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Hmong For Beginners Part I

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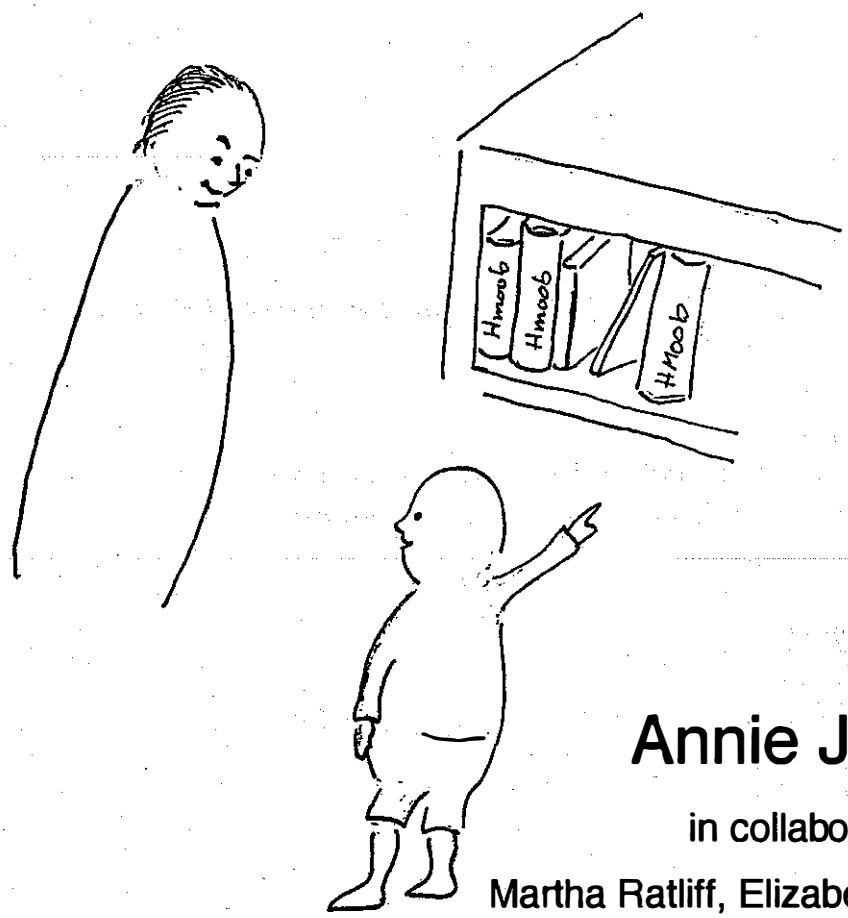
Supporting material:
1. Hmong For Beginners Part 2[download]
Supporting Material
Hmong For Beginners Part 2

3. Hmong For Beginners Part 3[download]
Supporting Material
Hmong For Beginners Part 3

5. Hmong For Beginners Part 4[download]
Supporting Material
Hmong For Beginners Part 4

HMONG FOR BEGINNERS



Annie Jaisser

in collaboration with

Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle,

David Strecker, Lopao Vang, and Lyfu Vang

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This book is dedicated to

the Hmong people

and

their sophisticated language

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PREFACE

ABOUT *HMONG FOR BEGINNERS*

This book evolved from the 10-week intensive Hmong course offered at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) during the summers of 1985-89. When Hmong was first taught in 1985, there were no instructional materials available. During the five summers Hmong was offered, the instructors—my collaborators and myself—had to create materials and lessons on a daily basis to be able to teach. This was typically done overnight, by the skin of our teeth and relying on illustrations from published sources. My goal in compiling *Hmong for Beginners* was to remedy this situation and to provide a textbook suitable for anyone interested in acquiring basic Hmong language skills. Since this covers a broad range of people with very diverse backgrounds and learning motivations, the instructional materials are presented in a flexible format which allows for either group instruction in a classroom setting or individual instruction with a tutor. The book begins with an introduction to the Hmong sound system and a pronunciation guide to the Romanized Popular Alphabet writing system, which provides pronunciation aids for consonants, vowels, and tones. Next, pedagogical materials are arranged in sections that target the different skills involved in foreign language learning. These sections are organized as follows:

Competency-Based Units: These units cover the basic vocabulary necessary to develop survival skills in areas of everyday life (family/kinship, food, clothing, etc.) and include a few practice dialogues.

Oral Comprehension Units: These units include original stories and exercises geared toward developing listening skills and improving the understanding of spoken Hmong. They are intended for use by a native speaker instructor/tutor.

Reading Units: These units include original stories which incorporate vocabulary presented in the competency-based units and are geared toward developing reading skills.

Grammar Units: These units make up a mini-grammar of Hmong which explains the most important and challenging aspects of Hmong grammar for students with varying backgrounds in foreign language learning. The overall strategy I used was to move from the familiar to the less familiar. Even though Hmong seems wildly exotic, it does share features with English and other languages on a conceptual level, and an effort has been made to point these out to facilitate the learning process.

Lessons can be created by combining elements from the different sections listed above. Using vocabulary and dialogues from the competency-based units as a starting point, complementary materials covering the same topic can be added from other units, thus providing practice in developing skills in all the necessary areas. These complementary materials are listed in the bottom left-hand corner in each competency-based unit and are coded as follows:

OC = Oral Comprehension
R = Reading
CP = Conversation Practice

Appendices 1 and 2 provide answer keys to the exercises as well as translations of the stories in the oral comprehension and reading sections. These are provided primarily for private instruction with a tutor so students can verify their answers and double-check their understanding. They should be consulted only as a last resort.

Appendix 3 is the transcript of an audiotape which provides listening practice in the content areas found elsewhere in the book. The transcript should not be looked at while listening to the tape, at least not at first. A good strategy would be to first listen to a section of the tape several times, and then to transcribe it, using the transcript to verify comprehension and spelling.

Appendix 4 discusses the major differences between the White and Green Hmong dialects (see below) so the book may be used by students interested in learning either or both.

The bibliography lists the resources used in the compilation of this book—including ordering information for several of them.

The glossary includes all the Hmong words contained in the textbook as well as other common words beginners might find helpful in interacting with Hmong people or reading simple texts.

ABOUT THE HMONG LANGUAGE

Hmong belongs to the Hmong-Mien (a.k.a. Miao-Yao) language family. This language family is quite large and diverse, the Hmongic branch of it being as complex as the Germanic branch of Indo-European and the Mienic branch being somewhat less complex. There is controversy among linguists as to the wider genetic affiliation of the Hmong-Mien family : some include it in the Sino-Tibetan language family while others place it within the Austro-Tai family.

The two major dialects of Hmong spoken in Thailand and Laos—and hence in the Western countries where Hmong refugees have relocated—are:

1. Hmong Daw, typically referred to in English as White Hmong
2. Mong Leng, also referred to in English as Green or Blue* Hmong/Mong†

For simplicity's sake I will refer to the two dialects as White and Green Hmong in this book. However, since there is variation within the Hmong community itself as to naming preferences, care should be taken to ask the Hmong with whom one comes in contact what they wish to be called. Linguistically speaking, the differences between the two dialects are relatively minor and the two varieties are mutually intelligible. This mutual intelligibility is enhanced by the fact that White and Green Hmong speakers live either together or in close proximity and consider themselves closely related enough to intermarry. A helpful analogy in characterizing the differences between the two dialects is to think of them as being farther apart than American and British English, but not as far apart as Spanish and Portuguese. Since most linguists who started

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* *Ntsuab* in Hmong, which translates as either green or blue (i.e., the anthropologist's "grue") since it refers to the greenish blue or bluish green portion of the color spectrum.

† The "hm" sound does not occur in Green Hmong; hence the frequently occurring "Mong" spelling for the name of this dialect (see Appendix 4 for details).

to analyze Hmong in the United States happened to rely on White Hmong speakers as language consultants for their research, White Hmong is the more investigated dialect, and hence the one used in this book. However, the major differences between the two varieties are discussed in the "Pronunciation Guide to the RPA" and in Appendix 4; a literate Green Hmong instructor/tutor will be able to make the necessary adjustments to use the book as a teaching tool, and a student interested in learning basic Green Hmong will be able to do the same.

Hmong is presented in the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), the practical orthography developed by missionaries in the early 1950s (see p. 4 for details). Words in Hmong are usually monosyllabic (for example, *qaib* 'chicken,' *tsev* 'house,' etc.), but there are a number of high-frequency words which are disyllabic compounds (for example, *me nyuam* 'child,' *to taub* 'to understand,' *hauj lwm* 'work,' etc.). These compounds are spelled as two words by some Hmong and as single words by others (i.e., the examples just given would be spelled *menyuam*, *totaub*, and *haujlwm*). For lack of standardization and for consistency's sake, everything is written in monosyllables in this book. This choice was further motivated by the fact that tone is easier to deal with in monosyllables in the initial language learning stages. Finally, it is the preferred spelling convention of the main Hmong contributor, Lopao Vang.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For helping me get this project off the ground, I am deeply indebted to my remarkable collaborators. We were all instructors involved in creating teaching materials for the Hmong courses offered at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) during the summers of 1985-89. *Hmong for Beginners* includes samples of each person's creative efforts and expertise. Lopao Vang made up the imaginative stories designed toward developing oral comprehension skills. Elizabeth Riddle, Lopao Vang, and Lyfu Vang contributed stories for reading practice as indicated in the body of the book. I could not have compiled the mini-grammar of Hmong without the contributions from my linguist colleagues, friends, and mentors: Martha Ratliff and Elizabeth Riddle supplied several drafts which I used as starting points, and I relied on results of their research to write about a number of topics; Nerida Jarkey lent her expert hand in revising my verb serialization draft; Susan Herring provided helpful information and insights on the notions of tense and aspect; Leanne Hinton gave me valuable feedback on my drafts based on her expertise in developing instructional materials for Native Americans; Jim Matisoff inspired me to come to Berkeley to pursue Hmong studies and continues to encourage me and to share his vast knowledge of Southeast Asia as a linguistic area.

For providing original and culturally sensitive artwork, I am grateful to Halinka Luangpraseut, David Strecker, and especially Tria Xiong. Their individual creative drawing styles make this a uniquely illustrated book.

For compiling from scratch an English-Hmong glossary, I thank Elizabeth Riddle. This glossary is a wonderful pedagogical tool and makes the book more complete.

For inspiration and ongoing support, I am forever indebted to my dear friends Ava-Dale and Charles Johnson. Through their vision and dedication they have been among my muses.

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A.J.

ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

Below is a list of the abbreviations and conventions used in the book:

clf	classifier
comp	comparative marker
dir	direction marker
e.o.	each other
fut	future marker
imp	imperative
int	intensifier
irrls	irrealis marker
loc	locative marker
neg	negation marker
neg uncert	negation uncertain
perf	perfective marker
pl.	plural
prog	progressive marker
prt	particle
Q	question marker
quant	quantifier
recip	reciprocal action marker
sg.	singular
superl	superlative marker
t.c.	tone change
top	topic marker
* X	X is ungrammatical
'X'	X is English translation of Hmong
< X	from X
(X)	X is optional

INTRODUCTION: THE SOUND SYSTEM OF HMONG

The purpose of this section is for you to become familiar with the general sound structure of Hmong (White and Green).

SYLLABLE STRUCTURE

Hmong is largely a monosyllabic language, meaning that most words appear in the shape of a single syllable (but see section on compound nouns for two-syllable words, some of which are used frequently in everyday speech). Each syllable is made up of an initial consonant or consonant cluster, a vowel or a diphthong, and a *simultaneous* tone. There are no final consonants, except for *ng* [ŋ], as in English *sing*, which occurs only as part of the pronunciation of the nasalized vowels of Hmong and hence is not considered a full-fledged final consonant (see section on vowels below).

TONES

Hmong—like hundreds of languages in Asia (e.g., Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, etc.), Africa, and the Americas—is a tone language. This means that each syllable is pronounced with its own distinctive tone.

There are different types of tones; the most common makes use of normal voice quality and changes in pitch (e.g., low vs. high pitch, falling pitch, rising pitch). English—like other European languages with which you may be familiar—is not a tone language, but it does make use of pitch changes at the level of intonation (i.e., the melody/music of a phrase or sentence). For instance, expressions such as *Yes! Great!* have a falling pitch and are interpreted as statements expressing enthusiasm, whereas those such as *Yes? Great?* have a rising pitch and are interpreted as questions. Pitch changes do not result in different words with different meanings; rather, they indicate that a word is used as a statement, a question, and/or to express speaker attitude (e.g., enthusiasm, surprise, hesitation, etc.). By contrast, in Hmong, pitch changes do affect the meaning of the word: *dej* with a falling pitch means 'water'; *dev* with a rising pitch means 'dog.'

To summarize, in Hmong, pitch changes are part of a phenomenon called tone and form an intrinsic part of the syllable; in English, pitch changes are part of a phenomenon called intonation and are superimposed on the syllable. Hence, even though pitch changes are used at a different level of linguistic structure and for different purposes in the two languages, you do know how to modulate your voice to produce different pitch patterns, and are thus already capable of producing some of the Hmong tones without being aware of it. This should help you relax and give you confidence—Hmong is less "exotic" than you think. Hmong has six such simple tones characterized by normal voice quality and changes in pitch:

- High level
- High falling
- Mid rising
- Mid level
- Low level with slight fall
- Low rising, long

For the tones described above, the hearer relies on pitch alone to distinguish among them. There are also more complex tones, whose salient characteristic is either a different type of voice quality from the one we use for normal speech, or some additional sound feature. Hmong has two such complex tones:

- Falling with breathy/whispery voice
- Low falling ending with a glottal stop (i.e., sharp catch in the throat) or creaky voice

In the "Pronunciation Guide to the Hmong Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) Writing System" (below), you will find more details on each one of these tones.

VOWELS

The White Hmong vowel system is relatively simple; it includes six simple vowels and seven complex vowels: two nasalized ones, and five diphthongs.

Simple vowels (e.g., i [i] as in *see*) are sounds pronounced on airflow escaping through the mouth alone. Nasalized vowels are more complex in that the air comes out not only through the mouth, but also through the nose while they are being produced. Besides the nasalization, the Hmong nasalized vowels are characterized by an additional feature: they end in the nasal consonant *ng* [ŋ] (as in English *sing*), which is part of the nasalization of the vowel and serves to make it more distinct. White Hmong has two such nasalized vowels, and Green Hmong has an additional one (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for more details).

Diphthongs are complex vowels in that they start with a particular vowel sound, but end in another, as in English *high* or *house*. Hmong also has these two diphthongs, plus three additional ones which do not occur in English (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for more details).

CONSONANTS

While the vowel system of Hmong is relatively simple, the consonant system is extremely rich and complex. Hmong seems to make use of just about every place of articulation (lips, teeth, front and back palate, uvula) and tongue position possible in the mouth to produce the fifty-seven consonant/consonant-cluster sounds of the language (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for minor differences in the consonant system of the two dialects). This means that you will have to listen carefully to train your ear to hear the subtle differences between consonant sounds and to learn how to position your tongue in the mouth to pronounce them properly (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for more details).

While complex, the consonant system is also a marvel of symmetry in its structure. The complexity is greatly reduced once you realize that a large number of these consonants actually boil down to a series with four variants:

- Simple unaspirated consonants
- Aspirated consonants—i.e., consonants which are pronounced with a puff of air coming out of the mouth, as in English *spin*, where the *p* is unaspirated, vs. *pin*, where the *p* is aspirated. (You can test this by putting your hand in front of your mouth while saying the two words out loud.) In the RPA, aspirated consonants are written with an *h* following the consonant.

- Pre-nasalized unaspirated consonants—i.e., consonants are pronounced with an *m*, *n*, or *ng* nasal consonant sound right before them. In the RPA, pre-nasalized unaspirated consonants are represented with an *n* right before the consonant.
- Pre-nasalized aspirated consonants—i.e., consonants are pronounced with an *m*, *n*, or *ng* nasal consonant sound right before them and a puff of air coming out of the mouth. In the RPA, pre-nasalized aspirated consonants are represented with an *n* right before the consonant and an *h* right after the consonant. Let us illustrate these four variants with *p*:

peb	1. 'three'; 2. 'we/us/our'	simple unaspirated *p*
phem	'evil, bad'	aspirated *p*
npe	'name'	pre-nasalized unaspirated *p*
nphau	'to tip over, turbulent'	pre-nasalized aspirated *p*

As seen in the Hmong Consonant Chart, the same four-way symmetrical pattern obtains with the following consonants: pl, t, tx, r, c, ts, k, and q (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for details on how to sound them out) and makes the system as a whole less daunting and more manageable.

HMONG CONSONANT CHART

(Sounds in *italics* occur only in White Hmong; sounds in **boldface** are specific to Green Hmong.)

	Lips		Teeth			Front Palate			Back Palate	Uvu -la	Vocal Cords
Unaspirated	p	pl	t	*d* **dl**	tx	r	c	ts	k	q	
Aspirated	ph	plh	th	*dh* **dlh**	txh	rh	ch	tsh	kh	qh	
Pre-nasalized unaspirated	np	npl	nt	**ndl**	ntx	nr	nc	nts	nk	nq	
Pre-nasalized aspirated	nph	nplh	nth	**ndlh**	ntxh	nrh	nch	ntsh	nkh	nqh	
	m	nl	n				ny		g		
	hm **m**	*hnl* **nl**	*hn* **n**				*hny* **ny**				
	f		x			s	xy				h
	v		l			z	y				
			hl								

To summarize, the sound inventory of White Hmong includes:

- Eight tones
- Thirteen vowel sounds
- Fifty-seven consonant/consonant-cluster sounds.

REPRESENTING HMONG SOUNDS: THE ROMANIZED POPULAR ALPHABET (RPA) WRITING SYSTEM

The writing system used in this book is the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA). The RPA is a practical orthography based on the Roman alphabet and developed in Laos in the early 1950s by the missionary linguists Linwood Barney, Yves Bertrais, and William Smalley. There are other writing systems—both older and more recent—for Hmong (see, e.g., Lemoine 1972 and Smalley et al. 1990), but the RPA is used here because it is not only the orthography accepted by most Hmong resettled in the Western world, but also the system most accessible to native speakers of English. Linguistically speaking, it is a good, clear, and consistent orthography in most respects; it is also quite phonetic, meaning that the relationship between the spoken language and the written language is a close one (along the lines of spoken/written Spanish and much better than written English or French). The next section will introduce you to the RPA in greater detail.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE TO THE HMONG RPA WRITING SYSTEM

The purpose of this guide is to help you learn how to pronounce Hmong on the basis of the RPA writing system. The first section deals with the tones, the second with the vowels, and the third with the consonants.

I. TONES

In the chart below the first column gives the RPA symbol for each tone. Since Hmong does not have final consonants, it was decided to use 8 arbitrary consonant letters and to attach them at the end of syllables to represent tone in the writing system.

The second column indicates what each tone sounds like; tone values are given on a five-point pitch scale, where 5 is the higher end of the pitch range and 1 the lower end—relative to each speaker's voice range. The first digit indicates the starting point of the pitch and the second digit the ending point.

The third column gives a description of each tone as well as helpful pronunciation strategies.

The fourth column gives an example word for each tone; notice that all the words given share the same consonant and vowel, and are *differentiated by tone alone* (except for the *-d* tone, where the vowel is different since *pod* does not occur as a word). Each word first appears with a graphic representation of its tone, where the vertical line stands for the full spoken voice range (going from high to low), and the line extending from it for the contour of the tone in relation to the voice range. Then the word is given in RPA and translated into English.

NOTE: The graphic representation of each tone is a good visual memory aid for learning tones and should help you remember that final consonants are not sounded out.

RPA Symbol	Tone Value	Tone Description + Pronunciation Aid	Example + Translation
-b	55	• High level; • Use high pitch in your voice range and maintain level pitch throughout the syllable.	po˥ *pob* 'lump'
-j	52	• High falling; • Start high in your voice range and drop pitch throughout the syllable to below middle of the range (pretending to be standing at the edge of a cliff and falling down helps achieve the desired effect); • Similar to falling intonation in English "Yes!"	po˥˩ *poj* 'female'
-v	24	• Mid rising; • Start just below the middle of your range, maintain level pitch first, and then raise your voice at the end of the syllable; • Similar to rising intonation in English yes/no questions.	po˧˥ *pov* 'to throw'
-Ø (no symbol)	33	• Mid level; • Use mid-range pitch and maintain it throughout the syllable.	po˧ *po* 'pancreas, spleen'
-s	22	• Low level; • Start just below the middle of your range, maintain level pitch at first, and then drop voice slightly at the end of the syllable.	po˩ *pos* 'thorn'

NOTE: As you can see, the *-Ø* tone and the *-s* tone are very close in pitch, which makes it sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. Rather than relying on pitch alone, listen for the fall at the end of the *-s* tone; this is what will help you differentiate it from the *-Ø* tone. Also, the *-Ø* tone seems to have a slightly "chanted" quality to it.

