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ESL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

by

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Abstract: This paper provides an account of the development of the Southeast

Asian Department of State Overseas Refugee Training Program's

competency-based ESL curriculum. The author relates her personal

experience as the curriculum developer for the refugee program in

Ban Vinai, Thailand in 1980 and 1981. The paper discusses the

history of competency-based education and explains why a

competency-based model was chosen. The paper concludes with a

discussion of the principles that guide ESL instruction in the

overseas training program.

Background

The first wave of Indochinese refugees to resettle in the United States included many well-educated professionals who had worked with Americans in their own countries. Many spoke English well and were familiar with Western ways. For the most part, these refugees adjusted to their new country with remarkable success, entering into mainstream America with enterprise and vigor. Within several years these early arrivals had achieved a rate of employment equal to that of the general population.

By 1979 the situation had begun to change as preliterate Hmong from the hills of Laos, Vietnamese fishermen, and Khmer farmers joined the ranks of the newcomers. Many of these later arrivals had no formal education or exposure to urban life and Western culture. Not surprisingly, new problems in refugee resettlement began to emerge. From California to Minnesota to Virginia reports contained complaints of refugees walking off the job for no apparent reason, large families crowded into small apartments cooking on the floor, men hunting animals in the park, and truant children. By 1979 the rate of employment among newly arrived refugees had dropped sharply.

New problems demanded new solutions, and in the spring of 1980, a program, conceived and funded by the U.S. Department of State, was implemented for the purpose of addressing problems refugees were facing in their resettlement. The program was designed to help newcomers cope with the demands of American society and to raise their level of English proficiency. The idea of utilizing the refugees' time for training while they waited in a refugee camp for medical clearance was applauded by U.S. service providers (agencies both private and governmental that help refugees resettle) and refugee sponsors. The program would be relatively cost effective, a major expense being the hiring of American

supervisors. Teachers would be recruited locally and would be mostly host country nationals.

By November of 1980 the Intensive English as a Second Language (IESL) and Cultural Orientation (CO) program was launched in four countries in Asia: Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Indonesia (See Appendix 1). The program was offered to all Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian refugees between the ages of 16-55 who had been selected for U.S. resettlement. Students were to receive 208 hours of ESL and 100-105 hours of CO.

It was through this program I came to Ban Vinai, Thailand, a Hmong refugee camp in northern Thailand, in 1980. The Hmong are hilltribe people from Laos who were helpful to American forces during the Vietnam war and have since been persecuted for their involvement with the U.S. I had been sent to Ban Vinai to supervise a team of seven Thai ESL teachers. My job was to design daily two-hour teacher training sessions based on my team's instructional needs. I regularly observed my teachers and offered suggestions for improving their classes. I also was designated the ESL curriculum developer for the program.

In order to prepare myself for my new job, I spent several weeks observing various ESL classes taught by refugee teachers. The students were diligently studying English while they waited for acceptance for resettlement into the U.S. These classes were not part of any formal ESL program. They were voluntarily taught by Hmong who had worked with Americans in their own country and whose English was therefore good. Motivation in these classes was high; the students met twice a day—at sunrise and sunset—frequently studying late into the night. The Hmongs' dedication to learning another language impressed me, considering that most had never studied in a classroom before. Indeed, most Hmong cannot even read and write their own language—a language that has only recently been given a written form.

Observing the classes taught by the volunteer refugee teachers gave me much to consider. It was likely that the students attending these classes would

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eventually be accepted for resettlement to the U.S. and therefore be enrolled in the classes I had come to supervise. I observed refugee teachers drilling structures in the audio-lingual method, much the same way I had learned German in 1962: "The book is next to the pen. Repeat." "The pen is next to the pencil. Repeat", and so on. A grammar-based text was what most teachers in Ban Vinai chose to teach from; it was the kind of text they had learned English from. I realized this would probably be the case with my Thai teachers: They, too, would have a propensity for teaching English as they had been taught. I questioned if I could spend a year observing twenty minute grammar drills and lengthy pronunciation exercises.

I pondered many questions as I walked around the camp observing refugee classes: How can we best help these highly motivated people to learn English? How can we best prepare these refugees for their new lives in the U.S., particularly during those first threatening months? Clearly spending an hour on the third person was not going to help most reach a goal of self-sufficiency. Two questions persisted: What will we teach them and how will we do it?

The ESL Curriculum Development Process in Southeast Asia.

When the program began in the various sites in the fall of 1980, there was no specified curriculum. English as a Second Language: A New Approach for the 21st Century had been selected by the Department of State as the text to be used for the first year of operation because it was a readily available text that focused on life skills. However, it was still a grammar-based text, and our staff began developing our own curriculum and materials to supplement this text.

The First Regional Meeting.

In November of 1980 the first regional meeting of representatives from the Southeast Asia programs and stateside program implementors was held in Bangkok, Thailand. One of the topics for discussion was the dissatisfaction with English as a Second Language: A New Approach for the 21st Century. The other

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representatives from the sites felt as I: This text did not teach survival

English. Several approaches for a survival ESL curriculum were discussed:

structural, notional-functional and competency-based. Because of the stateside

success of competency-based education with low-level English proficient

refugees, the group opted to use a competency-based model for curricula

development at all sites.

