward interactive and communicative style are taking place. These predispositions stem from patterns of discourse learned at home and from emerging patterns occurring outside the home. What follows is a critical examination of Hmong cultural predilections toward social patterns of communication and interaction.

Normative Patterns of Communication and Interaction

From interviews with key informants (May Lee 12-9-91, Yee Xiong 10-25-91, and Ge Yang 12-10-91), and through

extended observations of Hmong students, I was able to construct a general model for Hmong normative interactive discourse. What follows is a brief summary of the general features of Hmong interactive/communicative style.

General rules regulating traditional Hmong interactive/communicative style are organized primarily on the basis of status differentials. Differences in age, gender, marital status, and influence in the community are all factors which affect the ways in which communication can take place. In addition, patterns which influence the form and functioning of speech content represent important features of Hmong communication; especially as these patterns influence temporal and interpersonal references. What topics are considered appropriate for discussion, given cross-gender and age boundaries, may take varied forms in various situations.

Age Differentials

In Hmong society differences in age indicate important distinctions in status. At the highest rung of the social hierarchy are male elders. How a person will interact with a male elder will depend on one's own status in the community, and on one's specific relationship to that elder. Small children, for example, seldom talk directly to elder males. Usually children will talk to their mothers or to elder brothers and sisters; who may, in turn, present the

children's concerns to elder males. For children, respect for elders (regardless of gender) is maintained through various implicit rules of interaction. Lowering one's eyes, for example--never looking directly into the eyes of an elder--is considered a way of demonstrating deference to authority.

Silence is another way to communicate respect. Members of younger age sets are strongly discouraged from talking excessively to older members of the community. If the age difference is wide, then the rule is arduously maintained. If the age difference is not that great, the rule is eased.

The level at which an individual keeps one's head in relationship to others also indicates relative status. An elder, for example, might lean down and place his/her head lower than that of a child in order to reduce the formal distance between the two (Yee Xiong, personal communication). At an early age children become aware of the taboo of raising one's head above that of an elder's. The elevation of one's head as an indicator of status is also context dependent. The rule is enforced (implicitly) at formal gatherings, at meal times, and when talking in public. It is relaxed, however, in informal settings, such as night time story telling, during conversations just before bed time, and while working in the fields.

As children get older their interactions with elders become less constrained. At that point the only barriers

which remain strong stem from differences in local political power, gender differences, and marital status.

Gender Differences and Communication

A person's gender plays a significant role in regulating social interactions with other people. In general, Hmong children (regardless of gender) can communicate openly and freely with one another. However, as they get older, channels of communication become more constricted. Interactions between young boys and girls become more stilted and formalized, with foreboding expectations of courtship not too far off. To accommodate interactions between male and female adolescents, the Hmong have incorporated ritualized exchanges that allow boys and girls to talk--but in full public view. "Pov Pob," for example (ritualized ball throwing and chatting--done during Hmong New Year's celebrations), is one way the Hmong have instituted a means by which young Hmong boys and girls can talk to one another. Other institutionalized practices which allow for communication across gender lines include: traditional dancing, singing (there is a form of singing and the playing of a musical instrument [the instrument is called a "Ncas"]) as a form of courting, and occasionally informal talking during New Year's feasts.

The most serious constraints on communication arise when both age and gender status differentials are operating

simultaneously. It is difficult, for example, for young girls to talk directly to their fathers, or to other male elders in the community (May Lee, personal communication). The protocol system dictates that a girl must go through her mother in order to communicate with her father. Only in cases of extreme emergencies can this rule be avoided.

Traditionally the Hmong marry young. Girls typically get married between the ages of 14 and 17. Males are slightly older when they marry (between 18 and 22). When a Hmong girl gets married, her interactions with adult males, other than her husband, become severely limited. As one of my informants put it: "If a woman is at home and a man from the village comes to talk to her husband, and he [the husband] is not home; then the man must stand outside and shout out that he will return later when her husband has returned from the fields. It would be improper for him to enter the house, or to stop and have a conversation with her in other places" (Yee Xiong, personal communication).

A similar pattern can be seen in the way young Hmong girls generally avoid interaction with adult males. Both age and gender differentials will limit the amount of interaction that can occur, especially if the age difference is considerable.

The Structure of Verbal Discourse

The ways in which Hmong speak to one another vary

according to context. Some general features of Hmong verbal discourse can, however, be described.

The Hmong, as is the case for all societies, employ both formal and informal forms of speaking. At public meetings, making announcements at festivals or weddings, or in relating serious folk narratives, a formal voice is generally used. The Hmong can also appeal to a kind of poetry language during formal narrations or if a special event (such as a funeral) warrants it. Use of formal voice, however, is typically restricted to serious occasions, either to create a solemn tone, to convey the importance of a message, or to reinforce the status of the speaker.

Another characteristic style of Hmong communication is "indirectness" (Ellen Yin, personal communication). When addressing strangers, Hmong speakers will not address central issues directly. They will typically use third person narratives to establish context and rapport before addressing more central issues. The existence of this particular form of communication has created problems for school officials and representatives from various community organizations who come to Hmong households with specific agendas. The typical North American pattern for addressing issues is incisive. In applying an incisive style of communication, these officials run the risk of offending Hmong elders.

For the Hmong most speech, however, is concerned with

the mundane events of daily life. Talk generally focuses on the significance of events occurring in and around the village community. Mundane conversations concerning such topics as gardening, who is leaving on a trip, who went hunting, planning weddings, and so forth, are typical items of Hmong daily conversation. In structuring their conversations Hmong speakers generally address the nature of the event first. Until recently, for Hmong living in small village communities, there was little need to situate an event according to a specific historical time period, or to a highly specific time during the day. As the Hmong became more involved in the Indochina conflict, however, the need for more precise time indicators increased. Traditionally, however, as is true for most small-scale traditional societies, there was little need for particularistic abstractions for calibrating time. The Hmong would, however, frame an event in terms of its temporal provenience in general terms. They will often say "the other day" or "in the morning." Hmong conversations regarding events will usually be prefaced by some statement regarding the event itself. Instead of saying "the other day I saw Vang fishing"; they would simply say "I saw Vang fishing." If, for some reason it was deemed necessary, the speaker could add "the other day."

For indicating larger periods of time in the past Hmong speakers typically preface a statement with "a long time

ago." If what is being said concerns ancestors or family history, they will use generational increments as rough time depth indicators (e.g., "three generations ago our family came to Laos") (Yee Xiong, personal communication). They can also indicate a time period by associating an event with a particular folk hero or a legend regarding a known Hmong King or Chinese emperor. Many of their legends can be traced to actual historic periods in Chinese history.

At a general level the Hmong talk and interact with each other as do most people around the world. However, real problems tend to arise when stark language barriers exist or when normative cultural rules regulating social status are disrupted.

Transitional Patterns of Communication and Interaction

One function of cultural adaptation is to adopt communicative styles which allow one to communicate in various situations in new cultural surroundings. As much of communication and interaction is closely associated with social organization, learning English and adopting North American styles of interaction have generally disrupted normative Hmong social relations.

Perhaps the most significant problem has come from role reversals stemming from young Hmong learning to speak English with a higher degree of fluency than their parents.

Young Hmong who speak fluent English are able to develop more salient and functional relationships with members of the Euroamerican society. This disrupts traditional rights to authority. One informant put it this way: "In Laos the parents were the parents [i.e., were "in charge"]. In the United States, the children are the parents" (Yee Xiong, personal communication).

As Hmong children become more familiar with English and North American modes of interpersonal interaction, they tend to abandon the taciturn nature of Hmong traditional modes of interaction (especially as these rules affect interactions with adults). Eventually younger Hmong become more talkative, their interactions with non-Hmong become more open and frequent, and they come to feel less threatened by age and gender differences. Yet, all of these changes have produced tensions at home. As mentioned earlier, alterations in deference to authority (by age and gender) have seriously disrupted the traditional structure of the Hmong family. Communication barriers between parents and their children have emerged compounding growing tensions in American Hmong households. Yet these changes have allowed many Hmong, especially younger Hmong, to establish functional relationships outside the home in the schools and in the larger community.

The Hmong in Sierra

The first Hmong family to move to Sierra did so in the early 1980s. A male Hmong college student who had been attending a nearby school decided (after his marriage) to move his family to Sierra. Soon thereafter, other members of his and his wife's clan resettled there. The Hmong have an exogamous rule for marrying outside the clan, thus, in the years that followed, a number of other clans moved to Sierra (May Lee, personal communication).

Most of these Hmong settled in the southeast section of town. Entire apartment complexes and nearby houses became occupied by Hmong families. Some Hmong eventually bought homes while others began to rent apartments in other sections of town.

At present the Hmong are a highly visible ethnic community in Sierra. They participate actively in the Farmer's Market on Saturdays; and every day Hmong women can be seen taking large groups of Hmong children to a nearby park. During Hmong New Year's (November and December--their New Years celebration time has been modified to correspond to the European calendar) they set up booths for food, have long lines for Pov Pob, and put on cultural performances comprised of dancing, music, and story telling. This celebration is well attended by both Hmong and non-Hmong alike.

Hmong Households

Much of the dynamics of Hmong communicative and interactive style are set up by patterns carried out in households. These households are currently being affected by culture change. In order to fully comprehend how Hmong students are adapting to school culture it will be of some use to explore changes in traditional Hmong households.

Traditional Extended Family Households

In Laos traditional households were set up in single room wooden houses. Residing in these houses were both nuclear and extended family segments. These segments were typically made up of parents, their immediate offspring, elder relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, older cousins and so forth), and spouses who married into the patrilineage. If space was a problem, or if conflicts developed between daughters-in-laws and their new parents, an additional room could be built onto the existing house. There, a new nuclear family could be formed but only as an extension of the husband's family (living next door). No common door connects the two rooms; one would have to walk outside in order to enter the other section of the house.

Sleeping arrangements were quite simple. All members of a household (living in one room) would sleep on the floor next to one another in one long line. Typically, parents

would sleep at one end, the youngest next to them, and the oldest of the offspring were situated at the other end. Woven mats, cloth blankets, and sometimes bunk beds built into the walls served as bedding.

Cooking was done in one corner of the house, usually near the door. From that vantage point mothers could both watch children inside the house and keep track of events occurring outside. In the kitchen area, in order to conserve space, pots and pans would be neatly stacked when not in use. Small hearths served the family with most of their cooking needs. Men, however, would sometimes build larger fires outside for cooking pigs, deer and other larger animals.

Many of the activities occurring in and around Hmong households, as was mentioned earlier, were regulated by age and gender differentials. The youngest children stayed close by the mother, although adolescents often watched younger children when the mother was some distance away. Caretaking was typically a collective enterprise shared by mothers, adolescents (primarily females), and grandmothers. Furthermore, most of the early interactions between younger Hmong and older members involved speech exchanges with women.

Households In Transition

The structure and organization of Hmong households in

the United States has, in many cases, undergone significant change. The degree to which these changes have affected Hmong households has depended largely on the degree to which members have altered their life styles to match those of the surrounding society. In Sierra, many households are set up in ways that resemble the traditional homes of Laos. Only one large room would be used for a living space (the living room). All other rooms were used for storage. In most cases sleeping arrangements were set up as they were in Laos. Cooking, however, could be done in both the kitchen and the living room.

Traditional organization of Hmong households begin to break down as members of the family acquired aspects of North American culture. This is especially true if there are Hmong adolescents living in the home. For example, in one household in Sierra, a Hmong teenager moved into one of the unused extra rooms. He put up posters of rock stars, played music on his tape player, and had friends over without consulting his parents. His parents eventually confronted him. They told him that he was becoming more American than Hmong and that he had lost respect for his elders. Eventually this individual moved out of the house and went to live with his older brother.

Hmong Students At Sierra High

At the time of this study there were 24 Hmong students

attending Sierra High School (Table 2). (This number increased as the study progressed.) Some of these students had lived in the United States for more than 10 years while others had only just arrived. The school categorized these students according to language proficiency, age, and ability on competency exams. Determining the level of language proficiency was usually done by the ESL teacher. Based on her recommendation a student could be mainstreamed, partially mainstreamed, or retained in the ESL program (which included classes in other content areas i.e., Sheltered History, Science, and Math). Some of the older Hmong students had been partially mainstreamed (although English was difficult for some of them) because they had to take competency exams to prepare them for graduation.

In and around campus Hmong students tended to blend in with other Southeast Asian students. Many of the Anglo students with whom I talked, were unable to differentiate Hmong students from Lao, Korean, or Japanese students.

Hmong students tended to group together. Between class periods a small group of Hmong would congregate in front of the school near the flag pole (see map, Figure 1). During snack or lunch a large group of Hmong could be seen in the cafeteria sitting and talking with Lao students (see map, Figure 2). A small number of Hmong students could usually be seen just outside the library standing with a group of Lao students. These students, according to several school

TABLE 2. Distribution of Asian and Hispanic Students by Language Proficiency (for Sierra High School) 1991

Grade Level		10	11	12	Totals
Spanish	LEP	16	20	6	42
	FEP	19	15	12	46
Cantonese	LEP	0	0	0	0
	FEP	1	1	0	2
Korean	LEP	0	1	0	1
	FEP	1	0	2	3
Mandarin	LEP	1	2	0	3
	FEP	0	0	2	2
Japanese	LEP	0	0	1	1
	FEP	0	0	2	2
Cambodian	LEP	1	0	0	1
	FEP	0	0	1	1
Lao	LEP	4	7	8	19
	FEP	6	1	4	11
Hmong	LEP	6	8	1	15
	FEP	3	2	4	9

LEP = Limited English proficiency
FEP = Fluent English proficiency

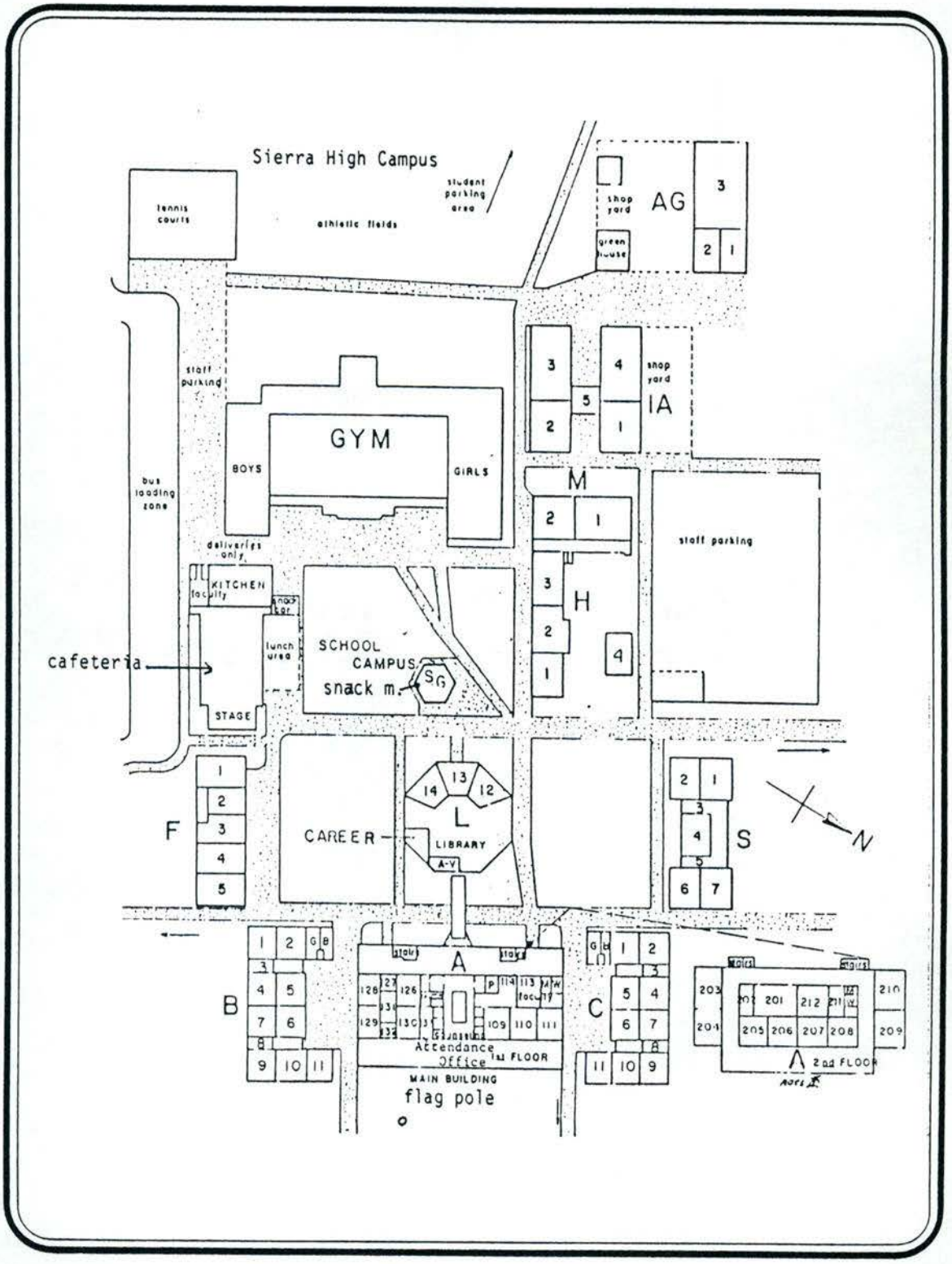


FIGURE 1. Map of Sierra High School campus.

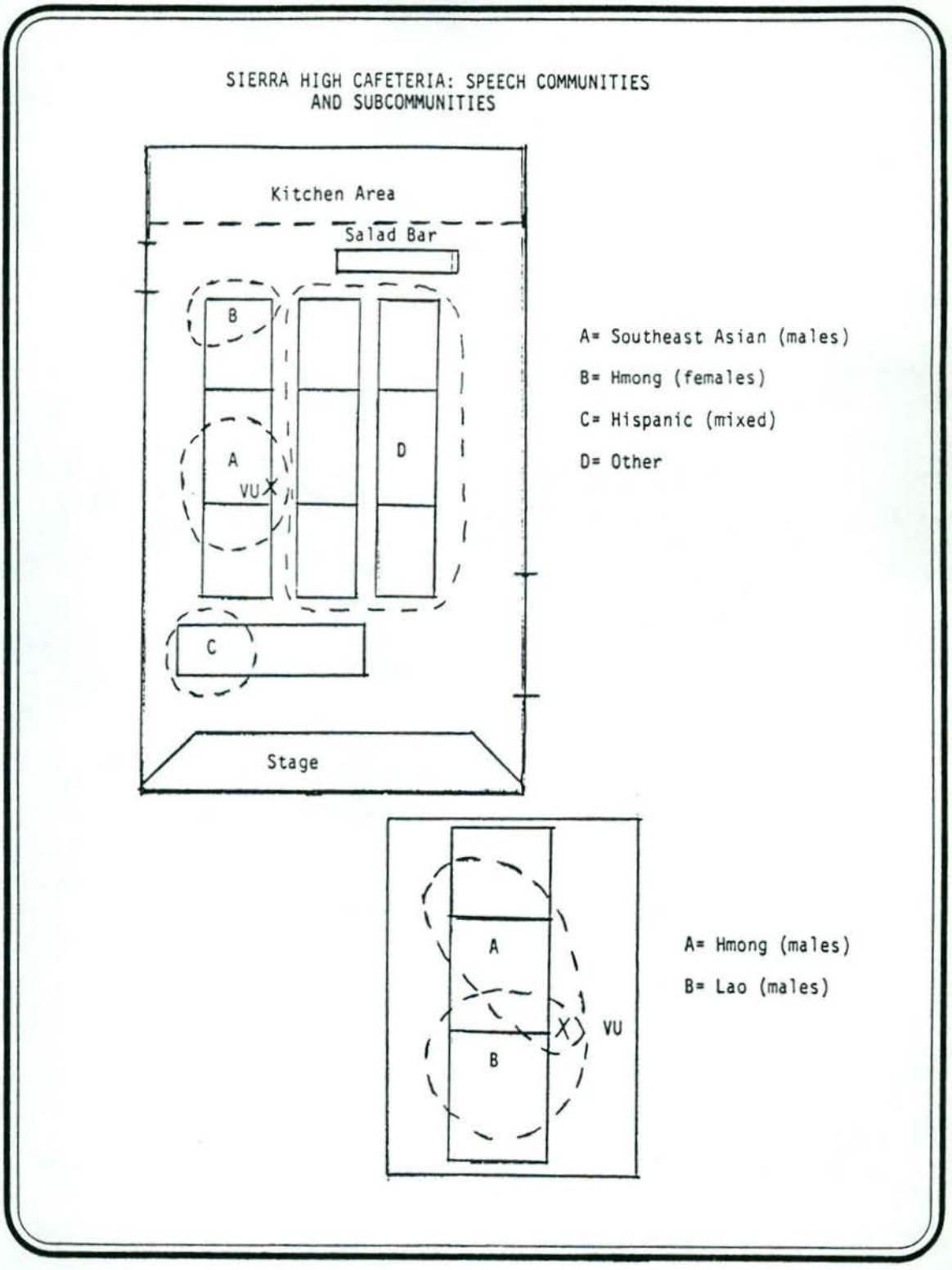


FIGURE 2. Map of Sierra High School cafeteria.

personnel with whom I spoke, represented an incipient gang element. Most of these students wore Raider's jackets (black sports jackets which have sometimes been associated with gang membership), black dress shoes, and baseball hats. After school this same group of students would meet in the parking lot and listen to rap music which was played on a car tape player.

Teachers with whom I spoke expressed a range of opinions regarding Hmong students. Most teachers characterized Hmong students as "hard working," or "highly motivated." Other teachers viewed them as problematic: "how are you going to teach them about 'Judicial Review' when they don't even know what a judge is." One teacher told me that he had six Asian students in his class, none of whom could "speak a stitch of English." Two of the students he was referring to later agreed to be interviewed by me for this study--both were fluent in English (although their English was minimal). I conducted the interviews without an interpreter.

