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ABSTRACT

This aid for teachers of Vietnamese children is an attempt to identify the educational needs and describe the background of Vietnamese students. Many of the educational needs of these students are a result of the differences between U.S. culture and Vietnamese culture which is more than a thousand years old. Because of the large number of student needs, this brief aid addresses only a few general areas of need such as language learning, grade placement, social relationships, and school background. Statements about Vietnamese culture are included to help the teacher select an appropriate approach for Vietnamese students who are refugees from a traditional society which underwent evolutionary change due to contact with the West. The degree of the students' cultural differences is dependent upon their background, for example, whether they had been living in the city or in the countryside, whether they had been intellectuals or illiterates. In working with the students, the teacher is encouraged to adopt the appropriate approach for each case. A bibliography is provided to indicate sources of further information. Also included is a list of some institutional sources for further information. (Author/JM)

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SOME HINTS TO WORK WITH VIETNAMESE STUDENTS

The following is an attempt to identify the educational needs and make an account of the background of Vietnamese students in order to facilitate the work of the teachers and the best adjustment of the children.

The culture of a people who have a millenary-old civilization could not be summarized factually in a few pages. Consequently the list of educational needs is only suggestive. Secondly, the statements about Vietnamese culture apply to the majority of cases, that is, the traditional society which has actually evolved since the contact with the West. The degree of evolution depends on the background of the refugees, whether they were living in the city or in the countryside, whether they are intellectuals or illiterate.

In working with the students, the teacher is the best judge to adopt the appropriate attitude and approach for each individual case. A bibliography is provided for the purpose of further information.

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I. EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Language Learning and Adjustment

The medium of instruction in Vietnam is Vietnamese from Kindergarten through higher education. Foreign languages are taught at grade 6. But almost all Vietnamese children need to learn English and adjust their pronunciation in order to follow classes in regular American schools. Difficulty in learning the English language comes from the following:

- Vietnamese sentence structure and grammar are very simple.
- Difficulty in the pronunciation of: th, b, and p, g and j, sp, st, y and w, etc.
- Children not always ready for oral response because of shyness and also because of the traditional method of teaching foreign languages in the country.
- Children not familiar with sophisticated instructional aids.

Recreation/Reconstruction of Documents

Most children have documents in Vietnamese. Many did not have time to pick up their documents, or lost them during the evacuation.

In the first case the State Department of Education will help the schools to translate or reconstruct the documents.

The second case, in which the child does not have a document to testify to his educational background, is the most difficult instance

Proposals have been submitted by various institutions and organizations to the US Department of HEW to deal with the recreation/reconstruction of documents in the light of the Cuban problem. So far, there is no positive reaction from HEW. In case of urgent need, the State may set up a binational panel to make the evaluation of education background and to issue certificates to children who do not have any documents. Another alternative is to place the child on a probational basis.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Educational Placement

In Vietnam "basic" education is compulsory. No one has bothered himself to define what "basic" really means.

Kindergarten is mostly taken care of by private schools.

At age 6, the child is enrolled in the First Grade. The educational system is 5-4-3: 5 years elementary, 4 years first cycle secondary (junior high school), 3 years second cycle secondary (high school).

Because of recent reforms in education in Vietnam, there should be some precaution in placing the children in American schools according to the numbering of grades.

	<u>Elementary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>	
<u>French</u>	12 11 10 9 8 7	6 5 4 3 2 1	T Baccalaureat
<u>US</u>	K 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	High School Diploma
			(T = Terminal)
Old			
<u>Viet</u>	5 4 3 2 1	7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Baccalaureat
<u>US</u>	1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	High School Diploma
New			
<u>Viet</u>	1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Baccalaureat

The new Vietnamese grade numbering system was suggested by UNESCO and is exactly the same as the American system.

To enter public secondary schools (grade 6) the children have to pass a very competitive entrance exam. In Saigon sometimes the exam fails 85% of the candidates. Those who fail may repeat the 5th grade or may attend 6th grade in private schools.

Socio-Cultural Adjustment

Social Relationships

Naming System.

Order of components of a full name is just the opposite of the American name.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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<u>Viet</u>	<u>Last</u> Kguyen	<u>M.</u> Van	<u>First</u> Thieu	Called Mr. Thieu
<u>US</u>	Gerald <u>First</u>	R. M.	Ford Last	Called Mr. Ford

It is suggested to ask for the family and the given names which are more familiar to the Vietnamese, rather than "last" and "first." Married Vietnamese women keep their maiden names in wedding certificates and other official/legal papers. For social relations, they are called by their husband's names.