Compentency-based Education: History.

"What are competencies and how do I teach them?" were the questions asked

by my Thai teachers when I returned to Ban Vinai and reported on the meeting.

"How is this different from a structural approach and where did this concept

come from?" To be able to answer these questions adequately, it was necessary

for me to discuss the recent history of Adult Basic Education (ABE) and the

trends within the field of language and linguistics that have impacted

competency-based language education (CBE) as we know it today.

In the 1970s adult educators were stressing the importance of

learner-centered education. They concluded that for effective training to take

place, adults must have their expectations for learning met: They need to know

that what they study will improve their lives. They believed that adults'

orientation to learning is task-based. Adults generally do not study subjects

which they feel someday may be useful; they begin by learning from situations

in which they find themselves. Historically, subject matter has taken

precedence over student needs. Competency-based education, where learning is

relevant to students' lives, sought to reverse this precedence.

The Notional-Functional Syllabus

At the same time that new theories of adult learning were being formulated,

new insights into language teaching and learning were being explored. The

Council of Europe had begun a project to identify the language needed in a

variety of social situations by someone emigrating to the Common Market

countries. The Council sought to explore how language is used, how native

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speakers express themselves in various situations. This was a dramatic departure from the traditional structural approach to language teaching which focused on form rather than content. The product of this project was the notional/functional syllabus.

Notions are the ideas people express and functions are the way in which they express them. Functions are "language acts", what one does with the language such as apologizing, agreeing and refusing. General notions are abstract time and space relations such as existence/non-existence, or presence/absence, and specific notions are items that are determined by the topic. For example, inquiring about (function) the existence of (general notion) a school (specific notion) is the framework for the sentence, "Is there a school nearby?".

The notional/functional syllabus looks at language synthetically instead of analytically and considers other linguistic and sociolinguistic features equally important. Some of these are:

  setting--where the interaction takes place and how the setting influences what is said.

  social, sexual and psychological roles--what the relationship is between the speakers and how this factor influences the language used.

  style, register--what attitudes influence the language used: Is the mood serious and formal or flippant and informal?

  stress and intonation--how the rise and fall of the voice conveys, for example, enthusiasm, rudeness or sarcasm.

  grammar--what structures we use that are appropriate to the situation.

  vocabulary--the words the speakers use.

  extralinguistic features--facial expressions or gestures that convey meaning.

Wilkins (1976), who was a proponent of the notional-functional syllabus, identified six categories of functions that people do with the language:

1) Impart and seek factual information.

2) Express and find out about intellectual attitudes.

3) Express and find out about emotional attitudes.

4) Express and find out about moral attitudes.

5) Get things done.

6) Socialize.

In the notional/functional syllabus it is not so important what the students know about the language, but rather what they can do with it. With this approach students learn to produce language which is both grammatically correct and socially acceptable. This is particularly important for adults who know what is socially appropriate in their own culture but may be baffled when entering a foreign culture. When speaking in his or her native language, "The mature adult has learned a complex body of social and linguistic rules which have made him a fully integrated member of a number of interlocking social groups. He knows how to behave with them, what to do and what to say, when, where, how and to whom" (Trim, 1977). When faced with a foreign culture and a foreign language this adult "finds himself confronted with a range of situations, which, despite all the knowledge and skill he has built up in his previous experience, he is incompetent to handle." (Trim, 1977)

The APL Project

At the same time that new theories of adult learning were being formulated and new trends within the field of language and linguistics were emerging, the Department of Adult Education of the U.S. Office of Education commissioned a study called the Adult Performance Level (APL) project. This study sought to identify the skills necessary for an adult to function successfully in today's society. The purpose of this study was to analyze the needs of native speakers.

The APL study defined functional literacy in terms of five knowledge areas (occupational, consumer, health, government and law), and four basic skill areas

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(communication, computation, problem-solving and interpersonal relationships).
The communication skill was further broken down into four language skills --
reading, writing, speaking and listening. This distinction was particularly
useful for the ESL practitioner. Each of the five knowledge areas has a series
of goals which are stated as task-oriented objectives or competencies.
Below is a sample of how competencies from the APL study broke down:

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND CONTENT AREAS

	CONSUMER ECONOMICS	OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE	HEALTH	COMMUNITY RESOURCES	GOVERNMENT AND LAW
READING	Reads material on making a budget	Reads about job requirements	Reads how to handle emergency situations	Reads about library services	Reads terms dealing with federal government
WRITING	Completes a catalog order form	Completes a job job resume	Creates a short story about feelings	Fills out an application for a driver's license	Completes a form to obtain a legal document
SPEAKING LISTENING	Discusses legal rights regarding housing	Discusses attributes and skills for work	Listen to or views a community-based drug-abuse program	Discusses the ways newspapers influence opinion	Views materials on citizen's rights and responsibilities to vote
COMPUTATION	Makes change	Calculates employment agency fees	Computes distance from fire and other emergency services to home	Calcultaes the cost or recreational activities	Computes the cost of local government services
PROBLEM SOLVING	Decides which agencies handle consumer fraud complaints	Rates factors for job selection	Makes decisions regarding his/her physical well being	Decides when to apply for public assistance programs	Decides which court system fits various situations
INTER- PERSONAL RELATIONS	Understands how "peer" pressure affects wise buying	Telephones inquiring about an employment opportunity	Interacts with family in meal planning	Inquires about travel reservations	Interacts with voter registration clerks

Taken from: Steck-Vaughn. 1983. Guide to Competency-Based education. Austin,
    Texas: Steck-Vaughn, p.16.

