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A text-based exploration of topics in White Hmong grammar

Katherine Ann Birnschein

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A TEXT-BASED EXPLORATION OF TOPICS
IN WHITE HMONG GRAMMAR

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Bob Jones University, 1993
Master of Education, Bob Jones University, 1995

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

December
2019

This thesis, submitted by Katherine Ann Birnschein in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.



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Katherine Ann Birnschein
October 30, 2019

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ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ABST	abstract
ANMT	animate
ART	article
ASP	aspect
CLF	classifier
COMP	complementizer
CPLT1	completeness one
CPLT2	completeness two
CPTV	comparative
DGNC	diligence
DT	distal
DU	dual
DUR	durative
EVNT	event
GNRL	general
GNRL1	general one
GNRL2	general two
GRP1	group one
GRP2	group two
HBTL	habitual
HSHD	household

IMP	imperative
IMPF	imperfective
INDF	indefinite
INT	intensifier
IRR	irrealis
LNGTH	length
MD	medial
MGTD	magnitude
NEG	negation, negative
NMLZ	nominalizer/nominalization
NSPC	nonspecific
OPST	opposite
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
PLTNS	politeness
POS	positive
PRF	perfect
PROG	progressive
PRON	pronoun
PRSN	person
PX	proximal
Q	question marker
RECP	reciprocal
REFL	reflexive
RLTVZR	relativizer
SEQ	sequence
SG	singular
SHT	sheet
SPKR	speaker

SPRT	spirit
SPTV	superlative
SRFC	surface
STCK	stack
TAG1	tag question 1
TAG2	tag question 2
TL	tool
TOP	topic
TRTH	truth
YNQ	yes no question

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of people deserve my thanks for their contribution to my accomplishment in writing this thesis. First of all I want to thank my primary language consultant, Ar Moua. She has spent many hours with me over the last two years, patiently helping me understand her language and checking my glossing and translation. She and I began with an academic relationship and now have a deep friendship. It was her joy to contribute to scholarly research about her language, but it was also her joy to help me succeed in my endeavor. I appreciate her help and her friendship very much.

Two other language consultants, Gaoyeeng Vang, a bilingual speaker of English and White Hmong, and Pa Xiong, a bilingual speaker of English and Green Hmong, both eagerly contributed their expertise. Pa in particular became fascinated with the grammar of her language and extended the analysis beyond what I could have known to ask. Pa began helping me for love of her language, but soon our friendship was her primary motivation.

I wish to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Stephen Marlett, Dr. Robert Fried, and Dr. John Clifton, for their willing, expert evaluation of my thesis and their personal encouragement. In particular, I have deep gratitude to Steve Marlett for his investment in me far beyond what his role as my advisor would require of him. As much as he has rigorously corrected my drafts, he has taught me principled thought patterns. He has had insight into how to lead me to the next level and how to keep me encouraged to press forward when I have felt overwhelmed.

The administration and students along with my fellow faculty members at Baptist College of Ministry, Baptist Theological Seminary, and Falls Baptist Academy have been my greatest source of encouragement through the whole thesis writing process. I thank them for their support, understanding, and deep personal interest in my accomplishment, considering both my pressures and my success their own.

My family has united behind my effort and encouraged me to succeed when I immersed myself in research and writing. I thank them for their patience and understanding.

My supreme thanks is to my Savior, the Lord Jesus, who not only called me to write this thesis but also enabled me. Writing a thesis is a humbling experience; I have felt ignorant, incapable, and incompetent on a regular basis. Yet I undertook the endeavor for his cause and at his bidding, and he has been faithful to encourage me, give me insight, and strengthen me in my need. My will and my plans would have never succeeded in carrying me through, but he has been faithful to enable according to his calling.

To my father, Mark Birnschein, who fostered in me both a love for language and a desire to understand how things work so that I grew to love linguistics even before I knew it as an academic subject to be studied. Dad has participated in my pursuit of linguistic understanding, attempting to comprehend everything I shared with him as I learned it, and encouraging me to accomplish God's will in my studies.

ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the historical development of the understanding of White Hmong grammar, comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing the extant analyses. It then responds to these analyses, based exclusively on a corpus of interlinearized texts included as appendices. It proposes new elements in the grammar including an indefinite article, a potential prefix (the perfective aspect marker), and several aspect markers that have grammaticalized from adverbs. It resolves conflicting descriptions of the constituent order of the noun phrase. It clarifies a number of incomplete or inaccurate descriptions including the lexical and structural ambiguity of constructions involving the homophones of *tau* (a lexical verb, an aspect marker, and a modal auxiliary), the deixis system of demonstratives, and restrictions on the use of classifiers and personal pronouns. It quantifies the frequency of syntactically and pragmatically controlled zero anaphora and proposes restrictions on its pragmatic use. It also provides RRG-style diagrams of serial verb constructions.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

It is presumably the influx of the Hmong people into the American population that has sparked the study of the Hmong language in the Western world. Immigration began in 1975, and very little is written about the language prior to this (Yau 2005). A study of any bibliography of the extant literature reveals that much has been written about the Hmong people and their language in the last few decades, but the majority of the studies are cultural, psychological, and sociolinguistic in nature and reflect a focus on the adaptation of this people to the language and culture of their adopted homeland. A minority of these studies deals with the language itself. Of these linguistic studies, much has been written about the phonology of Hmong and comparatively less about the syntax. Indeed, there is only one substantive grammar sketch, Mottin's (1978) *Éléments de grammair Hmong Blanc*. Mottin was a Roman Catholic priest from France who lived with the Hmong people in Thailand beginning in 1970. Though he may not have been a career linguist, his work is insightful and descriptive, and it presents a broad body of data. To this day it is the one work that best describes the lexicon and syntax of the Hmong language, and as such, it meets a genuine need.

Mottin's description, however, has its limitations as a reference work. First of all, it is written in French without any English translation, and this greatly reduces its accessibility to many researchers. Second, it is not text based. The importance of a text-based analysis is discussed in §1.1. Third, it is not comprehensive. Basically, the document is a highly structured lexicon. It contains many specific categories and subcategories arranged in tables with descriptions of proper use and comparison between similar but distinct categories. As a lexicon, it is a very insightful, thorough, and valuable resource. As a reference on syntax, however, it is deficient, giving no basic grammar identifying the phrasal constituents of the sentence in their order and then in turn the constituents of these phrasal

sentence constituents. In fact, Mottin's grammar deals almost exclusively with isolated phrases; very few example sentences can be found at all. Fourth, it is imprecise; while the grammar does give an ordered template for the sentence constituents (which is, nevertheless, incomplete), it attempts to represent in linear order all possible structures for a sentence without regard to constituent movement, information structure, mood, or illocutionary force; and it fails to properly account for serial verb constructions, directionals, and locatives, all of which abound in natural communication. Fifth, it contains no diagrams that in any way show the hierarchical relationship between the constituents at the various levels; all representations are linear; that is, they are simply ordered in a list. The presentation of the material in this fashion leaves the reader unable to determine the basic word order of a Hmong sentence, the difference between obligatory and optional constituents, and the existence (or potential non-existence) of a verb phrase. Sixth, as the first description of White Hmong ever attempted, it is remarkably accurate in many ways, but later descriptions improve on most of the ideas including Mottin's description of prepositions (not all of which are truly prepositions—even by Mottin's analysis—and a number of which are analyzed much more accurately as demonstratives (Ratliff 1997, Libert 2013), demonstratives (Ratliff 1997), classifiers (Bisang 1993), verb tense and aspect markers (Li 1991), and serial verbs (Jarkey 1991)).

While Mottin's is the most comprehensive grammar extant, there are a few other grammar sketches worthy of mention. One major contributor is Fuller through her dissertation *Topic and Comment in Hmong* (1988) along with articles that are drawn from this larger work (1986, 1987). The timing of Fuller's work definitely put her at a disadvantage, since a grammatical theory that could neatly handle serial verbs was not available to her when she wrote her dissertation. While she convincingly demonstrates that Hmong sentences often follow a topic-comment structure, there are aspects of her analysis that are strained, and these are taken up in the discussion below. As a pioneer in proper linguistic description of Hmong, she contributes much to the understanding of Hmong grammar that is both valuable and also understandably of limited precision. Linguists who have followed her have been able to build on her ideas and to improve the accuracy of a number of the

conclusions she draws. Both her contributions and the later corrections are discussed in this thesis by topic.

One analysis that plays a key role in my work is Jarkey's dissertation *Serial Verbs in White Hmong*, written from a Role and Reference Grammar perspective (1991). Jarkey provides a brief grammar sketch in the introductory chapter, which is orderly, accurate, largely text-based, and well supported from texts (1991:4). Her clear identification of the various levels of nexus and the kinds of juncture in the serial verb constructions is an invaluable contribution to the description of Hmong grammar. Her dissertation much more neatly and completely accounts for some of the data that Fuller introduces; she demonstrates that some of the constructions that Fuller identifies as verbs that are missing arguments are actually serial verbs that are sharing arguments.

However, the sketch she presents is for the purpose of background information only; it is not comprehensive (it makes no pretense in this regard), and it contains no diagrams of a common linguistic nature.¹

I do not attempt to improve on her analysis or the text-based supporting examples she uses, but I do attempt to codify her statements into a comprehensive whole. I also employ tree diagrams to visually represent her statements and their role within the larger grammar.

A third document that must be discussed is Harriehausen's *Hmong Njua* (1990). This document is a useful reference for points of comparison, but since it is specific to the Green Hmong dialect, it cannot be depended on for accuracy concerning White Hmong. Additionally, it is written in German, once again making it of limited accessibility to many researchers.

Complete grammar sketches are not the only form that contributes to the field of Hmong grammar. Quite a number of significant contributions greatly advancing the combined understanding have been made through various articles in journals, chapters in books, and other forums—more than can be mentioned here. These are discussed in the various sections of the thesis according to historical development by topic.

¹ It contains a number of helpful diagrams of serial verb constructions that are a sort of modified Venn diagram. To visually represent the various kinds of serial verb constructions, they are excellent, but they do not fill the role of tree diagrams or any other standard linguistic diagram that shows the relationship between constituent parts.

With this background of grammar descriptions, I present this thesis as a text-based exploration of topics in White Hmong grammar. I have three primary purposes in presenting this thesis. First, I seek to present the work that has been previously written as a unified whole; most of the topics are scattered throughout numerous sources, and many topics have developed in clarity over time.

Second, I illustrate all of the principles presented and the conclusions drawn from a corpus of texts; no statements are made that cannot be supported from the texts, and all statements are textually illustrated. The importance of this approach is discussed under §1.1. A work of this nature has never been done before on the White Hmong language.

The third purpose I have is to contribute several new principles of Hmong grammar to the body of knowledge. A number of my contributions are of the nature of providing clarity for imprecise or conflicting conclusions from previous analyses. There are a few principles I propose as new contributions that have not been previously written about.

My thesis follows two parallel lines of development. First of all, I follow the grammar sketches that have already been written; I include those describing White Hmong in particular, but at times I also reference descriptions of related dialects such as Green Hmong (Harriehausen 1990) and Chuanqiandian Miao (Xiong & Cohen 2005). I state the principles already known and illustrate them with examples taken directly from the texts. Second, I suggest new principles or modifications of previously proposed principles based on the texts. There are indeed some surprises when one compares statements that have been made about Hmong grammar with the texts that embody it. None of my examples is elicited, and I propose no grammatical principles I cannot support from the text corpus.

While I have diligently consulted all the sources I reference, and while I believe the sources I reference to be representative of the literature, I cannot claim that nothing in my observations has been noted earlier by someone else. I will gratefully acknowledge any sources I am presently not aware I need to reference.

1.1 The importance of a text-based analysis

An analysis needs a corpus of data. There are two primary sources for this data: oral and/or written texts, and fragments of language such as those a researcher elicits

from native speakers. Elicitation is a remarkably efficient means of gathering language samples, since the researcher knows exactly what constructions he wants to observe, and he can structure his questions and prompts to elicit these from the native speaker one after the other to produce data in a short period of time. Elicitation sessions also have the advantage of obviating ungrammatical structures, since the researcher may ask the native speaker directly whether a construction can be used. Natural texts are much more limited in these two regards: the researcher must search throughout the corpus to find the desired structures without any guarantee that the search will be fruitful or that the results will be complete; and the ungrammatical status of a construction may be hypothesized by its absence, but it can never actually be confirmed by this criterion alone.

Natural texts, however, capture many things about the language that isolated or elicited phrases and sentences cannot. A salient distinction between the two is the ability to showcase discourse features. Elicited phrases and sentences are artificial in that they are isolated. They are also potentially inaccurate or misleading; indeed, they often are. As thorough as Mottin's (1978) description of White Hmong is, it is greatly skewed toward fragmented language samples: the majority of his examples are phrases, and the rest are isolated sentences. There is no description of the grammar that will allow the readers to construct their own sentences beyond the most basic forms, or to construct any unit of communication larger than a sentence.

The ideal form of a natural text is an oral text that has been transcribed (Johnson 1992:xvi). While none of the sources of the texts I acquired documents the process of producing the texts, the oral nature of the original form of the texts seems only too apparent. The three personal narratives (Text: Ar Moua's story, Text: Kee's story, and Text: Everything starts with God) include constructions of a clearly spontaneous nature, as the speakers fish for the right way to say something, restate a thought in different terms, and occasionally leave thoughts unfinished. The procedural text (Text: How to make Hmong eggs) is even more obviously an oral form as opposed to written: most referents of the noun phrases are in sight and being acted on at the time of the recording of the narration and are thus referred to with zero anaphora, since the situational context makes explicit reference superfluous.

Not even all oral texts are equal. Foley (2003) describes the various genres associated with literate and preliterate societies, observing that oral narratives in preliterate societies have a more flexible syntax, a different VP to NP ratio, lower level of explicit logical organizers, a greater measure of implicitness (leaving more elements as understood from context and employing ellipsis and zero anaphora frequently), a lower “lexical density,” and more frequent clause chaining (2003:94). The texts I refer to in my thesis exhibit qualities of texts from both literate and preliterate sources. The narrative texts and the procedural text exhibit each of the qualities Foley describes as typical of preliterate sources along with light use of embedding. The hortatory text (Text: Tzerge Yang’s story), while apparently also an oral text and also from the same author as one of the narratives, is in a more literate style and provides for literary contrast with the other texts, containing more explicit logical organizers, a higher “lexical density,” and more intricate embedding. The features of oral texts in both literate and preliterate styles differ significantly from the type of sentences typically used as examples in grammars, as I will demonstrate. While the texts in the corpus do indeed contain phrases like the examples in Mottin’s grammar, they are by far the minority style, and it is difficult to find sentences directly comparable to Mottin’s examples. Examples discussed below demonstrate this difference.

Mottin (1978:84) gives the example in (1)² for a simple past tense.

- (1) *Nws tau mus tsev.*
 3SG PFV go house
 ‘He went home.’ [Mottin:84]

Four sentences in my texts are roughly comparable, but only one of them, presented as (2), is as simple as the Mottin example; the other three of them contain elements that link them to their place in the discourse (as well as a variety of obliques).

- (2) *Kuv los tsev lawm.*
 1SG come house PRF
 ‘I came home.’ [Testimony:24]

² See §2.3 for an explanation of the orthography. It is also helpful to understand that <w> is a close central unrounded vowel.

Unlike Mottin’s example, (3) contains *thiaj* ‘then’, a reference to the time of the event relative to the preceding discourse.

- (3) *kuv thiaj tau mus koom nws thawj hnub.*
 1SG then PFV go do.together 3SG the.first.thing day
 ‘then I went with her the first day.’ [Testimony:17.2]

Example (4) also contains *ces*, a discourse marker for closely sequenced events (discussed in §1.2), and the adverbial marker of time, *thiaj* ‘then’, as well as a serial verb construction; and therefore *mus* ‘go’ is not a simple, isolated verb.

- (4) *Ces peb thiaj tau mus ko taw taug kev mus nram lub zos*
 SEQ 1PL then PFV go foot follow way go MD.down CLF.GNRL village
nram mus.
 MD.down go
 ‘Then we walked down to the village down there.’ [Escape-K:50]

Example (5) is similar to (3) and (4) in that it contains *thiaj li*, another form of ‘then’, but it also contains an additional discourse marker, *yog li* ‘so then’ and another aspect marker, the perfect *lawm*.

- (5) *Yog li wb thiaj li tau mus rau Thaib teb lawm.*
 be like 1DU then obtain go to/for Thai land PRF
 ‘So then we got to go to Thailand.’ [Escape-TY:61]

If the presence rather than the absence of discourse markers is the normal condition, and the majority of sentences in natural texts includes these markers, it would stand to reason that the sample sentences in a grammar description should likewise include such constructions as a representative sample of the language. While the omission of sentences containing discourse markers does not present ungrammatical examples, it does skew the representation.

Not only are discourse markers more abundant in natural texts, but noun phrases are more infrequent. Du Bois (1987) sets forward several constraints regarding the usage of noun phrases in natural speech. The Non-lexical A Constraint: “Avoid lexical A’s” generalizes the cross-linguistic reality that full NPs may be used freely as the subjects of

intransitive clauses and the objects of transitive clauses, but they are dispreferred as the subjects of transitive clauses. The One New Argument Constraint: “Avoid more than one new argument per clause” is a corollary and the natural result of the first constraint. This constraint identifies the dispreference cross-linguistically for introducing more than one discourse participant at a time in the same sentence. Typically in natural discourse, a new participant will be introduced in a presentational construction or in the predicate of a clause in which the subject has recently been referenced (Dooley & Levinsohn 2001). Consequently, by the time the event is introduced, the participants have all been mentioned recently enough that anaphoric reference (either pronouns or zero anaphora) of some form is generally the way they are referred to. This pattern is in contrast to elicited sentences, which often represent arguments in full noun phrases, introducing all of the participants in the event described by the sentence in one breath. The following two examples, (6) from Mottin (1978:95) and (7) from Kee’s story in the corpus of texts, provide a contrast illustrating this point. Example (6) contains two full NPs, both of which are new arguments and one of which is the subject, while example (7), although following the same sentence structure, uses a pronoun, *peb* ‘we’, rather than a full NP for the subject. Although sentences like (6) exist, they are less frequent in natural speech.

(6) *Dav hlau nqa txhuv tuaj*
 hawk iron carry rice come
 ‘The airplane brings rice.’ [Mottin:95]

(7) *Peb yuav lawv ntawv.*
 1PL get 3PL writing
 ‘We got their letter.’ [Escape-K:27]

Mottin’s examples are not ungrammatical; they are merely contrived, while the texts represent the language, with its high frequency of ellipses, discourse markers, time references, and spatial deictics much more accurately.

Closely related to the dispreference for full NPs is the great frequency of zero anaphora. Elicited sentences with their full NPs or pronouns are valuable for a reference of sorts, but in natural communication numerous stretches of zero anaphora frequently occur, and a

grammar containing no such examples does not accurately represent the language. Example (8) exhibits syntactically controlled zero anaphora because of its serial verb construction (discussed in §4.1.2). The arguments of the first verb *muab* ‘take’, which are *koj* ‘you’ and *ib qho me me qhiav* ‘a little bit of ginger’, are stated at the beginning of the clause but are not repeated for the verbs that come later in the clause: *los* ‘come’, *tsoo* ‘crush’, *kom* ‘cause’, and the predicate *mos mos* ‘very fine’.

- (8) *koj muab ib qho me me qhiav los tsoo kom mos mos,*
 2SG take INDF.ART thing small small ginger come crush cause fine fine
 ‘you get a little bit of ginger and crush it so that it is very fine,’ [Eggs:7.2]

Example (9) exhibits pragmatically controlled zero anaphora in the form of topic chaining. The first clause in this series (9a) states the subject *kuv* ‘I’, but the following two clauses (9b)–(9c) have no overt subject; rather, they exemplify topic chaining, a type of zero anaphora discussed in §5.5.4. The subject is understood to be the same as the first clause.

- (9) a. *Thawm ntawv kuv tau pom thiab tau paub hais tias qhov nov*
 through PX.EVNT 1SG PFV see and PFV know COMP thing PX.SPKR
yog txoj hau kev tom ntej kuv yuav tau koj kuv
 be CLF.ABST principal way ahead 1SG must bring/take 1SG
tej menyuam mus kawm Vajtswv txoj lus,
 CLF.GRP2 child go learn God word
 ‘Through this I understood the way of living [for myself], and that I must bring
 my children to learn God’s Word,’ [Testimony:20.1]
- b. *thiab yuav tau taug Vajtswv qab,*
 and must follow God after
 ‘and I must follow after God,’ [Testimony:20.2]
- c. *thiab yuav tau hlub Vajtswv.*
 and must love God
 ‘and I must love God.’ [Testimony:20.3]

Natural texts also differ from elicited sentences in that they contain a number of elements that abound in utterances longer than one isolated sentence: direction relative to the speaker or event, location relative to the speaker or event, and evidentiality. Example

(10) makes use of directionals, particularly *rov qab* ‘return’ and *mus* ‘go’ and the locative *ntawv* ‘proximal to the event’.

- (10) *Tom qab* *ib* *lub vij kuv kuj tau hu rov qab rau tus*
 afterward/behind one/first week 1SG also PFV call return to/for CLF.ANMT
niam *tsev ntawv tias kuv yuav rov qab mus ntsib mus*
 woman/mother house PX.EVNT COMP 1SG intend return go meet go
koom *lub* *tshawj dua thiab.*
 do.together CLF.GNRL church more and
 ‘One week later I called this housewife back [to say] that I intended to go meet her
 to return to church again.’ [Testimony:25]

Not only are verbs of motion employed, but the direction in relation to the speaker and in relation to another participant in the narrative is emphasized. The verb *rov qab* ‘return’ is specific about its direction away from the speaker and toward another location previously mentioned. The verb *mus* ‘go’ is used not once but twice in the final verb phrase of the sentence. These verbs *mus* ‘go’, *tuaj* ‘come’, and *los* ‘come’ are used very frequently throughout the texts. When speaking of motion, it is normal to speak of action with direction relative to the speaker. Location relative to the speaker or event is also mentioned so frequently it is almost obligatory. This example uses *ntawv* ‘proximal to the event’ to identify the location of the house relative to the events of the narrative. These directionals and spatial deictics are characteristic of natural text but conspicuously underrepresented in Mottin’s grammar.

This grammar sketch is based on texts rather than elicitation sessions. No examples used to illustrate any points of the grammar come from any source other than the texts included in the appendices. This means that the examples are not contrived; not only is it possible for them to occur in natural speech, they actually do occur in natural speech. They exhibit a variety of levels of nominal and lexical density, frequent use of discourse markers and deixis, and frequent use of pronominal elements, ellipses, zero anaphora, and clause chaining. In short, they depict the language that the speakers actually use, and thus this grammar sketch describes White Hmong rather than an elicited representation of it.

1.2 The texts used

Five interlinearized texts form the basis for my presentation: three narrative texts, one procedural text, and one hortatory text. This grammar sketch is based exclusively on the content of these texts. Four of these five texts are already part of the literature. “Kee’s Story” is an appendix to Fuller’s (1988) dissertation, *Topic and Comment in Hmong* (1988). From White’s (2014) M.A. thesis, *Non-spatial setting in White Hmong*, I obtained the texts “Tzerge Yang’s story,” “How to make Hmong Eggs,” and “Everything starts with God.” The fifth text, the personal story of my language consultant Ar Moua, is introduced to the literature for the first time in this paper.

These are natural texts with a highly oral quality that is noticeable throughout—particularly in the personal narratives and the procedural text. The spontaneous nature of the text displays itself in a number of ways: the speaker fishing for words; starting a sentence, stopping without completing it, restarting his speech; being overcome by emotion and breaking up; and inserting pauses and vocalizations while thinking. All of these elements serve to underscore the natural use of the language and the reliability of the texts as genuine communication and thus as valid models for analysis.

In writing Ar’s story, we first recorded her oral narrative of a topic of her choosing, and then she personally transcribed it. After she transcribed the text, Ar requested that I change a few of the references to *Vajtswv* ‘God’ or *tus tswv* ‘the Lord’ to *Yesxus* ‘Jesus’ or *tswv Yesxus* ‘the Lord Jesus’, since she had not realized that she had given her whole testimony without mentioning his name. I made the requested changes in the requested locations but nothing further. I then interlinearized the text by consulting primarily Heimbach (1980) and secondarily a dictionary available online, *HmongDictionary.com* (2019),³ and then Ar and I went through it together for her input and confirmation. Even after our work together, there were passages for which I further reworked the free translation to make it more natural English.

Each of the texts were lacking in certain features that are standard for written language when I began working on them, including the initial transcription of Ar Moua’s

³ This website is maintained by Jay Xiong (Xiong 2005:viii). There is a physical dictionary available, *Lus Hmoob txhais (Hmong-English dictionary)* by Jay Xiong, which I have also consulted.

story. While Hmong orthography follows capitalization practice common for languages that share the Roman alphabet, none of the texts utilized capitalization consistently or according to standard practice, and they certainly never used it in a way that indicated sentence boundaries. None of them had consistent use of punctuation. Despite the fact that compound words exist in Hmong, each word was written as if monosyllabic; that is, each syllable was written as its own word. The lack of capitalization, punctuation, and acknowledgment of compound words meant that all of the texts had long stretches of strings of syllables without any indication in the written representation of sentence boundaries, clause boundaries, and sometimes even word boundaries. The texts I obtained from White (2014) were divided roughly into paragraphs, and so sentence boundaries were apparent at the beginnings and ends of paragraphs. Appendix F, “Kee’s story,” and Appendix B, “Ar Moua’s story,” had no indication whatsoever of sentence, clause, or compound word boundaries.

Each of the existing four texts was already interlinearized, and as much as possible, I maintained the glosses as I found them. Nevertheless, in order to accomplish a number of my own goals, I reworked certain glosses.

First of all, I wanted all the interlinearizations to conform to current practice, including the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie & Haspelmath 2015). I also wanted to establish consistency among all the texts in glossing, formatting, the level of consistency between the vernacular and the free translation, and the level of consistency with standard current American English. In cases where there was inconsistency, I chose the glossing most consistent with Heimbach (1980) as my primary source and HmongDictionary.com (2019) as my secondary source. Occasionally, especially in the oldest text, “Kee’s story,” there were words not listed in either dictionary and thus glosses that I could not corroborate. I left them as I found them, and in some cases, such as the word *thab han* ‘soldier’ or *hlis ntu* ‘month’, the consistent use in the context provided sufficient evidence that the gloss was appropriate as it stood. I wanted as well to highlight the syntactic points most important to my presentation while backgrounding the elements that I do not discuss.

Providing a free translation in natural English that was a faithful representation of the glossed words was definitely a challenging undertaking. In a number of places the

meaning was obscure enough that I had no choice but to let the original free translation guide my thinking. But I did not simply accept the work of previous translations as my own; I went over each gloss and line of free translation in the texts with my primary language consultant, Ar Moua. Then, after I had been working with the texts for two years, I had Ar Moua and Gaoyeeng Vang, both native speakers of White Hmong, go over all my free translations together and confer with each other before giving me their approval or recommending changes.

There are noticeable differences in idiolect between the three speakers for the five texts, and there are also a few genuine transcription errors. This combination of facts required me to use my own judgment at times to determine what is legitimate speaker variation and what is true transcription error. Many words are transcribed with a tone different from either of my dictionaries, even accounting for the few instances of normal tone sandhi; and some of these alternate tone transcriptions are quite consistent within a given text. These words I simply leave as they are transcribed in the original, without comment. When a word is obviously borrowed (obvious because the spelling of the word is impossible in Hmong phonology or orthography but nevertheless consistent throughout the text), I also leave it as transcribed in the original, without comment. Some words or phrases in the original transcriptions seem obviously wrong for a variety of reasons, and when my language consultant has concurred with my judgment, I have made the correction she has suggested. Admittedly, I thus accept one native speaker's judgment over another, but I do so because I can interact with my own consultant, and I obviously do not have access to the others. In each of these places I have corrected the text but preserved the original transcription in a footnote.

I handle compound words differently from the original transcriptions. I prefer to gloss compound words individually if they meet two criteria: the roots of the compounds are free, that is, they exist as independent words in the lexicon; and the meaning of the compound is relatively transparent, that is, the compositional meaning can be derived from the independent glosses without great difficulty. When possible, I avoid glossing long phrases as a unit, and this practice differs from each of the interlinearizations I have drawn from. I also use closed compounds (multimorphemic stems written as one word) if

this conforms to standard orthography; and in such cases, it is often also the case that at least one of the roots of the compound is not free. In conformity to standard orthography, I transcribe all multisyllabic proper nouns as one word, while none of the original texts does this. I also use the spelling Heimbach employs: if a compound is open (written as two separate words), I write it as such. If, however, a compound is closed (written as one word), I also write it as such, despite the fact that none of the texts came to me this way originally.

In “Kee’s story” I changed the glosses of the topic markers from Fuller’s original glosses. In her interlinearization she states plainly that she purposefully glosses all such words as PRT ‘particle’ in order to maintain a neutral perspective for doing her analysis. Since her paper compellingly demonstrates the function of these words, I gloss them according to the function she identifies: *mas* as a topic marker, ‘TOP’; and *ces* as the discourse marker ‘SEQ’.

I gloss aspect markers and modal auxiliaries (§4.2) differently from Fuller in a few places for a number of reasons. One is that Li (1991) demonstrates that a number of “auxiliaries” in Hmong, previously considered tense markers, are actually aspect markers. Most notable is the auxiliary *tau*, which Fuller glosses as ‘past’. Later scholarship (see §4.2) demonstrates that *tau* marks perfective aspect (glossed as PFV) or ability (glossed as ‘able’). I follow White’s (2014) glosses and translations for other auxiliaries, most notably *yuav*, which Fuller glosses as ‘future’, but I gloss as ‘POS.IRR (positive irrealis)’.

Ratliff (1997) covers the topic of demonstratives more comprehensively and accurately than earlier work had done. I use adaptations of her glosses, and I translate according to the reference points she lays out, departing from the simple ‘that’ and ‘there’ employed in Fuller’s glosses and even the more traditional ‘proximal’ and ‘distal’. I discuss Ratliff’s (1997) analysis in §5.3.

Fuller further notes that her text contains a number of Laotian loanwords, although she does not list them for reference. I have included the words as they are, and my assumption is that if a word is not possible in Hmong spelling or phonology, it is a loanword; I do not, however, label all such words as loanwords.

White's texts are divided into paragraphs and interlinearized accordingly, while Fuller's text is divided by speech units. I broke the texts into sentences and clauses, keeping relative clauses with their heads and complement clauses with the verb to which they relate. Because of the phenomena of zero anaphora and serial verbs, there are a number of instances where the clause breaks are open to discussion, and resultingly, the number of clauses for statistical analysis should be considered as having a range rather than a precise number.

There were a number of things I did not change about the texts. I did not change the glosses that I could not substantiate from a dictionary if they met at least one of two qualifications: either the context supported the given gloss, or the context did not disallow the given gloss and there were no other possible glosses available to me. I did not change the spelling without compelling reason (as described above); most of the time I simply noted the change desired in a footnote and left the spelling as I found it.

1.3 Theoretical orientation

The sources I have consulted in researching the Hmong language are many and diverse, and I deliberately attempt to express the concepts presented in these various sources in a way that is simple and accessible to a linguist of any grammatical persuasion and will not needlessly limit my audience. Admittedly, I have been heavily influenced by Generative Grammar, and various points of my discussion will reveal this. Nevertheless, there is on my part no desire to promote a particular theoretical orientation. I attempt to remain neutral in my bias, and I choose to present a general perspective whenever possible. Ultimately, my presentation is eclectic, because I use the theory that best describes the data at hand, and often this is the theory that underlies the discussion in the literature that I reference. There are two points, however, for which I find that the principles of analysis provided by a Role and Reference Grammar are especially well suited to handle the phenomena of Hmong grammar; these two points are the serial verb constructions (§4.1.2) and the many instances of zero anaphora (§5.5.3) (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:275-285, Van Valin 2005:94-105, 183-224). In addition to my preference on this point, Jarkey's (1991) analysis of serial verb constructions, the most thorough and comprehensive treatment of

the topic to date, is written entirely from a Role and Reference Grammar perspective. The theory fits the data and the analysis well, and I would not do her work justice to represent it in any other framework. Closely related to the discussion of serial verbs is the discussion of zero anaphora, since the serial verbs by definition share at least one argument; and thus the arguments tend to be zero anaphoric in one of the verbal constructions that shares them. The terms that Role and Reference Grammar employs, *controller* and *pivot*,⁴ to discuss elements of zero anaphoric constructions provide an efficient way to lay out this analysis.

The diagrams I use, then, are drawn according to the style of Role and Reference Grammar, and for those unfamiliar with this system of diagramming, a few notes of explanation are in order. First of all, the notion of a “Verb Phrase” is not relevant; the verb is represented as having arguments, and these are part of the “Core,” but no node is ever labeled “VP.” Second, triangles are used sparingly; when detail of the structure of a phrase is irrelevant, a single line is drawn to the whole phrase and centered above it so that it often points to the space between two words. This does not mean that phrase boundaries are consequently difficult to determine; the boundaries of neighboring phrases are indicated visually by spacing words farther apart from the neighboring phrase than from sister constituents. Another point of note is that words and phrases of primarily semantic content are diagrammed above the sentence, and words and phrases of primarily syntactic content (most notably modals, auxiliaries, and words imparting illocutionary force) are diagrammed below the sentence. One final noteworthy point of difference from traditional form is that the lines of the diagram are allowed to cross; phrases may interleave and have their constituents diagrammed *in situ*.

⁴ “Controllers may trigger verb agreement ... , antecede a reflexive, or supply the interpretation for a missing argument in an adjacent unit. ...The missing argument of a construction is the pivot of the construction” (Van Valin 2005:95).

CHAPTER 2

A short description of White Hmong

Hmong is a language of mainland Southeast Asia (Bisang 1996). Most of the seven to twelve million speakers of Hmong live in various provinces of southwestern China, but because of recent migrations, Laos, northern Thailand, northern Vietnam, and even the United States have also become home to significant Hmong populations (Enfield 2005:4, Pfeifer 2016).¹ In the United States, the Hmong population is currently estimated to be in excess of 309,000 (US Census Bureau 2017).² White Hmong (ISO 639-3 mww) (also known as Hmong Daw) and Green Hmong (ISO 639-3 hnj) (also known as Blue Hmong, Hmong Njua, and Mong Njua) are mutually intelligible dialects common in the United States (UCLA 2014). White Hmong is spoken by approximately 1.7 million people worldwide (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2019).

2.1 Genetic relationships

Hmong Daw is a Hmong-Mien language (Strecker 1987:1-3). Scholars differ in their classification of the Hmong-Mien language family. Areal typology plays a great role in the characteristics of Hmong (Enfield 2005). Indeed, phonological, lexical, and syntactic similarities between languages in this region are so strong that it is difficult to discern whether the similarities are genetic or the result of extended, intense contact. In her comprehensive book on Hmong-Mien language history, Ratliff (2010:1,3) lays out the arguments: “Traditionally, Chinese scholars have claimed that Hmong-Mien belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family,” but more recent scholarship has disputed this claim for

¹ Estimates of the number of Hmong speakers vary greatly.

² According to Pfeifer (2016), the official census number is always significantly lower than the actual count for various reasons, not the least of which being the fact that since the Hmong have no unique homeland, they tend to report their ethnicity as the country of their origin, such as Laos or Vietnam.

a number of reasons, and “the most prudent position to take [currently] is that Hmong-Mien constitutes an independent family of languages.” White Hmong is in the Western branch of the Hmongic branch of the Hmong-Mien language family (Ratliff 2010:3). It is closely related to and generally mutually intelligible with Hmong Njua, or Green Hmong (Heimbach 1980:xi). White Hmong and Green Hmong are the two dialects of Hmong predominant in the United States.³

2.2 Phonology

Hmong has predominantly open syllables: the syllable structure consists of a simple onset, a nucleus of a monophthong or a diphthong, and an optional coda that is the velar nasal. The consonant inventory of Hmong is robust. Obstruents have many contrastive features: prenasalization, aspiration, lateral release, and combinations of these. Retroflexion and palatalization are also prominent features for many of the coronals. Voicing is contrastive for nasals and laterals (Jarkey 1991:11-31, Heimbach 1980:xii-xxiii, and Mottin 1978:6-7). The voiceless nasal is, in fact, a hallmark of White Hmong; indeed, the very term *Hmong* begins with a voiceless bilabial nasal. The voiceless nasal is one of the elements of the phonology that differentiate it from Green Hmong (often referred to as Mong Njua to indicate the difference in phonology).

Hmong has the following vowels: monophthongs /i, e, ɨ, a, u, o/ (of which the /e/ and the /o/ occur nasalized) and diphthongs /ia, ua, ai, au/ (Heimbach 1980:xiv, Jarkey 1991:13).

Hmong is described as having eight tones: high, mid, low, high falling, low falling breathy, mid rising, low rising, and low glottalized (Heimbach 1980:xiv, Mottin 1978:14-16). The written representation of the tones (always the last letter of a syllable) is discussed in §2.3.

The unusual combination of two factors, aspirated voiced consonants and breathiness linked to tone (which is naturally associated with the vowel), makes White Hmong one of

³ The predominance of the White and Green dialects of Hmong in the United States is an observation that anyone in the American Hmong community will corroborate, but it is amazingly hard to document.

the few languages known that actually has phonemic contrast between the vowel following an aspirated voiced consonant and a breathy vowel (Esposito & Khan 2012:139).

Tone sandhi occurs to a limited extent. The factors causing and limiting instances of tone sandhi are highly complex and thus beyond the purpose and scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, a few generalizations provide a helpful framework to explain many of the instances of tone sandhi that occur in the texts. A high or high falling tone may change the tone of the following word, generally by lowering a level tone or leveling a rising tone (in general a form of downstep). The ability of a word to cause tone change corresponds directly to its grammatical class, with numbers having an especially strong tendency to effect tone sandhi, classifiers having no ability to do so, and other word classes having a less predictable interaction (Heimbach 1980:446). Examples of tone sandhi abound in the texts. In (11) the numeral *ib* ‘one’ causes the mid rising tone of *qhov* ‘thing’ to change to a level mid tone *qho*, and in (12) the numeral *ib* ‘one’ causes the low tone of *tus*, the classifier for persons, to change to a low falling breathy tone *tug*.

(11) *Nws muab tau ib qho tshuaj rau kuv.*
 3SG take obtain INDF.ART thing medicine to/for 1SG
 ‘She got a dose of [herbal] medicine for me.’ [Testimony:11]

(12) *Vim rau qhov tias kuv yog ib tug menyuam ntsuag,*
 because to/for thing COMP 1SG be INDF.ART CLF.ANMT child orphan
 ‘Because I was an orphan,’ [Testimony:30.1]

2.3 Orthography

Hmong has traditionally been transcribed with a variety of orthographies, mostly those associated with the languages surrounding them in Southeast Asia. The Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) is the orthography used by most Hmong immigrants in America, and, being composed exclusively of Roman letters, is thus an ideal writing system for those living in the Hmong and American cultures simultaneously. All of the sources I used in my research use the RPA, and so I follow suit in this thesis. While the sound-symbol correspondence of the RPA naturally does not match that of English exactly, it is generally

close enough that English speakers can usually make a reasonable approximation of the pronunciation. There are a few notable deviations.

The velar nasal is indicated by doubling the vowel symbol preceding it (always either <e> or <o>) as in *yeej* [j^ẽɨ⁵³] ‘habitual aspect’. When <h> precedes a sonorant, it indicates voicelessness of that sonorant, as in *hli* [li³] ‘moon/month’. When <n> precedes an obstruent, it indicates prenasalization as in *ntseeg* [nⁿdʃ^ẽɨ²¹] ‘believe’. The graphemes <x> and <s> represent [s] and [ʃ], respectively and may form affricates with the stop they follow as in *xav* [sa³⁴] ‘think/want’, *txib* [tsi⁵] ‘send’, *siab* [ʃia⁵] ‘liver’, and *tsav* [tʃa³⁴] ‘kind’. When <l> follows a stop it indicates lateral release as in *plig* [p^li²¹] ‘spirit’. When <h> follows a stop it indicates aspiration as in *phau* [p^hau²] ‘CLF. STCK’. The RPA spelling of the word *Hmong*, *Hmoob* [m^uʊŋ⁵], demonstrates this spelling of the voiceless nasal [m̥] and the velar nasal [ŋ] as well as high tone, discussed immediately below.

Another major deviation from English spelling is the representation of tone; tone is always indicated by the final “consonant” of the syllable. High tone is indicated by , mid by null, low by <s>, high falling by <j>, low falling breathy by <g>, mid rising by <v>, low rising by <d>, and low glottalized by <m> (Jarkey 1991:21).

In Table 1, I give the phonological representation in IPA symbols of certain words in standard RPA orthography. I assigned symbols based on Jarkey’s (1991:12-24) verbal description of White Hmong phonology and Heimbach’s (1980:xxii) visual representation of White Hmong tone.

Table 1. The orthographic representations of the tones and phonation in Hmong

Tone	Spelling	Example	Phonological representation	Gloss
High	-b	<i>peb</i>	/pe ⁵ /	1PL
Mid	null	<i>rau</i>	/ɾau ³ /	to/for
Low	-s	<i>mus</i>	/mu ² /	go
High falling	-j	<i>nplej</i>	/ ^m b ^l e ⁵³ /	unhulled rice
Low falling breathy	-g	<i>yog</i>	/jo ²¹ /	be
Mid rising	-v	<i>kuv</i>	/ku ³⁴ /	1SG
Low rising	-d	<i>ntawd</i>	/ ⁿ dai ²³ /	PX.EVNT
Low glottalized	-m	<i>yam</i>	/ja ¹ /	type

Many of the vowels in RPA actually correspond to the IPA symbols. Table 2 shows the correspondence between the IPA symbols and the RPA orthography.

Table 2. IPA-RPA correspondence of vowels

System of representation	Symbols
IPA	i e a ɔ u i ia ua ai ai au
RPA	i e a o u w ia ua aw ai au

2.4 Typology

2.4.1 Isolating morphology

White Hmong is an isolating language (Enfield 2005:2, 8). As such, it does not generally utilize affixation to communicate grammatical relationships. Rather, the grammatical structure of the sentence is conveyed primarily through word order. For this reason, much of this grammar sketch deals with constituent order, and diagrams depict the grammatical roles this order indicates. However, it is not true that word order establishes all grammatical relations and that nothing is communicated overtly through explicit grammatical words. The words that communicate grammatical information include adpositions, aspect markers, modal auxiliaries, and comparative and superlative markers of adjectives.⁴ My analysis reveals that there is at least one word, the perfective aspect marker *tau*, that is probably better interpreted as a prefix; this perfective aspect marker is discussed in §4.2. The comparative and superlative markers of adjectives (discussed in §5.4) also should be considered as candidates for inclusion in a class of suffixes.

2.4.2 SVO constituent order

The pragmatically unmarked word order of Hmong is SVO. Two examples illustrate this order. Example (13) is diagrammed in Figure 1, and the SVO constituent order is

⁴ The words indicating grammatical information are often homophonous with content words, and historically they probably derive from them. Thus for the uninitiated, the grammatical cues may not be easily identifiable (Bisang 1996).

apparent. The subject *peb* ‘we’ is followed by the verb *yuav* ‘get’ which is followed by the object *lawv ntawv* ‘their letter’.

- (13) *Peb yuav lawv ntawv.*
 1PL get 3PL writing
 ‘We got their letter.’

[Escape-K:27]

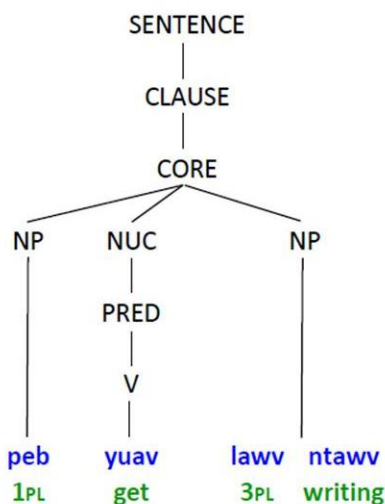


Figure 1. SVO constituent order in (13)

The subject in (13) is a pronoun, but to illustrate constituent order, full noun phrases are preferred over pronouns, since in many languages the latter function by different placement rules. As described in §1.1, natural texts tend to disprefer full noun phrases in the subject role, particularly when the verb is transitive. The texts in the corpus abundantly demonstrate this phenomenon. In all the corpus there are only a few sentences with transitive verbs that have a full noun phrase as subject; of these few sentences, very few are suitable for use as examples for other reasons, such as a zero anaphoric or pronominal object, a serial verb construction, or embedded clauses that obscure the form to be exemplified. Nevertheless, for the sake of accuracy, in Figure 2, I diagram (14), a sentence with full noun phrases for both subject and object. Example (14), shows the subject *Vajtswv* ‘God’ followed by the verb *npaj* ‘prepare’ followed by the object *peb lub neej thiab peb lub hom phiaj* ‘our life and our purpose’.

- (14) *Vajtswv twb npaj peb lub neej thiab peb lub hom phiaj*
 God really/already prepare 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate and 1PL CLF.GNRL
purpose
 ‘God already prepared our life and our purpose’ [Sermon:119.1]

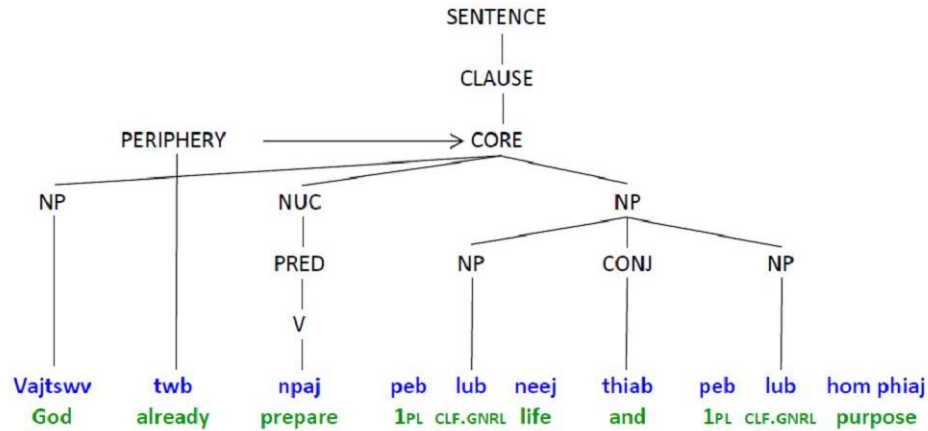


Figure 2. SVO constituent order with full noun phrases in (14)

Other basic sentence structures are described in §6.

2.4.3 Case marking

Case is not marked on noun phrases or pronouns by means of affixation. Subjects and objects are not marked for case by prepositions, but indirect objects are marked by the preposition *rau*. Example (15) shows the subject *nws* ‘s/he’ and direct object *ib qho tshuaj* ‘a dose of medicine’ as unmarked by prepositions, but the indirect object *kuv* ‘me’ is marked by the preposition *rau*.

- (15) *Nws muab tau ib qho tshuaj rau kuv.*
 3SG take obtain INDF.ART thing medicine to/for 1SG
 ‘She got a dose of [herbal] medicine for me.’ [Testimony:11]

2.4.4 Indications of verbal TAM

Tense, aspect, and mood are not marked on the verb. Aspect and mood are conveyed through separate aspect and mood markers in the verb phrase. The types of aspects and moods marked and the position of the markers in the verb phrase are discussed in §4.2.

Time is not obligatorily indicated, and when it is, it is through noun phrases, prepositional phrase, and adverb phrases.

Example (16) indicates the time with a noun phrase *hnuv no* ‘today’.

- (16) *Yog li hnuv no qhov kuv txiav txim siab los mus tham txog*
 be like day PX.SPKR thing 1SG make.decision come go talk about
mentsis yog tham txog kev ua qe noj.
 a.little.bit be talk about way make/do egg eat
 ‘So then, today I decided I’m going to talk about how to cook eggs.’ [Eggs:4]

Example (17) indicates the time in an adverb clause at the beginning of the sentence (17a) and the noun phrase giving the date in (17b).

- (17) a. *Thaum ntawd peb hla los mus txog sab tiv*
 the.time.when PX.EVNT 1PL cross come go arrive.at side oppose
 ‘When we crossed to the opposite side,’ [Escape-K:70.1]
- b. *yog van thib kaum rau lub rau hli ntuj.*
 be date ten six CLF.GNRL six month
 ‘the date was June 16.’ [Escape-K:70.2]

2.4.5 Left-headed phrases

Hmong phrases tend to be left-headed (Harriehausen 1990:43): the noun is to the left of words that describe it (adjective phrases, relative clauses, and demonstratives, but possessives, the indefinite article, classifiers, quantifiers, and class nouns precede it), the adjective is to the left of any intensifiers in the adjective phrase, the demonstrative is to the left of any complement it may have, the verb is to the left of most of the other constituents in the verb phrase (although aspect markers, modal auxiliaries, and certain adverbs may precede it), and the preposition is to the left of its object in the prepositional phrase.

In (18), the noun *hwjchim* ‘authority’ (spelled *fwjchim* here)⁵ is accompanied by the classifier *lub*, and it is to the left of the adjective phrase *loj kawg nkaus* ‘greatest’.

- (18) *Kuv tus Vajswv muaj lub fwjchim loj kawg nkaus.*
 1SG CLF.ANMT God have CLF.GNRL authority big to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘My God has greatest authority,’ [Testimony:62]

⁵ I have noticed an interchange between the phonemes /f/ and /h/ in Ar’s pronunciation, but I have not discerned the pattern involved.

In (19), the noun *neeg* ‘person’ is quantified with *txhua* ‘each/all’ and then accompanied by the classifier *tus*; it is to the left of the relative clause that modifies it: *ua haujlwm rau ntawd* ‘who worked for that’.

- (19) *cov Nyab Laj luag yuav tau txhom txhua leej txhua*
 CLF.GRP1 Vietnamese others/3PL must seize each/all CLF.PRSN each/all
tus neeg uas ua haujlwm rau ntawd.
 CLF.ANMT person RLTVZR make/do work to/for PX.EVNT
 ‘the Vietnamese would forcibly seize all the people who worked for that [the government].’ [Escape-K:13.4]

In (20), the adjective *zoo* ‘good’ is to the left of the intensifier *heev*, an intensifier of magnitude.