Children may bear their mother's name in 2 cases: (1) there is no wedding certificate and the father refuses to recognize the child; (2) Montagnards (Highlanders) children take their mother's names because they have a matriarchal system.

Greetings.

The Vietnamese do not have a sophisticated way of greeting according to the periods of the day. People do not say "Good Morning," "Good Afternoon," "Good Evening," "Good Night." Some people learn the occidental way of greeting and shake hands and even shake hands too often, like the French, whenever you meet people again in the same day. The traditional manner of greeting is to join one's hands and bow slightly or deeply the head, and to welcome to the house or ask about the other party's health or work.

Greeting cards are usually handwritten. New Year greeting cards are printed because of the volume.

Hierarchical Addressing of People.

The Vietnamese do not remember easily the names of other people, perhaps because it is not polite to call people by their names. Instead, people are called by their title, their position. In the family they are called by their rank: for example, Uncle number 4, Brother number 3. You would call your mother's younger brother Uncle number ____, even though he is many years younger than you.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Relationship Between

Parent and child: children have to obey, should not argue.

Husband and wife: "The husband orders, the wife should obey" is no longer true.

Teacher and student: students begin to dissent.

Boys and girls: much relaxation of the observance: "no bodily contact between boys and girls."

Same sex: A boy holding the hand of another boy in a public place has no meaning other than friendship.

Role of Women.

Women are no longer at home. About 2/3 of teachers and pharmacists are women. Women can be senators, policepersons, parachutists, champions in shooting, judges, attorneys, mayors, public works engineers, physicians, etc.

Teacher's Status.

Traditional social order: King, teacher, father.

Today's Teacher's College motto: "Honest teachers make the country prosper."

Birthdays.

Traditionally, the Vietnamese do not celebrate individual birthdays. Birthdays, or textually "age greeting," is celebrated for everyone on New Year's day (Lunar calendar).

But, the anniversary of the death is typical in the traditional family where the accurate birth date does not have any importance, but the date of death is well recorded for the purpose of ancestor worship.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Beliefs

Major Religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islamism.

The main beliefs which prevail in daily activities are a mixture of what was called "The Three Religions," a blend of religion and philosophy and ethics: Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism.

The worship of ancestors is a practice which sometimes has precedence in religion. In a wealthy family, a piece of property, real estate, is called "fire and incense land" and is set aside to yield income necessary for ancestor worship. The law forbids selling that land. Instead, it should be transmitted down through the generations in order to ensure the worship of ancestors.

Other Beliefs: Animism, recent politico-religious groups.

Superstitions: Uncertainty caused by a long war make people more and more superstitious, expecting supernatural powers coming to help heal suffering.

Food and Eating.

What?

Rice (long grain)

Nuoc mam (fish sauce)

More pork than beef

Fish

Vegetables, usually mixed with meat

Glutinous rice (sweet rice) is very popular

Not familiar with fresh milk. Condensed, sweetened milk is used in Vietnam.

A traditional meal in the countryside consists of 3 dishes: fried dish, salted dish and soup.

How?

Chopsticks. Chopstick culture (China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam)

Rice eaten out of a small bowl

All dishes served at the same time

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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When?

Usually 3 meals a day

In countryside, sometimes a brunch and an early dinner.

Invitation.

If you invite someone to lunch or dinner at a restaurant, it is understood that you are the host.

Where to shop for Oriental ingredients for Vietnamese cooking:

Phoenix Produce Company
202 South 3rd Street (at Madison)
Phoenix, Arizona
Telephone (602) 252-4881

Roland's Market
1505 East Van Buren Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85006
Telephone (602) 253-7616

Customs and Traditions

Wedding.

Arranged marriage

Divorce is not popular

Birth.

Many superstitions attached to the date of birth.

Many rituals until the baby is 12 months old.

A first male child is always more welcomed than a girl.

Death.

Date and time of burial are very important. They must be chosen carefully by an astrologer because it is believed that they influence the life of the living.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Visiting People.

Visits are not usually announced nor requested. People just come to friends' house for a visit without any notice, even if there is a telephone.

If you arrive in the middle of a meal, you are the guests for the meal. It would offend if you reject the offer.

No Time Concern.

In the city, time is more important than in the countryside, where time is often referred to as the duration of a smoked cigarette, the lasting of a mouthful of betel nut, the passing of a bus, the position of the sun in the sky, etc.

Holidays

Civic and Religious Holidays

Main Holidays.