An ESL competency can best be defined as a lifeskills task which requires
people to use language to perform the task successfully. An example of this is
"A student will be able to use enough English to respond to and request
information pertaining to employment". Stated in these terms a teacher has a
goal towards which to teach and a criterion for assessing performance.

ESP Courses

Another relevant development in the 1970s was the growth of English for
Special Purposes (ESP) courses. Courses designed to teach English for Science

or Technology (EST) and English for Business and Economics (EBE) were offered to advanced-level academic students who had special ESL needs. The success of ESP courses sharpened awareness that adult language learners have special needs and that a well-designed ESL program can meet those needs.

Competency Based Curriculum: ESL

The interface of four factors -- findings in adult learning theory, the design of the notional/functional syllabus, the APL study, and the advent of ESP courses -- laid the groundwork for the competency-based ESL curriculum, as we know it today. This approach was particularly appropriate to the special needs of the large Indochinese population, who needed English for the specific purpose of functioning in a new culture. They needed English to apply for jobs, to describe medical symptoms, and to get help in an emergency. In addition, the low educational level of many of these students argued for a task-based approach. Studying language as a system made up of parts of speech (as in a structure-based approach) or speech functions (as in the notional/functional syllabus) would be difficult for refugees with little or no formal education. Many had not learned to read or write their own language. A hands-on, task oriented approach to learning language would approximate how these students had learned non-formally in their country.

A competency-based curriculum is significantly different from a structural curriculum. (See chart on following page.) The focus of a competency-based curriculum is on acquiring functional, life-coping skills, while developing the language to perform these skills. Grammatical structures are practiced, but only as they relate to the real life tasks one needs to function in a new society.

Both the notional/functional and competency-based curriculum (unlike the structural curriculum) focus on meaning rather than form. The difference between a competency-based curriculum and a notional/functional syllabus is that a notional/functional syllabus is developed around linguistic skills while a competency-based approach focuses on lifeskills. Given the educational

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background of our students and their purpose in learning English, a task-based approach seemed most appropriate, although it should be recognized that such an approach can easily incorporate the teaching of language functions and structures.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL

AND COMPETENCY-BASED ESL PROGRAMS

Program Characteristics	Traditional Adult ESL Programs	Competency-Based Adult ESL Programs
A. Instruction		
1. Desired Outcomes	Typically goal level statements (e.g. The student will learn the English structures and vocabulary needed to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands.)	Specific, measureable statements typically at an objective level (e.g. The student will be able to follow oral directions asking for clarification as needed.)
2. Instructional Content	Language based (e.g. student will learn the past tense of common verbs)	Life skill competency based (e.g. student will be able to relate previous work experience using the past tense correctly)
3. Mode of Instruction	Emphasis on presentation and practice	Emphasis on extension of presentation and practice to meaningful application
4. Sequencing of Instruction	Determined by text (usually grammar-focused)	Determined by assessed needs of student
B. Assessment		
1. Purpose	Assess language proficiency	Certify life skill competency
2. Based on	Recalled information - reflects knowledge about language	Demonstrated performance- reflects application of knowledge to life skill/ role
3. Type	Measures individual performance against the performance of a specific group (other Beginning ESL students or other Intermediate Basic Ed students); assessment indicates degrees of performance reported in percentage scores or grade levels	Ongoing assessment (including pre/post tests) which measures students individual performance on specific competencies; assessment indicates whether student can/ cannot perform according to specified criteria.

The Second Regional Meeting - December 1980.

In December of 1980, ESL program representatives met again in Bangkok, this time to establish an inventory of competencies that would be the basis for a regional competency-based curriculum of survival English. The first task was to identify topic areas that refugees would encounter in their first six months of resettlement. We believed that the curriculum should address only initial situations since refugees should be able to obtain further English training not long after resettlement. We hoped to equip them with language skills that would lessen the impact of entry into an unfamiliar culture.

We looked to those resonsible for Cultural Orientation for guidance in choosing what topics we needed to address. A CO meeting was being conducted simultaneously with ours to develop a regional CO curriculum. The first task was to identify topics that would be taught in the students' native language. Of the various topics, those in CO chose to address, we took only the ones that required English. For example, a topic such as "Health" would require exposure to all four language skills: comprehending doctor's orders, stating symptoms, reading a perscription and filling out a medical history. Topics such as "Changing family roles" require no English skills, since any discussion around this topic would probably be done in the native language between family members. The topic areas we identified were:

- o Classroom and camp orientation

- o Personal and family identification

- o Transportation

- o Food

- o Clothing

- o Housing

- o Employment

- o Banking services

- o Health

- o Post office services

In addition, certain cross-topical areas were identified. These were areas that would resurface in many situations, for example, "Time" would be treated in "Health" with making an appointment with the doctor, in employment when understanding hours to be worked, and in food when reading supermarket hours. These cross-topical areas were: time, money, telephone, weights and measures, and emergencies.