- (20) *thiab nws kuj muaj noj muaj haus zoo heev.*
 and 3SG also have eat have drink good/well INT.MGTD
 ‘and it has plenty to eat and has very good things to drink.’ [Escape-TY:64.3]

In (21), the second occurrence in the sentence of the demonstrative *ntawm* ‘proximal to the event’ is to the left of its complement *ntug dej* ‘the riverbank’.

- (21) *Qhov ntawm yog nyob ntawm ntug dej uas hla rau*
 thing PX.EVNT be dwell/be.located PX.EVNT edge water RLTVZR cross to/for
sab Thaib teb yoojyim heev.
 side Thai land easy INT.MGTD
 ‘This place is located on the river bank where to cross to Thailand is quite easy.’
 [Escape-K:33]

In (22), the verb *muab* ‘take’ is to the left of the rest of the verb phrase, which constitutes the remainder of the sentence.

- (22) *Peb muab peb daim ntawv rau luag saib.*
 1PL take 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing to/for others/3PL look.at
 ‘We took our letter to them to look at.’ [Escape-K:39]

In (23), the preposition *tom qab* ‘after’ is to the left of its object, the demonstrative *no* ‘proximal to the speaker’.

- (23) *Zaum tom qab no kuv rov qab mus lub vij.*
 occasion after PX.SPKR 1SG return go week
 ‘The next week I went back the second time.’ [Testimony:27]

2.4.6 Nominative-accusative syntactic patterns

Hmong subjects always precede the verb (with the exception of *muaj*, the existential verb, see §6.1), whether the subject is the Single argument⁶ of an intransitive verb or the Agent/Actor of a transitive verb. Objects of the verb always follow (unless the object is topicalized, see §6.5). Thus the three potential basic semantic roles group themselves in a nominative-accusative pattern of Single argument and Actor on one hand versus Undergoer on the other.

In (24), the Single argument, *peb* ‘we’, which has the semantic role of Experiencer, precedes the intransitive verb *pw* ‘lie down’ (‘sleep’).

- (24) *Peb tsis pw*
 1PL NEG lie.down
 ‘We didn’t sleep there’ [Escape-K:44.1]

In (25), the first argument of the verb, *wb* ‘we’, which has the semantic role of Actor, precedes the transitive verb *mus ntaus* ‘go thresh’; *nplej* ‘unhulled rice’, which has the semantic role of Undergoer, follows the verb.⁷

- (25) *wb mus ntaus nplej.*
 1DU go thresh unhulled.rice
 ‘[so] we [could] go thresh the unhulled rice.’ [Escape-TY:33.2]

Languages in which the Single arguments of intransitive verbs pattern with the Actors of transitive verbs are nominative-accusative in type (Velupillai 2012:239). Thus, since the Single arguments of transitive verbs in Hmong pattern with the Actors of transitive verbs, Hmong can be classified as a nominative-accusative language.

⁶ Role and Reference Grammar does not use the terms *subject* and *object* but rather refers to “arguments” of the verb; the terms are not truly interchangeable, but the differences are beyond the purpose and scope of this discussion (Van Valin 2005:99).

⁷ RRG groups all semantic roles (Agent, Experiencer, Patient, etc.) under the “macroroles” of Actor and Undergoer Van Valin (2005:53).

2.4.7 Serial verb constructions

Hmong grammar employs serial verb constructions quite frequently. In a serial verb construction, a number of verbs jointly form the verb of the verb phrase while sharing one or more arguments. The arguments of all the verbs in the phrase come early in the construction, with the subject of the first verb preceding the whole serialization and the remaining arguments and verbs often interleaving. Arguments that interleave with the serialized verbs often have the role of object of at least one of the verbs in the serialization and the role of subject of at least one other verb (Van Valin 2005:95, 101). (Serial verb constructions are explained in more detail in §4.7.5.) Extensive interleaving of verbs and arguments, and the multiple roles arguments fill in a single serialized verb phrase is exemplified in (26). The first argument, *nws* ‘he’, is the subject of the first verbs in the serialization, *thiaj muab* ‘carry take’; the second of these verbs, *muab* ‘take’, identifies the Instrument, the object that follows it, *taxi* ‘taxi’ (obviously a borrowed word); *taxi* ‘taxi’ is the subject of the next verb, *thauj* ‘transport’, which is followed by its object, *peb* ‘we/us’; *peb* ‘we/us’ is the subject of the next three verbs, *los mus txog* ‘come go arrive at’. The sentence finishes with a demonstrative phrase *ntawm ntug dej* ‘near the river bank’.

- (26) *Ces nws thiaj muab taxi thauj peb los mus txog ntawm ntug*
SEQ 3SG carry take taxi transport 1PL come go arrive.at PX.EVNT edge
dej.
water
‘So he transported us to the riverbank in a taxi.’ [Escape-K:62]

2.4.8 Topic-comment sentence structure

Fuller (1988) makes abundantly clear that Hmong has a tendency toward topic-comment sentence structures. In sentences of this structure, a topic is stated at the beginning of the sentence, and the rest of the sentence is logically related to this topic, but there is not necessarily any grammatical link between the topic and the rest of the sentence (the comment). Often the topic is marked with a topic marker, but this is not obligatory. Example (27) begins with the topic of the sentence *Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb lub neej*, ‘God’s

purpose for our lives'; the topic is correferential with the subject of the sentence, *nws* 'it', but it is not grammatically part of the sentence.

- (27) *Vajtsv lub hom phiaj rau peb lub neej, nws zoo*
 God CLF.GNRL purpose to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate 3SG good/well
tshaj txhua yam tsav uas nyob rau hauv peb
 CPTV each/all type kind RLTVZR dwell/be.located to/for inside 1PL
lub neej uas peb niaj hnub ua nov.
 CLF.GNRL life/estate RLTVZR 1PL every day make/do PX.SPKR
 'God's purpose for our lives, it is better than everything is in this life every day
 here.' [Sermon:21]

CHAPTER 3

The noun

3.1 Characteristics of nouns

3.1.1 No case marking

There is no marking for case on the noun. In (28)–(29), the NP *kuv niam thiab ob tug kwv* ‘my mother and two younger brothers’ has the same form despite the fact that in (28) it is the subject of the verb while in (29) it is the object of the verb.

- (28) *Ces thaum ntawd lub xyoo tom qab thiab hnov*
SEQ the.time.when PX.EVNT CLF.GNRL year afterward/behind then hear
hais tias kuv niam thiab ob tug kwv
COMP 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT younger.brother
tuaj txog rau Nong Khai.
come arrive.at to/for Nong Khai
‘Then, after one year we heard that my mother and two younger brothers came to Nong-Khai.’ [Escape-K:85]

- (29) *Mas peb tau ncaim kuv niam thiab ob tug*
TOP 1PL PFV separate 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv lawv yog tau ib xyoos ntau.
younger.brother 3PL be DUR one/first year many/much
‘We left my mother and two younger brothers for more than a year.’ [Escape-K:90]

Indirect objects are marked by the preposition *rau*, as in (30), in which *rau* precedes the indirect object *luag* ‘them’.

- (30) *Peb muab peb daim ntawv rau luag saib.*
1PL take 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing to/for others/3PL look.at
‘We took our letter to them to look at.’ [Escape-K:39]

3.1.2 No number marking

Example (31) illustrates the lack of marking for number: the word *kwv* for ‘younger brother’ and ‘younger brothers’ is the same in the two occurrences of it in this example, despite the fact that for the first appearance of the word the referent is singular and for the second appearance the referent is plural.

- (31) *kuv txiv thiab kuv thiab kuv ib tug kwv*
 1SG father/male and 1SG and 1SG one/first CLF.ANMT younger.brother
yau kuv hu ua Npawv no peb peb txiv tub
 young 1SG call make/do Ber PX.SPKR 1PL three/third father/male son
xwb, peb thiab li tau tso kuv niam thiab ob tug
 only 1PL then PFV leave 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv yau tseg.
 younger.brother young leave
 ‘my father, my one little brother I called Ber, and I—these three of us, father and sons only—we then left my mother and two little brothers behind.’ [Escape-K:19.3]

There is, however, a way of marking the plurality of a referent semantically by using a group classifier such as *cov* or *tej* (Ratliff 1991, Jarkey 1991:38). (Group classifiers are discussed more thoroughly in §5.2.1.) In (32), *cov* marks the noun *menyuam* ‘child’ as a plurality of the referent so that the phrase refers to ‘a group of children’. In (33), *tej* marks the noun ‘qhov’ thing as a plurality of the referent and thus ‘a group of things’.

- (32) *kuv cov menyuam los muaj mob kawg li,*
 1SG CLF.GRP1 child come have sickness to.the.greatest.degree like
 ‘[and] my children got really sick a lot too,’ [Testimony:4.4]
- (33) *tsis hais tej qhov muag pom thiab tej qhov muag tsis pom,*
 whether CLF.GRP2 thing eye see and CLF.GRP2 thing eye NEG see
 ‘whether things the eye sees or things the eye does not see,’ [Sermon:12.3]

3.2 The order and constituents of the noun phrase

The general order of constituents in the noun phrase is the following: an optional embedded noun phrase as possessor, an optional quantity word or indefinite article, an optional classifier, the head noun, any number of optional adjective phrases, an optional

relative clause, and finally an optional demonstrative. There are a few exceptions to this rule (a class of adjective phrases and ordinal numbers) discussed below. The phrase structure rule is:¹

(34) NP → (NP) (QUAN/INDEF ART) (CLF) N (AP)* (PP) (S) (DEM)

The texts contain quite a number of noun phrases, all of which conform to this rule. In (35) we find a noun phrase with a classifier, *cov*; a noun, *lus* ‘word’; and an adjective phrase, *zoo* ‘good’ in that order.

(35) a. *Tiamsis mas kuv xav xav paub cov lus zoo*
 but TOP 1SG think/want think/want know CLF.GRP1 word good/well
 ‘But I really wanted to know the good words,’ [Testimony:33.1]

Example (36) contains the pronoun in the NP as possessor position, *kuv* ‘my’; classifier, *cov* ‘group’; noun, *lus* ‘word’; and demonstrative, *no* ‘this.near.me’.

(36) *Kuv muab kuv cov lus no qhia sau tseg rau peb*
 1SG take 1SG CLF.GRP1 word PX.SPKR teach write leave to/for 1PL
sawvdaws paub tias Vajtswv txoj kev hlub mas loj tshaj plaws.
 everyone know COMP God CLF.ABST way love TOP big SPTV
 ‘I give this testimony of mine in writing to us all to let us all know that God’s way
 is the greatest love.’ [Testimony:64]

A quantifier precedes the classifier in the noun phrase. In (37), the quantifier *ob* ‘two’ precedes the classifier *lub* in the noun phrase *ob lub qe* ‘two eggs’.

(37) *Koj mam muab ob lub qe coj los tsoo tso rau*
 2SG then take two/second CLF.GNRL egg bring/take come crush put to/for
hauv.
 inside
 ‘You then take two eggs, bring them [to where you’re working], break them, and
 put them in.’ [Eggs:11]

¹ This rule reflects Jarkey (1991:32), Fuller (1988:32) and Ratliff (1991:695) with additions based on my findings in the texts.

While the noun phrase structure rule includes a relative clause, I do not discuss relative clauses in this thesis. There is much of interest in this topic, but it is not possible to give an accurate superficial treatment, and a thorough treatment is beyond what is possible to include in the scope of this thesis.

I do not have an example or a diagram for the maximal noun phrase, since my texts do not contain a noun phrase with all the possible constituents.

A noun referring to time, such as *hnuv* ‘day’ in (118) and *xyoo* ‘year’ in (119), does not follow the pattern of other noun phrases (Mottin 1978:63). Example (38) shows a noun phrase referring to the date as having the classifier *lub* preceding the number *ob* ‘two/second’ rather than following it in the noun phrase *lub ob hlis* ‘the second month (February)’.

- (38) *Ces lub ob hlis vas nthib nee kaum plaub ib txhiab cuaj*
 SEQ CLF.GNRL second month date twenty four one thousand nine
pua yim caum ntawd ces peb thiaj li tuaj poob rau pem
 hundred eight ten PX.EVNT SEQ 1PL then come fall to/for MD.up
 Nebraska *ped.*
 MD.up
 ‘Then on February 24, 1980, we came up here to Nebraska.’ [Escape-TY:68]

A full noun phrase can also occupy the NP possessor position. There is no formal indicator of grammatical function for this NP other than word order. In (39), the NP begins with the possessive *nws*, which is followed by the classifier *lub* and finally the head noun *khob* ‘cup’.

- (39) *Kuv thiaj xa nws lub khob rov qab rau nws.*
 1SG then send 3SG CLF.GNRL cup return to/for 3SG
 ‘Then I returned her cup back to her.’ [Testimony:12]

In (40), the NP *kuv niam* ‘my mother’ modifies *neejtsa* ‘family’. This is also an example of recursive embedding: the possessor NP *kuv niam* ‘my mother’ itself contains a possessive, *kuv* ‘my’. It is noteworthy that the kinship terms do not have accompanying classifiers despite the possessives because of the semantic interaction classifiers have with kinship terms as discussed in §5.2.3.

- (40) *los raws kuv niam cov neejtsa.*
 come live.with 1SG woman/mother CLF.GRP1 family
 ‘to live with my mother’s family.’ [Escape-TY:9.3]

An adjective phrase follows the head noun of the noun phrase and precedes any relative clause. In (41), the adjective *tseeb* ‘true’ follows the head noun *kev* ‘way’, and precedes the relative clause *uas nyob tas mus ib txhis* ‘which abides forever’.

- (41) *Peb yuav tsum ua peb lub neej nyob rau*
 1PL must make/do 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located to/for
ntawm txoj kev tseeb uas nyob tas mus ib txhis,
 PX.EVNT CLF.ABST way true RLTVZR dwell/be.located finish go forever
 ‘We must live our lives here the true way which abides forever,’ [Sermon:112.1]

Relative clauses follow the head noun of the noun phrase and precede any demonstrative. Example (42) contains a noun phrase with the head noun *dos* ‘onion’ followed by relative clause *uas koj tsuav* ‘which you chopped’, which in turn is followed by the demonstrative *ntawd* ‘proximal to the event’.

- (42) *Ces koj muab cov dos uas koj tsuav ntawd,*
 SEQ 2SG take CLF.GRP1 onion RLTVZR 2SG chop PX.EVNT
 ‘Then you take the onions that you chopped,’ [Eggs:14.1]

In (43), the adjective *loj* ‘big’ follows the head noun *nom tswv* ‘head officer’.

- (43) *tuaj mus xee daim ntawv ntawm rau tom cov nom tswv*
 come go sign CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT to/for MD CLF.GRP1 officer
loj lub sijhawm ntawm.
 big CLF.GNRL occasion PX.EVNT
 ‘and we went to get this letter signed by those top officials at this time.’ [Escape-K:29.3]

A prepositional phrase may follow the head noun and modify it. In (44), the head noun *tseeb tseeb* ‘true words’ is followed by the modifying prepositional phrase *txog tsib yam hom phiaj nyob rau hauv peb lub neej* ‘about five kinds of purpose for our lives’.

- (44) *Vajtswv tau qhia tseeb tseeb txog tsib yam hom phiaj nyob*
 God PFV teach true words about five/fifth type purpose dwell/be.located
rau hauv peb lub neej nyob rau hauv
 to/for inside 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located to/for inside
Vajtswv txoj lus uas yog phau vaj lus kub.
 God word RLTVZR be CLF.STCK Bible
 ‘God has taught the absolute truth about five kinds of purpose for our lives in God’s Word, which is the Bible.’ [Sermon:105]

A prepositional phrase will precede any relative clause modifying the same head noun. In (44) the prepositional phrase *txog tsib yam hom phiajnyob rau hauv peb lub neej* ‘about

five kinds of purpose for our lives’ is in turn followed by a relative clause *nyob rau hauv Vajtswv txoj lus uas yog phau vaj lus kub* ‘which is in God’s Word, which is the Bible’.

Fuller (1988:11-16) actually gives a constituent order for the noun phrase in harmony with (34) but then, after discussion and illustration, goes on to say that it “is basically correct, [but] some modifiers have variable order or different orders for different functions.” It is true that there does seem to be variability for two constituents in the noun phrase in particular: the adjective phrase and the demonstrative. The variability for each of these constituents is, however, an illusion; there are rules that govern their position. Without presenting her analysis as a response to Fuller, Jarkey (1991:33) provides an explanation for the seemingly mobile adjective phrase. She identifies historical remnants that are exceptions to this order in which the adjective phrase precedes the noun it modifies; these adjectives belong to a closed class of adjectives that includes *niag* ‘great’, *nyuag* ‘little’, and *qub* ‘old/former’. Example (45) demonstrates this order. The noun phrase begins with the group classifier *tej* followed by the adjective *nyuag* ‘little’ followed by the head noun *haujlwm* ‘work’ followed by the prepositional phrase *rau hauv lab tab ban* ‘for the government’.

- (45) *thiab ua tej nyuag aw haujlwm rau hauv lab tab ban.*
 and make/do CLF.GRP2 little (hesitation) work to/for inside government
 ‘and occasionally he did some work for the government.’ [Escape-K:12.3]

Another exception that Fuller (1988) has proposed to (34), is the variable placement of the spatial deictic in the noun phrase relative to the head noun. To illustrate this statement, she give examples of spatial deictics in a phrase before and after a noun. The texts contain examples of the same pattern. Example (46) contains two phrases with the demonstrative *ntawd* (realized as *ntawm* both times): *daim ntawv ntawm* ‘this letter’ and *lub sijhawm ntawm* ‘this occasion’. In each of these phrases, the demonstrative follows the head noun and is the last constituent in the phrase.

- (46) *tuaj mus xee daim ntawv ntawm rau tom cov nom tswv*
 come go sign CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT to/for MD CLF.GRP1 officer
loj lub sijhawm ntawm.
 big CLF.GNRL occasion PX.EVNT
 ‘and we went to get this letter signed by those top officials at this time.’ [Escape-K:29.3]

In (47), *ntawd* (realized as *ntawm*) precedes the noun *ntug dej* ‘riverbank’.

- (47) *Qhov ntawm yog nyob ntawm ntug dej uas hla rau*
 thing PX.EVNT be dwell/be.located PX.EVNT edge water RLTVZR cross to/for
sab Thaib teb yoojyim heev.
 side Thai land easy INT.MGTD
 ‘This place is located on the river bank where to cross to Thailand is quite easy.’
 [Escape-K:33]

An examination of the evidence, however, affirms the rule rather than the exception. If what Fuller meant by her statement is that the spatial deictics can either precede or follow the head noun in the noun phrase that they are part of, the evidence does not support it. First of all, not every example in the discussion is a noun phrase: some are demonstrative phrases. A noun phrase and a demonstrative phrase have different heads and perform different roles in the sentence; they will naturally have constituent order different from one another. Example (46) contains a noun phrase of which the spatial deictic *ntawm* is a constituent that describes the head noun. Example (47) contains a demonstrative phrase with an adnominal complement. In the phrase *ntawm ntug dej* ‘near the river bank’, the demonstrative *ntawm* does not modify *ntug dej* ‘river bank’; *ntawm* is the head of the demonstrative phrase, and *ntug dej* ‘river bank’ is its complement. Secondly, not everything that has “variable order” is a “modifier.” In a phrase headed by a spatial deictic, the spatial deictic cannot be called a “modifier”; it is the head, as Fuller herself points out (1988:15). Jarkey (1991:32-44) discusses these different phrases individually and gives their constituent order, but she does not draw a direct contrast between the two. I affirm that the data allow for only one position of the spatial deictic in the noun phrase: the position after the head noun.

3.2.1 Nouns of generic reference

The noun phrase in White Hmong may consist of nothing more than a noun if the noun is generic in nature. In (48), the reference to *qe* ‘egg’ is generic, and as such, it is the only element in the noun phrase.

- (48) *Qhov nov yog Hmoob li ua qe noj xwb xwb.*
thing PX.SPKR be Hmong like make/do egg eat only only
‘This is just the Hmong way to cook eggs.’ [Eggs:5]

3.2.2 Quantifier and number

A cardinal number precedes the classifier in the noun phrase, as in (49), in which the word *ob* is interpreted as the cardinal number ‘two’ because it precedes the classifier *lub*.

- (49) *Koj mam muab ob lub qe coj los tsoo tso rau*
2SG then take two/second CLF.GNRL egg bring/take come crush put to/for
hauv.
inside
‘You then take two eggs, bring them [to where you’re working], break them, and put them in.’ [Eggs:11]

An ordinal number follows the noun it modifies in the noun phrase (Mottin 1978:63), as in (50) in which the word *ob* is interpreted as the ordinal number ‘second’ because it follows the noun *qhov* ‘thing’.

- (50) *Qhov ob tuaj mus Vajtswv twb paub peb ua*
thing two/second come go God really/already know 1PL make/do
ntej peb paub nws.
before 1PL know 3SG
‘The second thing: God already knew us before we knew him.’ [Sermon:118]

The corpus of texts contains a number of references to months, and months follow a unique rule (Mottin 1978:63). The ordinal number that modifies a month follows the classifier but precedes the noun, as in (51), in which the number *ob* ‘two’ indicates ‘second’ when it follows the classifier *lub*, and precedes the noun *hlis ntuj* ‘month’.

- (51) *Hnub no yog lub ob hlis ntuj vas nthib nees nkaum plaub ob*
 day PX.SPKR be CLF.GNRL second month date twenty four two
phav kaum plaub.
 thousand ten four
 ‘Today is February 24, 2014.’ [Eggs:2]

3.3 Conclusions

There are a few things my analysis of the noun phrases in the texts reveals that are not clarified in the literature that I have consulted. One of these items is the position of the constituents of the noun phrase relative to the head noun. Fuller (1988:11-16) actually gives the constituent order for the noun phrase and then, after discussion and illustration, goes on to say that it “is basically correct, [but] some modifiers have variable order.” My discussion shows that while at first “variable order” seems to exist, the constituent order is actually fixed. The first point I clarify is that while it appears that adjective phrases may precede or follow the head noun, according to Jarkey (1991:33), only a few adjectives in a closed class of words may precede the verb; thus it is not a matter of adjective phrases occurring in one of two possible positions in the noun phrase but rather adjectives being divided by class as to their obligatory position.

The second point I clarify is the position of the demonstrative in the noun phrase. The confusion comes from not differentiating between noun phrases containing demonstratives and demonstrative phrases containing adnominal complements. A noun phrase and a demonstrative phrase have different heads and perform different roles in the sentence; they will quite naturally have constituent order different from one another. Jarkey (1991:32-44) discusses these different phrases individually and gives their constituent order, but she does not draw a direct contrast between the two. The discussion under §5.3 serves to eliminate the confusion concerning this topic. The two kinds of phrases are described in comparison to each other, and the constituent order is given contrastively.

CHAPTER 4

The verb

The verb phrase in Hmong consists on the basic level of an optional modal followed by an optional aspect marker, followed by the main verb, an optional object, and a number of optional prepositional phrases. This phrase structure rule is (52).

(52) $VP \rightarrow (\text{Mod}) (\text{Aux}) V (\text{NP}) (\text{PP})^*$

This phrase structure rule is obviously a simplification of the true situation, but it is a good starting point for the discussion. A number of factors make most sentences more complex than can be described with (52). Primarily the introduction of a serial verb construction changes the whole picture. With a serial verb construction come complexities in negation and the interweaving of arguments and verbs, with some of the arguments being shared. These elements are discussed in §4.1.2 and §4.5. This rule also does not address the adverb clause because of its complexity. Simple adverbs (discussed in §5.6) and obliques can appear in combination either immediately before the verb or at some point after it in the verb phrase. Because of the variety of the positions available to them, this rule does not accommodate them either.

4.1 Forms of verbs

4.1.1 *Single verbs*

The Hmong verb may appear singly in a sentence as in (53), in which the only verb is *yuav* ‘get’.

- (53) *Mas peb thiaj li peb txiv tub peb thiaj li aws yuav lawv*
 TOP 1PL then 1PL father/male son 1PL then (hesitation) get 3PL
ib daig ntawv.
 INDF.ART CLF.SRFC/SHT writing
 ‘So then we, father and sons, we bought a [permission] letter of theirs.’ [Escape-
 K:20]

This construction, however, is a minority construction. Verbs more often appear together, and this section explores several of these concatenations of verbs, including the frequently employed serial verb construction in its most common forms.

4.1.2 *Serial verb constructions*

Like many other Southeast Asian languages, White Hmong has serial verbs. Linguists differ in their analysis of serial verbs regarding the number of propositions represented. Riddle (1989:1) points out that “there is a tendency ... to analyze those serializations which translate as verb + adverbial into English as representing single propositions.” She proposes a different analysis, claiming that “in White Hmong, the interpretation of the number of propositions expressed by a serial construction ultimately depends on lexical and pragmatic factors” (1989:2). Her analysis gives the serial verb construction great flexibility so that in a certain context, a concatenation of verbs can express only one proposition while in a different context, the identical concatenation of verbs can express multiple propositions, according to the communicative needs of the speaker.

Foley (2010:92) notes that in languages that utilize both serial verb constructions and clause chaining constructions (as White Hmong does), it can be difficult to determine which of these two structures is being employed at a given time. In many languages that utilize serial verb constructions, the boundaries of a single verb phrase are indicated by affixation: either the initial or the final verb in a serial verb construction will have the full complement of affixes, and the other verbs in the series will be only lightly marked, often with either no affixation or an affix that merely indicates they are part of the serial verb construction. In a language like Hmong, which employs no verb affixation, discerning the difference between the two constructions is even more difficult.

Jarkey (1991) uses a Role and Reference Grammar framework to analyze the serial verb constructions of White Hmong. Defining a few terms basic to this approach is essential to the discussion. The ‘nucleus’ of a clause “contains the predicate (usually a verb), [and] the ‘core’ ... contains the nucleus and the arguments of the predicate” (Van Valin 2005:4). A serial verb construction (SVC) can occur on the nuclear, core, or clause level (the clause level is not dealt with in this thesis). If it occurs on the nuclear level, all the verbs involved in the construction must share all arguments. If it occurs on the core level, all of the verbs share at least one argument and certain “operators,” such as deontic modals (Van Valin 2005:8, 183-205). Additionally, there are three ways the verbs in the SVC can relate to each other in nuclear or core juncture: they may have a relationship of coordination, subordination, or cosubordination. “Coordination is characterized by the joining of two or more units of equal size and status. ... Subordination, on the other hand, involves the embedding of one unit in another” (Van Valin 2005:183). Cosubordination is a relationship often exhibited by the SVCs in Hmong. In this relationship, there is “a kind of dependent coordination, in which units of equivalent size are joined together in a coordinate-like relation but share some grammatical category, e.g. tense or mood” (Van Valin 2005:187).

Jarkey (1991) identifies verbs that are joined at the nuclear, core, and peripheral levels (the peripheral level is later called the clausal level in Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:191) with subordinate, cosubordinate, and coordinate nexus, and the diagrams for these structures are key in differentiating the relationships between the verbs and their arguments.

Jarkey (1991) is the most comprehensive analysis of serial verbs in White Hmong available. Using a Role and Reference Grammar framework and a corpus of texts, she demonstrates which concatenations of verbs are simply juxtapositions in contrast to the SVCs. Then she identifies the level of juncture and kind of nexus of each SVC. She further identifies the following five constructions as being represented in Hmong: cotemporal SVCs (including motion SVCs and SVCs involving actions), causative SVCs, accomplishment SVCs, disposal SVCs, and valency increasing SVCs (1991). She discusses which constructions are productive and which are not. Her analysis contributes to the typological understanding of serial verbs cross-linguistically, and it is both insightful and consistent

with actual Hmong usage. There is far more in her analysis than this thesis can represent, so I illustrate only the constructions she discusses in Jarkey (2010), which is a distillation of Jarkey (1991). Jarkey (2010:119) identifies four of the five SVCs from the more comprehensive Jarkey (1991) (valency increasing SVCs are not part of 2010): Cotemporal (2010:116-117, 120-131), Disposal (2010:117), Pivotal (called causative in 1991:178-213), and Attainment (called accomplishment in 1991:214-239).

Cotemporal SVCs involve core cosubordination. The verbs share one argument and usually involve a verb of motion. In that they are cotemporal, the events are not sequenced but rather occur simultaneously, often involving motion and related activity, or motion and manner. The list in (54) gives the six possible elements (using Jarkey's 2010:121 labels) of this SVC in the order in which they occur:

- (54) Jarkey's Elements of Cotemporal SVCs
- a. Transport
 - b. Manner of Motion
 - c. Route
 - d. Source
 - e. 'Return'¹
 - f. Goal

In (55), diagrammed in Figure 3, there are two verbs, *rov qab* 'return', and *mus* 'go', and they share the subject *peb* 'we'. *Rov qab* 'return' is the 'Return' verb, and *mus* 'go' is the Goal verb.

- (55) *peb rov qab mus peb tsev xwb.*
 1PL return go 1PL house only
 'we were just returning to our home.' [Escape-K:24.2]

¹ So called because *rov qab* 'return' is the only verb possible in this element

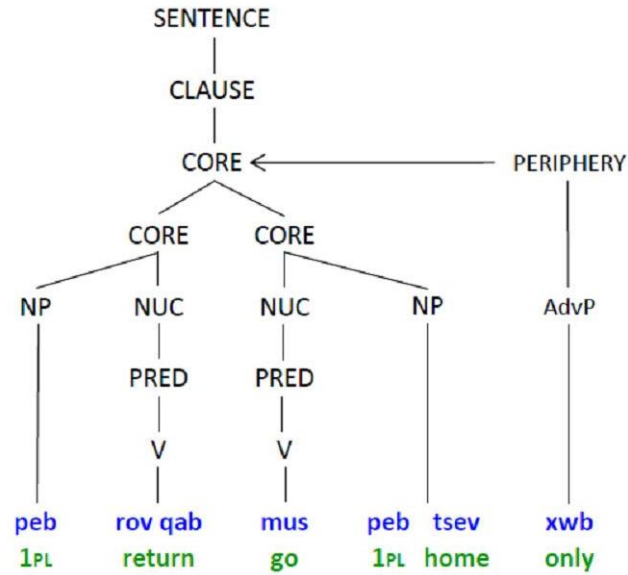


Figure 3. Sentence (55) with a cotemporal SVC

In a Pivotal SVC, the verbs share one argument, a “pivot”; the object of the first verb (V_1) is the subject of the second verb (V_2). The Pivotal SVC is a case of core cosubordination (Jarkey 2010:118). (56), diagrammed in Figure 4, exemplifies this construction. The verbs share the argument *peb* ‘us/we’; it is the object of V_1 *coj* ‘bring/take’ and subject of V_2 *los* ‘come’.

- (56) *Ces nws coj peb los.*
 SEQ 3SG bring/take 1PL come
 ‘Then he led us [there].’

[Escape-K:64]

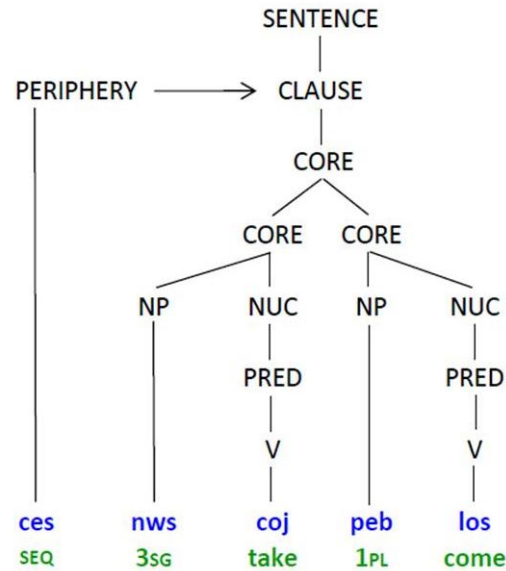


Figure 4. Sentence (56) with a pivotal SVC

A Disposal SVC involves a transitive verb (V_1) that acts in a significant way on the object and then a second transitive verb (V_2) indicating what the subject does to the object after or as a result of V_1 . “The second and subsequent verbs raise the transitivity of the clause by describing how the subject subsequently destroys or consumes the object, ... or at the very least, relinquishes it” (Jarkey 2010:117). The Disposal SVCs involve core cosubordination (Jarkey 2010:117). In (57), diagrammed in Figure 5, there is a series of chained cores, all with the same subject, *koj* ‘you’ and object, *ob lub qe* ‘two eggs’. The first core is a simple transitive verb, the second core is a Cotemporal SVC, and the third core is a Disposal SVC. The first verb in this third core *tsoo* ‘crush’, (V_1), describes an action the subject performs on the object that greatly affects it. The second verb in the core (V_2), *tso* ‘put’, describes how the subject disposes of the object after it has acted on it, in this case by putting it in the pan (the pan having been referred to in a previous clause).

- (57) *Koj mam muab ob lub qe koj los tsoo tso rau*
 2SG then take two/second CLF.GNRL egg bring/take come crush put to/for
hauv.
 inside
 ‘You then take two eggs, bring them [to where you’re working], break them, and
 put them in.’ [Eggs:11]

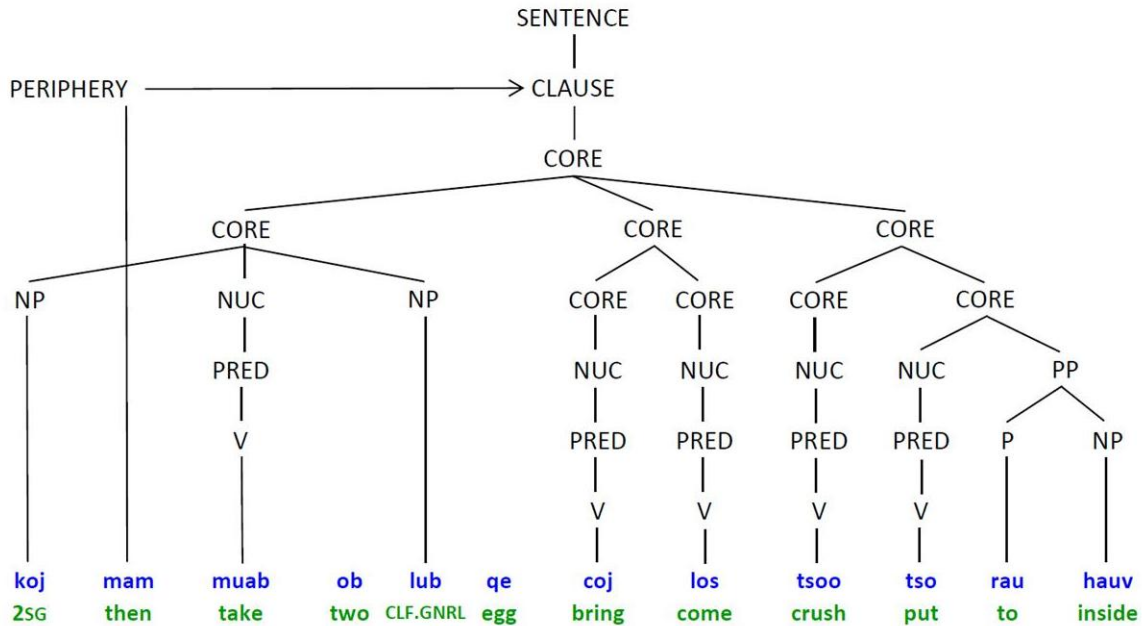


Figure 5. Sentence (57) with a disposal SVC

Example (57) also demonstrates recursive embedding in that there are two levels of core cosubordination. The fact that all the verbs share the two initial arguments demonstrates that the juncture occurs on the core level, and the fact that the verbs all share the modality of imperative demonstrates that the nexus is cosubordinate.

The fourth type of SVC is the Attainment SVC. It consists of only two verbs which share all arguments; and because no argument can intervene between V_1 and V_2 , it demonstrates nuclear juncture (Jarkey 2010:118-120) with a nexus of coordination (Jarkey 1991:239). (58), diagrammed in Figure 6, illustrates an Attainment SVC. The subject for both verbs *nrhiav* ‘look for’ and *tau* ‘obtain’ is *peb* ‘we’, and the object for both of these verbs is *peb lub hom phiaj* ‘our purpose’.

- (58) *Peb thiaj li nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj.*
 1PL then look.for obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose
 ‘Then we find our purpose.’

[Sermon:39]

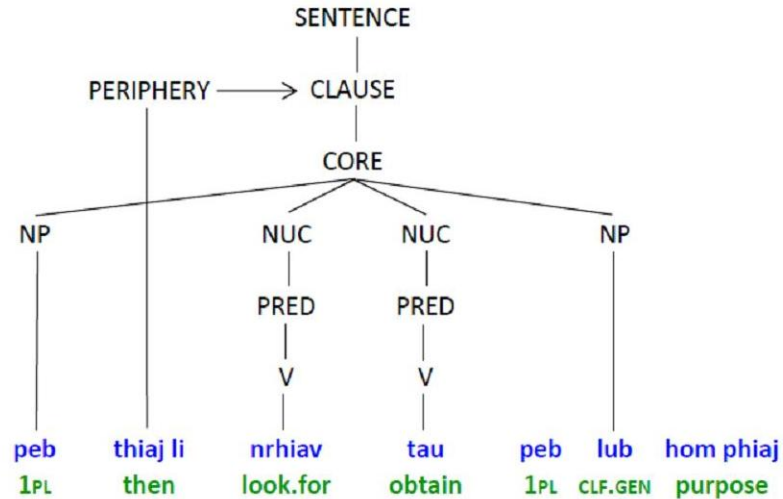


Figure 6. Sentence (58) with an attainment SVC

4.1.3 Conjoined and paired verbs

There is a construction that could be called a conjoined verb as opposed to a serial verb (discussed in §4.1.2) or even topic chaining (discussed in §5.5.4) because the verbs are closely linked by semantics and by an overt conjunction in a way that differs from serialization. In sentences where this construction occurs, there is such a close relationship between the verb phrases that there is not the sense of a sentence break as there is in topic chaining; the clauses continue the same thought. The verbs share all arguments. In (59), the verb *vam* ‘trust’ is linked by the coordinating conjunction *thiab* ‘and’ to the immediately following verb *cia siab* ‘depend on’. These verbs are closely linked semantically in that they are synonyms, and they also share both arguments: the subject *kuv* ‘I’ and the object, which is the complement clause beginning with *hais tias* ‘that’.

- (59) *Kuv vam thiab cia siab hais tias nej sawvdaws yuav koom nrog*
 1SG trust and depend.on COMP 2PL everyone POS.IRR do.together with
kuv thiab nrog kuv nyob es
 1SG and with 1SG dwell/be.located PLTNS
 ‘I hope and trust that everyone will join with me, and stay with me’ [Sermon:4.1]

While the verbs share both arguments, this construction nevertheless cannot be considered a serial verb construction (discussed in §4.1.2) for three reasons: the presence of

the coordinating conjunction; the fact that as synonyms, neither verb contributes significantly different semantic content to the verbal construction; and the lack of interleaving of the second argument and the verbs.

In (60), the two semantically similar verbs *hlub* ‘love’ and *tsom kwm* ‘focus care.for’ (the second verb is itself a serial verb construction) are joined by the coordinating conjunction *thiab*, and they share the object *kuv* ‘me’.

- (60) *kuv yeej niaj hnuv nco ntsoov tias muaj tus tswv hluv thiab*
 1SG ASP.HBTL every day remember COMP have CLF.ANMT lord love and
tsom kwm kuv txhua txhua hnuv,
 focus care.for 1SG each/all each/all day
 ‘every day I always remember well that the Lord loves and protects me each and every day,’ [Testimony:46.2]

Paired verbs are a construction in which two verbs occur in a symmetrical phrase that shares some characteristics with serial verb constructions but in other ways is distinct from them (Jarkey 1991:328-332). In (61), the verb phrase *muaj niam* ‘have mother’ is followed immediately with *muaj txiv* ‘have father’. Like serial verb constructions (discussed in §4.1.2), the verbs share at least one argument (the subject—*kuv* ‘I’) as well as the negative *tsis*; and the relative clause that follows describes the objects of both verbs, not merely the one it directly follows. Clearly these paired verbs behave as a unit, yet their structure differs from a serial verb construction in that the verbs may be identical (as in this case), and the argument that intervenes between the verbs is not a pivot.

- (61) *kuv tsis muaj niam muaj txiv los cob qhia kuv*
 1SG NEG have woman/mother have father/male come train teach 1SG
hais tias yuav ua li cas lub neej thiaj zoo.
 COMP POS.IRR make/do how?/why? CLF.GNRL life/estate then good/well
 ‘I didn’t have a mother [or] father to bring me up and teach me how to live right.’
 [Testimony:30.2]

4.2 Verbal TAM: A historical progression

As an isolating language, Hmong has a verb system that has been described as “very simple” (Mottin 1978:84). The simplicity, of course, is deceptive. Morphologically the

structure is indeed simple, but the syntax is rich and complex. This section discusses some of these syntactic facets: tense, aspect, and mood.

Hmong verbs are not marked for tense either by affixation or by tense markers in the sentence. Time in Hmong is communicated primarily by adverbs, noun phrases referencing time, and the larger context (Mottin 1978:84-85, Fuller 1988:20, Harriehausen 1990:52, Jarkey 1991:69-79, White 2014). There are a number of so-called auxiliaries that occur with the verb to add meaning of an aspectual type. Among Hmong scholars, there is a difference of opinion concerning their role, but the general trend over time has been to consider fewer of these words as indicators of tense and more as indicators of aspect or modality.

Mottin (1978:84) was the first to identify morphemes that relate to this topic in Hmong. He describes the “particles” listed in Table 3 as indicators of tense which “are often omitted.”

Table 3. Tense markers according to Mottin (1978)

Form	Meaning
<i>nyuam qhuav/nyuam qhuav no</i>	immediate past
<i>tau</i>	simple past
<i>lawm</i> (can combine with <i>tau</i>)	completed past
<i>yuav</i>	simple future
<i>yuav (tsis)... lawm</i>	near future or dependent future

Li (1991) argues, however, that rather than tense markers, several words on this list indicate aspect. He notes first that they are optional in nature: “It should be noted that most linguists who attribute a tense system to Hmong correctly observe that it is not necessary to indicate tense in Hmong, and therefore, an isolated verb can be understood as either a past tense verb or a present tense verb” (1991:26). He then proceeds to demonstrate that *tau* “does not indicate past tense” (1991:28) but rather is “an aspect marker indicating ‘attainment’” (1991:29) and “the potential mode” (1991:35), that *lawm* is a “completion aspect marker” (1991:37), and that an expression not identified by Mottin, *taabtom*, is a “progressive aspect marker” (1991:46) that is responsive to discourse con-

straints imposed on it. The aspect markers he identifies along with the perfective category to which they belong (1991:55) are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Aspect markers according to Li (1991)

Form	Meaning	Perfective category
<i>tau</i>	attainment	perfective
<i>lawm</i>	completion	perfective
<i>tab tom</i> ²	progressive	imperfective

Of all the “tense” markers previously suggested by Hmong scholars, Li allows only *yuav* as a true “tense marker,” but even this future indicator “is not obligatory in a sentence denoting an event occurring in the future” (1991:52). In §4.4, I present White’s (2014:80-85) analysis of *yuav*, which I believe is the most consistent with the data.

White (2014) provides insight into the words used to mark time and aspect. Table 5 presents some selected words from his work. I have glossed and analyzed the texts in the corpus according to his analysis except for *tau*, *lawm*, *tseem*, and *yeej* (discussed in §4.3).

Table 5. Non-spatial setting markers according to White (2014)

Position	Auxiliary or adverb	Gloss
Pre-modal	<i>mam (li)</i>	will
Pre-modal	<i>tab tom</i>	IMPF
Pre-modal	<i>tseem</i>	still
Pre-modal	<i>yeej</i>	already, certainly, can
Modal	<i>yuav</i>	POS.IRR
Modal	<i>yuav tau</i>	must, have to
Modal	<i>yuav tsum</i>	must, have to
Pre-main-verb	<i>tau</i>	ATTAINMENT, can
Pre-main-verb	<i>tsum</i>	can, have to
Pre-main-verb	<i>txhob</i>	NEG.IRR
Final	<i>lawm</i>	COMPLETION

² Li actually references the Green Hmong aspect marker *taabtom*. I have changed the spelling here to White Hmong for the sake of consistency.

4.3 Aspect

While Hmong does not mark tense, it has a number of aspect markers. This section explores markers of various kinds of imperfective, perfective, and perfect.

4.3.1 Perfect aspect marker *lawm*

The aspect marker *lawm* occurs at the end of the verb phrase and indicates perfect aspect (Jarkey 1991:77-78). It is very common, and it can combine with the pre-verbal perfective aspect marker *tau* (discussed in §4.3.2). Example (62) illustrates *lawm* used alone.

- (62) *Vim peb nrhiav yuam kev lawm.*
because 1PL look.for go.the.wrong.way PRF
'[It is] because we have searched in the wrong way.' [Sermon:29]

In (63), *lawm* combines with *tau* and the verb *tas* 'finish' to emphasize the finality of the situation involving the death of both parents.

- (63) *Ces nkawv ob leej tau tuag tas sim neej nyob*
SEQ 3DU two/second CLF.PRSN PFV die finish a.lifetime dwell/be.located
rau hauv lub zos Kiajmana lawm.
to/for inside CLF.GNRL village Kiamana PRF
'Then the two of them died forever in the village of Kiamana.' [Escape-TY:38]

4.3.2 Perfective aspect marker *tau*

The word *tau* has been the topic of much discussion, and opinions regarding its use vary greatly. All agree that *tau* is not simply one word but at least two: a semantic verb meaning 'obtain' and an auxiliary with a derivative grammaticalized function with a meaning that is still disputed. It is no wonder that its meaning is difficult to ascertain: not only does it indisputably have both a semantic and a grammatical form, the grammatical form seems to be able to appear in multiple places in a verb phrase, and it is capable of appearing in conjunction with other aspect markers and modal auxiliaries to form aspects and moods in complex layers. Additionally, it can be part of a number of serial verb

constructions whose surface structure is identical to the aspect marker/auxiliary + verb or verb + aspect marker/auxiliary structure already mentioned earlier in this section.

It does appear, however, that the cumulative effect of scholarly research has yielded a clearer understanding than the ideas that were first proposed. The earliest recorded analyses of the grammaticalized *tau* are of it as a tense marker, specifically marking past tense (Mottin 1978:84, Fuller 1986:20, Harriehausen 1990:53). Li (1991) provides greater clarity when he identifies it as an aspect marker, which he names ‘attainment’ because of the verb ‘obtain’ from which it derives. Jarkey (1991:73-77, 214-239) adopts his position (although glossing it as ‘perfective’) and expands upon it in her discussion of serial verbs. Based largely on her work, but also through my own analysis of the data, Table 6 lists the uses of *tau* as found in the corpus of texts.

Table 6. Uses of *tau*

Position in the verb phrase	Use
Main verb: to obtain/get	transitive verb
Preceding the main verb(s)	Perfective aspect
Preceding a complement clause (beginning with a verb)	Attainment of a desired activity or state
Verb ₂ in a serial verb construction	Compositional with the other verb(s) in the construction
Following the main verb	Ability

As a lexical transitive verb, *tau* means ‘obtain’ or a semantic extension of that, as in (64).

- (64) *Ces kuv txiv cia li tau ib tug mob tsis*
 SEQ 1SG father/male let like obtain INDF.ART CLF.ANMT sickness NEG
zoo.
 good/well
 ‘Then my father got a very bad sickness.’ [Escape-TY:13]

When it occurs before the main verb in the verb phrase, it indicates perfective aspect, that is, that “the event or state described by the verb is completed or realised, or will be completed or realised, at the time referred to” (Jarkey 1991:76). As a perfective aspect marker, *tau* differs from the perfect aspect marker *lawm* in that only *lawm* “[makes]

reference to whether [the event or state described by the verb] continues to have any further relevance at the time referred to” Jarkey (1991:77-78). Example (65) illustrates the perfective aspect marker *tau*.

- (65) *Nws tau tham txog Yesxus rau kuv.*
 3SG PFV talk about Jesus to/for 1SG
 ‘She talked to me about Jesus.’ [Testimony:13]

The perfective aspect marker *tau* could well be considered a prefix. In the one audio recording of the texts in the corpus that I have access to (Appendix B, “Ar Moua’s story”), it is phonologically reduced in that it is not stressed and the vowel is imprecise (syllable length, however, is difficult to determine because the language is syllable-timed as opposed to stressed-timed). Furthermore, it occurs only before verbs, and no other constituents ever intervene. The historical origin of the word and the fact that Hmong is classified as an isolating language and thus assumed to be incapable of possessing any affixes are the main reasons it is still currently considered a word in its own right rather than an affix. I do not know, however, of any linguistically sound argument for not considering it a prefix.³

The transitive verb *tau* ‘obtain’ can take a complement clause as its object. The complement clause has a subject co-referential with the matrix clause that is realized obligatorily as zero anaphora. The zero anaphoric subject results in the juxtaposition of the verb *tau* and the verb of the complement clause, so that the surface structure is identical to the construction of PRF + Verb and thus structurally ambiguous. The context, however, provides the semantic clues necessary for disambiguation. Example (66) demonstrates this use in which the verb *tau* ‘obtain’ is immediately followed by the verb *tuaj nyob* ‘come [to] be together’.

³ In personal communication with one of my language consultants, Pa Xiong, it seemed at one point that she indicated that there was potential for the perfective aspect marker *tau* to be used as the one word elliptical affirmative answer to a question in which it was used as an aspect marker, but further investigation did not give any solid answers but rather seemed to deny this possibility. If the perfective aspect marker *tau* can be used elliptically, it cannot be considered a prefix. The elliptical use of *tau*, however, does not occur at all in the corpus of texts, and since this thesis is limited to the textual analysis, no conclusions can be definitively drawn on the basis of this potential use.

- (66) *Kuv zoo siab hais tias hnuv no Neejteem wb tau tuaj*
 1SG good/well liver COMP day PX.SPKR Neejteem 1DU obtain come
nyob ua ke hauv kuv tsev no
 dwell/be.located together inside 1SG house PX.SPKR
 ‘I am happy that today Nathan [and I]—we get to meet together at my house here’
 [Escape-TY:3.1]

This sentence is structurally ambiguous with two legitimate translations: ‘I am happy that today Nathan [and I]—we *get to* meet together at my house here’, or ‘I am happy that today Nathan [and I]—we *have* met together at my house here’ [italics added to emphasize the contrast]. Without the matrix clause *kuv zoo siab* ‘I am happy’, there would be no way of disambiguating the verb sequence *tau tuaj nyob*. The matrix clause, however, clearly gives the idea of achieving a desired objective, and thus interpreting *tau* as the verb ‘obtain’ is preferred.

