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SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES IN NEW ZEALAND:  
LANGUAGE NEEDS AND PROVISIONS.

A thesis completed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Philosophy in Education  
at Massey University, Palmerston North.

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## ABSTRACT

The resettlement of a particular group of non-Western refugees in New Zealand is studied from a sociolinguistic perspective. The language needs of the group are assessed together with the provisions that have been made to meet these needs. A review of pressures associated with refugee status and resettlement is provided. In addition, the provision of English as a second language (ESL) and the broader linguistic issues of bilingualism including language shift and language maintenance are discussed.

The resettlement of over 7000 Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao refugees in New Zealand since 1979 under a special Southeast Asian refugee resettlement programme has challenged the resources of government and voluntary agencies alike. Consequent ad hoc provisions of ESL have now become more-or-less permanent, bureaucratized and extended to cater for the ESL needs of other refugee and migrant groups. Nevertheless, many of the language programmes remain officially tied to the Southeast Asian resettlement scheme and are thus provisional and restricted in nature.

The nature and extent of government and voluntary language provisions are assessed through an analysis of Department of Labour and Department of Education programmes. School, technical institute and home tutor provisions are surveyed, and supplemented by interviews and by questionnaires undertaken in local schools which have Southeast Asian refugee children. This information is set against on-arrival and post-arrival follow-up data derived from a sample of 230 case studies involving 785 individual refugees. These data cover the demographic, occupational, educational and linguistic characteristics of the Southeast Asian refugee sample. The study raises questions about the relationship between perceived and real language needs and between the language provisions which have been provided to meet these needs and the short- and longer-term effects of these provisions.