The Hmong Student Association

Hmong students who were attending a nearby college had formed an organization or association of Hmong students. The primary goals of this association were explicitly listed in their membership form to: (a) promote the quality of higher education for Hmong students and inform them of the

educational programs at various levels, (b) develop strategies and educational goals for Hmong students of different educational levels, (c) provide supportive services for Hmong students and distribute information concerning scholarships (grants, loans, etc.) available to prospective students, (d) provide counseling referrals, advice, and assistance to Hmong students who have personal, emotional, or social needs, and (e) contribute towards preserving the Hmong culture and bridge the gap between the Hmong and American cultures.

In the Fall of 1991 I attended several of the meetings of this association. At one particular meeting the agenda included (a) an expressed desire to bridge the gap between Hmong parents and the Sierra school system (they wanted to organize a meeting with Hmong parents to explain to them how the American school system works, and to explain what the schools expect of their children), (b) to organize educational fieldtrips for Hmong public school students and members of the association, and (c) to organize events for the upcoming Hmong New Year's celebration.

A few days after this meeting I spoke with the president of the association. She told me that she was having trouble getting members to volunteer "to do things." She said that it was difficult enough to get a group of parents together unless it was for a celebration; and, that she was disappointed in the lack of help she was receiving.

One month later she and her Vice President resigned, citing lack of support in organizing events for the Hmong New Years. Later, in an interview, she told me that there had been some resentment at having a woman as a President. "If that is the way they want it, then let them do it. Let them see how hard it is to get everything together."

CHAPTER V

PROFILES OF FOUR HMONG STUDENTS

Vu

Vu was born in Laos in 1973 in the westernmost section of northern Laos, just west of the Mekong river. At that time Vu's father and all of his uncles were fighting along with Vang Pao against the Pathet communist forces. Although Vu was too young to remember any of the events of that time, his parents have told him a great deal. Vu's parents were farmers. His father and uncles grew rice and raised pigs, chickens, and horses. During the war it was difficult to keep food on the table and Vu's mother remembers many days where food was so scarce that many people in the village died. Vu's father became a soldier in 1969 and, according to Vu's mother, rice production went down as the war escalated.

To complicate matters, Vu and his family had to move a great deal to avoid Pathet Lao forces who were operating in that part of Laos. This constant moving further impeded their ability to produce food and Vu's family, along with other members of the village, found themselves more and more dependent on U.S. aide (supplied by the US military and CIA

contacts).

In 1975, when the war ended, Vu and his family left Laos. Vu's father told him that it took eight days to get to the Lao/Thai border. They traveled night and day to get to Thailand as quick as possible. Vu described what it was like based on what his parents had told him:

> It pretty hard you a refugee. You move here, you move to another place. If you don't move the communists come over to take the Lao--they had to kill you. If your parents know soldier[s], it's okay, you can live there. But your parents soldier [soldiers opposing communists] like that, they have to catch that--like that--they have to kill your parents; so we have to go. We left Laos.

When Vu and his family crossed into Thailand the Thai government, as it did with so many refugees, placed Vu and his family in a temporary camp near the border. These holding camps had little to offer in terms of basic amenities. There were no permanent housing structures; refugee families lived out in the open, or in impromptu shelters built of wooden poles and small pieces of cloth. There were no showers or bathrooms. Food was doled in meager portions and, because of malnutrition and exposure to various diseases, health problems were everpresent.

Vu and his family lived in this camp for almost a year. In 1976 the Thai government moved Vu's family into the main refugee camp at Ban Venai (in northern Thailand, about 50 miles southwest of the Laotian capital of Vienntiene). Although the conditions at Ban Venai were harsh, it was an

improvement over the previous camp. At Ban Venai there were schools, a large field for playing soccer or kick ball, and, if you knew which guards to bribe, enough space to grow a garden.

For Vu, Ban Venai was a "big camp." Several thousand refugees were living there; Lao, Mien, and Hmong were the minority groups which made up the bulk of the refugee population. He remembers seeing the camp representative passing out food to the heads of each extended family. Every family got a certain amount of rice, meat, and vegetables. There was also a thriving black market at Ban Venai where food, services, and other commodities could be had for a price (usually U.S. dollars or some valuable trade item). Vu had a cousin in the US who would occasionally send money, money which came in handy when Vu's parents needed to leave the camp to visit relatives in other refugee camps. Through the course of several years at Ban Venai, Vu's father had accumulated about five hundred dollars in US cash. Thai representatives told Vu's father that for a price they could obtain Thai citizenship for the entire family. Vu's father eventually paid the representative but citizenship was never granted. Vu and his family never saw the representative again.

Late in 1976 one of Vu's uncles left Ban Venai to go back to Laos. Vu's uncle had often discussed his desire to get his immediate family out of Laos and bring them to

Thailand. Vu's uncle was gone several months when word came into the camp that he had been shot and killed. A friend of the family who had been travelling with Vu's uncle had managed to escape and, although wounded, had managed to make his way into Thailand. Shortly after being admitted to a Thai hospital he died. Vu was quite young and does not remember the event. His parents would often speak of his uncle and the lost friend. Vu's father had speculated that the friend of the family might have been poisoned by the Thai. Vu's father told him that "Thais do not like the Hmong and would rather not bother with them."

There were tensions in the camps. Vu recalls fights breaking out during soccer games. Most of the fighting was between the Lao and the other groups (Mien and Hmong). At times there were conflicts between the Hmong and the Mien and sometimes intragroup fighting occurred. Despite such problems, seldom did the conflicts ever escalate into major confrontations between the various minority groups in the camps.

Vu briefly attended school at Ban Venai. The school at Ban Venai was held in a long wooden barracks type building with rows of chairs, a small black board at the front of the room, and large open windows along both walls. The teachers were primarily Thai, Mien, Hmong, and sometimes Lao--although the Lao usually attended another school with exclusively Lao teachers. Math, reading, and various

languages were taught in the schools at Ban Venai. Vu recalls an American who came to inspect the camp. This American stayed for a couple of weeks and taught English to the refugee students. Vu also learned a bit of English in the camps. Vu recalled that when he was about ten years old an American teacher came to the camp and taught English. Although this teacher was only there about six months, much of what he taught has stuck in Vu's memory.

After about a year of schooling, Vu stopped attending because his mother had taken sick. Vu stayed close to the family and helped his father and brothers take care of his mother. During this time period Vu began to pick up Lao as a second language. Many of the young people who played sports in the camps were Lao, and Vu, having a liking for sports, began to identify with young Lao refugees. For several years this was Vu's day-to-day experience: running errands for his father and older brother, talking to his mother about what was going on in the camp, and going out in the afternoons to play soccer.

In 1988, with the help of one of Vu's cousins who was living in the United States, and through documentation proving Vu's father's role as a soldier in the Indochina war, Vu and his family had been told that they could immigrate to the United States. After receiving the appropriate release papers, they left the camp and went to Bangkok. There Vu saw more people than he had ever seen

before. In addition to Thais, there were Cambodians, Malaysians, Americans, Germans, and East Indians. There were also large buildings with big windows. Along the streets palm trees grew out of "rock" (concrete) providing shade for the many concessionaires. Buses, trucks, and thousands of cabs raced up and down the streets with a kind of indifference to pedestrians.

Early in 1989 Vu and his family boarded a plane destined for Seattle, Washington, where they were met by several members of Vu's extended family. After introductions they were driven to a neighborhood where a large number of Hmong were living. On the drive from the airport they stopped at a supermarket. At the entrance to the store Vu stopped at the automatic door and wondered how it could open without someone pulling on it. Vu's cousin said "Go ahead! It opens for you. Go in"!

Vu spent several weeks in Seattle before moving with his immediate family to Sacramento, California. Vu spent about a month in Sacramento. There Vu saw many things that both attracted and displeased him. Some Hmong kids had joined gangs. Vu got to know some of these kids. He liked to talk to them and sometimes dress like them, but he was afraid of some of the things they did. Vu's mother and some of Vu's cousins were concerned about increasing crime in Sacramento, they decided to move to a place were there was, as they saw it, no crime.

In June of 1989 they moved to Sierra. Sierra was ideal. It was a semirural town with very little crime, there was a college nearby, and there were Hmong living there (Hmong who had reported to Vu's father that the school system was good and life was relatively safe). Vu preferred Sierra to Sacramento because it was smaller and he could make friends more easily.

Vu's first experience in an American school was at Sierra Junior High. Because of his limited exposure to English, Vu spent most of his time in ESL classes. There were other Hmong in these classes as well as Lao. Most of the students in ESL classes, however, were Hispanic. In fact, Hispanic students formed the dominant culture in these classes and Vu immediately began to identify with them.

Vu has a proclivity for language and English came quickly for him. He also remembered much of the Lao he had learned in the camps, and he was beginning to acquire Spanish as well. Also, unlike many of the other Hmong students, Vu was not afraid to talk to people. The other Hmong students began to use Vu as a kind of go-between when they wanted to know what was going on in class and around school.

His interest in sports continued. After his first year at Sierra Junior he could read enough of the local newspaper to get through the sports page. Before class Vu could be seen with Hmong, Lao, and Hispanic students huddled around

him. He would read parts of the sports page to them and occasionally make wagers on games.

The following year (1990) Vu was transferred to Sierra High. Sierra High does not have a freshman class so Vu entered as a Sophomore. Vu spent most of the 1990/91 school year in the school's ESL track, which included sheltered history, science, math, and English (he attended two class periods of English/ESL). During this school year Vu formed many of the friendships that would become so important the following year. During this time he met Javier, Mrs. Murchison (the ESL teacher), and several of the adult Hmong aides who were working at Sierra high. These friendships proved to be crucial for Vu, for during the summer of 1991 his father passed away.

At the beginning of the 1991/92 school year (at the time of this study), Vu had been partially "mainstreamed." With the exception of two classes (English and sheltered History), Vu was placed in classes that were part of the school's regular curriculum. In these new classes his English continued to improve and so did his ability to communicate with a wider spectrum of Sierra high's student population. Despite his ability with English, however, the core of Vu's group of friends were language minority students. Javier, for example, is one of Vu's closest friends. They have several classes together and spend considerable time together between classes. They do not,

however, see each other after school. Doua, another Hmong student, is also one of Vu's closest friends. They generally sit together at lunch and in their history and ESL classes.

Every week day after school Vu works in the printshop at the local college. There he runs materials off on copiers, packs tests and handouts, and delivers packages to various department offices. Vu uses the money he earns to help his mother buy groceries and to help his brother with the rent. What money is left he uses to buy video games or tapes for his walk-man. He also uses some of the money to buy cokes and Pizza with his friends at the local mall.

Vu has expressed some reservations about next year and becoming a Senior at Sierra. He had heard from some of the other Hmong students that Government was a hard class. He also expressed trepidations regarding competency exams. Many of the other Hmong students (Seniors) had told Vu that the English test was hard. Many of these students had to take the test several times before receiving adequate scores for graduation.

When asked about the main difference between the United States and life in Southeast Asia, Vu recalled stories told to him by his father; stories about hunting, fishing, and walking free in the forest. Vu put it this way: "I think the United States different than our country, Lao. Most you don't have to follow the law you go hunting--you go free

hunting any kind of animal you want to kill. Here [the United States] you have to kill only deer, deer season; squirrel, only squirrel season. In our country any kind of animal you can kill. When we fish now, we have to get license like that. We still get fish and I take it to my mother for dry the fish in the sun."

Lu

Lu was born in the central northern section of Laos near the town of Sen Louang. Her parents have told her that she was born in 1976 but they do not remember on what specific day. Shortly after she was born she and her family left Laos for Thailand (this move probably took place in late 1976 or early in 1977). Lu has no recollection of her life in Laos but her parents told her that they moved because they were being hunted by the government.

Lu has spent most of her life in Thailand at a refugee camp named Pa Na. Prior to living at Pa Na, Lu and her family resided at the central northern refugee camp Ban Venai.

At Pa Na, Lu attended school for one year. Her mother had been encouraging her to learn cross-stitching ("Pa Ndau") so she left school and worked with her mother.

When she was not working with her mother she would play with several girls that she knew. Some of these girls were Lao but most of her friends were Hmong. As Lu's pool of

friends began to expand she started to learn Lao and Thai. Some of the girls still attended school, and when she had free time Lu had them show her math, reading, and English. One of her friends had a book that contained translations of Hmong to English phrases. Lu's father had mentioned that they would eventually resettle in the United States, so they would all have to learn English. Lu and her friend would spend hours practicing the English phrases (without the benefit of an English speaker to correct them).

Lu remembers that during the year that she attended school she had only Hmong teachers. School was set up in a barracks building. Along with most of the girls she had to sit on the floor while older boys took the few seats that were available. Lu recalls several Mien girls that would sit in the corner and talk among themselves. Lu tried to talk to them one day but they could not understand her. She asked her father who they were and he told her they were Mien and that they lived near where Lu's family had lived in Laos. "They lived beneath us" (referring to elevation) her father had told her. Lu also remembers seeing "Black Thai" who were called "Laotin." The Laotin did not associate with Lu or with her friends so she did not attempt to talk to them.

In June of 1989 Lu and her family moved to a refugee camp near the airport in the Bangkok area. There they lived for almost a year and a half before her father could secure

all of the necessary documents which would allow the family to immigrate to the United States.

In December of 1990 Lu, her mother, several sisters and brothers, and her father boarded a plane destined for San Francisco. Upon their arrival in San Francisco they were met by relatives. From there they were driven to Sierra where they now live.

Lu's first experience with an American school came when her parents enrolled her in Sierra Junior high. All of her classes there were difficult. She had several ESL classes, and PE, and she remembers taking art.

The following year (at the time of this study) Lu began attending Sierra High School. Lu, along with her friends Nngao, Mai, and Kao, were initially enrolled in several classes together (although Ngao had recently been partially mainstreamed). Lu still feels that all of her classes are difficult.

The school has classified Lu as a limited English speaker. At the time this study was started Lu's English was minimal (I used an interpreter to conduct interviews with her). When I first began observing Lu in class in the Fall of 1991, she, like her friends, were not talkative. Since that time, and despite her limited understanding of English, Lu has become more talkative. Several of her teachers have commented that Lu has developed an outgoing personality and in many instances will use this trait to

facilitate interaction between her friends and other students.

Lu does not know whether or not she will attend college. High school has proven to be difficult enough for her. She does want to continue to learn more about cross-stitching. She hopes that she and her family can sell their work at art shows and festivals.

Vang

Vang does not remember exactly where in Laos he was born. He does, however, know the year and the date of his birthday, June 20 1972.

Although Vang was still quite young when he lived in Laos he does remember farming. He and his father would go into the fields to plant rice and other crops (sometimes his brothers would take care of him while his father worked). Vang can also remember large forests that surrounded their hill-top village. Vang's older brothers used to go into the forest and hunt deer, pigs, birds, and tiger. Vang also remembers his father roasting a deer outside in the field near their house. His father dug a pit, started a large fire, then, after wrapping it in leaves, put the deer into the pit.

Vang and his family left Laos in 1975. Vang's father, his older brother, and several of his uncles had fought with Vang Pao against the Pathet Lao. Because they were Hmong

and because of their participation in the war (on the side of the US) the Pathet Lao had targeted Vang's family for execution. Many of the men and older boys in their village had also fought against the communists so after 1975 Vang's village was abandoned.

It took Vang and his family 25 days and nights to reach the Thai/Lao border. After crossing the Mekong River, Vang and his family were relocated in a temporary camp near the river. After several months at that camp Vang and his family were moved to a larger camp down river; a camp called "Ban Nan."

For Vang and his family life at Ban Nan was closely scrutinized by camp officials. Vang recalls:

> I remember the camp were [was] like two halves [outside and inside]. Almost [often] the policeman come into fool the people--almost dictate the people the middle line [camp perimeter]. . . . Some put it the middle, the people stay the middle. . . . You don't move outside. You move to some place [away from the camp] you go ask the President [camp representative]. You should ask him write something . . . the letter or proof you go another camp. If you go you alone, they put you in jail.

At Ban Nan, Vang and his family lived in a section of the camp that was occupied by Hmong. Vang does remember Mien, Lao, and Cambodian refugees at the camp as well. All of these groups, according to Vang, lived in their own sections of the camp. Early on, members of these various refugee minority groups attended their own school sessions (school conducted in their primary languages). In the late 1970s,

however, the school system at Ban Nan was unified by Thai officials. The Thai government had developed a program to teach the refugees Thai. Furthermore, the Thai government wanted to reduce the amount of ethnic tension in the camp, tensions which, according to Vang, surfaced now a again.

Despite such tensions there were occasions when the various groups would interact. Vang often had contact with members of these other groups when a soccer match was set up or if the camp representatives were gathering people together for labor duty. Vang recalls that contact with the Lao was frequent enough for him to learn a little bit of their language although he has not retained much of it.

Vang's family lived, along with other Hmong families, in a large barracks type building. Each family had their own small living space (about 10'x 10') that was separated by cloth hung from the ceiling. To cook they had to go outside to a shed that was set up for all of the families living in that particular barracks block. If anyone wanted to bathe they went down to the river.

Vang remembers that his first exposure to English came when one of the older Hmong men (a man who had fought with the Americans in Laos) started teaching it at school. This teacher used old American books that had been donated to the camp (from where Vang did not know). Along with other students, Vang practiced English phrases, working slowly to produce the correct pronunciations. Although Vang had

studied English like this for more than a year he could not understand what people were saying when he started living in the United States.

After living for several years at Ban Nan, Vang's family moved to a camp called Ban Loei. At Ban Loei the Thai government had set up a large school. There Vang learned basic math, reading, and Thai (although Thai and Lao are closely related languages, Vang remembers more of the Thai dialect than Lao). There was also a Hmong man who taught Hmong script to Hmong students. Vang remembers an American teacher who taught English at Ban Loei but this teacher did not stay for very long.

In 1988 Vang's parents obtained release papers which would allow them to immigrate to the United States. In December of 1989 Vang flew alone to St. Paul, Minnesota. His parents remained behind in Thailand due to some complications.

Upon arrival in the United States Vang was shocked by the cold weather and by the size of the city (St. Paul/ Minneapolis). Vang recalls being frightened that first day when his sister (who had been living in the US for several years) left him for three hours at a downtown mall. He waited for her to return at the place where she left him because he was afraid that if he moved he would "get lost forever." The following day Vang got in a cab and drove around the city for two hours. He could not get the driver

to stop because he could not explain where he was supposed to go and because he did not know how to tell the driver to stop.

Vang attended a high school in Minnesota. It was difficult for him.

> I go to school. It too hard for me. Mostly people speak English to me. I'm say "I don't know." "What do you say?" Hard to answer their question.

After living in Minnesota for one year, Vang and several relatives moved to Sierra. Eventually both his mother and father were able to leave Thailand. In January of 1991 they joined him in Sierra.

Vang attends Sierra High School. Because of his age and his exposure to more than a year of ESL, Vang has been partially mainstreamed. In many of his classes he is the only Hmong, so he must try to understand, as best he can, what is being said by teachers and other students. Vang has said that the biggest problem he has in his regular classes is that: "some teacher speak it too fast."

After school on Mondays and Fridays one of the Hmong aides from the college stops by to help Vang and some of the other Hmong students. Vang typically has reading assignments in Government and in his Immigrant Cultures class. Bao, a Hmong aide, and Vu would usually be there to help him on those days. Most of the time they would meet in Mrs. Murchison's class, sit in a corner, and slowly go over his lessons. At times Vang would get frustrated and close

his books: "Too hard--can't do it!"

Vang, being a Senior, must take competency exams. All limited English students must take the entire series of competency tests before they are allowed to graduate. Part of the test involves reading comprehension. Students must read a passage then answer certain questions concerning the passage. This portion of the test has been a source of anxiety for Vang because he has trouble reading at a sufficient rate to obtain comprehension for answering the questions. Vang had taken this portion of the test several times and had not yet passed.

On the whole, most of Vang's friends at Sierra high are Hmong. Unlike Vu, Vang does not have many non-Hmong friends. Before school in the mornings he will usually sit in the cafeteria alone or with a few of his Hmong friends. When the bell rings he invariably heads for his classes alone.

Ngao

Ngao was born in Xieng Khoung Province (north central Laos) on December 31, 1973. Ngao recalls that they lived high in the mountains of Laos. During the war, as her parents have told her, they had very little food. She also remembers that it rained a great deal in that area of Laos.

Her father was a farmer. During the day he would go out to the fields and sometimes would not come in until

dark. Ngao remembers her mother carrying fire wood from the nearby forest; she also remembers seeing her mother feed some of the animals that they owned.

Ngao and her family left Laos when she was eight years old (1981). Many of her neighbors had left the village several years earlier in fear of a Pathet Lao attack. Ngao's father, however, kept the family in Laos as long as he could before leaving for Thailand. In 1980, several neighboring villages had been attacked so Ngao's father and mother made the arrangements to leave Laos.

For more than three weeks, Ngao's family traveled through the mountains heading south toward the Thai/Lao border. On the Laotian side of the Mekong river they met a number of Hmong and Mien refugees who were going to attempt to cross the river at night. Ngao remembers these refugees using logs, crude rafts, and any way they could to get across the river.

After crossing the river, Ngao and her family were held by the Thai government in a temporary camp at Ban Sangao (on the banks of the Mekong river in Thailand). Shortly thereafter they were transferred to the main camp at Ban Venai, about 20 miles away. There, at Ban Venai, Ngao and her family lived for seven years.

For Ngao, Ban Venai was a stark place. Many refugees had been living there since 1975. There were no trees, the refugees having cut the last one down years earlier. What

few buildings there were all seemed to be built in the same military barracks style; and the refugee families all lived in systematic tightly packed rows with pole tents separating them.