Next the group broke into pairs. Each pair delineated the competencies in two topic areas, for example, "Housing" and "Health". The competencies were ranked in order of importance within the pairs and each was classified in one of the four language skill areas.

Three resources were used for this task:

o English for Adult Competency, Books I and II
  (Keltner et al., New York: Prentice-Hall, 1980)

o Everyday English, Books I and II
  (Schurer (ed.) San Francisco: Alemany Press, 1979, 1980)

o Adult Migrant Education Program Language Content Suggestions, Frames
  1, 2, and 3
  (Commonwealth/States Working Parties convened by the Joint
  Commonwealth/States Committee on Professional Aspects of the
  Adult Migrant Education Program, Canberra, Australia: Department
  of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, May, 1979)

Armed with a list of minimal, survival topics, the representatives returned to their sites to begin drafting their own competency-based curriculum.

First ESL Curriculum Task Force - June/July 1981.

In April of 1981 the U.S. Department of State asked the sites to develop a standardized, regional curriculum. This was done for several reasons. First, stateside ESL programs were enrolling students from different sites who had received different training: A student from Galang, the Indonesian camp, was not exposed to the same material as a student from Phanat Nikom, the Thailand camp. Stateside ESL teachers had difficulty designing lessons built on the work

done in the overseas program since refugees from different camps came with varying skills. Second, standardizing a regional curriculum would enable sites to share materials developed by the programs and by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the agency that runs a Refugee Service Center in Manila and Washington, D.C.

The group, plus a stateside consultant from CAL, convened again. This time they met at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center at Bataan. The meeting was held from June 25 to July 5, 1981. A similar CO meeting was held the week before so those in CO could identify the teaching points and the order in which they planned to teach them. ESL curriculum developers intended to follow CO curriculum developers' sequencing of topics. The rationale was that it was best to introduce a topic in CO in the native language first to contextualize the situations. The ESL component would then later apply language.

The first task was to agree on regional ESL levels. The Center for Applied Linguistics had developed a standardized placement test which was being used at the sites in December, 1980. Each site had been determining their cut-off scores for each ESL level. Because the curriculum would be standardized for use at each level, we needed to establish regional levels.

	Definition of ESL levels
A	Students who are preliterate or nonliterate in their native language(s) and score 0 to 7 on the CAL Placement Evaluation
B	Students who are literate in their native language(s), score 0 to 7 on the CAL Placement Evaluation, and may be able to answer some basic information questions, but have no systematic knowledge of the English language
C	Students who are literate in their native language(s), score 8 to 15 on the CAL Placement Evaluation, and have some English, but have little systematic knowledge of English
D	Students who are literate in their native language(s), score 16 to 24 on the CAL Placement Evaluation, and have some systematic knowledge of the English language.
E	Students who are literate in their native language(s), score 25 and above on the CAL Placement Evaluation, and have a systematic knowledge of the English language

We decided to develop a B,C,D level curriculum guide. We felt the A-level students would require a special curriculum which would be developed at a later time. We felt that there were an adequate number of commercially available texts for E-level students.

The next task was to decide which competencies were critical for each topic at the B-level. We identified 63. Once the list was complete, the group identified which competencies were more appropriate for the C and D level. When debating which competencies would be included in the regional guide, consensus was necessary for regional consistency. All sites had to agree to teach all competencies. If one site chose to add a competency, they were free to, but none could be dropped. The purpose of this was to be able to report to stateside refugee programs what exactly was taught in the camps.

The next task was to sequence the B-level competencies that the group had identified. All participants numbered the competencies 1-63 in order of how they thought the curriculum should be taught. Data were compiled and analyzed. From this, we were able to see what competencies individuals felt "chunked" (or grouped) together. These chunks provided the basis for the spiraling (that is, the recurrence of material) of the curriculum. For example, one chunk in employment dealt with finding a job, another with applying for a job and a third with keeping a job. We made the decision to spiral topics and competencies for two reasons: 1) to break the monotony of teaching one subject for too long and 2) to insure review of vocabulary and structures. The following example illustrates how the spiraling of competencies can reinforce language and hence make each new learning task easier. Each topic would be done in consecutive weeks. For example, "Food" might be covered in Week One, and then again in Week

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Three.

Food I (Week 1)	1)	Students will be able to identify common food items.
	2)	Students will be able to ask for and locate these food items.
	3)	Students will be able to read price labels on items.
Clothing I (Week 2)	1)	Students will be able to identify common items of clothing.
	2)	Students will be able to ask for and locate clothing items.
	3)	Students will be able to read price tags on items.
Food II (Week 3)	1)	Students will be able to read food name labels.
	2)	Students will be able to read and use coupons for grocery items.
	3)	Students will be able to make food purchases and verify correct change.
Clothing II (Week 4)	1)	Students will be able to express and ask for appropriate size.
	2)	Students will be able to identify size tags.
	3)	Students will be able to make clothing purchases and verify correct change.