-m	31ʔ	• Low falling with glottal stop/creaky voice at end; • Start mid-range and drop your voice to lower end of your pitch range; end syllable abruptly with a sharp catch in the throat (glottal stop—i.e., the sound in the middle of "oh-oh") or a bit of creaky voice (both are acceptable to native speakers); • Easy to recognize because of short duration and truncated quality at the end.	po˩ʔ	*pom*	'to see'
-g	4̰2̰	• Breathy/whispery falling; • Use a sultry or spooky voice quality and a falling pitch to produce this tone (I call it the Marylin Monroe tone); • This tone starts at different points of the voice range, depending on the speaker, but always has a falling contour; salient feature is the breathy, hollow voice quality.	po˩˩	*pog*	'grand-mother'

****

-d	213	• Low rising, noticeably longer than other tones; • Start just below the middle of your range, drop voice slightly, and then raise it sharply (similar to mid rising *-v* tone, but lower in pitch and longer). *N.B. This is a marginal tone, a variant of the -m tone, which is used only under certain grammatical conditions (see section on -d tone).*	po˨˧	*ped*	'up there'

NOTE: These are auditory descriptions of tones in citation form; in rapid, connected speech tones are influenced by neighboring sounds and syllables and are harder to make out. But context combined with knowledge of vocabulary and grammar will help you understand.

II. VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

The first column of the chart below shows the RPA symbols for vowels and consonants (for ease of reference, consonant symbols appear in alphabetical order). They represent both dialects, with sounds specific to Green Hmong in boldface characters (for a more detailed discussion of the major pronunciation differences between the two dialects, see Appendix 4).

The second column provides phonetic values for the benefit of those who are familiar with phonetic transcription, but it may be safely ignored by others.

The third column exhibits comments about the pronunciation of the RPA symbols:

- "As in X" means that the sound exists in English as a distinctive sound unit and hence will not present any learning difficulties;
- "No equivalent" means that the sound does not exist in English as a distinctive sound unit and hence will require extra work on your part;
- "(Roughly) similar to X" means that for sounds which do not have an equivalent in English, an example of an English sound sequence can be given which approximates the sound.

Sounding out the English examples in this column focusing on the underlined sounds will help you pronounce the Hmong sounds better.

The fourth column contains illustrative examples in RPA followed by their translation. It includes many Hmong proper names since it is important to learn how to prounounce them well right from the start. Try to sound the illustrative examples out with the help of a native speaker.

A. VOWELS

RPA Symbol	Phonetic Symbol	Pronunciation Aid	Example(s) + Translation
Simple vowels			
i	[i]	As in see; "the smiling vowel"	*ib* 'one' *yim* 'eight'
e	[e]	No equivalent; similar to play, but without diphthongization	*peb* 1. 'three'; 2. 'we/us/our' *tes* 'hand'
a	[a]	As in father for many speakers; "the dentist vowel"	*Yaj* 'Yang (clan name)' *Vaj* 'Vang (clan name)'
o	[ɔ]	No equivalent; similar to lawn	*Thoj* 'Thao (clan name)' *mov* 'cooked rice'
u	[u]	As in soon	*kub* 1. 'hot'; 2. 'gold'; 3. 'Kou, Ku (boy's name)'
w	[ɨ]	No equivalent; similar to houses, but with the lips rounded a little.	*Vwj* 'Vue, Vu (clan name)' *twm* 'water buffalo'

Nasalized vowels

ee	[ɛ̃ŋ]	No equivalent; roughly similar to sang	*nees* 'horse' *Lees/**Leeg*** '(Hmong) Leng'
oo	[ɔ̃ŋ]	No equivalent; roughly similar to song	*Hmoob* 'Hmong' *khoom* 'thing'
aa	[ãŋ]	No equivalent; nasalized [a]; only in Green Hmong	***Yaaj*** 'Yang (clan name)' ***Vaaj*** 'Vang (clan name)'

Diphthongs

ia	[ia]	No equivalent; roughly similar to see a (person)	*liab* 'monkey' *liaj* 'rice paddy'
ua	[ua]	No equivalent; roughly similar to sue a (person)	*ua* 'to do, to make' *npua* 'pig'
ai	[aj]	As in Hi and Bye	*Maiv* 'Mai, My (girl's name)' *qaib* 'chicken'
au	[aw]	As in outhouse	*plaub* 'four' *Lauj* 'Lo, Lor, Lau (clan name)'
aw	[ɤj]	No equivalent.	*dawb* 'white' *Hawj* 'Her, Heu (clan name)'

NOTE: Notice how in the RPA writing system simple vowels are represented with a single vowel symbol while complex ones appear as sequences of two vowel symbols. Nasalization is represented by a doubling of the vowel, and diphthongization by a sequence of the two vowel symbols involved in the diphthong—one of them always being the symbol a.

B. CONSONANTS

c	[ʈ]	No equivalent; pronounced with blade of tongue behind teeth and pressed against front part of the palate	*cev* 'body' *cuaj* 'nine'
ch	[ʈʰ]	No equivalent; same as above with aspiration	*cheb* 'to sweep'
d	[dː]	Roughly similar to do; = **dl/tl** [tɭ̥] in Green Hmong	*dawb* 'white' *dev* 'dog'
dh	[dːʰ]	No equivalent; rare; = **dlh/tlh** [tɭ̥ʰ] in Green Hmong	*dhia* 'to jump'
dl/dlh	See d/dh above		

f	[f]	As in five	*Faj* 'Fang (clan name)' *faib* 'to divide'
g	[ŋ]	No equivalent; similar to sing; very rare	*gig gog* 'sound of tigers fighting' *gus* 'goose'
h	[h]	As in happy	*Ham* 'Hang, Ha (clan name)' *hais* 'to speak, to say'
hl	[l̥]	No equivalent	*hli* 1. 'moon'; 2. 'Hli (girl's name)' *hlub* 'to love/care for'
hm	[m̥]	No equivalent; only in White Hmong	*Hmoob* 'Hmong' *hmo* 'night'
hml	[m̥l̥]	No equivalent; only in White Hmong; rare	*hmlos* 'to dent, to be dented'
hn	[n̥]	No equivalent	*hnov* 'to hear' *hniav* 'tooth'
hnl	Alternate spelling for *hml*		
hny	[ɲ̥]	No equivalent; only in White Hmong	*hnyav* 'heavy' *hnyuv* 'intestine'
k	[k]	No equivalent; similar to skin	*Koo* 'Kong (clan name)' *Kwm* 'Kue, Ku (clan name)'
kh	[kʰ]	As in cake	*Khab* 'Khang, Kha (clan name)'
l	[l]	As in life	*Lis* 'Le(e), Li, Ly (clan name)' *los* 'to come'
m	[m]	As in map	*Muas* 'Moua (clan name)' *mus* 'to go'
ml	[ml̥]	No equivalent; rare; similar to hamlet	*mloog* 'to listen' *mluas* 'sad'
mlh	Alternate spelling for *hml*		
n	[n̪]	As in near	*noj* 'to eat' *niam* 'mother'
nc	[ɳɟ]	No equivalent	*nco* 'to remember' *ncauj* 'mouth'
nch	[ɳʈʰ]	No equivalent	*nchuav* 'to pour out, to spill'

ndl	[n̪d̪l]	In Green Hmong only; no equivalent; similar to candle	*ndluav* 'to throw out (liquid)'
ndlh	[n̪t̪ɬʰ]	In Green Hmong only; no equivalent; very rare; similar to mantle	*ndlhij ndlhuaj* 'sound of walking through mud'
nk	[ŋg]	No equivalent; similar to finger	*nkoj* 'boat' *nkees* 'tired, lazy'
nkh	[ŋkʰ]	No equivalent; similar to incomplete	*nkhaus* 'crooked'
nl	Alternate spelling for *ml*		
np	[mb]	No equivalent; similar to combine	*npua* 'pig' *Npis* 'By (boy's name)'
nph	[mpʰ]	No equivalent; similar to computer	*nphau* 'to tip over, turbulent'
npl	[mbl̥]	No equivalent; similar to emblem	*nplej* 'unhulled rice' *nplooj* 'leaf'
nplh	[mpl̥]	No equivalent; similar to complain	*nphlaib* '(finger) ring'
nq	[ɴɢ]	No equivalent	*nqaij* 'meat, flesh' *nqe/nqi* 'price'
nqh	[ɴqʰ]	No equivalent; rare	*nqhuab* 'dried up'
nr	[ɳdr̥]	No equivalent; similar to can drink	*nram* 'down below, downhill' *nres* 'to stop'
nrh	[ɳtr̥ʰ]	No equivalent; similar to control	*nrhiav* 'to look for'
nt	[n̪d̪]	No equivalent; similar to endanger	*ntaub* 'cloth' *ntawv* 'paper'
nth	[n̪t̪ʰ]	No equivalent; similar to contend	*nthuav* 'to open out, unfold' *nthab* 'storage platform'
nts	[ndʒ]	No equivalent; similar to and Zaza (Gabor)	*ntsuab* 'green, greenish blue, color of vegetation' *ntses* 'fish'
ntsh	[ntʃʰ]	No equivalent; similar to can cheat	*ntshai* 'to fear, be afraid of'
ntx	[n̪d̪z̪]	No equivalent; similar to and Xerox	*ntxawm* 'youngest daughter; Yer (girl's name)' *ntxuav* 'to wash (hands, body)'

ntxh	[ⁿtsʰ]	No equivalent; similar to ants here	*ntxhw* 'elephant' *ntxhua* 'to wash (clothes), scrub'
ny	[ɲ]	No equivalent; similar to canyon, onion	*nyob* 'to reside' *nyiaj* 'silver, money'
p	[p]	No equivalent; similar to spin	*paj* 'flower' *paub* 'to know'
ph	[pʰ]	As in peace	*phem* 'evil, bad' *Phab* 'Phang, Pha (clan name)
pl	[pl]	No equivalent	*plaub* 'four' *plig* 'soul, spirit'
plh	[pl̥]	No equivalent; similar to play	*plhu* 'cheek'
q	[q]	No equivalent; similar to sky, but farther back in mouth; open mouth very wide, pull tongue back until you feel sick	*qaib* 'chicken' *qub* 'old (of things)'
qh	[qʰ]	No equivalent; same as above, but with aspiration; similar to car, but farther back in mouth	*qhia* 'to tell, teach'
r	[ʈʂ]	No equivalent	*roob* 'mountain' *Riam* 'Tria, Tia (boy's name)'
rh	[ʈʂʰ]	No equivalent; roughly similar to trough	*rhiab* 'to tickle'
s	[ʃ]	As in shoe	*sau* 'to write' *siab* 'liver'
t	[ʈ]	No equivalent; similar to stay	*tub* 'son' *twm* 'water buffalo'
th	[ʈʰ]	As in time	*them* 'to pay' *Thoj* 'Thao (clan name)'
tl/tlh	See d/dh		
ts	[tʃ]	No equivalent; similar to June, but a little harder	*Tsab* 'Chang, Cha (clan name)' *tsev* 'house'
tsh	[tʃʰ]	As in chair, church	*tsheb* 'vehicle' *tshuaj* 'medicine, herbs'
tx	[ⁿts]	No equivalent; similar to beds, but a little harder	*(lub) txiv* 'fruit' *txob* 'pepper'

txh	[tsʰ]	No equivalent; similar to tsetse (fly), Tsongas	*txhuv* 'hulled, uncooked rice' *txhiab* 'thousand'
v	[v]	As in very, visa	*Vaj* 'Vang (clan name)' *Vwj* 'Vue, Vu (clan name)'
x	[s̻]	As in see	*xa* 'to send' *xeem* 'clan'
xy	[ç]	Roughly similar to mash your (potatoes)	*Xyooj* 'Xiong (clan name)' *xyoob* 'bamboo'
y	[j]	Similar to yes	*Yaj* 'Yang (clan name)' *yeeb* 'opium'
z	[ʒ]	Similar to pleasure, vision	*zaj* 'dragon' *zos* 'village'

In summary, White Hmong has fifty-seven consonant sounds while Green Hmong has fifty-six (for more details on the major pronunciation differences between the two dialects, see Appendix 4).

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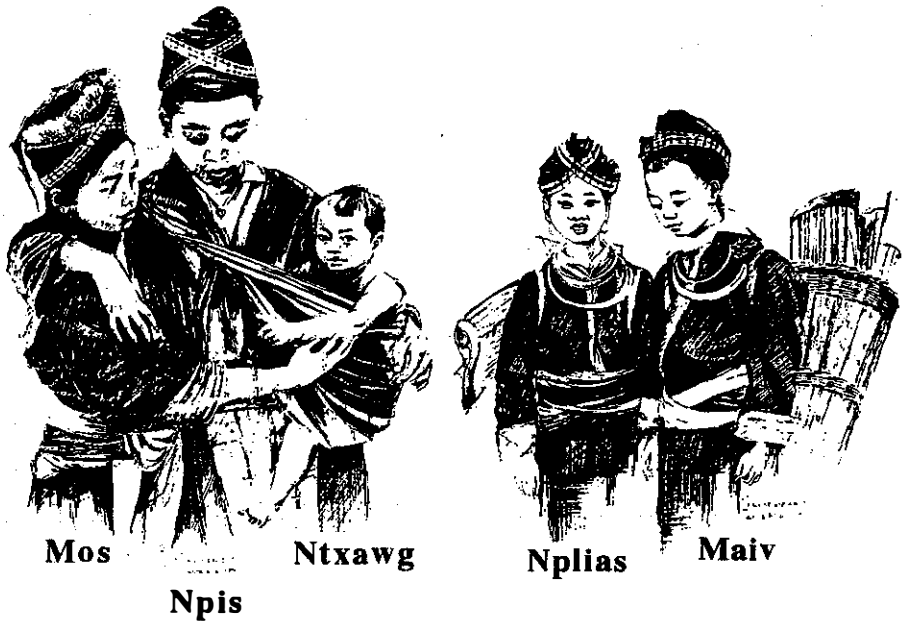
Abstract:
"Hmong For Beginners" was written by Annie Jaisser and her co-authors (Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle, David Strecker, Lopao Vang and Lyfu Vang) from materials they developed in the 1980s when Hmong was first being introduced as a language of instruction for the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI). The book was published by the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at UC Berleley in 1995 and is now out of print. This electronic version is intended to make the materials available to those interested in the Hmong language but with limited access to print materials about the language.

Competency-based Units

NPIS TSEV NEEG



Npis: "Nyob zoo. Kuv yog Npis, xeem Vaj. Kuv poj niam lub npe hu ua Mos. Wb muaj peb tug me nyuam, ob tug ntxhais thiab ib tug tub. Tus ntxhais hlob lub npe hu ua Nplias, tus yau Maiv. Kuv tus tub lub npe hu ua Ntxawg."

Mos: "Kuv lub npe hu ua Mos. Kuv tus txiv lub npe hu ua Npis. Wb tug ntxhais yog hluas nkauj (nkawd tsis tau yuav txiv). Wb tug tub yog ib tug hluas nraug; nws muaj ob xyoos xwb!"

Nplias: "Kuv lub npe hu ua Nplias. Kuv txiv lub npe hu ua Npis; kuv niam lub npe hu ua Mos. Kuv niam txiv muaj peb tug me nyuam; kuv yog tus ntxhais hlob. Kuv tus niam hluas lub npe hu ua Nplias; kuv tus nus lub npe hu ua Ntxawg."

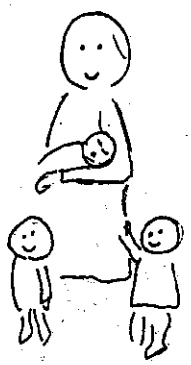
Maiv: "Kuv lub npe hu ua Maiv. Kuv tus niam laus lub npe hu ua Nplias. Kuv tus nus lub npe hu ua Ntxawg."

Ntxawg: "Kuv lub npe hu ua Ntxawg. Tsis muaj tij laug, tsis muaj kwv, muaj ob tug muam xwb; ib tug lub npe hu ua Nplias, ib tug Maiv."

OC: *Maiv Qhua*
R: *Ib tsab ntawv, Kuv tsev neeg*
CP: Bring pictures to talk about your own family (e.g., wedding or holiday photos).

NWS MUAJ PES TSAWG TUS ME NYUAM?

1.



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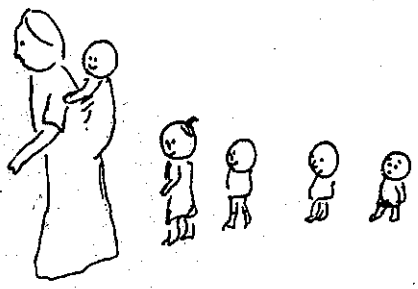
2.



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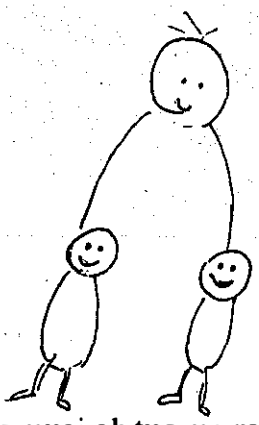
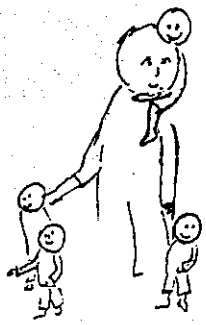


Nws muaj ob tug me nyuam.

4.



Nws muaj plaub tug me nyuam.

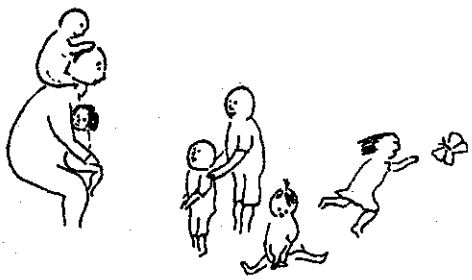
5.

Nws muaj ib tug me nyuam.

6.

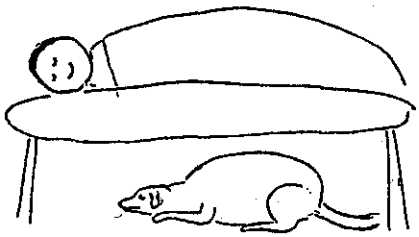
Nws muaj xya tug me nyuam.

7.



Nws muaj rau tus me nyuam.

8.



Nws tsis muaj; muaj ib tug dev xwb.

OC: *Cov naj npawb*

NPE HMOOB
'Hmong given names'

Given names are usually monosyllabic; they are sometimes preceded by *Maiv* for females—adding a "gentle, tender" connotation to the name—or *Tub* 'son, boy' for males. Occasionally, a male name will be preceded by a clan-like name—e.g., *Lauj Pov* 'Lopao' or *Lis Fwm* 'Lyfu.'

Typically, given names are either nouns referring to elements of the natural world or nouns symbolizing worthy, sought-after personality traits. As in any other language, there are given names with no such clear meaning. Traditionally, a child gets his/her given name at the end of the *hu plig* 'soul-calling' ceremony held on the third morning after birth. Upon marriage a man is given a *npe laus* 'honorary name' by his in-laws. This name comes first, followed by the name given at birth, and then the clan name—e.g., *Paj Tsu Yaj* 'Pa Chou Yang.'

Below is a list of the more common Hmong given names; for details on how to pronounce the names, see the "Pronunciation Guide."