The lexical verb *tau* may form a serial verb construction with a verb having “some kind of goal” (Jarkey 2010:119), contributing semantic information as the second lexical verb. Jarkey (1991:214) calls this an Accomplishment serial verb construction, defining it as a serial verb construction in which the second verb in the series serves to describe the successful accomplishment or achievement of the goal of the action or event depicted by the first verb. In (67), *tau* obtain follows the verb *nrhiav* ‘seek’ to form a serial verb construction codependent on the nuclear level in which each verb contributes equally to the composite meaning: ‘find’. (For definitions and discussion of serial verbs and nuclear codependence, see §4.1.2.)

- (67) *Peb thiaj li nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj.*
 1PL then look.for obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose
 ‘Then we find our purpose.’ [Sermon:39]

The verb *tau* may follow the verb as a modal auxiliary indicating ability, possibility, or potential. This is to be distinguished from achieving a desired objective. White sees this meaning as essentially identical to the use of *tau* to mean ‘obtain’, as in (66), although he acknowledges a “nuance” of difference (2014:95-96). The nuance, however, is identifiable in that ‘obtain’ implies a desire whereas ‘able’ implies only ability without any desire or

effort. This use of *tau* is exemplified in (68), in which *tau* ‘able’ follows *rov qab* ‘return’ to state that the holders of the letter were allowed to return to a village forbidden to others.

- (68) *peb rov qab tau*
 1PL return able
 ‘[and] we could return,’ [Escape-K:32.2]

In (69), *tau* is used after two verbs, *pab* ‘help’, and *ua* ‘make/do’ to indicate that this teaching can help us to be able to live successfully.

- (69) *Tej zaum nws yeej pab tau yus kom yus ua tau*
 maybe 3SG ASP.HBTL help able INDF.PRON cause INDF.PRON make/do able
lub neej vas meej
 CLF.GNRL life/estate successful
 ‘Maybe it always helps one to be able to live the successful life’ [Sermon:77.1]

In (70) the negated form of *tau* follows the verb *hluv* ‘love’ to indicate the speaker’s inability to love God (according to the context) in a manner commensurate with his great love.

- (70) *Kuv hluv tsis tau Vajtswy.*
 1SG love NEG able God
 ‘I can’t love God.’ [Testimony:48]

4.3.3 Imperfective aspect markers: Reduplication, *tab tom*, *tseem*, and *yeej*

Aspect in Hmong is indicated primarily by aspect markers, but these are not the only means; aspectual information is also indicated by reduplication. Although the consensus is not entirely uniform, all agree that the aspect indicated roughly can be categorized as progressive or imperfective, and once again later scholarship tends to give a more precise explanation. According to Mottin, reduplication of the verb intensifies its meaning, as in (71), in which the verb *xav* ‘want’ is reduplicated (1978:110).

- (71) *Tiamsis mas kuv xav xav paub cov lus zoo*
 but TOP 1SG think/want think/want know CLF.GRP1 word good/well
 ‘But I really wanted to know the good words,’ [Testimony:33.1]

Jarkey sees reduplication as indicating “habitual and durative aspect” (1991:75), a perspective in concord with Harriehausen (1990:47), who gives three grammatical meanings for reduplication in Green Hmong: a repetitive action, an action in progress, and a habitual action. The corpus of texts does not exemplify all of these grammatical implications, but (72) contains an example of reduplication indicating a repetitive action.

- (72) *Ces ua ua rau.*
 SEQ make/do make/do to/for
 ‘Then he did this over an over.’ [Escape-TY:23]

Jarkey identifies several “adverbs” that occur before the verb and indicate the imperfective aspect: “*tab tom* (imperfective); *tseem* ‘still’; *pheej* ‘continually’; *sij* ‘repeatedly’; *yeej* ‘originally’ (habitual)” (1991:75). The corpus of texts includes three of these: *tab tom*, *tseem*, and *yeej*, each of which I discuss below.

Example (73) illustrates *tab tom*, which I have glossed as an imperfective aspect marker ‘IMPF’, since its behavior in the text corpus is consistent with an aspect marker.

- (73) *Lub sijhawm no yog lub sijhawm uas Nyab Laj*
 CLF.GNRL occasion PX.SPKR be CLF.GNRL occasion RLTVZR Vietnamese
tab tom nrhiav cov neeg uas ua thabham nrog rau Amikas
 IMPF look.for CLF.GRP1 person RLTVZR be soldier with to/for America
ntawd tua pov tseg.
 PX.EVNT kill throw.away
 ‘This time was a time when the Vietnamese were looking for people who served as soldiers with America there [in order to] kill them.’ [Escape-TY:49]

There are several aspect markers that have grammaticalized from adverbs or intensifiers in Hmong. Two of these words, *tseem* and *yeej*, exist in the texts in both their semantic and grammaticalized forms, a fact that has caused some confusion, as various analyses have attempted to categorize all the uses of the words into either one category or the other (Fuller 1988:20, Jarkey 1991:76, White 2014:52-55, 70-75).

The adverb *tseem* ‘still’ communicates the concept of time duration (as in 74), ‘despite contrary factors’ (as in 76) or ‘increasing in intensity’ (as in 75).

(74) *Es tseem ntsib txoj kev txomnyem li kuv no,*
 (hesitation) still meet CLF.ABST way destitute like 1SG PX.SPKR
 ‘I still meet the destitute here like I was,’ [Testimony:57.1]

(75) *Vajtswv tseem hluv kuv kawg nkaus.*
 God still love 1SG to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘God still loves me so much.’ [Testimony:51]

(76) *hais tias Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb tseem loj tshaj li qhov*
 COMP God CLF.GNRL purpose to/for 1PL still big CPTV like thing
peb xav yuav xav tau.
 1PL think/want intend think/want obtain
 ‘God’s purpose for us is still bigger than what we intend to acquire.’ [Sermon:120.2]

The aspect marker *tseem* has a meaning related to the adverb from which it derives, but it clearly marks the progressive aspect, as in (77) and (78), in which none of the adverbial meanings would fit. I have glossed it PROG.

(77) *thiab kuv tseem xav tau hauv kuv lub siab tias vuag*
 and 1SG PROG think/want obtain inside 1SG CLF.GNRL liver COMP wow
tej no es twb yog tej kev ua
 CLF.GRP2 PX.SPKR (hesitation) really/already be CLF.GRP2 way RLTVZR
kuv xav yuav xav tau los ntev lawm.
 1SG think/want intend think/want obtain come long PRF
 ‘and I was thinking in my heart that, Wow! this was what I had wanted for a long time.’ [Testimony:28.2]

(78) *Nyob rau tom teb tseem ua tsis tau tiav.*
 dwell/be.located to/for MD land PROG make/do NEG PFV finish
 ‘We stayed at that field doing wasn’t done yet.’ [Escape-TY:32]

The intensifier *yeej* indicates certainty. I have glossed it as an intensifier of truthfulness, ‘INT.TRTH’ (79).

(79) *tiamsis kuv ntseeg thiab cia siab tias Vajtswv yeej hluv kuv*
 but 1SG believe and depend.on COMP God INT.TRTH love 1SG
kawg nkaus li.
 to.the.greatest.degree like
 ‘but I believe and trust that God truly loves me supremely.’ [Testimony:42.2]

The aspect marker *yeej* ‘ASP.HBTL’ has a meaning related to the adverb ‘originally’ from which it derives, but it clearly marks the habitual imperfective as in (80)–(82).

- (80) *kuv yeej niaj hnuv nco ntsoov tias muaj tus tswv hluv thiab*
 1SG ASP.HBTL every day remember COMP have CLF.ANMT lord love and
tsom kwm kuv txhua txhua hnuv,
 focus care.for 1SG each/all each/all day
 ‘every day I always remember well that the Lord loves and protects me each and
 every day,’ [Testimony:46.2]
- (81) *Vajtswv txoj kev hluv yeej tsis suav nuj tsis suav nqi rau*
 God CLF.ABST way love ASP.HBTL NEG count debt NEG count debt to/for
peb ib zaug li.
 1PL once like
 ‘God’s way of love never once expects us to pay our debt.’ [Testimony:60]
- (82) *cais kuv qhia rau nej hais tias peb yeej nrhiav tsis tau*
 then 1SG teach to/for 2PL COMP 1PL ASP.HBTL look.for NEG obtain
ib zaug hlo li.
 once INT.at.all
 ‘then I tell you that we will constantly search but never find anything at all.’ [Ser-
 mon:35.2]

4.4 Mood

Auxiliaries mark mood in Hmong. Modality markers cannot be negated by the negative *tsis* (White 2014:82-83). Harriehausen identifies *yuav* and *maam* as future markers in Green Hmong (1990:55). White’s (2014:80-88) analysis is similar, but he specifically demonstrates that *yuav* is not truly a future tense marker. Rather it is an irrealis marker (a mood that includes, but is not limited to, future). I gloss *yuav* as ‘POS.IRR’, ‘positive irrealis’, according to White’s analysis and in contrast to negative irrealis (marked by *txhob* and discussed under imperatives below). In the texts in this corpus, positive irrealis refers to things that are uncertain, things that could be, and things that should be. The modality marker *yuav* is exemplified in (83).

- (83) *Hnub no kuv yuav los hais kuv cov lus ua Vajtswv*
 day PX.SPKR 1SG POS.IRR come say 1SG CLF.GRP1 word RLTVZR God
tau pab kuv yav tag dhau los lawm.
 PFV help 1SG time.period finish past come PRF
 ‘Today I will tell my story of how God helped me in the past.’ [Testimony:1]
- (84) *yam twg yog yam uas peb yuav tsum tsis txhob ua*
 type which be type RLTVZR 1PL must NEG NEG.IRR make/do
 ‘which type is the type we must not do,’ [Sermon:106.3]

In addition to the modal auxiliary *yuav*, the adverb *mam (li)* may be used to indicate obligation, permission, or future time (White 2014:60-65).⁴ *Mam li* is exemplified as indicating obligation in (85).

- (85) *Ces koj mam li muab do rau kom zoo zoo tibsi*
 SEQ 2SG will/need take stir to/for cause good/well good/well altogether
tas.
 finish
 ‘Then you need to stir it all so that it is mixed really well.’ [Eggs:15]

Mam li is exemplified as indicating future time in (86).

- (86) *Es peb mam li rov sib ntsib dua nawb mog*
 (hesitation) 1PL will/need return RECP meet more TAG1
 ‘So we will come back to meet with each other again—right?’ [Sermon:129.1]

An imperative sentence is identical in structure to a second person indicative sentence. The subject is optionally omitted, and this option is frequently employed. Given the fact that the subject of an indicative mood sentence that can be understood from context is often omitted, this feature of the imperative does not differ from the indicative in its surface form (Jarkey 1991:66). Example (87) contains a sampling of a string of clauses that structurally could be interpreted either as imperative or as indicative. I believe the better interpretation in this context is that they are imperatives for three reasons: Ar’s intuition, the use of second person rather than either first person or the non-referential

⁴ For an explanation of why *mam (li)* is considered an adverb rather than a modal auxiliary, see White (2014:60-65). I suspect that like *tseem* and *yeej*, it may actually be both, but there are not enough data in the corpus of texts to test or prove this hypothesis.

pronoun *yus*, the fact that *yog* ‘if’ clauses are not followed by irrealis *yuav* but rather by this form. It is interesting to note, in light of the option to omit the subject, that the subject pronoun *koj* ‘you’ is repeated in each clause.

- (87) a. *Thawj koj muab dos coj los hlais kom mos mos tas.*
 the.first.thing 2SG take onion bring/take come slice cause fine fine finish
 ‘First you take some onion; slice it, making [the slices] very, very thin [pieces].’
 [Eggs:6]
- b. *Ces yog koj hos nyiam qhiav nrog thiab no*
 SEQ if 2SG also like ginger with and PX.SPKR
 ‘And then if you like ginger with this too,’ [Eggs:7.1]
- c. *koj muab ib qho me me qhiav los tsoo kom mos mos,*
 2SG take INDF.ART thing small small ginger come crush cause fine fine
 ‘you get a little bit of ginger and crush it so that it is very fine,’ [Eggs:7.2]
- d. *andkoj muab tsos cia.*
 2SG take put let
 ‘and then you put it aside.’ [Eggs:7.3]

An imperative sentence may also have a first person plural subject, as in (88).

- (88) *Peb mus nyeem ua ke seb Vajtswv txoj lus hais li cas rau peb*
 1PL go read together NSPC God word say how?/why? to/for 1PL
es.
 PLTNS
 ‘Let us read together what God’s Word says to us.’ [Sermon:8]

Imperative sentences optionally have “an illocutionary particle such as *nawb*, *mas*, *es*, or *os*, the effect of which is to give the imperative utterance the force of an invitation or suggestion rather than a command” (Jarkey 1991:66). The texts included in the corpus illustrate *nawb* and *es* in this role, but not exclusively as Jarkey describes it. In addition to co-occurring with imperative sentences to soften them, they co-occur with statements or questions to convey the idea of suggestion or obligation.

In (89), the speaker identifies himself with his audience and calls them to action along with himself as an invitation rather than a direct command. The word *es* appears twice, once at the end of each clause. The first clause is not otherwise imperative, but the inclusion of *es* gives this force.

- (89) a. *Kuv vam thiab cia siab hais tias nej sawvdaws yuav koom nrog*
 1SG trust and depend.on COMP 2PL everyone POS.IRR do.together with
kuv thiab nrog kuv nyob es
 1SG and with 1SG dwell/be.located PLTNS
 ‘I hope and trust that everyone will join with me, and stay with me’ [Sermon:4.1]
- b. *peb sib cog kawm Vajtswv txoj lus— seb Vajtswv txoj lus hais*
 1PL RECP bring/take learn God word NSPC God word say
li cas rau peb es.
 how?/why? to/for 1PL PLTNS
 ‘[as] we take God’s Word and learn from each other—whatever God’s Word tells us.’ [Sermon:4.2]

Example (90) uses *nawb* to change a statement of potential into a suggestion.

- (90) *Peb mam li ho pib kawm ua ke mus nawb yom.*
 1PL will/need so start learn together go IMP TAG2
 ‘We’ll start to learn together—okay?’ [Sermon:9]

While positive irrealis is indicated by *yuav*, negative irrealis is indicated by *txhob*, which I gloss as ‘NEG.IRR’, ‘negative irrealis’. Negative irrealis indicates things that could not be, should not be, or are desired not to be (White 2014:101-102).

A negative imperative uses the word *txhob* optionally preceded by the negative *tsis* “with little difference in meaning” (Jarkey 1991:66-67). It may be used in a direct command, as in (91).

- (91) *Peb tsis txhob mus nrhiav ntawm neeg lub tswvyim.*
 1PL NEG NEG.IRR go look.for PX.EVNT person CLF.GNRL wisdom
 ‘Let’s not go searching for man’s wisdom here.’ [Sermon:111]

The negative imperative may also be used in an indirect volitional expression as in (92), in which the speaker expresses his desire to keep his listeners from a certain behavior. This is a negative imperative embedded as a complement.

- (92) *Yog li kuv xav kom koj thiab kuv peb txhob niaj hnuv mus*
 be like 1SG think/want cause 2SG and 1SG 1PL NEG.IRR every day go
nrhiav peb lub neej nyob rau ntawm peb
 look.for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT 1PL
tus kheej lawm lossis peb lub hom phiaj rau ntawm peb tus kheej,
 REFL PRF or 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose to/for PX.EVNT 1PL REFL
 ‘And so I want to keep us from looking for our lives in ourselves or our purpose in
 ourselves every day,’ [Sermon:124.1]

Example (93) uses *txhob* to refer to what should not be. In this example the relative clause is a negative imperative.

- (93) *yam twg yog yam uas peb yuav tsum tsis txhob ua*
 type which be type RLTVZR 1PL must NEG NEG.IRR make/do
 ‘which type is the type we must not do,’ [Sermon:106.3]

4.5 Negation

Negation of a verb phrase is not discussed much in the literature; I include here only the most basic observations. According to Fuller (1988:27), negation of a verb phrase is accomplished by inserting the negative *tsis* before “the highest verb, from the point of view of constituent structure.” The wording of this principle reflects the older interpretation of the aspect markers in Hmong. I propose that the negative occurs to the left of the aspect verb complex over which it has scope.

Example (94) illustrates a negated simple verb, with *tsis* immediately preceding the verb *paub* ‘know’.

- (94) *Kuv kuj tsis paub tias Yesxus txoj kev hluv.*
 1SG also NEG know COMP Jesus CLF.ABST way love
 ‘I also didn’t know about Jesus’ love.’ [Testimony:14]

Example (95) illustrates a verb marked for aspect, with *tsis* immediately preceding the perfective aspect marker *tau*.

- (95) *Thaum kuv tsis tau paub Vajtswv,*
 the.time.when 1SG NEG PFV know God
 ‘When I didn’t yet know the Lord,’ [Testimony:2.1]

Negation can occur on the nuclear or core level but not the clause level (Van Valin 2005:12). If *tsis* occurs before a nuclear or core serial verb construction, it negates the entire construction.

Example (96) illustrates a cotemporal motion serial verb construction involving core cosubordination in which the entirety of the verb is negated by preceding the perfective aspect marker *tau* with *tsis*.

- (96) *Zoo li tsis tawm khiav li.*
 like NEG come.out run like
 ‘It was like nothing ran out.’ [Testimony:23]

Example (97) illustrates a conjoined pair of verb phrases, *muaj naim* ‘have mother’ and *muaj txiv* ‘have father’, jointly negated by *tsis*, which precedes the first verb phrase.

- (97) *kuv tsis muaj niam muaj txiv los cob qhia kuv*
 1SG NEG have woman/mother have father/male come train teach 1SG
hais tias yuav ua li cas lub neej thiaj zoo.
 COMP POS.IRR make/do how?/why? CLF.GNRL life/estate then good/well
 ‘I didn’t have a mother [or] father to bring me up and teach me how to live right.’
 [Testimony:30.2]

If *tsis* occurs between two of the juncts in a serial verb construction, it will negate only the junct to its right. A nexus of cosubordination requires the verbs to share all operators, including negatives, and thus a serial verb construction involving cosubordination cannot have a negative between its juncts. (See Jarkey 1991:149, Jarkey 2010:118-119).

Example (98) illustrates an attainment serial verb construction involving nuclear coordination in which only the second verb is negated; in this example, the first verb, *nrhiav* ‘seek’, is unmarked, and the second verb, *tau* ‘obtain’ is negated.

- (98) *peb nrhiav tsis tau thiab tsis paub txog li.*
 1PL look.for NEG obtain and NEG know arrive.at like
 ‘[that] we search for and don’t find and don’t arrive at knowledge [of]?’ [Sermon:27.3]

Negatives do not precede modality markers of realis. In (99), *tsis* comes after *yuav*, the marker for positive irrealis. This fact is consistent with the claim that the modality marker *yuav* operates at the clause level, not the core level.⁵

- (99) *cais peb yuav tsis paub hlub thiab txuag ib puas tsav yam*
 then 1PL POS.IRR NEG know love and care.for one/first hundred kind type
uas tshwm sim nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb
 RLTVZR be.born/appear dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth
no.
 PX.SPKR
 ‘then we will not know [how] to love and take care of all the things which appear
 here on earth.’ [Sermon:18.2]

There is a separate marker for negative irrealis, *txhob*; and if the mood is to be negated, this is the auxiliary to use, as in (100).

- (100) *Txhob mus lob yam ub yam no yam pev yam nray los*
 NEG.IRR go grab type DT type PX.SPKR type MD.up type MD.down come
rau peb tus kheej.
 to/for 1PL REFL
 ‘Let’s not go grabbing this and that and here and there for ourselves.’ [Sermon:97]

The negative irrealis marker *txhob* may be used in conjunction with *tsis*, as in (101).

- (101) *Peb tsis txhob mus nrhiav ntawm neeg lub tswvyim.*
 1PL NEG NEG.IRR go look.for PX.EVT person CLF.GNRL wisdom
 ‘Let’s not go searching for man’s wisdom here.’ [Sermon:111]

4.6 Reciprocal and reflexive constructions

The word *sib* before the verb marks reciprocity in which the individual members of a plural Actor subject perform the action of the verb to, for, or with each other (Jarkey 1991:49-50). The reciprocal marker *sib* is exemplified in (102), in which the two speakers converse with each other.

⁵ The optional nature of the co-occurrence of *tsis* and *txhob* is proposed but not explained by White (2014:101-106). He does state that *txhob* can be used in contexts in which *tsis* could not be used alone. There is no explanation beyond this statement.

(102) *thiab wb yuav sib tham mentsis txog kev ua noj.*
 and 1DU POS.IRR RECP talk a.little.bit about way make/do eat
 ‘and we will talk with each other a little bit about cooking.’ [Eggs:3.2]

I propose that a reflexive expression consists of a personal pronoun followed by *tus kheej*, as shown in (103) and (104).

(103) *Ces nws ho rov muab phom tua nws tus kheej.*
 SEQ 3SG so return take gun kill 3SG REFL
 ‘Then he turned the gun [on himself] and killed himself.’ [Escape-TY:37]

(104) *Peb nug peb tus kheej li no*
 1PL ask 1PL REFL like PX.SPKR
 ‘We ask ourselves [questions] like this.’ [Sermon:32.1]

This conclusion is obvious from the texts, but Harriehausen (1990:124) identifies a different structure in Green Hmong, while neither Mottin (1978), Jarkey (1991), Xiong & Cohen (2005) nor White (2014) discuss the reflexive at all. Xiong (2005) defines *kheej* as ‘himself’ or ‘herself’ but does not further comment on its grammatical role or on whether it can be used for anything besides third person singular. Thus I propose this construction as a new conclusion.

4.7 Conclusions

Following is a succinct restatement of the novel analyses I propose in §4.

4.7.1 *Tau*

The word *tau* is exemplary of the confusion caused by the syntactic complexity of the verb phrase. Building on the literature and analyzing the body of texts available to me, I present an explanation that is consistent both with the cumulative scholarship and with the data. No one argues about the meaning of the simple transitive verb *tau* as ‘obtain’, yet there have been conflicting opinions regarding its meaning and function when it is used along with another verb. In §4.2, I demonstrate that before a verb *tau* has two functions. First it can be a perfective aspect marker. Second, it can be a transitive verb that has a

complement clause beginning with a verb. After a verb, *tau* can also have two meanings. First it can be the modal marker ‘able’. Second, it can be the second verb of a serial verb construction indicating the accomplishment of a desired goal. The combination of structural and lexical ambiguity has caused the general confusion, and my analysis helps to differentiate between the meanings that have been occasionally confused.

4.7.2 *Tseem and yeej*

The adverb *tseem* and the intensifier *yeej*, while still functioning fully as adverbs, have also grammaticalized into the progressive and habitual imperfective aspect markers, respectively. Previous analyses attempted to categorize all the uses of these words as either adverbs or aspect markers, but never both.

4.7.3 *Es*

I suggest that the word *es*, already recognized as elements of politeness to soften an imperative, has another use that has not been previously identified: when it occurs in a sentence that does not express imperative mood, *es* imparts the idea of obligation or suggestion.

4.7.4 *Conjoined verbs*

I propose a verb construction, conjoined verbs, that is syntactically distinct from serial verbs and displays its own unique form. This construction is composed of two synonymous verbs sharing all arguments and joined by the coordinating conjunction *thiab*.

4.7.5 *Serial verb constructions*

The discussion of serial verb constructions (SVCs) is a summary of Jarkey (2010). Serial verb constructions in White Hmong occur at the nuclear or core level, and they involve cosubordination and coordination. They may embed recursively. Cotemporal SVCs involve core cosubordination and may be verbs of motion or activity. Cotemporal SVCs of motion may contain up to six verbs in a specified order according to their semantic content and role. Pivotal SVCs involve core cosubordination and share an argument that

is the object of V_1 and the subject of V_2 . Disposal SVCs involve core cosubordination and contain two verbs, the first of which speaks of an action that greatly affects the Undergoer, and the second of which identifies the manner in which the Undergoer is disposed of. Attainment SVCs involve nuclear coordination and contain a V_1 that implies an objective followed by a V_2 that identifies the attainment of the objective.

4.7.6 Negation

The negative *tsis* precedes the verb it negates. This will be the verb itself, if it has no auxiliaries, or the outermost auxiliary that is part of the core. In a serial verb construction, *tsis* will precede the first verb of a construction involving nuclear cosubordination. In all other forms of nexus and juncture, it will precede whichever verb in the series is specifically negated. The modal verbs of irrealis have positive and negative forms and thus do not use an external form of negation such as *tsis*. While the complexities of the verb structure in Hmong perhaps necessitate more thorough treatment than these few principles, this thesis at least provides the beginning of a description of negation and is certainly more comprehensive than those found in the extant literature.

4.7.7 Reciprocal and reflexive constructions

The word *sib* before the verb marks reciprocity in which the individual members of a plural Actor subject perform the action of the verb to, for, or with each other (Jarkey 1991:49-50). A reflexive expression consists of a personal pronoun followed by *tus kheej*. The proposal of the reflexive construction is a contribution this thesis makes to the literature.

CHAPTER 5

Other parts of speech

Word classes in Hmong have proven to be problematic for nearly anyone who has tried to analyze them. Mottin (1978:i, 72) is the first to acknowledge the difficulty, stating that the terminology to describe French grammar does not work very well for Hmong. He goes on to say that adjectives are more correctly referred to as adjective-verbs, prepositions are more correctly referred to as verb-prepositions, and he admits difficulty with categorizing demonstratives because of their ability to participate in functions of other parts of speech. Harriehausen (1990:51) proposes two major word classes for Green Hmong. The first major word class is “substantive,” including the subclasses of nouns and pronouns. The second major word class is “predicator,” including the subclasses of verbs, auxiliaries, and adjectives. She puts prepositions and “particles” in their own class outside of these two major classes. Jarkey (1991) generally follows generally accepted word classes, although she avoids the traditional terms of “demonstrative” (1991:41-44), a word class which participates in multiple grammatical roles, and “adjective” (1991:32-33), citing the lack of need to differentiate between adjectives and verbs (1991:47). There is much in the way the sentence constituents in the corpus of texts behave that make any number of non-standard approaches appealing. Such approaches, however, introduce a level of complexity into the overall analysis that is unnecessary for most ordinary uses where a categorization of parts of speech according to generally accepted standards works quite cleanly. In the following sections, therefore, I present word classes according to generally accepted principles.

5.1 The indefinite article

When a single participant is introduced into the discourse, it is introduced with the indefinite article *ib*, a word homophonous with and grammaticalized from the number

‘one’. Bisang (1993:25) comments on the introduction of discourse participants with the number ‘one’, but he stops short of calling it an article. Nevertheless, the role he describes is that of an indefinite article: introducing into the discourse a new participant which comes to a standing of definiteness thereafter. Examples (105) and (106) demonstrates this use. In (105), the participant, *ib tug niam tsev* ‘a housewife’ is introduced into the discourse for the first time.

- (105) *vim muaj ib tug niam tsev nyob*
 because have INDF.ART CLF.ANMT woman/mother house dwell/be.located
ntawv kuv ib sab.
 PX.EVNT 1SG INDF.ART side
 ‘because there was a housewife in the house right next door to me.’ [Testimony:6.2]

For the next several sentences this ‘housewife’ remains activated in the discourse. When this referent is next referred to with a full noun phrase *tus niam tsev ntawv* ‘this housewife’, in (106), the indefinite article *ib* is not used; rather the demonstrative adjective *ntawv* ‘proximal to the event’, is.

- (106) *Tom qab ib lub vij kuv kuj tau hu rov qab rau tus*
 afterward/behind one/first week 1SG also PFV call return to/for CLF.ANMT
niam tsev ntawv tias kuv yuav rov qab mus ntsib mus
 woman/mother house PX.EVNT COMP 1SG intend return go meet go
koom lub tshawj dua thiab.
 do.together CLF.GNRL church more and
 ‘One week later I called this housewife back [to say] that I intended to go meet her to return to church again.’ [Testimony:25]

In (107), the narrator introduces his dad’s sickness into the narrative for the first time. He does so with the indefinite article *ib*.

- (107) *Ces kuv txiv cia li tau ib tug mob tsis*
 SEQ 1SG father/male let like obtain INDF.ART CLF.ANMT sickness NEG
zoo.
 good/well
 ‘Then my father got a very bad sickness.’ [Escape-TY:13]

In the very next sentence, (108), he refers to the sickness without the indefinite article: *tus mob ntawv* ‘this sickness’.

- (108) *Tus mob ntawv ua rau kuv txiv pom wb pom no*
 CLF.ANMT sickness PX.EVNT make/do to/for 1SG father/male see.things
tua kuv txiv.
 kill 1SG father/male
 ‘The sickness here made my father see things that were [trying to] kill him.’ [Escape-TY:14]

Bisang’s (1993:25-26) accounting of *ib* in introducing participants as the number ‘one’ rather than as an indefinite article is representative of the prevailing perspective in the literature on Hmong (see, for instance, the glosses in Fuller 1988:19, Jarkey 1991:33, and White 2014:148). In light of the prevailing perspective, it is legitimate to question whether *ib* is truly an indefinite article and not merely a number. There are several factors that support the analysis of an indefinite article over a number. The first is simply the obvious fact that by introducing a new participant into the narrative, *ib* performs the role of an indefinite article. The second is that the word *ib* is used far more times in the texts than any other number. There are ninety-four tokens of *ib* in the texts; for the other numerals under ten, the number of tokens is far smaller, as Table 7 displays. The high rate of use of this word suggests that it is somehow different from other numbers.

Table 7. Tokens of the numerals one through nine

Number	Gloss	Number of tokens in the texts
<i>ib</i>	one	94
<i>ob</i>	two	20
<i>peb</i>	three	11
<i>plaub</i>	four	10
<i>tsib</i>	five	10
<i>rau</i>	six	12
<i>xya</i>	seven	9
<i>yim</i>	eight	2
<i>cuaj</i>	nine	6

The third factor is that other numbers are repeated when the noun phrase is repeated, but the indefinite article is not. As discussed above, (105)–(108) demonstrate the lack of repeating the word *ib*. Example (109a) states the noun phrase *ob tug kwv* ‘two younger brothers’ for the first time, and (109c) repeats the full noun phrase including the numeral *ob* ‘two’. Once again, the lack of repetition of *ib* in contrast to the repetition of other numbers suggests that *ib* is somehow different from other numbers.

- (109) a. *Ces thaum ntawd lub xyoo tom qab thiaj hnov*
 SEQ the.time.when PX.EVNT CLF.GNRL year afterward/behind then hear
hais tias kuv niam thiab ob tug
 COMP 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv tuaj txog rau Nong Khai.
 younger.brother come arrive.at to/for Nong Khai
 ‘Then, after one year we heard that my mother and two younger brothers came
 to Nong-Khai.’ [Escape-K:85]
- b. *Ces thaum peb twb los txog rau Vinai lawm*
 SEQ the.time.when 1PL really/already come arrive.at to/for Vinai PRF
 ‘Then when we had already arrived at [Ban] Vinai’ [Escape-K:86.1]
- c. *peb mam li mus take kuv niam thiab ob tug*
 1PL will/need go 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv los nrog peb nyob.
 younger.brother come with 1PL dwell/be.located
 ‘we went to take my mother and two younger brothers to come live with us.’
 [Escape-K:86.2]

The fourth argument is that there are cases where the interpretation of *ib* as the number one would result in a strange meaning for the phrase or sentence under consideration. In (110), the interpretation of *vim rau qhov tias kuv yog ib tug menyuam ntsuag* as ‘because I was one orphan’ is unnatural; there is nothing about the singleness of the orphan that is noteworthy. Interpreting the clause to mean ‘because I was an orphan’ is a much more natural rendering.

- (110) *Vim rau qhov tias kuv yog ib tug menyuam ntsuag,*
 because to/for thing COMP 1SG be INDF.ART CLF.ANMT child orphan
 ‘Because I was an orphan,’ [Testimony:30.1]

Thus the discourse role that *ib* performs, the high frequency of use of *ib*, its lack of repetition when the noun phrase it is in is repeated, and the semantic problems introduced when *ib* is consistently translated as ‘one’ all suggest that *ib* really is two words: the number ‘one’ and the indefinite article.

5.2 The classifier

Most commonly a noun phrase with a noun also includes a classifier. Classifiers play a major role in Hmong grammar. According to Bisang (1993:4), of the four operations classifiers may perform in a language, Hmong classifiers perform three: “classification, individualization and relationalization.” Classifiers are not a homogeneous group of words; rather they can be divided into categories according to a number of different parameters.

5.2.1 Types of classifiers

There are two major categories of classifiers: group classifiers and individual classifiers; and individual classifiers have two subgroups depending on whether they accompany nouns with tangible or intangible referents.¹ The individual classifiers that accompany nouns with tangible referents have features that must match the features of the nouns they accompany. Many of these features have to do with the animacy, physical properties, or function of the referent of the noun (Jaisser 1987, Sakuragi 2013). There is no single exhaustive list of classifiers available; there is a measure of variability from one list to another. In Table 8, I list the most common classifiers according to Bisang (1993:31-34) along with all the classifiers used in the texts in the corpus. I give the abbreviations I use for each classifier in these texts.² The features defined are adapted from Heimbach (1980), Jaisser (1987), and Bisang (1993:31-35).

¹ While it is easy to find sources to differentiate the singular classifiers, it is hard to find any that differentiate the group classifiers, particularly the two most common, *cov* and *tej*. Heimbach (1980), Mottin (1978), and even Bisang (1993) do not discuss this. These two classifiers can accompany the same nouns, so it is not a feature of the noun that differentiates their usage. What does differentiate their usage is a feature I have not yet been able to identify. This question deserves further research.

² I do not list classifiers of doubtful standing that occur in the texts. I have glossed these as classifiers but noted their unverifiability in the notes in my texts.

Table 8. Common classifiers

Classifier	Abbreviation	Feature
<i>cov</i>	GRP1	groups or mass quantities
<i>tej</i>	GRP2	groups or mass quantities, classes
<i>daim</i>	SHT	sheets; flat, leaf-like or plate-like things
<i>leej</i>	PRSN	persons
<i>lub</i>	GNRL	general: bulky or round objects; abstract concepts
<i>phau</i>	STCK	stacks of thing
<i>pab</i>	[not used in the corpus]	flocks, groups
<i>phiaj</i>	[not used in the corpus]	sets
<i>rab</i>	TL	tools, implements, weapons
<i>thaj</i>	SPRT	spirits
<i>tsab</i>	[not used in the corpus]	written messages
<i>tsev</i>	HSHD	household members
<i>tus</i>	ANMT	animate beings; long, slender things
<i>txhais</i>	[not used in the corpus]	one of a pair of objects occurring together
<i>txoj</i>	LNGTH	series of words; things that come in lengths; some abstract concepts

5.2.2 Syntactic use of classifiers

Bisang, building on ideas presented by T'sou (1976), sets up a two-dimensional continuum of the intersection of the features [\pm exact] and [\pm entity]. He then identifies the classifier system of Hmong as having the features [+ exact] and [+ entity]; that is, a noun phrase that uses a classifier is “exact” in that it can be quantified exactly and is fully referential, having a specific entity it refers to. Example (111) speaks first of non-referential chickens (111a); chickens are necessary for performing this test, but no specific chickens are in mind, and so the chickens are [-entity]; therefore no classifier is used. In (111c), two specific chickens are used for this test, and now the chickens are not only [+ exact], they are also [+ entity], and so a classifier (*tug*) is used.

- (111) a. *Kuv txiv thiaj li muab qaib los tua xeem*
 1SG father/male then take chicken come kill test
 ‘My father then performed a chicken-killing test’ [Escape-K:16.1]
- b. *hais tias ua yuav nyob zoo dua los mus*
 COMP make/do POS.IRR dwell/be.located good/well more or go
zoo dua.
 good/well more
 ‘to find out whether to stay or go would be better.’ [Escape-K:16.2]
- c. *Ces muab ob tug qaib los xeem tas.*
 SEQ take two/second CLF.ANMT chicken come test finish
 ‘So he performed the test on two chickens.’ [Escape-K:17]

Since classifiers are specifically [+ exact], they cannot be used with mass or non-count nouns unless these are some way individualized so that they can be quantified. One way is to use a group classifier. In (112), an unspecified number of onions is sliced very fine. The onion is thus [-exact], and so no classifier is used.

- (112) *Thawj koj muab dos koj los hlais kom mos mos tas.*
 the.first.thing 2SG take onion bring/take come slice cause fine fine finish
 ‘First you take some onion; slice it, making [the slices] very, very thin [pieces].’
 [Eggs:6]

Later on, in (113), the mass of sliced onion is referred to. It is now an exact quantity, and thus as [+ exact], [+ entity], it takes a classifier.

(113) *Ces koj muab cov dos uas koj tsuav ntawd,*
 SEQ 2SG take CLF.GRP1 onion RLTVZR 2SG chop PX.EVNT
 ‘Then you take the onions that you chopped,’ [Eggs:14.1]

Jaisser (1987:176) gives insight into what elements in the context give the feature [+entity]. She identifies five elements in noun phrases any of which, if present, make the classifier obligatory, unless the referent is topical (discussion on this point follows).

1. Definiteness
2. Numerals
3. Quantifiers
4. Possessives
5. Demonstratives

Accordingly, in examples (114) and (115), the noun phrases that contain numerals also contain classifiers. Example (114) contains the numeral *ob* ‘two’ and the classifier *tug* in the noun phrase *ob tug qaib* ‘two chickens’.

(114) *Ces muab ob tug qaib los xeem tas.*
 SEQ take two/second CLF.ANMT chicken come test finish
 ‘So he performed the test on two chickens.’ [Escape-K:17]

Example (115) contains the numeral *peb* ‘three’ and the classifier *lub* in the noun phrase *peb lub ntsiab lus* ‘three meanings’.

(115) *Nyob rau nqi vaj lub kub no nws muaj peb*
 dwell/be.located to/for verse Bible PX.SPKR 3SG have three/third
lub ntsiab lus qhia peb.
 CLF.GNRL essence word teach 1PL
 ‘In this Bible verse, it has three meanings to teach us.’ [Sermon:116]

The noun phrase *peb daim ntawv* ‘our letter’ in (116) contains a possessive *peb* ‘our’ and also a classifier *daim*.

- (116) *Peb muab peb daim ntawv rau luag saib.*
 1PL take 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing to/for others/3PL look.at
 ‘We took our letter to them to look at.’ [Escape-K:39]

The noun phrase *lub tebchaws tid* ‘that land’ in (117) contains a demonstrative *tid* ‘medial opposite’ and also a classifier *lub*.

- (117) *Ces peb thiaj li txiav txim siab hais tias nyob rau lub*
 SEQ 1PL then make.decision COMP dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL
tebchaws tid txognyem
 country MD.OPST destitute
 ‘Then consequently we agreed that living in that land is extremely difficult,’ [Escape-TY:63.1]

There are exceptions to the rule that nouns with the above elements require classifiers. In the corpus of texts, references to lengths of time do not take a classifier even when modified by a quantifying number. See *peb hnuv* ‘three days’ in (118) and *ob xyoo* ‘two years’ in (119).

- (118) *Kuv tau peb hnuv tom qab xav hais tias yog tsis*
 1SG DUR three/third day afterward/behind think/want COMP if NEG
khiav
 run
 ‘After three days I thought if I didn’t escape,’ [Escape-K:11.1]

- (119) *Peb los nyob hauv tau li ob xyoo ntau.*
 1PL come dwell/be.located inside DUR like two/second year many/much
 ‘We stayed there for something more than two years.’ [Escape-TY:10]

Another exception is that if the participant in the narrative is already established in the discourse, and if it has been referenced recently enough to be topical, the classifier may be omitted (Bisang 1996:542). Example (120) demonstrates this with the word *ntawv*, ‘letter’. It has been used six times in the immediately preceding sentences, and in this one sentence, it occurs without a classifier, despite the fact that the noun phrase also contains a possessive, an element that otherwise would require the co-occurrence of a classifier.

(120) *Peb yuav lawv ntawv.*
1PL get 3PL writing
'We got their letter.'

[Escape-K:27]

5.2.3 Semantic use of classifiers

In addition to their grammatical role, classifiers fill at least two distinct semantic roles. The first role is to disambiguate kinship terms, and for this role, the semantic considerations overrule the grammatical. For example, without a classifier, the expression *kuv txiv* means 'my father', while with the classifier, *tus*, it means 'my husband': *kuv tus txiv* (Fuller 1988:19). Example (121) contains the phrase *kuv txiv* 'my father'. This noun phrase has no classifier, despite the fact that the referent is not topical and the possessive in the noun phrase would otherwise require the co-occurrence of a classifier. The texts in the corpus do not contain the phrase *tus txiv* 'husband' at all, so this phrase cannot be exemplified.

(121) *Kuv txiv kuj tsis tau ua nom loj*
1SG father/male also NEG PFV be officer big
'My father wasn't a high-ranking officer,'

[Escape-K:12.1]

The second role is to add semantic content to the noun it accompanies; the noun is the same, but the choice of the classifier shapes the meaning of the noun phrase. Jaisser (1987:173) points out this phenomenon with reference to the classifiers that pair with the word *ntawv*, a word that has a semantic domain (the domain of communication) rather than an exact gloss, since the classifier gives it its specific meaning. According to Jaisser (1987:174), "[The classifier] *daim* ... is used with nouns referring to *flat things* and *surfaces*. ... [The classifier] *phau* is used with nouns referring to *stacks of things, things piled up on each other*. ... [The classifier] *tsab* is used with nouns referring to *written messages*" (italics in the original). When these classifiers are used with *ntawv*, "*daim ntawv* ... means *sheet of paper*, *phau ntawv* ... means *book*, and *tsab ntawv* means *letter*" (Jaisser 1987:173).

In (122), *ntawv* occurs with the classifier *daig* 'sheet' to express 'letter'.

- (122) *Mas peb thiaj li peb txiv tub peb thiaj li aws yuav lawv*
 TOP 1PL then 1PL father/male son 1PL then (hesitation) get 3PL
ib daig ntawv.
 INDF.ART CLF.SRFC/SHT writing
 ‘So then we, father and sons, we bought a [permission] letter of theirs.’ [Escape-
 K:20]

In (123), *ntawv* occurs with the classifier *phau* ‘stack’ to express ‘book’.

- (123) *Twb yeej muaj ntau phau ntawv, ntau liab*
 really/already INT.TRTH have many/much CLF.STCK writing many/much CLF
nam thiab ntau lub rooj cob qhia rau peb hais tias
 movie and many/much CLF.GNRL meeting train teach to/for 1PL COMP
peb yeej nrhiav tsis tau peb lub hom phiaj ntawm peb
 1PL ASP.HBTL look.for NEG obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT 1PL
lub neeg los ntawm peb tus kheej ib zaug hlo li.
 CLF.GNRL person come PX.EVNT 1PL REFL once INT.at.all
 ‘Truly there already are so many books, so many movies, and so many conferences
 for us that we constantly look for but never find the purpose in ourselves as peo-
 ple.’ [Sermon:40]

In (124), a usage not covered by Jaisser’s (1987:173) description, *yam* ‘type’ occurs with *ntawv* and refers to the sentence topic: ‘everything the pastor said.’

- (124) *Txhua yam txhua tsav ua hnuv tus xibfwb tau hais*
 each/all type each/all kind make/do day CLF.ANMT pastor/teacher PFV say
ntawv mas, txhua yam ntawv los rau hauv kuv lub siab.
 PX.EVNT TOP each/all type writing come to/for inside 1SG CLF.GNRL liver
 ‘Everything the pastor said that day, each point of communication came into my
 heart.’ [Testimony:21]

5.2.4 Use of classifiers without an overt head noun

Mottin (1978:29) states that a classifier may be used as a pronoun. More accurately, a classifier may be used in a noun phrase without an overt head noun. In (125), the classifier *cov* first appears as part of the noun phrase *cov neeg* ‘group of people’ in (125a). In the next sentence, (125b), *cov* remains in the noun phrase, but the head noun, *neeg* ‘person’ from sentence (125a) is not overtly stated.

- (125) a. *Cov neeg kuj txhua leej txhua tus tsuas nrhiav*
 CLF.GRP1 person also each/all CLF.PRSN each/all CLF.ANMT only look.for
kev tawm tebchaws Lostsuas tuaj mus rau sab Thaib teb.
 way come.out country Laos come go to/for side Thai land
 ‘Everybody else looked for a way to escape from Laos to Thailand as well.’
 [Escape-K:5]
- b. *Muaj peb hnuv ntawd lawv xuas nyooj hoom thauj cov.*
 have three/third day PX.EVNT 3PL use airplane transport CLF.GRP1
 ‘For three days they used airplanes to transport groups [of people].’ [Escape-K:6]

The group classifiers, *tej* ‘CLF.GRP2’ as in (126) and *cov* ‘CLF.GRP1’, as in (127) and (128), may refer to animate or inanimate referents.

- (126) *Luag tej muaj niam muaj txiv.*
 others/3PL CLF.GRP2 have woman/mother have father/male
 ‘Others have a mother [and] father.’ [Testimony:31]

- (127) *tsis hais tej tim tswv lossis tej muaj koob meej thiab cov*
 whether CLF.GRP2 officials or CLF.GRP2 have fame and CLF.GRP1
uas muaj meej mom.
 RLTVZR have power
 ‘whether the officials or the ones that have fame and who have power.’ [Sermon:12.4]

- (128) *Luag tsis pub cov zoo rau kuv hnov.*
 others/3PL NEG let CLF.GRP1 good/well to/for 1SG hear
 ‘I wasn’t allowed to hear the good things.’ [Testimony:32]

5.2.5 Restrictions on the use of classifiers

5.2.5.1 Animacy

None of the sources I consulted limit the use of a classifier in the noun phrase without an overt head noun; and in the examples given in the literature, all the classifiers have an inanimate referent. In the texts in the corpus, however, the classifier is never used to refer to an inanimate singular referent without an overt head noun. The only classifiers used to refer to singular referents in a noun phrase without an overt head noun are *leej* ‘CLF.PRSN’, as in (129), and *tus* ‘CLF.ANMT’ as in (130).

(129) *Ces nkawv ob leej tau tuag tas sim neej nyob*
 SEQ 3DU two/second CLF.PRSN PFV die finish a.lifetime dwell/be.located
rau hauv lub zos Kiajmana lawm.
 to/for inside CLF.GNRL village Kiamana PRF
 ‘Then the two of them died forever in the village of Kiamana.’ [Escape-TY:38]

(130) *Kuv xav hais tias nyaj ua luag lwm tus kuj*
 1SG think/want COMP probably be others/3PL another CLF.ANMT also
tej tus kuj yog yoojyim,
 CLF.GRP2 CLF.ANMT also be easy
 ‘I think that probably [for] other people it might be easy,’ [Escape-K:93.1]

In light of the evidence, it is my suggestion that Hmong has at best a dispreference for the use of a singular classifier to be used for an inanimate referent without an overt head noun. It is entirely possible that examples like what Mottin (1978:29) gives do occur in natural language use. It is, however, strongly suggestive of a dispreference for there to be no such instance anywhere in the corpus of texts. Thus I propose the following restriction:

(131) Avoid the use of a singular classifier with a non overt head noun having a non-human referent.

5.2.5.2 Accompaniment

There is another limitation on the use of the single classifier (as opposed to a group classifier) without an overt head noun: in the texts in the corpus, there are 395 tokens of classifiers, and not once is a single classifier ever used alone. In every case it is accompanied by another constituent of the noun phrase that describes the head noun. It may be described by an adjective phrase as in (132), in which the classifier for person *tus* is described by *dawb* ‘holy’ and *huv* ‘undefiled’.

(132) *Kuv mloog zoo li vaj ntsuj plig tus dawb*
 1SG listen good/well like lord spirit spirit CLF.ANMT morally.upright
huv los nyob rau hauv kuv lub siab.
 undefiled come dwell/be.located to/for inside 1SG CLF.GNRL liver
 ‘I listened well, like God’s Holy Spirit came to live inside my heart.’ [Testimony:18]

It may be described by a relative clause as in (133), in which the classifier *tus* ‘the one’ is modified by the relative clause *uas tsim koj xwb* ‘who alone created you’.

- (133) *Qhov yoojyim tshaj plaws ces rov qab mus cuag tus uas*
 thing easy SPTV SEQ return go ask.advice CLF.ANMT RLTVZR
tsim koj xwb.
 create 2SG only
 ‘The easiest thing, then, is just to go back and ask the advice of the one who alone
 created you.’ [Sermon:102]

Further examples include the classifier being quantified by a numeral or an indefinite quantity word as in [Escape-K:59], accompanied by a group classifier as in [Escape-K:32.3], and accompanied by a demonstrative as in [Testimony:28.2]. Thus I propose the following restriction:

- (134) *NP → CLF [+singular]
 (A singular classifier may not be the only overt element of a noun phrase.)

5.3 The spatial deictic

Spatial deictics are quite common in White Hmong. Many noun phrases incorporate them with reference to the head noun, as do many verb phrases with reference to the location of the events. Demonstratives “can also be used pronominally” (Ratliff 1997:318).

5.3.1 Systems of deixis

Ratliff presents the four subsystems pictured in Figure 7 and described below.³ The glosses I use are a slight adaptation of Ratliff (1997:318).

³ Ratliff’s (1997:318) figure is reproduced under a Creative Commons license.