At Ban Venai, Ngao lived with her mother, father, four uncles, four brothers and her older sister. Her sister's husband and their two children also lived with Ngao. Life was difficult for this many people to live in such a small place. Also, their food allotments barely kept the family nourished. Ngao remembers helping her mother prepare sticky rice for the rest of the family. Small portions were doled out so that everybody got a little. Meat was in short supply so when they did get it they treated the occasion almost as if it were a holiday.

At school all of Ngao's teachers were Hmong. She does not remember any American teachers. On occasion Thai officials came into the school to make inspections. The Hmong school was held in one of the long buildings in the camp. They had benches, a black board, and a map of Southeast Asia on the wall. Most of their lessons concentrated on reading and arithmetic. Ngao, and a few of the other students were able to obtain an English/Hmong phrase book (published by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC). The Hmong teacher gave them assignments from this book. Ngao and her friends spent much of their time in the mornings going over their assignments.

When Ngao turned 14 she got married. She moved in with her husband's parents in another part of the camp. A year later Ngao gave birth to her first child, a boy.

In 1988 Ngao's mother obtained the proper documents that would allow for immigration to the US. The documents did not include her father or her sister. Her father told them that he would stay in Thailand with Ngao's older sister and that he would join them later, in the United States.

After landing in San Francisco, Ngao, her husband, her mother, and her brothers got a flight to Madison, Wisconsin. In January of 1989 Ngao and her family took up residence in Oakley, Wisconsin. There Ngao attended her first American school.

Ngao was classified as a freshman. She understood very little English so she spent most of her time in ESL classes. In fact during her first year in the public schools she only took two non-ESL classes: Parenting and Art. The following year, after her English had improved, she took health, math, and history.

In the summer of 1991 Ngao and her family moved to Sierra. Ngao's mother had some relatives that lived there and she had been told that Sierra was not as cold as Wisconsin. Several weeks after arriving in Sierra, Ngao gave birth to her second child (a girl). Because of child-rearing constraints Ngao spent the 1990-91 school year at Valley continuation school. The flexible hours they granted

allowed Ngao to balance home and school responsibilities.

Ngao began attending Sierra High the following year (Fall 1991, at the time of this study). Based on her ability to speak minimal English, her age, and her previous schooling, Ngao was classified as a Senior. She was also partially mainstreamed. On her first day at school she met three other Hmong girls, Lu, Mai and Kao. They immediately became friends.

English for Lu and Kao has been difficult to acquire so Ngao usually spends time helping them with their lessons before school in the cafeteria. One of Ngao's cousins (Xia) is also a Senior at Sierra high. Xia has been living in the United States for 11 years and speaks fluent English. Often, Xia would go into the cafeteria in the mornings to help Ngao, Kao, and Lu. Xia also helps the girls in their Science class.

Ngao has expressed a sense of protectiveness for the other girls. "They are shy," she says. "Maybe I help them talk more to their teacher. Maybe I be more like Xia and coming in to help both them. Sometime they are not knowing what to do, I think they scared. Maybe I make them not so scared."

Note: Following the last of my interviews with Ngao she expressed some concern that the Hmong on campus were having trouble "blending in." Xia, who was interpreting some of Ngao's more detailed commentary, expanded by saying

that many of the Hmong on campus "don't know how to fit in." They "want to join clubs but are afraid to, and they [the Hmong] think that American kids don't understand who they are. A lot of them think we are Vietnamese because of the war, just because we look like Vietnamese. What Ngao is saying is that we just want to blend in somehow but still know that we are Hmong" (12-16-91).

CHAPTER VI

DAILY ROUTINES

In this chapter I describe the daily routines of four Sierra high Hmong students: Vu and Vang (males), and Ngao and Lu (females). In addition, the interactions between these four students and other Hmong and non-Hmong people are described. For purposes of continuity I have organized the chapter to follow the chronological sequence of a typical day at school for these four students. The descriptions in this chapter are composite vignettes, and do not represent a "true" single day in the lives of these students. Moreover, for purposes of analysis, I have selected particular events to be included in these vignettes to demonstrate recurring patterns which I observed during the course of extended observation. Thus, the reader should note that this chapter is a condensed and selective representation of these daily routines, and is not typical in the sense that one could expect to observe all of these types of interactions consistently in a single day. Also, for the sake of avoiding redundancy, I will not include descriptions of every class for every primary participating student. Inclusion is based on a segment's worth in covering an

important recurring pattern.

Before School

Vu arrived at school early, as is his habit. As he walked across campus he spotted Javier and shouted in English, "Javier! what you doing now"!

Javier smiled and walked over to Vu. Javier jokingly hit Vu on the arm and said: "You no muscle, when you go get muscle?"

Vu, laughed falling away in a defensive stance. "When my project finish, I be big--you too short."

Javier laughed. "No way! You shorter than me"!

Vu and Javier strolled over to the snack machines where they both purchased several bags of chips and a couple of candy bars. With their snacks in-hand they made their way over to the red bench just outside the library.

There they joined Souvanna (a Lao student) and Kou (a Hmong student), who were talking about the Raider's game (L.A Raiders football team). As Vu and Javier approached Vu said [in English]: "The Raiders no good"!

Souvanna, retorted: "Ahhh! the Forty Niner no good--real bad totally."

Kou laughed a little but said nothing.

Vu mentioned to the others that he had trouble getting over to the Mall last weekend because, "no one have car--when you going to get car"? [directing his comments to

Souvanna]

"When you get money to me" replied Souvanna sarcastically [in English].

Javier laughed at Vu and said "how come you no walk"?

"Too far! maybe go ride my bike, but it broken now," replied Vu.

The bell for first period rang. Vu and Javier walked off to their welding class. As they were walking away Vu turned to Kou and said something in Hmong. Kou looked at Souvanna briefly then lowered his head and chuckled.

Across campus Ngao and Lu were sitting at a table in the cafeteria talking to their friends Kao and Mai. All four girls had brightly colored ribbons in their hair, and each was wearing blouses with the combined colors of red, blue, and green. Their quilt jackets had Hmong embroidered patterns of birds, trees, tigers, and deer sewn into the cloth.

As they spoke [in Hmong], they often giggled and pointed at each other. At one point Ngao had Kao turn around and face away from her so she [Ngao] could braid Kao's hair. Mrs. Field, a teacher who happened to be walking through the cafeteria, came over to the girls and said: "Oh that's really pretty [pointing to the jackets]. Did you do that?" The girls stopped talking and focused their eyes on the table in front of them and did not reply. Mrs. Field pointed to a tiger design on Ngao's jacket: "Is

that a tiger? or a lion"? Lu giggled a little but did not look up. Finally, without making eye contact with Mrs. Field, Lu looked over at Ngao's jacket and said, "Cat." Mrs. Field smiled and commented, "Well it sure is pretty." As Mrs. Field walked away the girls slowly raised their heads and watched her. As soon as she was at the other end of the long cafeteria table Ngao, Lu, Mai, and Kao began to talk again.

After several more minutes of chatting, Ngao picked up her lesson book from her ESL class and started practicing some of her English vocabulary words. Mai, Kao, and Lu leaned over to see which words she was working on, and the other girls began to quietly practice with her.

At the other end of the table from where Ngao, Lu and the other girls were practicing their vocabulary words, sat Vang. Vang was reading Alex Haley's novel Roots, a book assigned to him for his Immigrant Cultures class. Intently he looked at the page in front of him and tried to sound out various words as he read.

Vang usually arrives at school quite early and typically goes to either the cafeteria or to Mrs. Murchison's ESL class. On this particular morning he chose to go into the cafeteria to read alone. The cafeteria is a kind of sanctuary for Vang, as other Hmong students, along with non-Hmong ESL students, often congregate before school in Mrs. Murchison's class for informal chatting. On this

day Vang had spent most of the morning (almost an hour) on the top half of one page, working slowly from one word to the next (he worked primarily on trying to sound out the words).

When the bell for first period rang, Vang closed his book noting the page number and walked out of the cafeteria. After leaving the cafeteria, Vang walked across the quad to the science building were his first period Life Science class was held.

Ngao, Lu and the other girls picked up their books and, staying close to one another, started off for their ESL class.

First Period

As Ngao and Lu approached the door to Mrs. Murchison's ESL class, the door bolted open and six Hispanic students came out talking and laughing energetically. The Hmong girls backed off and waited until the tardy bell was just about to ring before they entered the classroom. Inside, they went to their usual place near the chalk board and sat quietly. Across the room five Hispanic students were listening to a radio and talking to one another regarding Miguel's new girlfriend (the radio was tuned to an all Spanish speaking station). One of the boys was holding hands with one of the Hispanic girls while another boy was singing along with a song that was playing on the radio.

After the tardy bell rang, Mrs. Murchison moved to the podium in the front of the room and began to settle the class: "Okay, can I have everyone's attention up front here? Jorge! that's a pretty coat. Let's see if we can be more quiet now." [she waited quietly as some of the students 'shsssed' one another] After a few minutes all of the students had sat down and Mrs. Murchison began her lesson.

Vu and Javier entered Mr. Norman's welding class. Both students went directly to their lockers and put on their overalls and hung their protective goggles around their necks. Vu then went over to a welding station at the back of the shop and, after putting on his goggles, turned on a welding torch. From where I was sitting, all I could see was Vu's silhouette and bright white and blue bands of light shooting up and out from around Vu's head. Orange sparks flew as Vu worked. At one point Vu turned his torch off and walked over to a barrel of water sitting next to the door. The water hissed as he dipped a piece of hot glowing metal in the barrel. On his way back to his station he stopped to talk to me. "What are you making," I asked him.

"Wet bench," he said.

"A wet bench?"

"Yes."

I was a little confused and wasn't sure what a "wet bench was." Later, Mr. Norman, the welding teacher, told me

that Vu was working on a "weight bench" for body building. This must have been what Vu was referring to as "his project," when he was talking to Souvanna and Kou earlier that morning.

Vang set his books down next to Kou's on the lab desk in front of them. When the tardy bell rang Vang and Kou were already seated. Several Anglo students (AS) hurried through the door and rushed to their seats in order to avoid being counted as tardy. The student teacher (ST) spotted the students, shook his head and grinned as he made "T" marks in his attendance book.

As soon as all the students were in their seats the student teacher read the bulletin:

ST: For those students who need to take the ASCAB test, talk to Mr. S. . . . in the councilor's office. Do it right away, don't put it off. Sports! those who want to join the Ski club make sure you get your applications in early; we are expecting to have an early winter this year and you know what that means! The "word of the day" is: "adjourn" which means to postpone or break off.

After reading the bulletin the student teacher announced to the class that, "I'd like you to keep track of your own grades--keep track of total numbers and use the formula I gave you."

As the student teacher was going over the procedures for having the students keep track of their own grades, Vang was drawing a picture on a scrap piece of paper. Kou sat with his legs dangling along side the tall lab stool and he

stared at the floor.

After explaining the grading procedures, the student teacher began his lesson:

ST: Okay, let's get started. James, tell me how your joints move.

AS: They move by nerve impulses and stimulus--I think.

ST: What about muscle opposition? Ask about how sea slugs and sea anemones move.

AS: Muscle contraction?

ST: Yes, well--it involves contraction and something else.

AS: Expansion?

ST: Yea! You can't have contraction without the opposite which is expansion. Expansion and contraction is the basic mechanism in terms of muscle behavior that all animals use. Cynthia! what is respiration?

AS: Don't know. It's like when you breathe?

ST: Well, it involves more than that. The whole process, now watch this, it's easy to understand, involves taking oxygen--which is what Patrick?

AS: O2.

ST: Right!--taking oxygen and food, and converting those into energy and producing waste products. For example, with earthworms oxygen is taken in and diffused through the skin. [a few students express their disgust--euh!]

The student teacher continued his lesson in this manner, asking questions and either calling on specific students for answers, leaving the question open and waiting for responses, or answering his own questions in rhetorical fashion. Throughout the class period Kou and Vang sat quietly. They did not volunteer to answer any questions, nor were they called upon.

Ngao and Lu sat quietly as Mrs. Murchison cut lengths of yarn. As soon as she was finished cutting she asked all of her students to come to the center of the room. Reluctant at first, Ngao, Lu, and the other Hmong girls walked to the center of the room. The students grouped around Mrs. Murchison. Lazario joked, "No Ms M., don't want Miguel's. I get Gloria's."

"No Lazario. We'll let the yarn decide. Okay, girls grab one end. Boys! Come on and grab an end and when I let go follow the yarn to your partner. Come on Miguel. You understand what I'm saying--you've been here long enough" [Mrs. Murchison smiles and winks at Miguel]. Mrs. Murchison let go of the yarn. When she let go most of the students laughed as they traced the lengths of yarn to their partners. Lu was to do her vocabulary lesson with Miguel. Ngao had discovered that she would be working with Gabriel.

Lu looked around her nervously. She tried several times to make eye contact with Ngao, who was sitting across the room. Finally she opened her book and pointed to Miguel's book. Miguel turned and shouted to Mrs. Murchison "No Ms. M. puedo yo travajar con Gloria?"

"No Miguel, come on now. This will be good for you; and please use English."

"Ahh no Ms. M.. Please?"

"Miguel"! [Mrs. Murchison became stern with him]

"Okay Ms. M.."

Lu was already working on her words. She tried to form the words with her mouth. She would then stopped to take in their meaning. Miguel picked up his book and opened it.

"Say this," said Miguel pointing to the word 'vacuum.'

"Bakoom," replied Lu.

"This one," pointing to 'dusting.'

"Dussng." Lu did not look directly at Miguel.

"This one"! Miguel was pointing to the word 'repair.'

"Ree--pah," said Lu slowly and with some uncertainty.

The lesson went on like this for about fifteen minutes. Kao eventually came over and began to talk to Lu about the lesson. Lu helped her with several of the words. Miguel got up, went over to get a hall pass (a small piñata) and left the class for several minutes. When he returned he joined Gloria and Javier in a corner of the room. There they chatted. Occasional bursts of laughter could be heard as they talked in the corner.

After allowing several minutes of informal chatting, Mrs. Murchison announced: "Okay, everyone to your seats. Let's go over the lesson."

After the students had returned to their seats Mrs. Murchison began asking students questions about the assignments.

"Lazario! What do you use when you want to dust off a shelf?"

"Ah dooster."

"Good, that's good. Lu? What is it that you use when you want to get dirt up off the floor?"

Lu looked confused. She stared at her desk. Finally she looked over to Ngao for help. Ngao pointed to Lu's book.

"Baa--cum," she said slowly.

"/Va/ /koom/." Mrs. Murchison repeated the word "vacuum" slowly several times and allowed Lu to practice saying it.

Second Period

When the bell rang ending first period, Vu and Javier jumped toward the large metal door at the front of the welding shop. Like the other students they left the shop in a hurry because the walk to the main part of the campus was a long one. As they walked across campus they talked rapidly. Vu mentioned that one of the Anglo students was working on a trailer in welding. Vu said he was going to ask Mr. Norman if he could build a trailer for his next project.

When they reached the middle of the quad area they parted company. Javier walked toward the main building and Vu went to his locker near the southwing.

Vu shoved his coat into his locker and then pulled his history book out from under a pile of books and papers. Vu stood with his book and waited for Javier. Several minutes

passed before Javier came by. Vu and Javier continued to kid one another about Vu's project in welding. They raced around the corner and entered Mr. Roy's sheltered history class.

Vang and Kou went in different directions as they left their science class. Vang walked over to his locker, got his Government book and, without stopping to talk to anyone, hurried off to his Government class.

In Vang's Government class the chairs were arranged in a semicircle. Along one of the walls, next to a book shelf, was a group of chairs that were usually left vacant. Vang sat down in one of the chairs in that section of the room. Across from him sat a large group of Anglo students. In the center of the room was a podium, just in front of the teachers desk.

Mrs. Thomas, the Government teacher, waited until everyone was seated.

"Who is going to share something with us today? Karen, I believe you're up."

As Karen got up to go to the podium a boy in the back of the room shouted "She's going to tell us about legalizing Marijuana"!

"No I'm not! Shut up Kyle."

Several students laughed.

Vang looked up briefly to see what the commotion was, then turned his eyes down and fixed them on his government

book.

Karen stood at the podium and waited for the class to quiet down. Finally Mrs. Thomas spoke up: Let's have it a little more quiet in here. Some of you could learn to be a little more respectful--come on."

Karen began:

> About the election results from yesterday, the bond issue thing for the library didn't pass. I think it's really sad if we get to the point when we won't have any libraries, cause you'll have to buy all your own books and things. The other thing, because of the election, is that the schools are going to get less money so they won't be able to do special things for our education.

Mrs. Thomas interrupted: "Can you be a little more specific? Which initiatives are you referring to?"

"I don't remember the numbers but I read what the . . . the. . . ."

"The impact?" said Mrs. Thomas.

"Yea, the impact."

"Does anyone know which initiatives we are talking about? Janeane?"

"Well, 14 concerns appropriations for Sierra's library and 12 is for local property taxes."

"Good! What would be the impacts? Again Janeane?"

"Well, my mother says that the library would probably stay open but they would have to cut back on the hours it's open. But 'twelve' is going to force us to ask the state for more money for education and because we have a deficit

we're probably not going to get the money."

"At this point we are not sure what will happen." commented Mrs. Thomas. "There may be other revenues somewhere but times are bad all over. Thank you Karen." Mrs. Thomas nodded for Karen to sit down.

As this was going on Vang sat and read in his Government book. On occasion he would look up to see what Mrs. Thomas and the others were doing.

Ngao, Lu, Kao, and Mai hurried from Mrs. Murchison's class to the bathroom across the hall. When they came out of the restroom they walked around the corner to Mr. Roy's history class. They typically entered his class just before the tardy bell and they were usually together.

"Good morning ladies. Just in time again I see."

Vu and Doua were sitting at the front of the class. Javier was sitting near the wall. Ngao and the other girls sat behind Vu and Doua.

Vu and Doua were looking over the sports page and conversing [in Hmong] when Mr. Roy said: "Okay get out your books. Some of you can get the ones on the back shelf." At that moment a student teacher walked in and approached Mr. Roy.

"Do you want me to take them now?" she asked.

"Yea, why don't you go ahead. Here's the map. Just make sure they practice knowing which state is which--they had a lot of trouble the other day. Okay girls, time to

go."

Diane, the student teacher, walked Lu, Kao, and Mai across the hall to Mr. Bennet's room. This was Mr. Bennet's conference period so the room was empty. The girls sat down toward the back of the room and Diane had them get out their maps.

D: Okay, look at the top of your maps. See the top? This is the top. Lu? Can you tell me what state this is?

L: Ma oon.

D: Maine? Try it again. Maine.

L: Ma en.

D: Okay, that's pretty good. Kao, do you want to try it? Which state, or colony, excuse me, is this?

K: Mai nh.

D: Oh that's pretty good. Now listen to me: 'Maine.' It's a big colony. A big one. It gets really cold there. Let's move down the line a bit here. What is this state? Mai?

M: /Pa/ /nis/ /vana/

D: Pennsylvan/ia/. Say it--all of you.
[they all attempted to say it]
Now Lu, by yourself. Pennsylva/nia

L: /Pa/snee/ /bana/

D: Good! Pennsyl/vain/ya/ Yea, Pennsyl/vain/ya.

Diane continued the lesson in this same fashion. As she pronounced the names of each of the colonies, she emphasized the sounds formally and succinctly. Before moving on to the next one, however, she pronounced the names in the common form. When she shifted to the informal

pronunciation Lu, Kao, and Mai got puzzled looks on their faces.

Across the hall Mr. Roy was conducting a similar lesson. He had a large map of the 13 American colonies on the black board, and each of the students had a work sheet and a map. Mr. Roy would point to a colony, ask a student to pronounce the name of the colony, and have the student identify the colony as either New England, Middle, or Southern. After spending several minutes going over information on each of the colonies with the class, Mr. Roy let the students work on their worksheets.

Vu, Doua, and Ngao worked quietly for several minutes. After a number of minutes had passed (about five) Ngao tapped Vu on the shoulder. She pointed to one of the questions on her work sheet. Speaking in Hmong, Vu helped her. Later that day I asked Vu to tell me what she had been asking. His reply was: "She don't know what was 'Puritan.' I tell her what Puritan is Religion and people what live New England. She tell me more what questions."

Doua often had questions for Vu also. Doua had asked Vu about the term "Quaker." Vu had told him: "Was religion people what don't like war and didn't have friends with the Puritans so they move."

Vu, Doua, and Ngao continued to work this way until the end of the period. Vu would answer the questions on his work sheet and Ngao and Doua would ask either Vu or Mr. Roy

for help if they needed it. The following day Vu got his work sheet back. Out of twenty items he had missed six. Ngao had missed eight and Doua had missed seven.

Snack

Usually after second period all students are given 10 minutes for a snack period. Snack period on this day, however, was being extended to 20 minutes so that the football team and the cheerleaders could have a Pep Rally.

After grabbing some more chips and candy at the snack machines Vu, Doua, and Javier made their way through the crowd of students to the far side of the quad. The Sierra high Pep Band started to play and eventually the cheerleaders began to lead the crowd in cheers for the football team. Souvanna and Kou joined Vu, Doua, and Javier behind the crowd. After taking in the event for a few minutes they strolled over to Mrs. Murchison's room. Inside they were greeted by Mrs. Murchison. "Vu! your not going to the rally?"

"Ah no, Ms. M. It too noisy."

"What about you Doua and Souvanna?"