We also felt that to further simplify the curriculum, the first "chunk" of any topic should be clusters of competencies that relate to refugees' experiences such as "Select and pay for food in a setting familiar to a Southeast Asian refugee". The guiding principle became to introduce concepts in the "here and now" first and then to recycle the vocabulary and structure in the "there and then" later. For example, in the first chunk of "Food," refugees buy rice and vegetables in the camp market using local currency. The exchange, "How much is the rice?" "It's ten baht." supplied English for familiar concepts. Later in the curriculum the foreign concepts of American money, weights and measures, and the supermarket were added to the previously taught structures and the refugee practices "How much is a pound of beef?" "It's $3.50".

A spiralled list of competencies became the Regional Curriculum Guide (See Appendix 2).

From July 16-18 the task force met again to identify specific language items for each of the competencies.

The following format was used as the framework for our curriculum:

TOPIC	COMPETENCY	SPEAKING	LISTENING		READING	WRITING
FOOD	-Student will be able to ask for and locate food items	Where $\left.\begin{array}{l}\text{is}\\\text{are}\end{array}\right\}$ the _____? I need some _____	It's $\left.\begin{array}{l}\text{It's}\\\text{They're}\end{array}\right\}$ in the $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{dairy}\\\text{meat}\\\text{vegetable}\end{array}\right\}$ section. in Aisle (3).		DAIRY MEAT VEGETABLE PRODUCE	

STRUCTURAL FOCUS	VOCABULARY	CULTURAL NOTES	MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES
(Review: plural -s) count vs. non-count nouns some, a	oranges carrots lettuce meat fish	-Explain to students which foods must be refrigerated	English for Adult Competency I, p. 32 Notion by Notion, p. 10 Dialogue Repetition & Substitution Drills Role Play

Taken from: Center for Applied Linguistics. 1982. <u>Teaching ESL to Competencies: A Departure from a Traditional Curriculum for Adult Learners with Specific Needs.</u> Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, p.16.

We separated the active skills of speaking and writing from the receptive skills of listening and reading to reinforce that not all language needed to be produced. Some language would be taught for comprehension only. For example, although we felt it was necessary for students to respond to the question, "What's your social security number?", we felt there was no reason for them to produce this question. When would a low level learner ever ask someone what his or her social security number was?

One criterion we used for selecting <u>oral/aural language</u> items was: Is the language meaningful? What is the most common way an American in this situation would speak? The criteria we used for selecting reading/writing tasks was: What reading and writing tasks are necessary for the student to perform to master this competency? Hence, in order to successfully perform the competency "Get medical help; in an emergency, for an appointment," the student needs to be

able to read a doctor's appointment card and report an emergency on the phone.

In our B-level curriculum we did not include reading per se as part of the focus of our instruction; quite simply we did not feel that it was necessary to systematically teach the skill of reading since it was not critical to a refugee's survival. However, we did feel that sight word recognition was. It would be essential for a refugee to recognize the difference between 'Men' and 'Women' signs, to understand 'Emergency Entrance' and to respond to 'Keep out of the reach of children'. Similarly, writing tasks were rooted in the competency. In the tradition of competency-based education, all writing was task-oriented and focused on a lifeskill such as filling out a medical history or employment application.

By dividing language items into language skill categories, it was easy to identify the language students needed in order to do the task identified in the competency. With this detailed curriculum, teachers were encouraged to focus on real and necessary language rather than on unmeaningful language practice. Further, this type of organization prevented the teacher from introducing too many language skills at one time.

The grammatical structure column identifies the structure to be practiced or reviewed within a given competency. We believed that teaching grammar should be an integral part of a competency-based curriculum. We believed that it was necessary to teach our students a system of language, one that they could manipulate to generate their own language in a variety of situations.

As we worked on this part of the curriculum, we found that certain grammatical structures were best practiced with certain competencies. For example, the modal 'can' was easily practiced within the competency "Describe skills"--"Can you cook, drive, sew", and so on. When shopping in a supermarket the students would need to demonstrate mastery of mass and count nouns when they asked for some milk or if the store has bags of rice. The past tense was practiced in a variety of forms when the refugees described their past work

Varying degrees of structural complexity can be introduced through a single competency. The choice of structures depends on the level of the students. Language in the competency "Explain medical problems" can be learned simply with "My back hurts" at a low level; it can also be practiced with a greater level complexity--"I have a cramp in my stomach".

Similarly, degrees of functional complexity can be practiced at different levels. The competency "Locate a place" can be performed by simply asking "Where's the bus stop?", or by asking "Excuse me. Could you be so kind as to tell me where the bus stop is?"

The following chart shows how a competency can be taught at three different levels.