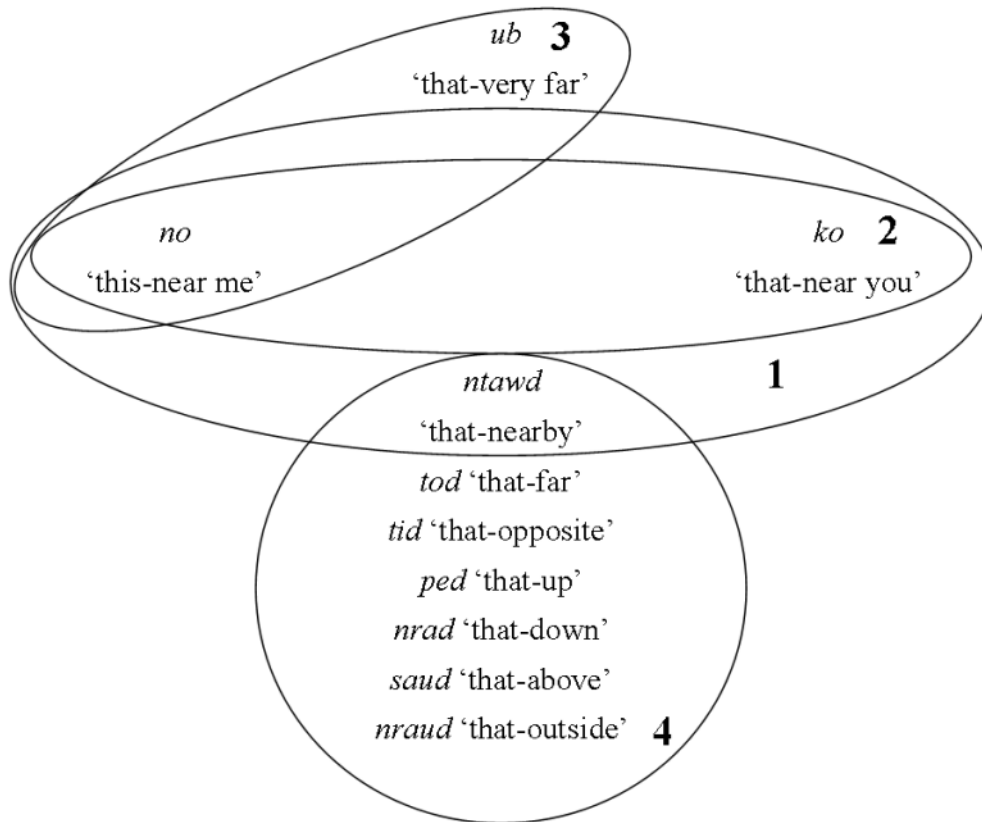


Figure 7. Ratliff's (1997:318) representation of the spatial deictics in White Hmong

The first subsystem, System 1, “makes reference to the speech event situation and participants” (Ratliff 1997:318). System 2 makes reference to the speaker’s or interlocutor’s location at the time of the speech event. System 3 refers to participants or subevents that are near the speaker or at a considerable distance from him in relation to the event being described. System 4 includes references to the direction a participant or sub-event is from the main event. The demonstrative *ntawd/ntawm* from this system is certainly one of the most frequently occurring words in the text corpus in this thesis. A participant or sub-event may be nearby, or it may be somewhat removed from the main event in a direction up, down, opposite, etc. Examples (135) through (138) illustrate one demonstrative from each system. Example (135) illustrates *ntawd* (spelled *ntawm* in this example) from System 1, (136) illustrates *no* from System 2, (137) illustrates *ub* from System 3, and (138) illustrates *nrad* (spelled *nram* in this example) from System 4. It should be noted that tone

sandhi interacts very freely on this class of words, and they are not often found in their citation (-*d*) form.

(135) *Ces peb thiaj yuav lawv daim ntawv ntawm.*
 SEQ 1PL then get 3PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT
 ‘So then we bought this letter of theirs.’ [Escape-K:23]

(136) *Mas lub neej no yog ib lub neej*
 TOP CLF.GNRL life/estate PX.SPKR be INDF.ART CLF.GNRL life/estate
txomnyem kawg nkaus.
 destitute to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘This life was a completely poor existence.’ [Escape-K:87]

(137) *sib tham mentsi txog kuv lub neej nyob*
 RECP talk a.little.bit about 1SG CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located
tim ub tuaj txog rau tim no.
 MD.OPST DT come arrive.at to/for MD.OPST PX.SPKR
 ‘[and] talk together a little bit about my life from there to here [Laos to America].’
 [Escape-TY:3.2]

(138) *lawv thiaj hais tias ua peb puas yog neeg nyob*
 3PL then say COMP make/do 1PL YNQ be person dwell/be.located
nram tiag.
 MD.down level.place
 ‘they asked if we were people who lived down the plain (in Vientiane).’ [Escape-K:31.2]

It is important to note according to the use of the demonstratives in System 4 in the texts in the corpus, the speaker does not view the events from the perspective of his location at the time of his speech act but rather from the location of the event he is describing. The speaker may be half a world away from where all the action in the narrative takes place as he relates the events, and yet he refers to things and events that take place there as proximal. Examples (139) and (140) bear this out. In these examples, the speaker refers to his homeland as *ub* ‘distal’ and America as *no* ‘proximal to the speaker’ when he introduces the narrative in (139) and yet proceeds to refer to participants in his homeland with the demonstrative *ntawd* ‘proximal to the event’, as in (140).

(139) *sib* *tham* *mentsi* *txog* *kuv* *lub* *neej* *nyob*
 RECP talk a.little.bit about 1SG CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located
tim *ub* *tuaj* *txog* *rau* *tim* *no.*
 MD.OPST DT come arrive.at to/for MD.OPST PX.SPKR
 ‘[and] talk together a little bit about my life from there to here [Laos to America].’
 [Escape-TY:3.2]

(140) *Yog* *li* *peb* *nyob* *rau* *lub* *zos* *Najloom* *ntawd.*
 be like 1PL dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL village Nalong PX.EVNT
 ‘So we were living there at Nalong village.’ [Escape-TY:17]

Jarkey (1991:43) identifies *ntawm* as ‘nearby’ when “[indicating] the relative distance of the place referred to with respect to the location of the speaker, or the speaker’s adopted point of view.” I agree, but I go the next step to define “the speaker’s adopted point of view,” because the speaker could adopt any point of view without the interlocutor having any idea of where that is, and thus the term loses its predictable meaning. By superimposing a deictic framework with the events in the story rather than “the speaker’s adopted point of view” as the reference point, I present a model that is predictable and also accounts for every use of this term in the corpus of texts.

5.3.2 Use of spatial deictics

The spatial deictic can occur in four different constructions in Hmong.

5.3.2.1 As a demonstrative adjective

The first construction that a demonstrative can occur in is a noun phrase; in this construction, it follows the head noun (for further discussion on the location of the demonstrative in the noun phrase, see §3.2). In (141), the demonstrative *ntawd* ‘proximal to the event’ occurs in the noun phrase *cov roj ntawd* ‘the oil there’ following the noun *roj* ‘oil’.

(141) *kom* *cov* *roj* *ntawd* *kub* *kiag* *lawm.*
 cause CLF.GRP1 oil PX.EVNT hot INT.CPLT1 PRF
 ‘so that this oil is thoroughly hot.’ [Eggs:10.2]

In (142), the spatial deictic *ntawm*, follows the head noun *ntawv* ‘writing’ in the noun phrase.

- (142) *Tiamsis daim ntauw ntauwm mas yog daim ntauw lawv*
 but CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT TOP be CLF.SRFC/SHT writing 3PL
nyob Vientiane.
 dwell/be.located Vientiane
 ‘But this letter was a letter from some people who lived in Vientiane.’ [Escape-K:25]

5.3.2.2 As a demonstrative pronoun

The second construction in which a demonstrative can occur is a phrase in which it is the sole constituent; in this construction, it is a demonstrative pronoun replacing a noun phrase. In (143), the demonstrative pronoun *ntawv*, referring to the entire situation described in the preceding sentences, is the object of the preposition *thawm* ‘through’.

- (143) *Thawm ntauw kuv tau pom thiab tau paub hais tias qhov nov yog*
 through PX.EVNT 1SG PFV see and PFV know COMP thing PX.SPKR be
txoj hau kev tom ntej kuv yuav tau coj kuv tej
 CLF.ABST principal way ahead 1SG must bring/take 1SG CLF.GRP2
menyuam mus kawm Vajtswv txoj lus,
 child go learn God word
 ‘Through this I understood the way of living [for myself], and that I must bring my
 children to learn God’s Word,’ [Testimony:20.1]

In (144), the demonstrative pronoun *no*, referring to the entire situation described in the preceding sentences, is the object of the preposition *tom qab* ‘afterward/behind’.

- (144) *Tom qab no los zoo tib yam nkaus li qub,*
 afterward/behind PX.SPKR come good/well single type look.like the same
 ‘After this everything was good as [before],’ [Testimony:28.1]

5.3.2.3 As an adverb of place

The third construction in which a demonstrative can occur is an oblique of place. In (145), the demonstrative *tod* ‘medial’ functions adverbially telling where the speaker and his family stayed for over three years.

- (145) *thiab ces peb los nyob tod tau muaj peb xyoos.*
 and SEQ 1PL come dwell/be.located MD PFV have three/third year
 ‘and we stayed over there for three years.’ [Escape-K:80.3]

5.3.2.4 As a preposition

The fourth construction in which a demonstrative can occur is a phrase headed by the demonstrative and followed by a nominal complement. In this phrase, it functions as a preposition.⁴ In (146), the spatial deictic *ntawm* ‘proximal to the event’ occurs in construction with *ntug dej* ‘edge water’ to form the locative phrase translated ‘on the river bank’.

- (146) *Qhov ntawm yog nyob ntawm ntug dej uas hla rau*
thing PX.EVNT be dwell/be.located PX.EVNT edge water RLTVZR cross to/for
sab Thaib teb yoojyim heev.
side Thai land easy INT.MGTD
‘This place is located on the river bank where to cross to Thailand is quite easy.’
[Escape-K:33]

Jarkey (1991:41) refers to the phrases headed by words of this class as “locative phrases.” She defines the [most common] locative phrase as consisting of “a spatial deictic ... followed by a noun phrase” (1991:41). She identifies eight spatial deictics in harmony with Ratliff (1997:318), whom she cites (1991:42). Her analysis differs notably from Heimbach (1980:322) in the defining attribute of proximity for the word *tom* (*tod*), which she and Ratliff (1997:318) agree is “distal” and Heimbach (1980:322) lists as “proximal.”

Spatial deictics may occur before or after a noun, but their location communicates their grammatical role relative to the noun phrase. There is a crucial distinction between first, a locative phrase headed by a spatial deictic having a noun phrase complement and second, a noun phrase containing a spatial deictic that describes the head noun. This distinction plays a role in the discussion in §3.2.

5.4 The adjective

The phrase structure for the adjective phrase is an optional negative followed by an adjective, which in turn is followed by an optional intensifier. The negative and intensifiers are the same as those used to negate and intensify verbs.

⁴ When the demonstrative functions as a preposition, the system of reference shifts from the system of deixis that references the speaker, interlocutor, or event to a perspective that references primarily its nominal complement.

(147) AP → (Neg) A (Int)

Adjective phrases may be composed of simply an adjective, as the adjectives *dawb* ‘morally upright’ and *huv* ‘undefiled’ in (148), or an adjective plus an intensifier.

(148) *Qhib kuv lub siab txais tos Vajtswv txoj lus dawb*
open 1SG CLF.GNRL liver receive take God word morally.upright
huv.
undefiled
‘I opened my heart opened to receive God’s holy Word.’ [Testimony:19]

An adjective may be absolute, as *zoo* ‘good’ is in (149), or it may be comparative as *tseem ceeb tshaj* ‘more important’ is in (150).

(149) *Tiamsis mas kuv xav xav paub cov lus zoo*
but TOP 1SG think/want think/want know CLF.GRP1 word good/well
‘But I really wanted to know the good words,’ [Testimony:33.1]

(150) *Los ntawm kev saib seb yam twg yog yam tseem ceeb tshaj*
come PX.EVNT way look.at NSPC type which be type important CPTV
es ua yam ntawd mus xwb.
PLTNS make/do type PX.EVNT go only
‘Then this way let’s examine what is more important and just do this.’ [Sermon:96]

The word *tshaj* follows the adjective to indicate the comparative Harriehausen (1990). Mottin (1978:56) identifies this word as superlative, but this does not fit the contexts in which it is used. For two reasons it is understandable that Mottin (1978) might propose the superlative, but neither of these reasons stands up to close scrutiny. The first reason that *tshaj* might seem to mark the superlative is that superlatives are not compared to another entity in their class, and comparatives often are compared to another entity in their class. The second element of the comparison, however, is not obligatorily explicitly stated; sometimes the second element must be inferred from the context, and this lack of explicitness has the appearance of the superlative. But *tshaj* cannot indicate the superlative, because there are cases in which the second element of the comparison of which it is a part is clearly stated. Example (151) uses *zoo tshaj* ‘better’, the comparative of *zoo* ‘good’; the second element in the comparison is *peb tsev neeg* ‘our family’.

- (151) *Nws zoo tshaj peb tsev neeg.*
 3SG good/well CPTV 1PL CLF.HSHD person
 ‘It’s better than our family.’ [Sermon:22]

The second reason that *tshaj* may at first appear to mark the superlative is that it is the first word in the two-word construction *tshaj plaws* that does mark the superlative (Xiong 2005). Example (152) contains the adjective *yoojyim* ‘easy’ in its superlative form *yoojyim tshaj plaws* ‘easiest’. (See also Appendix Text: Ar Moua’s story sentence 102.)

- (152) *Qhov yoojyim tshaj plaws ces rov qab mus cuag tus uas*
 thing easy SPTV SEQ return go ask.advice CLF.ANMT RLTVZR
tsim koj xwb.
 create 2SG only
 ‘The easiest thing, then, is just to go back and ask the advice of the one who alone created you.’ [Sermon:102]

The word *dua* ‘more’ may also be used after an adjective to indicate the comparative form, as *zoo dua* ‘better’, the comparative of *zoo* ‘good’, is in (153).

- (153) *Tus mus zoo dua.*
 CLF.ANMT go good/well more
 ‘The one for going was better.’ [Escape-K:18]

Intensification of an adjective is accomplished by an intensifier. In (154) the noun *roj* ‘oil’ is modified by the predicate adjective phrase *kub kiag* in which *kub* ‘hot’ is intensified by the superlative *kiag*, an intensifier indicating completeness.

- (154) *kom cov roj ntawd kub kiag lawm.*
 cause CLF.GRP1 oil PX.EVNT hot INT.CPLT1 PRF
 ‘so that this oil is thoroughly hot.’ [Eggs:10.2]

An adjective phrase may be negated. The negative *tsis* directly precedes the adjective. In (155), *tsis* precedes the adjective *zoo* ‘good’, and this adjective phrase directly follows the head noun *mob* ‘sickness’.

(155) *Ces kuv txiv cia li tau ib tug mob tsis*
 SEQ 1SG father/male let like obtain INDF.ART CLF.ANMT sickness NEG
zoo.
 good/well
 ‘Then my father got a very bad sickness.’ [Escape-TY:13]

5.5 The pronoun and other anaphoric devices

Hmong has a number of means of anaphoric reference including personal pronouns and non-referential pronouns as well as zero anaphora.

5.5.1 Personal pronouns

White Hmong has only one set of personal pronouns. These pronouns have features for person and number but not gender, case, or level of formality. They are identified in Table 9, which is based on a chart by Mottin (1978:44) but modified to show the findings of my analysis.

Table 9. Personal pronouns

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1st person	<i>kuv</i>	<i>wb</i>	<i>peb</i>
2nd person	<i>koj</i>	<i>neb</i>	<i>nej</i>
3rd person	<i>nws</i>	<i>nkawd</i>	<i>lawv</i>

According to Mottin, personal pronouns can be used to refer to people but not to anything lower on the animacy hierarchy, unless it immediately follows the antecedent (Mottin 1978:44). The texts in the corpus include all of the pronouns in Table 9 except second and third person dual.

Following are a number of examples of the actual use of each of these pronouns. Only a few representative uses are included here. Appendix A contains a more comprehensive set of examples.

Example (156) uses the first person singular pronoun *kuv* as subject, object, and possessive.

- (156) *Hnub no kuv yuav los hais kuv cov lus ua Vajtswv*
 day PX.SPKR 1SG POS.IRR come say 1SG CLF.GRP1 word RLTVZR God
tau pab kuv yav tag dhau los lawm.
 PFV help 1SG time.period finish past come PRF
 ‘Today I will tell my story of how God helped me in the past.’ [Testimony:1]

Example (157) uses the second person singular pronoun *koj* as subject.

- (157) *Koj mam muab ob lub qe koj los tsoo tso rau*
 2SG then take two/second CLF.GNRL egg bring/take come crush put to/for
hauv.
 inside
 ‘You then take two eggs, bring them [to where you’re working], break them, and
 put them in.’ [Eggs:11]

Example (158) uses the first person singular pronoun *kuv* and the second person singular pronoun *koj* as objects of the preposition *rau* ‘to/for’.

- (158) *Peb tsis pom tagkis hais tias muaj nuj nqis dabtsi ntxiv rau*
 1PL NEG see tomorrow/morning COMP have important what? add to/for
koj thiab rau kuv peb lawm.
 2SG and to/for 1SG 1PL PRF
 ‘We won’t see tomorrow—what is more important for you and for me—us.’ [Sermon:19]

Example (159) uses the first person dual pronoun *wb* as the subject of the verb *tham* ‘talk’.

- (159) *thiab wb yuav sib tham mentsis txog kev ua noj.*
 and 1DU POS.IRR RECP talk a.little.bit about way make/do eat
 ‘and we will talk with each other a little bit about cooking.’ [Eggs:3.2]

Example (160) uses the first person dual pronoun *wb* as the object of the preposition *rau* ‘to/for’. In this case *wb* refers to the speaker and his one older brother.

- (160) *Ces thiaj li hnov xov xwm tsis zoo tuaj txog rau wb*
 SEQ then hear news matter NEG good/well come arrive.at to/for 1DU
hais tias kuv txiv tau muab phom tua kuv niam
 COMP 1SG father/male PFV take gun kill 1SG woman/mother
 ‘Then we heard the bad news that came to us saying that my father took a gun and
 killed my mom,’ [Escape-TY:36.1]

Example (161) uses the third person singular pronoun *nws* as the possessive of *khob* ‘cup’ and the Recipient, the object of the preposition *rau*. The referent of these pronouns is feminine.

- (161) *Kuv thiaj xa nws lub khob rov qab rau nws.*
 1SG then send 3SG CLF.GNRL cup return to/for 3SG
 ‘Then I returned her cup back to her.’ [Testimony:12]

Example (162) uses the third person singular pronoun *nws* to refer not to a person but rather to a dish of scrambled eggs as the object of the verb *kom* ‘cause’.

- (162) *ces koj ua rau kom nws siav siav.*
 SEQ 2SG make/do to/for cause 3SG well.done well.done
 ‘then you need to make it very well done.’ [Eggs:18.2]

Example (163) uses the third person pronoun *nws* as the subject of the verb *yuav coj* ‘want to take’, the object of the proposition *nrog* ‘with’, and the possessive of the nominal *lub zos* ‘village’. The referent of each of these pronouns is masculine.

- (163) *Ces yog li nws yuav coj kuv txiv mus nrog nws*
 SEQ be like 3SG intend bring/take 1SG father/male go with 3SG
nyob tom nws lub zos.
 dwell/be.located MD 3SG CLF.GNRL village
 ‘So he wanted to take my father with him to live at his village.’ [Escape-TY:26]

Example (164) uses the third person singular pronoun *nws* as a “dummy” subject. It serves as a syntactic subject for the verb *pab* ‘help’, when the clause following the verb is the topic. According to Jarkey (2006:135), Hmong does not allow clauses as the subjects of the sentence, so the “dummy” subject is necessary to express this idea.

- (164) a. *Tej zaum nws yeej pab tau yus kom yus ua*
 maybe 3SG ASP.HBTL help able INDF.PRON cause INDF.PRON make/do
tau lub neej vas meej
 able CLF.GNRL life/estate successful
 ‘Maybe it always helps one to be able to live the successful life’ [Sermon:77.1]

Example (165) uses the second person plural pronoun *nej* as the subject of the verb *yuav muab* ‘will take’, the subject of the verb *npjaj* ‘prepare’, and the possessive modifier of the noun *neeg* ‘life’.

- (165) *nej yuav muab qhov no coj los ua ib txoj kev*
 2PL POS.IRR take thing PX.SPKR bring/take come be one/first CLF.ABST way
rau nej npjaj nej lub neeg nyob rau hauv
 to/for 2PL prepare 2PL CLF.GNRL person dwell/be.located to/for inside
lub ntiajteb no nawb mog.
 CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR TAG1
 ‘so you will take this thing [and] it will be one way for you to prepare your life on
 this earth—all right?’ [Sermon:127.2]

It is common to include redundant reference when introducing a pronoun into the discourse for the first time; the speaker states first who the pronoun refers to and then uses the pronoun redundantly. This is actually a subcategory of the topic-comment sentence structures typical of Hmong; the sentence begins with a clear statement of the topic before introducing the subject and the remainder of the sentence. Particularly interesting is the express statement of the referent for the first person singular pronoun rather than simply taking for granted that the first person pronoun refers to the speaker. Three of the four texts begin with the narrator directly introducing himself *kuv yog* ‘I am [identification]’ before referring to himself with the first person singular pronoun *kuv*, as in (166) (see also [Escape-TY:2] and [Sermon:2]).

- (166) *Kuv yog ib tus neeg nyob deb zos deb*
 1SG be INDF.ART CLF.ANMT person dwell/be.located distant village distant
lub tshav nyooj hoom deb rau Loob Ceeb.
 CLF.GNRL field airplane distant to/for Long Chieng
 ‘I was a person living in a village far from the airport and from Long Chieng.’
 [Escape-K:9]

After the speaker has introduced himself personally, he next introduces his family with a full noun phrase, *kuv tsev neeg thiab kuv* ‘my family and I’, before referring to his family with the first person plural pronoun *peb*, as seen in (167).

- (167) *Kuv tsev neeg thiab kuv peb nyob aw*
 1SG CLF.HSHD person and 1SG 1PL dwell/be.located (hesitation)
 ‘My family and I, we lived ...’ [Escape-K:10.1]

This redundant reference can go even one layer further. In (168), the speaker first references three participants with full noun phrases: *kuv txiv thiab kuv thiab kuv ib tug kwv yau* ‘my dad and I and my little brother’, then he introduces the first person plural pronoun and clarifies it, *peb peb txiv tub xwb* ‘we three father, sons only’, and finally he uses the pronoun *peb* ‘we’ by itself.⁵

- (168) *kuv txiv thiab kuv thiab kuv ib tug kwv*
 1SG father/male and 1SG and 1SG one/first CLF.ANMT younger.brother
yau kuv hu ua Npawv no peb peb txiv tub
 young 1SG call make/do Ber PX.SPKR 1PL three/third father/male son
xwb, peb thiaj li tau tso kuv niam thiab ob tug
 only 1PL then PFV leave 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv yau tseg.
 younger.brother young leave
 ‘my father, my one little brother I called Ber, and I—these three of us, father and sons only— we then left my mother and two little brothers behind.’ [Escape-K:19.3]

Example (169) also demonstrates this great measure of redundant reference when it uses the full noun phrases as vocatives to address everyone in the audience, and then *koj* ‘2SG’ and *kuv* ‘1PL’, and finally *peb*, the first person plural pronoun.

- (169) *Yog li ib tsoom niam txiv kwvtij neejtsa sawvdaws,*
 be like everybody woman/mother father/male relatives in.laws everyone
yog hais tias koj thiab kuv, peb, tsis ntseeg lossis tsis paub hais tias
 if COMP 2SG and 1SG 1PL NEG believe or NEG know COMP
Vajtswv tsim ib puas tsav yam
 God create one/first hundred kind type
 ‘So all my brethren, everybody, if you and I—we—don’t believe or don’t know, that God created everything,’ [Sermon:17.1]

⁵ The pronoun *peb* 1PL and the numeral *peb* ‘three’ are homophones.

Example (170) does similarly in that it identifies *koj thiab kub* ‘you and me’ before referring to this combination of people jointly with *peb* ‘us’.⁶

- (170) *Nws yeej muaj lub hom phiaj zoo rau koj thiab kuv—*
 3SG ASP.HBTL have CLF.GNRL purpose good/well to/for 2SG and 1SG
peb.
 1PL
 ‘He always has a good purpose for you and me—us.’ [Sermon:53]

Mottin (1978:44) states, “*Le personnel s’utilise surtout pour les êtres humains, et il est à éviter pour les animaux ou les choses, à moins qu’il ne soit immédiatement précédé du nom.*” (The personal pronoun is used especially for human beings; it is avoided for animals or things, unless the [full] noun [itself] immediately precedes it.)⁷ The examples he gives each begin with a noun phrase topic which is immediately followed by a pronoun which is coreferential with the topic; this pronoun is also the subject of the sentence. There are examples like this in my texts. In (171), the sentence begins with the noun phrase *Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb lub neej* ‘God’s purpose for our lives’ which is immediately followed by the pronoun *nws* ‘3SG’ with which it is coreferential. This pronoun is the subject of the sentence, and it is clearly a non-human entity.

- (171) a. *Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb lub neej, nws zoo*
 God CLF.GNRL purpose to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate 3SG good/well
tshaj txhua yam tsav uas nyob rau hauv peb
 CPTV each/all type kind RLTVZR dwell/be.located to/for inside 1PL
lub neej uas peb niaj hnuv ua nov.
 CLF.GNRL life/estate RLTVZR 1PL every day make/do PX.SPKR
 ‘God’s purpose for our lives, it is better than everything is in this life every day here.’ [Sermon:21]

The texts in the corpus, however, demonstrate the use of personal pronouns with non-human referents that clearly do not follow a noun phrase topic with which they are coreferential. One such example is (172) in which *nws* ‘3SG’ (in 172c) refers to *qe* the ‘egg’

⁶ I do not have an explanation for the phenomenon I have observed here and elsewhere of using a plural pronoun to refer to a dual antecedent.

⁷ Special thanks to my friend Jim Roberts for his translations of the source text.

(in 172a) being cooked. The egg is inanimate, and the pronoun referring to it does not immediately follow it; they are in two separate clauses with other constituents intervening.

- (172) a. *Ces koj saib cov qe.*
 SEQ 2SG look.at CLF.GRP1 egg
 ‘Then, you check the eggs.’ [Eggs:17]
- b. *Yog koj nyiam noj kom siav siav*
 if 2SG like eat cause well.done well.done
 ‘If you like to eat them very well done,’ [Eggs:18.1]
- c. *ces koj ua rau kom nws siav siav.*
 SEQ 2SG make/do to/for cause 3SG well.done well.done
 ‘then you need to make it very well done.’ [Eggs:18.2]

Another clear example is (173), in which *nws* ‘3SG’ refers to *tebchaws* ‘country’. The referent, ‘country’, is inanimate, and the pronoun referring to it does not immediately follow it. The pronoun is the subject of the relative clause modifying the head noun, *tebchaws* ‘country’, and they are separated by a relativizer.

- (173) *thiab nws yog ib lub tebchaws uas nws muaj tsov muaj*
 and 3SG be INDF.ART CLF.GNRL country RLTVZR 3SG have tiger.like have
rog.
 war
 ‘and it was a country which always had dangerous wars going on.’ [Escape-TY:63.2]

Examples (172) and (173), then, demonstrate that the principle Mottin proposes does not always hold true. I propose that while Hmong displays an infrequent use of personal pronouns to refer to non-human referents, this use is not ungrammatical; it is entirely permissible.

My suggestion is that Mottin recognized a genuine pattern that was coincidental with his observation of the infrequency of the use of pronouns for non-human referents. What he was observing was actually the topic-comment structure common in Hmong but uncommon in French and thus something more difficult for him to analyze appropriately. He interpreted the topic as necessary for licensing the use of the pronoun for non-human referents, but the co-occurrence was merely coincidental. The use of the pronoun to refer to a non-human referent was inherently permissible, just uncommon.

It is my proposal that rather than there being a prohibition of or even a dispreference for the use of personal pronouns for non-human referents, the infrequent usage is a function of the semantics and pragmatics. The pragmatics of Hmong permit the zero-anaphoric reference to a participant in the discourse that has been activated. Thus any participant, human, animate, or inanimate may be realized by zero anaphora. Zero anaphora, however, is more likely in the grammatical role of object than in the grammatical role of subject. The higher the level of the animacy of an entity, the more likely it is to be agentive in its semantic role. The lower the level of animacy, the more likely it is to be patient-like in its semantic role. The prototypical Patient is the object of the verb, and this is the sentence constituent most likely to be referred to either with a full noun phrase (because it is the new material in the sentence (Du Bois 1987:823)) or to become zero-anaphoric because of the allowance of the pragmatics (see the discussion in §5.5.3), but not to be referred to with a pronoun. Thus I propose that there is neither prohibition nor dispreference to restrict the use of personal pronouns according to the animacy of their referent.

5.5.2 Non-referential pronouns

White Hmong utilizes a number of non-referential pronouns: *yus*, *lawv*, *luag*, and compounds beginning with *luag* (Heimbach 1980:120, Mottin 1978:44). Each of these is discussed below and identified in Table 10.

Table 10. Non-referential pronouns

Singular	Plural
<i>yus</i>	<i>lawv, luag</i>

Yus is a singular non-referential pronoun which can be used anywhere a singular personal pronoun could be used when the speaker has no particular referent in mind, as in each of the three clauses in (174). In these sentences, the speaker is not referencing himself, the listener, or another definite person specifically known. He is commenting on the way an individual in general will behave in the given circumstance. It is equivalent to the indefinite use of the English *one* or *you*. Example (174a) could be translated, ‘when

one is about to die’, or ‘when you are about to die’, depending on the context and level of formality.

- (174) a. *thaum yus yuav tuag lawm*
 the.time.when INDF.PRON POS.IRR die PRF
 ‘when you are about to die’ [Escape-K:88.2]
- b. *ces yus tsuas vam yus txoj sia nkaus xwb.*
 SEQ INDF.PRON only trust INDF.PRON CLF.ABST life INT.CPLT2 only
 ‘then you think only about your own life.’ [Escape-K:88.3]
- c. *Yus tsuas khiav yus ib leeg xwb.*
 INDF.PRON only run INDF.PRON one/first CLF.PRSN only
 ‘You escape all by yourself.’ [Escape-K:89]

Lawv and *luag* are plural pronouns that can be used referentially or non-referentially. Rather than establishing a dichotomy between referential and non-referential antecedents, however, the use of these two pronouns demonstrates a continuum of referential quality. At one end of the spectrum is the fully referential use in which the referent is a group of known people precisely identified in the context; only *lawv* fills this role in the texts. Example (175), in which the speaker’s mother and two brothers are first identified and then referred to pronominally, provides an example of this fully referential use.

- (175) *Mas peb tau ncaim kuv niam thiab ob tug*
 TOP 1PL PFV separate 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv lawv yog tau ib xyoos ntau.
 younger.brother 3PL be DUR one/first year many/much
 ‘We left my mother and two younger brothers for more than a year.’ [Escape-K:90]

Both *lawv* and *luag* can refer to antecedents that are identified in the context but who are nevertheless less specific than those referred to by *lawv* uniquely; I will call this a *semi-referential use*. In my texts, such referents are specifically identified but are unnamed and serve only to represent a group.

In (176), the referents of *lawv* are also three distinct individuals, but they are unknown to the speaker except as the owners of the letter under discussion. As such, they are less clearly referential than the referents of (175).

- (176) a. *Mas peb thiaj li peb txiv tub peb thiaj li aws yuav lawv*
 TOP 1PL then 1PL father/male son 1PL then (hesitation) get 3PL
ib daig ntawv.
 INDF.ART CLF.SRFC/SHT writing
 ‘So then we, father and sons, we bought a [permission] letter of theirs.’ [Escape-K:20]
- b. *Tiamsis daim ntawv ntawm mas yog daim ntawv*
 but CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT TOP be CLF.SRFC/SHT writing
lawv nyob Vientiane.
 3PL dwell/be.located Vientiane
 ‘But this letter was a letter from some people who lived in Vientiane.’ [Escape-K:25]

Example (177) contains examples of this semi-referential use when it uses *luag* to refer to a group of soldiers unknown to the speaker who have no personal identity but are representative of their government.

- (177) a. *Peb muab peb daim ntawv rau luag saib.*
 1PL take 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing to/for others/3PL look.at
 ‘We took our letter to them to look at.’ [Escape-K:39]
- b. *Luag mas ntsia peb daim ntawv peb yog neeg*
 others/3PL TOP stare.at 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing 1PL be person
nyob Vientiane.
 dwell/be.located Vientiane
 ‘They looked at our letter [which said that] we were people who live in Vientiane.’ [Escape-K:40]

Lawv can also be used to indicate a non-referential or generic plural subject, as in (178), in which it is not known and certainly immaterial who were the ones using airplanes to transport groups of people. This sentence could also be translated, ‘For three days, airplanes were used to transport people’.

- (178) *Muaj peb hnuv ntawd lawv xuas nyooj hoom thauj cov.*
 have three/third day PX.EVNT 3PL use airplane transport CLF.GRP1
 ‘For three days they used airplanes to transport groups [of people].’ [Escape-K:6]

In (179), there is an interesting contrast, because *lawv* and *luag* occur in close succession to each other; *lawv*, in (179a), clearly refers to the previously mentioned officials, but

it is improbable that *luag*, in (179d), does. Rather it is much more reasonable to assume it refers to the Vietnamese in general—a referent with no antecedent in the immediate context.

- (179) a. *lawv thiaj hais tias ua peb puas yog neeg nyob*
 3PL then say COMP make/do 1PL YNQ be person dwell/be.located
nram tiag.
 MD.down level.place
 ‘they asked if we were people who lived down the plain (in Vientiane).’ [Escape-K:31.2]
- b. *Peb thiaj muab peb daim ntawv ntawm rau uas tias yog*
 1PL then take 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT put RLTVZR COMP be
peb tuaj xyuas xwb
 1PL come visit only
 ‘We then took our letter which [said] that we only came to visit,’ [Escape-K:32.1]
- c. *peb rov qab tau*
 1PL return able
 ‘[and] we could return,’ [Escape-K:32.2]
- d. *vim luag tsis pub cov neeg mus ze rau Vientiane.*
 because others/3PL NEG let CLF.GRP1 person go nearby to/for Vientiane
 ‘because they didn’t let people go near Vientiane.’ [Escape-K:32.3]

In (180), *luag* has a fully non-referential status—more so than any of the foregoing examples—in that it has no real personal referent; rather it refers to something ill defined such as a set of life circumstances in general.

- (180) *Luag tsis pub cov zoo rau kuv hnov.*
 others/3PL NEG let CLF.GRP1 good/well to/for 1SG hear
 ‘I wasn’t allowed to hear the good things.’ [Testimony:32]

Luag cov (181) is a compound formed from the pronoun *luag* and the classifier *cov*, a classifier indicating a group of individuals. It is used when delineating members of a group as in the examples, and I have translated it ‘the ones’. The identity of the individuals is not important to the speaker; what is important to him is the characteristic of the group.

- (181) *luag cov uas yeeb ncuab*
 others/3PL CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR enemy
 ‘the ones who were enemies,’ [Escape-K:13.2]

Luag tej is a similar compound also formed from the pronoun *luag* and this time the classifier *tej*, also a classifier indicating a group of individuals. This compound, in (182b), indicates a contrast with a group or individual just referenced, as in (182a).

- (182) a. *kuv tsis muaj niam muaj txiv los cob qhia kuv*
 1SG NEG have woman/mother have father/male come train teach 1SG
hais tias yuav ua li cas lub neej thiaj
 COMP POS.IRR make/do how?/why? CLF.GNRL life/estate then
zoo.
 good/well
 ‘I didn’t have a mother [or] father to bring me up and teach me how to live right.’ [Testimony:30.2]
- b. *Luag tej muaj niam muaj txiv.*
 others/3PL CLF.GRP2 have woman/mother have father/male
 ‘Others have a mother [and] father.’ [Testimony:31]

Luag tus puav (183), is an indefinite pronominal compound with semi-referential quality. It is formed from the pronoun *luag*, the classifier *tus*, a classifier indicating a person, and the indefinite pronoun *puav* meaning ‘some’.

- (183) *Ces npaj no aws luag tus puav twb*
 SEQ time PX.SPKR (hesitation) others/3PL CLF.ANMT some really/already
tuaj soj pom peb
 come follow see 1PL
 ‘Then, right then, some people followed us [and] saw us’ [Escape-K:55.1]

5.5.3 Zero anaphora

Southeast Asian languages generally exhibit zero anaphora, a phenomenon in which a referent in a discourse may be referred to by total omission of the noun phrase; it simply is missing, not represented even by a pronoun (Fuller 1986:266-268). Mottin describes it this way: “*Le personnel est souvent omis quand le sens est clair, et, quand il serait à répéter, on a la possibilité de choisir lequel garder ou lequel omettre*” (1978:44) (The personal pronoun is

omitted when the sense is clear; and, when it is repeated, there is potential to choose which to keep or which to omit.).⁸ Miao follows the same pattern (Xiong & Cohen 2005:65). Mottin’s statement is true in many ways, but it is not as precise as it could be, and it does not give any indication of the frequency of this phenomenon.

In pursuit of a more precise statement, it is necessary to define what is meant by “*quand le sens est clair*” (Mottin 1978:44). The optional or obligatory nature of zero anaphora is not entirely at the speaker’s discretion. As William Foley suggests (p.c. July 2017), there are two kinds of zero anaphora: syntactically controlled and pragmatically controlled. Syntactically controlled zero anaphora is always obligatory; pragmatically controlled zero anaphora is always optional. (Fuller 1986 makes the same distinctions.)

Syntactically controlled zero anaphora

Syntactically controlled zero anaphora is actually a very frequent occurrence in White Hmong—far more frequent than pragmatically controlled zero anaphora, mostly because of the serial verb constructions (discussed in §4.1.2), but also because of embedded clauses (not discussed in this thesis). In all serial verb constructions in Hmong, the verbs in the construction share at least one argument. The arguments of the verb are stated as early in the construction as the nature of the construction allows, all the verbs in the serialization have access to these arguments, and they are never repeated until a new clause is begun; there is, in fact, a syntactic requirement not to repeat them.

Many of these serial verb constructions interleave the arguments and the verbs in the pattern S V₁ O V₂ V₃ ... V_n. These shared arguments (called *pivots*, in Role and Reference Grammar) are illustrated in (184): the object *nej* ‘you’ of the verb *thov caw* ‘ask invite’, is the subject of the verb *muab ... los*, ‘take ... come’. (It is interesting to note that the subject of the first verb in (184b), *thov* ‘ask’, is also zero anaphoric; it will be discussed under pragmatically controlled zero anaphora below.)

- (184) a. *Yog nej muaj Vajtswv txoj lus*
 if 2PL have God word
 ‘If you have God’s Word,’ [Sermon:7.1]

⁸ Special thanks to my friend Jim Roberts for his translations of the source text.

- b. *thov caw nej muab Vajtswv txoj lus los*
 ask invite 2PL take God word come
 ‘[I] invite you to take God’s Word,’

[Sermon:7.2]

Pragmatically controlled zero anaphora

Mottin (1978:44) mentions that zero anaphora is optional, but there is no indication of its frequency compared to pronominal reference or full noun phrase reference. He states that it occurs “*souvent*,” and his only qualification is that it occurs “*quand le sens est clair*.” Pragmatically controlled zero anaphora is truly optional in that it is never obligatory; it is entirely at the speaker’s discretion. I propose, however, that there are three principles that govern its usage.

The first principle to govern the use of zero anaphora is that the referent must qualify according to its role in the discourse. In her discussion of zero anaphora in Hmong, Fuller (1986:275) proposes that for a referent to be eligible for zero anaphoric reference, it must be “the discourse topic.” Later theory that more capably explains discourse roles (not available at the time of the publication of Fuller 1986) clarifies this role specifically as an activated participant in the discourse (Dooley & Levinsohn 2001:69, 111-14). I propose, therefore, that more accurately stated, in order for a referent to be eligible for pragmatically controlled zero anaphoric reference, it must be an activated participant in the discourse; whether it is the sentence topic or the discourse topic is immaterial.

In (185), the discourse topic is introduced: *Hmoob li ua qe noj* ‘the Hmong way to cook eggs’.

- (185) *Qhov nov yog Hmoob li ua qe noj xwb xwb.*
 thing PX.SPKR be Hmong like make/do egg eat only only
 ‘This is just the Hmong way to cook eggs.’

[Eggs:5]

In (186), two sentences later, the discourse participant *qhiav* ‘ginger’ is introduced and activated in the first clause, (186a), and referred to with zero anaphora in the last clause, (186c), as the object of the serial verb *muab tsos cia* ‘take put let’.

- (186) a. *Ces yog koj hos nyiam qhiav nrog thiab no*
 SEQ if 2SG also like ginger with and PX.SPKR
 ‘And then if you like ginger with this too,’

[Eggs:7.1]

- b. *koj muab ib qho me me qhiav los tsoo kom mos mos,*
 2SG take INDF.ART thing small small ginger come crush cause fine fine
 ‘you get a little bit of ginger and crush it so that it is very fine,’ [Eggs:7.2]
- c. *andkoj muab tsos cia.*
 2SG take put let
 ‘and then you put it aside.’ [Eggs:7.3]

In the sentence following (187), the discourse participant *yias* ‘pan’ is introduced and activated in the first clause (187a), and the discourse participant *roj* ‘oil’ is introduced and activated in the second clause (187b). These two referents are jointly referred to with zero anaphora in (187c) as the object of the serial verb *muab tso* ‘take put’ and in (187d) as the object of the serial verb *muab taws* ‘take burn’

- (187) a. *Ces koj muab lub yias*
 SEQ 2SG take CLF.GNRL pan
 ‘Then you take a pan,’ [Eggs:8.1]
- b. *thiab koj muab li ob diav roj koj los tso rau*
 and 2SG take like two/second spoon oil bring/take come put to/for
hauv lub yias,
 inside CLF.GNRL pan
 ‘and you take about two spoonfuls of oil, [and] put it in the pan,’ [Eggs:8.2]
- c. *thiab koj muab tso rau ntawm lub qhov cub.*
 and 2SG take put to/for PX.EVNT CLF.GNRL cooking.fire
 ‘and you put it on the stove.’ [Eggs:8.3]
- d. *Ces koj muab taws rau* medium high.
 SEQ 2SG take burn to/for
 ‘Then you heat it to medium high.’ [Eggs:9]

The discourse topic of cooking Hmong eggs remains the same throughout these sentences and quite a few more that follow, but more discourse participants are introduced and activated, and finally at the end, all of the activated participants are referred to collectively by one instance of zero anaphora in (188) as the object of *muab do* ‘take stir’, the object of *kom* ‘cause’, and the subject of the predicate adjective *zoo zoo* ‘really well’.

- (188) *Ces koj mam li muab do rau kom zoo zoo tibsi*
 SEQ 2SG will/need take stir to/for cause good/well good/well altogether
tas.
 finish
 ‘Then you need to stir it all so that it is mixed really well.’ [Eggs:15]

The second principle I propose is that pragmatically controlled zero anaphora is not commonly employed for the subject or object of the sentence. In one of the first-person narratives, Text: Ar Moua’s story, there are ninety-eight clauses, excluding complement clauses and relative clauses. Of these ninety-eight clauses, fifteen subjects are zero anaphoric; fourteen of these subjects are in a series of clauses employing topic chaining (a specific form of zero anaphora discussed in §5.5.4), and one refers to a noun that is a member of the previous two clauses that is not an argument of the verb.⁹ Also in these thirty-five clauses, there are three instances of zero anaphoric objects of the verb, but each of these verbs could possibly be interpreted as being intransitive.¹⁰ In, Text: How to make Hmong eggs, there are thirty-five clauses, excluding complement clauses and relative clauses (which operate by different rules). Of these thirty-five clauses, three subjects are zero anaphoric; and all three of these are in a series of clauses employing topic chaining. Additionally, topic chaining never occurs in any of the texts for more than two consecutive clauses. These two texts are typical of the texts in the corpus. These observations support the hypothesis that pronominal reference or full noun phrases are preferred over zero anaphora for both the subject and the object of the verb in a given clause.

The third principle I propose is that the frequency of pragmatically controlled zero anaphora of subjects and objects is a function of the situational context rather than the linguistic context. The Text: How to make Hmong eggs exhibits behavior of zero anaphora that differs from all the other texts. Of the thirty-five clauses, nine objects are zero anaphoric—a much higher percentage than Text: Ar Moua’s story. This is a procedural text, and it seems that both the speaker and the interlocutor are in sight of the items talked about as the text is being recorded. Given the pragmatic constraints of relevance

⁹ There are three additional instances that are arguably not any of the constructions under consideration but rather the single subjects of a reduplicated verb (see clauses 30.2, 31, and 60).

¹⁰ See sentences 29 and 45.

(Clark 2013:29-33), it would have been too much mental processing without any greater cognitive rewards to refer to each of the objects by a full noun phrase or even a pronoun; the situational context of the utterances rendered zero anaphora the preferred expression. In contrast, in Text: Ar Moua’s story, the topics of discussion are removed in both time and place, or they are abstractions with no physical form present with the speaker and interlocutor. Thus I propose that the situational context plays a great role in the frequency of usage of zero anaphora: when the topics of discussion are not visible to the speaker and the interlocutor, the frequency of usage will be lower; and when the topics of discussion are visible to the speaker and the interlocutor, the frequency of usage will be higher.

Table 11. Frequency of zero anaphora of subject in Text: Ar Moua’s story

Total clauses	Topic chaining		Non-topic chaining	
Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
98	14	14%	1	1%

Table 12. Frequency of zero anaphora of object in Text: Ar Moua’s story

Transitive clauses	Zero anaphoric objects	
Number	Number	Percent
80	3	3.75%

Table 13. Frequency of zero anaphora of subject in Text: How to make Hmong eggs

Total clauses	Topic chaining		Non-topic chaining	
Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
35	3	8.6%	0	0%

Table 14. Frequency of zero anaphora of object in Text: How to make Hmong eggs

Transitive clauses	Zero anaphoric objects	
Number	Number	Percent

Transitive clauses	Zero anaphoric objects	
29	9	31%

It is interesting to note that while zero anaphora can be employed for subjects and is not restricted to topic chaining, this device is not acceptable for the subject of a sentence in which the Agent is unknown. Zero anaphora must have an antecedent, and if there is none in the context, the pronoun cannot simply be left out; rather a non-referential pronoun must be employed. Thus a sentence like (189) uses the pronoun *lawv* to refer to the unknown subject; it cannot have a zero anaphoric subject, since no one in the context has been identified as doing the flying.

- (189) *Muaj peb hnuv ntawd lawv xuas nyooj hoom thauj cov.*
 have three/third day PX.EVNT 3PL use airplane transport CLF.GRP1
 ‘For three days they used airplanes to transport groups [of people].’ [Escape-K:6]

None of the literature on zero anaphora points out this limitation of zero anaphora.

5.5.4 Topic chaining

Topic chaining is a type of zero anaphora of the subject; it is actually the most common way zero anaphora occurs in the subject (Fuller 1986:264-268). Fuller (1988:120) defines topic chaining this way: “In extended discourse, zero noun phrases may be part of topic chains, in which a sequence of zero noun phrases are co-referential to a topic which is overtly expressed at the beginning of the discourse.” Below are examples of topic chaining.

Example (190) identifies the subject *kuv* ‘I’ in the matrix clause; this subject is the understood subject of the following two clauses: the adverb clause introduced by *yog* ‘if’ in the second part of (190a) and the clause introduced by the sequence marker *ces* in (190b).

- (190) a. *Kuv tau peb hnuv tom qab xav hais tias yog tsis*
 1SG DUR three/third day afterward/behind think/want COMP if NEG
khiav
 run
 ‘After three days I thought if I didn’t escape,’ [Escape-K:11.1]

- b. *ces yuav nyob lub tebchaws Lostsuas ntawd.*
 SEQ POS.IRR dwell/be.located CLF.GNRL country Laos PX.EVNT
 ‘then I would just live here in Laos.’ [Escape-K:11.2]

Example (191) identifies the subject *peb* ‘we’ in the first clause, and this subject is the understood subject of the following clause.

- (191) a. *ces peb thiaj li rov qab los mus thawj Nyab Laj.*
 SEQ 1PL then return go surrender Vietnamese
 ‘then we returned and surrendered to the Vietnamese.’ [Escape-TY:56.2]
- b. *Ces los mus nyob hauv zos Kiajmasnas tau li*
 SEQ come go dwell/be.located inside village Kiamana DUR like
ib xyoos ntawd.
 one/first year PX.EVNT
 ‘Then we went and lived in the village of Kiamana for about one year.’ [Escape-TY:57]

Topic chaining, however, is far from obligatory. The following example (192) repeats the same subject, *peb* ‘we’, five clauses in a row, demonstrating that repeating the subject is actually often preferred to leaving it understood as a chained topic.

- (192) a. *Ces peb nqis kias rau hauv nkoj.*
 SEQ 1PL go.down INT.CPLT1 to/for inside boat
 ‘Then we went all the way down into the boat.’ [Escape-K:66]
- b. *Ces peb caij nkoj*
 SEQ 1PL ride boat
 ‘We rode the boat.’ [Escape-K:67.1]
- c. *peb hla los mus rau sab Thaib teb.*
 1PL cross come go to/for side Thai land
 ‘We crossed to Thailand.’ [Escape-K:67.2]
- d. *Peb los mus txog rau sab Thaib teb.*
 1PL come go arrive.at to/for side Thai land
 ‘We arrived in Thailand’ [Escape-K:68]
- e. *Peb los mus nyob lub zos hu ua Nong Khai.*
 1PL come go dwell/be.located CLF.GNRL village call make/do Nong Khai
 ‘We came to stay at the village called Nong Khai.’ [Escape-K:69]

This passage is not unique; in fact, the vast majority of the sentences in the texts use pronoun subjects as opposed to zero anaphoric subjects, as seen in Table 11 and Table 13. There are a number of instances in each of the texts in which the same subject is repeated as a pronoun in five or more sentences in a row. There are no instances of topic chaining in more than two clauses in a row. This holds true for first, second, and third person. Appendix F sentences 47–54 exemplify first person repeated subjects; Appendix E sentences 6–18 exemplify second person repeated subjects; and C sentences 25–28 exemplify third person repeated subjects. Thus while zero anaphora for subjects is permissible and is not uncommon, it is far less common than pronoun usage. It is my suggestion that what at first glance often appears to be topic chaining is actually obligatory zero anaphora required by a serial verb construction. I discuss this phenomenon further under §4.1.2.

5.6 The adverb

Adverb phrases and clauses may occur sentence-initially, preceding the verb, at various places after the verb in the verb phrase, or in final position in the verb phrase.

In (193a), the adverb clause of time *Thaum ntawd peb hla los mus txog sab tiv* ‘when we crossed to the opposite side’ is an adverb clause occurring sentence initially.

- (193) a. *Thaum ntawd peb hla los mus txog sab tiv*
 the.time.when PX.EVNT 1PL cross come go arrive.at side oppose
 ‘When we crossed to the opposite side,’ [Escape-K:70.1]
- b. *yog van thib kaum rau lub rau hli ntuj.*
 be date ten six CLF.GNRL six month
 ‘the date was June 16.’ [Escape-K:70.2]

In (194), the adverb phrase *thiaj li* ‘then’ precedes the serial verb construction *tawg mus nyob* ‘left and went to live’.