"No" [they all laugh]

San Se [a Lao student] invited Souvanna to play a game of checkers with him. Vu, Kou, and Doua walked across the room where several other Hmong students were sitting. One of the students had a Walkman. Vu asked him what he was

listening to. "Hammer"! The student shared the headphones with Vu for several minutes. Doua and Kou got a checker board from one of the other Hmong students. They sat down in a corner and started to play. Near the door a group of Hispanic students were listening to the radio. An all Mexican station was playing. Javier recognized one of the songs and began to sing out loud.

"Javier! you should go on the radio," said Mrs. Murchison jokingly.

"Yo no Ms. M."

Just outside of Mrs. Murchison's classroom, on a nearby bench, sat Ngao, Lu, Kao, and Mai. Mai sat with her back to Lu while Lu made braids in Mai's hair. Ngao had brought some "sticky rice" (a type of glutinose rice eaten by Hmong and other Southeast Asians) from home, which she shared with the other girls. They chatted quietly in Hmong as other students rushed by them going to and from the Pep Rally.

Third Period

When the bell for third period rang the halls were once again filled with students rushing to get to their lockers or to their next class.

Ngao, Lu, and the other girls left the bench where they had been sitting and walked across campus to their sheltered Science class. Bao, a Hmong teacher's aide, was already seated at one of the lab tables when the girls came in. At

the front desk, Xia, a Hmong student assistant (a senior), was setting up the attendance book to get ready to take roll. Mr. Stephens, the science teacher, was laying down a stack of work sheets and cross-word puzzles on one of the front tables. "Please come up and get one of each" he said.

After all the students had gone up to get the handouts and returned to their seats, he began his lesson.

"All of you remember the experiment we did yesterday don't you? Mai? You remember don't you? [he smiles at her and she giggles]. Lazario, what do we call this?"

"A . . . A . . ."

"Hector. Help him out."

"A flask."

"Good!"

"Lu! What did we put in the flask?"

Lu looked at a drawing she had made the day before. "Wadrr?" Lu looked over at Bao for help. Bao nodded, then spoke to Lu in Hmong.

"What kind of water?" said Mr. Stephens.

Bao continued to talk to Lu. As Bao explained the question to her, Lu listened intently. Finally Lu looked up: "dirddeee wadrr."

"Good"!

Mr. Stephens continued his lesson like this for the first half of the period. After he had finished with this question and answer portion of the lesson he had the class

work in groups. He first went over to a group of Hispanic students and helped them with their work sheet. He took with him a large piece of white paper and several colored magic markers. He drew a picture of the apparatus he had used the previous day and slowly explained the functions of each of the steps of the experiment.

After working with the Hispanic students for several minutes he moved over to where the Hmong students were sitting. Bao immediately asked him a few questions.

"They're having trouble with 'condensation.' Can you tell them some other examples?"

"Oh, okay. Let's see. Look at your drawings. When the vapor goes through this tube, what happens to it?"

Bao translated. Ngao finally said "cold."

"Right, but what happens to the vapor?"

Again Bao explained the question to Ngao.

Ngao replied to Bao in Hmong. Bao turned to Mr. Stephens and said: "She say that because it gets cold, the vapor turns into water."

"Yes that's what happens. How would she say it in English?" Ngao understood the question and slowly attempted to formulate an answer: "the wader . . . cold . . . back."

"And what was it before"?

"Bapor."

"Good" replied Mr. Stephens. The girls looked at each other and giggled.

Vu entered his plant science class just before the bell rang. Vu, Javier, and Doua sat down next to one another at a long table. Ms. Baker stood at a podium which was situated in front of the chalk board.

Most students were sitting at their places talking when Ms. Baker, in a loud booming voice said: "Okay! we've got some congratulations to go out to those of you who went to the plant show this last weekend. Man, I'm proud of you guys." Ms. Baker looked to be in her mid-20s. She was dressed in Levis, had on cowboy boots and a western style shirt. As she talked she kept her hands stuck in her back pockets.

"Yep ya did pretty good. Sam back there took away second place for one a his plants and Vu got third place. Vu was also a judge." Vu laughed and ducked his head in embarrassment. Javier punched him lightly on the shoulder.

Following her commendations to the students who participated in the show, Ms. Baker pointed to an outline on the board and began her lesson. As she moved through the lesson she spoke rapidly and in an informal manner.

B: Who can tell me what the 'N' is? Okay, Jeff?

J: Nitrogen.

B: Yep! That's it. What about 'K.' This is a toughy because the 'K' isn't the same letter at the start of the word for the element. Who's gonna try it? Okay, Pam?

P: Potassium?

B: Yep! How come it's indicated by a 'K'? Anyone? [no reply] It comes from Latin. The Latin word for Potassium begins with a 'K' and we've just kept it over. Now, here's an easy one. What's 'O'? Anyone? Jeff again.

J: Oxygen.

B: Yep.

Toward the end of the period Ms. Baker gave the class a short quiz. The quiz covered the material she had just discussed.

Fourth Period

Vu, Vang, Ngao, and Lu all have Mrs. Murchison's ESL class for fourth period. The seats in Mrs. Murchison's class are divided up into two sections with walking space in between, in the middle of the room. Ngao, Lu, Kao, and Mai, all sat together near the chalk board. Vang usually sits near the door. Vu almost always sits near a side wall next to a group of Hispanic students.

Gloria, Mrs. Murchison's student aide, usually takes role while Mrs. Murchison sets up her lesson. This is largest ESL class of the day for Mrs. Murchison; it includes both mainstreamed and partially mainstreamed students. As Mrs. Murchison wrote the agenda for the class period on the board, students conversed energetically. After she was finished Mrs. Murchison walked over to me and said: "It's always this way before lunch. They have lots of energy."

After setting down her lesson book she began by

announcing that: "Okay most of you know what today is. It's speech day. I hope that all of you who were supposed to be ready have prepared your speeches." The students called back: "No Ms. M. not today! Let Esteban do his, he has a new girls friend"! The class laughs. Vu puts in: "Maybe girl friend go up Sacramento don't want see him"! There is more laughter.

"Come on now. You people are so afraid. What are you afraid of! Oh my, look at you Manuel, you won't look at me. Why won't you look at me." Mrs. Murchison joked with him.

Javier responded: "We don't do it today, okay? Maybe the other day."

"No comprende" shouted Vu.

The entire class erupted in laughter. Even Mrs. Murchison couldn't hold back a laugh. "Oh Vu, you are learning Spanish? Is Javier teaching you Spanish?"

"Sometime maybe," replied Vu with a large smile on his face.

At that moment Bao, the Hmong aide walked in. "What's going on here"?

"Oh, Vu is teaching us Spanish," said Mrs. Murchison.

Bao looked at Vu. "Do you know Spanish now?"

"No comprende," replied Vu.

Again the class erupted in laughter. After a few moments Mrs. Murchison settled the class down. She asked for volunteers. Javier was first. Then came Lazario and

Esteban. Mrs. Murchison kept asking for volunteers and would occasionally look in the direction of the Hmong and Lao students. Finally Bao shouted out: "I have a question! Vang here is ready!" Vang skwirmed in his seat and, after an uncomfortable moment said: "Okay, I do." Mrs. Murchison and several of the other students applauded as Vang took his place behind the podium.

"My name it Vang. I am it from Lao but I live in it Thailand most of it many year. I come it from refugee because in my country many fighting. In Thailand I go to school. It many time I get problem and come to Minnesota."

Mrs. Murchison asked Vang to tell the class about his taxi ride.

"Oh [Vang laughs], I get taxi. Maybe he don't understand me saying go all St. Paul two hour."

"Vang didn't know how to tell him where or when to stop so he [the driver] kept going," put in Mrs. Murchison.

"Anyway he keep going. I don't know maybe English."

Manuel shouted from the back of the room: "You have girl friend?"

"No. Maybe right now no girl friend."

"You guys have a one tracked mind," said Mrs. Murchison looking at Manuel. "Vang, when did you come to Sierra?"

"Maybe last year. From Minnesota. It not so cold here."

"Does anyone have any questions for Vang?"

Gloria shouted out: "What car you drive?"

"Maybe sometime my cousin car. He drive me to school."

"Thank you Vang. That was very good. See? It's not so bad," said Mrs. Murchison as Vang went to his seat. "Okay that's enough for the day. We'll finish them up tomorrow. The rest of the period is homework time. Try to use the time wisely." Mrs. Murchison turned and said something in Spanish to Lazario and Manuel. They were getting out of there seats and were heading for the radio until she spoke to them.

Bao took Vang, Ngao, Lu, Kao, and Mai into a corner to help them with work from their other classes. Vu turned his desk around to face Doua and Javier. They began to work on lessons they had been assigned in Mr. Roy's class. Vu pointed to a picture in his history book and Doua provided an answer (usually in English). When he needed clarification, Doua switched to Hmong. Javier was less attentive. He would lean over the row of chairs next to them and poke Lazario, who was working with Estaban and Lupe.

Bao had Ngao and the other girls working on their science work sheets. Vang was working on an assignment from Government. His assignment was a series of questions regarding "Marbury vs. Madison." Bao was trying to explain to him what "Judicial Review" was. Feeling frustrated she walked over to me: "Can you help us; we are having trouble

with Vang's Government stuff."

"Sure."

Bao, Vang and I pulled our chairs away from the wall. I started out by trying to remember what I knew about Marbury vs. Madison. After skimming through the section dealing with Judicial Review I started in.

"Vang do you know what a Judge is?"

Bao said something to him in Hmong then she turned to me. "There is not really a word for judge but we have ways of describing important people who decide matters."

"Okay," I said, what if a dispute breaks out between two families in a Hmong village. Who would settle the dispute?"

"It would go to the elders," said Bao.

"In a way, then, your elders sometimes are like a council of judges.

"Yes, they are just like that; but, what is 'Judicial Review' then?"

"Well, our Supreme court would be like your elders, but we have other parts of our government which have power too. For example, the President and the Congress are separate from the Supreme Court. Judicial Review is the source of power that Supreme Court judges have that balance their power with the other two branches--to keep them from getting too powerful."

Bao went on to explain this to Vang.

Lunch

The cafeteria is a long rectangular building with large panel windows on both of its lengthwise sides. Inside, in the middle of the building is a large dinning area where long rows of tables are situated. On the south side of the room is the kitchen area and the food line. This part of the cafeteria has been partitioned off from the main dining hall. Just outside the partition, in a corner of the dining hall, is a small salad bar. At the opposite end of the dining hall, on the north side of the room, is a stage.

On most days the Southeast Asian students sat at the table nearest the window at the opposite side of the room from where the entrance is located (see map, Figure 2). On this particular day Vu was sitting in the middle section of this table. Around him were Souvanna, Kou, Doua, and other Lao, and Hmong students (all male). At the far end of the table, near the kitchen, sat Lu, Kao, Ngao, and Mai.

Vu was talking vigorously as he intermittently took bites of a hamburger. Vu was talking to the group of students that immediately surrounded him so he spoke, primarily, in English: "Why you always eat rice at school." He directed his comments to Souvanna.

"Rice not bad," replied Souvanna. "How come you always eating, eating, eating the big food, but you never big?"

They all laugh.

"I try make it so I fast. Maybe you can race," retorted Vu, laughing as he talked.

Doua said something to Vu in Hmong. All of the Hmong students laughed. The Lao students looked at each other and started speaking Lao. Vu hesitated to listen then replied in Lao. Souvanna smiled and said in English: "Maybe we get money for soccer game--Hmong vs Lao."

Vu smiled and backed down. "No, maybe mixed--too many fighting."

Vang stood near the salad bar eating a bowl of salad. Doua left the table where he had been sitting and walked over to talk to Vang. Later that day Vang told me that Doua had told him about the proposed soccer game and that the Lao had wanted it to be a "Lao vs. Hmong" game. Some of the Hmong did not mind but some Hmong students were afraid that a fight might break out. I asked Vang what he thought:

"Maybe get fighting. Don't know. Sometime maybe it alright. I don't know."

When Vang finished his salad he picked up his books and left to go to Mrs. Murchison's class.

Ngao pulled a small piece of cloth from her bag and started to work cross-stitching. Lu, Kao, and Mai talked to each other in rapid, high pitched exchanges. In between the verbal exchanges were short bursts of laughter. They spoke entirely in Hmong and did not speak to anyone outside of their small enclave.

Mrs. Murchison sat at her desk eating a small salad which she had brought from home. Several Hispanic students had a radio going in a far corner of the room. Two male Hmong students sat near Mrs. Murchison's desk and played checkers.

One of Mrs. Murchison's aides came in to talk to her about a problem that had arisen with two of the Hispanic boys. Earlier that day, Mrs. Murchison had sent the boys down to the office because they had been disrespectful. The aide told Mrs. Murchison that the Vice Principal (who spoke fluent Spanish) had "a long talk with the boys, and they would be different when they returned."

"Okay," said Mrs. Murchison. "This has been developing for a long time. I like both of them but they need to know there are limits."

Occasionally Mrs. Murchison would walk over to the Hispanic students at the far side of the room and have them turn the radio down.

Fifth Period

After the bell ending lunch rang, Vu went to his locker to deposit his coat. He then used the stairway to go up to the second floor to get to his typing class.

In Vu's typing class the desks were arranged in long neat rows. At every desk was an electric typewriter and a stand to hold copy. Vu sat at a desk in the back of the

room next to two male Lao students. Mr. Wheeler stood at the podium taking roll, occasionally glancing up over his bifocals at the class. After he finished taking role he addressed the class: "Would you please turn to lesson #26 on page 82 for your timed typing. Now I know the lesson has 'numbers,' but don't slow down, just reach for them. Okay? Is everybody on the right page, and do you see where to start? [pause] Begin!"

Vu and the two Lao students plucked slowly at their typewriters. When Mr. Wheeler called "Stop"! Vu kept going. Mr. Wheeler let Vu and the two Lao students continue at their own pace.

Mr. Wheeler set up another timed lesson. Again, Vu and the two Lao students worked through the lesson at their own speed. The final lesson was not timed. The class was instructed to type a copy of a letter (in the book) and to type for accuracy, not speed. As the students worked on this assignment, Mr. Wheeler circulated and helped students with problems.

At one point during the class period one of the Lao students leaned over and asked Vu a question. Vu listened and shook his head as if to say "I don't know." Vu then raised his hand and Mr. Wheeler came over to help. As Mr. Wheeler provided a solution to the problem, Vu waited and listened. As Mr. Wheeler walked away Vu turned to the Lao student and, in Lao, explained what Mr. Wheeler had said.

After this exchange, Vu, and the two students sitting next to him, continued to work slowly and quietly until the bell rang. Leaving class Vu spoke to no one. He entered the hallway outside and walked to his business class which was just down the hall.

Vang dressed quickly for P.E. As he entered the gym, he picked up a jump rope. All of the students in the gym used jump ropes to warm up. After several minutes, Vang's P.E. teacher, Mr. Robeson, walked into the gym. Mr. Robeson carried a clip board with him and a whistle hung around his neck. After several minutes Mr. Robeson barked out: "Okay! I want to see all of you over here on these seats in one minute."

The students rushed over and sat in the section of the bleachers where Mr. Robeson was standing.

"Okay, I have something to say to you before you get started. About the 'Pickle Ball' test. Some of you bombed it--I mean bombed it real bad. Now the test was on rules. How you goin to play a game if you don't know the rules? Ughh? It's just like volleyball now; it's a game that can be destroyed real quick if you don't know the rules--especially if you keep getting into the net. You ain't Tarzan and Jane so for God's sake don't swing on the net. The other thing that burns me is ball hogging. We always have one 'hot-shot' on a team. DON'T DO THAT! Let everyone have a piece of the pie."

Vang and Javier were sitting next to each other as Mr. Robeson delivered his speech. Through it all they sat quietly and stared at the floor. When Mr. Robeson had finished, he pointed to the nets and said: "Okay get going--let the girls pick the teams today."

Vang and Javier stayed together and formed a doubles team. They had been matched up with two Lao girls. Vang rolled the ball under the net as a way of saying "You serve first." Little was said as they played. On occasion, Vang spiked the ball (hit it downward from over the net). This sent the girls racing off after the ball. Vang and Javier exchanged glances and smiled when this occurred. The girls, upon their return, said nothing and either rolled the ball under the net or served it.

Ngao and Lu, along with Kao and Mai, had Mrs. Murchsion's ESL class for fifth and sixth periods. In these class periods, the number of students was small (between 12 and 18). These last two periods were designed for "Limited English Proficiency" (LEP) students only; that is those students who knew little or no English. In these classes Mrs. Murchison concentrated more on using language in conjunction with social interaction. Many of the lessons involved conversations, getting up in front of the class to talk, or using music to allow students to interact more freely.

On this particular day Ngao had brought in an audio

tape to play for the class. Lazario put the tape in the player for Ngao. She then went to the center of the room and stood while the music (an American folk ballad) played. When the music was finished Mrs. Murchison said: "Oh that was beautiful. Did you select that?"

Ngao looked at Mrs. Murchison and smiled.

Mrs. Murchison repeated: "Ngao? Did you select that? Choose the music?"

"No. Mai."

"Oh, well it sure is nice." Lazario took the tape out and handed it to Ngao. "Can I see it?" Ngao handed the tape to Mrs. Murchison; she quickly wrote down the name of the tape.

"Well thank you Ngao. That was very nice. Today I want all of you to work on your poems. Lazario? You are working on the poem about the 'cat' right?"

"Si Ms. M."

"What about you Kao and Lu? The same? Ms. Gonzales? [teacher's aide] Would you work with the ladies" (referring to Lu, Ngao, Kao, and Mai).

Ms. Gonzales sat down next to the girls and went over the poem with them. She would have them read each line, and would correct their pronunciation as they worked through the verses. After they had gone through the poem several times, Ms. Gonzales asked the girls how to say 'hello' in Hmong.

"Nee ou, zoe," said Ngao.

"Nee go?" Ms. Gonzales replied.

"Nee ou, zoe."

Ms. Gonzales and the girls laughed.

"What about in Lao?" said Ms. Gonzales. Ngao said hello in Lao and again they all laughed.

Mrs. Murchison spoke up from where she had been sitting behind her desk: "Boy! a lot of language going on here today. Hmong girls teaching a Hispanic Lao? Boy." They all laughed.

Sixth Period

After taking a shower, Vang dressed, walked out of the gym, and made his way to Mr. Lang's ceramics class. Mr. Lang's classroom was actually two rooms. Part of a wall had been taken out so that one could walk easily between the two rooms. One room was used as a classroom, the other as a work space. The work room was set up with potter's wheels and large tables for working clay.

After most of the students had entered and sat down, Mr. Lang circulated around the room and passed out color pictures of famous European paintings. "We don't spend a lot of time on sculpture--we usually do pots--but I want you to have some exposure to some of the finer aspects of clay use and design. What I want you to do is look at these pictures, draw up a reasonable design, and think about how you would express that design in clay."

Vang was sitting at a table with an Anglo girl. I was sitting in the back of the room next to a group of Anglo students. One of the Anglo girls came up to me and said: "What are you doing? You a student teacher or something?"

"No. Just observing."

"Are you studying students?"

"Not really, just what goes on in the classroom. I'm mainly working with Hmong students."

"With what?"

"Hmong students. Southeast Asians?"

"Oh yea. Chinese. We got lots of 'em here. They keep moving in."

Some of the Anglo students were having fun with several of the prints. Goya's painting of the Nude Woman was among the prints. "Whoooah! What are we learning here? Pornography? I don't know man, she looks a little chunky to me."

"Yea, but you like um chunky, Joe." They laughed. Vang did not look up.

In front of Vang was a small pile of prints. He picked up a representation of one of Degas paintings of a dancer. The girl who had been sitting across from him said: "Let me see." Vang handed her the picture. "Hmm, this is really nice. God, look at the lighting. This would be hard to do, though."

Vang nodded. "Yea, it real hard."

The girl picked up another picture and handed it to Vang. It was a picture of Vincent Van Gogh's "Postman."

"This one would be much easier," she said.

"Vang looked at it and smiled. "What maybe the pipe is easy. But . . . [Vang pointed to his chin to communicate the idea of whiskers].

"No, they wouldn't be a problem. Just use a knife for texturing."

"Oh yea, maybe it working." Vang smiled and looked at the picture.

For most of the students the rest of the period was spent looking over pictures, running up to Mr. Lang for his assessment of the feasibility of producing a statue from the prints, or finishing up previous projects. Several times Vang went up to Mr. Lang to ask him about a print. Just before the bell rang Vang went over to a table and picked up one of his projects. He brought it over to show me. It was a tall vase with a coil wrapped around the outside. A face had been sculpted into the neck of the vase. "This for Ms. M's. birthday next week. I give it to her."

"That's great," I said. "How long did it take you to make it."

"Maybe two week. Not so hard."

Vu and Chen Yao (a female Chinese student) sat in the front row of their accounting class. To Vu's left was a Black American student. Several seats behind Vu sat a group

of Hmong female students; all of whom could speak fluent English. Mrs. Bowen, the accounting teacher, walked around from behind her desk and passed out a set of charts. "These are for you to take home. Most of you know where you are. If you need help just raise your hand, or if I don't see you get up quietly and get me."

Vu and Chen Yao worked silently. Occasionally, when problems arose, they would speak to each other (in English). Before class Chen Yao had announced to Vu that she had passed her competency exams the day before. Vu asked her if they were very difficult.

"The writing one is hard. But, you do okay. You see."

"No I think it hard. Too hard for me."

"No, you will do it next year. It's not too bad," she said.

I was sitting in the back of the room when Mrs. Bowen came up to talk to me. "Your studying the Hmong students?"

"Yes, I'm just seeing how they are adapting to the school here."

"Well," she said, "I have four Hmong in here. Vu is up front, and three of the girls here are Hmong. They do pretty well. They are very motivated."

"Do they ever have problems?" I asked.

"Well, sometimes with the meanings of words. Xia there had trouble the other day with the word 'estimate.' We don't have any Hmong dictionaries here yet but Xia speaks

English well enough that we were able to figure it out. I told her it was like figuring out a close enough answer that will work but not necessarily an exact answer."