I. COMMON GIVEN NAMES FOR GIRLS

Name in RPA	English Spelling	Meaning
Cib	Chee	'Basket'
Cua	Chua	'Wind'
Dawb	Der	'White'
Diav	Dia	'Spoon'
Hli	Hli	'Moon'
Hnub	Nou, Nu	'Sun'
Hua	Houa	'Cloud'
Iab, Ab	Ia, Ah	'Bitter, shiny'
Maiv	Mai, My, May	
Mos	Mao, Mo	'Young, soft'
Npauj	Bao, Bau	'Insect'
Nplias	Blia	'Grasshopper'
Ntsuab	Njua, Joua, Youa	'Green'
Ntxawm	Yer, Ger, Geu	'Youngest/last daughter'
Ntxhoo	Song	
Nyiaj	Ngia, Nhia	'Silver'
Paj,Paaj	Pa, Pang	'Flower'
Rwm	True, Tue, Treu	
Tshaus	Chao	'Basket'
Xis	Xe, Xy, Se, See, Si	'Right (opposite of left)'

II. COMMON GIVEN NAMES FOR BOYS

Name in RPA	English Spelling	Meaning
Cai	Chai	'Rule, custom'
Ceeb	Cheng	'Important'
Choj	Chao, Xao	'Bridge'
Foom	Fong	'Blessing'
Fwm	Fu, Fue	
Kaub	Kao, Kau	
Leej	Leng	'Seam'
Liab	Lia	'Red'
Lwm	Lue	'Next'
Mas	Ma	
Nuv	Nou	'Fishing hook'
Npis	Bee, By	'Stout, strong'
Nplooj	Blong	'Leaf'
Nruas	Ndrua	'Drum'
Ntaaj	Dang	'Sword'
Ntxawg	Yer, Ger	'Youngest /last son'
Pov	Pao	'Protect'
Riam	Tria, Chia	'Knife'
Teeb	Teng	'Lamp'
Teev	Teng	'Weigh-scale'
Thoob	Tong	'Bucket'
Tsab	Cha	
Tsu	Chu, Chou	'Rice steamer'
Tsuas	Choua	'Rocky'
Tswb	Chu, Cheu, Chue	'Bell'
Tub	Tou, Tu	'Son'
Xauv	Sao, Xao	'Neck-ring'
Xeeb	Seng, Xeng	'Heart' (< Chinese)

III. COMMON GIVEN NAMES FOR EITHER GIRLS OR BOYS

Name in RPA	English Spelling	Meaning
Ci	Chee	'Shiny, bright'
Kub	Kou, Ku	'Gold'
Neeb	Neng	'Spirits'
Qhua	Khoua	
Tooj	Tong	'Copper'
Tswb	Chue	'Bell'
Txiaj	Xia, Chia	'Valuable'
Txiab	Chia, Xia	'Scissors'
Yeeb	Ying, Yeng	'Opium'
Yeej	Yeng	'Win'
Yias	Yia	'Pan'

XEEM NPE HMOOB
'Hmong clan names'

Like Chinese society, Hmong society is divided into a small, essentially finite number of *xeem* 'clans'—Mottin (1978:157) identifies 14 in Thailand and Yang Dao (1992:288) 25 in Laos. Hmong legend has it that clans originated from the union of a brother and a sister, the lone survivors of a flood; their monster child was cut into pieces, each of which turned into a couple who then started a given clan. The nature of Hmong clan genesis accounts for the taboo on marriage between members of the same clan.* A clan includes a male ancestor, his sons and unmarried daughters, and the children of his sons—going back 160 or more generations according to Hmong lore.

Traditionally, a man identifies himself as *Npis, xeem Vaj* or *Npis, Hmoob Vaj* 'Bee, clan Vang.' Although clan names are not identical to last names, Hmong refugees started using them as such upon their arrival in the Western hemisphere in response to the demand for a last name. Since the number of clans is restricted, many Hmong then share the same "last name."

Below is an alphabetical list of the most common Hmong clan names; the ones with the largest membership in Laos appear in boldface. Where there are pronunciation differences between the two dialects, the *Hmoob Dawb* clan name appears first, followed by its *Moob Ntsuab* equivalent. (For details on how to pronounce the names, see the "Pronunciation Guide.")

CLAN NAME IN RPA	ENGLISH SPELLING	COMMENTS
Faj	Fang	
Ham, Haam	Hang	
Hawj	Her, Heu	
Khab, Khaab	Kang	
Koo	Kong	< Chinese meaning "river"
Kwm	Kue, Ku	
Lauj	Lo, Lor, Lau	< Chinese meaning "poplar"
Lis	Lee, Ly, Le, Li	< Chinese meaning "plum"
Muas	Moua	< Chinese meaning "horse"
Thoj	Thor, Thao	
Tsab, Tsaab	Chang	
Vaj, Vaaj	Vang	< Chinese meaning "king"
Vwj	Vue, Vu	
Yaj, Yaaj	Yang	< Chinese meaning "goat"
Xyooj	Xiong	< Chinese meaning "bear"

* For a full-length Hmong-English version of this tale, see Johnson and Yang, eds. (1992); for versions in beginning and intermediate level Hmong, see Johnson (1981).

CAG CEG HMOOB
'Hmong lineage groups'

I. *KWV TIJ* 'PATRILINEAL RELATIVES AND CLAN MATES'

So far we have learned about two pillars of Hmong society: the *tsev neeg* 'nuclear family' and the *xeem* 'patrilineal clan.' The third pillar is the *cag ceg* 'lineage group (literally 'root' + 'branch'), which consists of all the males in an unbroken line of descent: brothers, their sons, and male grandchildren—going back in time as far as memory allows. These patrilineal relatives are known as *kwv tij*, which translates literally as 'younger brother' + 'older brother.' Within a *cag ceg*, members of the same generation refer to each other as *kwv* 'younger brother' or *tij* 'older brother'—depending on age—thus expanding the notion of "brother" beyond the nuclear family. Their children refer to them as *txiv* 'father,' *txiv hlob* 'older father,' or *txiv ntxawm* 'younger father'—again expanding the notion of "father" beyond the nuclear family.

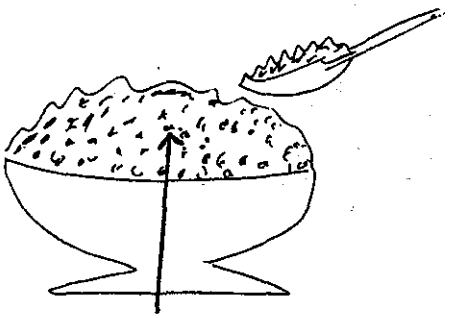
Not only the members of a *cag ceg*, but also the members of a given clan with no direct blood connection consider themselves as *kwv tij* since they are ultimately the offspring of one and the same ancestral couple who arose from the monster child mentioned in the section on Hmong clans above.

II. *NEEJ TSA* '(LOOSELY) RELATIVES-IN-LAW'

In addition to the patrilineal relatives and clan mates known as *kwv tij*, a man also has a set of relatives known as *neej tsa*. A *neej tsa* consists of the people related to him via a blood line which connects all the people related to a woman who is linked to him; this woman may not only be his wife, but also his mother or grandmother, the wife of his son or that of his son's son, or the wife of his brother or that of his brother's brother, etc. There is no exact equivalent for the *neej tsa* concept in Western kinship systems; 'relatives-in-law' is the closest translation available, but it is not entirely accurate since it includes a man's sister-in-law, who, by Hmong standards, is an integral part of her husband's family rather than an in-law. Inter-clan ties then stem from *kwv tij-neej tsa* alliances.

To summarize, Hmong society consists of groups rather than individuals; these groups include the *tsev neeg* 'nuclear family,' the *xeem* 'patrilineal clan,' the *kwv tij* 'patrilineal relatives and clan mates,' and the *neej tsa* '(loosely) relatives-in-law.' The kinship terminology outside of the *tsev neeg* is rather complex and goes beyond the scope of a beginning text; for further details the interested student may consult the kinship charts found in Heimbach (1979: Appendix 10).

KHOOM NOJ



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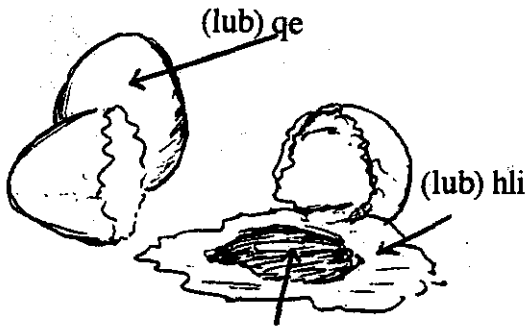
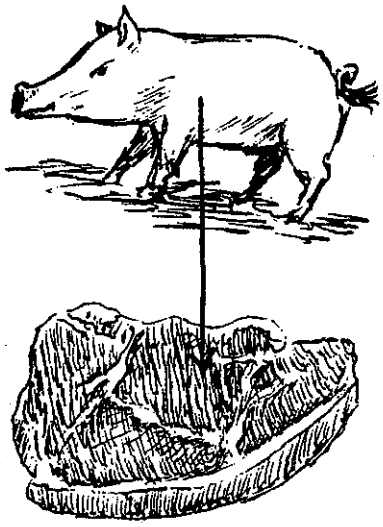
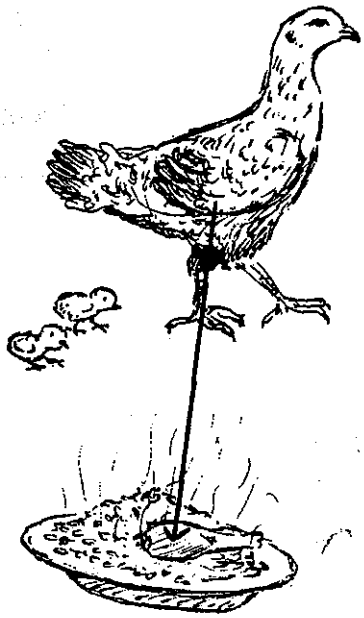


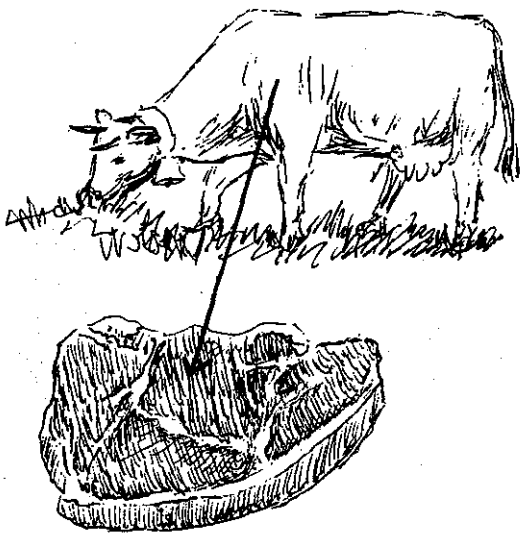
(lub) nkaub qes daj



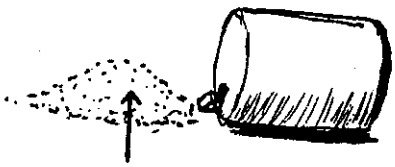
nqaij npuas (<npua)



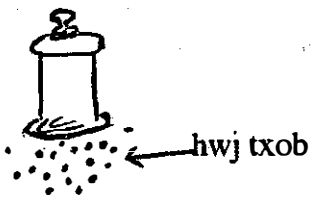
nqaij qaib



nqaij nyug (<nyuj)

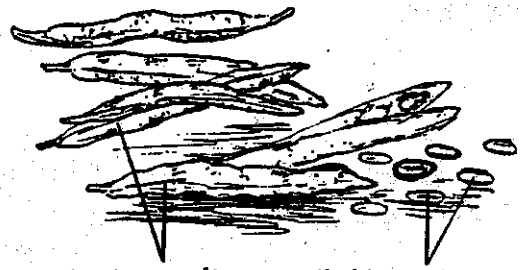


ntsev

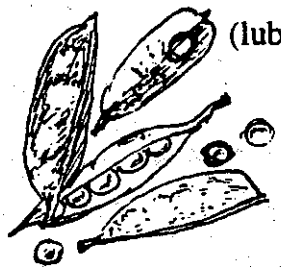


OC: *Npis npaj mov noj, Tsov tsis noj tsheb, Kuv lub tsheb, Tus tsov los xyuas*
R: *Wb mus pem Chicago, Ua ncuav*
CP: Talk about foods you (dis)like and eat at different times of the day and in different countries.

TAUM



(tus) taum lag (lub) noob taum



(lub) noob taum mog

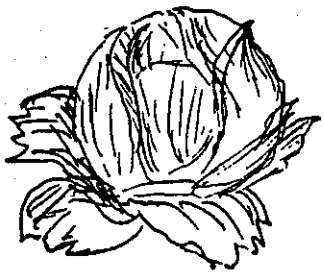
(tus) taum mog

(lub) taum pauv taum hwv (< Chinese)

ZAUB

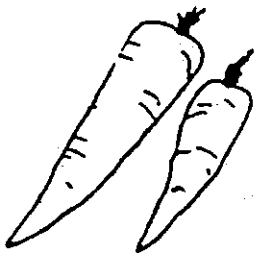
(lub) zaub paj

(lub) zaub paj ntsuab

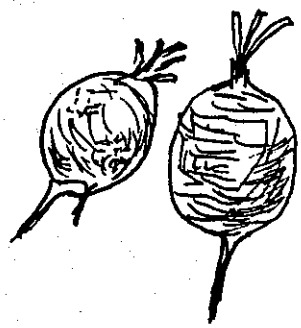


(lub) zaub xavlav

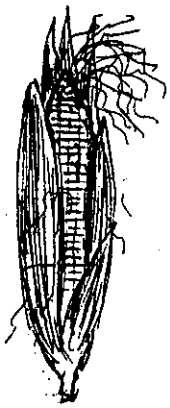
(lub) zaub qhwv



(tus) zaub ntug daj



(lub) zaub lauj pwm

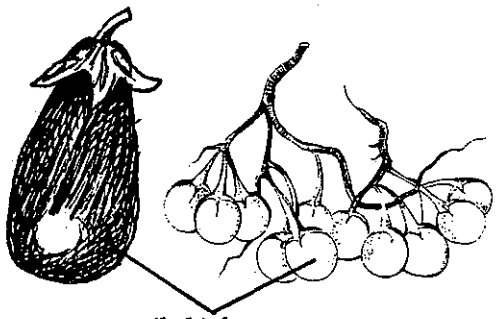


(lub) pob kws

(lub) dib

(lub) kua txob ntsim

(lub) kua txob ntsuab

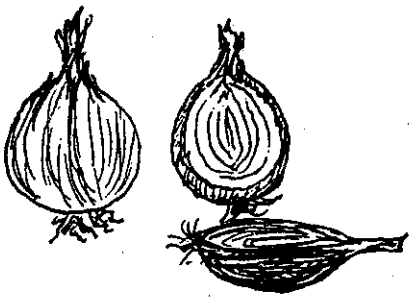


(lub) lws

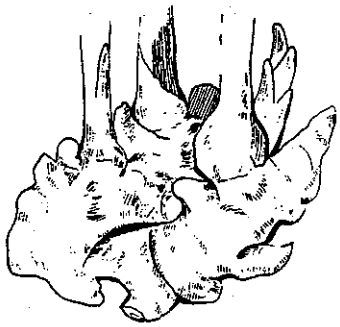
(lub) qos yaj ywm

(lub) huab xeeb (Heimbach 1979)
txiv laum fuab xeeb (Bertrais 1979)

(lub) qij/qej

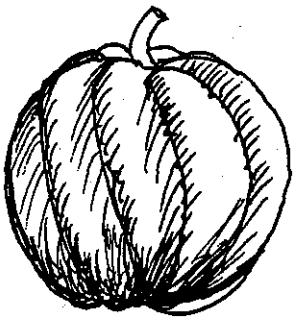


(lub) dos



qhiav

(lub) taub

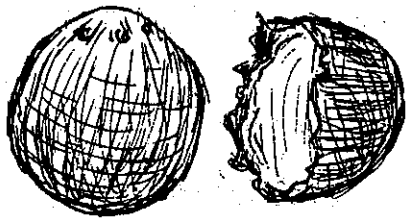


(lub) taubdag

tauj qaib/tauj dub

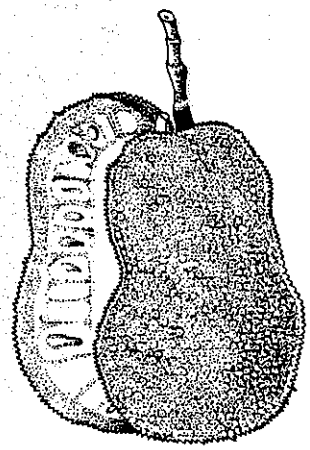
(tus) xyoob

TXIV HMAB TXIV NTOO

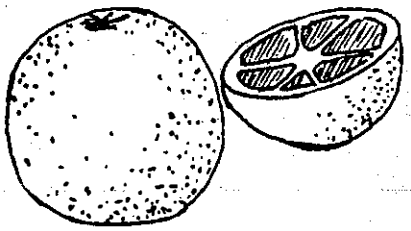


txiv plaws ploom (Mottin 1978)
txiv mav poj (Heimbach 1979)

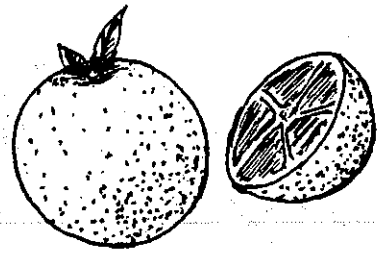
txiv tsawb



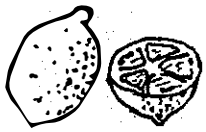
txiv plab nyug



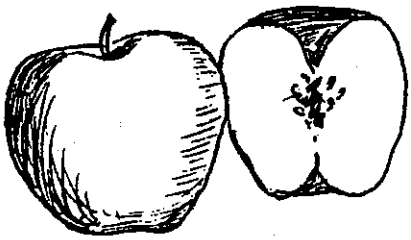
txiv lws zoov



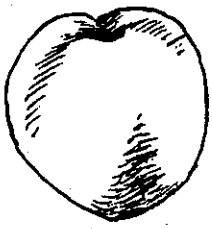
txiv kab ntxwv

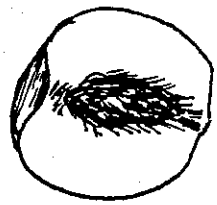


txiv qaub

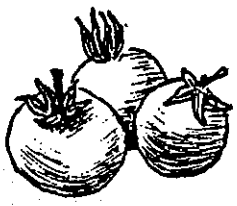


txiv zuaj (Bertrais 1979, Mottin 1978)
txiv ev paum (< English)