Solar Calendar New Year

Lunar Calendar New Year

Memorial Day (3rd month of lunar calendar)

Noon Celebration Day (5th day, 5th month, lunar calendar)

All Souls Day (15th day, 7th month, lunar calendar)

Mid-Autumn Day or Children's Day (15th day, 8th month, lunar calendar)

Founding Fathers Day (10th day, 3rd month, lunar calendar)

National Day

Various National Heroes Days

Religious holidays according to each faith

Sports, Entertainment and Pastimes

Favorite Sports: Soccer, ping pong, volleyball, basketball. There was a movement to restore traditional sports and games.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Performing Arts

Hat Boi (traditional opera)

Cai Luong (renovated opera)

Cai Luong ho Quang (renovated opera with Chinese music)

Drama, comedy

Dance

Chams

Montagnards

Ritual dance

Traditional Music and Songs: Usually sad; langor attributed to the domination of the country by foreign powers.

Modern Music and Songs

Chess (Chinese)

Cards

Transportation

Inter-City

In the city

Public transportation: Buses, Lambrettas (3-wheel vehicles), railways, boats, airplanes

Honda economy (1 million Honda motorcycles for a population of less than 19 million)

Transportation in rural area: mechanization

Transportation on rivers: "Shrimp tail sampan." The motor of a water pump could be used to generate electricity, or push a sampan. The long helix looks like a shrimp tail.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Communication

P.T.T. (Post, telegraph, telephone)

In Saigon

In provinces

T.V.: Saigon and provincial stations

Radio: Saigon and provincial stations

Newspapers: At peak, there were about 30 dailies
in Saigon.

II. BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

Racial Composition

Mainstream Vietnamese

Minorities.

Montagnards from the Central Highlands
Chams from the Center and the Delta
Cambodians from the Delta and the border
Chinese mainly from Saigon Chinatown

Language Background

Spoken Languages.

Mainstream Vietnamese with Northerner, Central,
Southerner (Saigon) accents.
About 40 Montagnards dialects
Cham
Cambodian
Chinese

Foreign Languages.

French
English

Writing.

Vietnamese Romanized writing (with accents borrowed from French, Spanish and Portuguese). A phonetic transcript, with a number of rules for spelling, make it easy to learn for the native speakers. An adult illiterate could read and write after three months of intensive learning.

Nho characters: Sino-Vietnamese characters. Chinese characters pronounced in a learned, scholarly Vietnamese language used in literature and administration under the Emperors.

Nôm characters: Demotic script made up of Chinese characters with roots adapted to the vernacular Vietnamese language. Chinese people understand the Nho characters, but can not understand the Nôm characters.

Romanized writings developed for the Montagnards by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (affiliated with the University of North Dakota).

BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

Page 11

Curriculum

Same national curriculum and syllabuses for all schools, public and private.

Same curriculum for urban and rural schools.

Mostly college preparation.

Four main tracks at secondary level:

- Mathematics
- Experimental Sciences
- Modern Letters
- Classical Letters.

Most students take Math and Sciences.

The system is 5-4-3 (Elementary, First Cycle Secondary, Second Cycle Secondary).

Kindergarten usually in private schools.

The national exam at the end of the 12th grade gives the Baccalaureat II.

Some technical/vocational schools prepare for the Technical Baccalaureat.

Some agricultural schools prepare for the Baccalaureat in Agriculture, Forestry and Animal Husbandry.

Some comprehensive schools prepare for the Baccalaureat of Comprehensive Education.

All public elementary schools have been converted into community elementary schools with a more practical curriculum, including practical experience such as: rat eradication, mosquito eradication, irrigation, etc.

In secondary, the majority of students take the General Education curriculum leading to college. Even students in technical/vocational schools, beside the Technical Baccalaureat, also prepare for the General Education Baccalaureat.

Salable skills are not regarded as important.

Extra-curricular activities are minimized.

Not much sports, athletics.

BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

Page 12

Teaching/Learning Methodology

Handwriting.

Every elementary student has an inkpot, and learns to write with a metallic pen. No pencil or ball-point pen allowed.

Notebook and homework book for each subject.

Elementary students also keep daily assignment book.

Textbooks transferred from older to younger ones in the family.

Students copy what teacher writes on blackboard.

Bookish learning.

Lecture

Listening, taking notes

Memorizing

Reciting

Not much discussion

Only cognitive learning.

No place for affective domain to develop.

Heavy homework even in 1st grade.

Not many instructional materials.

Inadequate laboratories.

Quizzes, trimester or semester control exams.

Preparation for exam rather than individual development.

Very selective.

Meritocracy.

Elitism.

Literary vs. pragmatism.

Generalist vs. specialist.

BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

Page 13

Examinations

In some selective elementary schools, children have to pass a competitive entrance exam (for 1st grade).