"That's a nice way to put it," I said. "Have you noticed anything else?"

"Not really, overall they do pretty good. I guess some of them in ESL are having a tough time. Well, the language barrier you know."

Vu and Chen Yao continued to work quietly throughout the period.

After School

After the final bell of the day the halls became instantly filled with students rushing to their lockers or to awaiting cars. Vu went out front by the flag pole and waited for his brother to come by and pick him up and take him to work. Lu, Kao, and Mai lingered in Mrs. Murchison's class and looked at pictures in a National Geographic. Ngao went outside by the flag pole where her husband would pick her up. There she stopped to talk to Vu.

Vang walked into Mrs. Murchison's room with his Government book in hand. He spotted me. "Hi Mike."

"What do we have today?" I said. "More Judicial Review?"

"No, project newspaper."

"Okay, well let's pull up some seats here and see what

we have."

Vang and I worked on his government project for about an hour. I looked through a stack of newspapers and had Vang cut out sections that dealt with Supreme Court decisions.

Throughout the later phases of my field work I found myself tutoring more and more--especially with Vang. As this occurred I found myself becoming more and more familiar with each students particular situation. It occurred to me that their adaptation was really a process comprised of a mixture of their own personalities, efforts made by teachers and other educators to help them, and, a product of ongoing sociocultural episodes occurring at school and in the community.

CHAPTER VII

ANALYSIS

In this study I have been concerned with social dimensions of communication and how such features of communication involve adaptation. In this particular chapter, speech events, their social contexts, and their relationship to cultural adaptation are discussed. The analysis is based, in part, on a synthesis of elements: descriptive data (provided in the previous chapter and from a more comprehensive corpus of data contained in field notes, i.e., a broader data base than the composite day presented in Chapter VI), primary and secondary sources (provided in Chapters II and IV), and methods of analysis that have been outlined in Chapter III. In addition, the analysis that follows involves my own interpretations, interpretations based on events that were observed during the course of my fieldwork and through subsequent reflection.

General Overview of Findings

My findings, in general terms, indicate that problems of communication still exist for Hmong students at Sierra

High School, despite efforts of educators and students alike to overcome these problems. Three problem areas were observed:

1. Mainstreamed Hmong students were often omitted from communicative interactions.

2. Cultural predispositions (Hmong and North American) often impeded communication.

3. Variations in phonological representation (sound production) and speaking style often confused communicative exchanges.

Results also indicate that Hmong students, aides, and various educators have developed strategies for overcoming problems of communication:

1. Hmong students and educators made extensive use of key cultural/linguistic brokers.

2. Some teachers made extensive use of paralinguistic communication (non-verbal forms). This included use of audio/visual materials.

3. Some teachers contextualized their lessons (i.e., placed a specific lesson within the context of a recognizable event).

4. Some teachers recognized emotion (affect) as an important dimension to learning and structured their classroom environments to accommodate Hmong and other language minority students.

5. Some teachers developed specific strategies for

incorporating Hmong students in communicative loops.

6. Hmong students learned to modify traditional patterns of interaction in order to accommodate their new situation (at school and in the community at large).

7. Hmong students relied on preexisting cultural models for regulating communicative interaction (i.e., models that worked for them in their new situation).

Speech Communities and Subcommunities

People commonly refer to the official curriculum of a classroom as "the class" (e.g., a "P.E. class" or a "History class"). The term "class" as it is used here refers to both a physical space and the actions and agendas of those people who makeup the class. In conventional terms a classroom is a single open room with tables, desks, chairs, blackboards, sometimes television sets (or other media materials), and now, quite often, computers. The physical makeup of a classroom can affect the types of behaviors that can occur there. "Classes," to move the meaning away from referring to the physical room, also contain people. These people have agendas. For teachers the agendas might include meeting state guidelines for curriculum, carrying out a specific lesson, maintaining order in the classroom, and so forth. Student agendas might include completing assignments, getting feedback from the teacher, or obtaining information from other students. Many agendas, however, are

not quite so obvious. Some teachers may dislike some students, thus a hidden agenda might involve finding a way to get a student transferred out of the class. Students also have hidden agendas. A student who knows how to read a teacher's weaknesses might use that knowledge to manipulate the teacher for some desired goal (e.g., getting out of homework, getting better grades on subjective assignments and so on). These "hidden agendas" are part of the culture of the classroom experience and must be included in any analysis of linguistic data. There is a danger, however, in attempting to see all classroom behavior in terms of hidden agendas. Thus a balanced approach must be taken.

Attempting to understand the nature and operations of communicative agendas involves defining circumscribed social units that shape or regulate the type of communicative codes that are used. Naturally this would involve analyzing both obvious and subtle aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication as these behavioral forms are carried out in <u>speech communities</u> and <u>subcommunities</u> in various classrooms. Although speech communities, and their associated subcommunities described in this study, varied in this respect from one setting to another, certain generalized features tended to hold true across most situations--especially as these recurring patterns were observed in various classrooms:

1. Teachers generally set the tone for the type or

range of speech codes that could occur in their classrooms.

2. Students incorporated cultural and personal styles of communication in the ways in which they engaged others (either students, teachers or other personnel); but these interactions were always affected by particular characteristics of the class as a distinctive speech community.

3. Communicative style in classrooms was affected by school and community culture.

4. Finally, that formal and informal codes were in constant use (the extent to which various codes were used as dominant forms of expression depended on a particular teacher's style, and on the composition of the student population in a given class).

Despite such generalized recurring patterns there was a significant degree of variability in the way speech, nonverbal communication, and social interaction occurred. In some classes, for instance, a great deal of informal interaction was tolerated. In Mrs. Murchison's class, for example, her use of highly varied speech codes established a wide range of communicative channels for her and her students. She could interact informally with students and provide formal explicit instructions for lessons by simply switching codes at an appropriate moment. If students did not understand the meaning of the switch she could opt to remain in a formal mode in order to emphasize a serious

tone.

In contrast, Mr. Wheeler, Vu's typing teacher, used a limited range of speech codes. Even when he circulated to help students one-on-one, his tone was formal and distant.

Some teacher regulated speech codes involved the use of elaborated idiosyncratic language. Mr. Robeson, Vang's P.E. teacher, for example, employed this particular type of code when he was lecturing his students on ethical problems associated with "hogging the ball," or "being Tarzan and Jane" in the volleyball nets. Idiosyncratic language is essentially conveyed through prosodic cues and culture-bound metaphors, which, to language minority students, may be incomprehensible. The speaker, in this case Mr. Robeson, may assume that he is using common everyday language--and at some level he is. However, because the utterance combines prosodic nuance with culture bound references, attempting to decode such messages are often difficult for language minority students--and the Hmong are no exception.

Nonverbal forms of communication generally followed the form and style of speech codes. Teachers who allowed for a wider range of speech code types generally used more and varied forms of nonverbal communication as well. Mrs. Murchison, to illustrate, would move her hands and arms a great deal to stress certain types of messages. Expanding on the variety and quantity of kinesic cues, in conjunction with structuring such cues to accommodate differing

communicative styles, allowed Mrs. Murchison to increase the range of communicative channels that she used in her class. She would also vary the type of voices used in order to emphasize a full range of prosodic cues. In addition she typically used many different facial expressions to communicate desired messages. Thus, in classes where elaborated speech was used extensively, communication at the paralanguage level was also extensive and varied.

Subcommunities

Operating within the somewhat malleable boundaries of the speech community of the classroom were various speech subcommunities. Factors organizing the formation of informal subcommunities derived primarily from similarities in ethnolinguistic background, gender, age, and personal preference. Formal subcommunities were typically formed by teachers (i.e., study groups, organizing partners for specific lessons, and so on). For example, when Mrs. Murchison used the lengths of yarn to select study partners, speech subcommunities were formed that without such intervention would not have been formed. In fact some students indicated that working in such groups was uncomfortable for them (the explicit function of such groupings however was to enhance intercultural/linguistic and cross-gender interaction). Mr. Roy allowed for the formation of a particular kind of subcommunity when he

instructed a student teacher to take Lu, Mai, and Kao across the hall for a conversation lesson. In this particular situation the subcommunity was made up of Hmong girls and one female student teacher. Speech exchanges were generally regulated by the student teacher in two-way question and answer transactions.

Subcommunities formed by Hmong students had an underlying structure to them. Informal hierarchies were established. For example, in Mr. Roy's class, Vu, Doua, Ngao, Lu, Mai, and Kao always sat in a group. Vu was the oldest in the group and was also the most fluent in English. If Doua needed help he could ask Vu directly. If Lu or Mai needed some assistance they would generally ask Ngao and she would ask Vu. If they were all having the same problem Vu sometimes talked to the entire group. This also occurred when Vu was making a comment about something not directly related to a lesson. The girls were usually reluctant to talk directly to Mr. Roy although their apprehensions lessened as the semester progressed. They would generally wait for Vu to ask Mr. Roy a question, try to figure it out themselves, or have Vu work it out. During informal exchanges, gender barriers became more obvious. To illustrate, toward the end of each period in Mr. Roy's class, students were allowed free time to talk. Vu invariably would end up sitting with either Doua or Javier. The Hmong girls stayed together and talk among themselves.

Even within these smaller groups, hierarchies were apparent. Ngao, being the oldest of the girls, would typically sit and read while the other girls talked with each other. Occasionally one of the girls would ask Ngao something and all of the girls would stop what they were doing to listen. If Ngao addressed the other girls directly they would all stop talking and defer to her.

On occasion it was necessary to appeal to a person's ability to speak another language. For example, at lunch, the Southeast Asian students sitting at the long table in the cafeteria formed a particular speech community. Within that community were subcommunities primarily based on criteria of primary language and ethnic groupings. Vu could speak both Lao and Hmong thus his role in the dominant speech community was crucial. He could interpret for both Lao and Hmong students; he could send covert messages to either Lao or Hmong students; and, he could, to some extent, regulate the content and flow of the speech exchanges. English was also used by these students as a means of transcending the language barrier. Moreover, girls and boys did not sit together. Thus, the formation of speech subcommunities within the population of Southeast Asian students at the lunch tables was determined primarily by ethnolinguistic affiliation, and gender.

The structure of each subcommunity, in turn, influenced how speech transactions were carried out at the speech

community level by setting up imperatives to use cultural/ linguistic brokers or by limiting dialogue to the use of English (English at various levels of proficiency). Cultural/linguistic brokers, such as Vu, had special status in terms of both community and subcommunity social ordering. Vu used his ability with language to select and channel what messages could be sent (if a language barrier existed); he could reinterpret what was said by one party and pass on his version to another party; or he could send covert messages in three directions (channeled to Lao, Hmong, or primary English speaking students). Vu, therefore, was an important individual in terms of his influence over social interaction among Southeast Asian students by way of his ability to orchestrate exchanges at both community and subcommunity levels.

Dominant Participant Structures

Speech communities, and the subcommunities subsumed under them, represent the sociolinguistic environments in which Hmong students and other actors operated. Speech, and nonverbal forms of communication occurring within these environments, were distributed according to implicit rules governing the allocation of features belonging to various communicative events. How students tacitly structured speech turn-taking; how teachers questioned students; and how interactions were generally distributed among the

participants in this study, were a direct result of culturally derived regulatory mechanisms for social interaction. In this section I outline various rules governing the distribution and allocation of talk, nonverbal cuing, and social status. Social rules for initiating and eliciting communicative exchanges are also discussed.

Moreover, I wish to suggest here the transition from normative (traditional) Hmong modes of interaction to transitional forms as an unavoidable consequence of general culture change occurring at home and at school. To do this I run the risk of raising issues regarding the definition and assumed existence of "normative culture." As anthropologists can attest, this is a sticky subject. It is, therefore, not my intent to engage all of the epistomological and ontological issues involved with this problem. I merely present Hmong normative culture, (in this case cultural rules for participating in social/communicative discourse), as tendencies--not as axiomatic rules for behavior.

Normative Participant Structures

Understanding how Hmong rules for distributing and initiating speech are structured requires some comprehension of authority/peer matrices. In Chapter IV I described some of the general patterns involved. In general, extreme age differences constrained the manner in which people talk.

Members of the same age set could engage in communicative exchanges much more freely than could members of two distant age sets. As has already been mentioned, gender, in more traditional circumstances, has a significant bearing on how communicative interactions will be structured. Here I apply these basic rules as they might affect the primary participants in this study. They are:

1. Traditional rules regulating interaction between adult Hmong males and married women: Vu could not talk to Ngao because she is a married woman (except if Vu keeps his distance, keeps his comments brief, and their exchange is in full public view).

2. Adult females could initiate speech exchanges with adult males when speaking on behalf of younger members (especially younger females). For example Bao, the female Hmong aide, talked to male teachers on behalf of Ngao, Lu, and the other Hmong girls. This did not constitute a break with norms for traditional discourse.

3. Adult males could initiate exchanges with any member regardless of age or gender; except informally with married women.

4. Informal speech exchanges are separated more distinctly along gender lines. For example, in Mr. Roy's class, after a lesson was completed, the need for intergender communication was reduced. Vu and Doua spent more time talking to one another and the girls resumed

talking with each other exclusively. Only when there was a need to shift the context away from informal discussion were gender barriers lowered.

5. Hmong girls resist talking to adult males regardless of ethnicity.

6. In general, individuals of higher status and authority organized the structure and the content of speech events when speaking to other members of Hmong society.

7. Hmong students are more parsimonious with their use of the physical space of a classroom than are other groups of students (including Lao, Hispanic, Anglo, and so forth). Also, when a Hmong student left his/her seat the purpose of the move was usually utilitarian (i.e., sharpening a pencil, getting a book). (See Table 3 for a breakdown of movement spatial comparisons.)

The rules stated above are by no means a comprehensive summary of Hmong interactional standards for communicative behavior. I have merely listed some of the basic constraints that might affect these students in more traditional contexts. What actually occurred at Sierra high school can only be understood by applying a contrasting set of "transitional" rules (rules that have altered, replaced, or maintained previously existing standards) with the above mentioned traditional patterns.

TABLE 3. Comparative Spatial Distributions by Movement in Classrooms for Hmong, Lao, Hispanic, and Anglo Students

Ethnic Group	Utilitarian Moves	Social Moves	Totals
Hmong	12	4	16
Lao	13	8	21
Hispanic	19	53	72
Anglo	24	28	52

N=64
NOTE: A complete move was recorded when a student left his/her seat for some purpose and then returned (that was given a value of 1). Utilitarian moves occurred when a student left his/her seat in order to move somewhere in the classroom to perform a utilitarian task (i.e., to sharpen a pencil, ask the teacher for instructions, and so forth). Social moves involved leaving one's seat in order to socialize. Counts were taken in 50 minute blocks.

Transitional Participant Structures

As a natural consequence of culture contact and change, and in adjusting to communicative and interactional dimensions of school life, Hmong students had to make use of both traditional knowledge and a newly acquired understanding of how people in a North American school context communicate. How to elicit a response from someone, how to open a conversation, how to respond to a teacher's queries required a new repertoire of cultural rules for communicative interaction. Contrasting this new set of tacit protocols with those stated earlier provides a focused view of culture change as change relates to participant

structuring. For example:

1. Vu and Ngao talked to each other (sometimes informally) despite traditional rules that discouraged such interaction.

2. Ngao could initiate, or open, a speech exchange with Vu or with adult male teachers. Previously this could be done but only when speaking on behalf of younger girls.

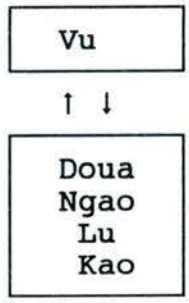
3. Lu, Kao, and Mai could also speak directly to Vu and adult male teachers. During the early phase of this study Lu, Kao, and Mai were reluctant to talk to Vu or adult male teachers. As the field work continued, however, I observed that they spoke directly to Vu more often. Their difficulty with English prevented much direct interaction with adult male teachers. However, despite their difficulty with English, later on in the school year they on occasion attempted to open exchanges (early in the semester they would not attempt such exchanges at all).

4. Females still tended to work more through the hierarchical protocol system than did Vu or Doua (Hmong females who were fluent in English and had adopted many North American modes of interaction generally did not rely so much on informal hierarchies--unless they were tutoring).

In simple terms three patterns for regulating the flow of communicative interactions were observed:

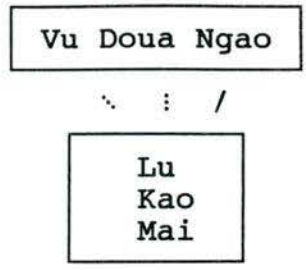
Pattern One

This pattern occurred when all members of the subcommunity were working on a common problem (either associated with school or concerning a nonschool issue). Vu and Doua could speak to any of the other members directly. Doua and Ngao would speak to Vu more often than did Lu, Kao, or Mai (although the younger girls did speak to both Vu and Doua). Doua and Vu spoke often to one another. The younger girls spoke often to one another.



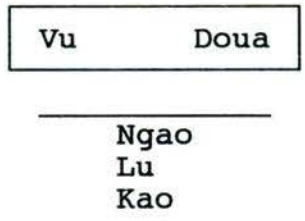
Pattern Two

In pattern two, Ngao would speak to either Vu or Doua on behalf of the younger girls. Ngao's status as an older Hmong girl set her up as a kind of gender/age broker. This pattern usually occurred when Ngao would open negotiations with either Vu or Doua concerning a problem--or to communicate a concern of the younger girls. This allowed the younger girls communicative access to both Vu and Doua--and ultimately to the teacher (in this case Mr. Roy).



Pattern Three

Pattern three emerged when informal conversations began. As formalities subsided a gender barrier arose. Vu and Doua did not typically talk to any of the girls when this occurred. If a problem arose (one that Ngao or the other girls could not solve), a shift to pattern two could occur. If neither Vu nor Doua could solve the problem, pattern one would develop. Quite often, after several minutes of collective discourse (characterized by pattern one), an appeal could be made to Mr. Roy or to someone else outside the immediate subcommunity to intervene (sometimes a student teacher or an aide). If the conversation were to shift back to more mundane topics, then pattern three (where gender barriers were present) would once again emerge.



Participant structures based on hierarchical

relationships were typical in all classes that I observed. For this section I chose the patterning in Mr. Roy's class because of the particular mix of students. Vu's command of English, and his status as an older Hmong male (relative to high school age), made him a pivotal person. Lu, Mai, and Kao, working through Ngao, were able to bridge major communication barriers by appealing to Vu. Thus, despite the fact that some members of this speech subcommunity could speak very little English, communication through access to content encoded in English was still possible. In addition, by modifying rules governing interaction, these Hmong students were able to develop new strategies for engaging communication and social interaction within the school context.

Teacher Regulated Participant Structures

The ways in which teachers engaged Hmong students varied considerably from class to class. A teacher's personal communicative style, the types of questioning strategies employed by teachers, course content, as well as student characteristics, affected how teachers structured interactional events in their classrooms. What follows is an analysis of various teacher regulated participant structures used by several teachers at Sierra high and how these structures affected participation for those Hmong students involved in this study.

Teacher Talk Time

The amount of time teachers spent talking varied a great deal. In Mr. Wheeler's typing class, student and teacher talk time was minimal. Here, course content acted as a major constraining factor on speech distribution. Emphasis was placed on typing activities and listening to brief sets of instructions from the teacher. In contrast in Mr. Stephen's and Mrs. Murchison's classes, students and teachers spent a great deal of time talking. This created the potential for a wider range of speech exchanges between teachers and students to occur. In Mr. Stephen's class, for example, he would generally provide students with a demonstration (e.g., heating oil in a test tube to produce gas and so forth). As he conducted his demonstration he would ask students questions. After the demonstration had been concluded he would circulate around the room, constantly engaging students through direct questioning (typically calling on them by name). On numerous occasions he would stop at the table where the Hmong girls were sitting and talk to them in a quiet tone. In Mrs. Murchison's classes a similar type of exchange style was employed. As she conducted lessons she would walk around the room and call on specific students. Hence, in both Mr. Stephen's and Mrs. Murchison's classes there was a significant variety of verbal interaction.

In Vang's science class talk time was dominated by teacher/student question and answer exchanges. Although the student teacher would question students, exchanges were kept brief and to the point. Seldom did he call on specific students by name. During the course of my observations he never asked Vang to respond to a question.

Hmong student reactions to teacher talk depended more on how teachers engaged students than on initiatives taken by students. If a teacher tended to dominate talk time, Hmong students would sit quietly and not interrupt. If, on the other hand, a teacher encouraged a great deal of verbal interaction with students, Hmong students generally participated (although sometimes reluctantly). In general, however, Hmong students usually had to be explicitly encouraged to participate. Anglo and Hispanic students, on the other hand, often opened exchanges with teachers.

During the course of my fieldwork I heard several teachers describe Hmong students as "shy." Based on my observations, keeping in mind communicative style, I would add "taciturn" as an additional descriptive concept to point to (keeping in mind that they are taciturn by North American standards). In some contexts, for example, Hmong students were more verbal than in others (see section on lunch in Chapter VI). If a situation required deference to an authority figure, because of their training, Hmong students usually remained quiet. This, according to an informant,

was more out of respect and sometimes fear than it was shyness (see Hmong communicative style Chapter IV). Another contributing factor with regard to taciturn style derived from a cultural link between affect and potentials for communication. Hmong students were reluctant to either open conversations or respond to others if they were not comfortable with that individual. Thus, in many situations Hmong students merely preferred not to talk.

Teacher Questioning Strategies

Given a Hmong predisposition toward being taciturn, the ways in which teachers tended to involve students in dialogue becomes a crucial issue. Teachers used a number of questioning strategies in order to elicit responses from students. I observed teachers using four basic types of questioning strategies:

1. Open ended: Here teachers asked an open ended question and waited for a student response. If no response was forthcoming often teachers asked the question again or switched strategies.