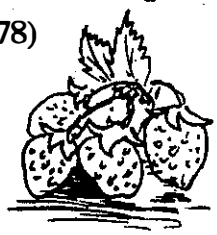




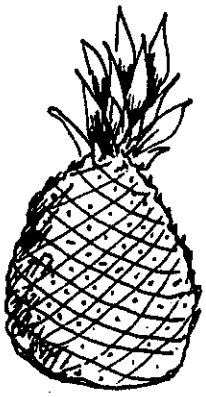
txiv duaj



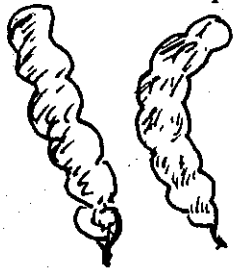
txiv lws suav



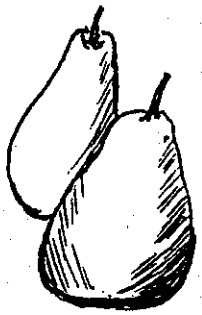
txiv pos (liab)



txiv puv luj



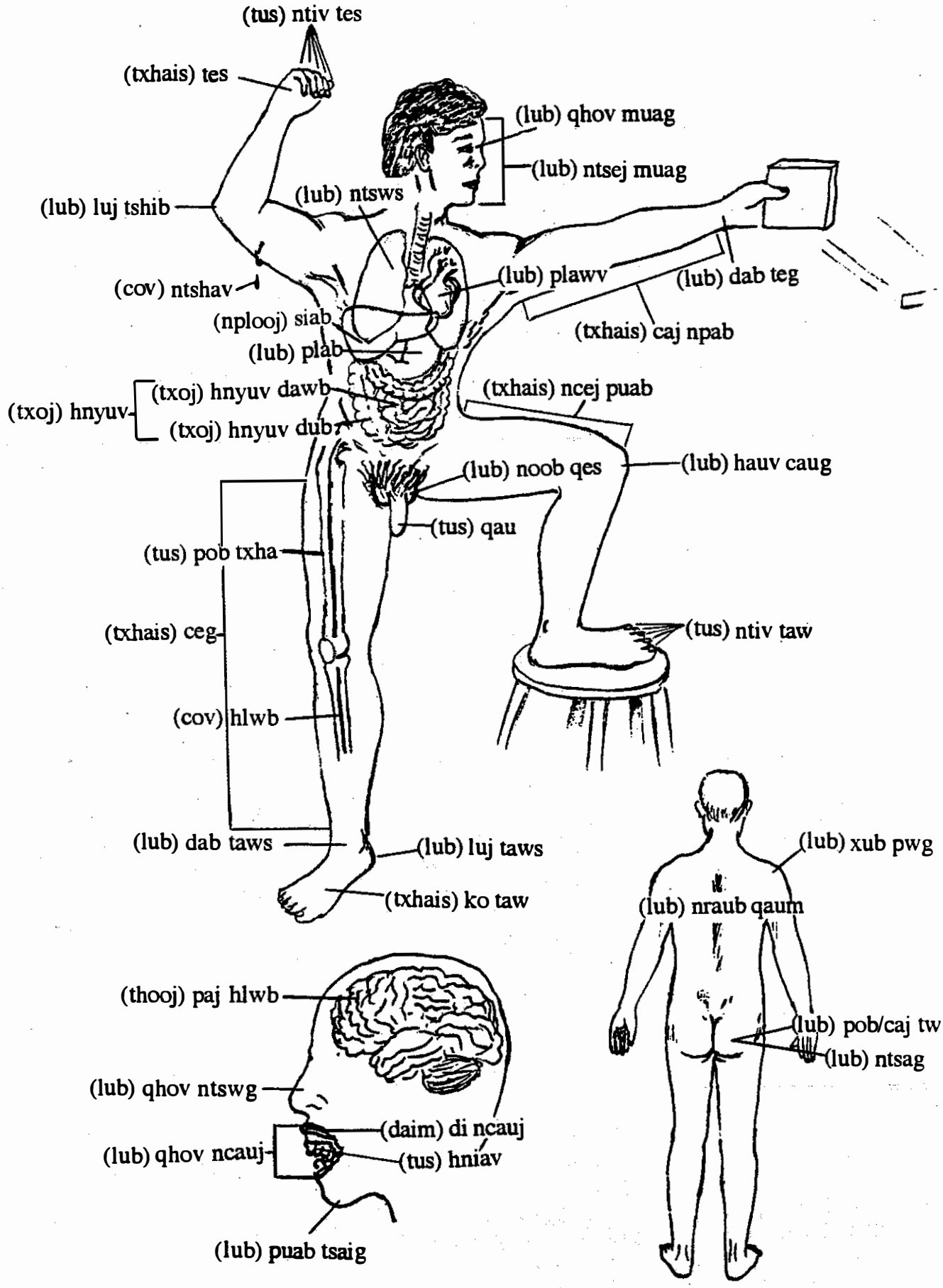
txiv quav miv



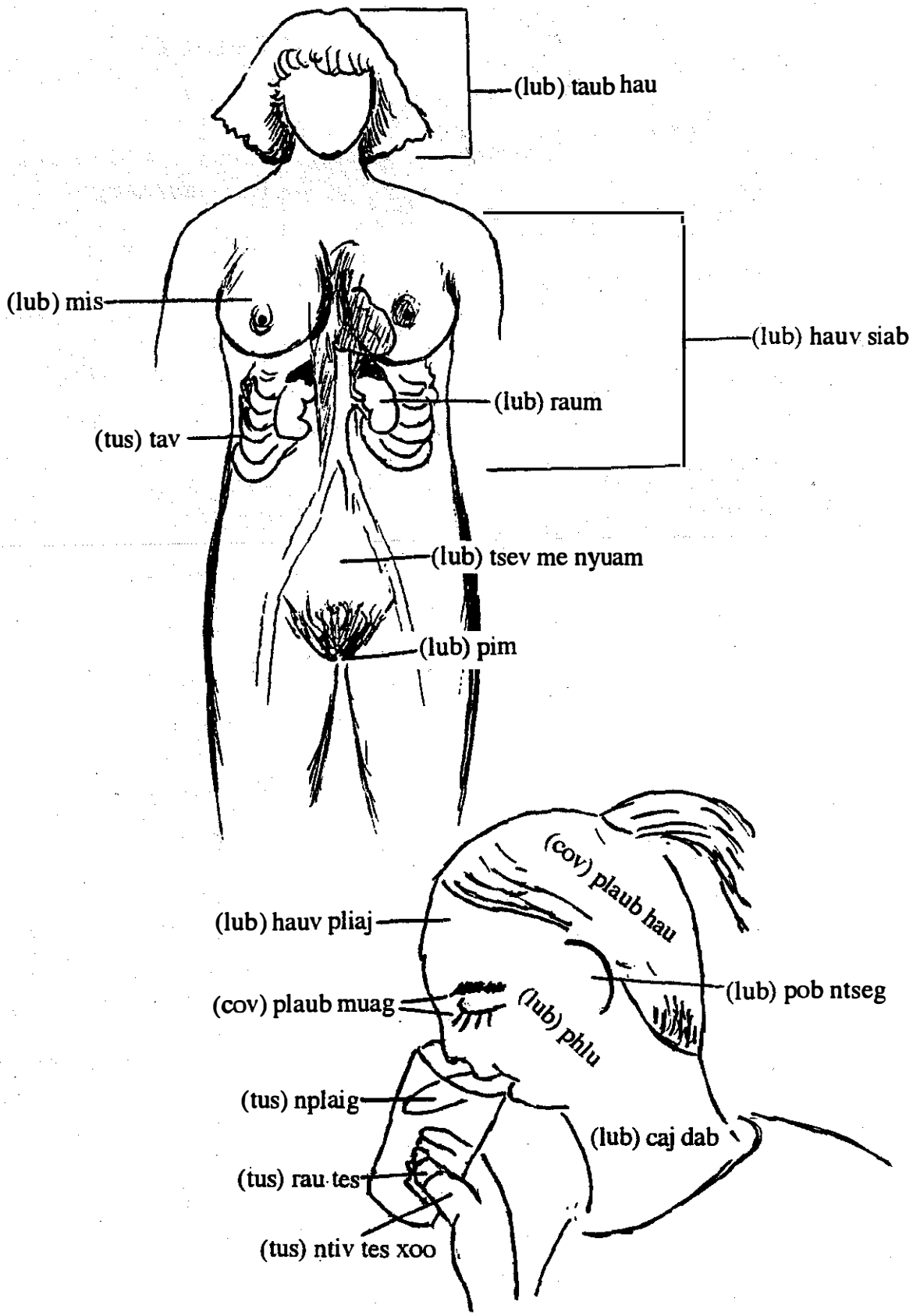
txiv phiaj (< English)

txiv cawv

TUS TXIV NEEJ LUB CEV



TUS POJ NIAM LUB CEV



OC: *Npis thiab nws cov phooj ywg, Saib daim duab: Npis thiab nws cov phooj ywg, Tus me nyuam dev tom Npis ko taw*

R: Hmong-English medical history form

CP: Express aches and pains via doctor/patient role-playing.

THE METAPHORICAL AND METONYMIC ROLES OF BODY PARTS

In Western cultures the heart is considered to be the primary seat of the emotions; in Hmong and other Southeast Asian cultures, the liver plays this role. Rather than being "heartbroken," a person is *tu siab* 'break apart-(in) liver' or *siab ntais* 'liver-break off'—that is, "liverbroken." Numerous other phrases involving *siab* 'liver' show that this is the physical organ where not only emotions, but also mental or intellectual processes as well as physical sensations are perceived to take place. The central role played by the liver is further reflected in the fact that the language has a grammatical device for differentiating between the liver as physical organ and the liver as seat of the affections: the classifier *nplooj*, which is used with nouns referring to leaf-like entities, is associated with *siab* when it refers to the physical organ (this, of course, makes good sense when one thinks of the lobes of the liver), and the classifier *lub*, which is the general-purpose classifier used with numerous abstract nouns, is associated with *siab* when it refers to the seat of the affections.

Below is a list of *siab* phrases arranged in sections which reflect their metaphorical meanings. First, however, is a summary of the limited metaphorical role played by the heart.

I. THE METAPHORICAL ROLE OF *PLAWV* 'HEART'

1. *plawv zoov*
   heart jungle
   'the heart/middle of the jungle'
2. *plawv zos*
   heart village
   'the middle of the village'
3. *plawv ntoo*
   heart tree
   'the heart of a tree'

As seen in (1-3), *plawv* 'heart' can be used metaphorically as literal center/core. This connection between the heart and the central/innermost part is also found in Western languages (the heart of Chinatown/of a rose, etc.), but while it includes both the physical and the abstract realms in Western cultures (the heart of the matter, etc.), it only extends to the physical in Hmong.

II. THE METAPHORICAL ROLE OF *SIAB* 'LIVER'*

a. Personality traits/moral characteristics

4. *siab ntev*
   liver long
   'patient, even-tempered'
5. *siab luv*
   liver short
   'impatient, short-tempered'
6. *siab ncaj*
   liver straight
   'morally honest and upright'
7. *siab nkhaus*
   liver crooked
   'dishonest, not straightforward'

b. Mental states and processes

8. *nkag siab*
   crawl (into) liver
   'to understand'
9. *siab nthuav*
   liver unfold, unroll, open out as a book
   'to have reached the age of wisdom'
10. *txiav siab*
    cut liver
    'to decide, make a decision'
11. *rau siab*
    put, place liver
    'to apply oneself to do something'

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* For a detailed analysis of this topic—including a comprehensive list of *siab* phrases—see Jaisser (1990).

c. Anger

12. *siab kub / siab ceev*
liver hot / liver fast
'quick- or hot-tempered, prone to anger'

13. *siab npau*
liver boil, bubble up
'to be angry'

d. Satisfaction

14. *siab kaj*
liver bright
'satisfied with things, pleased, refreshed'

15. *qab siab*
sweet liver
'happy, at ease, satisfied'

16. *raug siab*
hit the mark liver
'pleased, satisfied'

17. *xu siab*
miss the mark liver
'displeased, dissatisfied'

e. Fear

18. *siab nyias*
liver thin
'fearful, timid'

19. *siab tuab*
liver thick
'brave, courageous'

20. *poob siab*
fall liver
'frightened, scared'

21. *siab Xob*
liver Xob*
'scared, afraid of punishment'

f. Confusion

22. *siab fab*
liver bushy, weedy, overgrown
'heart upset, confused, mind not clear'

23. *nphau siab*
tip/turn over liver
'to lose one's mental or physical balance'

III. THE METONYMIC ROLE OF *SIAB*

There are also *siab* phrases with no metaphorical meaning. In these, *siab* merely plays a metonymic role in that it stands for the place where a given emotion is perceived to take place. This is part of a productive pattern in the language whereby the locus of an emotion is expressed overtly, as seen in (26-27), where the stomach and the eye are involved.

24. *chim siab*
angry (in) liver
'angry'

25. *kho siab*
lonely (in) liver
'lonely, homesick, sad (out of loneliness)'

26. *tshaib plab*
hungry (in) stomach
'hungry'

27. *txaj muag*
ashamed (in) eye
'ashamed'

IV. CONCLUSION

While the liver is the metaphorical "organ substitute" for the heart in Hmong, its role extends far beyond that. If we accept the notion that, to a certain extent, language reflects the psychological make-up of the people who speak it, the plethora of *siab* phrases indicates that it is the locus where emotions, mental activities, and physical sensations are perceived to take place in Hmong culture. However, even though the expression of these states and processes is encoded differently and more overtly in Hmong, some of the underlying conceptual metaphors are also found in English and other languages—thus reflecting the cognitive make-up we share universally.

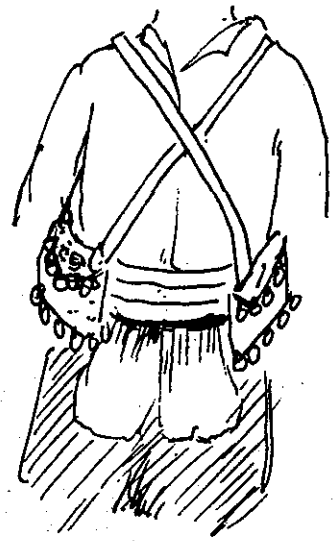
---

* As seen in the weather terminology section below, *Xob* is the mythical creature responsible for thunder and lightning so that when the liver is *"Xob-ed"*—i.e., struck by this mythical figure—one is scared.

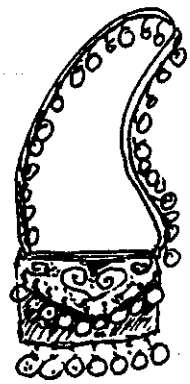
KHAUB NCAWS HMOOB

(daim) tiab Hmoob Dawb

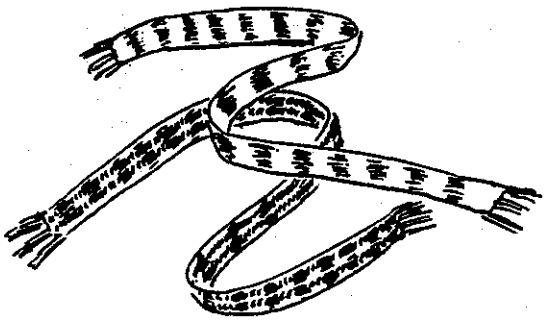
(daim) tiab Hmoob Ntsuab/Laes



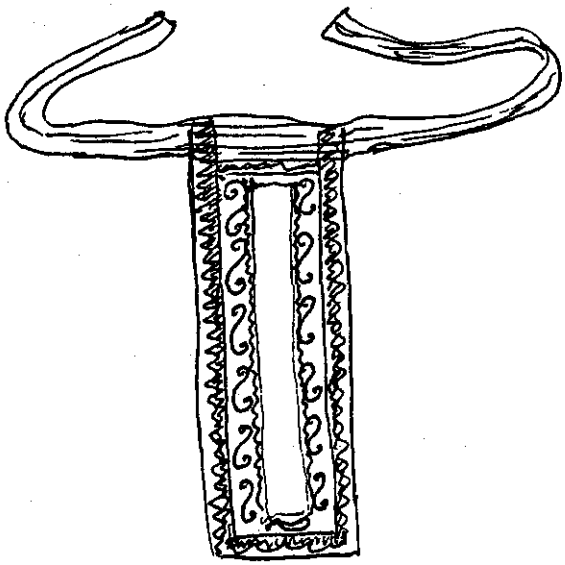
(lub) hnab



(lub) hnab nyiaj



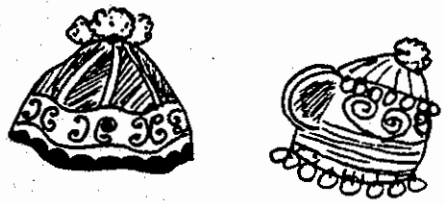
(txoj) siv ceeb



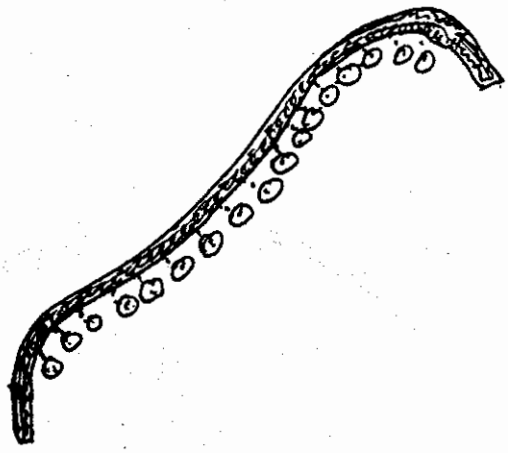
(daim) sev

R: *Ntxhua khaub ncaws, Muas khaub ncaws, Ua paj ntaub*
CP: Describe somebody in terms of his/her clothing (in a classroom situation have your classmates guess who it is).

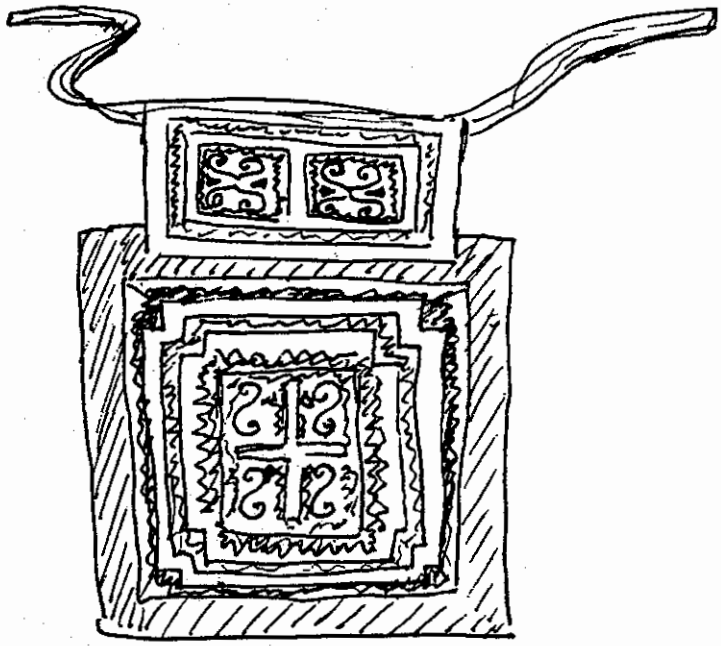
(daim) phuam



(lub) kaus mom Hmoob



(txoj) hlab nyiaj



(daim) nyias (*ev* me nyuam)

UA PAJ NTAUB

Maiv: Koj ua dabtsi?

Nplias: *Kuv ua paj ntaub.*

Maiv: Zoo nkauj kawg. Xaws puas nyuab?

Nplias: *Tsis nyuab tiamsis siv sijhawm ntev.*

Maiv: Koj puas xav tias kuv yuav kawm xaws tau thiab?

Nplias: *Tau kawg mas.*

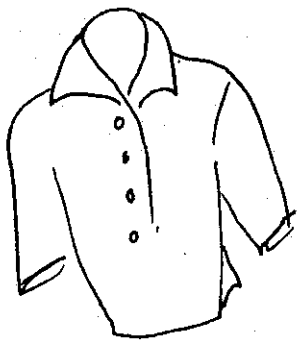
Maiv: Koj puas kam qhia kuv?

Nplias: *Kam xwb.*

Helinka Luangpraseut

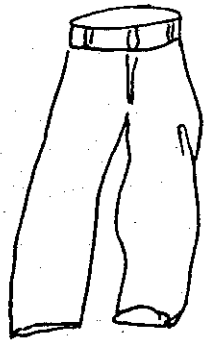
KHAUB NCAWS

hnav



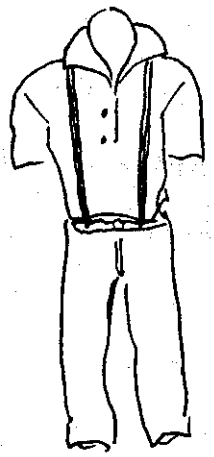
(lub) tsho

hnav



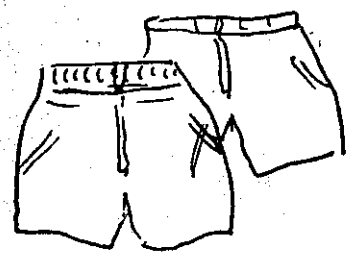
(lub) ris [ntev]

hnav



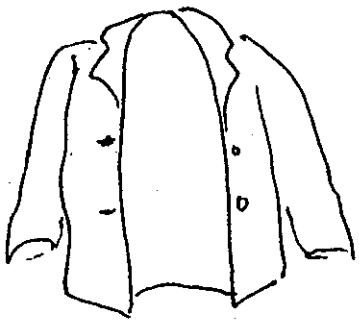
(lub) ris-tsho

hnav



(lub) ris luv

hnav

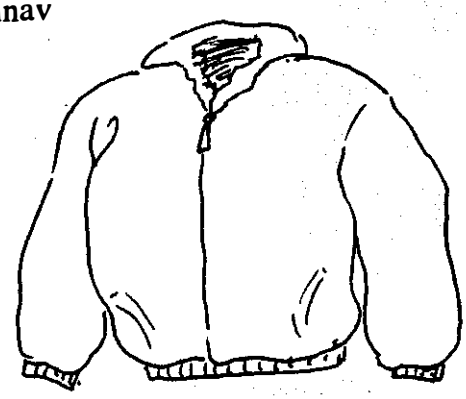


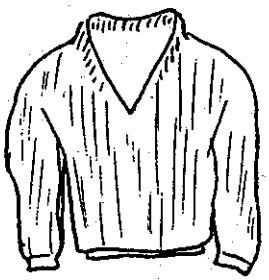
(lub) tsho loj

hnav

(lub) tsho tiv nag

hnav



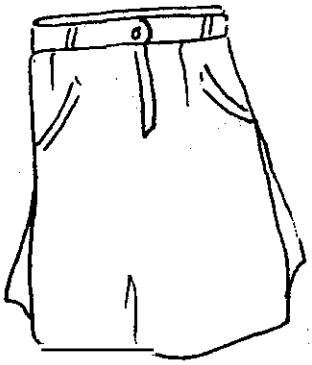


(lub) tsho tiv no

hnav

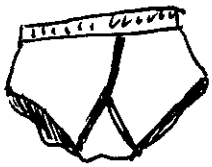
(lub) tiab/(lub) cev tiab

hnav



(daim) tiab

hnav



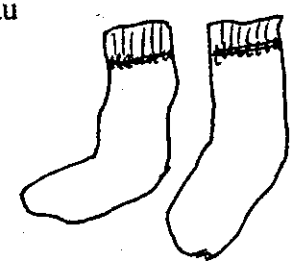
(lub) ris xiv liv

(lub) tiab me me

rau

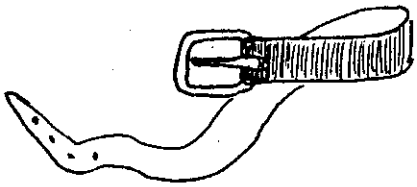
(nkawm) khau

rau



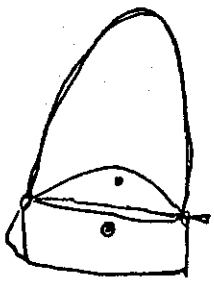
(nkawm) thom khwm

sia



(txoj) siv

nqa



(lub) hnab

ntoo

(lub) kaus mom

MAIV THIAB NPLIAS MUS MUAS KHAUB NCAWS

Maiv: Kuv nyiam cev tiab no.