<u>Teaching the Same Competency at Different Levels</u>

"Explain Medical Problems"

	Level I	Level II	Level III
Speaking	My (body part) hurts. This hurts. I'm / He's / She's } sick. dizzy.	I have a ___ ache. He / She } has a sore ___. My ___ aches.	I have / He has / She has } a } pain. cramp. my in his ___. her I can't + V. (bend down)
Listening	What's the matter? What's wrong? Take ___ aspirin(s). Stay } in bed. home.	How do you feel? Where does it hurt? Take something 4x a day. Call me.	Are you in pain? Can you + V? -before } meals -after
Sight Words (Reading)		-can distinguish between over the counter & prescription medicine	- can read medicine label instructions
Writing			- can write note to teacher excusing child for absence due to illness
New Structures	Present Tense: BE (sing. forms) Present Tense -3rd person singular	Present Tense: have (sing. forms) Review: Plural nouns (-s)	Possessives: my his her (neg.) modal + V
Materials & Activities	A New Approach for the 21st Century Lesson 11 - Visuals - Dialogue - Repetition & Substitution Drills - Role Play - Total Physical Response: Simon Says	English for Adult Competency I pp. 51-54 - Realia (medicine bottles) - Visuals - Flashcards - Matching exercises - Dialogue - Role Play - Total Physical Response: -w/ (candy) pills	English for Adult Competency I pp. 60-62 Notion by Notion - Unit 33 -Visuals -Flashcards -Hand-outs: matching, fill in the blank -Dialogue -Role Play -Question-Answer Drills -Total Physical Response

The vocabulary column contains the lexical items to be practiced. The number and difficulty of vocabulary items is determined by the level of the students.

The cultural notes column identifies the extrainguistic or cultural skills needed to perform a competency successfully. For example, to competently interview for a job, students must be able to ask and answer questions pertaining to the job. In addition, students need to know that our culture places a premium on hearty handshakes and eye contact as a sign of self-confidence. Students also need to be aware of the different forms of address used for employers and co-workers. All these points would be listed in the cultural notes column.

The last column is materials and activities which lists resources for teaching the competency. These may be appropriate texts which can be cross-referenced to the curriculum or activities particularly well suited to presenting, practicing, or communicating the competency. Items which will help tie the competency to reality (such as job applications, health forms, or realia such as plastic vegetables to be used in roleplays) would be listed here. Sample pages from the regional curriculum guide are found at the end of this paper (See Appendix 3.)

After the B-level competencies were sequenced and language items inventoried, the group identified additional cross-topical areas. A master list of these areas was established. The list included the following:

- Locations outside a building

- Locations inside a building

- Oral directions

- Money

- Telling Time

- Clarification

. Form filling out

. Personal Identification

. Telephone

Curriculum developers at each site would incorporate these topics into the curriculum as frequently as they deemed appropriate for their populations. For example, since low-level Hmong in Ban Vinai had difficulty telling time and using American money, we reviewed these areas in depth. Since all of these areas were introduced and reinforced in various topics, review was automatically built in.

The standardization of the Regional Curriculum guide was accepted. The group agreed to adhere to the following:

. Inclusion of all regionally agreed upon competencies

. Common sequencing of these competencies

. Inclusion of regionally agreed upon language items to achieve those competencies

. Inclusion of grammatical structures that will enable the learners to achieve those competencies

All sites agreed to teach all competencies listed. If any wished to add any competency, language item, or structure they could do so provided they had included all those that were regionally agreed upon.

The field test of the new curriculum was to culminate February 1982 when another regional meeting was slated to assess the curriculum. The following issues and questions were considered during the field test period:

. Is the language appropriate?

. What's missing? What shouldn't be there?

. Is the chunk appropriate in terms of the amount and kind of information in a chunk and the sequencing of the chunks?

. Should the order of presentation of the boxes within any competency be prescribed? If so, what is a suitable order? And, why is that order suggested?

- What is the student reaction to the curriculum?

- What kinds of additional support or supplementary materials are needed?

- Do some methods or techniques work better with different competencies?

- When should mastery of an item be expected? How is it measured?

- Is the curriculum teachable? Do teachers/supervisors like it? Why? Does the curriculum help teachers to teach? How?

- How, and with what results, have lists of cross topical areas been worked into the curriculum?

- How has the Grammatical Structure Focus column been used?

- How has the Cultural Notes column been used?

- Is there a logical prerequisite or follow-up to a chunk, competency, or activity that hasn't been included in the curriculum?

- Should pronunciation notes be included in the curriculum? If so, what form should they take?

I returned to Ban Vanai to discuss the outcomes of the meeting and train teachers in the use of the curriculum. The following guiding principles for using the curriculum guide and assumptions about language learning/teaching emerged during the training:

1. Successful communication is the goal of the curriculum. Students must understand the teachers and each other. They must also prepare to communicate with strangers in the U.S. Lessons should be sequenced from practice activities to communicative ones. Students should receive feedback on how well they have communicated.

2. Language practice should be meaningful. Practice should be communicative and situationally based. Attention should be paid to the difference between "real" and classroom language. The curriculum was carefully laid out to ensure that students would only be producing language that would be required of them in real life. Hence, students ask the teacher "What's this?" or "What's this called in English?" to achieve the competency "Find out English for Unknowns" and not the other way around as is frequently the case in the

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traditional ESL classroom. Similarily, teachers should provide practice in use of shortened forms. For example, in answering the question "What's your name?" students should be encouraged to practice the shortened form "Chue Vang" as well as the long ("My name is Chue Vang.")