2. Requests for volunteers: Here teachers signaled to students that a volunteer was needed to answer the question. This form of questioning strategy is similar to the open ended question except that a clear message has been sent indicating that student participation is required.

3. Rhetorical questions: These are questions asked

by teachers without the intention of obtaining student responses. The teacher answered his/her own question.

4. Person identification: Here teachers identified specific students and asked for a response.

Hmong students reacted to these questioning strategies in fairly predictable ways. For most Hmong students, with a few exceptions, any questioning format that did not specifically invite a response resulted in little or no student reaction. Often teachers would ask for volunteers and Hmong students were typically reticent (I am referring to Hmong students who had recently arrived in the United States).

In contrast, if a teacher specifically called on a Hmong student, the student usually attempted to form some type of answer. Often Hmong students relied on a Hmong aide or on each other to help articulate an answer. Nevertheless, when singled out Hmong students generally responded.

Barriers

In their attempt to bridge gaps in communication, teachers and Hmong students encountered formidable barriers. Adaptations generated by both Hmong students and Sierra high teachers were generated in order to find some middle ground by which these barriers could be mitigated. In this section I describe these barriers in some detail. Difficulties

stemming from specific problems associated with the mechanics of language acquisition as well as difficulties brought about by sociocultural obstacles are provided in order to better understand how and why adaptive measures were taken by both teachers and Hmong students.

Barriers to Language Acquisition

In their endeavor to learn English Hmong students encountered a number of circumstances which impeded the language acquisition process. Differences in phonological representation, subtle shifts in prosodic cues, a lack of equivalent native (Hmong) cover terms for English terms, and other problematic features of language learning were recorded. What follows is a systematic discussion of these problems.

Sound Production: Shifts in Phonological Representation

In conversation lessons, and quite often in more rote lessons, teachers, student teachers, and aides used two variants of the same phonological system when sounding out words. Native speakers operating from a generalized model for word representation would, without being aware of it, shift phonemes in words. The non-native speaker hearing the shifts became confused. This problem, as it relates to language acquisition, was first described and analyzed by

Edward Sapir (1975 [1929]). Consider the following utterance by a student teacher:

ST: Okay now say it again. Pennsylvan/ia/. That's good Pennsyl/vane/ /ya/.

In this utterance the native English speaker has shifted the phoneme /ia/ to /ya/. Thus /ia/ and /ya/ are suspicious pairs. This shift follows a move from formal pronunciation to a vernacular form. Because the native English speaker understands the word as a generalized linguistic unit, she does not hear the subtle change. To the non-native speaker, however, two distinctly different sounds are being heard. The same is true when teachers ask Hmong students how to say something in Hmong. The Hmong student will usually respond in the vernacular form first then, if another pronouncement is requested, a shift to a more stilted form would occur.

Lack of Cover Terms

Hmong aides often encounter problems when attempting to translate English into Hmong. A common problem stems from a lack of equivalent Hmong cover terms for words that are common in the English lexicon. For example no equivalent terms exist in Hmong for such words as "economy," "psychology," "curriculum," and "sociology." This problem stems from a fundamental difference in the way Hmong and English are structured. The Hmong lexicon tends to be more

concrete and descriptive. English, in contrast, contains more abstractions.

Subtle Switches in Speech Codes

Hmong students not only had to interpret overt linguistic utterances they also had to interpret subtle switches in code usage. Their ability to do this depended on the amount of comprehensible context in the sociolinguistic environment in which the communicative event occurred. If, for example, an informal code (familiar voice) was used often by a teacher in delivering lessons; and a formal voice was used to reprimand students, a recognizable recurring social pattern would accompany changes in code (or code switching). If, on the other hand, a teacher switches from one code to another and the change does not occur simultaneously with a predictable sociolinguistic context, then the meaning of the switch might be lost to the student. Consider the following exchange:

T: Please get out your copy. When you are ready to go I will start you. Some of you are not looking [formal voice]. Boy oh boy. Watch the hand that starts the race [informal voice]. Are some of you tuned in? You, in the back (referring to Kou). You don't seem to want to look at your copy; would you change seats please?

K: Why?

T: Because I was ready to go and you were looking off into space.

In this exchange the typing teacher (a substitute)

relied upon a switch in codes to communicate the message "we are ready to start." By switching to an informal voice and using an idiomatic signal ("watch the hand that starts the race") she had said that she is ready to begin. Kou, being a language minority student, did not read the signal correctly. I talked to Kou later about the incident. He had not been able to understand what had transpired. I asked him if he knew what she meant by a "race." He knew that by "race" she was creating an analogy to typing (although he figured this out later). What he could not understand, however, was how she had conveyed to other students the message that she was ready to go. "She never say go, like Mr. W." Because this was a substitute teacher, Kou was not familiar with her particular communicative style. Not enough context existed for Kou to interpret her use of code switching.

Interpreting "Sarcastic" Prosodic Cues in Conjunction with Linguistic Utterances

In some situations teachers would send mixed, or confused messages through sarcasm. In such instances the actual utterance would not be the intended message. The inclusion of a "sarcastic tone" could often signal that another message was being sent. Non-native speakers tend to take utterances at face value--that is until they are able to interpret the more subtle aspects of a language. In the

following sequence a teacher uses a sarcastic tone to convey a particular message:

T: Vu? Are the states still there? Do you still see them?

V: I think maybe they still there.

T: Oh yea? Better look again. Are the states still there?

V: Don't know what you meaning.

T: Your work sheet. Yea that's right. Now it gets through.

In this exchange, Vu thinks that the teacher is literally referring to the states. As he told me later he thought that maybe some states had been destroyed by our civil war or that a "big storm" had washed away whole regions of the United States at one time. The teacher was referring to Vu's work sheet. Had Vu been able to read the tone in the teacher's voice he might have been able to interpret the intended message.

A similar problem exists when teachers use idiomatic language to communicate. Take, for example, Vang's P.E. teacher's use of the terms "ball hog," (to refer to someone who keeps the ball too long) and "Tarzan and Jane," (referring to people who excessively get entangled in the volleyball net). Unless Vang has incorporated the necessary cultural references to interpret such ideomatic phrases, translation will be difficult. Terms such as "Tarzan and Jane" are part of American folk culture. Knowing what they

mean within the context of American folkculture will allow for construction of the appropriate connotative meaning (i.e., someone who swings on vines [nets]). Without such contexts the meaning is lost.

Pacing

Hmong students, along with other language minority students, had to comprehend various types of verbal lessons; lessons which were presented in various formats. Some lessons were structured in rapid two way question and answer volleys. Exchanges organized in this manner selected out those students who could not assimilate the linguistic material that rapidly. Fast pacing, coupled with the fact that many of the concepts being covered were fairly abstract, caused some Hmong students to read while verbal lessons were being conducted. For these students reading allowed for some degree of control over how pacing could be organized.

One Sided Conversations and Lack of Comprehensible Feedback

Hmong students learn to acknowledge basic prosodic cues before they can actually translate verbal utterances. Thus, when a person talks to a Hmong student (one who speaks very little English) quite often an illusion of comprehension exists. Hmong students will nod their heads indicating

comprehension when a speaker places an end or a question intonation when closing segments of verbal discourse. Without knowing exactly what was said the student can lubricate a "one sided conversation" to its closure. During an interview a key informant reconstructed a one sided conversation for me. The conversation involved a school principal, a Hispanic student (male), and a Hmong student (male). The two students had been sent to the office because they had been fighting. The Hmong student had called the Hispanic "Nigger" (one of the few English words he knew) and the Hispanic student had called the Hmong student "Chink." The boys were brought into the principal's office where they waited for a Hmong aide to arrive (my informant).

The principal lectured the boys for 10 minutes. He told them that they were wrong to call each other such names and that the names that they used were incorrect anyway. He also told them that they didn't have to like one another but that they were not allowed to fight. "Fighting was no way to solve problems," he told them. As he spoke, the boys nodded their heads often, indicating that they knew what he was saying.

The Hmong aide sat quietly and did not interrupt the principal. When the principal let them go the Hmong aide stopped the boy in the hall and asked him to reiterate what the principal had told him. The boy said he had no idea

what the principal had said. The Hmong boy had simply nodded his head when he recognized the appropriate cue. The principal did not stop to ask for verbal responses--thus the principal did not receive "comprehensible feedback."

Sociocultural and Interactional Barriers

Many of the barriers encountered by Hmong students were a consequence of cultural differences. Problems related to cultural differences could be expressed in both behavioral and ideational manifestations. Often these disparities were objectified through the ways in which interpersonal interactions were carried out. In this section I describe communication barriers that stem from sociocultural differences between Hmong students and non-Hmong people.

Isolation: Physical and Cultural

In some classes, Hmong students found themselves both physically and culturally isolated from other students. This was in part by their own choosing and by way of teachers failing to incorporate Hmong students into classroom interactions. For example, in his government class, Vang sat in a section of the classroom where no other students sat. This physical distancing reduced the potential for social interaction. By separating himself from other students in actual physical distance he had also separated himself in terms of potentials for intercultural communication.

Differences in speaking styles also created distance. In many of the classes I observed, some Anglo students talked openly about drugs, sex, and the authority of teachers--often challenging that authority. Hmong students typically had trouble understanding this type of communicative style. As Vu put it: "Why they always making fun the teacher." Respect for authority figures, even outside of the Hmong cultural matrix, is an integral and important rule governing social interaction. The manner in which some Anglo students addressed teachers and other students caused some Hmong students to dissociate themselves from these students--normally by distancing in classes (sitting apart) and by not seeking out situations where Hmong and Anglo students typically interacted.

Physical and cultural isolation often was exacerbated by the formation of bounded ethnolinguistic speech subcommunities. In certain situations, divisions based on the formation of these linguistic enclaves became quite pronounced. For example, just before Christmas break Mrs. Murchison gave a party for her students. In one corner of the room the Hispanic students were congregated, playing dance music on a tape player. In another corner of the room were Lao students, some playing cards while others sat and talked. Hmong male students had situated themselves in the corner farthest from the door. There they sat, some of them playing checkers and others merely talking. The Hmong girls

sat with Bao, the Hmong aide. Mrs. Murchison made the comment that she was disappointed at the groupings. "It wasn't like this last year." These types of groupings, however, seemed to be situation-specific. For example, during regular class periods, Hmong, Lao, and Hispanic students interacted more openly and freely. Thus the Christmas party, for some reason, had a divisive affect on student grouping.

Loquacity vs. Taciturn Style

Normally, with a few notable exceptions, Hmong students were quiet in classroom situations. This particular cultural predisposition prevented Hmong students from initiating, or opening speech transactions with other students (non-Hmong students) and teachers. The general difference between a loquacious interactive style and that of the Hmong students, caused further disparities to obtain in intercultural communication. The lack of opportunities for communicative exchanges, therefore, reduced the overall amount of intercultural communication. This barrier overlaps with problems stemming from social and physical isolation in that it reinforces distances between groups. The specific problem, however, derives from fundamental differences in cultural styles of communication.

Omission

In many classes Hmong students were not consciously brought into teacher regulated communicative loops. Omission has been a common problem in terms of dealings with language minority students (Brophy and Good 1974, Gollnick and Chinn 1989:94). In such cases, as has been previously mentioned, teachers used questioning strategies intended to encourage volunteer responses. Given the Hmong predisposition to being taciturn, Hmong students often received fewer interpersonal and intercommunicational exchanges with teachers.

The problem of omission was further complicated by the fact that many teachers had little understanding of fluency levels for various Hmong and other language minority students. One teacher told me: "I have six Southeast Asian students in here. Not one of them can speak a stitch of English." I was familiar with two of the students to whom he was referring. They spoke functional English. Because the teacher rarely spoke with them his understanding of their levels of fluency was based on limited perceptions rather than on the basis of real verbal exchanges.

Time Performance Sequencing

Other difficulties emerged as a result of cultural differences in the way time and the sequencing of events are

organized. In Vu's typing class, for example, lessons were timed, and they proceeded in a linear sequential order. Vu, along with other Southeast Asian students, tended to work at their own pace and according to strategies that involved constant contemplation and reexamination of materials. Other students in the class, even if they were working slowly, would proceed through a lesson by following the series of steps contained in the assignment.

In addition, for many Hmong students, placing time constraints on the learning process was an unfamiliar idea. Vang told me that in Laos you "do something until you end it. No one stopping you always." Vang had just taken some of his competency exams. Traditional discourse, according to an informant, went at its own pace. In Laos, for example, the elders would set the time frame for special events, but these time allotments were only suggested guidelines; rarely were they followed to the letter (Yee Xiong, personal communication). In fact in Laos there were few situations that required highly specific time frames or the linear sequencing of tasks.

Identity

Students from Southeast Asia and elsewhere who enter the United States as refugees often experience identity problems (Dunnigan 1986:41-54). Many of these students have lost close relatives in wars, through forced migration, or

through displacement while trying to immigrate to the U.S. This caused, in some cases, the disintegration of both nuclear and extended family solidarities. Often, as a result of familial disintegration, identity problems for young Hmong arose.

For Hmong students at Sierra high identity problems affected intergroup communication in that tensions between various subgroups often led to cultural misunderstanding. Some Hmong students knew, for example, that Anglo students associated Hispanic and Southeast Asian students with gang activity. In response, some Hmong students would wear clothes indicating gang affiliation (sometimes there was actual gang affiliation but at Sierra high at the time of this study there appeared to be little real gang behavior). Thus, by wearing gang clothes, these Hmong were constructing identity markers for the school and the larger community. The overt display of identity markers had direct affect on the creation of community level communication barriers--especially if those markers were not viewed in a positive light by various segments of the dominant society.

Dominant Speech in ESL Classes

The dominant culture in ESL classes was Hispanic. This presented problems and advantages for Hmong students. Because much class time was spent addressing communication problems, by switching back and forth between Spanish and

English, Hmong students were consequently left out of such exchanges. This was not a problem of design but rather a consequence of the particular makeup of the student population in these classes.

On the other hand, having such a mix of students (Hispanic, Hmong, Lao) provided teachers with the opportunity to have differing language minority students work together. English, therefore, became the only possible means by which these students could communicate. All of the ESL teachers whom I observed made extensive use of this situation.

Adaptations

During the course of their daily affairs Hmong students and educators developed strategies (intentional and unintentional) to allow for the mitigation of barriers to communication. My aim in this section is to provide some sense of these strategies in terms of there general functioning at Sierra high. I have divided this section into two parts: (a) Hmong student adaptations, and (b) educator adaptations. I have not included my evaluation as to the effectiveness of any of the adaptations which follow. They are presented as integral parts of the descriptive record and as representations of the full range of adaptations that I observed.

Hmong Student Adaptations

Hmong students made use of a number of strategies to negotiate communicational and interactional obstructions. Some of these strategies were overt and intentional while others occurred naturally without much notice.

Brokers and Key Personnel

The Hmong students with whom I worked made use of a number of differing types of people in order to transcend communication obstacles. I have organized key personnel into four categories: (a) Hmong aides, (b) key Hmong students, (c) non-Hmong aides (including counselors), and (d) teachers. Parenthetically, I might add myself to this list (as a non-Hmong aide), although my role was somewhat different from most non-Hmong aides in that participating Hmong students viewed me as a researcher and a tutor.

Hmong aides played an important role in that they acted as linguistic and cultural go-betweens. For example, when Vang was reluctant to give his speech in Mrs. Murchison's class, Bao (the Hmong aide) said to Mrs. Murchison: "I have a question. Vang is ready. He will do his speech." In this capacity, Bao was acting as a linguistic interpreter for Vang (he might have had trouble organizing the proper words for saying he is ready). More importantly, however, Bao was acting as a cultural broker. By intervening in the

way that she did, Bao was able to break through cultural barriers which were impeding Vang's willingness to volunteer (Bao, in essence, volunteered for him). I observed Bao doing this on behalf of other Hmong students as well. For example, on one occasion in Mr. Stephen's science class, he asked his students why heat turned liquid into vapor. Lu knew the answer but was not sure how to formulate her response in correct English. Bao asked her in Hmong what her answer would be. After Lu's reply, Bao raised her hand saying: "I think Lu can answer but you will have to let her answer slowly." Mr. Stephens said: "Okay, everyone quiet please. Let Lu answer."

Lu, after some hesitation said: "molcule fasty" [molecules begin to move faster].

Bao had, again, not only acted as interpreter but as a person who recognized salient cultural differences which hindered the initiation of speech exchanges. First she checked to see how much Lu understood regarding the question, then she tested Lu's answer before she announced that Lu could answer the question.

Hmong students quite often relied on one another for assistance. Some students, such as Vu, became key brokers at an informal level (they were not formally recognized as aides or assistants). In the following exchange Vu recognized that some students (in this case Lao students) were not aware of the fact that a substitute teacher did not

know the informal protocol that the regular teacher had allowed to evolve (i.e., that some students did not need to be in their assigned seats):

T: Is Souvanna here? Where? [Souvanna doesn't answer]. All of you in your right seats? If your not you will be marked "not here."

V: Souvanna, get right seat! She don't know Mr. W. . . . [in English]. [Vu then switched to Lao telling Souvanna about the problem. Souvanna told two other Lao students about the problem and they all returned to their regular seats]

Here Vu made use of his ability to understand Lao and English. He also made use of his ability to read a possible problematic situation. In this case the teacher was unfamiliar with the regular teachers routines. Vu knew this and acted accordingly. Vu also knew when to intervene on behalf of Hmong students who were having trouble keeping up with a lesson. In the following exchange, Ngao, Lu, Kao, and Mai could not keep up with one of Mrs. Murchison's lessons:

V: Could go back number three, number four?

M: Are you having trouble keeping up Vu?

V: No. Maybe they [pointing to the girls] not get some number.

M: Okay girls; which numbers didn't you get? [Vu consulted with them and gave the numbers to Mrs. Murchison].

In this exchange Vu did several things: he had communicated to Mrs. Murchison that she was going too fast for the girls, he had specified which questions the girls had missed, and he had used his own communicative style to

transcend the taciturn style of the girls. This pattern of communication is tied in with the structuring of speech subcommunities discussed earlier in this chapter. The formation and operation of hierarchies within these subcommunities can be viewed as an adaptive strategy as well. Vu, in relation to other Hmong students, was a key figure in terms of language ability and his skill in recognizing miscommunications at situational levels. In viewing the structure of these subcommunities by way of interactional rank, Vu had attained the status of "key cultural broker." His skills with language and reading social situations provided other language minority students with the opportunity to communicate outside of the immediate speech subcommunity.

Non-Hmong aides were also used by Hmong students. Often non-Hmong aides worked one-on-one or in small groups with Hmong students. In general these lessons were loosely organized in terms of speech discourse. One non-Hmong aide (a Hispanic college student) worked quite often with the Hmong girls. During such sessions it was not uncommon to hear four different languages being spoken. The following set of exchanges was typical of this type of interlinguistic interaction:

TA: Okay girls, what can you say about this picture [using English and pointing to a picture of a cat]

L: [Lu] Poem.

TA: Yes, the poem.

L: Si. [everyone laughs]

TA: How do you say "cat" in Hmong?

L: Cat? Mee. (Miv)

TA: How do you say "hello" in Hmong.

L: Hello? Neou zoe. (Nyob zoo) [laughter]

TA: En Español "cat" es "gato."

L: Gato. [laughter]

TA: What is that thing you were saying the other day? [The aide simulated a Lao phrase she had heard the girls using the day before--it was good morning in Lao.]

L: [Lu replied in Lao and Mrs. Murchison put in 'that's Lao not Hmong.']

M: [Mrs. Murchison] Boy listen to the languages going around today!

Despite the fact that the non-Hmong aide could not speak either Hmong or Lao, and Lu's English was limited, a significant degree of language acquisition was taking place. Lu recognized that this particular aide liked to open up free-form conversations and Lu obliged. Moreover, the aide took advantage of Lu's ability to speak some Lao. This helped this aide with her tutoring of Lao students. By mutual construction of informal conversation lessons, Hmong students and non-Hmong aides were able to benefit.

Collaboration and Cooperation

When Hmong children approach ages of seven or eight they begin to take on the role of secondary caretakers (the

mother being the primary caretaker). This fosters values of cooperation and collaboration. The expression of these values can be seen in the variety of ways Vu, Ngao, Doua and other Hmong students helped one another. Their interactions were not based on a competitive model but rather on a model that encouraged collective effort.

This cultural predisposition can be seen in the way that informal hierarchies function for the benefit of a Hmong subcommunity of students. Their willingness to help one another is typically expressed easily and naturally (see description of speech subcommunities earlier in this chapter).

Silent Acquisition

Hmong students spent a significant amount of time working silently. This normally involved reading silently (often quietly sounding out words), going through newspapers, looking at posters on walls, or watching teachers model lessons. Hmong students also watched other students in order to interpret prosodic cues. For example, an incident in Mrs. Murchison's class caused her to reprimand several Hispanic students. The Hmong students did not know exactly what was said, but by reading the expressions on other students faces and by reading the shift in Mrs. Murchison's voice, they were able to comprehend the importance of the event.

Silent acquisition also involved interacting with visual and written texts. Vu and Doua, for example, often read the newspaper (especially the sports page). In many of the classes, films and videos were shown on a regular basis. Hmong students relied on these forms of communication in order to avoid the hazards of speaking to non-Hmong people. Hmong students often avoided potential speech exchanges with non-Hmong people, especially Anglos. Films, videos, and newspapers afforded them a nonthreatening way to acquire language and cultural knowledge.