- (194) *Ces peb thiaj li tau tawg mus nyob hav zoov hav tsuag lawm.*
 SEQ 1PL then PFV break.open go dwell/be.located jungle PRF
 ‘So we left and went to live in the jungle.’ [Escape-TY:44]

In (195), the adverb *kiag*, an intensifier indicating completeness, follows the verb *nqis* ‘go down’.

- (195) *Ces peb nqis kiag rau hauv nkoj.*
 SEQ 1PL go.down INT.CPLT1 to/for inside boat
 ‘Then we went all the way down into the boat.’ [Escape-K:66]

In (196) the adverb *xwb* ‘only’ occurs in final position in the verb phrase.

- (196) *peb rov qab mus peb tsev xwb.*
 1PL return go 1PL house only
 ‘we were just returning to our home.’ [Escape-K:24.2]

The position of the adverb phrase or clause is not arbitrary, but the delineation of the factors that define its position is beyond the scope of this thesis. Van Valin’s (2005:3-8, 19-21) explanation of “the layered structure of the clause” (consisting of “nucleus,” “core,” and “periphery”) and the interaction of adverbs with these layers provides insight into adverb position in Hmong, which, I believe, could be codified according to these principles with further research.

Within the class of adverbs, White Hmong has a closed class of intensifiers that occur in various positions in the verb phrase after the verb. These intensifiers may provide a general sense of intensity, or they may indicate something about the manner in which the action of the verb was executed (Harriehausen 1990:62). Some may intensify any verb, and some are restricted to a specific class of verbs (Heimbach 1980:468-479). The text corpus includes the following intensifiers: *tiag* (general intensifier), *nkaug* (general intensifier) *nkaus* (indicating completeness), *kiag* (indicating completeness or decisiveness), *tag nhro* (indicating completeness), *plaws* (indicating suddenness), *heev* (indicating magnitude), and *hlo li* (‘at all’) (glosses based on Heimbach 1980:468-479). Examples (197)–(199) illustrate the use of *tiag* (197), *nkaug* (198), *nkaus* (198), and *kiag* (199).

- (197) *Hlub kuv npaum li no tiag.*
 care.for 1SG as.much.as PX.SPKR INT.GNRL2
 ‘[That he] loved me this much.’ [Testimony:15]

(198) *tias muaj tus tswv Yesxus hlub yus nkaug nkaus*
 COMP have CLF.ANMT lord Jesus love INDF.PRON INT.GNRL1 INT.CPLT2
no.
 PX.SPKR
 ‘that the Lord Jesus who deeply loves everyone here.’ [Testimony:4.6]

(199) *Ces peb nqis kias rau hauv nkoj.*
 SEQ 1PL go.down INT.CPLT1 to/for inside boat
 ‘Then we went all the way down into the boat.’ [Escape-K:66]

5.7 The adposition

The prepositional phrase in White Hmong consists of a preposition followed by a noun phrase. Example (200) contains two prepositional phrases: *txog Yesxus* ‘about Jesus’ and *rau kuv* ‘to me’.

(200) *Nws tau tham txog Yesxus rau kuv.*
 3SG PFV talk about Jesus to/for 1SG
 ‘She talked to me about Jesus.’ [Testimony:13]

In addition to the prepositions commonly recognized, I propose a preposition that has grammaticalized from the verb *tau* ‘obtain’ and is a semantic extension of it. The preposition *tau* identifies the duration of an event as in (201). The word *tau* has been recognized as a verb and an aspect marker, but this use of the word as a preposition has not yet been proposed in the literature.

(201) *Peb tuaj mus nyob tau ob hnub xwb nyob*
 1PL come go dwell/be.located DUR two/second day only dwell/be.located
rau nram Vientiane xwb.
 to/for MD.down Vientiane only
 ‘We came and stayed down in Vientiane only two days.’ [Escape-K:54]

Verbs and prepositions have a great deal of semantic overlap; indeed, nearly all of the purported prepositions in the texts included in the corpus are homophonous with verbs that have a related meaning. For instance, the preposition *txog* ‘about’ is homophonous with the verb *txog* ‘arrive at’, and the preposition *rau* ‘to’ is homophonous with the verb *rau* ‘put, place’. The question must be answered, then, whether the words that head these

phrases are still verbs or whether they have become grammaticalized as prepositions. It is beyond the purpose and scope of this paper to provide a robust answer to this question, and Libert (2013) abundantly demonstrates the difficulty of proposing a clear answer. Jarkey (2010:120-125), however, presents at least one argument that gives weight to a verbal analysis as opposed to prepositional. One very common type of phrase that could be considered a prepositional phrase because of its representation in other languages has to do with the verbs of motion and direction in the cotemporal serial verb construction (see §4.1.2.) The verb of direction represents what in other languages would be a prepositional phrase of directed motion headed by words such as *across*, *into*, *through*, *to*, *toward*, or *from*. Jarkey (2010:120-125) demonstrates that no matter how other languages may present these concepts, the behavior of these phrases in Hmong is entirely consistent with the behavior of verb phrases as part of a serial verb construction (see also Jarkey 1991).

The analysis of all prepositions as verbs, however, is problematic. Example (202), for instance, contains the preposition *hauv* ‘inside’. Proposing a subject and object for this word as a verb is semantically problematic.

(202) *Peb los nyob hauv tau li ob xyoo ntau.*
 1PL come dwell/be.located inside DUR like two/second year many/much
 ‘We stayed there for something more than two years.’ [Escape-TY:10]

Example (203) contains the word *txog* ‘about’. It is also difficult to identify a subject or object for this as a verb.

(203) *Nws thiaj tau qhia kuv txog tswv Yesxus.*
 3SG then PFV teach 1SG about lord Jesus
 ‘Then she taught me about the Lord Jesus.’ [Testimony:9]

Example (204), for instance, contains the preposition *thawm* ‘through’. Proposing a subject and object for this word as a verb is semantically problematic.

- (204) *Thawm ntawv kuv tau pom thiab tau paub hais tias qhov nov yog*
 through PX.EVNT 1SG PFV see and PFV know COMP thing PX.SPKR be
txoj hau kev tom ntej kuv yuav tau koj kuv tej
 CLF.ABST principal way ahead 1SG must bring/take 1SG CLF.GRP2
menyuam mus kawm Vajtswv txoj lus,
 child go learn God word
 ‘Through this I understood the way of living [for myself], and that I must bring my
 children to learn God’s Word,’ [Testimony:20.1]

The verb/preposition question is an interesting question that should be addressed.

One other interesting observation is that the texts contain a few postpositional phrases. Example (205) contains the construction *no thawm*; *thawm* is the adposition ‘through’ (normally a preposition (Xiong 2005)), and the demonstrative *no* ‘proximal to the speaker’ is its complement.¹¹

- (205) *Yog li no thawm kuv paub Yexus lawm.*
 be like PX.SPKR through 1SG know Jesus PRF
 ‘Through this I met Jesus.’ [Testimony:40]

Example (206) contains the construction *Vajtswv qab*; *qab* is the adposition ‘after’ (normally a preposition (Xiong 2005)), and *Vajtswv* ‘God’ is its complement.¹²

- (206) *thiab yuav tau taug Vajtswv qab,*
 and must follow God after
 ‘and I must follow after God,’ [Testimony:20.2]

Given that the postpositional phrases are headed by words that are also prepositions, it is possible that rather than this phenomenon indicating a separate word class, perhaps the constructions are prepositional phrases with their constituents reordered for pragmatic effect.

¹¹ It is likely that the adposition *thawm* derives from the verb *thawm* ‘soak into, permeate’, but the suggestion that this verb is the word in question here is an even less likely solution to the question of the meaning of this phrase.

¹² It is likely that the adposition *qab* derives from the noun *qab* ‘underside’, but the suggestion that this noun is the word in question here is an even less likely solution to the question of the meaning of this phrase.

One additional option is to interpret *qab* as the verb ‘return’ or ‘remember’. This interpretation would allow for it to be part of a serial verb construction of cotemporal motion, but it does not fit the pattern Jarkey (2010:121) describes, and the adpositional interpretations make more sense.

5.8 Conclusions

Following is a succinct restatement of the novel analyses I propose in §5.

5.8.1 *The existence of the indefinite article*

In §5.1 I propose an indefinite article as a word class in Hmong. The principle that the introduction of a participant into the discourse requires the word *ib*, formerly glossed as ‘one’ (even when used this way), is not a new principle; but my proposal that this word, when functioning this way, is indeed an indefinite article is new.

5.8.2 *Restrictions on the use of classifiers*

I propose restrictions on the use of classifiers in a noun phrase without an overt head noun. That classifiers can be used this way is a fact all agree upon, but that there are restrictions on their use this way has not yet been suggested. I propose two rules, (131) and (134), which I repeat here:

(207) Avoid the use of a singular classifier with a non overt head noun having a non-human referent.

(208) *NP → CLF [+singular]

(A singular classifier may not be the only overt element of a noun phrase.)

5.8.3 *The system of deixis for the demonstrative*

In §5.3.1 I propose that while a set of the demonstratives has as their point of reference their relative distance from the speaker or interlocutor, there is a set of the demonstratives that refer to the events in the narrative as their point of deixis rather than either the speaker or the interlocutor. This system of deixis has not been proposed in the literature about Hmong grammar before and is thus my contribution.

5.8.4 *The comparative and superlative of the adjective*

Adjectives can be used in the absolute, comparative, and superlative forms. The comparative form may be used without explicit identification of the second element in the

comparison. The comparative form is marked by the word *tshaj* following the adjective. The superlative form is marked by the phrase *tshaj plaws* following the adjective. Previous descriptions of the comparative and superlative were incomplete and/or inaccurate.

5.8.5 The use of personal pronouns and anaphoric devices

In §5.5.1 I suggest that contrary to restrictions that have been proposed, there is neither restriction, prohibition, nor dispreference for the use of personal pronouns according to the animacy of their referent. I clarify a previously proposed principle that stated that a referent must be a discourse topic to be eligible for zero anaphoric reference, by proposing instead that eligibility is dependent on the referent's status as activated participant in the discourse. I also suggest that zero anaphora is not purely an option at the discretion of the speaker. Syntactically controlled zero anaphora is obligatory, and this accounts for most instances of zero anaphora. Pragmatically controlled zero anaphora, including topic chaining, is not commonly employed for arguments of the verb; most clauses have noun phrases or pronouns for the subject and object rather than zero anaphora. The situational context may increase the frequency of zero anaphora. Additionally, zero anaphora may not be used to anonymize or background a subject that is unknown or irrelevant.

Serial verb constructions are responsible for most cases of zero anaphora in White Hmong. Zero anaphora in a serial verb construction is syntactically controlled and thus obligatory. The arguments of the verbs are stated once, and then they may not be explicitly repeated. All the verbs in the serialization have access to each of these arguments. To make an argument explicit after it has been introduced is to begin a new clause.

I identify a continuum of referentiality for pronouns and propose that there is overlap in the usage of fully referential pronouns with semireferential and nonreferential pronouns. I propose that nonreferential pronouns are used to anonymize or background a subject that is unknown or irrelevant, a function for which many languages use a passive voice.

There is a phenomenon of redundant reference that is quite common when introducing a pronoun into the discourse: the full noun phrase is first stated, then the coreferential pronoun immediately follows it. The repetition can even add a third layer in the case of

plural referents, according to my texts. I discuss this in §5.5.1. This is a distinctive feature of the Hmong texts, but none of the other scholars comment on it, most likely because it is a feature of the discourse, not of isolated sentences.

5.8.6 The placement of adverbs in the sentence

While it is generally acknowledged that Hmong adverbs can occur in multiple places, the rules known to govern the placement are not sufficient to predict many cases. I suggest that further research using the principles regarding “the layered structure of the clause” as laid out in Van Valin (2005:3-8, 19-21) could lead to codifying such placement rules.

5.8.7 The existence of prepositions and postpositions

There are arguments for and against the existence of prepositions in Hmong and what differentiates them from verbs if, indeed, they are separate word classes. The literature to date does not sufficiently answer the questions. It is my hypothesis that prepositions, as grammaticalized from verbs, do genuinely exist, but further research needs to be done to prove or disprove this hypothesis definitively.

I suggest that Hmong may have either a small class of postpositions or a pragmatic re-ordering of constituents in the prepositional phrase. Additionally, I suggest a preposition not yet recognized by the literature: *tau* when used to indicate duration.

CHAPTER 6

The clause

Rules (209) and (210) represent the simplest representation of the grammar, with respect to the order of major constituents. A sentence consists of a noun phrase followed by a verb phrase. The verb phrase consists of a verb followed by an optional noun phrase and any number of optional prepositional phrases.

(209) $S \rightarrow NP VP$

(210) $VP \rightarrow V (NP) (PP)^*$

The clause can be described by the kind of verb that heads the verb phrase as well as by the complement(s) to the verb, if there are any.

6.1 The existential clause

The simplest clauses possible in White Hmong involve a verb and a single argument. The existential clause is one such clause, involving only a verb and a subject. The constituents in this clause do not follow standard constituent order, but rather the verb precedes the subject. The verb used in such clauses is *muaj* ‘have’ (which can also be used according to its lexical meaning and follows standard constituent order when it does), and the subject follows the verb, as in (211), diagrammed in Figure 8. In this clause, the verb *muaj* ‘have’ begins the clause and is followed by the noun phrase subject *qee thaum kuv nyob ib leeg* ‘a time when I stayed all by myself’.

(211) *Muaj qee thaum kuv nyob ib leeg*
be a.portion.of the.time.when 1SG dwell/be.located one/first CLF.PRSN
‘There was a time when I stayed all by myself,’ [Testimony:47.1]

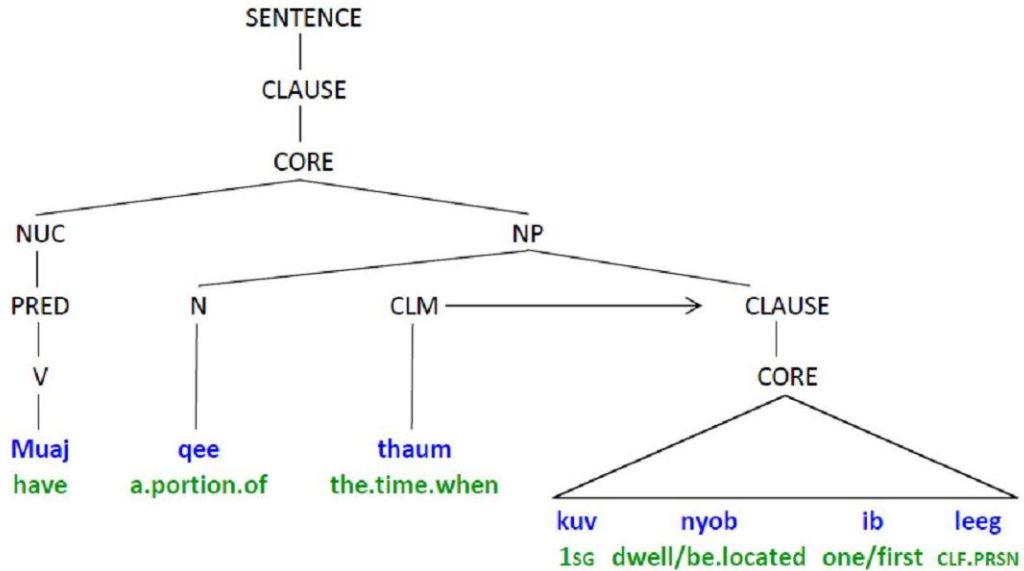


Figure 8. Sentence (211) with an existential verb

Muaj ‘have’ is the existential verb not only when the subject follows it but also at times when the object is the constituent being discussed as existing. In the latter case, the existence of the referent has a bearing on another participant in the discourse, and this other participant is expressed as the subject of the sentence, even though semantically it cannot be seen as possessing the referent expressed as the object of the verb.¹ In (212), the subject, *nws* ‘he’, is only weakly related to the rest of the sentence semantically. It cannot at all be seen as having any agentive role, although it could be interpreted as the Experiencer of the object’s existence. The referent, the speaker’s older brother, is mentioned in the sentence immediately preceding. The point of (212) is not the older brother’s possession of the people returning but rather the existence of these people. The syntax, however, identifies him as the subject of the verb *muaj* ‘have’, and the returning people are the syntactic object of this verb.

(212) *Nws muaj neeg rov qab los.*
 3SG have person return
 ‘There were some people coming back.’ [Escape-TY:59]

¹ Jarkey (1991:46) allows for a non-referential use of the pronoun *nws* in “bare existential clauses” that are not used as a “presentative existential construction.” Based on the context of these clauses, I believe both that an antecedent is identifiable and also that these clauses are not “bare existential clauses” but rather are used presentationally, and thus I believe that they constitute a form not previously described.

Example (213) is similar. The preceding sentences talk about *txhua yam tsav nyob hauv lub ntiajteb no* ‘everything of every kind that lives on the earth’. This is the antecedent to the pronoun *nws* in (213) the subject of the existential clause beginning with *muaj* ‘have’. The object of *muaj*—what is declared to exist—is the remainder of the sentence.

- (213) *Tiamsis nws yeej muaj ib tug tswv yog tus tsim*
 but 3SG INT.TRTH have INDF.ART CLF.ANMT lord be CLF.ANMT create
ib puas tsav yam ntawd
 one/first hundred kind type PX.EVNT
 ‘But there truly is a Lord who is the one who created everything here’ [Sermon:15.1]

6.2 The intransitive clause

The intransitive clause follows the pattern of a noun phrase subject followed by a verb. There are three kinds of intransitive clauses: those with only an intransitive verb (other than the copula), those with a nominal complement, and those with a predicate adjective.

6.2.1 Without a complement

An intransitive clause with a verb (other than the copula) contains a subject followed by a verb, as in (214). The subject *coob nws* ‘many of them’ is followed by an intransitive verb, *poob* ‘fall’. The sentence ends with an optional locative prepositional phrase *rau tom qab* ‘to [place] behind’. Example (214) is diagrammed in Figure 9.

- (214) *Coob nws poob rau tom qab.*
 many 3SG fall to/for afterward/behind
 ‘Many of them were left behind.’ [Escape-K:7]

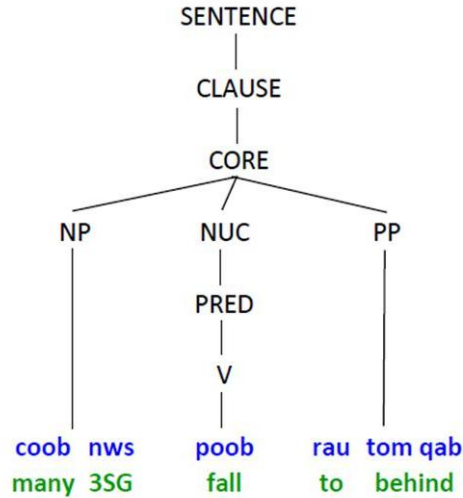


Figure 9. Sentence (214) with an intransitive verb

6.2.2 With a nominal complement

Hmong has two copulas. The one primarily used is *yog* ‘be’; a second verb that can also fill this role “in certain contexts” is *ua*, a verb which usually means ‘make/do’ (Heimbach 1980).² The copula takes a predicate nominal as its complement. Example (215), diagrammed in Figure 10, uses the copula *yog* to identify a particular day; the noun phrase subject *hnuv ntawm* ‘that day’ precedes the copula *yog* ‘be’ which in turn precedes the nominal complement *hnuv kawg* ‘the last day’; the sentence ends with a spatial deictic *ntawm* ‘proximal to the event’ that is peripheral to the core.

(215) *Hnuv ntawm yog hnuv kawg ntawm.*
 day PX.EVNT be day end PX.EVNT
 ‘That day was the last day there.’

[Escape-K:2]

² He does not state the contexts that allow *ua* to be a copula, and I cannot discern them from the corpus of texts.

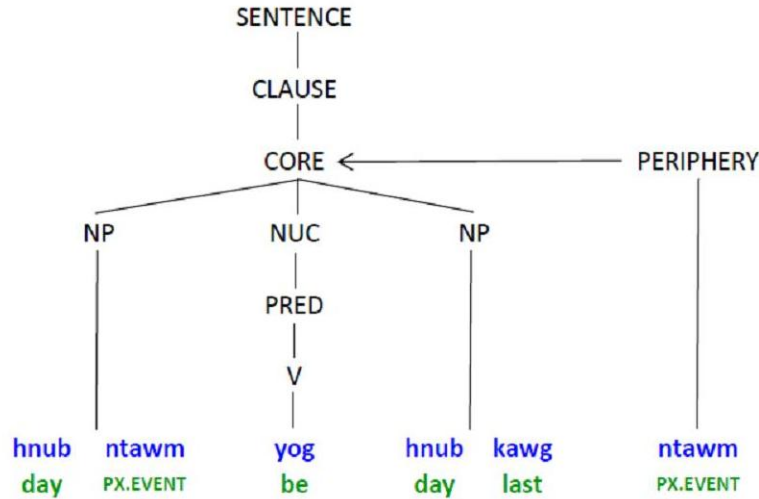


Figure 10. Sentence (215) with a nominal complement

Example (216) uses the copula *ua* twice, once in each clause, to identify the role the speaker’s father had.

(216) a. *Kuv txiv kuj tsis tau ua nom loj*
 1SG father/male also NEG PFV be officer big
 ‘My father wasn’t a high-ranking officer,’ [Escape-K:12.1]

b. *tiamsis ua thabhan*
 but be soldier
 ‘but he was a soldier,’ [Escape-K:12.2]

6.2.3 With a predicate adjective

A clause may have a subject followed by a predicate adjective. A copula is rarely used in this construction. Example (217) identifies *Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb* ‘God’s purpose for us’ as being *loj tshaj* ‘bigger’; no copula is used.

(217) *hais tias Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb tseem loj tshaj li qhov*
 COMP God CLF.GNRL purpose to/for 1PL still big CPTV like thing
peb xav yuav xav tau.
 1PL think/want intend think/want obtain
 ‘God’s purpose for us is still bigger than what we intend to acquire.’ [Sermon:120.2]

Because of the lack of the copula, a number of Hmong specialists regard predicate adjectives as stative verbs (Jarkey 1991:47, Fuller 1988:21, Harriehausen 1990:51). Speaking of the equivalent verb in Miao, *yaos*, Xiong & Cohen (2005:57-58) note its incompatibility with predicate adjectives, which “function independently as the predicate of a sentence” and take the same intensifiers.

A copula, however, is not entirely disallowed in this construction. Example (218) shows the predicate adjective *txomnyem* as the only overt constituent of the sentence ‘[we were] destitute,’ but (219) shows the predicate adjective *txomnyem* ‘destitute’ as following the copula *yog*.

(218) *Txomnyem.*
 destitute
 ‘[We were] destitute.’ [Escape-TY:54]

(219) *Mas yog txomnyem kawg nkaus.*
 TOP be destitute to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘We were most destitute.’ [Escape-K:91]

In (220), the predicate adjective *yoojyim* ‘easy’ follows the copula *yog* in the first clause (220a); and the predicate adjective *nyuab* ‘difficult’ follows the copula *yog* in the second clause (220b).

(220) a. *Kuv xav hais tias nyaj ua luag lwm tus kuj*
 1SG think/want COMP probably be others/3PL another CLF.ANMT also
tej tus kuj yog yoojyim,
 CLF.GRP2 CLF.ANMT also be easy
 ‘I think that probably [for] other people it might be easy,’ [Escape-K:93.1]

b. *tej tus kuj yog nyuab kawg.*
 CLF.GRP2 CLF.ANMT also be difficult to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘but [for] some it is also most difficult.’ [Escape-K:93.2]

The phenomenon that a predicate adjective may follow the copula is specifically purported to be disallowed (Fuller 1988:21, Jarkey 1991:47). It is certainly a rare construction. In the corpus of texts, it is used only by one speaker in only one text, and the

sentences in which it is used are all in the same form and in the same context. The subject in each case is zero anaphoric, and the referent is an entire situation rather than a specific tangible entity. Further research is certainly in order to determine whether this phenomenon can occur under other conditions.

6.2.4 *With a complement prepositional phrase*

In the corpus of texts, the copula *yog* never directly takes a locative of any kind in the texts. Rather, prepositional phrases of location complement the very *nyob* ‘be located’ (which can also mean ‘to live or to dwell [in a certain place]’). Example (221) demonstrates this pattern; the prepositional phrase *rau tebchaws nplog* ‘in the country Laotian’ follows the verb *nyob*, not the verb *yog*.

- (221) *peb nyob rau tebchaws nplog.*
 1PL dwell/be.located to/for country Laotian
 ‘we were living in Laos.’ [Testimony:2.2]

6.3 The transitive clause

The order of constituents for a sentence containing a transitive verb is a noun phrase subject followed by a verb which is followed by an object. In (222), diagrammed in Figure 11, the subject *wb* ‘we’ is followed by the verb *mus ntaus* ‘go thresh’, which, in turn, is followed by the object *nplej* ‘unhulled rice’.

- (222) *wb mus ntaus nplej.*
 1DU go thresh unhulled.rice
 ‘[so] we [could] go thresh the unhulled rice.’ [Escape-TY:33.2]

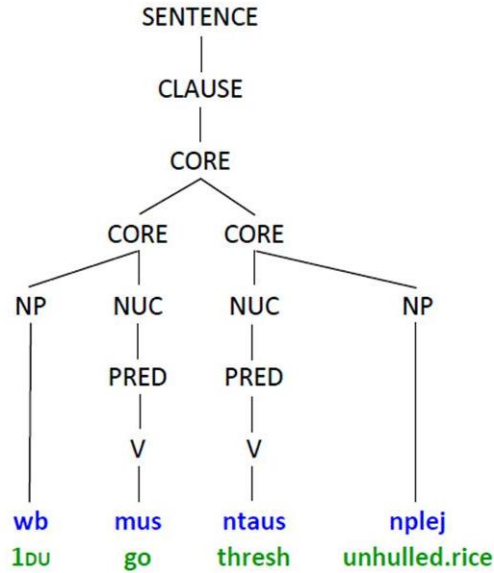


Figure 11. Sentence (222) with a transitive verb

6.4 The ditransitive clause

A transitive verb may have a Recipient or Benefactive. This third argument of the verb is expressed as an oblique prepositional phrase which always follows the object (when present) and is invariably marked by *rau* when the object is explicitly stated (Jarkey 1991:58).³ Example (223), diagrammed in Figure 12, illustrates a Recipient. The subject *nws* ‘she’ is followed by the verb *muab tau* ‘take obtain’, which is followed by the object *ib qho tshuaj* ‘one thing [of] medicine’, which is followed by the oblique prepositional phrase, *rau kuv* ‘for me’.

(223) *Nws muab tau ib qho tshuaj rau kuv.*
 3SG take obtain INDF.ART thing medicine to/for 1SG
 ‘She got a dose of [herbal] medicine for me.’

[Testimony:11]

³ The word *rau* is both a lexical verb, ‘put, place’, and a preposition ‘to/for’ that has grammaticalized from the lexical verb. There are two interpretations of *rau* when it marks a Recipient or Benefactive (called by various schools of grammar “indirect object,” “second object,” or “third argument of the verb”): It may be interpreted as the head of a prepositional phrase, or it may be interpreted as constituting the second verb in a serial verb construction. The arguments for each position are beyond the scope of this thesis. I therefore present the straightforward analysis of a prepositional phrase.

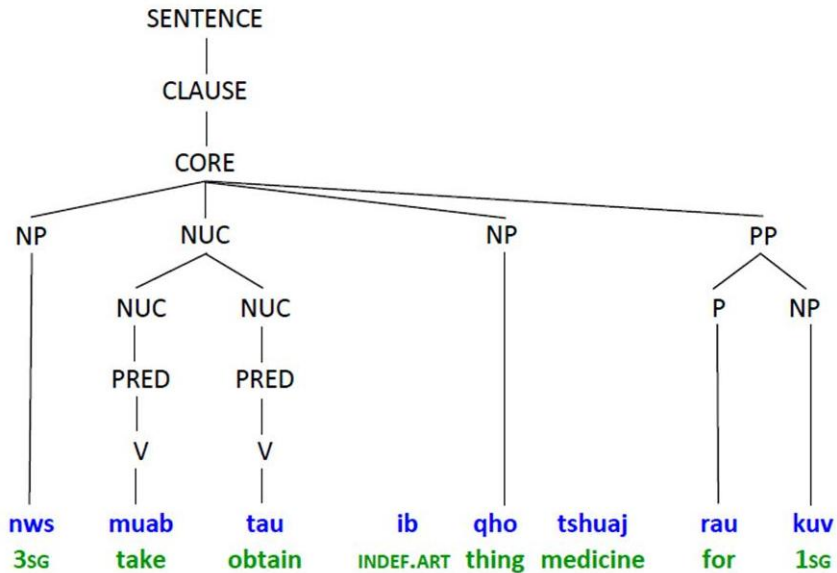


Figure 12. Sentence (223) with an oblique prepositional phrase

6.5 Pragmatically altered order of constituents

The order of constituents may be altered for pragmatic effect. The object can be fronted to put it in the topic position. In (224), the object, *Vajtswv txoj kev hlub*, ‘God’s way of love’, is moved to the left of the subject *peb* ‘we’, and this yields an OSV sentence constituent order.

- (224) *Vajtswv txoj kev hlub peb yeej pauj tsis tau.*
 God CLF.ABST way love 1PL INT.TRTH pay.back NEG able
 ‘God’s way of love we truly cannot repay.’ [Testimony:59]

Fronting the object in this way serves to maintain the topic for two consecutive sentences; God’s love is the subject and thus the topic of the following sentence.

6.6 Questions

The constituent order for indicative sentences and for questions is identical with the exception that an interrogative word is added. For the yes-no question (discussed in §6.6.1), the interrogative word, *puas*, is unique to this construction. For informational

questions (discussed in §6.6.2), the interrogative word replaces and questions the particular sentence constituent for which an answer is sought.

6.6.1 Yes-no questions

A yes-no question is indicated by placing the word *puas* before the verb (Fuller 1986:28, Mottin 1978:88). The text corpus has only indirect questions, but these questions nevertheless use *puas*. Examples (225) and (226) are indirect questions with *puas* before the verbs *paub* ‘know’ and *yog* ‘be’, respectively.

(225) *Nws tau hais rau kuv tias kuv puas paub tswv Yesxus.*
 3SG PFV say to/for 1SG COMP 1SG YNQ know lord Jesus
 ‘She asked me whether I knew the Lord Jesus yet.’ [Testimony:7]

(226) *lawv thiaj hais tias ua peb puas yog neeg nyob*
 3PL then say COMP make/do 1PL YNQ be person dwell/be.located
nram tiag.
 MD.down level.place
 ‘they asked if we were people who lived down the plain (in Vientiane).’ [Escape-K:31.2]

6.6.2 Information questions

Interrogative words are used *in situ* in the clause to form information questions (Fuller 1988:28). Many information questions contain the word *nes* (Heimbach 1980, White 2014:170). Neither the sources I have consulted nor my analysis of the texts has yielded a rule about when *nes* must be included and its position when it is included. In the texts in the corpus it occurs three times, each time in a different location: at the beginning of the sentence, before the verb, and at the end of the sentence. The word *nes* appears in (227) and (228).

(227) *tias kuv xav ua dabtsi nes?*
 COMP 1SG think/want make/do what? Q
 ‘what do I want to do?’ [Sermon:32.2]

- (228) *Nes es peb yuav ua cas nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj*
 Q PLTNS 1PL POS.IRR how?/why? look.for obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose
ntawm peb tus kheej?
 PX.EVNT 1PL REFL
 ‘How then are we supposed to find our purpose in ourselves?’ [Sermon:43]

Dabtsi is an interrogative pronoun Heimbach (1980) used in combination with or without the interrogative word *nes* to form a question, as in (227) and (229), respectively.

- (229) *Lub hom phiaj ntawm peb lub neej uas Vajtswv tsim*
 CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate RLTVZR God create
peb los nyob rau hauv ntiqteb no yog dabtsi
 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for inside earth PX.SPKR be what?
tiag tiag?
 INT.GNRL2 INT.GNRL2
 ‘What really is this purpose [for] our lives which God created us to live for on this earth?’ [Sermon:101]

Li cas and synonymous *ua cas* are adverbial interrogative expressions (Heimbach 1980) that may be used to form a question with or without the interrogative marker *nes*, as in (228) and (230)–(231), respectively.

- (230) *Yog vim li cas cov kwvtij es?*
 be because how?/why? CLF.GRP1 relatives PLTNS
 ‘Why is this, brothers?’ [Sermon:28]

- (231) *Yog li peb yuav ua cas nrhiav tau lub hom phiaj ntawd?*
 be like 1PL POS.IRR how?/why? look.for obtain CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT
 ‘So how will we find this purpose?’ [Sermon:57]

6.7 Conclusions

The conclusions for §6 are necessarily brief, since little in this chapter contributes any new perspective to the body of knowledge. The main contribution of this chapter is the representation of the clause structure in tree diagrams.

Muaj ‘have’ is the existential verb not only when the subject follows it but also at times when the object is the constituent being discussed as existing. In the latter case, the existence of the referent has a bearing on another participant in the discourse, and this

other participant is expressed as the subject of the sentence, even though semantically it cannot be seen as possessing the referent expressed as the object of the verb. Intransitive clauses consist of a subject followed by a verb with optional prepositional phrases or adverbial phrases or clauses. The transitive clause consists of a subject followed by a verb followed by an object. A transitive verb may have an indirect object; indirect objects are marked by the preposition *rau*. Direct objects may be fronted to be topicalized. Binary questions are formed by placing the word *puas* before the verb. Interrogative questions replace the constituent being questioned *in situ* with an interrogative word; they may also include the interrogative word *nes*.

In §6.2.3, I demonstrate that despite statements to the contrary, White Hmong is capable of using the construction of a copula followed by a predicate adjective.

CHAPTER 7

Event structure and discourse analysis

In this chapter I touch on two topics that relate to language structure at a level higher than the sentence. I cannot fully develop these thoughts, and I do not quantify the generalizations I make. I include my observations on these points not as definitive but as suggestive and as topics for further quantitative research. Nevertheless, since one of the propositions I hope to establish in this thesis is that textual analysis leads to conclusions not suggested by the analysis of isolated (especially elicited) sentences, I want to further establish this proposition by mentioning some of the conclusions I began to draw by interaction with the texts.

7.1 Event structure

Amberber, Baker & Harvey (2010) and Jarkey (2010:11-12) grapple with the notion of “event.” They present evidence that the mental bounds of an event are culturally shaped: what may be regarded in one culture as a single event may be regarded in another as multiple events. The language reveals the perceived number of events. Among syntax displays *event* as a multifaceted entity, giving each facet its own semantic representation in the predicate. The abundance of verbs—specifically, the high ratio of verbs to events—gives the verb phrase a complexity that does not fit well in a number theoretical orientations. Additionally, the boundaries of the verb phrase and the clause are difficult to discern at times. If a clause is viewed as a verb plus its arguments, and the arguments are often zero anaphoric, what is left is a series of contiguous verbs, and the relationship between the verbs is not readily apparent without a familiarity with common patterns in verb use. Because of this, one of the more challenging aspects of interlinearizing the texts was breaking them into sentences and then clauses. I found Amberber, Baker, & Harvey’s

(2010:1-12) discussion of the complex (“multi-headed”) predicate to be confirmational of the patterns I had begun to see as I immersed myself in the texts. Foley’s (2010) descriptions and diagrams mapping from syntax to the lexical conceptual structure provided further illumination. The conclusions I have drawn from splitting the texts into sentences and the sentences into clauses are twofold.

First, completely simple sentences are exceedingly rare. Many sentences have multiple clauses (in both coordinate and dependent relationships) and most predicates have multiple verbs.

Second, the bounds of the predicates, clauses, and sentences are not communicated entirely by the grammar. In fact, the grammar seems to communicate the least information about these constituent boundaries; pragmatic choices and discourse features play a much greater role.

As I worked with the texts, patterns began to emerge: subjects are often repeated at the beginnings of sentences but omitted with subsequent clauses and predicates. Overt subjects typically co-occur with a discourse feature such as a sequential marker or a topic marker. Clause chaining is rare between sentences but is normal for juxtaposed coordinate clauses in a single sentence. Multi-predicational clauses are a clause form that is frequently employed. Sentences often end with a spatial deictic, grounding the event in the narrative. Obviously each of these statements could be developed on its own as a section in this paper, but the goals of this thesis constrain the topics. The point is that the descriptions of the grammar available to me were not sufficient for me to determine something as basic as predicate, clause, and sentence boundaries. The sample phrases and sentences in a grammar sketch are useful as a touchstone to which more complex language samples can be compared, but they rarely materialize in real language use.

7.2 Discourse analysis

A principle that my analysis of the corpus of texts clearly presents is the importance of discourse features. Discourse analysis and syntactic analysis are interrelated and inseparable. I would have come to much different conclusions in my analysis on a number of points if I had not begun to notice the discourse features and markers and what they

indicated. As I indicate in §7.1, the discourse features guided my interpretation of sentence and clause boundaries. Additionally, I noted pragmatic patterns in the use of zero anaphora compared to full noun phrases. There are constraints from outside the sentence that influence the structure of the sentence. Natural texts capture these structural choices in context, and the influences are more readily apparent; to allow for the option of free variation becomes less of a necessary recourse. The interplay between discourse features and syntactic structure applies to zero anaphora, as discussed in §5.5.3, and topic chaining, as discussed in §5.5.4.

CHAPTER 8

Contributions of the thesis

The topics of this thesis are wide ranging. The goal of the thesis never was to prove or disprove a particular proposition; rather it has the express purpose of utilizing natural texts to support, clarify, or correct previous analyses, along with the prospect of discovering new patterns in language use. A goal of this nature naturally leads to a wide range of the topics. In this final chapter, I summarize the contributions this thesis has made according to novel proposals, refinement of prior analyses, and clarification of previous explanations. I also comment on the contribution the diagrams make.

8.1 Novel proposals

In §4.1.3, I propose a verb construction, conjoined verbs, that is syntactically distinct from serial verbs but rather displays its own unique form. This construction is composed of two synonymous verbs sharing all arguments and joined by the coordinating conjunction *thiab*.

In §4.3, I propose that there is a class of words, aspect marker, and that certain members of this class, *tau*, *tseem*, and *yeej*, are not the same as the verbs and adverbs that they have grammaticalized from but are rather fully grammaticalized aspect markers that have undergone semantic bleaching. I also differentiate between the various uses of the multiple forms of the word *tau*.

In §4.7.7, I propose a new construction: a reflexive expression consisting of a personal pronoun followed by *tus kheej*.

In §5.1, I propose an indefinite article, *ib*, as a word class in Hmong.

In §5.5.2, I suggest that the two categories of referential and non-referential pronouns are not sufficient; and rather than a dichotomy, I propose a continuum of referential

quality with the new category of semi-referential pronouns between fully referential and non-referential pronouns. I also propose that rather than passive voice, most often the non-referential pronouns are used to background or anonymize the Agent subject.

In §5.7, I suggest the class of postposition, since there are examples in the text in which known prepositions are part of an apparent postpositional phrase; I do, however, allow for a prepositional phrase with constituent reordering for pragmatic effect. Also in §5.7, I propose a new preposition indicating duration, *tau* DUR.

8.2 Refinement of prior analyses

In §5.2.5, I propose two specific restrictions on the use of classifiers in a noun phrase without an overt head noun. That classifiers can be used this way is a fact all agree upon, but the suggestion that there are restrictions on their use this way has not yet been made.

In §5.5.1, I refine the restrictions on the use of personal pronouns to refer to non-human referents. I state the restriction in terms of a dispreference rather than a qualified disallowance as had been previously suggested. I further demonstrate that the qualifying qualities supposed necessary to overcome the disallowance are actually unrelated to the phenomenon and thus not exceptions to a rule at all but rather examples of an allowable but less common syntactic pattern. Further, I suggest that the low frequency of personal pronouns referring to non-human referents may not truly signify even a dispreference but are likely the result of the convergence of other unrelated discourse features pertinent to the semantic roles.

In §6.2.3, I demonstrate that White Hmong is capable of using a copula with a predicate adjective, despite the statements in the literature that restrict the copula to use with a predicate nominal.

8.3 Clarification of previous explanations

In §3.2, I reconcile conflicting statements from the literature about certain constituents in the noun phrase, the adjective and the demonstrative, as well as their order relative to the noun.

In §4.5, I propose two points of clarification regarding negation. First of all, I note that negation of a verb is crucially tied to the type of nexus and level of juncture of the serial verb constructions; no rule regarding the placement of the negative relative to the verb can be written without referencing these factors. Second, I clarify that irrealis verbs do not take external negation but that the negative irrealis modal auxiliary is used instead.

In §5.3.1 I propose a system of deixis that includes not only speaker and interlocutor as primary and secondary reference points but also a tertiary reference point (and actually the one most dominant in the texts): the reference point of the events in the narrative.

In §5.4, I clarify the syntax of the comparative and superlative of the adjective. Previous descriptions of the comparative and superlative were incomplete and/or inaccurate.

In §5.5.3 I clarify that the qualifying factor for a referent to be referred to by zero anaphora is its role as activated participant in the discourse rather than its role as discourse topic. I further differentiate between syntactically and pragmatically controlled zero anaphora and quantify the frequency of the phenomenon of the latter. I clarify that what has been previously supposed to be at the discretion of the speaker in regard to the employment of zero anaphora is actually largely mandated by the syntax, with speaker discretion playing only a minor role. When syntax is not a controlling factor, situational context actually plays a role greater than speaker discretion. When speaker discretion is legitimately an option, zero anaphora is not frequently employed. The roles of syntax, situational context, and speaker discretion have not been delineated before, and the suggestion that discretionary zero anaphora is actually infrequently employed is new.

Also in §5.5.3, I propose that zero anaphora may not be used to anonymize or background a subject that is unknown or irrelevant.

8.4 Concerning diagrams

The main contribution of the Chapter §6 is the representation of the clause structure in tree diagrams. Many include serial verb constructions, and all are drawn according to the patterns presented in Role and Reference Grammar (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:441-476, Van Valin 2005:183-205).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Examples of pronoun use

Example (232) uses the second person singular pronoun *koj* as object.

- (232) *Qhov yoojyim tshaj plaws ces rov qab mus cuag tus uas*
 thing easy SPTV SEQ return go ask.advice CLF.ANMT RLTVZR
tsim koj xwb.
 create 2SG only
 ‘The easiest thing, then, is just to go back and ask the advice of the one who alone
 created you.’ [Sermon:102]

Example (233) uses the second person singular pronoun *koj* twice: once as the shared argument of the verbs—it is the object of *los pab kom* ‘come help cause’ and the subject of the verb *tau* ‘obtain’—and once as a possessive of the noun *kev npau suav* ‘the way of dreams’.

- (233) *los pab kom koj tau raws li koj txoj kev npau suav,*
 come help cause 2SG obtain according.to like 2SG CLF.ABST way dream
 ‘to begin helping yourself obtain your dreams,’ [Sermon:93.2]

Example (234) uses the third person singular pronoun *nws* as the subject of the verb *tham* ‘talk’. The referent of this pronoun is feminine.

- (234) *Nws tau tham txog Yesxus rau kuv.*
 3SG PFV talk about Jesus to/for 1SG
 ‘She talked to me about Jesus.’ [Testimony:13]

Example (235) uses the third person singular pronoun *nws* as the object of the verb *nug* ‘ask’.

- (235) *Kuv kuj tau nug nws.*
 1SG also PFV ask 3SG
 ‘So I asked her [about him].’ [Testimony:8]

Example (236) uses the third person pronoun *nws* to refer to the dish of eggs as the subject of the predicate adjective *zoo* ‘good’.

- (236) *ces nws zoo qab dua rau kuv.*
 SEQ 3SG good/well good.tasting more to/for 1SG
 ‘—then it tastes better to me.’ [Eggs:20.2]

Example (237) uses the second person plural pronoun *nej* as the object of the verbs *nrog nraim* ‘always accompany’ and *pub koob hmoov* ‘bless’.

- (237) a. *Es yog li thov Vajtswv nrog nraim nej,*
 (hesitation) and.then ask God always.accompany 2PL
 ‘And I ask God to be with you,’ [Sermon:128.1]
- b. *thiab thov Vajtswv pub koob hmoov nej cov uas nej koom*
 and ask God bless 2PL CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR 2PL do.together
nrog kuv nyob rau lub sijhawm no.
 with 1SG dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL occasion PX.SPKR
 ‘and ask God to bless you all here with me together at this time.’ [Sermon:128.2]

Example (238) uses the second person plural pronoun *nej* as the object of the preposition *rau* ‘to’.

- (238) *cais kuv qhia rau nej hais tias peb yeej nrhiav tsis tau*
 then 1SG teach to/for 2PL COMP 1PL ASP.HBTL look.for NEG obtain
ib zaug hlo li.
 once INT.at.all
 ‘then I tell you that we will constantly search but never find anything at all.’ [Sermon:35.2]

Example (239) uses the second person plural pronoun *nej* as the shared argument of two verbs. It is the object of the verb *thov caw* ‘invite’ and the subject of the verb *muab* ‘take’.

- (239) *thov caw nej muab Vajtswv txoj lus los*
 ask invite 2PL take God word come
 ‘[I] invite you to take God’s Word,’ [Sermon:7.2]

APPENDIX B

Text: Ar Moua's story

Ar Moua's story is the story of my primary language consultant. Born in the mountains of Laos in the Long Chieng region and growing up there as a native speaker of White Hmong, she witnessed horrors of the Vietnam War. After her village was destroyed, she lived with what remained of her family in the mountain jungles until finally surrendering to the Vietnamese and living first in the state of Xiangkhouang near Phonsavan and then in the city of Vientiane. There she met and married her husband, who was also a White Hmong speaker from her native region. Danger and constant privation prompted her to flee to Thailand with her family. After further suffering in the refugee camps in Thailand, she and her family finally immigrated to America in 1989. She has lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin since her arrival. Now widowed, she has four grown children. Since her infant son became deaf in the refugee camps in Thailand, Ar learned sign language and is fluent in ASL.

Ar Moua's story

Testimony:1

Hnub no kuv yuav los hais kuv cov lus ua Vajtswv tau
day PX.SPKR 1SG POS.IRR come say 1SG CLF.GRP1 word RLTVZR God PFV

pab kuv yav tag dhau los lawm.

help 1SG time.period finish past come PRF

'Today I will tell my story of how God helped me in the past.'

Testimony:2.1

Thaum kuv tsis tau paub Vajtswv,
the.time.when 1SG NEG PFV know God

'When I didn't yet know the Lord,'

Testimony:2.2

peb nyob rau tebchaws nplog.
1PL dwell/be.located to/for country Laotian

'we were living in Laos.'¹

¹ The word *nplog* is the ordinary term the Hmong in Laos use for the Laotians, but elsewhere this is a very derogatory term.

Testimony:3

Kuv muaj mob ntau yam ntau tsav.
1SG have sickness many/much type many/much kind
'I was sick a lot.'

Testimony:4.1

Txog thaum kuv los yuav txiv los
arrive.at the.time.when 1SG come marry also
'Also when I got married,'

Testimony:4.2

kuv muaj mob kawg li,
1SG have sickness to.the.greatest.degree like
'I was still really sick a lot too,'

Testimony:4.3

thiab los muaj me tub menyuam los,
and come have children come
'and I had children,'

Testimony:4.4

kuv cov menyuam los muaj mob kawg li,
1SG CLF.GRP1 child come have sickness to.the.greatest.degree like
'[and] my children got really sick a lot too,'

Testimony:4.5

thiab tsis paub thov tus tswv Yesxus pab—
and NEG know ask CLF.ANMT lord Jesus help
'and I didn't know to ask the Lord Jesus for help—'

Testimony:4.6

tias muaj tus tswv Yesxus hlub yus nkaug nkaus no.
COMP have CLF.ANMT lord Jesus love INDF.PRON INT.GNRL1 INT.CPLT2 PX.SPKR
'that the Lord Jesus who deeply loves everyone here.'

Testimony:5.1

Tiamsis xyoo kuv tuaj txog tebchaws Meskes teb no es
but year 1SG come arrive.at country America land PX.SPKR (hesitation)
'But the year I came here to America,'

Testimony:5.2

kuv paub Yesxus lawm.
1SG know Jesus PRF
'I met Jesus.'

Testimony:6.1

Xyoo ib txhiab cuaj pua cuaj caum tsib yog lub rau hli ntuj
year one thousand nine hundred nine ten five be CLF.GNRL six/sixth month
vis thib ib ntawv kuv tau paub Yesxus,
date one/first PX.EVNT 1SG PFV know Jesus
'The first of June 1995 is the day I met Jesus,'²

² No dictionary corroborates *hli ntuj/hlis ntuj* as 'month', but the texts agree for all the speakers who use it, and the gloss is consistent with the context. The word *hli* means 'moon/month', and the word *ntuj* means

Testimony:6.2

vim muaj ib tug niam tsev nyob
 because have INDF.ART CLF.ANMT woman/mother house dwell/be.located
ntawv kuv ib sab.
 PX.EVNT 1SG INDF.ART side
 ‘because there was a housewife in the house right next door to me.’

Testimony:7

Nws tau hais rau kuv tias kuv puas paub tswv Yesxus.
 3SG PFV say to/for 1SG COMP 1SG YNQ know lord Jesus
 ‘She asked me whether I knew the Lord Jesus yet.’

Testimony:8

Kuv kuj tau nug nws.
 1SG also PFV ask 3SG
 ‘So I asked her [about him].’

Testimony:9

Nws thiaj tau qhia kuv txog tswv Yesxus.
 3SG then PFV teach 1SG about lord Jesus
 ‘Then she taught me about the Lord Jesus.’³

Testimony:10.1

Vim kuv tau mob heev,
 because 1SG obtain sickness severe
 ‘Because I got very sick,’

Testimony:10.2

kuv mus rau tom nws.
 1SG go to/for MD 3SG
 ‘I went over there to her.’

Testimony:11

Nws muab tau ib qho tshuaj rau kuv.
 3SG take obtain INDF.ART thing medicine to/for 1SG
 ‘She got a dose of [herbal] medicine for me.’