Nplias: *Kuv nyiam thiab.*

Maiv: Koj xav tias kuv yuav cev tiab no puas zoo?

Nplias: *Raug nqi pes tsawg?*

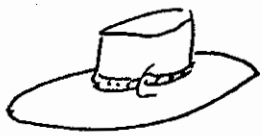
Maiv: Kaum tsib doslas.

Nplias: *Pheej yig thiab yuav los zoo kawg.*

$7.59

$ .89

$11.99



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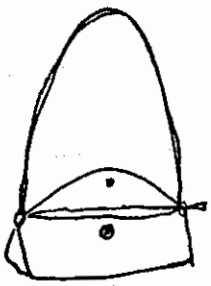
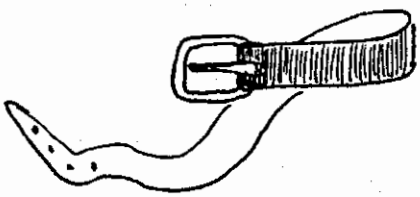
$13.25



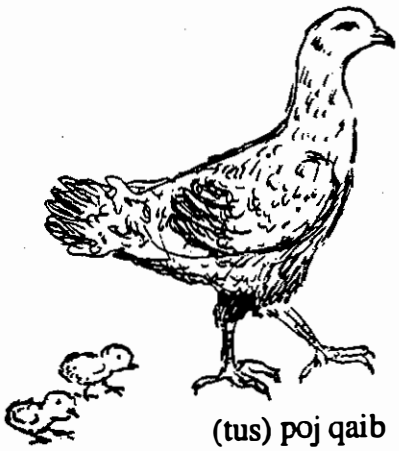
$6.95



$4.79

$9.99

TSIAJ



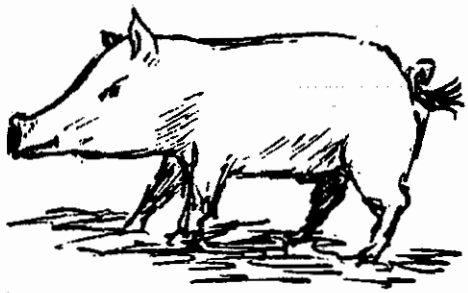
(tus) poj qaib

(tus) me nyuam qaib

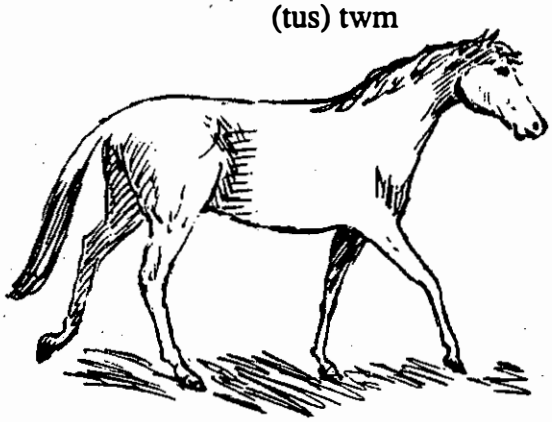
(tus) lau qaib

(tus) os

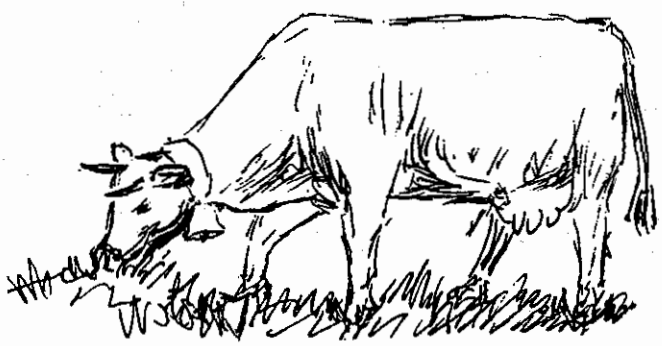
(tus) twm



(tus) npua



(tus) nees



(tus) nyuj

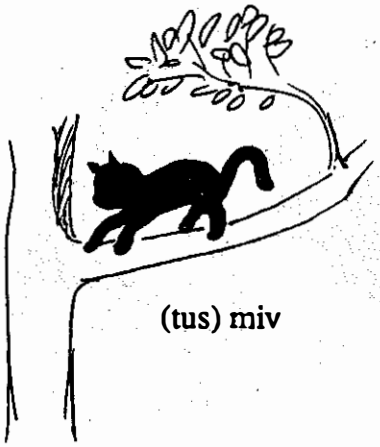
(tus) luav

(tus) yaj

OC: *Npis mus tom lub vaj tsiaj, Kuv lub tsheb, Npis thiab nws cov phooj ywg, Saib daim duab: Npis thiab nws cov phooj ywg*

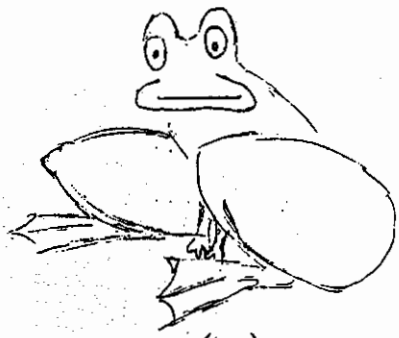
R: Dab neeg nab qa tsiav, Tus tsov thiab tus qav

CP: Talk about your pet(s) and the kinds of animals people treat as pets in different countries.

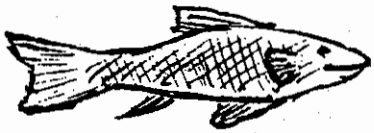


(tus) miv

(tus) dev

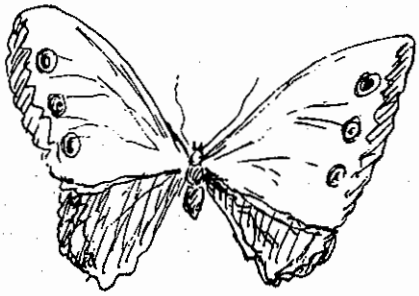


(tus) qav



(tus) ntses

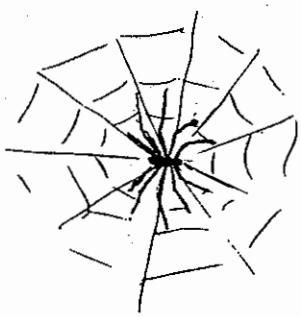
(tus) noog



(tus) npauj npaim

(tus) muv

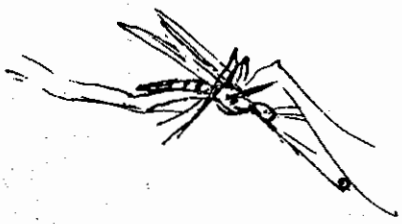
(tus) nkawj



(tus) kab laug sab

(tus) laum

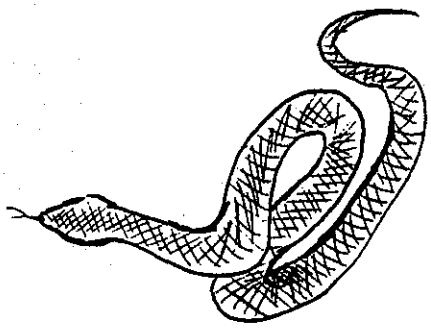
(tus) ntsaum



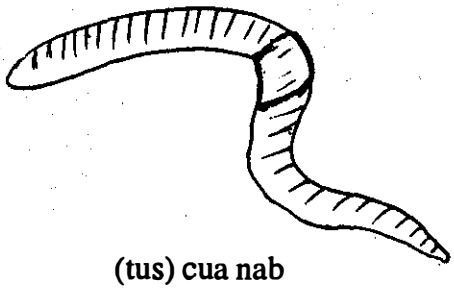
(tus) yoov tshaj cum

(tus) yoov mos ntsuab

(tus) dev mub



(tus) nab

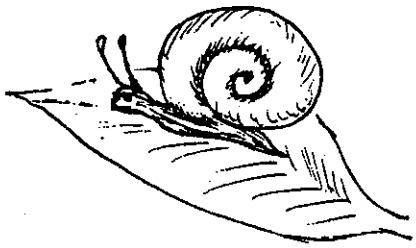


(tus) cua nab

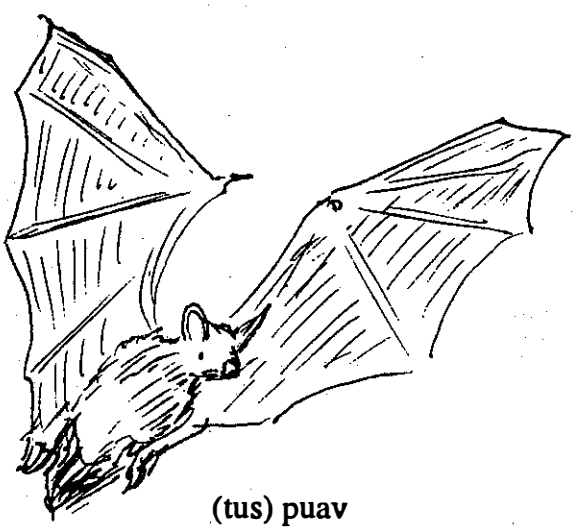
(tus) nas

(tus) nas tsuag

(tus) nas ncuav



(tus) qwj



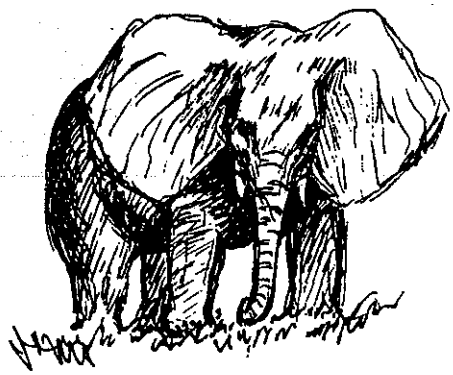
(tus) puav

(tus) plas

(tus) tsov

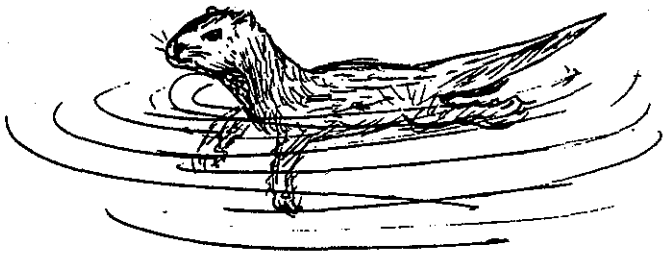
(tus) tsov ntxhuav

(tus) liab

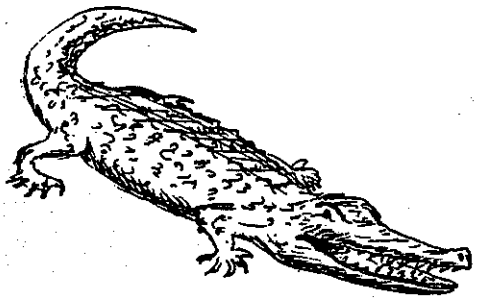


(tus) ntxhw

(tus) vaub kib



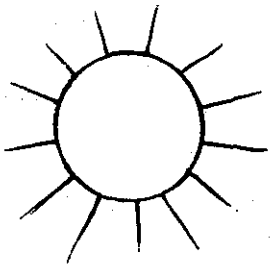
(tus) ntshuab



(tus) khej

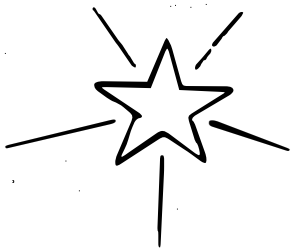
(tus) hma

HUAB CUA

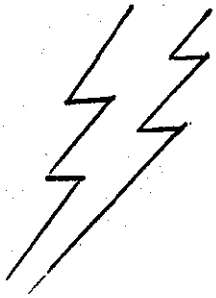


(lub) hnub

(lub) hli



(lub) hnub qub



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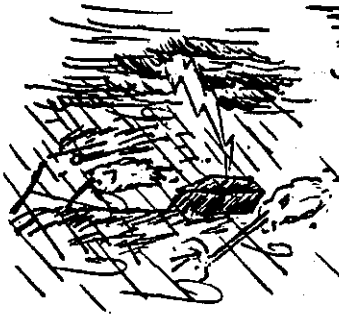
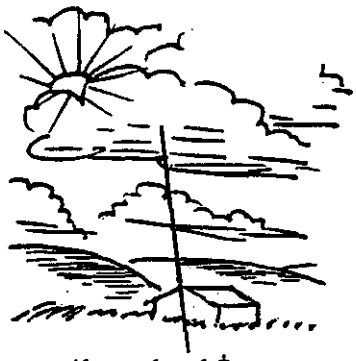


xob quaj

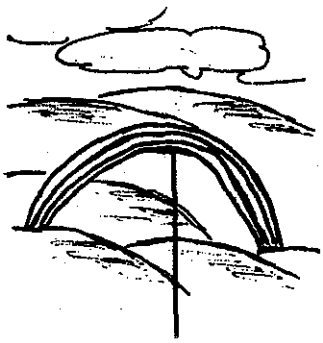
cua daj cua dub

(lub) kaus



ibtau huab†

covte



(tus) zaj sawv**

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* According to Hmong cosmology, *Xob* is the creature in the heavens responsible for thunder and lightning. *Xob laim* 'lightning' literally translates as "*Xob* flashes," and *xob quaj* 'thunder' as "*Xob* cries out."

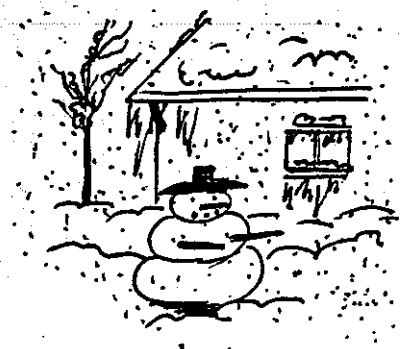
† *Tauv* is the classifier for clouds (and clusters of fruit); note the tone change after *ib*.

** *Tus zaj sawv* 'rainbow' literally translates as "the dragon rises," which reflects the way rainbows are perceived in Hmong cosmology.

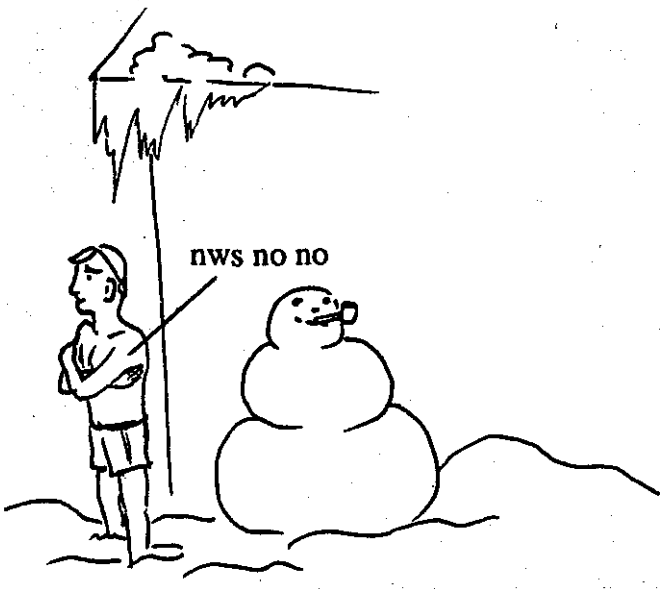
HNUB NO, HUAB CUA ZOO LI CAS?

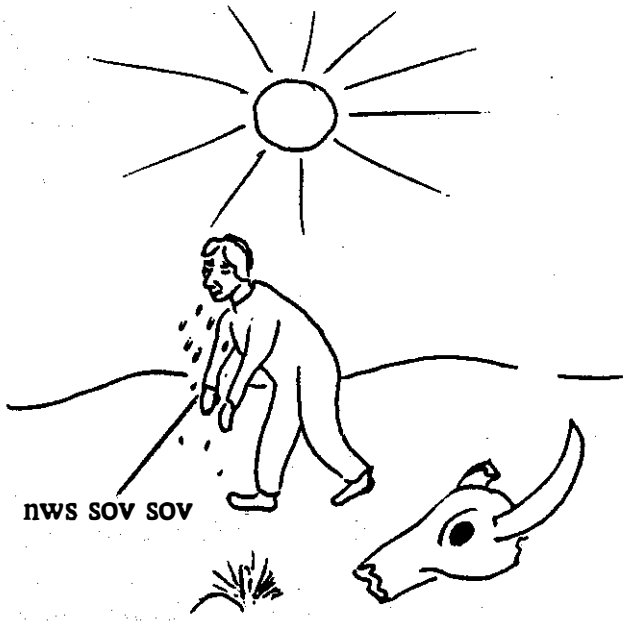
tshav ntuj (tsis muaj huab) | pos huab | los nag | cua hlob

los los nag thiab cua daj cua dub hlob hlob



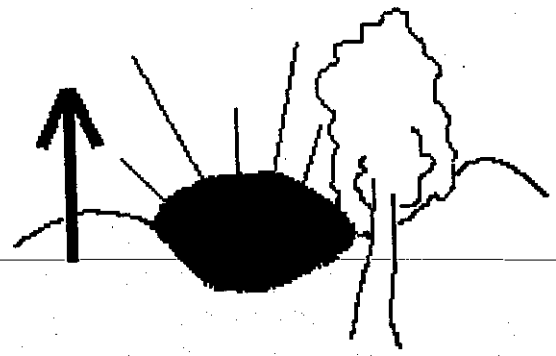
los te





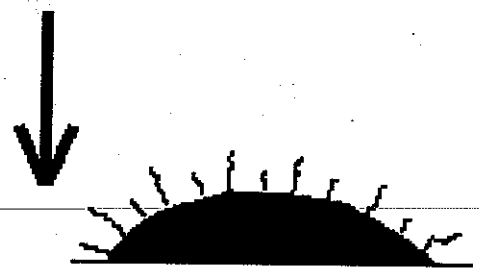
LUB HNUB UA DAB TSI?

1.



Hnub tuaj.

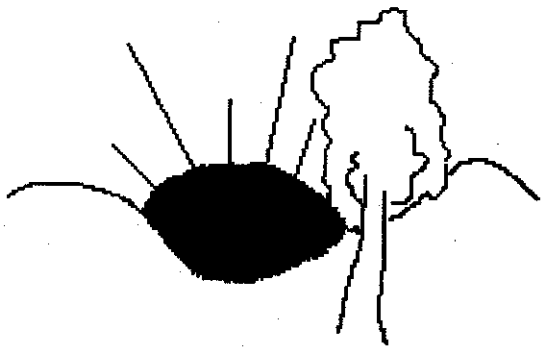
2.



Hnub poob qho.

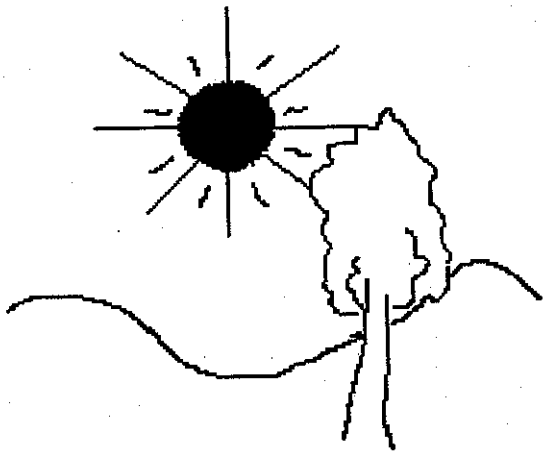
THAUM TAV TWG?

1.