3. Language is contextualized. Situations and the nature of the relationship between the speakers influence the language used. The setting where the communication takes place as well as the social roles between the speakers (strangers or friends, employer or employee, asker or giver) affect the language used. Extralinguistic features such as gestures, eye contact, and attitude can also be addressed in the context of various situations.

4. The teaching of language forms is important and should be incorporated into a competency-based curriculum. ESL learners should have a basic, practical knowledge of the English system of word order, phonology, intonation patterns, and vocabulary. Varying degrees of mastery of these features should be expected based on student level: A-level students will only be exposed to these forms; E-level should expect some degree of mastery.

5. Frequently students need to understand language different from what they need to speak or write. Certain words or sentences should be taught for listening or reading only depending on the situation. The curriculum is designed to ensure students both understand and produce language appropriate to a given situation.

6. Language should be spiralled and reviewed. Several presentations and frequent practice are necessary before material is mastered. Structures especially should be recycled and reviewed to insure mastery and to insure that more complex language can be used as students progress. Since some language will reappear in different competencies, there is ample opportunity for review and reinforcement of structures.

7. Competency - based ESL allows for the use of a variety of methods, materials, and techniques. Since adults have individual learning styles, a variety of auditory, visual, or physically active tasks should be included in a given lesson to accomodate various learning styles.

8. The number of items presented must be carefully determined. Between five and nine items -- be that language, structure or vocabulary -- should be emphasized at any one time. The brain can not handle more than this. Low level learners with no formal education may have difficulty with more than five items. Grammatical complexity and vocabulary should be adapted to the ability of the student to avoid excessive frustration.

9. Moving from the known to the unknown will facilitate learning. Students should learn the English that could be used in situations familar to them before applying English to situations unfamiliar to them. Using language to describe their past or camp work experience should be practiced before using English to apply for a job in the U.S.

10. Instruction should be individualized as much as possible. There is no need for low level students to learn all the occupations of their classmates; what they do need to learn is to talk about their own occupation and how to describe their own skills and duties.

11. When a negative response to a question is given, whenever possible, a positive response should follow. For example, a question like "Do you have a job?" should be answered with "No, but I'm looking", so the refugee appears to be hard working.

12. Not everything has to be or should be fixed. The curriculum was designed to ensure maximum flexibility. Students are not expected to master all the language in the B-level curriculum before learning some of the language in the C-D curriculum. If the teacher feels that the students can handle more complex structures or more difficult vocabulary items within a given competency, he or she should introduce them. Furthermore, teachers must constantly assess

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their students' ability to go beyond the minimum. For example, some classes or levels would benefit most from practicing one-sided dialogues where the students produce only the language in the speaking column. Others might benefit from two-sided dialogue practice where students produce the language in both the speaking and listening columns.

Conclusion.

Although curriculum development in Southeast Asia started in 1980, it is an on-going, dynamic process. The regional, standardized ESL curriculum has undergone several revisions since it was designed in 1981. Competencies have been added or deleted or given different emphasis based on the changing profile of the resettling refugee. As more refugees are reunited with relatives living in the United States, certain tasks which were once considered important for the refugee to perform independently are now being handled with the help of others. For example, few refugees now must find their own housing, but rather they move in with family members who have already settled in the U.S. Other competencies were reevaluated and found not truly critical for survival. Still, the basic communicative approach within a competency-based framework and the principles behind the approach remain the same today as they were in 1981 and guide all ESL curriculum development in the overseas training program.

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Appendix 1: Implementing Agencies

Thailand

o The Consortium:
   Save the Children Federation (SCF)
   The Experiment in International Living (EIL)
   World Education (WE) - Phanat Nikhom, Thailand
o Pragmatics, International - Nongkai, Thailand

Hong Kong

o Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
   (LIRS)/American Council for Nationalities
   Service (ACNS)

Indonesia

o A consortium of:
   Save the Children Federation (SCF)
   The Experiment in International Living (EIL) - Galang, Indonesia

Philippines

o International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) - Bataan, Philippines

The following spiralled list of competencies became the Regional Curriculum Guide:

CHUNK	TOPIC	B-LEVEL COMPETENCIES (C/D- Only Competencies are Asterisked) COMPETENCY	COMPETENCY NO.
#1	CLASSROOM ORIENTATION	Identify self (name, ID number, country of origin, language background)	1.1
		Introduce self	1.2
		Introduce others	1.3
		Greet and be greeted	1.4
		End conversations	1.5
		Express lack of understanding and ask for clarification	1.6
		Follow simple directions	1.7
		Find out English for unknowns	1.8
		Observe classroom etiquette	1.9
#2	CLOTHING	Describe clothing needs	2.1
#3	HOUSING	Describe housing needs, e.g. types of rooms, furniture, major appliances	3.1
		Locate facilities within housing, e.g. laundry, fire escape, garbage chute	3.2
#4	FOOD	Describe food needs	4.1
		Describe food preferences	4.2
		Select and pay for food within a setting familiar to a Southeast Asian refugee, i.e., price quantity	4.3
#5	HEALTH	Explain medical problems, i.e., symptoms, illnesses, injuries	5.1
		Get medical help, e.g., in an emergency, for an appointment	5.2
#6	TRANSPORTATION	Locate means of transportation	6.1
		Locate a place	6.2
#7	EMPLOYMENT	Describe work experience	7.1
		Describe skills	7.2
		Describe education background	7.3
#8	FOOD	Locate food items	8.1
		Select food, i.e., price, container, size, quantity, freshness	8.2
		Pay for food, e.g., cash, change, coupons	8.3
		Locate place to buy food	8.4
#9	EMPLOYMENT	Recognizes common entry-level jobs, e.g., names, duties; and qualifications	9.1
		Indicate job preference	9.2