Testimony:12

Kuv thiaj xa nws lub khob rov qab rau nws.
 1SG then send 3SG CLF.GNRL cup return to/for 3SG
 ‘Then I returned her cup back to her.’

‘sky’, but the compound is not verifiable.

No dictionary corroborates *vis thib* ‘date’. *Vasthib* is the Laotian word for ‘date’. Tzerge Yang uses the compound *vas nthib*. Kee Fuller (1988) uses the compound *van thib*. Because of the general lack of agreement, I retain Ar’s spelling.

³ I have glossed the expression *thiaj (li)* as ‘then’, which can indicate either sequence or consequence. I have found in the texts that it is more likely to indicate sequence (‘then’) when it follows the sequence marker *ces* and that it consistently indicates consequence (‘consequently’) when it follows the expression *yog li*—literally ‘be like’, or more freely translated ‘that being the case’.

Testimony:13

Nws tau tham txog Yesxus rau kuv.
 3SG PFV talk about Jesus to/for 1SG
 ‘She talked to me about Jesus.’

Testimony:14

Kuv kuj tsis paub tias Yesxus txoj kev hlub.
 1SG also NEG know COMP Jesus CLF.ABST way love
 ‘I also didn’t know about Jesus’ love.’

Testimony:15

Hlub kuv npaum li no tiag.
 care.for 1SG as.much.as PX.SPKR INT.GNRL2
 ‘[That he] loved me this much.’

Testimony:16

Kuv ua Vajtswv tsaug.
 1SG make/do God thanks
 ‘I thank the Lord.’

Testimony:17.1

Thaum nws tau caw kuv kom kuv mus hauv lawv lub tshawj
 the.time.when 3SG PFV invite 1SG cause 1SG go inside 3PL CLF.GNRL church
lawm,
 PRF
 ‘When she invited me to go to their church,’

Testimony:17.2

kuv thiaj tau mus koom nws thawj hnuv.
 1SG then PFV go do.together 3SG the.first.thing day
 ‘then I went with her the first day.’

Testimony:18

Kuv mloog zoo li vaj ntsuj plig tus dawb huv
 1SG listen good/well like lord spirit spirit CLF.ANMT morally.upright undefiled
los nyob rau hauv kuv lub siab.
 come dwell/be.located to/for inside 1SG CLF.GNRL liver
 ‘I listened well, like God’s Holy Spirit came to live inside my heart.’

Testimony:19

Qhib kuv lub siab txais tos Vajtswv txoj lus dawb huv.
 open 1SG CLF.GNRL liver receive take God word morally.upright undefiled
 ‘I opened my heart opened to receive God’s holy Word.’

Testimony:20.1

Thawm ntawv kuv tau pom thiab tau paub hais tias qhov nov yog
 through PX.EVNT 1SG PFV see and PFV know COMP thing PX.SPKR be
txoj hau kev tom ntej kuv yuav tau koj kuv tej
 CLF.ABST principal way ahead 1SG must bring/take 1SG CLF.GRP2
menyuam mus kawm Vajtswv txoj lus,
 child go learn God word
 ‘Through this I understood the way of living [for myself], and that I must bring my

children to learn God's Word,'

Testimony:20.2

thiab yuav tau taug Vajtswv qab,
and must follow God after
'and I must follow after God,'

Testimony:20.3

thiab yuav tau hluv Vajtswv.
and must love God
'and I must love God.'

Testimony:21

Txhua yam txhua tsav ua hnuv tus xibfwb tau hais
each/all type each/all kind make/do day CLF.ANMT pastor/teacher PFV say
ntawv mas, txhua yam ntawv los rau hauv kuv lub siab.
PX.EVNT TOP each/all type writing come to/for inside 1SG CLF.GNRL liver
'Everything the pastor said that day, each point of communication came into my
heart.'⁴

Testimony:22

Zoo nkaus li muaj ib lub tais cug kiag nyob
like have INDF.ART CLF.GNRL dish collect INT.CPLT1 dwell/be.located
hauv kuv lub siab kiag.
inside 1SG CLF.GNRL liver INT.CPLT1
'It was like having a bowl in my heart to completely capture [everything he said].'⁵

Testimony:23

Zoo li tsis tawm khiav li.
like NEG come.out run like
'It was like nothing ran out.'

Testimony:24

Kuv los tsev lawm.
1SG come house PRF
'I came home.'

Testimony:25

Tom qab ib lub vij kuv kuj tau hu rov qab rau tus
afterward/behind one/first week 1SG also PFV call return to/for CLF.ANMT
niam tsev ntawv tias kuv yuav rov qab mus ntsib mus
woman/mother house PX.EVNT COMP 1SG intend return go meet go
koom lub tshawj dua thiab.
do.together CLF.GNRL church more and
'One week later I called this housewife back [to say] that I intended to go meet her to

⁴ The pronunciation *xibfwb* 'teacher' is used consistently throughout the texts for both speakers who use the word. The dictionary lists *xibhwb*. I have noticed an interchange between the phonemes /f/ and /h/ in Ar's pronunciation, but I have not discerned the pattern involved.

⁵ While this sentence and the next contain the word *zoo* 'good/well', Ar and Gaoyeeng say this idiomatic expression is not to be captured exactly in English.

return to church again.⁶

Testimony:26

Kuv xav tias yog thawj zaug.
1SG think/want COMP be the.first.thing time
'I think that was the first time [to go to church].'

Testimony:27

Zaum tom qab no kuv rov qab mus lub vij.
occasion after PX.SPKR 1SG return go week
'The next week I went back the second time.'

Testimony:28.1

Tom qab no los zoo tib yam nkaus li qub,
afterward/behind PX.SPKR come good/well single type look.like the same
'After this everything was good as [before],'

Testimony:28.2

thiab kuv tseem xav tau hauv kuv lub siab tias vuag
and 1SG PROG think/want obtain inside 1SG CLF.GNRL liver COMP wow
tej no es twb yog tej kev ua kuv
CLF.GRP2 PX.SPKR (hesitation) really/already be CLF.GRP2 way RLTVZR 1SG
xav yuav xav tau los ntev lawm.
think/want intend think/want obtain come long PRF
'and I was thinking in my heart that, Wow! this was what I had wanted for a long time.'

Testimony:29

Tiamsis kuv nrhiav tsis tau li hnub no kuv nrhiav tau lawm
but 1SG look.for NEG obtain like day PX.SPKR 1SG look.for obtain PRF
lau.
emphatic

'But I was seeking and not finding—like this day I finally found it!'

Testimony:30.1

Vim rau qhov tias kuv yog ib tug menyuam ntsuag,
because to/for thing COMP 1SG be INDF.ART CLF.ANMT child orphan
'Because I was an orphan,'

Testimony:30.2

kuv tsis muaj niam muaj txiv los cob qhia kuv hais tias
1SG NEG have woman/mother have father/male come train teach 1SG COMP
yuav ua li cas lub neej thiaj zoo.
POS.IRR make/do how?/why? CLF.GNRL life/estate then good/well
'I didn't have a mother [or] father to bring me up and teach me how to live right.'⁷

Testimony:31

Luag tej muaj niam muaj txiv.
others/3PL CLF.GRP2 have woman/mother have father/male
'Others have a mother [and] father.'

⁶ I changed *rou* to *rov*. I believe *rou* was a transcription error.

⁷ The phrase *li cas* is often an interrogative adverb 'how?/why?', but it can also function as a pro-adverb.

Testimony:32

Luag tsis pub cov zoo rau kuv hnov.
others/3PL NEG let CLF.GRP1 good/well to/for 1SG hear
'I wasn't allowed to hear the good things.'

Testimony:33.1

Tiamsis mas kuv xav xav paub cov lus zoo
but TOP 1SG think/want think/want know CLF.GRP1 word good/well
'But I really wanted to know the good words,'

Testimony:33.2

xav hnov qhov zoo xwb.
think/want hear thing good/well only
'wanted to hear only the good things.'

Testimony:34.1

Thaum kuv hnov Vajtswv txoj lus lawm,
the.time.when 1SG hear God word PRF
'When I heard God's Word,'

Testimony:34.2

kuv paub tseeb hais tias qhov ntawv yog qhov uas kuv niaj hnub
1SG know true COMP thing PX.EVNT be thing RLTVZR 1SG every day

taij thiab tos los ntev lawm.
implore and wait come long PRF

'I knew truly that those things were things that I prayed for every day and waited for a long time.'

Testimony:35

Kuv nrhiav tsis tau.
1SG look.for NEG obtain
'I had sought but didn't find.'

Testimony:36

Li hnub no kuv nrhiav tau lawm.
about day PX.SPKR 1SG look.for obtain PRF
'That day I found [it].'

Testimony:37

Yog li Vajtswv tau hlub kuv kawg li.
be like God PFV love 1SG to.the.greatest.degree like
'The Lord loved me so much.'

Testimony:38

Kuv thiaj li los paub Vajtswv rau thaum ntawv.
1SG then come know God to/for the.time.when PX.EVNT
'So I came to know the Lord at that time.'

Testimony:39

Kuv thiaj li txiav txim siab koj kuv cov niam tub los
1SG then make.decision bring/take 1SG CLF.GRP1 woman/mother son come

mus ntseeg Vajtswv.
go believe God

‘So I made a decision to lead my children to believe God.’⁸

Testimony:40

Yog li no thawm kuv paub Yexus lawm.
be like PX.SPKR through 1SG know Jesus PRF
‘Through this I met Jesus.’

Testimony:41

Vajtswv hluv kuv ib ntus dhua ib ntus.
God love 1SG one/first time beyond one/first time
‘The Lord loves me time after time.’

Testimony:42.1

Pab kuv ntau yam ntau tsav hais nej yuav tsis ntseeg
help 1SG many/much type many/much kind say 2PL POS.IRR NEG believe
tias puas muaj tseeb
COMP should have true
‘He helps me in so many ways that you wouldn’t believe are true,’

Testimony:42.2

tiamsis kuv ntseeg thiab cia siab tias Vajtswv yeej hluv kuv
but 1SG believe and depend.on COMP God INT.TRTH love 1SG
kawg nkaus li.
to.the.greatest.degree like
‘but I believe and trust that God truly loves me supremely.’

Testimony:43.1

Txij thaum kuv paub Vajtswv los lawm
since the.time.when 1SG know God come PRF
‘Since the time when I came to know the Lord,’

Testimony:43.2

Vajtswv pab kuv ntau yam ntau tsav.
God help 1SG many/much type many/much kind
‘God has helped me so many different ways.’

Testimony:44.1

Txawm yog kuv taj thiab tsis nco qab thov los
even if 1SG implore and NEG remember ask come
‘Even if I pray and don’t remember to ask,’

Testimony:44.2

Vajtswv yeej muab pub dawb rau kuv.
God INT.TRTH take give morally.upright to/for 1SG
‘the Lord truly gives me what is right for me.’

⁸ The exact expression *txiav txim siab* is not found in the dictionary. *Txiav* means ‘decide’, *txim* means ‘bind’, and *siab* means ‘liver’.

Testimony:45

Yam kuv tsis paub xav tag nrho li!
type 1SG NEG know think/want completely/intensely like
'I can't at all comprehend anything like this!'

Testimony:46.1

Thaum kuv tau txais Vajtswv txoj koob hmoov lawm,
the.time.when 1SG PFV receive God CLF.ABST blessing PRF
'When I receive the Lord's blessing,'

Testimony:46.2

kuv yeej niaj hnuv nco ntsoov tias muaj tus tswv hluv thiab tsom
1SG ASP.HBTL every day remember COMP have CLF.ANMT lord love and focus
kwm kuv txhua txhua hnuv,
care.for 1SG each/all each/all day
'every day I always remember well that the Lord loves and protects me each and every day,'

Testimony:46.3

thiab Yexus hluv kuv kawg nkaus li,
and Jesus love 1SG to.the.greatest.degree like
'and Jesus loves me so much,'

Testimony:46.4

thiab hluv kuv cov menyuam,
and love 1SG CLF.GRP1 child
'and he loves my children,'

Testimony:46.5

thiab hluv tag nrho peb sawvdaws kawg nkaus.
and love completely/intensely 1PL everyone to.the.greatest.degree
'and he completely loves all of us deeply.'

Testimony:47.1

Muaj qee thaum kuv nyob ib leeg
be a.portion.of the.time.when 1SG dwell/be.located one/first CLF.PRSN
'There was a time when I stayed all by myself,'

Testimony:47.2

kuv kuj tau quaj rau Vajtswv tias Vajtswv txoj kev hluv loj
1SG also PFV weep to/for God COMP God CLF.ABST way love big
kawg nkaus.
to.the.greatest.degree INT.CPLT2
'and I wept to God that God is the way of incredibly great love.'

Testimony:48

Kuv hluv tsis tau Vajtswv.
1SG love NEG able God
'I can't love God.'

Testimony:49

Yog kuv tib leeg.
be 1SG single CLF.PRSN
'I am [only] one person.'

Testimony:50.1

Kuv xav li cas kuv thiaj yuav ua tau li Vajtswv
1SG think/want how?/why? 1SG then POS.IRR make/do able like God
ua,
make/do
'I want to be able to do like what the Lord does,'

Testimony:50.2

tabsis kuv yeej ua tsis tau los.
but 1SG INT.TRTH make/do NEG able come
'but I truly can't do this.'

Testimony:51

Vajtswv tseem hlub kuv kawg nkaus.
God still love 1SG to.the.greatest.degree
'God still loves me so much.'

Testimony:52.1

Txhua yam tshua tsav ntawm no kuv zoo siab
each/all type like kind right.here 1SG good/well liver
'In everything I am happy here,'

Testimony:52.2

thiab kuv ua Vajtswv tsaug thaum kuv los paub Vajtswv lawm.
and 1SG make/do God thanks the.time.when 1SG come know God PRF
'and I thank God [for] the time when I came to know him.'

Testimony:53.1

Txawm kuv tsis ua ib thaj neeb los,
even 1SG NEG make/do INDF.ART CLF.SPRT shaman come
'Even [though] I don't do any shaman rituals [anymore],'

Testimony:53.2

kuv tej mob zoo tag nrho.
1SG CLF.GRP2 sickness good/well completely/intensely
'I completely recover from my sicknesses.'

Testimony:54.1

Txawm yog kuv tej me tub menyuam muaj mob los,
even if 1SG CLF.GRP2 children have sickness come
'Even if my children get sick,'

Testimony:54.2

kuv thov Vajtswv los.
1SG ask God come
'I pray to the Lord.'

Testimony:55

Vajtswv hluv thiab teb kuv tej lus taij thov tag nrho.
God love and answer 1SG CLF.GRP2 word implore ask completely/intensely
'God loves me and completely answers my prayers.'

Testimony:56.1

Kuv tau cog lus rau Vajtswv tias muaj ib hnuv twg
1SG PFV promise word to/for God COMP have INDF.ART day which
yuav tau mus hais Vajtswv txoj lus,
must go say God word
'I promised the Lord that there would be a day when I must proclaim God's Word,'

Testimony:56.2

ua lus povthawj pub rau lwm leej lwm tus tsis
make/do word guarantor give to/for another CLF.PRSN another CLF.ANMT NEG
tau paub thiab tsis tau hnov.
PFV know and NEG PFV hear
'giving my testimony to anyone and everybody who has not known and has not heard.'

Testimony:57.1

Es tseem ntsib txoj kev txomnyem li kuv no,
(hesitation) still meet CLF.ABST way destitute like 1SG PX.SPKR
'I still meet the destitute here like I was,'

Testimony:57.2

tabsis hnuv no Yexus pab es dim tag nrho txhua
but day PX.SPKR Jesus help (hesitation) release completely/intensely each/all
yam los lawm.
type come PRF
'but today Jesus has helped—completely redeemed me.'

Testimony:58

Vajtswv hluv peb kawg nkaus.
God love 1PL to.the.greatest.degree
'God loves us so much.'

Testimony:59

Vajtswv txoj kev hluv peb yeej pauj tsis tau.
God CLF.ABST way love 1PL INT.TRTH pay.back NEG able
'God's way of love we truly cannot repay.'

Testimony:60

Vajtswv txoj kev hluv yeej tsis suav nuj tsis suav nqi rau
God CLF.ABST way love ASP.HBTL NEG count debt NEG count debt to/for
peb ib zaug li.
1PL once like
'God's way of love never once expects us to pay our debt.'

Testimony:61

Kuv ua kuv tus Vajtswv tsaug.
1SG make/do 1SG CLF.ANMT God thanks
'I give my God thanks.'

Testimony:62

Kuv tus Vajtswv muaj lub fwjchim loj kawg nkaus.
 1SG CLF.ANMT God have CLF.GNRL authority big to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘My God has greatest authority,⁹’

Testimony:63

Hlub thiab tsom kwm peb txhua tus tag nrho
 care.for and focus care.for 1PL each/all CLF.ANMT completely/intensely
huv tibs.
 altogether
 ‘He completely loves and cares for us all—absolutely everybody.^{10, 11}’

Testimony:64

Kuv muab kuv cov lus no qhia sau tseg rau peb sawvdaws
 1SG take 1SG CLF.GRP1 word PX.SPKR teach write leave to/for 1PL everyone
paub tias Vajtswv txoj kev hluv mas loj tshaj plaws.
 know COMP God CLF.ABST way love TOP big SPTV
 ‘I give this testimony of mine in writing to us all to let us all know that God’s way is the greatest love.’

Testimony:65

Peb yuav pauj tsis tau Vajtswv lub txiaj ntsim ib qho li.
 1PL POS.IRR pay.back NEG able God CLF.GNRL gracious.gift at.all
 ‘We will never at all be able to repay such a gracious gift!’

⁹ The standard spelling for *fwjchim* is *hwjchim*. As noted earlier, this is another example of an interchange of the phonemes /h/ and /f/.

¹⁰ I changed *huv tibs* to *huv tibs* to reflect standard spelling and pronunciation. The recording reflects the standard pronunciation.

¹¹ I changed *kwum* to *kwm*. I believe *kwum* was a transcription error.

APPENDIX C

Text: Everything starts with God

The texts “Everything starts with God,” “Tzerge Yang’s story,” and “How to make Hmong eggs” (Appendices C through E) are by Tzerge (Jay) Yang, the primary language consultant to work with White (2014). White says of his consultant: “Tzerge (Jay) Yang [is] a native speaker of White Hmong originally from Xieng Khouang province, Laos who currently lives in Fresno, California.” (2014:1). These texts are appendices in (White 2014). By all appearances, the texts are transcriptions of oral recordings, but this point cannot be verified. The texts are divided into paragraphs, and while the free translation is divided into sentences, the Hmong portion is not; there is, in fact, no punctuation in the base line of the texts. The spelling is standard orthography except for capitalization conventions. I have added all the punctuation and sentence capitalization used in these texts.

Everything Starts with God

Sermon:1

Nyob *zoo.*
dwell/be.located good/well
'Hello.'

Sermon:2

Ib tsoom niam txiv kwvtij neejtsa hmov thiab tshua
everybody woman/mother father/male relatives in.laws care.for and like
ntawm no kuv yog xibfwb Txawjzeb Yaj.
right.here 1SG be pastor/teacher Tzerge Yang
'Each mother, father, relative, in-law, and loved one here, I am Teacher Tzerge Yang.'¹

Sermon:3

Kuv yog tus yuav tuaj muab Vajtswv txoj lus rau peb sawvdaws
1SG be CLF.ANMT POS.IRR come take God word to/for 1PL everyone

¹ Heimbach (1980) allows for this translation of *ib tsoom* as ‘everybody’, but it is different from any listed in the dictionary. The full expression is *ib zeej tsoom neeg* ‘all persons’.

The pronunciation *xibfwb* teacher is used consistently throughout the texts for both speakers who use the word. The dictionary lists *xibhwb*. I have noticed an interchange between the phonemes /f/ and /h/ in Ar’s pronunciation, but I have not discerned the pattern involved.

sib cog mloog nyob rau lub caij lub nyoog
RECP bring/take listen dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL time CLF.GNRL time

no.

PX.SPKR

‘I am the one who will bring God’s Word to all of us who are listening at this time.’

Sermon:4.1

Kuv vam thiab cia siab hais tias nej sawvdaws yuav koom nrog kuv
1SG trust and depend.on COMP 2PL everyone POS.IRR do.together with 1SG

thiab nrog kuv nyob es
and with 1SG dwell/be.located PLTNS

‘I hope and trust that everyone will join with me, and stay with me²’

Sermon:4.2

peb sib cog kawm Vajtswv txoj lus— seb Vajtswv txoj lus hais
1PL RECP bring/take learn God word NSPC God word say

li cas rau peb es.
how?/why? to/for 1PL PLTNS

‘[as] we take God’s Word and learn from each other—whatever God’s Word tells us.’³

Sermon:5

Peb thiaj li yuav paub coj los ua peb lub neej
1PL then POS.IRR know bring/take come make/do 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate

kom muaj nuj nqis nyob rau ntawm Vajtswv.
cause have important dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT God

‘We then will know [how] we ought to lead our lives as important for God.’⁴

Sermon:6.1

Hnub no kuv coj Vajtswv txoj lus tuaj
day PX.SPKR 1SG bring/take God word come

‘Today I bring God’s Word,’

Sermon:6.2

yog muaj lub ntsiab hais li no hais tias txhua yam tsav yog
be have CLF.GNRL essence say like PX.SPKR COMP each/all type kind be

pib ntawm Vajtswv los.
start PX.EVNT God come

‘[my message] having the title, “Everything starts with God.”’

Sermon:7.1

Yog nej muaj Vajtswv txoj lus
if 2PL have God word

‘If you have God’s Word,’

² I changed *vaj* to *vam* in accordance with Ar and Heimbach (1980).

³ The phrase *li cas* is often an interrogative adverb ‘how?/why?’, but it can also be function as a pro-adverb.

⁴ White (2014) glosses *núj nqis* as ‘important’. No dictionaries corroborate this. Xiong (2005) lists *núj nqis* as ‘debt’. However, ‘important’ is the gloss that best fits the context.

I have glossed the expression *thiaj (li)* as ‘then’, which can indicate either sequence or consequence. I have found in the texts that it is more likely to indicate sequence (‘then’) when it follows the sequence marker *ces* and that it consistently indicates consequence (‘consequently’) when it follows the expression *yog li*—literally ‘be like’, or more freely translated ‘that being the case’.

Sermon:7.2

thov caw nej muab Vajtswv txoj lus los
ask invite 2PL take God word come
'[I] invite you to take God's Word,'

Sermon:7.3

thiab peb nthuav rau phau ntawv Khaulauxais tshooj ib nqi
and 1PL open to/for CLF.STCK writing Colossians chapter one/first verse
kaum rau es.
ten/tenth six/sixth PLTNS
'and let's open to the book of Colossians chapter one verse sixteen.'⁵

Sermon:8

Peb mus nyeem ua ke seb Vajtswv txoj lus hais li cas rau peb es.
1PL go read together NSPC God word say how?/why? to/for 1PL PLTNS
'Let us read together what God's Word says to us.'⁶

Sermon:9

Peb mam li ho pib kawm ua ke mus nawb yom.
1PL will/need so start learn together go IMP TAG2
'We'll start to learn together—okay?'

Sermon:10

Nyob rau hauv Khaulauxais tshooj ib nqi kaum
dwell/be.located to/for inside Colossians chapter one/first verse ten/tenth
rau nws hais li no hais tias:
six/sixth 3SG say like PX.SPKR COMP
'In Colossians chapter one verse sixteen, it says this: [Text read from Colossians 1:16]'

Sermon:11

Ib tsoom niam txiv kwvtij neejtsa, Vajtswv txoj lus hais
everybody woman/mother father/male relatives in.laws God word say
li cas nyob rau hauv Khaulauxais tshooj ib nqi
how?/why? dwell/be.located to/for inside Colossians chapter one/first verse
kaum rau?
ten/tenth six/sixth
'All my brethren, what does God's Word say in Colossians chapter one verse sixteen?'

Sermon:12.1

Vajtswv txoj lus tau hais tias Vajtswv yog tus tsim ib puas
God word PFV say COMP God be CLF.ANMT create one/first hundred
tsav yam tag nrho huv tibsi
kind type completely/intensely altogether
'God's Word says that God is the one who created everything, absolutely everything,'

⁵ I standardized the spelling of *phauv* to *phau*; there are no alternate spellings, and no tone sandhi is indicated.

⁶ The compound *ua ib ke* 'do one way' is how Heimbach (1980) writes 'together', in contrast to *ua ke*, as it is here.

Sermon:12.2

tsis hais saum tej nraub ntug lossis nyob hauv lub
whether over CLF.GRP2 sky or dwell/be.located inside CLF.GNRL
ntiajteb no,
earth PX.SPKR
'whether above the sky or on this earth,⁷'

Sermon:12.3

tsis hais tej qhov muag pom thiab tej qhov muag tsis pom,
whether CLF.GRP2 thing eye see and CLF.GRP2 thing eye NEG see
'whether things the eye sees or things the eye does not see,'

Sermon:12.4

tsis hais tej tim tswv lossis tej muaj koob meej thiab cov
whether CLF.GRP2 officials or CLF.GRP2 have fame and CLF.GRP1
uas muaj meej mom.
RLTVZR have power
'whether the officials or the ones that have fame and who have power.'

Sermon:13

Vajtswv yog tus tsim ib puas tsav yam.
God be CLF.ANMT create one/first hundred kind type
'God is the one who created everything.'

Sermon:14.1

Yog li qhov ntawd qhia rau peb hais tias txhua yam tsav
be like thing PX.EVNT teach to/for 1PL COMP each/all type kind
nyob hauv lub ntiajteb no tsis yog av luaj dag tawg—
dwell/be.located inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR NEG be come.by.itself
'So this teaches us that everything of every kind that lives on the earth did not come about by itself—'

Sermon:14.2

es cia li tsim muaj los xwb.
(hesitation) let like create have come only
'or just get created by itself.'

Sermon:15.1

Tiamsis nws yeej muaj ib tug tswv yog tus tsim
but 3SG INT.TRTH have INDF.ART CLF.ANMT lord be CLF.ANMT create
ib puas tsav yam ntawd
one/first hundred kind type PX.EVNT
'But there truly is a Lord who is the one who created everything here'

Sermon:15.2

tsis tas li ntawd xwb—
NEG finish like PX.EVNT only
'not only these things—'

⁷ The gloss of *tsis hais* 'whether' is my own; it fits the context in this text as in other translations I have read. It consistently introduces lists of disparate items. I cannot find a dictionary to corroborate it. The individual words, however, *tsis* 'not' and *hais* 'say' do not contribute to the meaning of the sentence.

Sermon:15.3

txawm yog peb los.
even be 1PL come
'even us.'

Sermon:16

§Vajtswv yog tus tsim peb huv tibs thiab yom.
God be CLF.ANMT create 1PL altogether and TAG2
'God is the one who created all of us—right?'

Sermon:17.1

Yog li ib tsoom niam txiv kwvtij neejtsa sawvdaws, yog
be like everybody woman/mother father/male relatives in.laws everyone if
hais tias koj thiab kuv, peb, tsis ntseeg lossis tsis paub hais tias Vajtswv
COMP 2SG and 1SG 1PL NEG believe or NEG know COMP God
tsim ib puas tsav yam
create one/first hundred kind type
'So all my brethren, everybody, if you and I—we—don't believe or don't know, that
God created everything,'

Sermon:17.2

cais peb yuav saib peb lub neej tsis muaj nuj nqis
then 1PL POS.IRR look.at 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate NEG have important
'then we will view our life as unimportant;'

Sermon:17.3

thiab peb yuav saib ib puas tsav yam hauv lub ntiajteb
and 1PL POS.IRR look.at one/first hundred kind type inside CLF.GNRL earth
no tsis muaj nuj nqis dabtsi rau peb hlo li.
PX.SPKR NEG have important what? to/for 1PL INT.at.all
'and we will view everything on this earth as not having any importance at all.'⁸

Sermon:18.1

Yog hais tias thaum zoo li no lawm
if COMP the.time.when good/well like PX.SPKR PRF
'If times are good like this,'

Sermon:18.2

cais peb yuav tsis paub hluv thiab txuag ib puas tsav yam
then 1PL POS.IRR NEG know love and care.for one/first hundred kind type
uas tshwm sim nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb
RLTVZR be.born/appear dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth
no.
PX.SPKR
'then we will not know [how] to love and take care of all the things which appear here
on earth.'

⁸ The word *dabtsi* is usually an interrogative 'what?', but it does not always mean this; at other times it is an indefinite pronoun 'anything'.

Sermon:18.3

peb yuav muab siv ua lwj ua liam pov tseg kom
 1PL POS.IRR take use make/do destroy make/do ruined throw.away cause

tag rau peb hnuv no xwb.
 finish to/for 1PL day PX.SPKR only

‘We will ruin, destroy, waste [these things] on just ourselves, just for today.’

Sermon:19

Peb tsis pom tagkis hais tias muaj nuj nqis dabtsi ntxiv rau koj
 1PL NEG see tomorrow/morning COMP have important what? add to/for 2SG

thiab rau kuv peb lawm.
 and to/for 1SG 1PL PRF

‘We won’t see tomorrow—what is more important for you and for me—us.’⁹

Sermon:20

ib tsoom niam txiv kwvtij neejtsa kuv xav kom
 everybody woman/mother father/male relatives in.laws 1SG think/want cause

koj thiab kuv peb paub zoo li no hais tias lub hom phiaj
 2SG and 1SG 1PL know good/well like PX.SPKR COMP CLF.GNRL purpose

uas peb los nyob rau hauv ntiaj teb no tsis yog
 RLTVZR 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for inside earth PX.SPKR NEG be

rau peb tus kheej nyob ib pliag xwb nawb mog.
 to/for 1PL REFL dwell/be.located one/first moment only TAG1

‘Everyone, all my loved ones, I want you and me—us—to understand this, that the purpose for which we live on this earth is not for ourselves for the moment only—you see?’¹⁰

Sermon:21

Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb lub neej, nws zoo tshaj
 God CLF.GNRL purpose to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate 3SG good/well CPTV

txhua yam tsav uas nyob rau hauv peb lub
 each/all type kind RLTVZR dwell/be.located to/for inside 1PL CLF.GNRL

neej uas peb niaj hnuv ua nov.
 life/estate RLTVZR 1PL every day make/do PX.SPKR

‘God’s purpose for our lives, it is better than everything is in this life every day here.’

Sermon:22

Nws zoo tshaj peb tsev neeg.
 3SG good/well CPTV 1PL CLF.HSHD person

‘It’s better than our family.’

Sermon:23

Nws zoo tshaj peb lub hom phiaj thiab peb lub hwjchim uas
 3SG good CPTV 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose and 1PL CLF.GNRL authority RLTVZR

⁹ I see no reason for tone change of *taskis* to *tagkis* in this context, but the speakers all agree, so I retain the original spelling.

¹⁰ No dictionaries corroborate the gloss of *nawb mog* as a tag question. I retain White’s (2014) gloss. It fits the context consistently.

peb niaj hnuv ua npauv suav xav yuav xav tau
 1PL every day make/do dream think/want intend think/want obtain
nyob rau yav pem ntej.
 dwell/be.located to/for time.period MD.up before
 ‘It’s better than our purpose and our glory which we constantly attempt to acquire
 from the the beginning till now.’

Sermon:24.1

Yog peb xav paub txog hais tias yog vim li cas peb ho los
 if 1PL think/want know about COMP be because how?/why? 1PL so come
nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb no,
 dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR
 ‘If we want to find out why we came to live on this earth,’

Sermon:24.2

peb yuav tsum los pib nrhiav peb tus kheej nyob rau ntawm
 1PL must come start look.for 1PL REFL dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT
Vajtswy,
 God
 ‘we must begin by searching for ourselves in God,’

Sermon:24.3

vim hais tias nws tsim peb los ntawm nws lub hom phiaj,
 because COMP 3SG create 1PL come PX.EVNT 3SG CLF.GNRL purpose
 ‘because he created us to arrive at his purpose’

Sermon:24.4

thiab tsim peb los rau nws lub hom phiaj,
 and create 1PL come to/for 3SG CLF.GNRL purpose
 ‘and he created us for His purpose,’

Sermon:24.5

tsis yog los rau peb lub hom phiaj nawb mog.
 NEG be come to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose TAG1
 ‘not for our purpose—you see?’

Sermon:25.1

Yog peb nrhiav ntawm peb xwb
 if 1PL look.for PX.EVNT 1PL only
 ‘If we search only in ourselves,’

Sermon:25.2

yeej tsis tau
 INT.TRTH NEG obtain
 ‘we certainly won’t find,’

Sermon:25.3

vim peb tsis yog tsim peb los rau peb lub hom phiaj.
 because 1PL NEG be create 1PL come to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose
 ‘because we are not [the ones] who created ourselves for our purpose.’

Sermon:26

Peb niaj hnub nrhiav peb lub hom phiaj ntawm peb lub
 1PL every day look.for 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT 1PL CLF.GNRL
neej los nyob rau hauv ntiajteb.
 life/estate come dwell/be.located to/for inside earth
 ‘Every day we look for our purpose in our life on this earth.’

Sermon:27.1

No yog dabtsi tiag tiag—
 PX.SPKR be what? INT.gnrl2 INT.gnrl2
 ‘What is this really—’

Sermon:27.2

tau ntau xyoo ntau tiam los lawm—
 obtain many/much year many/much generation come PRF
 ‘after so many years and so many generations have come—’

Sermon:27.3

peb nrhiav tsis tau thiab tsis paub txog li.
 1PL look.for NEG obtain and NEG know arrive.at like
 ‘[that] we search for and don’t find and don’t arrive at knowledge [of]?’

Sermon:28

Yog vim li cas cov kwvtij es?
 be because how?/why? CLF.GRP1 relatives PLTNS
 ‘Why is this, brothers?’

Sermon:29

Vim peb nrhiav yuam kev lawm.
 because 1PL look.for go.the.wrong.way PRF
 ‘[It is] because we have searched in the wrong way.’

Sermon:30

Peb thiaj nrhiav tsis tau lossis tsis paub hais tias yog vim li cas
 1PL then look.for NEG obtain or NEG know COMP be because how?/why?
peb hom los nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb no.
 1PL so come dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR
 ‘We search [but] don’t find or don’t know that it is the reason we came to live on this earth.’¹¹

Sermon:31.1

Peb pib nrhiav peb lub hom phiaj li no
 1PL start look.for 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose like PX.SPKR
 ‘We start looking for our purpose like this.’

Sermon:31.2

peb nrhiav ntawm peb tus kheej ua ntej.
 1PL look.for PX.EVNT 1PL REFL make/do before
 ‘we search in ourselves first.’

¹¹ White (2014) differs on the role and meaning of the final clause, translating it, ‘that’s why we cannot find it or have no knowledge of it—why we came to live in this world.’

Sermon:32.1

Peb nug peb tus kheej li no
1PL ask 1PL REFL like PX.SPKR
'We ask ourselves [questions] like this:'

Sermon:32.2

tias kuv xav ua dabtsi nes?
COMP 1SG think/want make/do what? Q
'what do I want to do?'

Sermon:33

Kuv yuav ua kuv lub neej zoo li cas?
1SG POS.IRR make/do 1SG CLF.GNRL life/estate good/well how?/why?
'How will I live a good life?'

Sermon:34

Kuv cov hom phiaj lossis kuv cov kev npau suav rau kuv lub
1SG CLF.GRP1 purpose or 1SG CLF.GRP1 way dream to/for 1SG CLF.GNRL
nej nyob yav tom ntej nes yog dabtsi tiag?
life/estate dwell/be.located time.period MD before Q be what? INT.gnr12
'What really are my purposes or my ways of dreaming for my life beforehand?'

Sermon:35.1

Yog hais tias peb tsuas nrhiav peb lub neej ntawm peb tus kheej
if COMP 1PL only look.for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate PX.EVNT 1PL REFL
xwb
only
'If we only look for our life only in ourselves,'

Sermon:35.2

cais kuv qhia rau nej hais tias peb yeej nrhiav tsis tau ib zaug
then 1SG teach to/for 2PL COMP 1PL ASP.HBTL look.for NEG obtain once
hlo li.
INT.at.all
'then I tell you that we will constantly search but never find anything at all.'

Sermon:36.1

Vajtswv txoj lus hais li no tias,
God word say like PX.SPKR COMP
'God's Word says it this way:'

Sermon:36.2

Vajtswv yog tus tswjhwm peb lub neej
God be CLF.ANMT control 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate
'God is the one [who] controls our lives,'

Sermon:36.3

thiab Vajtswv yog tus tswjhwm ib puas tsav yam uas muaj
and God be CLF.ANMT control one/first hundred kind type RLTVZR have
sia nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb no nyob
life dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR dwell/be.located

rau hauv Yauj tshoom kaum ob kaum.
 to/for inside Job chapter ten/tenth two/second ten/tenth
 ‘and God is the one [who] controls everything that has life on this earth, in Job
 chapter 12 [verse] ten.’

Sermon:37

Yog li kuv xav kom peb nkag siab rau nqi vaj lu kub no
 be like 1SG think/want cause 1PL understand to/for verse Bible PX.SPKR
hais tias Vajtswv yog tus ua ib puas tsav yam ntawd.
 COMP God be CLF.ANMT make/do one/first hundred kind type PX.EVNT
 ‘So then I want to help us all understand this Bible verse [which] says that God is the
 one who does everything here.’

Sermon:38

Yog li peb yuav tsum los nrhiav ntawm nws xwb.
 be like 1PL must come look.for PX.EVNT 3SG only
 ‘So then we must begin looking only for him here.’

Sermon:39

Peb thiaj li nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj.
 1PL then look.for obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose
 ‘Then we find our purpose.’

Sermon:40

Twb yeej muaj ntau phau ntawv, ntau liab
 really/already INT.TRTH have many/much CLF.STCK writing many/much CLF
nam thiab ntau lub rooj cob qhia rau peb hais tias peb
 movie and many/much CLF.GNRL meeting train teach to/for 1PL COMP 1PL
yeej nrhiav tsis tau peb lub hom phiaj ntawm peb lub
 ASP.HBTL look.for NEG obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT 1PL CLF.GNRL
neeg los ntawm peb tus kheej ib zaug hlo li.
 person come PX.EVNT 1PL REFL once INT.at.all
 ‘Truly there already are so many books, so many movies, and so many conferences for
 us that we constantly look for but never find the purpose in ourselves as people.¹²’

Sermon:41

Tej zaum peb twb muaj coob tug sim tas lawm.
 maybe 1PL really/already have many portion try finish PRF
 ‘Maybe there are many of us who have tried it already.’

Sermon:42

Peb twb tsis yog tus tsim peb.
 1PL really/already NEG be CLF.ANMT create 1PL
 ‘We really aren’t the ones who created ourselves.’

Sermon:43

Nes es peb yuav ua cas nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj
 Q PLTNS 1PL POS.IRR how?/why? look.for obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose

¹² The gloss for *liab nam* is uncertain. White (2014) notes that he is uncertain of the gloss for *liab*, and he glosses *nam* as ‘movie’, but no dictionaries corroborate this. Ar corroborates this.

ntawm peb tus kheej?

PX.EVNT 1PL REFL

‘How then are we supposed to find our purpose in ourselves?’

Sermon:44

Pivtxwv: koj sim saib seb ib tug neeg uas nws

example 2SG try look.at whether.or.not INDF.ART CLF.ANMT person RLTVZR 3SG

tsim ib rab riam lossis ib rab taus lossis rab hlau.

create INDF.ART CLF.TL knife or INDF.ART CLF.TL axe or CLF.TL hoe

‘[For] example, try watching someone who creates a knife or an axe or a hoe.’¹³

Sermon:45

Yog vim li cas nws ho tsim tej cuabyeej ntawm?

be because how?/why? 3SG so create CLF.GRP2 household.equipment PX.EVNT

‘Why does he create these things?’

Sermon:46

Nws tsim rab taus los mus ntov ntoo txib taw.

3SG create CLF.TL axe come go chop tree send firewood

‘He creates the axe to chop trees into firewood.’¹⁴

Sermon:47.1

Qhov ntawd yog nws lub hom phiaj

thing PX.EVNT be 3SG CLF.GNRL purpose

‘This is his purpose,’

Sermon:47.2

nws thiaj li tsim rab taus los rau qhov ntawm.

3SG then create CLF.TL axe come to/for thing PX.EVNT

‘so he creates an axe for this.’

Sermon:48.1

Nws tsim rab hlau

3SG create CLF.TL hoe

‘He creates the hoe’

Sermon:48.2

yog los ncaw av thiab los khawb nroj los ua tej yam

be come till soil and come hoe weed come make/do CLF.GRP2 type

ntawd.

PX.EVNT

‘to till the soil and dig up weeds and do things like this.’¹⁵

Sermon:49

Yog li nws lub hom phiaj nws tsim rab hlau los ua qhov

be like 3SG CLF.GNRL purpose 3SG create CLF.TL hoe come make/do thing

¹³ I changed *pib txwv* to *pivtxwv* to agree with Ar and Heimbach (1980).

The word *seb* is not listed in any dictionary with this sense, ‘whether or not’. I retain White’s (2014) gloss.

¹⁴ White (2014) had *ndov*, an impossible spelling. I changed it to *ntov* to agree with Ar and Heimbach (1980).

The word *taw* ‘firewood’ is not listed in any dictionary. I retain White’s (2014) gloss.

¹⁵ I changed *ab* to *av* to agree with Heimbach (1980) and Ar.

I changed *khaw* to *khawb* to agree with Heimbach (1980) and Ar.

ntawd.

PX.EVNT

‘And then his purpose—he creates the hoe to do this thing.’

Sermon:50

Yog li rab hlau tshwm sim vim tus tswv uas tsim
be like CLF.TL hoe be.born/appear because CLF.ANMT lord RLTVZR create

rab hlau ntawd nws muaj lub hom phiaj rau rab hlau ntawd.
CLF.TL hoe PX.EVNT 3SG have CLF.GNRL purpose to/for CLF.TL hoe PX.EVNT

‘So the hoe exists because the master who created this hoe has a purpose for this hoe.’

Sermon:51

Yog vim li cas Vajtswv tsim peb?
be because how?/why? God create 1PL

‘Why did God create us?’

Sermon:52

Rau qhov vim Vajtswv tsim peb los rau nws lub hom phiaj.
to/for thing because God create 1PL come to/for 3SG CLF.GNRL purpose

‘For this reason: God created us for His purpose.’

Sermon:53

Nws yeej muaj lub hom phiaj zoo rau koj thiab kuv— peb.
3SG ASP.HBTL have CLF.GNRL purpose good/well to/for 2SG and 1SG 1PL

‘He always has a good purpose for you and me—us.’

Sermon:54

Yog li Vajtswv thiaj li tsim peb los rau Vajtswv lub hom phiaj xwb.
be like God then create 1PL come to/for God CLF.GNRL purpose only

‘So God created us for God’s purpose alone.’

Sermon:55.1

Yog li koj thiab kuv— peb— thiaj li nrhiav tsis tau lub hom phiaj
be like 2SG and 1SG 1PL then look.for NEG obtain CLF.GNRL purpose

ntawm peb tus kheej

PX.EVNT 1PL REFL

‘So you and I—we—then, won’t find the purpose in ourselves’

Sermon:55.2

vim peb tsis yog tus tsim peb.
because 1PL NEG be CLF.ANMT create 1PL

‘because we aren’t the ones who created ourselves.’

Sermon:56

Peb tsis muaj hom phiaj.

1PL NEG have purpose

‘We don’t have a purpose.’

Sermon:57

Yog li peb yuav ua cas nrhiav tau lub hom phiaj ntawd?

be like 1PL POS.IRR how?/why? look.for obtain CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT

‘So how will we find this purpose?’

Sermon:58

Yog li Vajtswv txoj lus hais nyob rau hauv Yauj tshooj
be like God word say dwell/be.located to/for inside Job chapter
kaum ob kaum thiaj li hais tias:
ten/tenth two/second ten/tenth then COMP
'God's word says in Job chapter 12:10 that [quote from Job 12:10].'

Sermon:59.1

Yog li peb yuav tsum pib nrhiav peb tus kheej nyob rau
be like 1PL must start look.for 1PL REFL dwell/be.located to/for
ntawm Vajtswv,
PX.EVNT God
'We must begin by looking for ourselves in God.'

Sermon:59.2

vim Vajtswv yog tus tsim peb rau nws lub hom phiaj.
because God be CLF.ANMT create 1PL to/for 3SG CLF.GNRL purpose
'because God is the one who created us for his purpose.'

Sermon:60

Qhov uas peb tshwm sim los ua neeg nyob rau
thing RLTVZR 1PL be.born/appear come make/do person dwell/be.located to/for
hauv lub ntiajteb no, vim twb yog Vajtswv tsim peb
inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR because really/already be God create 1PL
thiaj li muaj peb.
then have 1PL
'The reason we came to be people on this earth is really because it is God who created us to be ourselves.'

Sermon:61.1

Vajtswv yog tus tsim peb
God be CLF.ANMT create 1PL
'God is the one who created us.'

Sermon:61.2

thiab nws tsim peb los rau lub hom phiaj uas nws muaj ntawd.
and 3SG create 1PL come to/for CLF.GNRL purpose RLTVZR 3SG have PX.EVNT
'and he created us for the purpose which he has here.'

Sermon:62

Tsis yog rau peb lub hom phiaj.
NEG be to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose
'It is not for our purpose.'

Sermon:63.1

Yog hais tias peb tsis nkag siab zoo li no
if COMP 1PL NEG understand good/well like PX.SPKR
'If we don't understand this well.'

Sermon:63.2

ces peb yeej tsis paub lub hom phiaj uas peb los ua
SEQ 1PL INT.TRTH NEG know CLF.GNRL purpose RLTVZR 1PL come make/do

nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb no yog dabtsi hlo li
dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR be what? INT.at.all
nawb mog, peb cov niam txiv kwvtij neejtsa
TAG1 1PL CLF.GRP1 woman/mother father/male relatives in.laws

e.

(hesitation)

‘then we truly don’t understand at all what our purpose is which we have living on this earth—right, brothers and sisters?’

Sermon:64.1

Qhov uas peb yuav nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj ntawm peb
thing RLTVZR 1PL POS.IRR look.for obtain 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT 1PL
lub neeg thiab peb txoj kev uas peb yuav mus ntawd,
CLF.GNRL person and 1PL CLF.ABST way RLTVZR 1PL POS.IRR go PX.EVNT
‘The way we will find purpose for ourselves [as] people and the path which we should go,’

Sermon:64.2

peb yuav tsum pib nrhiav ntawm Vajtswv mus xwb;
1PL must start look.for PX.EVNT God go only
‘must start with looking to God alone;’

Sermon:64.3

peb thiaj li yuav paub hais tias peb yuav mus
1PL then POS.IRR know COMP 1PL POS.IRR go
‘then we will know [the way] we should go,’

Sermon:64.4

qhov twg peb lub hom phiaj yog ua dabtsi tiag tiag.
where 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose be make/do what? INT.GNRL2 INT.GNRL2
‘where and what our purpose really is.’

Sermon:65

Txhua txoj kev uas nyob hauv ntiajteb no puav leej
each/all CLF.ABST way RLTVZR dwell/be.located inside earth PX.SPKR all
pab tsis tau peb kom peb paub txog peb lub hom phiaj uas
help NEG able 1PL cause 1PL know about 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose RLTVZR
peb los ua neeg nyob hauv ntiajteb no.
1PL come make/do person dwell/be.located inside earth PX.SPKR
‘All the paths on earth are not able to help us know about our purpose on this earth.’

Sermon:66

Kuv tau nyeem ntau phau ntawv los pab kuv ua kuv
1SG PFV read many/much CLF.STCK writing come help 1SG make/do 1SG
lub neej.
CLF.GNRL life/estate
‘I have read so many books to help me live my life.’

Sermon:67

Txhua phau ntawv uas kuv nyeem no pua leej qhia kuv
each/all CLF.STCK writing RLTVZR 1SG read PX.SPKR all teach 1SG

nrhiav kuv lub neej ib yam nkaus.
look.for 1SG CLF.GNRL life/estate the.same INT.CPLT2

‘All the books which I have read teach me to look for my purpose exactly the same way.’

Sermon:68

Cov ntawv no qhia kuv hais tias kuv yuav muab kuv cov
CLF.GRP1 writing PX.SPKR teach 1SG COMP 1SG POS.IRR take 1SG CLF.GRP1

kev npau suav coj los saib seb kuv nyiam ua
way dream bring/take come look.at whether.or.not 1SG like make/do

dabtsi.

what?

‘These [books] teach me that I should examine the paths of my dreams and choose which ones I want to do.’

Sermon:69

Kuv yuav tsum muab kuv cov kev npau suav ntawd coj los
1SG must take 1SG CLF.GRP1 way dream PX.EVNT bring/take come

theej tseg saib yog dabtsi tiag tiag.
steps leave look.at be what? INT.GNRL2 INT.GNRL2

‘I must choose my dreams here and begin prioritizing, watching everything carefully.’¹⁶

Sermon:70

Kuv yuav tsum saib seb kuv txawj ua yam twg.
1SG must look.at NSPC 1SG know.how make/do type which

‘I need to look at which ones I know how to do.’

Sermon:71

Kuv yuav tsum ntseeg hais tias kuv yeej yuav tsum ua tau xwb.
1SG must believe COMP 1SG INT.TRTH must make/do able only

‘I only have to believe that I really must be able to do this.’

Sermon:72

Ces rau siab ntso ua mus tsis txhob tas kev cia siab.
SEQ put liver INT.DGNC make/do go NEG NEG.IRR finish way depend.on

‘Then [I must] persist heartily and must never give up the path of hope,’¹⁷

Sermon:73

Ces ib hnuv kuv yeej yuav ua tau raws li kuv
SEQ one/first day 1SG INT.TRTH POS.IRR make/do able according.to 1SG

¹⁶ This sentence is problematic. White (2014) (through Mr. Yang) gives a slightly different rendering and states that not all of the glosses can be corroborated from available dictionaries. Ar says that *theej* is incorrect; she says only *theem* makes sense. Heimbach (1980) concurs. The word *theem* is the word for ‘step’. She recommends handling *theem tseg* as a compound: ‘step by step’—perhaps ‘prioritize’. The word *tseg* means ‘save’ or ‘set aside’ and certainly has the idea of setting aside some things for another time.

¹⁷ The expression *rau siab ntso* is an idiom meaning ‘continue to, commit oneself to’.

txoj kev npau suav thiab raws li qhov kuv xav yuav
 CLF.ABST way dream and according.to thing 1SG think/want intend
xav tau.
 think/want obtain

‘Then one day I will actually be able to live according to my dream and according to the things I always wanted.’