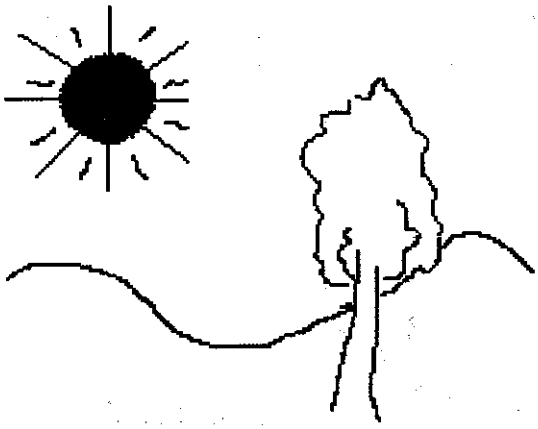
***Sawv ntxov* (3 AM - 12 PM)**
8 teev sawv ntxov = 8AM

2.



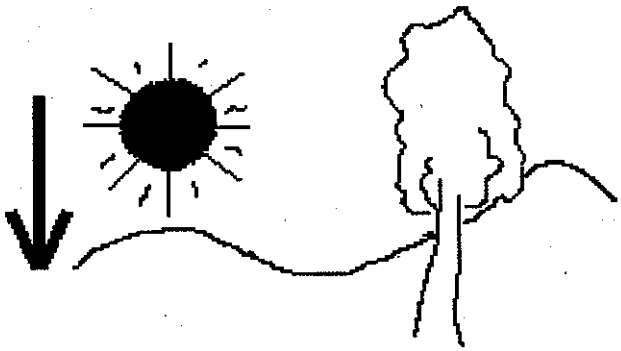
***Tav su* = 12 PM**
12 teev hnub ntseg = 12 PM

3.



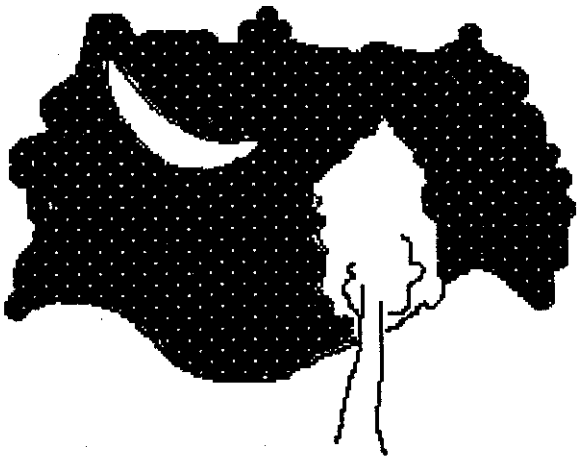
Hnub qaij **(1 PM - 4 PM)**
3 teev hnub qaij = 3PM
(3 teev tav su dua)
(3 teev yav tsaus ntuj)

4.



Yuav tsaus ntuj **(4 PM - 6 PM)**
6 teev yuav tsaus ntuj = 6 PM
tsaus ntuj zuag = 6 PM - 7 PM (it's getting dark, but you can still see people)

5.



Tsaus ntuj **(7 PM - 12 AM)**
9 teev tsaus ntuj = 9 PM

6.

Ib tag hmo **= 12 AM**

(*tsis muaj lub npe*: 1 AM - 3 AM)
2 teev ib tag hmo dua = 2 AM

THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR

1993 = *tsaib ub*
1994 = 1. *tsaib no*; 2. *xyoo tag los lawm*
1995 = *xyoo no*
1996 = *lwm xyoo*

The months of the Gregorian calendar are translated with the following construction: clf *lub* + # + *hli ntuj* 'month (literally 'moon' + 'sky')'; the days of the week are translated with the following construction: *hnub* 'day' + # (note that Sunday is considered to start the week). Some Hmong also use the Lao names for the days of the week—as seen in the July 1994 monthly calendar below—and some use the names for the days of the week of the country in which they have been relocated. Sometimes the Lao word for 'week,' *(lub) as thiv*, is used instead of *lim piam* or *lim tiam.*

lub ib hlis ntuj	January	*lub xya hli ntuj*	July
lub ob hlis ntuj	February	*lub yim hli ntuj*	August
lub peb hlis ntuj	March	*lub cuaj hlis ntuj*	September
lub plaub hlis ntuj	April	*lub kaum hli ntuj*	October
lub tsib hlis ntuj	May	*lub kaum ib hlis ntuj*	November
lub rau hli ntuj	June	*lub kaum ob hlis ntuj*	December

Hnub chiv (= 'start')	Sunday	*Hnub tsib*	Thursday
Hnub ob	Monday	*Hnub rau*	Friday
Hnub peb	Tuesday	*Hnub xya*	Saturday
Hnub plaub	Wednesday		

(LUB) XYA HLI NTUJ 1994

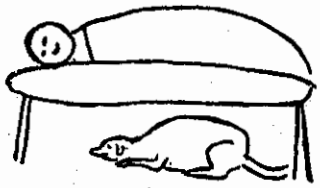
Hnub vas thiv	*Hnub vas cas*	*Hnub vas as qhas*	*Hnub vas phuv*	*Hnub vas phaj hav*	*Hnub vas xuv*	*Hnub vas xaum*
					1	2
3 <----------	4 ----------	5 *lub lim piam*	6 /*lub lim tiam*	7 *tag los lawm/ nram ntej*	8 ----------	9 ---------->
10 <----------	11 ----------	12 *lub lim piam*	13 /*lub lim tiam*	14 *no* ----------	15 ----------	16 ---------->
17 <----------	18 ----------	19 *lwm lub lim*	20 *piam / lwm*	21 *lub lim tiam*	22 ----------	23 ---------->
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

NWS/LAWV UA DAB TSI?

1.

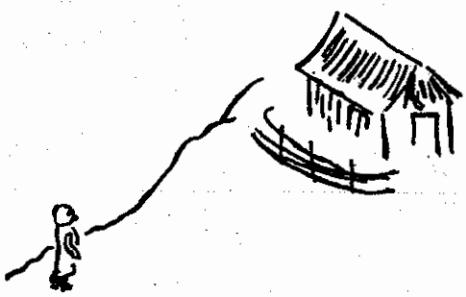
Nws kawm ntawv.

2.



Nws pw tsaug zog.

3.



Nws mus tsev.

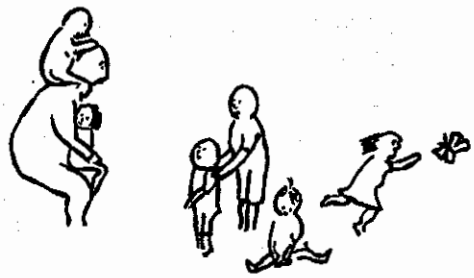
4.

Nws haus dej.

5.

Nws ntxhua khaub ncaws.

6.



Nws nrog nws tus me nyuam ua si.

7.

Nws ntxuav tes.

8.

Nws npaj mov noj; nws hlais nqaij npuas.

9.

Nws muas ib tug qaib.

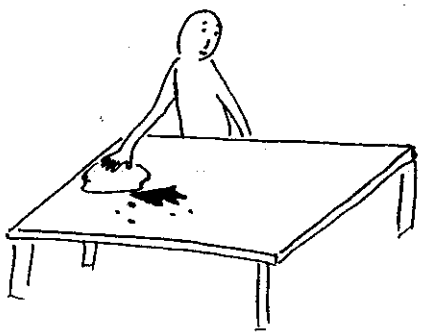
10.

Nws ua liaj.

11.

Nws tshov qeej.

12.



Nws so lub rooj.

13.

Lawv da dej.

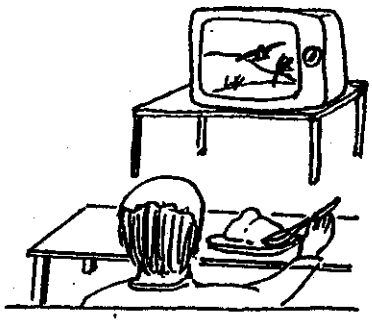
14.

Nws cheb tsev.

15.

Nws txiav taws.

16.



Nws saib TV.

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Annie Jaiser et al.

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Hmong, linguistics, Southeast Asia, language

Abstract:
"Hmong For Beginners" was written by Annie Jaisser and her co-authors (Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle, David Strecker, Lopao Vang and Lyfu Vang) from materials they developed in the 1980s when Hmong was first being introduced as a language of instruction for the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI). The book was published by the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at UC Berleley in 1995 and is now out of print. This electronic version is intended to make the materials available to those interested in the Hmong language but with limited access to print materials about the language.

Oral Comprehension Units

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

COV NAJ NPAWB

Underline the number you hear in each row:

(a)	25	27	29	26	23
(b)	15	27	59	11	43
(c)	25	57	79	26	32
(d)	18	14	11	17	15
(e)	16	13	19	12	17
(f)	99	92	97	96	90
(g)	102	120	100	110	120
(h)	77	70	79	76	78
(i)	67	60	90	66	69
(j)	102	120	100	110	122
(k)	15	27	59	86	43
(l)	120	170	190	110	160
(m)	87	70	77	72	78
(n)	49	62	17	26	60
(o)	142	176	193	180	169

TONE PERCEPTION EXERCISE

Fill in the tone letters. (Leave blank if mid "zero" tone).

Pua___ ta___ ko___ mu___ da___ tsi___ law___? Ku___ mu___ yua___ khoo___ to___ khw___ law___. Ko___ yua___ tau___ da___ tsi___? Ku___ yua___ tau___ i___ co___ qe___, nqai___ qai___, zau___ xa___ la___, zau___ pa___, pia___ tha___, thia___ txhu___.

INITIAL CONSONANT PERCEPTION EXERCISE

Fill in the consonant you hear. (Possible consonants: d, dh, k, kh, r, rh, q, qh, ts, tsh.)

1. ___uaj
2. ___eev
3. ___o
4. ___uab
5. ___uaj
6. ___uav
7. ___ub
8. ___aj
9. ___o
10. ___au
11. ___o
12. ___eem
13. ___uv
14. ___eeb
15. ___aij

WORD PERCEPTION EXERCISE

Underline the word that you hear for each line.

1.	ib	yim
2.	ruam	cuaj
3.	nres	ntses
4.	tam sim no	tiam sis
5.	neb	nej
6.	ntxiv	txiv
7.	koj	kov
8.	txhiab	thiab
9.	caum	rau
10.	loj	los
11.	ntawm	ntawd
12.	nkoj	koj
13.	tus	tug
14.	thiab	tiab
15.	kuv	kub

STORIES FOR ORAL COMPREHENSION PRACTICE

NPIS NPAJ MOV NOJ

Tag kis no Npis tshaib tshaib plab tiam sis nws tsis muaj dab tsi noj. Nws thiaj li mus taj laj yuav tau ib co qe, zaub paj, thiab txhuv.

Npis rov qab los tsev los muab ib lub lauj kaub rau dej rau, npau lawm, nws mam li npaws zaub paj rau. Nws cub mov thiab. Thaum tiav huv si lawm nws mam li noj. Tsis qab li, tiam sis txaus noj.

Teeb Meem:

1. Tag kis no, Npis mob mob plab, puas yog?

2. Npis tsis muaj dab tsi noj, puas yog?

3. Npis mus qhov twg?
   a. mus yuav khoom tom khw
   b. mus tua nas nram hav dej
   c. mus xyuas phooj ywg pem zos

4. Npis yuav tau dab tsi?
   a. ib co qe, zaub paj, thiab txhuv
   b. nqaij qaib, nqaij npuas, thiab nqaij nyug
   c. ib phau ntawv, ib tug cwj mem, thiab ntawv

5. Npis puas ua qe noj?

6. Npis muab ib lub lauj kaub rau dab tsi rau?
   a. mis nyuj
   b. dej
   c. txhuv

7. Npis puas cub zaub paj?

8. Npis puas cub mov?

9. Npis puas noj zaub paj thiab mov ?

10. Npis ua zaub paj thiab mov puas qab?

11. Thaum noj zaub paj thiab mov tas lawm, Npis puas tshaib plab?

TSOV TSIS NOJ TSHEB

Nag hmo sawv ntxov muaj ib tug tsov tuaj hauv kuv lub tsev. Kuv hais tias, "Nyob zoo. Koj tuaj dab tsi?" Tus tsov teb tias, "Kuv tuaj noj koj."

Kuv noog tias, "Aub! Tsov noj tsheb, puas yog?" Tsov hais tias, "Tsis yog! Peb noj tib neeg xwb!" Kuv hais tias, "Yog li ces koj noj kuv tsis tau. Kuv yog ib lub tsheb. Cov tib neeg nyob tim ub." Tus tsov thiaj li mus nrhiav tib neeg noj lawm.

Teeb Meem:

1. Kuv puas yog tsheb tiag?

2. Tus tsov puas muaj tswv yim?

3. Tus tsov mus nrhiav dab tsi?

4. Tsheb puas noj tsov?

5. Tus tsov tuaj hauv kuv lub tsev los kuv lub tsheb?

6. Tus tsov hais lus Hmoob puas tau?

7. Tsov noj dab tsi?

8. Tus tsov nyob hauv kuv lub tsev ob peb hnub, puas yog?

9. Nag hmo muaj tsib tug tsov tuaj hauv kuv lub tsev, puas yog?

10. Tsiaj dab tsi noj tib neeg?

11. Thaum kuv hais rau tus tsov, kuv puas muaj tswv yim?

MAIV QHUA

Npis muaj ib tug tij laug. Nws lub npe hu ua Kaub. Kaub muaj ib tug me nyuam. Nws lub npe hu ua Maiv Qhua. Maiv Qhua tseem hais lus tsis tau, tiam sis nws txawj txawj luag.

Maiv Qhua tseem tsis muaj hniav. Nws thiaj li noj nqaij tsis taus. Kaub thiab Kaub tus poj niam ho cub mov rau Maiv Qhua noj.

Teeb Meem:

1. Maiv Qhua tom Npis, puas taus?

2. Vim li cas tsis taus?

3. Maiv Qhua hais lus Asiv, puas tau?

4. Maiv Qhua me los loj?

5. Maiv Qhua ua taus dab tsi?
   a. hais lus Hmoob
   b. luag thiab noj mov
   c. tsav lub tsheb

6. Kaub thiab Kaub tus poj niam muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam?

7. Maiv Qhua muaj pes tsawg tus niam laus?

8. Maiv Qhua laus dua Kaub, puas yog?

9. Maiv Qhua tseem tsis tau muaj ib yam. Nws yog dab tsi?
   a. tsis muaj niam thiab txiv
   b. tsis muaj pob ntseg
   c. tsis muaj hniav

10. Qaib puas muaj hniav?

NPIS MUS TOM LUB VAJ TSIAJ

Muaj ib hnub Npis mus tom vaj tsiaj. Npis zoo siab heev. Nws nyiam saib cov tsiaj. Thaum Npis mus tom vaj tsiaj thawj zaug, nws pom ib tug dais dawb. Nws tsis paub tias muaj dais xim dawb. Nws thiaj li hais tias, "Tus dais ntawd mob mob puas yog?" Npis niam hais tias, "Tsis yog. Tus dais ntawd tsis mob."

Teeb Meem:

1. Hnub no Npis mus qhov twg?
   a. tom khw
   b. pem zos Los Tsuas
   c. tom vaj tsiaj

2. Npis yuav ua dab tsi?
   a. xyuas nws tus phooj ywg
   b. pub cov tsiaj
   c. saib cov tsiaj

3. Npis puas nyiam saib cov tsiaj?

4. Thaum Npis mus tom vaj tsiaj thawj zaug nws pom ib tug dev dawb, puas yog?

5. Puas muaj dais xim dawb?

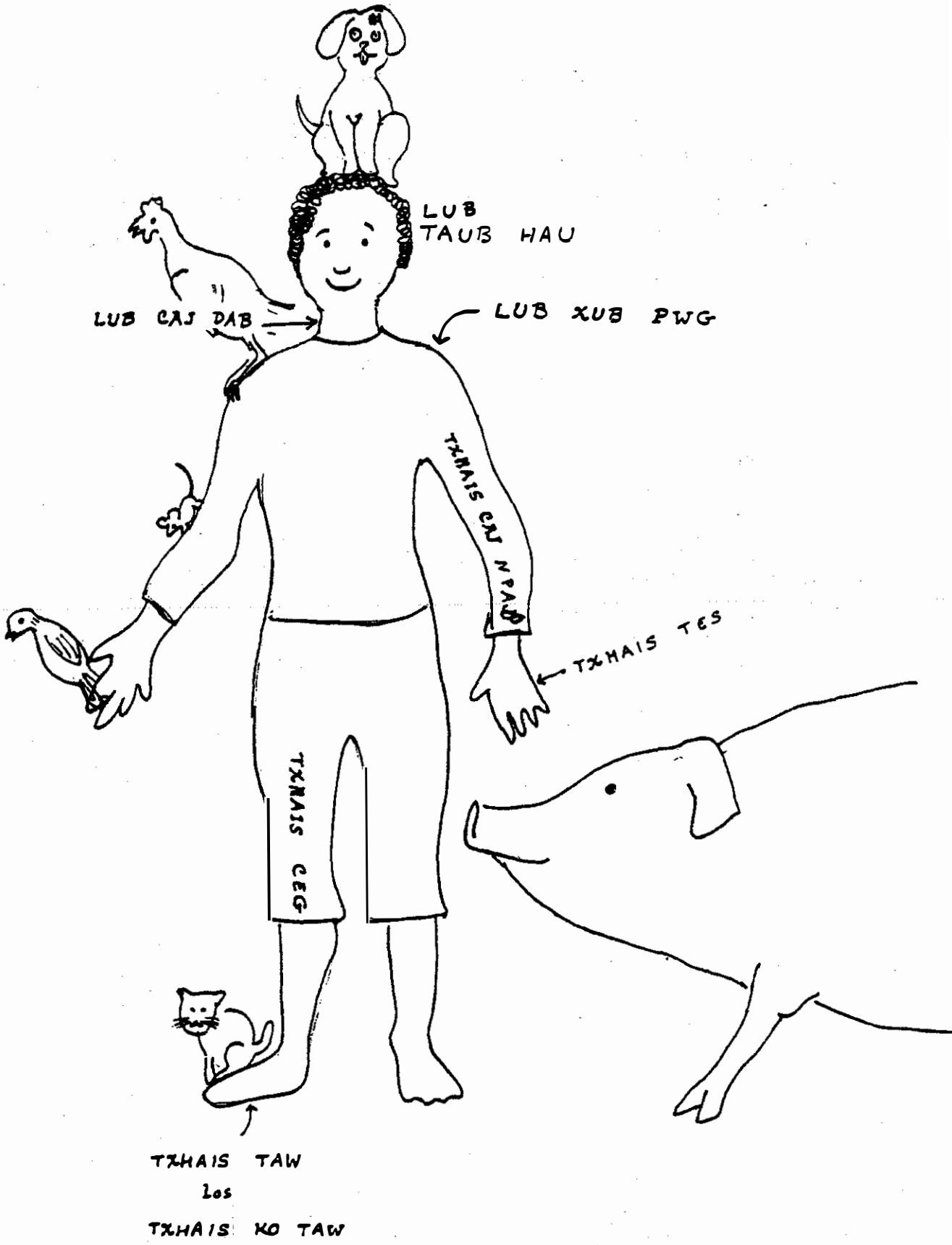
6. Tus dais dawb mob, puas yog?