#	Category	Competency	No.
#10	POST OFFICE:	Address envelopes and packages	10.1
		Buy items in the post office	10.2
		Locate different mail slots	10.3
		Locate places to mail things	10.4
		Prepare a money order	10.5
		*Notify post office of change of address	10.6
		*Register mail	10.7
		*Pick up mail	10.8
		*Register as an alien	10.9
		*Prepare customs and insurance document	10.10
		*Register for the draft	10.11
#11	HEALTH	Follow instructions about treatment	11.1
		Follow instruction furing exam	11.2
		Buy medicine (prescription and non-prescription)	11.3
		*Buy items for personal hygiene	11.4
#12	TRANSPORTATION	Buy transportation services	12.1
		Use transportation systems, e.g. by foot, on the bus subway, train, plane	12.2
		Handle emergencies	12.3
		Give directions	12.4
#13	EMPLOYMENT	Locate possible jobs, e.g. approach person at work site; make an appointment; convey a desire to work	13.1
		Give relevant information when applying for a job	13.2
		Get information about a job	13.3
#14	HOUSING	Get information about costs, e.g. rent, utilities	14.1
		Secure household repairs	14.2
		Report emergencies, e.g. fire, burglary	14.3
		*Locate appropriate housing	14.4
#15	CLOTHING	Locate clothing	15.1
		Select and pay for clothing, i.e. sizes, praices, color, style, fabric	15.2
		Locate places to buy clothing	15.3
		*Give and receive compliments about dress	15.4
		*Care for clothing, e.g. hand/machine wash, dry, iron, dry clean	15.5
#16	BANKING	Provide proper ID, when asked when cashing a check or money order	16.1
		Cash a check or money	16.2
		Locate a bank	16.3
		Buy a money order	16.4
		*Open an account, i.e., checking, savings	16.5
		*Use a bank account	16.6

#17	FOOD	Order food, e.g. at a snack bar, restaurant, fast food place	17.1
		Act appropriatelt as a guest/host	17.2
		*Store food properly	17.3
		*Prepare food	17.4
#18	EMPLOYMENT	Follow instructions on the job	18.1
		Give explanations for sickness, lateness, absence, mistakes	18.2
		Converse with co-workers, e.g. about family, recreation, weather, traffic, news	18.3
#19	TRANSIT PROCESS FROM SEA TO US	Handle emergencies, e.g., being lost, not being met, getting sick	19.1
		Act appropriate on the plane	19.2
		Meet sponsor	19.3

TOPIC: HEALTH

COMPETENCY: Follow instructions about treatment   NUMBER: 11.1 (p.1)

LANGUAGE AREAS

SPEAKING	LISTENING	WRITING	READING (SIGHT WORDS)	GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE FOCUS	MINIMAL VOCABULARY	CULTURE NOTES	MATERIALS
How many should I take?	You should take <u>3</u> <u>aspirin</u>. (no.) (type of medicine)	You should take <u>3</u> <u>teaspoons</u> (no.) (type of measure-ment) of <u>cough medicine</u> (type of medi-cine) <u>a day.</u> (frequency)	[READ INSTRUC-TIONS ON MEDICINE LABELS, e.g. Take 2 tea-spoons 4 times a day]	How many...? Modal(should)			
How much should I take ?	Take <u>3</u>. (no.)	Take <u>3</u> <u>teaspoons</u> (no.)(units of measure-ment) <u>a day.</u> (frequency)	TEASPOON TSP TABLESPOON TBSP	How much...? Modal(should) TIME EXPRES-SIONS e.g., every 3 hours			
		Take <u>3</u> <u>teaspoons</u>. (no.) (units of measure-ment)					

TOPIC: HEALTH

COMPETENCY: Follow instructions about treatment

NUMBER: 11.1 (p.1)

LANGUAGE AREAS

SPEAKING	LISTENING	WRITING	READING (SIGHT WORDS)	GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE FOCUS	MINIMAL VOCABULARY	CULTURE NOTES	MATERIALS
How many should I take?	You should take __3__ aspirin. (no.) (type of medicine) Take __3__. (no.)		[READ INSTRUC-TIONS ON MEDICINE LABELS, e.g. Take 2 tea- spoons 4 times a day] TEASPOON TSP TABLESPOON TBSP	How many...? Modal(should)			
How much should I take?	You should take __3__ teaspoons (no.) (type of measure- ment) of cough medicine (type of medi- cine) Take __3__ teaspoons (no.)(units of measure- ment) a day. (frequency) Take __3__ teaspoons. (no.) (units of measure- ment)			How much...? Modal(should) TIME EXPRES-SIONS e.g., every 3 hours			

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