Sermon:74.1

Tej ntawv nyob hauv ntiaj teb no
 CLF.GRP2 writing dwell/be.located inside earth PX.SPKR
 ‘The literature in this world,’

Sermon:74.2

nws puav leej txawj qhia yus mus txog rau tej ntawd.
 3SG all know.how teach INDF.PRON go about to/for CLF.GRP2 PX.EVNT
 ‘it all is able to teach people to go about doing these things.’

Sermon:75

Kuv tsis tau hais tias tej ntaub ntawv no pab tsis tau kuv.
 1SG NEG PFV say COMP CLF.GRP2 cloth writing PX.SPKR help NEG able 1SG
 ‘I did not say that these books cannot help me.’¹⁸

Sermon:76

Tej lus pab no.
 CLF.GRP2 word help PX.SPKR
 ‘The teachings help here.’

Sermon:77.1

Tej zaum nws yeej pab tau yus kom yus ua tau
 maybe 3SG ASP.HBTL help able INDF.PRON cause INDF.PRON make/do able
lub neej vas meej
 CLF.GNRL life/estate successful

‘Maybe it always helps one to be able to live the successful life’¹⁹

Sermon:77.2

yog hais tias yus rau siab ntso ua tiag tiag.
 if COMP INDF.PRON put liver INT.DGNC make/do INT.GNRL2 INT.GNRL2
 ‘if one does so with all his heart.’

Sermon:78.1

Cov kwvtij yog hais tias peb xav muaj nyiaj
 CLF.GRP1 relatives if COMP 1PL think/want have money
 ‘Brothers, if we want to have money,’

Sermon:78.2

ces peb yuav tsum rau siab ntso mus khwv tiag tiag tas
 SEQ 1PL must put liver INT.DGNC go toil INT.GNRL2 INT.GNRL2 finish

¹⁸ I suggest that *tej ntaub ntawv* should actually be *tej ntau ntawv* as it is in sentence 92.2: ‘the literature’.

¹⁹ The expression *vas meej* is not in Heimbach (1980) as such. The word *vas* is ‘net’ and *meej* has a variety of meanings, among them are ‘soft’, ‘bendable’, and ‘clear’. White’s (2014) gloss cites no source. I retain White’s gloss, as it clearly consistently fits the context.

hnuv tas hmo xya hnuv xya hmo.
 day finish night seven/seventh day seven/seventh night
 ‘then we must put our heart into working really hard day and night seven days a week.’

Sermon:79.1

Ces peb yeej yuav tsum muaj nyiaj xwb.
 SEQ 1PL INT.TRTH must have money only
 ‘Then we certainly will have money.’

Sermon:79.2

yog peb xav ua ib tug kws kho mob
 if 1PL think/want make/do INDF.ART CLF.ANMT doctor
 ‘If we want to become a doctor,’

Sermon:79.3

ces peb rau siab mus kawm
 SEQ 1PL put liver go learn
 ‘then we diligently study,’

Sermon:79.4

peb yeej yuav tau los ua xwb.
 1PL INT.TRTH must come be only
 ‘[and] we certainly will become [one].’

Sermon:80

Tiamsis qhov kuv coj tuaj qhuab qhia peb hmo no lossis hnuv
 but thing 1SG bring/take come preaching 1PL night PX.SPKR or day
no lossis lub sijhawm no tsis yog tej kev vas meej
 PX.SPKR or CLF.GNRL occasion PX.SPKR NEG be CLF.GRP2 way successful
nyob rau hauv lub ntiqjeb no xwb lossis
 dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR only or
nyob rau peb lub neej no xwb.
 dwell/be.located to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate PX.SPKR only
 ‘But the thing I am taking up in preaching at this time is not the ways to be successful
 on this earth only or in this life only.’²⁰

Sermon:81.1

Kuv hais txog lub hom phiaj uas yog vim li cas Vajtswv
 1SG say arrive.at CLF.GNRL purpose RLTVZR be because how?/why? God
ho tsim koj thiab kuv peb los nyob rau hauv lub
 so create 2SG and 1SG 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL
ntiqjeb no—
 earth PX.SPKR
 ‘I talking about what really is the purpose which is why God created you and
 me—us—to live on this earth—’²¹

²⁰ Heimbach (1980) defines *qhuab qhia* as to ‘teach by disciplining’. I retain White’s (2014) gloss as more fitting to the context.

²¹ The use of *txog* ‘arrive at’ indicates, as far as I can tell, that the verb *hais* ‘say’ is an active accomplishment: talking until an objective is reached. But I cannot yet see how to make the translation accomplish this.

Sermon:81.2

nws yog dabtsi tiag tiag.
3SG be what? INT.GNRL2 INT.GNRL2
'what it really is!'

Sermon:82

Qhov ntawd lau yog qhov kuv xav coj koj thiab kuv—
thing PX.EVNT emphatic be thing 1SG think/want bring/take 2SG and 1SG
peb— sib tham txog.
1PL RECP talk about
'This thing really is the thing I want to take up for you and me to talk about with each other.'

Sermon:83.1

Yog qhov ntawd:
be thing PX.EVNT
'It's this.'

Sermon:83.2

tsis yog tej kev vas meej nyob rau ntawm yus
NEG be CLF.GRP2 way successful dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT INDF.PRON
tus kheej nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteg no xwb.
REFL dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR only
'it is not the successful ways for your self on this earth alone.'

Sermon:84

Rau qhov hais tias lub hom phiaj uas kom yus lub
to/for thing COMP CLF.GNRL purpose RLTVZR cause INDF.PRON CLF.GNRL
neej vas meej nyob hauv lub ntiajteg no thiab
life/estate successful dwell/be.located inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR and
lub hom phiaj ntawm yus lub neej yog vim
CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT INDF.PRON CLF.GNRL life/estate be because
li cas yus ho los nyob hauv ntiajteg no
how?/why? INDF.PRON so come dwell/be.located inside earth PX.SPKR
txawv txav tsis zoo ib yam nawb mog cov kwvtij.
difference NEG good/well the.same TAG1 CLF.GRP1 relatives
'Because the purpose which makes a successful earthly life and the purpose for someone coming to be on this earth are different—not as good, right, brothers?'

Sermon:85.1

Kuv xav kom peb paub li no
1SG think/want cause 1PL know like PX.SPKR
'I want us to understand this.'

Sermon:85.2

peb thiaj li paub los mus nrhiav peb lub hom phiaj nyob
1PL then know come go look.for 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose dwell/be.located

rau ntawm Vajtswv.

to/for PX.EVNT God

‘then we will know to start searching for our purpose in God.’

Sermon:86

Txawm yog koj thiab kuv peb twb ua tau peb lub
even be 2SG and 1SG 1PL really/already make/do able 1PL CLF.GNRL

neej vas meej nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb no
life/estate successful dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR

lawm.

PRF

‘Even you and I, we really can live a successful life on this earth.’²²

Sermon:87

Los peb yeej tsis tau paub hais tias yog vim li cas Vajtswv ho
come 1PL INT.TRTH NEG PFV know COMP be because how?/why? God so

tsim peb los nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb no.
create 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR

‘We certainly don’t know that is why God created us to live on this earth.’

Sermon:88.1

Vajtswv txoj lus hais li no tias;

God word say like PX.SPKR COMP

‘God’s word says this: [quote from Matthew 16:16];’

Sermon:88.2

nyob rau hauv Mathais tshooj kaum rau nqi
dwell/be.located to/for inside Matthew chapter ten/tenth six/sixth verse

nee nkaum rau hais li no.

twenty six/sixth say like PX.SPKR

‘in Matthew chapter sixteen verse twenty-six it says this.’

Sermon:89.1

Nqi vaj lub kub no tau hais tias yog peb nrhiav peb lub

verse Bible PX.SPKR PFV say COMP if 1PL look.for 1PL CLF.GNRL

hom phiaj ntawm peb tus kheej xwb

purpose PX.EVNT 1PL REFL only

‘This Bible verse says that if we look for our purpose in our own selves alone,’

Sermon:89.2

peb yeej nrhiav tsis tau li nawb mog.

1PL INT.TRTH look.for NEG obtain like TAG1

‘we certainly won’t find it—you see?’

Sermon:90.1

Peb yuav tsum los nrhiav ntawm Vajtswv txoj kev xwb

1PL must come look.for PX.EVNT God CLF.ABST way only

‘We must come to search only in God’s way’

²² I changed *tawm* to be *txawm*. White (2014) glosses this word as ‘even’, and the word for ‘even’ is *txawm*.

Sermon:90.2

peb thiaj li yuav nrhiav tau peb tus kheej thiab qhov tseeb ntawm peb
1PL then POS.IRR look.for obtain 1PL REFL and thing true PX.EVNT 1PL
tus kheej.
REFL

‘so that we will find ourselves and the truth about ourselves.’

Sermon:91

Qhov nov lau cov kwvtij!
thing PX.SPKR emphatic CLF.GRP1 relatives
‘This is it, brothers!’

Sermon:92.1

Es qhov kuv qhia hnuv no lossis lub sijhawm no
(hesitation) thing 1SG teach day PX.SPKR or CLF.GNRL occasion PX.SPKR
rau koj thiab kuv
to/for 2SG and 1SG
‘So the thing I’m teaching us at this time,’

Sermon:92.2

peb kawm no tsis yog qhia li tej ntau ntawv hauv
1PL learn PX.SPKR NEG be teach like CLF.GRP2 many/much writing inside
ntiajteb no.
earth PX.SPKR
‘we learn this is not teaching like earthly literature.’

Sermon:93.1

Qhia los nrhiav ib txoj haujlwm zoo rau koj,
teach come look.for INDF.ART CLF.ABST work good/well to/for 2SG
‘This teaching to begin searching for a good job for yourself,’

Sermon:93.2

los pab kom koj tau raws li koj txoj kev npau suav,
come help cause 2SG obtain according.to like 2SG CLF.ABST way dream
‘to begin helping yourself obtain your dreams,’

Sermon:93.3

los pab koj npaj koj lub neej hauv ntiajteb no.
come help 2SG prepare 2SG CLF.GNRL life/estate inside earth PX.SPKR
‘to begin helping to prepare for your life on this earth.’

Sermon:94

Kuv tsis yog yuav qhia koj nrhiav lub nras hanyav ntxiv los
1SG NEG be POS.IRR teach 2SG look.for CLF.GNRL burden heavy add come
rau koj lub neej.
to/for 2SG CLF.GNRL life/estate
‘I won’t teach you to look for another heavy burden for your life.’

Sermon:95.1

Tiamsis qhov kuv qhia hnuv no lossis hmo no lossis lub
but thing 1SG teach day PX.SPKR or night PX.SPKR or CLF.GNRL

sijhawm no yog
occasion PX.SPKR be

‘But the thing I’m teaching at this time is this:’

Sermon:95.2

qhia hais tias peb yuav nrhiav li cas thiaj li paub nrhiav lub
teach COMP 1PL POS.IRR look.for how?/why? then know look.for CLF.GNRL
nras kom sib los rau peb lub neej.

burden cause light come to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate

‘I’m teaching [how] we will look for it and then [how we will] know [how] to lighten the burden for our lives.’²³

Sermon:96

Los ntawm kev saib seb yam twg yog yam tseem ceeb tshaj es
come PX.EVNT way look.at NSPC type which be type important CPTV PLTNS
ua yam ntawd mus xwb.

make/do type PX.EVNT go only

‘Then this way let’s examine what is more important and just do this.’

Sermon:97

Txhob mus lob yam ub yam no yam pev yam nraw los
NEG.IRR go grab type DT type PX.SPKR type MD.up type MD.down come
rau peb tus kheej.

to/for 1PL REFL

‘Let’s not go grabbing this and that and here and there for ourselves.’

Sermon:98.1

Qhov ntawd nws yuav ua lub nras hnyav
thing PX.EVNT 3SG POS.IRR be CLF.GNRL burden heavy
‘This thing, it will be a heavy burden,’

Sermon:98.2

thiab yuav ua kev nyuab siab rau peb nyob rau hauv
and POS.IRR be way difficult life to/for 1PL dwell/be.located to/for inside
lub ntiajteb no.

CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR

‘and it will be a difficult way of life for us on this earth.’²⁴

Sermon:99

Yog qhia kom peb paub ua peb lub neej lossis ua ib
be teach cause 1PL know make/do 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate or be INDF.ART
tug neeg raws li Vajtswv lub hom phiaj uas nws
CLF.ANMT person according.to like God CLF.GNRL purpose RLTVZR 3SG
tsim peb los ua neeg nyob rau hauv lub ntiajteb
create 1PL come be person dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL earth

²³ This sentence is wordy and simply difficult to translate; to express every idea from the original in its fullest in the translation renders very awkward English.

²⁴ I do not know whether *siab* ought to be ‘life’ or ‘liver’. Technically only *siav* is ‘life’, but *siab* has been glossed as ‘life’ as a tonal variant at other times in this text.

no xwb.

PX.SPKR only

‘It is teaching us to know [how] to live our lives according to God’s purpose or to be only the person which he created us to be on this earth.’

Sermon:100.1

Yog li peb yuav ua li cas

be like 1PL POS.IRR make/do how?/why?

‘So then, what will we do’

Sermon:100.2

peb thiaj li paub txog peb lub hom phiaj hais tias yog vim li cas
1PL then know about 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose COMP be because how?/why?

Vajtswv thiaj li tsim peb los nyob rau hauv lub
God then create 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL

ntiajteb no?

earth PX.SPKR

‘so that we know about our purpose for which God created us to live on this earth?’

Sermon:101

Lub hom phiaj ntawm peb lub neej uas Vajtswv tsim peb
CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate RLTVZR God create 1PL

los nyob rau hauv ntiajteb no yog dabtsi tiag
come dwell/be.located to/for inside earth PX.SPKR be what? INT.GNRL2

tiag?

INT.GNRL2

‘What really is this purpose [for] our lives which God created us to live for on this earth?’

Sermon:102

Qhov yoojyim tshaj plaws ces rov qab mus cuag tus uas tsim
thing easy SPTV SEQ return go ask.advice CLF.ANMT RLTVZR create

koj xwb.

2SG only

‘The easiest thing, then, is just to go back and ask the advice of the one who alone created you.’²⁵

Sermon:103

Nws thiaj yuav paub hais tias yog vim li cas.

3SG then POS.IRR know COMP be because like how

‘He will know why.’

Sermon:104.1

Vajtswv yeej tsis tau tso peb nyob tsaus ntuj nti

God INT.TRTH NEG PFV leave 1PL dwell/be.located darkened.sky

‘God truly hasn’t left us in the dark,’

²⁵ The verb *cuag* could be translated as an accomplishment marker as well. This would render the free translation: ‘The easiest thing, then, is just to go back to the one who created you’.

Sermon:104.2

tsis paub dabtsi hlo li
NEG know what? INT.at.all
'not knowing anything at all'

Sermon:104.3

thiab niaj hnuv tso peb xav hais tias peb lub neej ces
and every day leave 1PL think/want COMP 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate SEQ
yog li no lossis yog li tod xwb.
be like PX.SPKR or be like MD only
'and every day leaving us to think that our lives are only like this or like that.'

Sermon:105

Vajtswv tau qhia tseeb tseeb txog tsib yam hom phiaj nyob
God PFV teach true words about five/fifth type purpose dwell/be.located
rau hauv peb lub neej nyob rau hauv Vajtswv
to/for inside 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located to/for inside God
txoj lus uas yog phau vaj lus kub.
word RLTVZR be CLF.STCK Bible
'God has taught the absolute truth about five kinds of purpose for our lives in God's
Word, which is the Bible.'

Sermon:106.1

Nyob rau hauv Vajtswv txoj lus tau qhia rau peb hais tias yog
dwell/be.located to/for inside God word PFV teach to/for 1PL COMP be
vim li cas peb thiaj li muaj sia nyob,
because how?/why? 1PL then have life dwell/be.located
'In God's Word he has taught us why we have life,'

Sermon:106.2

peb yuav ua peb lub neej li cas,
1PL POS.IRR make/do 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate how?/why?
'how we ought to live our lives,'

Sermon:106.3

yam twg yog yam uas peb yuav tsum tsis txhob ua
type which be type RLTVZR 1PL must NEG NEG.IRR make/do
'which type is the type we must not do,'

Sermon:106.4

thiab nws muaj dabtsi tos peb nyob rau peb lub neej
and 3SG have what? wait 1PL dwell/be.located to/for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate
yav pem suab.
future.time.period
'and what he has awaiting us in our future life.'²⁶

²⁶ My gloss for *yav pem suab* 'future time period' is based on White's (2014); no dictionaries corroborate this.

Sermon:107

Vajtswv txoj lus hais li no hais tias:
God word say like PX.SPKR COMP
'God's word says this: [quote from 1 Corinthians 2:7]'

Sermon:108

Nyob rau hauv ib Khaulithaus tshooj ob nqi
dwell/be.located to/for inside one/first Corinthians chapter two/second verse
xya hais li ntawm.
seven/seventh say like PX.EVNT
'In 1 Corinthians chapter two verse seven it says this.'

Sermon:109.1

Vajtswv tsis yog txoj sia uas xub pib tuaj xwb
God NEG be CLF.ABST life RLTVZR first start come only
'God is not only the life which came first,'

Sermon:109.2

tiamsis nws yog lub hauvpaus siab.
but 3SG be CLF.GNRL foundation life
'but he is the foundation of life.'

Sermon:110.1

Yog peb xav paub txog peb lub hom phiaj ntawm peb lub
if 1PL think/want know about 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose PX.EVNT 1PL CLF.GNRL
neej
life/estate
'If we want to know our purpose in our life,'

Sermon:110.2

hais tias yog
COMP be
'that is,'

Sermon:110.3

vim li cas peb ho los nyob hauv lub ntiajteb
because how?/why? 1PL so come dwell/be.located inside CLF.GNRL earth
no
PX.SPKR
'why we came to live on this earth,'

Sermon:110.4

peb yuav tsum los nrhiav ntawm Vajtswv uas yog tus tsim peb
1PL must come look.for PX.EVNT God RLTVZR be CLF.ANMT create 1PL
nawb mog cov kwvtij.
TAG1 CLF.GRP1 relatives
'we must search in God who is the one who created us—right, brothers?'

Sermon:111

Peb tsis txhob mus nrhiav ntawm neeg lub tswvyim.
1PL NEG NEG.IRR go look.for PX.EVNT person CLF.GNRL wisdom
'Let's not go searching for man's wisdom here.'

Sermon:112.1

Peb yuav tsum ua peb lub neej nyob rau ntawm
1PL must make/do 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT
txoj kev tseeb uas nyob tas mus ib txhis,
CLF.ABST way true RLTVZR dwell/be.located finish go forever
'We must live our lives here the true way which abides forever,'

Sermon:112.2

tsis zoo li neeg ntiqteb lub tswvyim,
NEG like person earth CLF.GNRL wisdom
'not like the earthly person's wisdom,'

Sermon:112.3

es nyob ib pliag xwb.
(hesitation) dwell/be.located one/first moment only
'which lasts only a moment.'

Sermon:113.1

Thaum muaj tus neeg txawj tshiab los
the.time.when have CLF.ANMT person know.how new come
'When there is a new educated person who comes,'

Sermon:113.2

ces nws yuav hais tias yog li no lawm.
SEQ 3SG POS.IRR say COMP be like PX.SPKR PRF
'then he will say that [it] is like this.'

Sermon:114

Vajtsvw txoj lus hais li no ntxiv:
God word say like PX.SPKR add
'God's word says this again: [quote from Ephesians 1:11].'

Sermon:115

Nyob rau hauv Efexaus tshooj ib nqi kaum
dwell/be.located to/for inside Ephesians chapter one/first verse ten/tenth
ib hais li ntawm.
one/first say like PX.EVNT
'In Ephesians chapter one verse eleven [it] says this.'

Sermon:116

Nyob rau nqi vaj lub kub no nws muaj peb lub
dwell/be.located to/for verse Bible PX.SPKR 3SG have three/third CLF.GNRL
ntsiab lus qhia peb.
essence word teach 1PL
'In this Bible verse, it has three meanings to teach us.'

Sermon:117.1

Lub ntsiab lus ib peb yuav tsum nrhiav tau peb tus kheej
CLF.GNRL essence word one/first 1PL must look.for obtain 1PL REFL
'The first meaning we must find for ourselves,'

Sermon:117.2

thiab peb lub hom phiaj los ntawm peb muaj txoj kev
and 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose come PX.EVNT 1PL have CLF.ABST way

sib raug zoo nrog Yexus Khetos.
relationship good/well with Jesus Christ

‘and our purpose comes where we have a good relationship with Jesus Christ.’²⁷

Sermon:118

Qhov ob tuaj mus Vajtswv twb paub peb ua ntej
thing two/second come go God really/already know 1PL make/do before

peb paub nws.
1PL know 3SG

‘The second thing: God already knew us before we knew him.’

Sermon:119.1

Vajtswv twb npaj peb lub neej thiab peb lub
God really/already prepare 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate and 1PL CLF.GNRL

hom phiaj
purpose

‘God already prepared our life and our purpose’

Sermon:119.2

thaum tsis tau muaj peb lawm.
the.time.when NEG PFV have 1PL PRF

‘when we did not yet exist.’

Sermon:120.1

Lub ntsiab lus thib peb hais li no
CLF.GNRL essence word turn three/third say like PX.SPKR

‘The third meaning is this:’²⁸

Sermon:120.2

hais tias Vajtswv lub hom phiaj rau peb tseem loj tshaj li qhov peb
COMP God CLF.GNRL purpose to/for 1PL still big CPTV like thing 1PL

xav yuav xav tau.
think/want intend think/want obtain

‘God’s purpose for us is still bigger than what we intend to acquire.’

Sermon:121

Vajtswv lub hom phiaj yog kom peb muaj txoj sia nrog Vajtswv
God CLF.GNRL purpose be cause 1PL have CLF.ABST life with God

nyob mus ib txhis.
dwell/be.located go forever

‘God’s purpose is that we have everlasting life living forever with God.’²⁹

²⁷ I changed the compound *sib rauv* should be *sib raug*. Heimbach (1980) and Ar agree about this.

²⁸ I question the inclusion of the word *thib* ‘turn’, since it does not seem to fit the context and does not follow the pattern set by *lub ntsiab lus ib* ‘the first meaning’ in sentence 117.1.

²⁹ I changed the spelling of *ib txis* ‘forever’ to ‘*ib txhis*’ to agree with sentence 112 as well as Heimbach (1980).

Sermon:122

Qhov no lau!
thing PX.SPKR emphatic
'This is it!'

Sermon:123.1

Cov kwvtij yog lub hom phiaj uas Vajtswv xav kom
CLF.GRP1 relatives be CLF.GNRL purpose RLTVZR God think/want cause
koj thiab kuv peb tau,
2SG and 1SG 1PL obtain
'Brothers, this is the purpose which God wants to give us,'

Sermon:123.2

thiab yog qhov Vajtswv tsim peb los nyob rau hauv lub
and be thing God create 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL
ntiajteb no.
earth PX.SPKR
'and it is the thing God created us to come live on this earth for.'

Sermon:124.1

Yog li kuv xav kom koj thiab kuv peb txhob niaj hnub mus
be like 1SG think/want cause 2SG and 1SG 1PL NEG.IRR every day go
nrhiav peb lub neej nyob rau ntawm peb tus kheej
look.for 1PL CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT 1PL REFL
lawm lossis peb lub hom phiaj rau ntawm peb tus kheej,
PRF or 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose to/for PX.EVNT 1PL REFL
'And so I want to keep us from looking for our lives in ourselves or our purpose in ourselves every day,'

Sermon:124.2

tiamsis peb yuav tsum mus nrhiav rau ntawm Vajtswv.
but 1PL must go look.for to/for PX.EVNT God
'but we must search in God.'

Sermon:125.1

Peb thiaj paub hais tias lub hom phiaj nyob rau ntawm
1PL then know COMP CLF.GNRL purpose dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT
Vajtswv,
God
'Then we know that our purpose is in God,'

Sermon:125.2

lossis peb lub hom phiaj yog dabtsi tiag tiag.
or 1PL CLF.GNRL purpose be what? INT.GNRL2 INT.GNRL2
'or what our purpose really is.'

Sermon:126

Nawb mog.
TAG1
'Right?'

Sermon:127.1

Es kuv vam thiab siab hais tias nej sawvdaws yuav nkag siab
(hesitation) 1SG trust and liver COMP 2PL everyone POS.IRR understand
zoo es
good/well PLTNS

‘So I hope that you all, everyone, will understand well,³⁰’

Sermon:127.2

nej yuav muab qhov no coj los ua ib txoj kev
2PL POS.IRR take thing PX.SPKR bring/take come be one/first CLF.ABST way
rau nej npaj nej lub neeg nyob rau hauv
to/for 2PL prepare 2PL CLF.GNRL person dwell/be.located to/for inside
lub ntiajteb no nawb mog.
CLF.GNRL earth PX.SPKR TAG1

‘so you will take this thing [and] it will be one way for you to prepare your life on this earth—all right?’

Sermon:128.1

Es yog li thov Vajtswv nrog nraim nej,
(hesitation) and.then ask God always.accompany 2PL
‘And I ask God to be with you,’

Sermon:128.2

thiab thov Vajtswv pub koob hmoov nej cov uas nej koom nrog
and ask God bless 2PL CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR 2PL do.together with
kuv nyob rau lub sijhawm no.
1SG dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL occasion PX.SPKR

‘and ask God to bless you all here with me together at this time.’³¹

Sermon:129.1

Es peb mam li rov sib ntsib dua nawb mog
(hesitation) 1PL will/need return RECP meet more TAG1
‘So we will come back to meet with each other again—right?’

Sermon:129.2

yog Vajtswv tsis tau los.
if God NEG PFV come
‘—if the Lord has not come.’

³⁰ Ar says that *vam thiab siab* ‘trust and liver’ makes no sense. She wants it to be *vam thiab saib* ‘trust and watch’. I think it should be *vam thiab cia siab* ‘trust and depend on’; this phrase is used elsewhere in the text. I retain White’s (2014) spelling in light of the the variety of opinions and the general disagreement.

³¹ Ar says that a word has been omitted. She says that *rau* should follow *pub koob hmoov* ‘bless’ and precede *nej* ‘2pl’.

I changed *hmoob* to *hmoov*. I believe this to be a typographical error. The word *hmoob* means ‘Hmong’, and the word *hmoov* means ‘good fortune’. There is no rule of tone sandhi that would change *hmoov* into *hmoob* in any context.

APPENDIX D

Text: Tzerge Yang's story

Information about the author and the origin of this text is in Appendix Text: Everything starts with God.

Tzerge Yang's story

Escape-TY:1

Nyob *zoo.*
dwell/be.located good/well
'Hello!'

Escape-TY:2

Ntawd no kuv yog Txawjzeb Yaj.
PX.EVNT PX.SPKR 1SG be Tzerge Yang
'This is Txawjzeb Yang.'¹

Escape-TY:3.1

Kuv zoo siab hais tias hnuv no Neejteem wb tau tuaj
1SG good/well liver COMP day PX.SPKR Neejteem 1DU obtain come
nyob ua ke hauv kuv tsev no
dwell/be.located together inside 1SG house PX.SPKR
'I am happy that today Nathan [and I]—we get to meet together at my house here'

Escape-TY:3.2

sib tham mentsi txog kuv lub neej nyob tim
RECP talk a.little.bit about 1SG CLF.GNRL life/estate dwell/be.located MD.OPST
ub tuaj txog rau tim no.
DT come arrive.at to/for MD.OPST PX.SPKR
'[and] talk together a little bit about my life from there to here [Laos to America].'

Escape-TY:4

Yog li kuv xav piav rau nws mloog.
be like 1SG think/want tell to/for 3SG listen
'So I want to tell him as he listens.'

Escape-TY:5

Kuv lub npe hu ua Txawjzeb.
1SG CLF.GNRL name call make/do Tzerge
'My name is Txawjzeb.'

¹ I retain White's (2014) phonetic spelling of the speaker's name in the free translation, since this is how he did it, but the text "Everything starts with God" gives a traditional spelling: *Tzerge Yang*.

Escape-TY:6

Kuv yug nyob lub zos Tojpob Xeev Khuam tebchaws
 1SG be.born dwell/be.located CLF.GNRL village Tojpob Xieng Khouang country
plog.
 Laotian

‘I was born in the town of Tojpob, in the province of Xiengkhouang, Laos.’

Escape-TY:7

Kuv txiv lub npe hu ua Toojkhwb.
 1SG father/male CLF.GNRL name call make/do Toojkhwb
 ‘My father’s name is Toojkhwb.’

Escape-TY:8

Kuv niam lub npe hu ua Maumtswb Vaj.
 1SG woman/mother CLF.GNRL name call make/do Maumtswb Vang
 ‘My mother’s name is Maumtswb Vang.’

Escape-TY:9.1

Kuv nco qab muaj ib zawg
 1SG remember have INDF.ART occasion
 ‘I remember there was a time’

Escape-TY:9.2

peb tsiv los nyob rau hauv lub zos Najloom
 1PL move come dwell/be.located to/for inside CLF.GNRL village Nalong
 ‘[when] we moved to live in the town of Nalong’

Escape-TY:9.3

los raws kuv niam cov neejtsa.
 come live.with 1SG woman/mother CLF.GRP1 family
 ‘to live with my mother’s family.’

Escape-TY:10

Peb los nyob hauv tau li ob xyoo ntau.
 1PL come dwell/be.located inside DUR like two/second year many/much
 ‘We stayed there for something more than two years.’

Escape-TY:11

Kuv xav hais tias yuav yog xyoo xya caum tsib mus
 1SG think/want COMP POS.IRR be year seven/seventh ten/tenth five/fifth go
txog rau xya caum xya.
 arrive.at to/for seven/seventh ten/tenth seven/seventh
 ‘I think that that would have been ’75 to ’77.’

Escape-TY:12

Thaum peb los nyob hauv muaj ib xyoo
 the.time.when 1PL come dwell/be.located inside have one/first year
thaum peb noj peb cawg tag.
 the.time.when 1PL eat New.Year’s finish
 ‘The time when we lived there was one year after we celebrated New Years.’²

² Heimbach (1980) lists ‘to eat the New Year’s feast’ as *noj peb caug*. I have retained White’s (2014) spelling.

Escape-TY:13

Ces kuv txiv cia li tau ib tug mob tsis zoo.
 SEQ 1SG father/male let like obtain INDF.ART CLF.ANMT sickness NEG good/well
 ‘Then my father got a very bad sickness.’³

Escape-TY:14

Tus mob ntawv ua rau kuv txiv pom wb pom no tua
 CLF.ANMT sickness PX.EVNT make/do to/for 1SG father/male see.things kill
kuv txiv.
 1SG father/male
 ‘The sickness here made my father see things that were [trying to] kill him.’⁴

Escape-TY:15

Nws pom poj koob yawm ntxwv los nrog nws nyob.
 3SG see ancestor come with 3SG dwell/be.located
 ‘He saw his ancestors coming to stay with him.’⁵

Escape-TY:16

Qhov nov ua rau kuv txiv feeb tsis meej.
 thing PX.SPKR make/do to/for 1SG father/male distinguish NEG clear
 ‘This made my father go crazy.’

Escape-TY:17

Yog li peb nyob rau lub zos Najloom ntawd.
 be like 1PL dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL village Nalong PX.EVNT
 ‘So we were living there at Nalong village.’

Escape-TY:18

Peb tsis muaj kwvtij txeeb zes nrog peb nyob rau ntawd.
 1PL NEG have close.relative with 1PL dwell/be.located to/for PX.EVNT
 ‘We didn’t have any close relatives there with us there.’⁶

Escape-TY:19

Kuv txiv cov kwvtij hos nyob rau puag tom
 1SG father/male CLF.GRP1 relatives also dwell/be.located to/for far MD
lub zos Kiajmana lawm.
 CLF.GNRL village Kiamana PRF
 ‘My father’s relatives also lived far away in the village of Kiamana.’

³ Ar and Heimbach (1980) agree that the word that was originally spelled *cias* should be spelled *cia* and the word that was originally spelled *twj* should be *tug*. White (2014:148) says of *twj*: “This gloss is tentative, as other sources do not appear to contain it. The status of *twj* as a classifier is based on syntax and the fact that Jay Yang treated it in glossing in a manner similar to known classifiers. It is possibly related to Mottin’s (1978) ‘that, whichever’, though the syntax of *twj* here differs noticeably from what Mottin provides.”

⁴ The four words *pom wb pom no* have the form of a figure of speech, but the expression is not in Heimbach (1980). Ar agrees that these four words form a unit: ‘see things’ (White’s 2014 gloss).

⁵ Ar confirms that the expression *poj koob yawm ntxwv* is spelled correctly and means ‘ancestors’ (White’s 2014 gloss). It is not in a dictionary.

⁶ I can verify the gloss for *kwvtij* ‘relative’, but I cannot verify *kwvtij txeeb zes* ‘close.relative’. I retain White’s (2014) gloss.

Escape-TY:20

Kab hais tias mus li ib hnuv ke thiaj mus txog.
figure COMP go like one/first day way then go arrive.at
'I figure it was about one day's travel to get there.'⁷

Escape-TY:21.1

Yog li thaum kuv txiv tus tij laug hlob
be like the.time.when 1SG father/male CLF.ANMT older.brother old older
hnov—
hear
'So when my father's older brother heard—'

Escape-TY:21.2

ua yog kuv txiv tus tij laug hlob hlob hnov—
make/do be 1SG father/male CLF.ANMT older.brother old older older hear
'it was my father's oldest brother who heard—'

Escape-TY:21.3

hais tias kuv txiv mob mob.
COMP 1SG father/male sickness sickness
'that my father was very sick.'

Escape-TY:22.1

Yog li nws thiaj li tuaj nrog kuv txiv nyob tau ib
be like 3SG then come with 1SG father/male dwell/be.located DUR one/first
vas nthiv
week
'So then he came to stay with my father for one week,'⁸

Escape-TY:22.2

thiab nws tuaj ua neeb kho kuv txiv tau ib vas nthiv.
and 3SG come make/do shaman heal 1SG father/male DUR one/first week
'and he came to do a shaman ritual for one week for the purpose of being able to heal my father.'⁹

Escape-TY:23

Ces ua ua rau.
SEQ make/do make/do to/for
'Then he did this over an over.'

Escape-TY:24

Ces kuv txiv kuj has nyob tu zog
SEQ 1SG father/male also get.a.little.better dwell/be.located not.worse.or.better

⁷ I have glossed the expression *thiaj (li)* as 'then', which can indicate either sequence or consequence. I have found in the texts that it is more likely to indicate sequence ('then') when it follows the sequence marker *ces* and that it consistently indicates consequence ('consequently') when it follows the expression *yog li*—literally 'be like', or more freely translated 'that being the case'.

⁸ No dictionaries corroborate *vas nthiv* as 'week', but the use is consistent.

⁹ White (2014) translates the word *neeb* as 'jingle'.

lawm.

PRF

‘Then my dad also improved a little bit and stayed neither better or worse.’¹⁰

Escape-TY:25.1

Ces nws kuj tau hais rau kuv txiv hais tias nyob rau
SEQ 3SG also PFV say to/for 1SG father/male COMP dwell/be.located to/for
hauv Najloom ntawd
inside Nalong PX.EVNT

‘Then he also said to my father that living in Nalong there,’

Escape-TY:25.2

ces yog raws neejtsa xwb.
SEQ be live.with in.laws only
‘he was living with only his wife’s family.’

Escape-TY:26

Ces yog li nws yuav coj kuv txiv mus nrog nws
SEQ be like 3SG intend bring/take 1SG father/male go with 3SG
nyob tom nws lub zos.
dwell/be.located MD 3SG CLF.GNRL village

‘So he wanted to take my father with him to live at his village.’¹¹

Escape-TY:27

Es nws thiaj yuav muaj caij nrhiav neeb nrhiav yaig kho
(hesitation) 3SG then POS.IRR have time look.for shaman look.for sprit.rite heal
kuv txiv.
1SG father/male

‘Then he would have time to look for a shaman to perform the ritual to heal my father.’

Escape-TY:28

Yog li nws thiaj coj kuv txiv thiab kuv niam nrog
be like 3SG then bring/take 1SG father/male and 1SG woman/mother with
rau kuv tus kwv yaus thiab kuv tus muam
to/for 1SG CLF.ANMT younger.brother younger and 1SG CLF.ANMT sister
yaus.
younger

‘So then he took my father and my mother along with my youngest brothers and youngest sister.’

Escape-TY:29

Yog li lawv thiaj li mus lawm.
be like 3PL then go PRF
‘So then they left.’

¹⁰ I have retained White’s (2014) glosses for *has*, ‘get.a.little.better’ and *tu zog*, ‘not.worse.or.better’. None of my dictionaries can corroborate these glosses. Ar says that the expressions are not White Hmong.

¹¹ I changed *yob* to *yog* in agreement with Ar and Heimbach (1980).

Escape-TY:30.1

Yog li lawv mus tau ib vas nthiv,
 be like 3PL go DUR one/first week
 ‘So then they went for one week,’

Escape-TY:30.2

thaum ntawd tshuav kuv tij laug hlob thiab kuv.
 the.time.when PX.EVNT have 1SG older.brother old older and 1SG
 ‘while my eldest brother and I were here.’

Escape-TY:31.1

Wb nyob tom qab
 1DU dwell/be.located afterward/behind
 ‘We stayed behind’

Escape-TY:31.2

rau qhov tshuav peb cov nplej.
 to/for thing have 1PL CLF.GRP1 unhulled.rice
 ‘because we had unhulled rice.’

Escape-TY:32

Nyob rau tom teb tseem ua tsis tau tiav.
 dwell/be.located to/for MD land PROG make/do NEG PFV finish
 ‘We stayed at that field doing wasn’t done yet.’

Escape-TY:33.1

Ces yog li wb nyob tso
 SEQ be like 1DU dwell/be.located a.while
 ‘So then we stayed for a while’

Escape-TY:33.2

wb mus ntaus nplej.
 1DU go thresh unhulled.rice
 ‘[so] we [could] go thresh the unhulled rice.’

Escape-TY:34

Yog li wb thiaj nyob.
 be like 1DU then dwell/be.located
 ‘So then we stayed.’

Escape-TY:35

Wb nyob tau ib vas nthiv.
 1DU dwell/be.located DUR one/first week
 ‘We stayed for one week.’

Escape-TY:36.1

Ces thiaj li hnov xov xwm tsis zoo tuaj txog rau wb hais tias
 SEQ then hear news matter NEG good/well come arrive.at to/for 1DU COMP
kuv txiv tau muab phom tua kuv niam
 1SG father/male PFV take gun kill 1SG woman/mother
 ‘Then we heard the bad news that came to us saying that my father took a gun and
 killed my mom,’

Escape-TY:36.2

thiab kuv niam tau tuag lawm.
and 1SG woman/mother PFV die PRF
'and my mom died.'

Escape-TY:37

Ces nws ho rov muab phom tua nws tus kheej.
SEQ 3SG so return take gun kill 3SG REFL
'Then he turned the gun [on himself] and killed himself.'

Escape-TY:38

Ces nkawv ob leej tau tuag tas sim neej nyob
SEQ 3DU two/second CLF.PRSN PFV die finish a.lifetime dwell/be.located
rau hauv lub zos Kiajmana lawm.
to/for inside CLF.GNRL village Kiamana PRF
'Then the two of them died forever in the village of Kiamana.'

Escape-TY:39

Yog li qhov nov thiaj ua rau kuv tu siab heev thiab
be like thing PX.SPKR then make/do to/for 1SG break liver INT.MGTD and
tij laug.
older.brother old
'So then this consequently deeply broke my heart—and my older brother.'

Escape-TY:40

Wb qhua.
1DU cry
'[And] we cried.'

Escape-TY:41.1

Yog li thaum kuv niam thiab kuv txiv nkawv tuag
be like the.time.when 1SG woman/mother and 1SG father/male 3DU die
tas
finish
'So then when my mother and father died,'

Escape-TY:41.2

ces peb hlob tuaj coj peb cov menyuam mus nrog nws
SEQ 1PL older come bring/take 1PL CLF.GRP1 child go with 3SG
nyob.
dwell/be.located
'then my uncle came to take us children to go live with him.'

Escape-TY:42.1

Ces yog li peb thiaj li tau tsiv tawm hauv Najloom ntawd;
SEQ be like 1PL then PFV move come.out inside Nalong PX.EVNT
'So then we moved out of Nalong;'

Escape-TY:42.2

thiaj mus nrog kuv txiv hlob nyob rau tom Kiajmana lawm.
 then go with 1SG uncle dwell/be.located to/for MD Kiamana PRF
 ‘then [we] went with my uncle to live in Kiamana over there.’¹²

Escape-TY:43.1

Ces yog li thaum peb mus nyob tod tau li ib
 SEQ be like the.time.when 1PL go dwell/be.located MD DUR like one/first
tog xyoo xwb,
 halfway year only
 ‘So when the time we lived there got to be only about half a year,’

Escape-TY:43.2

ces Nyab Laj kuj hos tuaj tua hauv zos Kiajmana.
 SEQ Vietnamese also also come kill inside village Kiamana
 ‘then the Vietnamese also came to the village of Kiamana and began killing.’

Escape-TY:44

Ces peb thiaj li tau tawg mus nyob hav zoov hav tsuag lawm.
 SEQ 1PL then PFV break.open go dwell/be.located jungle PRF
 ‘So we left and went to live in the jungle.’¹³

Escape-TY:45

Nyob rau lub caij nyoog nov yog lub caij nyoog
 dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL time PX.SPKR be CLF.GNRL time
uas Mikas— thiab tsov rog Nyab Laj ntawd— lawv tau swb lawm.
 RLTVZR America and war Vietnamese PX.EVNT 3PL PFV lose PRF
 ‘At this time was the time when America—and the Vietnamese War there—they lost.’¹⁴

Escape-TY:46

Es Mikas tau swb rog nrog Nyab Laj lawm.
 (hesitation) America PFV lose war with Vietnamese PRF
 ‘... America had lost the war with Vietnam.’

Escape-TY:47.1

Es Mikas tau rov qab mus tsev
 (hesitation) America PFV return go house
 ‘... America went back home’

Escape-TY:47.2

thiab tsis tas li ntawd.
 and NEG finish like PX.EVNT
 ‘and didn’t finish here.’

¹² I changed the spelling *txib hlob* ‘uncle’ to *txiv hlob*. I changed it to conform to Heimbach (1980) as well as to be consistent in the text. I believe the spelling to be a typographical error, since no rules of tone sandhi allow for it.

¹³ Heimbach (1980) lists the compounds *hav zoov* ‘jungle’ and *hav xub tsuag* ‘a wilderness area’; thus White’s (2014) gloss for the entire compound *hav zoov hav tsuag* ‘jungle’ is not without support. I retain White’s gloss.

¹⁴ Admittedly, this sentence is broken up, but it seems that is how the original form is, and the translation cannot improve it.

Escape-TY:48.1

Lub tsov rog nyob rau tebchaws plog kuj tau tag
 CLF.GNRL war dwell/be.located to/for country Laotian also PFV finish
nyob rau lub sijhawm ntawd,
 dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL occasion PX.EVNT
 ‘The war in Laos finished at that time also,’

Escape-TY:48.2

thiab yog li ntawd sawvdaw kuj tau rov qab mus tsev.
 and be like PX.EVNT everyone also PFV return go house
 ‘and everyone went back home also.’

Escape-TY:49

Lub sijhawm no yog lub sijhawm uas Nyab Laj tab tom
 CLF.GNRL occasion PX.SPKR be CLF.GNRL occasion RLTVZR Vietnamese IMPF
nrhiav cov neeg uas ua thabham nrog rau Amikas ntawd
 look.for CLF.GRP1 person RLTVZR be soldier with to/for America PX.EVNT
tua pov tseg.
 kill throw.away
 ‘This time was a time when the Vietnamese were looking for people who served as soldiers with America there [in order to] kill them.’¹⁵

Escape-TY:50.1

Yog li ces peb thiaj li tau tawg mus nyob hav zoov hav tsuag
 be like SEQ 1PL then PFV break.open go dwell/be.located jungle
lawm
 PRF
 ‘So then we went out to live in the jungle’

Escape-TY:50.2

vim kuv txiv hlob kuj yog ib tug nai thabham ua
 because 1SG uncle also be INDF.ART CLF.ANMT leader soldier make/do
tsov rog nrog rau nai phoo lawv thiab.
 war with to/for general 3PL and
 ‘because my uncle was a captain who worked with General Vang Pao too.’¹⁶

Escape-TY:51

Yog li thaum peb mus nyob hav zoov hav tsuag tau muaj
 be like the.time.when 1PL go dwell/be.located jungle PFV have

¹⁵ This is a difficult sentence to analyze. I am not certain how to analyze the sequence *nrog rau* ‘with/accompany put/to/for’. Each of these words could be either a verb or a preposition. It is most consistent with the overall NP pattern of PPs preceding relative clauses to analyze both words as prepositions, so that is what I have done. This sequence of two words that could both be either verbs or prepositions is not uncommon in the corpus of texts.

The word *thabhan/tabham* is not in any dictionary. Hmong orthography does not allow for words ending in <n>. Without any better suggestion available, I retain White’s (2014) spellings and gloss. Kee (Fuller 1988) uses *thab han*.

¹⁶ This free translation is from White (2014). I cannot corroborate the gloss of *nai phoo* as ‘general’, nor can I see the general’s name in the original.

li rau lub hli mus rau ib xyoos ntawd.
 like six/sixth CLF.GNRL month go to/for one/first year PX.EVNT
 ‘So then the time we went to live in the jungle got to be about six months to a year there.’¹⁷

Escape-TY:52.1

Ces nyuab heev
 SEQ difficult INT.MGTD
 ‘Then it was very difficult’

Escape-TY:52.2

vim muaj me tub menyuam thiab pojniam tub se nrog sawvdaws mus
 because have children and wife.and.children with everyone go
nyob rau tom hav zoov hav tsuag ntawd.
 dwell/be.located to/for MD jungle PX.EVNT
 ‘because there were women and children with everyone who was living there in the jungle.’

Escape-TY:53

Tsis muaj noj muaj haus.
 NEG have eat have drink
 ‘There wasn’t anything to eat or drink.’

Escape-TY:54

Txomnyem.
 destitute
 ‘[We were] destitute.’

Escape-TY:55.1

Yog li kuv txiv hlob thiaj li tau hais tias kom peb cov uas peb
 be like 1SG uncle then PFV say COMP cause 1PL CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR 1PL
hos me lossis cov laus uas mus tsis tau ces rov qab los mus
 also small or CLF.GRP1 old RLTVZR go NEG able SEQ return go
thawj Nyab Laj nyob rau tom zos,
 surrender Vietnamese dwell/be.located to/for MD village
 ‘So then my uncle told us that all those of us who were very little or the old ones who couldn’t walk [should] return and go surrender to the Vietnamese staying in that village.’

Escape-TY:55.2

ces cov uas muaj zos thiab mus taus kev ces lawv thiaj li
 SEQ CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR have strength and go able.to way SEQ 3PL then
los mus rau Thaib teb lawm.
 come go to/for Thai land PRF
 ‘Then the ones who had strength and were able to walk, then they would go to Thailand.’

¹⁷ I changed *hlob hli* ‘love month’ to *lub hli* ‘CLF.GNRL month’ at the recommendation of Ar and in agreement with Heimbach (1980).

Escape-TY:56.1

Yog li thaum lawv los mus rau Thaib teb tag,
be like the.time.when 3PL come go to/for Thai land finish
'So when they had left for Thailand,'

Escape-TY:56.2

ces peb thiaj li rov qab los mus thawj Nyab Laj.
SEQ 1PL then return go surrender Vietnamese
'then we returned and surrendered to the Vietnamese.'

Escape-TY:57

Ces los mus nyob hauv zos Kiajmasnas tau li ib
SEQ come go dwell/be.located inside village Kiamana DUR like one/first
xyoos ntawd.
year PX.EVNT
'Then we went and lived in the village of Kiamana for about one year.'

Escape-TY:58

Ces kuv tij laug thiaj li rov qab txib neeg.
SEQ 1SG older.brother old then return send person
'Then my older brother sent people back.'

Escape-TY:59

Nws muaj neeg rov qab los.
3SG have person return
'There were some people coming back.'

Escape-TY:60

Ces nws thiaj tau hais kom lawv los coj kuv thiab kuv tus
SEQ 3SG then PFV say cause 3PL come bring/take 1SG and 1SG CLF.ANMT
muam wb mus rau Thaib teb.
sister 1DU go to/for Thai land
'Then he told them to come and take me and my sister—us—to Thailand.'

Escape-TY:61

Yog li wb thiaj li tau mus rau Thaib teb lawm.
be like 1DU then obtain go to/for Thai land PRF
'So then we got to go to Thailand.'

Escape-TY:62

Ces peb mus txog rau Thaib teb.
SEQ 1PL go arrive.at to/for Thai land
'Then we arrived in Thailand.'

Escape-TY:63.1

Ces peb thiaj li txiav txim siab hais tias nyob rau lub tebchaws
SEQ 1PL then make.decision COMP dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL country
tid txognyem
MD.OPST destitute
'Then consequently we agreed that living in that land is extremely difficult,¹⁸

¹⁸ The exact expression *txiav txim siab* is not found in the dictionary. *Txiav* means 'decide', *txim* means 'bind', and *siab* means 'liver'.

Escape-TY:63.2

thiab nws yog ib lub tebchaws uas nws muaj tsov muaj rog.
 and 3SG be INDF.ART CLF.GNRL country RLTVZR 3SG have tiger.like have war
 ‘and it was a country which always had dangerous wars going on.’

Escape-TY:64.1

Ces yog li peb yuav tau tuaj rau tebchaws Amikas nov
 SEQ be like 1PL must come to/for country America PX.SPKR
 ‘And so then we had to come to the country of America here’

Escape-TY:64.2

rau qhov tebchaws Amikas nov nws yog ib lub tebchaws
 to/for thing country America PX.SPKR 3SG be INDF.ART CLF.GNRL country
tsis muaj tsov muaj rog
 NEG have tiger.like have war
 ‘because this country of America is one of the countries that don’t have dangerous wars going on,’

Escape-TY:64.3

thiab nws kuj muaj noj muaj haus zoo heev.
 and 3SG also have eat have drink good/well INT.MGTD
 ‘and it has plenty to eat and has very good things to drink.’