Informal Interactions with Non-Hmong

Hmong students interacted quite often with other language minority students. When this occurred, English was the language most often used. In this sense English became a kind of utility language--the lingua franca of language minority students. In the cafeteria, for example, English was used more often than the primary languages of the students. Their primary languages were often used to communicate covert messages. Vu could speak Lao and Hmong fluently. He could also speak English better than many of the Hmong students. Hence, informal interactions between these subgroups of minority students depended on brokerage skills of particular students (Vu is a good example). In addition to facilitating intergroup communication, these brokers frequently assisted other students with school work.

In terms of adaptation, the role of cultural/linguistic brokers was crucial for minority students; and English was the primary medium for verbal exchanges.

Seeking Comfort Zones

Hmong students felt a need to be emotionally comfortable in situations where open communication was likely to occur. They would, therefore, spend some considerable energy seeking out social environments that were comfortable for them. Mrs. Murchison's class was one haven. For instance, during the pep rally (see Chapter VI) most Hmong students went to her class. As Vu told me later he felt uncomfortable at the rally: "Don't know what they doing this for. I think maybe the football game, but too much noise. It too loud."

This need for emotional comfort was also expressed in terms of interpersonal relationships. Hmong students were non-communicative with people with whom they were unfamiliar. In fact some Hmong students would not speak at all unless they had developed some sense of the other person's character. Several informants had told me that Hmong children are extremely wary of strangers. As one informant put it: "They do not talk to people at all unless they know them. Maybe someone would have to do something to make them feel comfortable with them before they would talk to them" (Yee Xiong, personal communication).

Crossing Normative Boundaries

Part of the adaptive process involved modifying normative rules for interaction. Boundaries of age, gender, and general rules governing social interaction were altered or, in some cases, abandoned in order to facilitate the initiation of functional communicative events. For example, Vu and Ngao spoke to each other often and in a way different from what normally transpired in a more traditional context. Their interactions were still situation-specific but the general rules regulating how married women will interact with adult males had been relaxed. A specific cultural rule had been modified in order to accommodate a new situation.

Likewise, boundaries between distant age sets had been somewhat modified. To illustrate, Ngao, Lu, Kao, and Mai, at the beginning of the school year, rarely talked directly to their teachers. As the school year progressed, however, they adopted the normative behavior of non-Hmong students. They found it easier to talk to adults (especially teachers); thus reducing the formal distance between extremes of age.

As general rules regulating interpersonal interaction under went modification, these students (the girls in particular) became less reticent to interact with non-Hmong people. They found it easier to open conversations with Hispanic, Lao, and Anglo students (although Anglos remained

the most distant group). Their interactions in most situations have, through time, become less stilted by traditional modes of communication.

Educator Adaptations

Educators have also sought to bridge gaps in communication. Their adaptations have been both intentional and, at times, without overt recognition. Here I describe these adaptations focusing mainly on teacher behavior and program design. In addition, these adaptations must be viewed in light of their relationship to Hmong students and to student culture in general.

The Extended Role of ESL

The often stated function of ESL, English as a Second Language, is to teach English to students whose primary language is not English. Yet the role of ESL programs, and the teachers who direct them, often go beyond the role of teaching English. Some ESL teachers, for example, helped students with assignments from other classes--viewing the opportunity to do so as an extended function of teaching English across content areas. Sometimes, toward the end of a class period, ESL teachers allowed for "homework time." During these sessions, the teacher, and various aides circulated and assisted students with their homework. Most of this time was spent helping with translation; translating

specific terms or attempting to explain larger concepts. During these sessions informal social conversations also occurred.

ESL teachers also coordinated lessons with language minority aides. For example, on one occasion Mrs. Murchison gave Bao, the Hmong teacher's aide, a lesson which contained several abstract terms (terms which probably did not have Hmong equivalents). Bao was to help Lu, Mai, and Kao with this lesson. Mrs. Murchison cued Bao to the fact that these words would probably give the girls problems. Mrs. Murchison suggested that Bao merely describe what the words meant rather than try to find exact equivalents from the Hmong lexicon. Bao worked through the lesson often switching back and forth between Hmong and English.

In a similar situation, Mr. Roy was confronted with the task of having to explain the meaning of the word "religion." On this particular day no Hmong aides were present. He proceeded by providing a number of salient examples: belief in God, spirits, various beliefs regarding supernatural power. He then attempted to link these examples with the singular concept of religion. Mr. Roy was fully aware of the fact that the Hmong did not have a word for religion.

I have already mentioned that ESL classes provided a safe "comfort zone" for many language minority students. During the pep rally many Hmong students went to Mrs.

Murchison's classroom. They found it difficult to participate in the rally so they opted to seek out a familiar social environment. Providing such an environment suggests that in this particular case the role of ESL classes represents an extended function--a function beyond that of specific preestablished curricular goals.

In broader and in more visible terms, the ESL program at Sierra High represented a conscious adaptive response to the presence of Hmong and other language minority students. By creating a special track of courses ("Sheltered" classes), the school was allowing for the teaching of English across various content areas. Sheltered courses included: math, science, and history. In addition, Sierra High had adopted a policy of partial mainstreaming. Vang and Vu attended both ESL and regular classes.

Interpersonal Interactions

Teachers often modified the ways in which they interacted with various types of students. With Hmong students, to illustrate, some teachers used less obtrusive ways to open communication. Mr. Stephens, for example, moved in close and talked softly when speaking to the Hmong girls. Mrs. Murchison often used subtle hand gestures to get Hmong students to approach her.

Some teachers switched to a voice that personalized the communicative event. This, in many cases, allowed teachers

to transcend normative barriers to communication. Hymes refers to this as communication at a "use-function" level (1974b:439). Also, if a Hmong student was a limited English speaker, the teacher might "talk down" to that student. Talking down (see Krashen and Terrell 1983), involves using very simple but highly expressive language in order to communicate (e.g., the way mothers talk to babies and younger children). This type of interaction also involves an embellished use of physical gestures. For instance, some teachers made extensive use of overt hand gestures or faces when trying to communicate. Extensive use of kinesic forms of communication allowed teachers to overcome barriers associated with constraints on verbal exchanges. Some teachers were conscious of this and systematically included lessons with a high degree of physical action (what second language acquisition specialists refer to as "Total Physical Response" TPR).

As an extension of both physical and verbal communication some teachers at Sierra high made considerable use of audio/visual materials. Films, videos, and recorded music were used to enhance the over-all communicative process. Hmong students, as has already been noted, made significant use of such materials.

Some problems associated with communication derived from teachers not having a clear idea as to what Hmong students actually understood during conversations. Many

teachers, while attempting communication with Hmong students, would occasionally stop and seek comprehensible feedback. This typically involved asking a student to rehash what had previously been discussed. By doing this, teachers hoped to avoid the "one-sided conversation." This also allowed teachers to test the efficacy of communication taking place. Furthermore, in questioning students, some teachers called on specific Hmong students by name. This involved the student directly in the communicative event. Mrs. Murchison, when she wanted Hispanic students to respond, asked for volunteers. When she wanted a Hmong student to respond she usually called on that student by name.

Fostering Intercultural/
Linguistic Interaction

Many of the teachers that I observed took measures to insure intercultural/linguistic interaction. Mrs. Murchison, by using lengths of yarn to randomize the selection of students for an upcoming lesson, forced students of differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds to work with one another. Lu, in one of the examples from Chapter VI, was matched to work with Miguel, a Hispanic male. This created a situation where English was the only common language that could be used between the two students. Moreover, by matching Lu with Miguel, gender lines were

crossed; thus modifying preexisting attitudes toward gender and creating potentials for further interaction.

Individualized Accommodations

Some teachers had developed informal means by which Hmong students could be treated differently from other students. Sometimes this was intentional but most often it was carried out as part of a tacit system of individualized treatment. In Vu's typing class, for example, Vu was not expected to do the timed lessons. He was allowed to work at his own pace. The same latitude was extended to other language minority students in this class. This was never discussed openly but this form of accommodation was built into the tacit structuring of activities for this class. This represented a practical way of avoiding difficulties stemming from varying levels of competency which might affect speed and performance. It is possible that from this particular teacher's perspective, having these students perform timed lessons would have been counter-productive.

Many teachers afforded Hmong students greater amounts of time in order to complete lessons. Although this was not universally practiced among teachers, many allowed Hmong students to work beyond deadlines or to take their work out of class and go to Mrs. Murchison's class to work. Again, these adaptations were made to facilitate a wide range of competency levels among language minority students.

Use of Key Personnel

Finally, like Hmong students, teachers made use of key cultural/linguistic brokers. The use of such go-betweens by teachers, however, was organized somewhat differently from the way students made use of them. Normally, teachers handed specific lessons to Hmong aides, or Hmong aides stopped a teacher in a lesson to ask for clarification on a particular point. Hmong aides that I talked to expressed reluctance to interrupt teachers during on going lessons, so teachers typically initiated the opening of communication with these aides.

In addition, teachers employed Hmong aides in order to acquire the meanings of a limited number of Hmong words and to learn about Hmong culture. Mr. Stephens, for example, had ordered Hmong/English dictionaries and had also expressed considerable interest in learning about Hmong culture. In order to facilitate this desire to learn about Hmong culture, these educators recognized that Hmong tutors and aides represented important links to the Hmong community. Building on the recognition of the importance of this link, these teachers were able to generate more opportunities for communication between the school and the Sierra Hmong community than had previously existed. To illustrate, Mrs. Murchison worked with a Hmong aide to develop a questionnaire for the parents of Hmong students

(see Appendix A). The questionnaire was primarily designed to obtain some of the Hmong parents' dominant attitudes regarding school. Although such attempts at community level communication were fraught with the same difficulties encountered through direct verbal exchanges, the use of cultural/linguistic brokers was generally recognized by teachers and other educators as advantageous.

Modifying the ways in which teachers directly interact with Hmong students, constructing special tracks for language minority students, and using key Hmong cultural brokers have allowed educators to meet Hmong students half way in the adaptation process.

CHAPTER VIII

IMPLICATIONS

In this final chapter I wish to address issues pertaining to pedagogy and broader implications of intercultural communication and learning (learning here expressed more as a function of adaptation). Although the data and analyses of the previous chapters invoke important issues regarding the actions of teachers and other educators, it is not my intention here to be in any way prescriptive. I merely raise these issues for purposes of general discussion. This final chapter is organized into two general sections: (a) methodological issues, (b) pedagogical issues, and (c) issues pertaining to intercultural communication. It is, I think, useful to explore the ramifications of these data in terms that might be useful for educators and the Hmong community. Moreover, at the conceptual level, these data may provide some useful guidelines for the construction of practical conceptual models of intercultural communication--or to provide additional input for existing models.

Methodological Issues

I encountered a number of problems during the initial stages of my fieldwork. Most of these difficulties stemmed from the same barriers discussed in the previous chapter. For instance, cultural predispositions regulating inter-gender communication hindered my developing a rapport with the Hmong girls. The language barrier itself presented a formidable obstacle. To overcome these difficulties, I found myself adapting to various situations in much the same way as teachers and non-Hmong aides.

For example, in developing a rapport with the Hmong girls I waited until they were comfortable with my presence. This did not occur until my role had changed from observer-researcher to tutor. As my role shifted to one more readily recognizable in a school context, interaction with the Hmong girls became easier and more natura..

I also found myself using cultural/linguistic brokers as a means of opening communication with Hmong students. Hmong aides helped me in a number of ways. First, they were able to explain my role as a researcher. Second, they acted as interpreters and informants. Their role as informants became crucial to my study; two of the aides eventually became key informants (providing data on Hmong culture and Hmong communicative style).

Finally, at the time this study was initiated, I was in

the early stages of learning to speak Hmong. Because I was not fluent in Hmong this affected the emphasis of my analysis. In sociolinguistics, two dimensions of analysis are typically given equal weight: (a) semantic content (i.e., literally the meaning of utterances in texts), and (b) the structuring and regulating of interaction. My emphasis was on how Hmong students (and non-Hmong people) interacted; that is, how they modified and utilized social situations in order to communicate. Although interaction received more attention in my analysis, content still played a significant part. What was said in conversations for example, was obtained through reconstruction of conversations carried out by working closely with key Hmong informants. Content, as conveyed through these reconstructions, were second hand and the pristine nature of the discourse itself was lost; therefore, the meaning of what was said was taken at a gross level.

From the standpoint of methodology, carrying out the fieldwork forced me to engage the adaptation process itself. It was, in a sense, a participant observation study from the beginning.

Pedagogical Issues

Before beginning a discussion of pedagogy I feel compelled to state that both educators and Hmong students alike, through their daily actions, have developed the

pedagogical themes that follow. I have not generated solutions from above, nor do I intend to impose any original recommendations. Thus, in actuality, the pedagogical issues raised here initially emerged in-situ at Sierra high through the actions of Hmong students, teacher's aides, teachers, and administrators.

Many of the teachers at Sierra high had, through the course of their daily contact with Hmong students, developed a number of pedagogical tools for reducing communication and cultural barriers. In this section I summarize many of the issues raised in Chapter VII; however, the discussion is couched in terms of potentials for instructional use. In terms of organizing these issues for purposes of instruction, four relational patterns can be kept in mind while reading subsequent portions of this chapter: (a) direct teacher/student interaction, (b) appealing to cultural/linguistic brokers, (c) reorganizing student-to-student interactions, and (d) identification of specific communication barriers.

Structuring Communicative Events

Many of the actors involved in this study structured communicative events in particular ways in order to facilitate communication across cultural, linguistic, and social domains. Choice of voice, how a teacher questions students, and students reactions to teacher behavior

generally affected how communication was carried out. What follows are specific aspects of these patterns and how they relate to teaching.

Variety in Code Usage

Bernstein (1964) has noted that the use of elaborated codes generally increases the over-all variety of speech forms being used in given speech environments through regulating production of texts containing more universal meanings. In this study, teachers who attempted to generate elaborated codes employed a significantly wider range of speech related communicative mechanisms than those teachers whose style relied on restricted codes. Through the ability to switch codes at appropriate junctures in communicative events, many of these teachers were able to negotiate both linguistic (semantic) and social meaning with Hmong students. This form of code usage also added social context to various speech events which occurred. In this sense, specific verbal utterances were associated with more extensive dimensions of social meaning. Using a familiar or personalized voice also lessened the formal distance between teacher and student--an important consideration given the Hmong predisposition toward the formalities of communicative exchange. Others have commented on the efficacy of this general theme (embellishing or elaborating features of communicative process). Cummins (1981,1982,1983), and

Bowers and Flinders (1990) have noted that communication is enhanced when it is embedded in a recognizable matrix for social interaction.

Nonverbal communication represents a form of elaboration as well. Bowers and Flinders, along with Hall (1959,1969), have observed that physical movement and proxemics can accentuate verbal communication--sometimes transcending cultural/linguistic obstacles. By simply moving one's hand in a certain way the general meaning of a verbal utterance can sometimes be conveyed. Furthermore, prosodic cues can add more context to verbal exchanges. A slight change in voice can communicate a teacher's intentions. Encouragement, happiness, disappointment, and so forth can be communicated by a mere shift in a prosodic cue, adding an extended layer of meaning to verbal exchanges.

This type of extended code discourse appears to be quite useful when dealing with language minority students. Many of the students in this study spent a considerable amount of time merely watching. Comprehension of specific speech events that they did not understand at the verbal level were translatable, albeit at a basic level, through nonverbal elaborated codes associated with those speech events.

With respect to verbal exchanges, obtaining comprehensible feedback and "talking down" to students has

been discussed as a useful tool for enhancing second language acquisition (Krashen and Terrell 1983, Rivers 1987, Wells 1981). By simplifying and incorporating emotive elements to speech exchanges, the over-all richness of the communicative event becomes heightened. Stephen Krashen has noted that TPR (total physical response), used in conjunction with verbal exchanges which incorporate talking down, significantly stimulates language acquisition processes. Simple words are uttered along with use of kinesic/emotive activity. Learning can be facilitated by associating specific utterances with contextualized moods and states of emotion. In this sense the acquisition process involves linguistic material and emotional symbolism.

It is also the case that for Hmong students codes varied from one social context to another. In Hmong homes, for example, the principle regulating code for communication was restrictive. In classrooms, codes were less restrictive. Outside of school and home contexts, regulating codes were, as Bernstein (1990) put it, "elaborated" (e.g., conversation dominated as the principle medium of exchange).

Questioning Strategies, Turn Allocation, and Omission

In their endeavor to engage students, teachers employed

a number of questioning strategies and other means to involve students. The literature is full of examples of questioning strategies which work in one cultural context but not in others (cf. Heath 1986). For Hmong students the problem centered on their reluctance to volunteer answers when teachers asked for volunteers. This is a problem associated with the larger problem of omission (Brophy and Good 1974, Gollnick and Chinn 1989:94). Some teachers recognized this problem and utilized various questioning strategies for different minority groups. This occurred naturally in "Sheltered" ESL classes. When a teacher wanted a Hmong student to respond to a question, the students were typically called upon by name. They were also encouraged to volunteer answers.

In general, if barriers stemming from age and gender differentials (including differences in ethnicity) were present, Hmong students were not likely to initiate or open communicative exchanges. Once a series of exchanges was open, however, Hmong students typically allowed non-Hmong speakers to dominate conversations. This had direct impact on conversation lessons involving participants that were Hmong and non-Hmong. Some teachers had learned to employ aides to regulate, to some degree, how much a student could dominate "talk time." Despite such efforts, in many informal conversation lessons Hmong students did not monopolize speech time.

Regulating Intercultural/
Linguistic Interchanges

In order to facilitate the use of English some teachers purposely organized lessons which involved placing students of varying ethnolinguistic backgrounds together in work groups. Beyond forcing students to use English, this served a number of other functions. First, Hmong students learned to interact with non-Hmong students, increasing their direct exposure to other cultural perspectives. Second, these groupings created situations where students had to construct modes of social interaction which transcended cultural boundaries. Finally, these types of working arrangements, at least momentarily, broke up cultural/linguistic enclaves. Maintaining such enclaves in most circumstances appeared to be useful; however, occasionally reorganizing student groupings appeared to force students to develop a wider range of communicative skills.

The Problem of Shifting Phonemes

Hearing two representative, but varying forms of the same phonological system, presented some problems for limited English Hmong listeners. Teachers cognizant of this problem always made sure that when pronouncing words (even when pronouncing slowly) they used a vernacular form. Seldom in everyday speech do people use stilted language. When common forms of speech were used extensively Hmong

listeners heard a consistent phonological representation of English.

With regard to phonological representation, linguistic codes, such as regional dialects, could present comprehension problems for these students. However, at Sierra High the range of differences in regional dialect was relatively narrow and did not seem to be a major problem.

Dealing with Abstractions

In academic environments it is impossible to avoid use of abstract terminology. In most cases, at the high school level, vocabulary building is incorporated into various lessons across all content areas. For Hmong students this was, as it is for all students, part of the learning process. Many teachers employed strategies for dealing with abstraction by using concrete language and tangible examples in order to extend meaning to abstract terms. The Hmong community itself has begun the task of inventing Hmong terms for words not previously contained in the Hmong lexicon. The term "Li Tsu," for example, means "history." Until 1982 the Hmong did not have an equivalent term for history (Yee Xiong, personal communication). Thus, the Hmong themselves are creating language which allow for incorporating these types of abstractions.

Contextualizing Lessons

Teachers also enhanced the language acquisition process by contextualizing lessons. During Halloween, for example, Mrs. Murchison prepared a conversation lesson that incorporated words related to Halloween. In conjunction with pictures, stories, and costumes, she was able to reinforce the use of vocabulary words through context building.

Identification of the Underlying Features of Hmong Speech Subcommunities

Knowing something about cultural predispositions and how Hmong behavior takes place in the classroom might help teachers develop pedagogical tools for overcoming cultural obstacles. This type of task, with respect to subcultural variability, might involve identifying specific speech subcommunities and specifying their underlying features. This might also involve the identification of normative, marginal, and transitional forms of Hmong discourse.

In terms of specifying structural dimensions of Hmong speech subcommunities, identifying hierarchies, or interactional rank within these subcommunities, may prove useful. By obtaining these features it might be possible to mitigate intragroup dynamics by working through existing channels; channels which have been organized by rank, age,

gender, and cultural/linguistic competency. For example, by knowing who in particular subcommunities has easier access to other members, and by knowing the circumstances under which the flow of communication is distributed to the largest number of members, construction and use of certain interactional protocols could enhance the way communication is conducted between teachers and Hmong students. In addition, the frequency with which "conversation" is utilized as a tool for enhancing language acquisition, could be better served by having an understanding of speech subcommunity structure and dynamics. Hatch, for example, has observed that most language acquisition "evolves out of learning how to carry out conversations" (1978:404). By facilitating the use of conversation within the context of existing subcommunities, and by working across differing subcommunities, it might be possible to stimulate second language acquisition with a higher degree of success.

Many of the teachers described in this study intuitively knew how such groupings were organized. Facilitating lessons which utilized existing structures, therefore, became a matter of course. In recognizing a teachers efforts in this area, Hmong students learned to modify subcommunity structures in order to accommodate non-Hmong members. This was already occurring with respect to non-Hmong aides, teachers, and, in some cases, non-Hmong students.

Modeling and Demonstrating

Modeling lessons and using visual demonstrations were, according to comments made by Hmong students during interviews, preferred over purely verbal lessons. These students expressed the opinion that, in many instances, they wanted to see how things worked. This preference for visual modeling and demonstration, as most teachers will attest, cannot always be provided. In instances where it can, especially if a class has a significant number of language minority students, using demonstrations may prove useful. Mr. Stephens, for example, relied a great deal on actual in-class demonstrations. If students did not understand the underlying principles he was trying to convey, he modeled the lesson by drawing it out on a large piece of butcher's paper. Giddan and Giddan (1984) have recognized the efficacy of using pictures to enhance the language acquisition process. Creating images that correspond to written and verbal materials, as Giddan and Giddan point out, create more lasting cognitive impressions. In some classes, however, the basic content of the course did not lend itself to constant demonstration, so merely opting for such forms of performance was not always an option.