7. Npis xav tias tus dais dawb mob, puas yog?

8. Npis txiv hais tias tus dais dawb tsis mob, puas yog?

9. Npis niam hais dab tsi?
   a. kuv tsis mob
   b. tus dais dawb tsis mob
   c. tsis txhob noj mov

10. Vim li cas Npis nyiam mus tom vaj tsiaj?
    a. nws nyiam noj cov tsiaj
    b. nws nyiam saib cov tsiaj
    c. nws nyiam nrog cov tsiaj hais lus Askiv



NPIS

THIAB NWS COV PHOOJ YWG

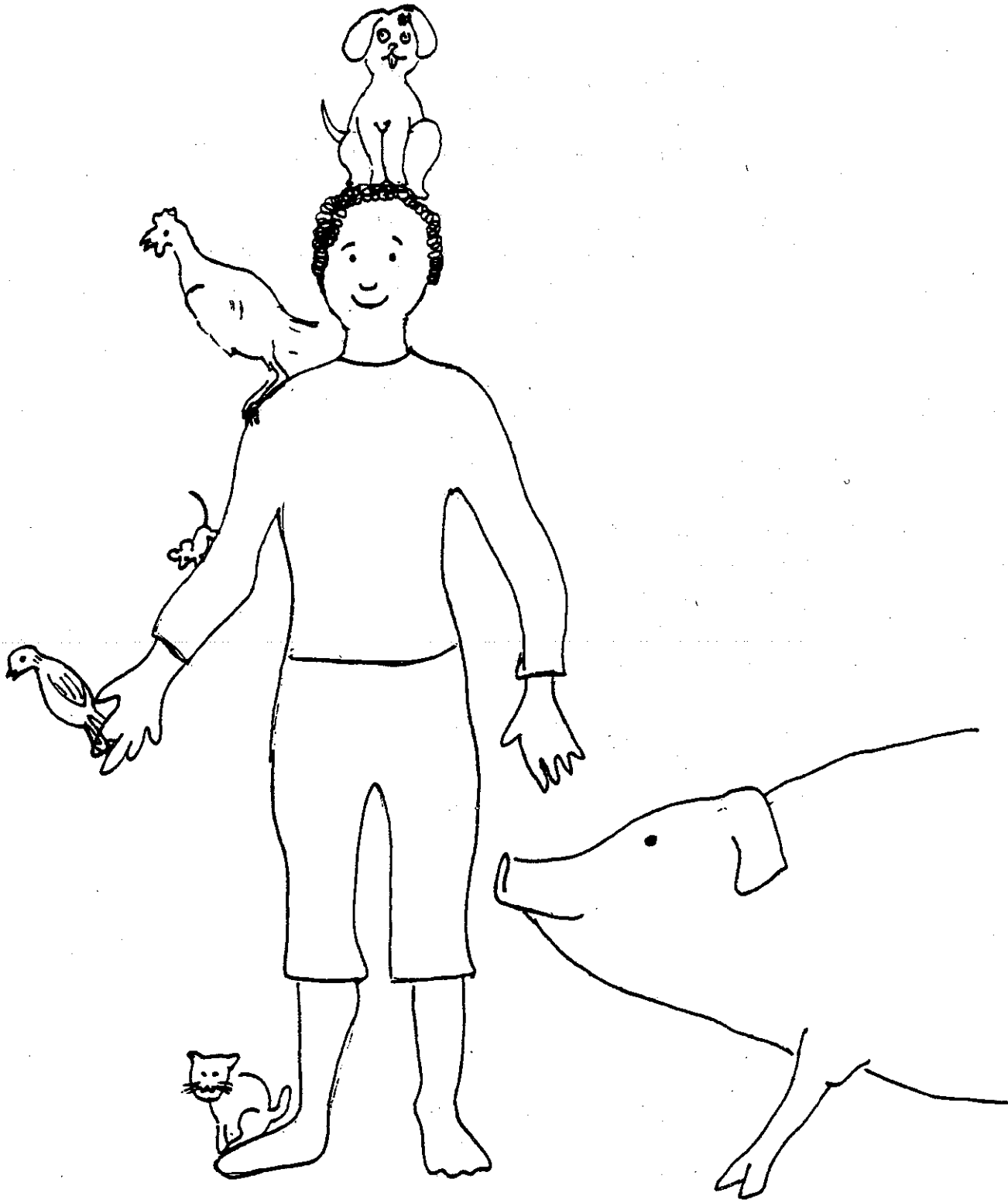
NPIS THIAB NWS COV PHOOJ YWG

Npis muaj phooj ywg ntau ntau. Koj saib daim duab. Koj thiaj li paub Npis cov phooj ywg zoo li cas.

Ib tug phooj ywg yog ib tug me nyuam dev. Tus me nyuam dev nyiam nyiam zaum saum Npis lub taub hau. Muaj ib hnub tus me nyuam dev poob. Nws poob mus rau saum tus npua lub taub hau. Tus npua tu siab. Nws hais rau tus me nyuam dev hais tias: "Ua cas koj yuav ruam ua luaj!"

Teeb Meem:

1. Npis muaj pes tsawg tus phooj ywg?
2. Ib tug phooj ywg yog ib tug nyuj, puas yog?
3. Ib tug phooj ywg loj. Yog leej twg?
   a. tus nas
   b. tus npua
   c. tus me nyuam miv
4. Tus me nyuam dev nyiam nyob qhov twg?
   a. Nws nyiam nyob hauv lub tsev dev.
   b. Nws nyiam nyob saum Npis lub xub pwg.
   c. Nws nyiam nyob saum Npis lub taub hau.
5. Npis lub taub hau tuaj ob tug kub, puas yog?
6. Tus me nyuam dev poob mus qhov twg?
   a. saum Npis ob txhais ko taw
   b. saum tus qaib lub taub hau
   c. saum tus npua lub taub hau
7. Vim li cas tus npua tu siab?
   a. Nws tshaib plab.
   b. Tus me nyuam dev poob rau saum npua lub taub hau.
   c. Tus me nyuam miv tom npua ko taw ua si.
8. Koj xav tias tus me nyuam dev ntse los ruam?
9. Tus npua hais li cas rau tus me nyuam dev?
   a. "Leej Muad, kuv txom txom nyem li es!"
   b. "Yog li ces tsis cheem koj!"
   c. "Ua cas koj ruam ua luaj!"
10. Npis xav noj qe. Nws thov ib tug phooj ywg muab pub rau nws. Koj xav tias nws thov leej twg?
   a. tus nas los tus me nyuam miv
   b. tus npua los tus me nyuam dev
   c. tus qaib los tus noog



NPIS

THIAB NWS COV PHOOJ YWG

SAIB DAIM DUAB:
NPIS THIAB NWS COV PHOOJ YWG

1. Npis muaj pes tsawg lub taub hau?

2. Npis muaj pes tsawg lub caj dab?

3. Npis muaj pes tsawg txhais caj npab?

4. Npis muaj pes tsawg txhais tes?

5. Npis muaj pes tsawg txhais ceg?

6. Npis muaj pes tsawg txhais taw?

7. Muaj yam tsiaj dab tsi nyob saum Npis lub taub hau?

8. Muaj yam tsiaj dab tsi nyob saum Npis ib txhais caj npab?

9. Muaj yam tsiaj dab tsi nyob saum Npis ib txhais tes?

10. Muaj yam tsiaj dab tsi nyob ze ntawm Npis ib txhais ceg?

11. Muaj yam tsiaj dab tsi nyob saum Npis ib txhais taw?

12. Koj puas xav tias Npis nyiam tsiaj?

13. Koj puas xav tias tsiaj nyiam Npis?

14. Npis puas muaj tsiaj nyob saum nws lub caj dab?

15. Npis puas muaj tsiaj nyob saum nws lub xub pwg?

KUV LUB TSHEB

Kuv lub tsheb lub npe hu ua Nplias. Nws yog ib lub tsheb vaub kib. Nws yog xim daj. Kuv hlub kuv lub tsheb. Tej zaug nws tshaib plab. Kuv thiaj li pub roj rau nws noj. Nws tsis nyiam noj mov, zaub, thiab nqaij.

Kuv thiab kuv lub tsheb tsis zoo ib yam. Kuv tsis nyiam noj roj. Kuv nyiam noj mov, zaub, thiab nqaij zoo.

Teeb Meem:

1. Kuv thiab kuv lub tsheb nyiam noj ib yam, puas yog?

2. Kuv lub tsheb loj loj, puas yog?

3. Kuv lub tsheb xim zoo li cas?

4. Koj puas nyiam noj tsheb?

5. Koj nyiam noj dab tsi?

TUS ME NYUAM DEV TOM NPIS KO TAW

Muaj ib hnub, Npis mus xyuas nws ib tug phooj ywg. Tus phooj ywg lub npe hu ua Nplias. Nplias muaj ib tug me nyuam dev me me. Nws lub npe hu ua Dub rau qhov nws cov plaub xim dub dub.

Dub nyiam tom neeg ko taw ua si. Thaum Npis tuaj xyuas Nplias, Dub tom Npis ko taw. Npis tsis nyiam li. Tiam sis nws tsis ua dab tsi vim Nplias yog nws tus phooj ywg.

Teeb Meem:

1. Npis mus dab tsi?
    a. xyuas ib tug phooj ywg
    b. yuav khoom tom khw
    c. pab nws niam ua hauj lwm
2. Npis tus phooj ywg hu li cas?
    a. Hu ua Npis.
    b. Hu ua Nplias.
    c. Hu ua Dub.
3. Npis tus phooj ywg tus dev lub npe hu li cas?
    a. Hu ua Npis.
    b. Hu ua Nplias.
    c. Hu ua Dub.
4. Vim li cas tus me nyuam dev no lub npe hu ua Dub?
    a. Nws nyiam saib cua daj cua dub.
    b. Nws ob lub qhov muag xim dub dub.
    c. Nws cov plaub xim dub dub.
5. Dub loj loj, puas yog?
6. Npis ntshai Dub vim Npis me dua Dub, puas yog?
7. Dub nyiam nyiam ua dab tsi?
    a. tom neeg lub taub hau
    b. tom neeg ko taw
    c. tom neeg tuag
8. Npis ntaus tus me nyuam dev, puas yog?
9. Vim li cas Npis tsis ntaus tus me nyuam dev?
    a. Nws nyiam tus me nyuam dev.
    b. Nws nyiam Nplias.
    c. Nws nkees nkees li.
10. Vim li cas tus me nyuam dev tom Npis ko taw?
    a. Nws lam ua si xwb.
    b. Nws tshaib plab.
    c. Nws tsis nyiam Npis li.
11. Thaum tus me nyuam dev tom nws ko taw, Npis puas tu siab?

TUS TSOV LOS XYUAS

Muajib hnub, ib tug tsov tuaj hauv kuv lub tsev. Tus tsov hais tias, "Kuv yuav noj koj." Tiam sis kuv teb tias, "Koj noj kuv tsis tau. Kuv twb noj koj lawm."

Tus tsov mam li quaj quaj. Kuv thiaj li hlub hlub nws. Kuv los npaj nqaij qaib pub nws noj.

Teeb Meem:

1. Tus tsov puas tau noj kuv?

2. Kuv _____ tus tsov.
   a. ntaus
   b. yuav
   c. hlub

3. Tus tsov yuav noj:
   a. kuv cov me nyuam
   b. nqaij qaib
   c. zaub xav lav

4. Tus tsov no muaj tswv yim, puas yog?

5. Thaum kuv hais rau tus tsov kuv dag, puas yog?

TXIV NRAUG NTSUAG THIAB COV UAS KAWM HAIS LUS HMOOB

Thaum ub, Txiv Nraug Ntsuag txom txom nyem. Tsis muaj niam tsis muaj txiv. Tsis muaj liaj tsis muaj tsev. Tsis muaj me nyuam dev nrog nws ua si.

Muaj ib hnub, tuaj ib tug poj niam zoo zoo nkauj. Tus poj niam hais rau Txiv Nraug Ntsuag hais tias, "Nyob zoo. Kuv tuaj kawm hais lus Hmoob. Koj puas kam qhia kuv?"

Txiv Nraug Ntsuag hais tias, "Leej Muad! Kuv txom txom nyem es. Koj lam hais xwb. Kuv qhia koj tsis tau."

Tam sim no, tuaj ib tug txiv neej zoo nraug. Tus txiv neej hais rau Txiv Nraug Ntsuag hais tias, "Nyob zoo. Kuv tuaj kawm hais lus Hmoob. Koj puas kam qhia kuv thiab?"

Txiv Nraug Ntsuag tsis teb. Tiam sis Huab Tais Qaum Ntuj hlub hlub ob leeg no uas xav kawm hais lus Hmoob. Nws tso nws tus ntxhais thiab nws tus tub los qhia. Txiv Nraug Ntsuag pab thiab nws sau duab zoo heev.

Teeb Meem:

1. Muaj pes tsawg leej xav kawm hais lus Hmoob?
2. Muaj ob tug poj niam kawm hais lus Hmoob, puas yog?
3. Vim li cas Txiv Nraug Ntsuag tsis xav ua nais khus?
    a. Nws nkees nkees li.
    b. Nws txom txom nyem.
    c. Nws hais lus Hmoob tsis tau.
4. Txiv Nraug Ntsuag muaj ib tug dev xwb, puas yog?
5. Txiv Nraug Ntsuag ua tsis tau dab tsi li, puas yog?
6. Leej twg tso cov nais khus los?
    a. Huab Tais Qaum Ntuj
    b. Txiv Nraug Ntsuag
    c. Huab tais Fab kis teb
7. Tam sim no, Fab kis teb puas muaj Huab tais?
8. Vim li cas Huab Tais Qaum Ntuj tso nais khus los?
    a. Nws xav tau nyiaj.
    b. Nws chim rau cov nais khus.
    c. Nws hlub cov uas xav kawm hais lus Hmoob.
9. Cov nais khus yog leej twg?
    a. Huab tais cov tub mab tub qhe
    b. Huab tais cov me nyuam
    c. Huab tais cov qaib thiab os
10. Txiv Nraug Ntsuag pab cov nais khus ua dab tsi?
    a. sau duab
    b. ntxuav qhov rais
    c. npaj zaub noj

Title:
Hmong For Beginners Part 4

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Annie Jaiser et al.

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Abstract:
"Hmong For Beginners" was written by Annie Jaisser and her co-authors (Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle, David Strecker, Lopao Vang and Lyfu Vang) from materials they developed in the 1980s when Hmong was first being introduced as a language of instruction for the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI). The book was published by the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at UC Berleley in 1995 and is now out of print. This electronic version is intended to make the materials available to those interested in the Hmong language but with limited access to print materials about the language.

READING UNITS

IB TSAB NTAWV

Hnub tim 23 lub 6 hli, 1989

Nco txog Kaub,

Koj puas nyob zoo? Kuv txais tau koj tsab ntawv lawm. Kuv zoo siab thiab ua koj tsaug. Kuv tsev neeg peb sawv daws puav leej noj qab nyob zoo. Kuv nco txog koj thiab koj poj niam me nyuam huv tib si.

Sib ntsib dua,

Npis

WB MUS PEM CHICAGO

Tus sau: Elizabeth Riddle

Hnub vas xaum, kuv nrog kuv tus txiv mus pem Chicago. Wb mus noj mov ntawm lub tsev noj mov Nyab Laj. Wb noj nqaij npuas, mov, thiab kab yob ua hmo. Wb muab kaus taum, zaub xav lav, pum hub, dib, thiab zaub txhwb qhwv rau hauv daim ntawv kab yob noj. Wb haus dej. Ces wb noj txiv tsawb qab zib, tiam sis wb tsis haus kasfes vim tsis nyiam. Zaub mov Nyab Laj qab heev thiab tsis kim. Kuv xav rov qab mus pem lub tsev noj mov Nyab Laj no dua.

NTXHUA KHAUB NCAWS

Tus sau: Elizabeth Riddle

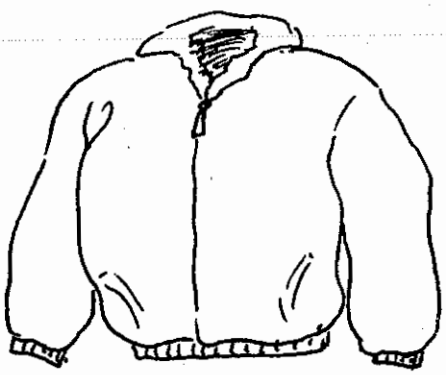
Tsev neeg no muaj tsib leeg. Muaj leej txiv, leej niam, thiab peb tug me nyuam. Lawv txiv mus tom khw lawm, tiam sis lawv niam tab tom ntxhua khaub ncaws. Ob tug me nyuam hlob tab tom pab nkawd niam ziab khaub ncaws. Tus me nyuam yau tab tom nrog nws tus dev ua si. Nws lom zem kawg.

MUAS KHAUB NCAWS

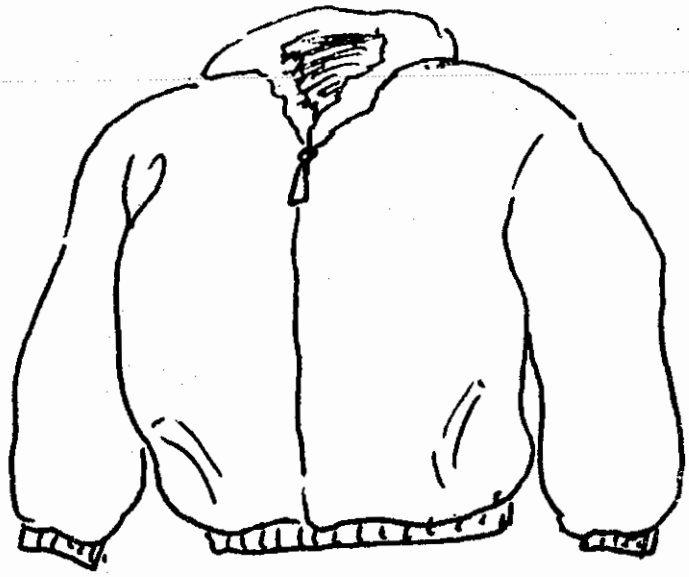
Tus sau: Elizabeth Riddle

Niam xav muas tsho tiv no rau nws cov me nyuam. Nws xav yuav ib lub me thiab ib lub loj.

Cov me nyuam nyiam tsho tiv no xiav. Niam xav muas cov tsho tiv no uas luv nqi lawm.



ib lub tsho tiv no me



ib lub tsho tiv no loj

KUV TSEV NEEG

Tus sau: Elizabeth Riddle

Kuv niam txiv muaj yim tus me nyuam. Nkawd muaj plaub tug tub thiab plaub tug ntxhais. Cov ntxhais yog cov hlob, cov tub yog cov yau. Kuv yog tus hlob. Kuv thiaj li muaj peb tug niam hluas thiab plaub tug nus yau.

Thaum peb tseem yau, peb nyob ua ke hauv ib lub tsev loj loj nyob hauv lub xeev Connecticut. Tam sim no, peb tsis nyob ua ke lawm. Kuv niam txiv nyob nram lub xeev Florida. Kuv ib tug niam hluas thiab nws tus txiv nyob nram Florida thiab. Nkawd muaj ib tug ntxhais. Nws muaj ob xyoos. Nws lub npe hu ua Nicole.

Kuv ib tug niam hluas thiab nws tus txiv nyob hauv lub xeev North Carolina ze ntuj hiav txwv. Nkawd muaj ib tug tub hu ua Christopher. Nws muaj plaub xyoos.

Kuv ib tug niam hluas thiab ob tug nus tseem nyob hauv Connecticut, tiam sis lawv tsis nyob ua ib zos. Tus niam hluas nyob hauv Hartford. Nws tsis tau yuav txiv. Ib tug nus nyob hauv lub zos hu ua Orange. Nws muaj poj niam thiab ib tug tub hu ua Justin. Justin muaj yim xyoo. Kuv ib tug nus uas nyob hauv Connecticut tsis tau muaj poj niam, tiam sis lwm xyoo nws yuav yuav poj niam.

Kuv ob tug nus nyob hauv lub zos New York, nkawd tsis tau muaj poj niam thiab. Ib tug ua hauj lwm lawm tiam sis ib tug tseem kawm ntawv xwb. Lub rau hli ntuj thiab lub xya hli ntuj nkawd mus nram Central America. Nkawd mus ncig xyuas teb chaws thiab mus kawm hais lus Spanish.

Kuv thiab kuv tus txiv nyob hauv Indiana. Ib xyoos wb mus xyuas kuv niam txiv ob peb zaug nram Florida. Tej zaum nkawd tuaj xyuas wb pem Indiana thiab. Tej zaum wb mus tim Connecticut, tim New York thiab nram North Carolina mus xyuas kuv cov niam hluas thiab kuv cov nus.

Teeb Meem:

1. Tus sau yog tus ntxhais yau, puas yog?

2. Tus sau, nws txiv thiab nws niam muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam?

3. Thaum tus sau yog me nyuam hluas nws tsev neeg nyob qhov twg?

4. Tam sim no, nws txiv thiab nws niam nyob ze xeev Indiana, puas yog?

5. Tus sau cov niam hluas nyob qhov twg?

6. Tus sau nyob qhov twg?

7. Cov nus uas nyob hauv New York tab tom ua dab tsi?

8. Koj puas xav tias tus sau nyiam mus xyuas nws tsev neeg?

9. Draw the author's family tree and label it with the appropriate kinship terms.

UA NCUAV

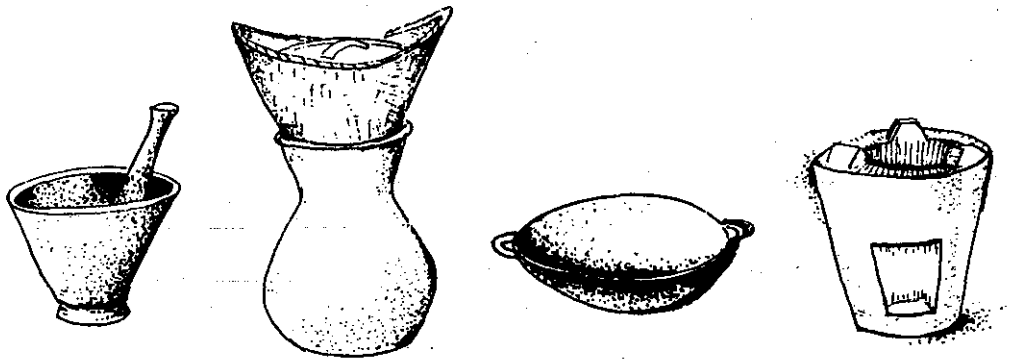
Hmoob kev ua ncuav kuj yog ua li no. Thaum yus cub mov siav lawm ces yus tsaws lub tsu coj los hliv cov mov rau hauv lub dab ncuav ces yus mam li muab rab dauj los tuav. Yus yuav tsum tuav kom cov mov mos mos thiaj li zoo coj los puab ua ncuav.