Escape-TY:65

Yog li ces peb thiaj li txiav txim siab xam phaj tuaj rau tebchaws Amikas
 be like SEQ 1PL then make.decision interview come to/for country America
no.
 PX.SPKR

‘So then we decided to interview to come to this country America.¹⁹’

Escape-TY:66

Yog li nyob rau lub ib hlis ntuj ces peb thiaj li sawv
 be like dwell/be.located to/for CLF.GNRL first month SEQ 1PL then get.up
kev tuaj nyob tom Koosthej.
 way come dwell/be.located MD Bangkok

‘Consequently in January we came to live there at Bangkok.²⁰’

Escape-TY:67

Peb tuaj nyob rau tod tau li ib hlis.
 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for MD DUR like one/first month
 ‘We lived there about one month.’

Escape-TY:68

Ces lub ob hlis vas nthib nee kaum plaub ib txhiab cuaj pua
 SEQ CLF.GNRL second month date twenty four one thousand nine hundred

¹⁹ The term *xam phaj* as ‘interview’ is not listed; Heimbach (1980) glosses it as ‘to figure with numbers’.

²⁰ No dictionary corroborates *hli ntuj/hlis ntuj* as ‘month’, but the texts agree for all the speakers who use it, and the gloss is consistent with the context. The word ‘hli’ means ‘moon/month’, and the word *ntuj* means ‘sky’, but the compound is not verifiable.

yim caum ntawd ces peb thiaj li tuaj poob rau pem Nebraska *ped.*
 eight ten PX.EVNT SEQ 1PL then come fall to/for MD.up MD.up
 ‘Then on February 24, 1980, we came up here to Nebraska.’²¹

Escape-TY:69

Peb tuaj nyob rau ped tau li tsib xyoos.
 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for MD.up obtain like five/fifth year
 ‘We lived up there about five years.’

Escape-TY:70

Ces peb thiaj li khiav los nyob rau hauv California nov.
 SEQ 1PL then run come dwell/be.located to/for inside PX.SPKR
 ‘Then we left to live here in California.’

Escape-TY:71.1

Thaum peb los nyob hauv California nov,
 the.time.when 1PL come dwell/be.located inside PX.SPKR
 ‘When we came to live in California,’

Escape-TY:71.2

ces thiaj li los mus kawm ntawv tiav nyob hauv nov
 SEQ then come go learn writing finish dwell/be.located inside PX.SPKR
 ‘then we finished attending school here,’

Escape-TY:71.3

thiab ces thiaj li los yuav pojniam nyob hauv Fresno
 and SEQ then come marry woman/wife dwell/be.located inside Fresno
nov.
 PX.SPKR
 ‘and then I got married here in Fresno.’

Escape-TY:72.1

Tamsim nov kuv muaj ob tug menyuam tub:
 immediately 1SG have two/second CLF.ANMT child son
 ‘Right now I have two children, sons:’

Escape-TY:72.2

ib tug hu ua Tubtsheej
 one/first CLF.ANMT call make/do Toucheng
 ‘one called Toucheng,’

Escape-TY:72.3

hos ib tug hu ua Ywgpheej
 also one/first CLF.ANMT call make/do Youpheng
 ‘also one called Youpheng,’

Escape-TY:72.4

nrog rau kuv pojniam nws npe hu ua Cua Lis no.
 with to/for 1SG woman/wife 3SG name call make/do Choua Lee PX.SPKR
 ‘with my wife here; her name is Choua Lee.’

²¹ Heimbach (1980) gives the preferred spelling for *nee kaum* ‘twenty’ as *nees nkaum*.

Escape-TY:73

Yog li tamsim no peb nyob rau hauv Fresno nov.
be like immediately 1PL dwell/be.located to/for inside Fresno PX.SPKR
'Right now we live here in Fresno.'²²

Escape-TY:74

*Qhov nov yog lub neeg me me ntawm, kuv lub neeg kuv
thing PX.SPKR be CLF.GNRL story small small PX.EVNT 1SG CLF.GNRL story 1SG
piav qhia rau Nathan paub li ntawd.*
tell teach to/for Nathan know like PX.EVNT
'This is the very short story here—my story that I told to Nathan.'

²² I moved the *nov* from the beginning of the next sentence to the end of this one. The free translation Nathan White (2014) did reflects this, and it follows normal sentence patterns better, but the base line had the sentence break before the *nov* originally.

APPENDIX E

Text: How to make Hmong eggs

Information about the author and the origin of this text is in Appendix Text: Everything starts with God.

How to make Hmong eggs

Eggs:1

Nyob *zoo.*
dwell/be.located good/well
'Hello.'

Eggs:2

Hnub no yog lub ob hlis ntuj vas nthib nees nkaum plaub ob
day PX.SPKR be CLF.GNRL second month date twenty four two
phav kaum plaub.
thousand ten four
'Today is February 24, 2014.'¹

Eggs:3.1

Nebtee rov qab tuaj rau hauv kuv tsev,
Nathan return come to/for inside 1SG house
'Nathan came back to my house,'

Eggs:3.2

thiab wb yuav sib tham mentsis txog kev ua noj.
and 1DU POS.IRR RECP talk a.little.bit about way make/do eat
'and we will talk with each other a little bit about cooking.'

Eggs:4

Yog li hnub no qhov kuv txiav txim siab los mus tham txog mentsis
be like day PX.SPKR thing 1SG make.decision come go talk about a.little.bit

¹ No dictionaries corroborate *hli ntuj/hlis ntuj* as a compound meaning 'month', but the texts agree for the two speakers who use it, and the gloss is consistent with the context. The word *hli* means 'moon/month', and the word *ntuj* means 'sky', but the compound is not verifiable.

I changed *vas nthiv* to *vas nthib*. Neither compound is found in any dictionary, but the use of *vas nthiv* as 'week' is consistent by this speaker except for in this sentence. There is one other occurrence of *vas nthib*, and that is at the end of Appendix D, "Tzerge Yang's story," in which he uses the term for 'date', a gloss that fits much better here.

According to Xiong (2005), the word *phav* 'thousand' is a Laotian loanword.

yog tham txog kev ua qe noj.
be talk about way make/do egg eat

‘So then, today I decided I’m going to talk about how to cook eggs.’²

Eggs:5

Qhov nov yog Hmoob li ua qe noj xwb xwb.
thing PX.SPKR be Hmong like make/do egg eat only only
‘This is just the Hmong way to cook eggs.’

Eggs:6

Thawj koj muab dos coj los hlais kom mos mos tas.
the.first.thing 2SG take onion bring/take come slice cause fine fine finish
‘First you take some onion; slice it, making [the slices] very, very thin [pieces].’

Eggs:7.1

Ces yog koj hos nyiam qhiav nrog thiab no
SEQ if 2SG also like ginger with and PX.SPKR
‘And then if you like ginger with this too,’

Eggs:7.2

koj muab ib qho me me qhiav los tsoo kom mos mos,
2SG take INDF.ART thing small small ginger come crush cause fine fine
‘you get a little bit of ginger and crush it so that it is very fine,’

Eggs:7.3

andkoj muab tsos cia.
2SG take put let
‘and then you put it aside.’

Eggs:8.1

Ces koj muab lub yias
SEQ 2SG take CLF.GNRL pan
‘Then you take a pan,’

Eggs:8.2

thiab koj muab li ob diav roj coj los tso rau hauv
and 2SG take like two/second spoon oil bring/take come put to/for inside
lub yias,
CLF.GNRL pan
‘and you take about two spoonfuls of oil, [and] put it in the pan,’

Eggs:8.3

thiab koj muab tso rau ntawm lub qhov cub.
and 2SG take put to/for PX.EVNT CLF.GNRL cooking.fire
‘and you put it on the stove.’

Eggs:9

Ces koj muab taws rau medium high.
SEQ 2SG take burn to/for
‘Then you heat it to medium high.’

² The exact expression *txiav txim siab* is not found in the dictionary. *Txiav* means ‘decide’, *txim* means ‘bind’, and *siab* means ‘liver’.

Eggs:10.1

Ces koj tos li ib mi pliag zoj li nees nkaum xiskoos
SEQ 2SG wait like a.little.while like twenty second
‘Then you wait for for a little while—about twenty seconds—³’

Eggs:10.2

kom cov roj ntawd kub kiag lawm.
cause CLF.GRP1 oil PX.EVNT hot INT.CPLT1 PRF
‘so that this oil is thoroughly hot.’

Eggs:11

Koj mam muab ob lub qe koj los tsoo tso rau
2SG then take two/second CLF.GNRL egg bring/take come crush put to/for
hauv.
inside
‘You then take two eggs, bring them [to where you’re working], break them, and put them in.’

Eggs:12

Ces koj muab tso rau hauv.
SEQ 2SG take put to/for inside
‘Then you put them in.’

Eggs:13

Ces koj tso mentsis ntsev rau thiab.
SEQ 2SG put a.little.bit salt to/for and
‘Then you put a little salt in also.’

Eggs:14.1

Ces koj muab cov dos uas koj tsuav ntawd,
SEQ 2SG take CLF.GRP1 onion RLTVZR 2SG chop PX.EVNT
‘Then you take the onions that you chopped,’

Eggs:14.2

thiab cov qhiav koj tsoo ntawd muab tso rau hauv.
and CLF.GRP1 ginger 2SG crush PX.EVNT take put to/for inside
‘and the ginger that you crushed, [and] you put [these items] in.’

Eggs:15

Ces koj mam li muab do rau kom zoo zoo tibsib tas.
SEQ 2SG will/need take stir to/for cause good/well good/well altogether finish
‘Then you need to stir it all so that it is mixed really well.’

Eggs:16.1

Ces thaum koj muab do tas lau,
SEQ the.time.when 2SG take stir finish emphatic
‘Then when you are all done stirring,’

³ No dictionary corroborates the glossing of *ib mi pliag zoj* as ‘a little while’. Certainly *ib* means ‘INDF.ART’, *pliag* means ‘a moment, an instant’, and *zoj* is an intensifier indicating speed, but *mi* is not in any dictionary, nor is the phrase as a whole. I suspect that *mi* should really be *me* ‘little’, but I cannot be sure. I have retained the glossing from White (2014).

Eggs:16.2

ces koj li about ib na this li tej ntawd.
 SEQ 2SG like one/first minute like CLF.GRP2 PX.EVNT
 ‘you wait for about a minute or so.’⁴

Eggs:17

Ces koj saib cov qe.
 SEQ 2SG look.at CLF.GRP1 egg
 ‘Then, you check the eggs.’

Eggs:18.1

Yog koj nyiam noj kom siav siav
 if 2SG like eat cause well.done well.done
 ‘If you like to eat them very well done,’

Eggs:18.2

ces koj ua rau kom nws siav siav.
 SEQ 2SG make/do to/for cause 3SG well.done well.done
 ‘then you need to make it very well done.’

Eggs:19

Thiabsi li kuv no, ces kuv tsuas nyiam noj kom siav kiag
 but like 1SG PX.SPKR TOP 1SG only like eat cause well.done INT.CPLT1
xwb.
 only
 ‘But as for me, I like to eat it just well done.’⁵

Eggs:20.1

Ces koj ua li ntawd,
 SEQ 2SG make/do like PX.EVNT
 ‘So you do it like this’

Eggs:20.2

ces nws zoo qab dua rau kuv.
 SEQ 3SG good/well good.tasting more to/for 1SG
 ‘—then it tastes better to me.’

Eggs:21

Qhov ntawv lau koj ua tas, ntawm no.
 NMLZ PX.EVNT emphatic 2SG make/do finish right.here
 ‘There! You are done right here.’

Eggs:22.1

Ces koj muab coj los mus tso,
 SEQ 2SG take bring/take come go leave
 ‘Then you scoop it out,’

⁴ The word *na* and the compound *na this* are not in any dictionary. I retain White’s (2014) gloss ‘minute’. Kee Fuller (1988) uses the compound *nas this*.

⁵ Ar say that *siav kiag* is ‘lightly done, little cooked’.

Eggs:22.2

hais ib tais mov,
dip.out INDF.ART dish rice
‘[and] dish up a plate of rice,’

Eggs:22.3

thiab koj muab cov qe ntawd tso rau saum toj cov mov.
and 2SG take CLF.GRP1 egg PX.EVNT put to/for over hill CLF.GRP1 rice
‘and you put the eggs here on top of the mound of rice.’

Eggs:23

Ces koj mam li noj.
SEQ 2SG will/need eat
‘Then you will eat it.’

Eggs:24

Mas zoo nkaus li qab kawg li.
TOP good/well INT.CPLT2 like good.tasting to.the.greatest.degree like
‘It looks and tastes really good.’

Eggs:25

Ces kuv qhia li no rau koj paub hais tias ua qe Hmoob yog
SEQ 1SG teach like PX.SPKR to/for 2SG know COMP make/do egg Hmong be
ua li cas
make/do how?/why?

‘So I taught you how to make Hmong eggs.’⁶

Eggs:26

Ces tas li no lawm xwb.
SEQ finish like PX.SPKR PRF only
‘And this is the end.’

Eggs:27

Ua tsaug
thank.you
‘Thank you.’

⁶ The phrase *li cas* is often an interrogative adverb ‘how?/why?’, but it can also be function as a pro-adverb.

APPENDIX F

Text: Kee's story

Kee's story is the personal narrative of the "primary informant" of Fuller's in writing Fuller (1988), of which this text is an appendix. She gives the following biographical information about him: "Kee Thao [is] a White Hmong speaker from the Long Chieng area of Laos. Now a university student in his twenties, Kee left Laos in 1975 with part of his family, spent three years in Thailand, and came to the United States in early 1970. He is also literate in Laotian" (Fuller 1988:4). The circumstances about the production of the text are not given. The written form of the text as it appears in the appendix of the dissertation is a continuous stream of words (syllables) without punctuation or capitalization. The style is consistent with the transcription of a recorded oral narrative, but this fact cannot be verified. Slashes appear intermittently between words, apparently marking prosodic units, but no explanation for the slashes is given. The individual words are glossed, but the free translation is on the facing page separate from the interlinearizations. Sentence content and boundaries in the free translation do not correspond closely to the units delineated by the slash marks in the original transcription.

Kee's story

Escape-K:1

Thaum lub sijhawm ib txhiab cuaj puas xya caum tsib
the.time.when CLF.GNRL occasion one thousand nine hundred seven ten five
lub plaub lub tsib hli ntuj van thib kaum plaub peb tau
CLF.GNRL fourth CLF.GNRL fifth month date ten four 1PL PFV
tawg rog nyob rau tebchaws Lostsuas.
break.open war dwell/be.located to/for country Laos
'On April—May 14, 1975, we lost the war in Laos.'¹

¹ The compound *van thib* is an impossible spelling, and it does not occur in any dictionary. Ar suggests *vas thib* instead. *Vasthib* is the Laotian word for 'date'. Tzerge Yang uses the compound *vas nthib*. Because of the general lack of agreement, I retain Fuller's (1988) spelling.

I changed *li* to *hli*. I believe *li* is a transcription error.

Escape-K:2

Hnub ntawm yog hnub kawg ntawm.
day PX.EVNT be day end PX.EVNT
'That day was the last day there.'

Escape-K:3

Peb yawg hlob Vaj Pov tau khiav tawm tebchaws.
1PL grandfather older Vang Pao PFV run come.out country
'Our General Vang Pao fled the country.'

Escape-K:4

Ua tsis tas li ntawd.
make/do NEG finish like PX.EVNT
'That wasn't all.'

Escape-K:5

Cov neeg kuj txhua leej txhua tus tsuas nrhiav kev
CLF.GRP1 person also each/all CLF.PRSN each/all CLF.ANMT only look.for way
tawm tebchaws Lostsuas tuaj mus rau sab Thaib teb.
come.out country Laos come go to/for side Thai land
'Everybody else looked for a way to escape from Laos to Thailand as well.'

Escape-K:6

Muaj peb hnub ntawd lawv xuas nyooj hoom thauj cov.
have three/third day PX.EVNT 3PL use airplane transport CLF.GRP1
'For three days they used airplanes to transport groups [of people].'

Escape-K:7

Coob nws poob rau tom qab.
many 3SG fall to/for afterward/behind
'Many of them were left behind.'

Escape-K:8

Nws tuaj nce tsis tau nyooj hoom.
3SG come ascend NEG able airplane
'They could not get on the airplanes.'

Escape-K:9

Kuv yog ib tus neeg nyob deb zos deb
1SG be INDF.ART CLF.ANMT person dwell/be.located distant village distant
lub tshav nyooj hoom deb rau Loob Ceeb.
CLF.GNRL field airplane distant to/for Long Chieng
'I was a person living in a village far from the airport and from Long Chieng.'²

No dictionary corroborates *hli ntuj/hlis ntuj* as 'month', but the texts agree for all the speakers who use it, and the gloss is consistent with the context. The word *hli* means 'moon/month', and the word *ntuj* means 'sky', but the compound is not verifiable.

² Ar says *Loob Ceeb* should be spelled *Looj Ceeb*. I retain Fuller's (1988) spelling.

Escape-K:10.1

Kuv tsev neeg thiab kuv peb nyob aw
 1SG CLF.HSHD person and 1SG 1PL dwell/be.located (hesitation)
 ‘My family and I, we lived ...’³

Escape-K:10.2

pab man li ib tav su kev yog mus caij tsheb mus rau
 about like one/first period.of.time noon way be go ride vehicle go to/for
ntawm lub zos Loob Ceeb rau ntawm kuv lub zos
 PX.EVNT CLF.GNRL village Long Chieng to/for PX.EVNT 1SG CLF.GNRL village
kuv nyob ntawm.
 1SG dwell/be.located PX.EVNT
 ‘it was about half a day’s car ride from Long Chieng to my village where I lived.’

Escape-K:11.1

Kuv tau peb hnub tom qab xav hais tias yog tsis khiav
 1SG DUR three/third day afterward/behind think/want COMP if NEG run
 ‘After three days I thought if I didn’t escape,’⁴

Escape-K:11.2

ces yuav nyob lub tebchaws Lostsuas ntawd.
 SEQ POS.IRR dwell/be.located CLF.GNRL country Laos PX.EVNT
 ‘then I would just live here in Laos.’

Escape-K:12.1

Kuv txiv kuj tsis tau ua nom loj
 1SG father/male also NEG PFV be officer big
 ‘My father wasn’t a high-ranking officer,’

Escape-K:12.2

tiamsis ua thabhan
 but be soldier
 ‘but he was a soldier,’⁵

Escape-K:12.3

thiab ua tej nyuag aw haujlwm rau hauv lab tab ban.
 and make/do CLF.GRP2 little (hesitation) work to/for inside government
 ‘and occasionally he did some work for the government.’⁶

³ The word *nyob* was originally *nyog*. Ar recommends the spelling change, and Heimbach (1980) allows for only *nyob*.

Ar says that she is used to seeing *aw* ‘(hesitation)’ spelled *ua* or *uas* but never *aw*. I retain Fuller’s (1988) spelling: with speech sounds that are not real words, I must assume that this is the sound the speaker made, and I cannot document the spelling of non-words. I do, however, want to note the suggestion of a possible standard.

⁴ Ar suggests that *tau* ‘DUR’ should be *tos* ‘wait’. This fits the grammatical patterns I know of much better, but I have retained the wording of the original text.

⁵ The word *thabhan/tabham* is not in any dictionary. Hmong orthography does not allow for words ending in <n>. Without any better suggestion available, I retain Fuller’s (1988) spellings and gloss. Tzerge Yang (White 2014) uses *thabham*.

⁶ Ar suggests that *lab tab ban* ‘government’ (which is an impossible spelling) ought to be *lab thab npas*. I think it ought to be *lub thab npas*, but I cannot verify this, so I retain Fuller’s (1988) spelling.

Escape-K:13.1

Thiab yog li ntawd
and be like PX.EVNT
'And that being the case,'

Escape-K:13.2

luag cov uas yeeb ncuab
others/3PL CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR enemy
'the ones who were enemies,'

Escape-K:13.3

cov uas luag
CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR others/3PL
'the ones who were these people,'

Escape-K:13.4

cov Nyab Laj luag yuav tau txhom txhua leej txhua
CLF.GRP1 Vietnamese others/3PL must seize each/all CLF.PRSN each/all
tus neeg uas ua haujlwm rau ntawd.
CLF.ANMT person RLTVZR make/do work to/for PX.EVNT
'the Vietnamese would forcibly seize all the people who worked for that [the government].'

Escape-K:14.1

Cov uas yeeb ncuab los
CLF.GRP1 RLTVZR enemy or
'The ones who were enemies or'

Escape-K:14.2

yog tau ua thabhan ntawd tog rau yus tog
be PFV make/do soldier PX.EVNT side to/for INDF.PRON side
'had acted as soldiers for their side'

Escape-K:14.3

luag yuav txhom tibs mus.
others/3PL POS.IRR seize altogether go
'they would seize [them] all.'

Escape-K:15.1

Mas yog li ntawd
TOP be like PX.EVNT
'So because it was like this,⁷'

Escape-K:15.2

mas thiaj li tau ntshai.
TOP then PFV fear
'we were afraid.'⁸

⁷ The translation of 'because' actually comes from the word *thiaj li* 'consequently' from the next clause.

⁸ I have glossed the expression *thiaj (li)* as 'then', which can indicate either sequence or consequence. I have found in the texts that it is more likely to indicate sequence ('then') when it follows the sequence marker *ces* and that it consistently indicates consequence ('consequently') when it follows the expression *yog li*—literally 'be like', or more freely translated 'that being the case'.

Escape-K:16.1

Kuv txiv thiaj li muab qaib los tua xeem
 1SG father/male then take chicken come kill test
 ‘My father then performed a chicken-killing test’⁹

Escape-K:16.2

hais tias ua yuav nyob zoo dua los mus zoo
 COMP make/do POS.IRR dwell/be.located good/well more or go good/well
dua.
 more
 ‘to find out whether to stay or go would be better.’

Escape-K:17

Ces muab ob tug qaib los xeem tas.
 SEQ take two/second CLF.ANMT chicken come test finish
 ‘So he performed the test on two chickens.’

Escape-K:18

Tus mus zoo dua.
 CLF.ANMT go good/well more
 ‘The one for going was better.’

Escape-K:19.1

Ces yog li ntawd
 SEQ be like PX.EVNT
 ‘So that being the case,’

Escape-K:19.2

lub sijhawm ntawd yog hnuv van thib kaum, van thib kaum cuaj
 CLF.GNRL occasion PX.EVNT be day date ten date ten nine
lub tsib hlis ntuj ib txhiab cuaj puas xya caum tsib
 CLF.GNRL fifth month one thousand nine hundred seven ten five
 ‘(at that time it was the 10th—the 19th of May, 1975),¹⁰

Escape-K:19.3

kuv txiv thiab kuv thiab kuv ib tug kwv yau
 1SG father/male and 1SG and 1SG one/first CLF.ANMT younger.brother young
kuv hu ua Npawv no peb peb txiv tub xwb, peb
 1SG call make/do Ber PX.SPKR 1PL three/third father/male son only 1PL
thiaj li tau tso kuv niam thiab ob tug
 then PFV leave 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT

⁹ Ar’s explanation of the chicken-killing test is this. If someone needs to know the answer to a question for a major decision, he takes a chicken and talks to it, telling it his question. Then he kills the chicken and cooks it. After cooking it, he examines the appearance of the eyes (whether they are bruised, swollen, sagging or otherwise imperfect), the tongue (whether it is straight or curled or jagged) and feet of the chicken (whether they are contracted, contorted, splayed, or otherwise imperfect) and discerns his answer. In this case, apparently the inquirer took two chickens through the process simultaneously, and the chicken that represented leaving had eyes, tongue, and feet with better form.

¹⁰ No dictionaries corroborate *hli ntuj/hlis ntuj* as ‘month’, but the texts agree for the two speakers who use it, and the gloss is consistent with the context.

kwv yau tseg.
 younger.brother young leave
 ‘my father, my one little brother I called Ber, and I—these three of us, father and sons
 only— we then left my mother and two little brothers behind.’

Escape-K:20

Mas peb thiaj li peb txiv tub peb thiaj li aws yuav lawv ib
 TOP 1PL then 1PL father/male son 1PL then (hesitation) get 3PL INDF.ART
daig ntawv.
 CLF.SRFC/SHT writing
 ‘So then we, father and sons, we bought a [permission] letter of theirs.’¹¹

Escape-K:21.1

Lawv daim ntawv ntawm yog ua Vientiane tuaj
 3PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT be make/do Vientiane come
 ‘Their letter was from Vientiane,’

Escape-K:21.2

hais tias tuaj xyuas kwvtij nyob rau pem Xieng Khouang.
 say COMP come visit relatives dwell/be.located to/for MD.up Xieng Khouang
 ‘saying that [we] came to visit relatives who were living up in Xieng Khouang.’

Escape-K:22.1

Lawv muaj peb leeg
 3PL have three/third CLF.PRSN
 ‘There were three of them,’

Escape-K:22.2

thiab ces peb muaj peb leeg
 and TOP 1PL have three/third CLF.PRSN
 ‘and there were three of us,’

Escape-K:22.3

tab tom phim lawv daim ntawv ntawd.
 IMPF match 3PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT
 ‘matching their letter.’

Escape-K:23

Ces peb thiaj yuav lawv daim ntawv ntawm.
 SEQ 1PL then get 3PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT
 ‘So then we bought this letter of theirs.’

Escape-K:24.1

Ces peb hais tias peb mus Vientiane
 SEQ 1PL say COMP 1PL go Vientiane
 ‘We said that we were going to Vientiane;’

¹¹ Ar says that *daig* should be *daim*; Heimbach (1980) supports the tone change from *daim* to *daig*. I have retained the concept of buying the letter—not simply obtaining it—as a reflection of the free translation in Fuller (1988).

Escape-K:24.2

peb rov qab mus peb tsev xwb.
 1PL return go 1PL house only
 ‘we were just returning to our home.’

Escape-K:25

Tiamsis daim ntawv ntawm mas yog daim ntawv lawv
 but CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT TOP be CLF.SRFC/SHT writing 3PL
nyob Vientiane.
 dwell/be.located Vientiane
 ‘But this letter was a letter from some people who lived in Vientiane.’

Escape-K:26

Lawv tuaj.
 3PL come
 ‘They came.’

Escape-K:27

Peb yuav lawv ntawv.
 1PL get 3PL writing
 ‘We got their letter.’

Escape-K:28

Peb yuav nrhiav kev khiav tuaj mus rau sab Thaib teb xwb.
 1PL POS.IRR look.for way run come go to/for side Thai land only
 ‘We would just look for a way to escape to Thailand.’

Escape-K:29.1

Peb tuaj mus txog rau lub zos hu ua Ban Son
 1PL come go arrive.at to/for CLF.GNRL village call make/do Ban Son
 ‘We travelled until we arrived at a village called Ban Son’

Escape-K:29.2

tuaj mus pw tau ob hmos rau hauv
 come go lie.down DUR two/second night to/for inside
 ‘[and] stayed there for two nights,’

Escape-K:29.3

tuaj mus xee daim ntawv ntawm rau tom cov nom tswv loj
 come go sign CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT to/for MD CLF.GRP1 officer big
lub sijhawm ntawm.
 CLF.GNRL occasion PX.EVNT
 ‘and we went to get this letter signed by those top officials at this time.’¹²

Escape-K:30

Neeg khiav coob heev.
 person run many INT.MGTD
 ‘Very many people were escaping.’

¹² I changed *xen* to *xee* ‘sign’ in accordance with Ar and Xiong (2005); *xee* is a Laotian loanword; *xen* is not a Hmong word at all.

I changed *nom txwv* to *nom tswv* ‘officer’ to agree with Heimbach (1980). The original spelling seems to be a typographical error.

Escape-K:31.1

Mas yog li ntawd
TOP be like PX.EVNT
'So then that being the case,'

Escape-K:31.2

lawv thiaj hais tias ua peb puas yog neeg nyob nram
3PL then say COMP make/do 1PL YNQ be person dwell/be.located MD.down
tiag.
level.place
'they asked if we were people who lived down the plain (in Vientiane).'

Escape-K:32.1

Peb thiaj muab peb daim ntawv ntawm rau uas tias yog peb
1PL then take 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing PX.EVNT put RLTVZR COMP be 1PL
tuaj xyuas xwb
come visit only
'We then took our letter which [said] that we only came to visit,'

Escape-K:32.2

peb rov qab tau
1PL return able
'[and] we could return,'

Escape-K:32.3

vim luag tsis pub cov neeg mus ze rau Vientiane.
because others/3PL NEG let CLF.GRP1 person go nearby to/for Vientiane
'because they didn't let people go near Vientiane.'

Escape-K:33

Qhov ntawm yog nyob ntawm ntug dej uas hla rau
thing PX.EVNT be dwell/be.located PX.EVNT edge water RLTVZR cross to/for
sab Thaib teb yoojyim heev.
side Thai land easy INT.MGTD
'This place is located on the river bank where to cross to Thailand is quite easy.'

Escape-K:34

ces peb thiaj tuaj mus.
SEQ 1PL then come go
'So then we went.'

Escape-K:35

Peb caij lot tuaj mus lawv xee daim ntawv rau peb lawm.
1PL ride car come go 3PL sign CLF.SRFC/SHT writing to/for 1PL PRF
'We rode in the car to [where] they signed the letter for us.¹³'

Escape-K:36.1

Peb caij lot tuaj mus aws
1PL ride car come go (hesitation)
'We rode in a car ...'

¹³ The word *lot* 'car' is an odd word. It is not possible to spell it or pronounce in in Hmong. It is likely a Laotian loanword /lod/ 'car' (Google Translate). I have taken the gloss from Fuller (1988).

Escape-K:36.2

caij bus tuaj mus rau nram Vientiane
ride bus come go to/for MD.down Vientiane
'rode a bus down to Vientiane.'¹⁴

Escape-K:37.1

Tuaj mus ib hnuv tsaus ntuj
come go one/first day night/darkness
'We traveled all day until dark'

Escape-K:37.2

txog pem kev ib nrab ke xwb.
arrive.at MD.up way one/first half way only
'and came only half way up.'

Escape-K:38.1

Thabhan cov thabhan Nyab Laj muab peb khaum cia rau pes
soldier CLF.GRP1 soldier Vietnamese take 1PL catch let put there
'Soldiers—a group of Vietnamese soldiers—stopped us there'

Escape-K:38.2

ces muab lawv muab cov neeg nqis muab peb nqis tas
SEQ take 3PL take CLF.GRP1 person go.down take 1PL go.down finish
'and took—they took us off the bus,¹⁵

Escape-K:38.3

bus mus ndhau lawm.
bus go continue PRF
'[and] the bus went on.'¹⁶

Escape-K:39

Peb muab peb daim ntawv rau luag saib.
1PL take 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing to/for others/3PL look.at
'We took our letter to them to look at.'

Escape-K:40

Luag mas ntsia peb daim ntawv peb yog neeg
others/3PL TOP stare.at 1PL CLF.SRFC/SHT writing 1PL be person
nyob Vientiane.
dwell/be.located Vientiane
'They looked at our letter [which said that] we were people who live in Vientiane.'

Escape-K:41.1

Yog li ntawm
be like PX.EVNT
'That being the case'

¹⁴ The original text includes the word *bus* 'bus', and I have preserved it as such, but I think it highly probable that it is not truly a Hmong word.

¹⁵ According to Ar, this sentence would make more sense if the first *muab* were deleted. The word *nqis* 'go.down' does not occur in any dictionary. This gloss is from Fuller (1988).

¹⁶ The word *ndhau* is not a possible Hmong spelling. It is not listed in any of the dictionaries I have, even when searching likely alternate spellings. I retain the gloss 'continue' supplied by Fuller (1988).

Escape-K:41.2

luag yuav tsum tso peb mus.
others/3PL must permit 1PL go
'they had to let us go.'

Escape-K:42

Ces twb tsaus ntuj lawm.
SEQ really/already night/darkness PRF
'It was already dark.'

Escape-K:43

Lawv yuav kom peb nrog cov thabhan Nyab Laj ntawm pw.
3PL intend cause 1PL with CLF.GRP1 soldier Vietnamese PX.EVNT lie.down
'They wanted us to spend the night with the Vietnamese soldiers.'

Escape-K:44.1

Peb tsis pw
1PL NEG lie.down
'We didn't sleep there'

Escape-K:44.2

rau qhov peb tsis tau luag.
to/for thing 1PL NEG obtain companion.for.safety
'because we had not gotten anyone to go with us to ensure our safety.'

Escape-K:45.1

Lub sijhawm ntawm kuv muaj kaum xyoo
CLF.GNRL occasion PX.EVNT 1SG have ten/tenth year
'At that time I was ten years old,'

Escape-K:45.2

kuv tus kwv muaj yim xyoo
1SG CLF.ANMT younger.brother have eight/eighth year
'my younger brother was eight years old,'

Escape-K:45.3

hos kuv txiv nws pab man hais tias muaj plaub caug xyoo.
also 1SG father/male 3SG about COMP have four/fourth ten/tenth year
'and my father was about forty.'

Escape-K:46.1

Ces yog li ntawd
SEQ be like PX.EVNT
'That being the case,'

Escape-K:46.2

peb thiaj li,
1PL then
'we then—'

Escape-K:46.3

lawv hais tias muaj ib lub zos nyob nram
3PL say COMP have INDF.ART CLF.GNRL village dwell/be.located MD.down

hav mus kev taug mus ko taw pab man li peb caug nas this
valley walk follow go foot about like three/third ten/tenth minute

los yog plaub caug nas this txog.
come be four/fourth ten/tenth minute arrive.at

‘they told us that there was a village located down in the valley about a thirty or forty minute walk distant.’¹⁷

Escape-K:47

Mas peb thiaj li tias peb xum mus pw nram lub zos
TOP 1PL then COMP 1PL rather go lie.down MD.down CLF.GNRL village

nplog ntawm.
Laotian PX.EVNT

‘We [said] that we would rather go down to spend the night at that Laotian village.’¹⁸

Escape-K:48.1

Ces peb mus ko taw
SEQ 1PL go foot
‘So we went on foot’

Escape-K:48.2

thaum ntawm twb tsaus ntuj lawm
the.time.when PX.EVNT really/already night/darkness PRF
‘when it was already dark,’

Escape-K:48.3

tiamsim peb xum tsis nrog cov Nyab Laj thabhan Nyab Laj ntawm
but 1PL rather NEG with CLF.GRP1 Vietnamese soldier Vietnamese PX.EVNT
pw.
lie.down

‘but we would rather not to spend the night with those Vietnamese soldiers.’¹⁹

Escape-K:49

Peb xum nrog cov nplog nram pw.
1PL rather with CLF.GRP1 Laotian MD.down lie.down
‘We would rather spend the night down there with the Laotians.’

Escape-K:50

Ces peb thiaj tau mus ko taw taug kev mus nram lub zos
SEQ 1PL then PFV go foot follow way go MD.down CLF.GNRL village
nram mus.
MD.down go

‘Then we walked down to the village down there.’

¹⁷ I cannot get any source to corroborate *nas this* as ‘minute’, but it clearly means that by this speaker in this context. Twawjzeb Yaj uses the compound *na this*.

¹⁸ The word *nplog* is the ordinary term the Hmong in Laos use for the Laotians, but elsewhere this is a very derogatory term.

¹⁹ I cannot find any explanation for the tone change of *tiamsis* to *tiamsim*.

Escape-K:51

Thov ib tug yawg nplog nyob nram.
ask INDF.ART CLF.ANMT grandfather Laotian dwell/be.located MD.down
'We asked a Laotian household head living down there.'

Escape-K:52

Nws thiaj li peb mus pw so nws lub tsev pw tau ib
3SG then 1PL go lie.down rest 3SG CLF.GNRL house lie.down DUR one/first
hmos.
night
'He let us stay at his house and sleep one night.'²⁰

Escape-K:53

Tagkis kaj ntug peb thiaj tuaj lawm tuaj mus txog Vientiane.
tomorrow/morning daylight 1PL then come leave come go arrive.at Vientiane
'The next morning we left and went until we arrived in Vientiane.'²¹

Escape-K:54

Peb tuaj mus nyob tau ob hnub xwb nyob
1PL come go dwell/be.located DUR two/second day only dwell/be.located
rau nram Vientiane xwb.
to/for MD.down Vientiane only
'We came and stayed down in Vientiane only two days.'

Escape-K:55.1

Ces npaj no aws luag tus puav twb tuaj
SEQ time PX.SPKR (hesitation) others/3PL CLF.ANMT some really/already come
soj pom peb
follow see 1PL
'Then, right then, some people followed us [and] saw us'

Escape-K:55.2

hais tias tej zaum ntshe peb txawv
say COMP maybe maybe 1PL differ
'[and] said that maybe we were different,'

Escape-K:55.3

peb yuav khiav.
1PL intend run
'[and] we were intending to escape.'

Escape-K:56

Peb tuaj mus so hauv peb ib tug phoojywg aws
1PL come go rest inside 1PL INDF.ART CLF.ANMT friend (hesitation)

²⁰ Ar suggests that *thiaj cia* 'then let' should replace *thiaj li* 'then' to make more sense. This is a problem sentence for me, and Ar's suggestion is a welcome resolution. It is the only way I can see the sentence as making sense grammatically. Additionally, the glossing is consistent with the original free translation. While I have retained the original wording, I include the suggestion for further evaluation.

²¹ I see no reason for tone change of *taskis* to *tagkis* in this context, but the speakers all agree, so I retain the original spelling.

lub tsev.

CLF.GNRL house

‘We came and stayed in a friend’s house.’

Escape-K:57

Ces tsis peb thiaj li ntiav nws kom nws mus tiv tauj nkoj rau peb.

SEQ NEG 1PL then hire 3SG cause 3SG go request boat to/for 1PL

‘Then we hired him to go and request a boat for us.’²²

Escape-K:58.1

Muaj ib tug dab laug nrog peb

have INDF.ART CLF.ANMT brother-in-law with 1PL

‘We had a brother-in-law with us’

Escape-K:58.2

thiab peb yog plaub leeg.

and 1PL be four/fourth CLF.PRSN

‘and so there were four of us.’

Escape-K:59

Mas ib tug yog tsib caug txhiab.

TOP one/first CLF.ANMT be five/fifth ten/tenth thousand

‘One person was 50,000.’

Escape-K:60

Ces peb plaub leeg yog ob puas txhiab.

SEQ 1PL four/fourth CLF.PRSN be two/second hundred thousand

‘We four people were 200,000.’

Escape-K:61

Ces peb ntiav nws mus.

SEQ 1PL hire 3SG go

‘So we hired him to go’

Escape-K:62

Ces nws thiaj muab taxi thauj peb los mus txog ntawm ntug dej.

SEQ 3SG carry take taxi transport 1PL come go arrive.at PX.EVNT edge water

‘So he transported us to the riverbank in a taxi.’

Escape-K:63

Ces nws mus nrog tus thabhan uas zov ntug dej ntawm tham

SEQ 3SG go with CLF.ANMT soldier RLTVZR watch edge water PX.EVNT talk

tas.

finish

‘Then he went to talk to the soldier who watched the riverbank.’

²² The compound word *tiv tauj* ‘request’ does not appear in any dictionary. This is the gloss I arrived at after Ar’s description.

Ar says that the negative *tsis* has no place in the sentence and should be deleted. I have preserved the original, but I cannot justify the inclusion of the negative, and I could not find any way to translate it sensibly in the free translation.

Escape-K:64

Ces nws coj peb los.
SEQ 3SG bring/take 1PL come
'Then he led us [there].'

Escape-K:65

Ces tus thabhan zov ntug dej ntawm thiaj ua txuj tsaug zog lawm.
SEQ CLF.ANMT soldier watch edge water PX.EVNT then pretend sleep PRF
'Then the soldier [who] watched the riverbank pretended to be asleep.'

Escape-K:66

Ces peb nqis kiag rau hauv nkoj.
SEQ 1PL go.down INT.CPLT1 to/for inside boat
'Then we went all the way down into the boat.'

Escape-K:67.1

Ces peb caij nkoj
SEQ 1PL ride boat
'We rode the boat.'

Escape-K:67.2

peb hla los mus rau sab Thaib teb.
1PL cross come go to/for side Thai land
'We crossed to Thailand.'

Escape-K:68

Peb los mus txog rau sab Thaib teb.
1PL come go arrive.at to/for side Thai land
'We arrived in Thailand'

Escape-K:69

Peb los mus nyob lub zos hu ua Nong Khai.
1PL come go dwell/be.located CLF.GNRL village call make/do Nong Khai
'We came to stay at the village called Nong Khai.'

Escape-K:70.1

Thaum ntawd peb hla los mus txog sab tiv
the.time.when PX.EVNT 1PL cross come go arrive.at side oppose
'When we crossed to the opposite side,'

Escape-K:70.2

yog van thib kaum rau lub rau hli ntuj.
be date ten six CLF.GNRL six month
'the date was June 16.'

Escape-K:71

Sijhawm ntev kawg nkaus peb tuaj mus pev rau pog txog
occasion long to.the.greatest.degree 1PL come go flee to/for (for) arrive.at
rau Thaib teb.
to/for Thai land
'It [took] the longest time for us to flee to Thailand.'²³

²³ Ar says that *pev rau pog* does not make any sense. She suggests *puas* 'should' instead. I retain Fuller's (1988) gloss.

Escape-K:72.1

Mas peb tuaj nyob rau Thaib teb tau aws plaub
 TOP 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for Thai land DUR (hesitation) four/fourth
hmos xwb;
 night only
 ‘We stayed in Thailand for only four nights;’

Escape-K:72.2

hmo van thib neeg kaum lub rau hli ntuj ntawm.
 night date twenty CLF.GNRL sixth month PX.EVNT
 ‘the date that night was June 20.’²⁴

Escape-K:73

Lawv muaj ib co lot tos ib co neeg ntawm
 3PL have INDF.ART CLF.GRP1 car take INDF.ART CLF.GRP1 person PX.EVNT
Nong Khai mus rau tom Nam Phong.
 Nong Khai go to/for MD Nam Phong
 ‘They had some vehicles to take a group of people from Nong Khai to Nam Phong’

Escape-K:74

Ces lawv yuav luag tos tsis txog peb.
 SEQ 3PL almost take NEG arrive.at 1PL
 ‘They almost didn’t take us.’

Escape-K:75.1

Peb yog van thib kaum rau,
 1PL be date ten/tenth six/sixth
 ‘We are [the group that arrived on] the 16th,’

Escape-K:75.2

tiamsis lawv muaj ib lub bus.
 but 3PL have INDF.ART CLF.GNRL
 ‘but they had one bus.’

Escape-K:76

Lawv muaj ib lub bus seem.
 3PL have one/first CLF.GNRL left.over
 ‘They had one bus left over.’

Escape-K:77

Ces lawv thiaj tias tos cov van thib kaum tsib txog
 SEQ 3PL then COMP take CLF.GRP1 date ten/tenth five/fifth arrive.at
nees nkaum kiag thiab no.
 twenty INT.CPLT1 and PX.SPKR
 ‘So they took everyone there [who] arrived [from] the 15th [to] the 20th also.’

Escape-K:78

Ces peb thiaj li tau tuaj mus nyob rau Nam Phong.
 SEQ 1PL then PFV come go dwell/be.located to/for Nam Phong
 ‘So we then went and stayed in Nam Phong.’

²⁴ The number *neeg kaum* ‘twenty’ seems to be a misspelling of *neeg nkaum*.

Escape-K:79.1

Thaum peb los nyob rau Nam Phong
the.time.when 1PL come dwell/be.located to/for Nam Phong
'When we came to stay in Nam Phong,'

Escape-K:79.2

peb muaj peb leeg peb txiv tub nkaus xwb.
1PL have three/third CLF.PRSN 1PL father/male son INT.CPLT2 only
'there were only three of us—just a father and sons.'

Escape-K:80.1

Mas txomnyem kawg nkaus
TOP destitute to.the.greatest.degree
'We were absolutely destitute,'

Escape-K:80.2

tabsis peb kuj muaj kwvtij tus puav nyob tom
but 1PL also have relatives CLF.ANMT some dwell/be.located MD
'but we had some relatives living over there,'

Escape-K:80.3

thiab ces peb los nyob tod tau muaj peb xyoos.
and SEQ 1PL come dwell/be.located MD PFV have three/third year
'and we stayed over there for three years.'

Escape-K:81.1

Tsis yog
NEG be
'No,'

Escape-K:81.2

peb los nyob tod tau muaj ib xyoos.
1PL come dwell/be.located MD PFV have one/first year
'we stayed over there for one year.'

Escape-K:82

Ces thaum ntawm yog xyoo xya caum rau lub peb hlis ntuj.
SEQ the.time.when PX.EVNT be year seven ten six CLF.GNRL third month
'Then it was March 1976.'

Escape-K:83.1

Peb thiaj tau los mus
1PL then PFV come go
'We then went'

Escape-K:83.2

lawv thiaj muab cov neeg nyob tom lub xun Nam
3PL then take CLF.GRP1 person dwell/be.located MD CLF.GNRL camp Nam
Phong tod nyaib los mus rau thauj los mus rau tom lub
Phong MD move come go to/for transport come go to/for MD CLF.GNRL
xun hu ua Ban Vinai no.
camp call make/do Ban Vinai PX.SPKR
'—then they took a group of people staying at Nam Phong to move here to another

camp called Ban Vinai.²⁵

Escape-K:84

Peb thiaj los nyob rau Ban Vinai.
1PL then come dwell/be.located to/for Ban Vinai
'So we stayed at Ban Vinai.'

Escape-K:85

Ces thaum ntawd lub xyoo tom qab thiaj hnov hais tias
SEQ the.time.when PX.EVT CLF.GNRL year afterward/behind then hear COMP
kuv niam thiab ob tug kwv tuaj
1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT younger.brother come
txog rau Nong Khai.
arrive.at to/for Nong Khai
'Then, after one year we heard that my mother and two younger brothers came to Nong-Khai.'

Escape-K:86.1

Ces thaum peb twb los txog rau Vinai lawm
SEQ the.time.when 1PL really/already come arrive.at to/for Vinai PRF
'Then when we had already arrived at [Ban] Vinai'

Escape-K:86.2

peb mam li mus take kuv niam thiab ob tug
1PL will/need go 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv los nrog peb nyob.
younger.brother come with 1PL dwell/be.located
'we went to take my mother and two younger brothers to come live with us.'

Escape-K:87

Mas lub neej no yog ib lub neej txomnyem
TOP CLF.GNRL life/estate PX.SPKR be INDF.ART CLF.GNRL life/estate destitute
kawg nkaus.
to.the.greatest.degree
'This life was a completely poor existence.'

Escape-K:88.1

Yog tsis paub hais li cas li:
be NEG know say how?/why? like
'I don't know [how] to say this.'²⁶

Escape-K:88.2

thaum yus yuav tuag lawm
the.time.when INDF.PRON POS.IRR die PRF
'when you are about to die'

²⁵ The Hmong spelling of *Ban Vinai* is *Van Vibnais*.

No dictionary contains the word *nyaib* or the word *xun*. I retain Fuller's (1988) glosses.

²⁶ Ar says that *yog* 'be' should be *yeej* 'can'.

The phrase *li cas* is often an interrogative adverb 'how?/why?', but it can also be function as a pro-adverb.

Escape-K:88.3

ces yus tsuas vam yus txoj sia nkaus xwb.
 SEQ INDF.PRON only trust INDF.PRON CLF.ABST life INT.CPLT2 only
 ‘then you think only about your own life.’

Escape-K:89

Yus tsuas khiav yus ib leeg xwb.
 INDF.PRON only run INDF.PRON one/first CLF.PRSN only
 ‘You escape all by yourself.’

Escape-K:90

Mas peb tau ncaim kuv niam thiab ob tug
 TOP 1PL PFV separate 1SG woman/mother and two/second CLF.ANMT
kwv lawv yog tau ib xyoos ntau.
 younger.brother 3PL be DUR one/first year many/much
 ‘We left my mother and two younger brothers for more than a year.’

Escape-K:91

Mas yog txomnyem kawg nkaus.
 TOP be destitute to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘We were most destitute.’

Escape-K:92

Mas txoj kev aws khiav tebchaws nplog rau tebchaws Thaib mas
 TOP CLF.ABST way (hesitation) run country Laotian to/for country Thai TOP
tsis yog ib qhov yoojyim.
 NEG be INDF.ART thing easy
 ‘The way to escape from Laos to Thailand was not easy.’

Escape-K:93.1

Kuv xav hais tias nyaj ua luag lwm tus kuj
 1SG think/want COMP probably be others/3PL another CLF.ANMT also
tej tus kuj yog yoojyim,
 CLF.GRP2 CLF.ANMT also be easy
 ‘I think that probably [for] other people it might be easy,²⁷’

Escape-K:93.2

tej tus kuj yog nyuab kawg.
 CLF.GRP2 CLF.ANMT also be difficult to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘but [for] some it is also most difficult.’

Escape-K:94.1

Ntawm kuv eng kuj yog tu siab kawg hais tias ib
 PX.EVNT 1SG myself also be break liver to.the.greatest.degree COMP INDF.ART
qho nyuaj kawg nkaus
 thing difficult to.the.greatest.degree
 ‘To me, myself, I was brokenhearted—that was a most difficult thing,²⁸’

²⁷ Ar suggests cutting a number of words: *ua* and *kuj tej*.

²⁸ The word *eng* ‘myself’ is an impossible spelling in Hmong. It may be a loanword. I retain Fuller’s (1988) gloss, but I do not include it in my pronoun charts.

Escape-K:94.2

tiamsis tseem muaj tej qhov tej tus tseem yuav ua
but still have CLF.GRP2 thing CLF.GRP2 CLF.ANMT still POS.IRR make/do
tau nyuaj tshaj qhov no kuj muaj thiab.
able difficult CPTV thing PX.SPKR also have and
'but there are still others who could have had even more difficulty than this, as well.'

Escape-K:95.1

Es kuv txoj kev khiav ces tsuas muaj li no xwb:
(hesitation) 1SG CLF.ABST way run SEQ only have like PX.SPKR only
'The way I escaped was just like this.'

Escape-K:95.2

txoj kev tso kwv tso tij tso txiv tseg.
CLF.ABST way leave younger.brother leave older.brother leave father/male leave
'the way that leaves brothers and father behind.'

Escape-K:96

Muaj li no xwb.
have like PX.SPKR only
'It was only like this.'

Escape-K:97

Muaj lus ua tsaug ntau.
have word thank.you many/much
'Thank you very much.'

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