Individualized Lessons

The use of individualized lessons for Hmong students,

presents certain ethical problems. On the one hand, if Hmong students are treated exactly like all other students (in mainstreamed situations), does this in reality represent a form of selecting out? One could venture to ask: do such conditions actually exist where all students are treated essentially the same? In contrast, if Hmong students are treated differently, what are the ramifications of doing so? Instead of trying to resolve this dilemma myself I will point to the conditions under which Hmong students were tacitly separated. Typically it was done in classes where the requirements of the course were beyond the skill levels of Hmong students. This did not mean that Hmong students were not able to perform, it merely suggests that their abilities required modifications concerning what was actually expected of them. Thus, in a way, teachers who used this form of separation were adapting to a social reality as opposed to appealing to "idealized" notions of educational neutrality. There have been numerous studies, especially within the body of literature sensitive to cultural issues in education, which suggest that a truly neutral policy toward teacher expectations of students is unobtainable (cf. Bowers and Flinders 1990:91-92, Spindler 1988a:14-20). If that is indeed the case then the differential treatment of students might prove useful as a means of organizing reasonable expectations for students of varying backgrounds.

Models of Intercultural Communication

In their text, Samovar and Porter outline the basic conditions under which intercultural communication occurs. They state: "Intercultural communication occurs whenever a message is produced by a member of one culture for consumption by a member of another culture" (1991:10). They go on to point out that this type of communication is problematic not only because the individuals involved may not share the same primary language, but they most likely will not share the same cultural paradigms. Susan Philips (1982, 1985) points to a fundamental problem stemming from cultural differences in her Warm Springs study. The central issue is one of differences in culturally derived features for the organization of rules for social and communicative participation. In viewing her approach to understanding intercultural communication as problematic with regard to schools, three salient observations emerge:

1. The individual is seen as being almost exclusively governed by cultural precedence.

2. That implicit assumptions built into the ways participation is structured in two differing cultural systems can be problematic in school environments;

3. That student teacher relations are dominated by the imposition of dominant cultural attitudes held by teachers.

Cummins (1981,1982,1983) has constructed a model whereby communication is viewed more as a specific context dependent phenomena. He notes that language minority students acquire "face-to-face" language competency when talking to peers, before they acquire the necessary skills to survive in all English academic environments. In general terms his model sees intercultural communication as comprised of: (a) two or more culturally/linguistically different parties, (b) context-dependent constraints affecting how language minority students learn second languages in various social situations, and (c) influences of context-rich vs context-reduced linguistic environments. In context-reduced environments, much like Bernstein's notion of restricted codes, communication is limited and particularistic because of a general lack of extralinguistic reinforcement. Also, tasks for these students become "cognitively demanding" under conditions of "decontextualization" (1981:215). Various prosodic cues, physical gestures, and other nonverbal communicative actions, increase the over-all richness of the interactive event lessening cognitive demands on these students.

Cummins goes on to point out that because language minority students acquire language competency at the peer level first, educators often make the mistake of mainstreaming them too early. Thus these students have a tendency to fail in <u>all</u> English dominated academic settings.

In such environments extensive extralinguistic communication is often lacking. Data collected for this study bear this observation out. Vang represents a fairly typical example. In face-to-face encounters Vang could communicate quite effectively with non-Hmong speakers. In his regular classes, however (mainstreamed classes), communication was difficult. As Cummins would put it, these classes represent "context-reduced" linguistic environments.

Bernstein has put forth similar ideas with his notions of elaborated and restricted codes. Another idea which Bernstein proposes is notion of "concept code" (1984:135-151). Here, Bernstein suggests that actors involved in speech exchanges will manifest basic sets of culture core concepts. With this suggestion, Bernstein is entering the realm of cognition. In my study I indicate that certain normative cultural patterns influencing communicative actions are operating. For me to assume that these actions represent a core set of cultural traits is purely based on observations and on what I was told by Hmong informants. It would be difficult for me to construct a cognitive model demonstrating in precise terms what these core traits are--thus I only depend on descriptive data. By introducing this notion of concept code, Bernstein is also indicating a link between cultural predispositions and the construction and use of speech codes. This is an important link when considering intercultural communicative transaction.

An underlying assumption contained in the above mentioned models is that culture is the overriding driving force influencing problems of intercultural communication. By definition, that is by focusing purely on culture and communication, this is so. Yet, in developing a full view of intercultural interactive process, this is not enough.

A Final Word

Throughout this study I have sought to describe the process by which Hmong students and educators confronted difficulties of communication. Observing the four students, and obtaining information related to Hmong predispositions toward communication and interaction, provided me with a partial window into this process.

Despite language barriers, each of the four students found ways to communicate with non-Hmong speakers. Vu relied on his increasing proficiency with English and on his skill at reading and interpreting social situations. Lu was still at the early stages of the language acquisition process and had to depend on others for information.

Toward the end of the school year Vang was preparing for graduation. Despite the language barrier, Vang had successfully passed his competency exams and was thinking about attending a local community college. Also, toward the end of the school year Vang was more talkative and expressive in his ESL class. In his regular (mainstream)

classes, however, he remained quiet.

Ngao, like Vu, was becoming a crucial broker for other Hmong students (especially the girls). She was becoming more fluent in English. At the end of the school year I could maintain a conversation with her without the need for an interpreter. Ngao also continued to balance her responsibilities as a student, wife, and mother.

For Vu, Ngao, Vang, Lu, and educators at Sierra high, their ability to synchronize cultural knowledge and shifting situations in their own individual ways, represents "functional adaptation." As a function of communication, integrating cultural elements with situational and individual demands, represents a much more complete view of the communicative process. Sociocultural boundaries create imperatives for those engaging in communicative events. The skill with which an individual negotiates these boundaries will depend on the richness of the context in which the communication takes place, on the cultural tools available to the individual, and on characteristics embedded in an individual's own constructed world. For Hmong students the challenge will be to adapt without losing a sense of what it is like to be Hmong. For educators the challenge will be one of engaging issues of cultural, contextual, and individual influences on communication. However this process unfolds in the long run, language, or more specifically "speaking," as an integral part of social

interaction, will be the primary medium by which disparate worlds are brought together.

APPENDIX A

SIERRA HIGH SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

PREPARED FOR HMONG PARENTS

Qhov tseem ceeb txog diam ntaw no yog peb xav paub txog ntawm nej cov niam-txiv, tsev neeg, thiab phooj ywg muaj me nyuam kawm ntawv nyob rau hauv ESL, xav li cas txog peb lub ESL program nyob hauv [Sierra] Senior High School no. Nej teb cov lus ntsam no, ua lus hmoob los tau. Yog hais tias nej muaj kev thuam txog peb lub program los yog nej muaj tswv yim dad tsis xav los pab kom peb qhia nej cov me nyuam no, thov hais tuaj qhia rau peb paub.

ESL program muaj ob lub sijhawm xws li cov nyiam qhuav pib txog ESL thiab cov twb tau kawm ESL ntev zog. Cov nyiam qhuav pib ces peb muab li ob teev tuaj ib hnub rau kawm txog English. Peb muaj co hoob kawm txog Asmilekas lub neej puag thaum ub los txog niam no. Nws muaj neeg yuav los pab nej cov me nyuam nyob rau thaum kawm ntawv tas yav tsau ntuj ntawd. Yog leej twg xag xav mus kom lawv pab, mus ntsib tau. Peb muaj neeg nws hais lus xws li, lus nplog, lus, hmoob nyuaj. Muab cov lus no coj mus xav es pab teb cov lus thauj no.

1. Nej cov niam qhua pib kawm ESL puas xav tias lawv pab nej txaus thiab los tsis txaus?

2. Nej cov twb tua kawm ESL ntev zog los lawm, nej xav lawv pab nej txaus thiab los tsis txaus?

3. Koj tus me nyuam puas tau txias kev pab los ntawm tus nais khus thiab cov tuaj pab nws, txog nes cov hoob?

4. Koj tus me nyuam kawm English ntev li no, nws xav tias nws to taub thiab los tsis tau?

5. Koj cov me nyuam puas muaj homework txaus cov los tom tsev xws li nyob rau hauv hoob English, Science, thiab history?

6. Koj cov me nyuam puas txaus siab tias peb cov phau ntwv thiab cov ntawv peb siv, zoo thiab los tsis tau?

7. Koj cov me nyuam puas txaus siab rau nws cov hoob ESL? Nws puas xav tias nws kawm tau thiab los tsis tau?

8. Koj cov me nyuam kawm zoo li cas nyob rau cov hoob kws tsis yog ESL xws li, math, P.E. government, economics, thiab txhua yam?

9. Koj puas xav tias peb yuav tsum muaj ib cov hoob los pab qhia science thiab history rau ESL rau nej cov me nyuam kws kawm ntawv nyob rau hauv ESL no, mus ntxiv?

10. Koj puas xav kom muaj lwm cov hoob los pab nej cov me nyuam nyob rau cov hoob xws li government thiab economics?

11. Koj puas xav tias koj cov me nyuam daim ntawv qhab niav puas qhia tau koj cov me nyuam kawm tau English thiab los tsis tau?

12. Koj puas pom zoo tias peb muaj tib neeg nyob hauv tsev kawm ntawv kws hais tau lus zoo li koj cov me nyuam tuaj pab qhia koj cov me nyuam nyob rau hauv cov hoob tsis yog ESL?

13. Koj puas xav tias tus tib neeg tuaj pab koj cov me nyuam ntawd, puas hais nej cov lus txaus thiab?

14. Koj xav kom tus neeg tuaj pab koj cov me nyuam

ntawd, hais nej cov lus ntau npaum li cas nyob hauv hoob?

15. Koj cov me nyuam cov nais khus nyob hauv ESL program puas hais kom koj cov me nyuam khaws nej cov kev cai thiab cov lus?

16. Cov nais khus nyob hauv tsev kawm ntawv puas to taub txog nej coj kev cai txawv?

17. Koj puas xav tias koj cov me nyuam kawm txog Asmilika kev cai thiab tus yeeb yam?

18. Koj cov me nyuam puas tau lus zoo ntawm cov nais khus, tus tuaj pab koj cov me nyuam thiab tus saib xyuas koj cov me nyuam cov ntaub ntawj, puas qhia txog cov hoob kws koj cov me nyuam yuav tsum kawm thiam li tiav?

19. Koj cov me nyuam xav tias tsev kawm ntawv yog ib qhov chaws kaj siab thiab kawm tau?

20. Koj cov me nyuam puas tau txias kev rau siab thiab yuav tsum siv zog thiam kawm tau?

21. Koj cov me nyuam muaj kev nyuaj siab txog kev kawm ntawv, lawv puas los hais qhia koj paub?

22. Koj cov me nyuam puas kawm tau kev zoo tom tsev kawm ntawv?

23. Koj cov me nyuam puas mus ntsib cov neeg tuaj pab koj cov me nyuam nuob rau yav thaum lawb ntawv?

24. Peb yuav ua li cas, peb thiam yuav muaj txoj kev to tau zoo los nyob ntawn cov niam-txiv thiab cov nais khus?

25. Koj puas muaj tsum yim yuav los pab kom peb lub program no zoo mus ntxiv?

THOV NEJ MUAB DAIM NTAWV NO RAU NEJ COV ME NYUAM NQA ROV QAB TUAJ RAU TOM TSEV KAWM NTAWV, TSIS PUB NDHAU LUB OCT. 7

.....UA TSAUG.....

NOTE: I have made this interview protocol in the Hmong language available here as a resource for the Hmong community. It was originally written in English but is not an exact translation of that version.

APPENDIX B

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

With qualitative studies of this type it is customary to include background information on the author. This provides the reader with a sense of the author's particular perspective. In keeping with this "reflexive mode" I include here a brief autobiographical sketch which should help the reader see, at least in part, the study through my eyes.

The Early Years

I was born in Southern California. I grew up in a suburb community of Los Angeles and went through the public school system of that community. In going through the public schools in southern California during the 1950s and 1960s I was exposed to a number of social and cultural transformations. Those transformations had a profound affect on my current academic interests. At that time I witnessed the unfolding of the Civil Rights movement. I watched the build up and demise of the Vietnam war. I also watched, on TV, the replays of the Kennedy assassinations (both John and Robert), in addition to the assassination of Martin Luther King.

The elementary school I attended, unlike other schools in the district, was integrated. In any given classroom there might be, out of a class of thirty or so, four or five blacks, two or three Japanese Americans, six or seven Hispanics, or two or three European students (I remember

several German students). Roughly half of a typical class would not be Anglo American. However, there were no ethnic minority teachers. In fact all of the teachers, with the exception of one (a white male), were white and female.

It was, I think, in the fourth grade that I first became aware of certain stereotypical attitudes held by White students, teachers, and administrators toward Black children. One incident in particular brought this realization home. One day while playing on the playground, I got involved in an altercation with a black student. He and I ended up rolling on the ground kicking, hitting, and yelling at one another. It didn't take long for two teachers to pull us apart and drag the both of us to the Vice Principal's office. The Black student (Johnny, a pseudonym) went in first while I sat outside in the hallway where I could hear the Vice Principal yelling at Johnny. Johnny must have been in there for 15 minutes before he came out; and when he finally did he was crying and he also looked extremely frightened. I remember thinking 'oh boy, am I going to get it now.' When I went into the Vice Principal's office I was already crying. "Sit down," he said. "Just take it easy, this won't take long." After I collected myself a bit he said: "So, just what happened anyway?"

"He threw something at me and it hit me," I said.

The Vice Principal looked at me sternly and said: "When

those boys do that to you, no matter how mad you get, don't fight back. I'll tell you why. If you get into trouble with a colored they'll all gang up on you. They'll wait until after school and get you when your walking home--that's the way they are. If its after school we can't help you."

I had heard this before from other students and, at that time, had no reason to doubt it--although I could not remember a specific instance where it had occurred. Although I was only in the fourth grade, I knew something was wrong. It was difficult at that time to articulate it.

By the time I entered Junior High the Civil Rights movement was fully underway. Students from all over the district were put into one school. At that time most of the elementary schools in the district were all white. My previous school (mixed) and one other school (all Black) were the only exceptions. My experience during 7th and 8th grades taught me that there were serious divisions in the community in which I lived. On a number of occasions out and out hostilities broke out between White and Black students. Rumors continuously circulated reporting fights or supposed fights between Blacks and Whites.

Many of the stereotypes of Blacks students were more overt and elaborated in Junior high. One in particular held that Blacks were clanish and that they did everything together, including gang up on White students. I also

remember, however, both White and Black students trying to resolve these problems. For example, I recall sitting next to a Black girl in Band and having conversations with her almost every day. She would usually start the conversations with some humorous jab. One of her favorites was "You White guys always look like your going on a hike; do you guys hike a lot"? We would laugh because it was true. My friends and I typically wore hiking boots or the standard tennis shoes with Levis and white T-shirts. She would often go on to talk about labels: "You guys should call us 'Bloods.' Only niggers could call each other niggers," she would say and laugh. It was popular at that time for blacks to refer to each other as "niggers" when they were being sarcastic. The term was, of course, tabu for Whites. Context is important.

In looking back, we were experimenting with new identities; identities as adults and as bearers of a more egalitarian worldview. We were idealistic and naive. We had fostered an almost religious belief that someday there would be no discrimination. High school proved that social change, despite our idealism, was not always easy or pain free.

The year I became a freshman in high school the 1960s phenomenon came on the scene. Jimi Hendrix, Cream, the Beatles were being played on many of the local radio stations. Numerous local rock bands were being formed in our community; the Vietnam war was raging out of control;

and drugs became an ever present feature of school culture. Although the Vietnam war was going on it still seemed to be too far away to affect us (as freshmen). It was still just something you would discuss in social science or see on the news just before the weather and sports.

As I went through various stages of my high school career I started to see myself more and more as a social activist. Several of us had read Marx's Communist Manifesto, and it gave us a sense of power when we walked through the halls of the school with copies conspicuously tucked under our arms. I had also grown critical of the war in Vietnam.

I was good at moving in and out of various social groups. For example, I could hang out with the jocks, play football, basketball, and baseball with them; and talk "jock talk" as needed. I could also hang out with the counter cultural types: the artists, the loads, and the musicians. When I think back, though, the people I associated with the most were nondescript academic types. Guys who were into outdoor activities, biology, astronomy, and current issues. These types made up a small core group of friends. We could usually be found under the oak tree on campus arguing, joking around, and teasing each other about girlfriends (or the lack of them). There were six of us. Only two are still alive (myself and one other who now lives in Wyoming).

College

When I graduated from high school the Vietnam war was still going strong. I had been issued my lottery number for selection in the draft; it was 69. Although, I felt I had "had it" with school, I decided to enroll at the local community college in order to maintain a minimum amount of course work to avoid the draft. In 1972 President Nixon began his "Vietnamization" program and, after student deferments were cancelled, I thought that I was going to go. Nixon, however, released my selection group as part of his program and I became classified as I-H. Several months later I destroyed my draft card.

It was toward the second year of my schooling in college that I began to transcend adolescence. Two of my closest friends died within a period of six months (one from cancer, the other from an accidental gunshot wound from an antique pistol). In looking back on this period it does not seem extremely dark or gloomy though. It was, in a way, a time of awakening. I went from being a mediocre student to an A student in the course of one summer. The following Fall I enrolled at California Polytechnic University, Pomona, and declared a major in history.

My experience at California Polytechnic shaped the future of my academic interests. As a student of history I focused on 18th century American ideas regarding equal

rights and the formation of civil laws protecting those rights. What I wanted to know was how a group of founding fathers could appeal to political and social theories of the European philosophes, philosophers who upheld the values of democracy and egalitarianism, and still fail to understand the plight of Native Americans. To look into the problem I chose for my Senior project the actions and ideas of the Philadelphia Quakers. In 1763 the Quakers were trying to maintain peace between Pennsylvania Scotch-Irish settlers and the Philadelphia citizenry. The incident is known in history books as the "Paxton Riots." The Scotch-Irish were marching on Philadelphia in order to capture and kill several hundred Moravian Indians (Indians who had been converted to Christianity). The Quaker government in Philadelphia, along with non-Quaker citizens, barricaded the city and prevented the Paxtons (as the Scotch-Irish were called) from entering the city. The incident pointed to early concerns for the rights of Native Americans but also demonstrated a serious lack of legitimate legal protection for their rights. Later, after the Revolutionary War was fought and won, and the Constitution was subsequently written, there was still no coherent policy regarding what would later be called "Indian Affairs."

My interest in Native American culture led me to anthropology. I enrolled in a field archaeology class and began to take courses in cultural anthropology to supplement

my history major. I was enticed by the notion of "culture." I recall that I was somewhat intoxicated by the idea of culture. Like many of the other students in anthropology I had become smitten by cultural relativism and an almost absolute belief in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Everything was "culture" to me, because everything passed through my own culturally constructed lens. Through the years the romanticism and totality of this approach to culture has waned--yet I sometimes long for those early days, regardless of naivete that characterized my thinking.

Leaving Home

After graduating from college I began a protracted period of work and travel. During the summer months I would work on the docks in Kodiak, Alaska. There I worked numerous jobs: throwing fish in canneries, doing longshore, fishing, and finally as dock foreman and supervisor of a freezing plant. During the winter months I would take my earnings and go to the tropics. I have spent some considerable time in Jamaica, southern Mexico, and Central America (including Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica). I have also gone to Europe.

During this period of time I developed a keen interest in Maya prehistory. Much of my time spent in southern Mexico and in Central America focused on visits to major and minor Maya archaeological sites. I visited Tikal in

Guatemala; Palenque, Uxmal, and Chichen Itza, among others, in Mexico. My father had often spoken of the Maya when he would relate stories from his days as a graduate student at the University of the Americas in Mexico city. My mother, who was also a student in Mexico, often spoke of the Indians of Mesoamerica. After several years of kindling interests in this area (Maya prehistory) I returned to academia.

In 1982 I went back to school to work on a Masters degree in anthropology, focusing on Maya prehistory (with an emphasis on Maya ceramics). I chose the program at California State University at Chico (Chico, California). My experience there opened my eyes to the world of anthropology as science. I wanted to study Maya prehistory and was able to do so in classes, but was unable to obtain raw material data from the Maya area to use for my thesis (Chico State collections only contain materials gathered in California). I could not do the thesis that I wanted to without transferring to another program.

Gradually, I began to move back toward cultural anthropology. One of the faculty members had encouraged me to pursue research in the "anthropology of education." I had developed an interest in cross-cultural studies of learning, sociolinguistics, and cognitive anthropology, which I subsequently applied to the completion of my Masters degree (which I received in 1984).

In 1985, through an accelerated program in education, I

obtained a secondary credential to teach high school history. The following year (1986) I was offered a temporary position to teach cultural anthropology. In this capacity I taught introductory courses in Cultural Anthropology and the Anthropology of Religion. I also taught, on occasion, Multicultural Education in Chico State's education department. The position in the anthropology department lasted four years (including one year teaching full time). Also, several members of the anthropology department at Chico had, for some time, been encouraging me to consider going back to school for a PhD.

Interest in the Hmong

While I was teaching at Chico State I also worked for a short time with the Upward Bound Project. In this program I worked as a councilor/tutor for disadvantaged high school students. Some of the students with whom I worked were Hmong. Being an anthropologist I became facinated with their culture. As I talked to these students I came to realize that, although these students seemed to be extremely motivated to learn, something was still wrong. These students were attempting to adapt to a cultural system that was, to them, still a mystery. The American cultural system (if such a singular system exists) was also, at times, hostile to these newcomers. The case of these Hmong high school student stood out in my mind as a topic for a PhD

dissertation. In 1989 I applied for entrance into the Doctorate program in Education at the University of Oregon were I have pursued my interests in anthropology and in Hmong cultural adaptation.

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