After 5th grade, to enter a secondary public school, students have to pass a competitive entrance exam.

Formerly, by the end of the 9th grade there was an exam for the Diploma of First Cycle Secondary Education. It has been abolished.

Abolished also, recently, the Baccalaureat Part I, given by the end of the 11th grade. This leaves the Baccalaureat Part II at the end of the 12th grade.

Essay type exam. Objective test is novel.

Discipline

Respect for elders.

Motto of traditional schools: "Morals first, letters later."

Shyness of Vietnamese children.

Introspection rather than verbal expression.

More punishment than reward at school (suffer to learn).

Foreign Schools in Vietnam

French Schools.

A selected number of Vietnamese children attend French schools besides children of the diplomatic corps. Vietnamese language is considered a second language.

Chinese Schools.

Officially, they have to follow the national Vietnamese curriculum. Practically, they teach more Chinese than Vietnamese. Result: many Chinese Vietnamese are not fluent in Vietnamese.

BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

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American Schools.

Rare are Vietnamese children who can afford to attend schools reserved for American dependents.

The so-called "International Schools" which claim to teach American curriculum operate illegally; are rather profit makers.

Bilingual Education in Vietnam

Education for Montagnards.

Under the First Republic (before 1964), Vietnamese language was medium of instruction beginning with 1st grade.

After 1964, bilingual education implemented in the Highlands for Montagnards. Vietnamese language introduced gradually in upper classes.

Lower requirements and special training for Montagnard teachers.

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- ENGLISH-VIETNAMESE PHRASEBOOK WITH USEFUL WORD LIST (for Vietnamese speakers).
A survival phrasebook and mini-dictionary for Vietnamese. The 3,000 item glossary is bilingual from Vietnamese to English and English to Vietnamese.
 - VIETNAMESE-ENGLISH PHRASEBOOK AND USEFUL WORD LIST (for English speakers).
Intended as a simplified guide and mini-dictionary to basic, useful Vietnamese phrases and words which an American teacher can use immediately with non-or limited-English speaking Vietnamese. Simplified phonetic transcriptions are provided, also a brief section on Vietnamese pronunciation (including tones and grammar). The 3,000 item glossary is bilingual from Vietnamese to English and English to Vietnamese.
 - A SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF VIETNAMESE
This bibliography will provide school districts with information on published commercial materials as well as ERIC documents suitable for the instruction of Vietnamese at all levels from pre-school through college and adult education. Included are English teaching materials and references on Vietnamese language and culture, as well as a section on professional works on teaching methods.
 - PERSONNEL RESOURCES FOR THE EDUCATION OF VIETNAMESE
Information on available Vietnamese and American educators who have by background, experience, or training, special expertise in teaching content subjects in Vietnamese or English as a second language. Also lists experts available to offer technical assistance to school districts on short-term consultant basis.

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Cassettes of approximately one and one-half hours in length.
- BILINGUAL VIETNAMESE-ENGLISH DICTIONARY
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 2. BEGINNING ENGLISH FOR VIETNAMESE SPEAKERS. (Hoc Tieng Anh, Cap I)
 3. INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH FOR VIETNAMESE SPEAKERS. (Hoc Tieng Anh, Cap II)

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3. READ VIETNAMESE - second year textbook.
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II. CULTURE:

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A bilingual bi-weekly newsletter, edited and published by the National Vietnamese Refugee and Information Center in Washington, D.C. - has the purpose of promoting understanding between Americans and Indochinese in America. Subscriptions are available upon request by writing to American-Indochinese Assistance Center, P. O. Box 2839, Washington, D. C. 20013.

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1611 North Kent Street
Arlington, Va. 22209
Director: Allene Grognet
Telephone: (800)336-3040, (703)528-4312

ERIC Clearinghouse of Languages and Linguistics
Same Address.
Ask for ERIC materials relating to Vietnamese and
English compiled by Jennifer DeCamp.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY GROUP
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Washington, D.C. 20208
Vietnamese Project (U.S. Dept. of HEW)
Write and ask for: one set of the Vietnamese Resource
Materials. Service will continue until the supply is
exhausted, or December 31, 1975.

SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS, INC.
Huntington Beach, Ca. 92648
Telephone: (714)536-9346
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the Vietnamese Montagnards.

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Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Carbondale, Illinois 62901
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Ask for "Survival English," material and cassette tapes.

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6401 Linda Vista Road
San Diego, Ca. 92111
Ask for materials of Project "Prep Survival English,"
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Washington, D. C. 20037
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES
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Write and ask for pamphlet: "Understanding the Refu-
gees from Vietnam."

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