Ua ntej ntawm yus yuav muab cov ncuav no coj los tu thiab puab ua tej lub me me, yus yuav tsum muab nkaub qes daj coj los pleev tes thiab pleev lub vab rau ncuav. Yus yuav tsum muab nplooj tsawb coj los ntshi ua tej daim me me kom zoo cia qhwv ncuav thiab.

Thaum ntawd, yus mam li rub cov ncuav tawm hauv lub dab ncuav los rau hauv lub vab. Yus mam li muab cov ncuav tu ua tej thooj me me coj los qhwv rau hauv cov nplooj tsawb. Thaum qhwv tau cov ncuav lawm, yus mam li muab coj los ci noj.

Lo lus nyuaj:

(lub) tsu	'rice steamer'
tuav	'to pound'
puab	'to flatten'
pleev	'to smear'
ntshi	'to tear'
rub	'to pull'
tu	'to break, to twist off'
ci	'to roast/to toast (over or beside fire)'



UA PAJ NTAUB

Cov poj niam npaj zam tseg rau hnub noj peb caug. Cov poj niam rau rau siab ua paj ntaub thiab xaws khaub ncaws. Thaum txog peb caug lawm sawv daws thiaj tau hnav tshiab.

Cov poj niam tuav txhuv, tsoov txhuv, ris dej, tuav ncuav coj los ci rau sawv daws noj thiab ua lwm yam hauj lwm.

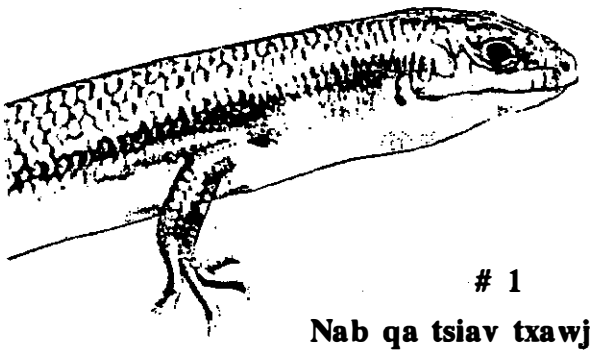
Lo lus nyuaj:

zam 'to dress up in fancy, colorful clothing'
tseg 'to set aside'
noj peb caug literally, to eat the thirtieth—i.e., 'to eat the New Year feast' (the New Year celebration is traditionally held on the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month, hence the use of *peb caug* to refer to it).
tuav 'to pound'
tsoov 'to winnow'
ci 'to toast'

1. Leej twg npaj zam?

2. Cov poj niam ua hauj lwm dab tsi?

3. Thaum txog peb caug lawm sawv daws thiaj yuav tau hnav dab tsi?



DAB NEEG NAB QA TSIAV

Tus sau: Lisfwm Vaj

1
Nab qa tsiav txawj khiav

Tus xib fwb qhib nws lub rooj sau ntawv. Ib tug nab qa tsiav khiav tawm los. Cov tub ntxhais kawm ntawv luag luag. *Maiv Tooj* luag thiab hnoos. *Tub Riam* khob khob nws lub rooj sau ntawv. *Tub Sawm* sawv mus ntes tus nab qa tsiav tab sis tus nab qa tsiav khiav tawm tim lub qhov rooj mus lawm. *Tub Sawm* thiaj li rov qab los zaum.

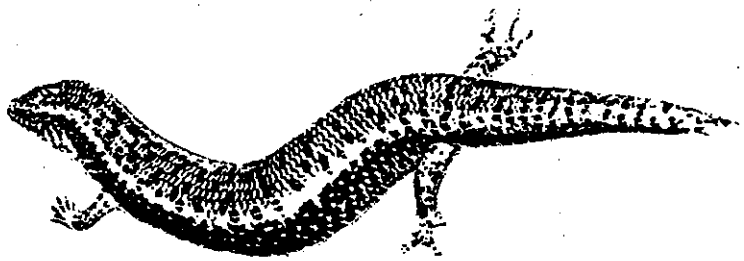
2
Tus xib fwb yug nab qa tsiav

Tus xib fwb lub npe hu ua *Yawg Laum* yug ib tug nab qa tsiav. Nws tus nab qa tsiav nkag nkag nyob saum nws lub rooj sau ntawv. Nws tus nab qa tsiav ua rau tus ntxhais kawm ntawv lub npe hu ua *Maiv Tooj* luag luag. *Maiv Tooj* luag luag ua rau tus tub kawm ntawv lub npe hu ua *Tub Riam* luag thiab hnoos. *Tub Riam* thiaj mus sawv ntsug tim lub qhov rais.

3
Tus xib fwb tsaug zog

Ib tug nab qa tsiav nkag tawm tim lub qhov rooj los. Nws maj mam nkag los nres ze ze ntawm *Maiv Tooj* lub rooj zaum. *Maiv Tooj* thiaj taw taw tes rau tus nab qa tsiav, tus nab qa tsiav thiaj li khiav tawm tim lub qhov rooj rov qab mus lawm.

Tub Sawm pom *Maiv Tooj* ua li ntawd, *Tub Sawm* thiaj li luag luag. *Tub Riam* tsis paub dab tsi, *Tub Riam* thiaj li tsis zoo siab. *Tub Riam* thiaj li khob nws lub rooj sau ntawv. Nws thiaj li ua rau tus xib fwb tsaug tsaug zog tsim dheev. Tus xib fwb tsis paub dab tsi. Tus xib fwb thiaj li sawv mus qhib lub qhov rooj thiab hais tias: "Nkag los!"

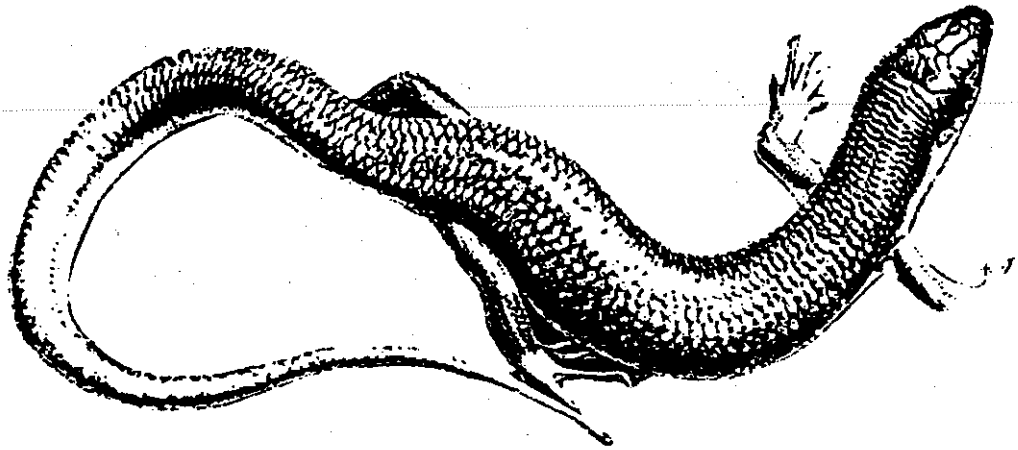


4
Ntshai nab qa tsiav

Tub Riam yuav zaum. *Tub Sawm* ho yuav sawv. *Maiv Tooj* ho yuav nce mus saum nws lub rooj zaum. Cov tub ntxhais kawm ntawv ua li no vim yog muaj ib tug nab qa tsiav khiav los ze ze ntawm lawv cov rooj zaum.

Tus xib fwb thiaj hais kom *Maiv Tooj* mus qhib lub qhov rooj. *Maiv Tooj* ho taw taw tes thiab qw qw kom *Tub Riam* mus qhib lub qhov rooj. *Tub Riam* ho tig mus hais kom *Tub Sawm* mus qhib lub qhov rooj.

Thaum lawv sib qw sib qw, tus nab qa tsiav khiav tawm tim lub qhov rais mus lawm.



TUS TSOV THIAB TUS QAV

Tus sau: Lauj Pov Vaj

Puag thaum ub, muaj ib tug Qav thiab ib tug Tsov nkawd los sib ntsib. Tus Tsov tshaib tshaib plab li. Tus Tsov thiaj hais rau tus Qav tias, "Qav, wb sib twv dhia. Yog koj dhia yeej kuv no ces cia li, ho yog koj dhia tsis yeej kuv no ces kuv noj koj." Tus Qav xav xav ib pliag, tus Qav xav tau tswv yim ces nws thiaj li hais tias, "Ua li los ua li." Nkawd mus txog ntawm ib tug cav loj loj nyob tav kev ces tus Tsov txawm hais tias, "Qav, wb sib twv dhia hla tus cav no saib leej twg dhia tau deb dua." Tus Qav ntsia ntsia tus cav tas ces tus Qav thiaj li hais tias, "Tsov, ua li koj hais; koj dhia ua ntej." Lub caij no, tus Tsov xav xav noj tus Qav kawg li; ces tus Tsov thiaj li hais tias, "Ua li ntawd los tau." Thaum tus Tsov tab tom yuav dhia, tus Qav txawm tuav kiag tus Tsov tus tw. Tus Tsov ib plhaw hla plaws tus cav rau sab tod. Thaum tus Tsov dhia ntawd, tus Tsov tus tw ib xyob* tus Qav dhau plaws tus Tsov rau pem hauv ntej lawm. Thaum tus Tsov dhia mus txog sab nraud, tus Tsov thiaj li hais tias, "Qav, koj ho dhia tuaj las." Tus Qav teb tom tus Tsov hauv ntej tuaj tias, "Kuv nyob tom no os." Tus Tsov xav xav, tus Tsov tsis paub yog vim li cas tus Qav thiaj li dhia tau deb dua tus Tsov lawm. Tus Tsov tsis ntseeg tus Qav ntawd li; tus Tsov thiaj li hais dua tias, "Koj muaj zog diam,† wb rov qab dhia dua rau sab tod soj." Tus Qav rov qab teb dua tias, "Ua li los tau." Thaum tus Tsov tab tom yuav dhia, tus Qav rov qab tuav dua tus Tsov tus tw kiag. Tus Tsov ib plhaw hla plaws tus cav rau sab tod. Tus Tsov tus tw tib xyob tus Qav dhau plaws tus Tsov rau pem hauv ntej lawm. Thaum tus Tsov dhia mus txog sab nraud lawm, tus Tsov hais tias, "Qav, koj nyob qhov twg? Koj puas tau dhia tuaj?" Tus Qav teb pem

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* 'Push in flight.'

† *Diam* is an intensifier which adds emphasis to the verb phrase "You are so strong."

hauv ntej tuaj tias, "Kuv nyob pem no os." Lub caij no tus Tsov muaj ntsis npau taws* lawm vim tias nws dhia tsis yeej tus Qav li. Tus Tsov hais dua chim tsawv rau tus Qav tias, "Qav, koj muaj zog ua luaj, wb rov qab dhia dua ib zaug† saib leej twg yeej." Tus Qav teb dua tias, "Koj xav dhia dua los tau, tsis ua li cas." Zaum no tus Tsov sib sib zog dhia kom tus Qav dhia tsis yeej kiag, tab sis tus Qav rov qab tuav dua tus Tsov tus tw. Tus Tsov tib plhaw hla plaws tus cav, tus Tsov tus tw tib xyob tus Qav ya plaws mus tsoo** tsob ntoo loj loj ces ntshav tawm tawm hauv tus Qav lub qhov ncauj los. Tus Tsov hais dua tias, "Qav, koj nyob qhov twg?" Tus Qav mob mob nws twb yuav tuag, tab sis nws tseem hais taus lus thiab. Nws thiaj teb tus Tsov tias, "Kuv nyob pem no os." Thaum no tus Tsov chim heev heev lawm, tus Tsov thiaj li los hais rau tus Qav tias, "Kuv tshaib tshaib plab li kuv yuav noj koj." Tus Qav tsis paub yuav ua li cas li. Tus Qav txawm hais tias, "Koj yuav noj kuv! Kuv twb tho koj lub siab noj tas lawm las as. Koj sim saib seb kuv lub qhov ncauj twb lo lo†† ntshav tiag." Tus Tsov los saib tus Qav lub qhov ncauj ua ciav lo lo ntshav tiag. Lub caij no tus Tsov ntshai tus Qav heev heev li, tus Tsov thiaj li khiav thiab dhia siab tshaj qab nthab mus ploj ntais tom hav zoov lawm vim tias nws tsis xav kom tus Qav rov qab noj dua nws ntxiv lawm. Tus Qav sab heev, ces nws txawm pw hauv tsob qab ntoos. Nws pw ib chim nws mam li sawv los. Nws mloog nws lub cev ntxim li cov pob txha tsis lov, ces nws mam li maj mam dhia taug kev lawm.

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* 'Angry.'
† *Ib zaug* = 'one time, once.'
** 'Collision.'
†† 'To stick.'

MEDICAL HISTORY FORM*

Tus neeg txhais lus: Martin Platt

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

a. Koj tuaj ntawm Refugee Clinic no (kem tsev kho mob no) thawj zaug yog thaum twg?
'When did you first come to the Refugee Clinic?'

b. Koj yug thaum twg?
'When were you born?'

c. Koj tuaj teb chaws twg tuaj?
'What country are you from?'

d. Koj puas txawj hais lwm yam lus?
'Do you speak other languages?'
Lus dab tsi?
'What language(s)?'

e. Koj tuaj txog Asmesliskas Teb thaum twg?
'When did you come to the United States?'

f. Koj puas tau mus tim lub tsev kho mob kuam plaub theem (txij thaum uas koj tuaj txog Seattle no)?
'Did you go to the Seattle Refugee Screening Clinic at Pacific Medical Center (when you first arrived in Seattle)?

g. Lawv puas tau muab ib tug naj npawb kho mob rau koj?
'Did they give you a patient number/case number?'
Naj npawb dab tsi?
'What number?'

2. PAST MEDICAL HISTORY (= *Kab mob kev nkeeg yav tag los*)

a. TB (= *mob ntsws*)
Koj puas tau hno tsuaj sim kev mob ntsws los dua?
'Have you ever had a TB skin test?'

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* This is a translation of a medical history form used at a Seattle refugee clinic. The translator (*tus neeg txhais lus*), Martin Platt, studied Hmong at SEASSI in 1988 and 1989. This translation was his 1989 class project.

Thaum twg?
'When?'
Lawv hais tias koj mob los tsis mob?
'Was it positive or negative?' (Literally, 'Did they say you were sick or not?')
Koj puas tau siv tshuaj mob ntsws los dua?
'Have you ever taken medicine for TB?'
Tshuaj dab tsi? Zoo li cas/yam twg?
'What medicine? What kind?'
Koj puas tau thaij (yees) daim duab es-xam-les (X-ray) ntawm lub hauv siab los dua?
'Have you ever had a chest X-ray taken?'
Tus kws kho mob hais li cas txog daim duab ntawd?
'What did the doctor say about it?'
*Thasmadas los tsis thasmadas?**
'Normal or abnormal?'

b. Ob-Gyn

Koj muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam?
'How many children do you have?'
Koj tau xeeb tub pes tsawg zaus lawm?
'How many times have you been pregnant?'
Koj puas tau rho me nyuam dua?
'Have you ever had an abortion?'
Koj puas siv khoom ua kom tsis txhob xeeb tub/muaj me nyuam?
'Do you use contraceptives?'
Khoom dab tsi/yam twg?
'What kind?'
Koj puas tau mus tom kem tsev kho mob rau cov poj niam los dua?
'Have you ever been to the women's clinic?'

c. Smoking

Koj puas haus luam yeeb?
'Do you smoke cigarettes?'
Ib hnub koj haus pes tsawg pob?
'How many packs per day?'
Koj haus luam yeeb tau pes tsawg xyoo lawm?
'How many years have you been smoking?'

---

* *Thasmadas* is a loanword from Lao (and Thai).

d. Alcohol

Koj puas haus cawv?

'Do you drink alcohol?'

Ib hnub los tias ib lub lim piam (as thiv) koj haus npaum li cas?

'How much do you drink in one day or one week?'

e. Allergies

Puas muaj tej yam tshuaj los tias tej yam mov zaub uas tsis haum koj?

'Are there any medications or foods to which you are allergic?'

Yog dab tsi?

'What are they?'

f. Medications

Niaj hnub no koj puas siv yam tshuaj dab tsi?

'Are you currently using any medications?'

g. Surgeries (= *Kev phais*)

Koj puas tau raug phais los dua?

'Have you ever had surgery?'

Thaum twg?

'When?'

Nyob qhov twg?

'Where?'

Phais dab tsi?

'What kind of operation?'

Koj puas tau mus pw kho mob hauv cov tsev kho mob los dua?

'Have you ever been hospitalized?'

Thaum ntawd koj pw ntev li cas (pes tsawg hmo)?

'How long did you stay? (How many nights?)'

Thaum twg?

'When?'

Qhov twg?

'Where?'

Vim li cas? (mob dab tsi?)

'Why? (For what illness?)'

h. Other conditions/Other medical care

Koj puas tau mus lwm lub tsev kho mob thiab?

'Have you gone to other hospitals?'

Thaum twg?

'When?'

Qhov twg?

'Where?'

Vim li cas? (mob dab tsi?)

'Why? (For what illness?)'

3. FAMILY HISTORY

a. *Koj niam nyob qhov twg?*

'Where does your mother live?'

b. *Koj txiv ne?*

'What about your father?'

c. *Koj cov kwv tij uas nyob hauv ib tse neeg nyob qhov twg?*

'Where do your siblings live?'

d. *Koj cov me nyuam nyob qhov twg?*

'Where do your children live?'

Koj muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam tub?

'How many sons do you have?'

Nws/nkawd/lawv muaj pes tsawg xyoo lawm?

'How old is he/are they?'

Koj muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam ntxhais?

'How many daughters do you have?'

Nws/nkawd/lawv muaj pes tsawg xyoo lawm?

'How old is she/are they?'

4. SOCIAL HISTORY

a. *Thaum ub koj ua hauj lwm dab tsi nyob tim Teb Chaws Los Tsuas ... ua ntej kev tsov rog?*

'What work did you do in Laos ... before the war?'

... tom qab kev tsov rog?

'... after the war?'

b. *Lub caij no koj ua hauj lwm dab tsi?*

'What work do you do now?'

5. CHIEF COMPLAINTS

Koj mob qhov twg?
'What's the matter?' (Literally, 'Where does it hurt?')
Dab tsi ntxiv?
'What else?'

6. CONSTITUTIONAL

Koj noj mov puas qab?
'How is your appetite?'
Koj puas niaj hnub sem nqaij/yuag zuj zus?
'Are you losing weight?'
Koj puas tsaug zog zoo?
'Do you sleep well?'
Koj puas kub ib ce los tias ua npaws tshee tshee?
'Do you have a fever or chills?'
Koj puas tawm hws (thaum tsaus ntuj los lwm lub sij hawm)?
'Do you sweat? (at night or at other times?)'

7. SKIN

Koj puas muaj mob dab tsi ntawm koj tej tawv nqaij?
'Do you have any skin problems?'

8. HEENT

Koj puas mob taub hau?
'Do you have headaches?'
Koj puas pom kev tseeb?
'Do you see clearly?'
Koj puas hnov lus zoo?
'Do you hear well?'
Koj puas mob caj dab los mob xub qwb?
'Do you have any neck pains?'
Koj puas mob pob ntseg?
'Do you have problems with your ears?'
Koj puas mob ntawm qhov ncauj los hauv lub qab?
'Do you have any problems with your mouth or throat?'
Koj puas mob ntawm qhov ntswg?
'Do you have any problems with your nose?'

9. RESPIRATORY

Koj puas hnoos heev heev?
'Do you cough a lot?'
Thaum koj hnoos, koj puas hnoos los ntshav?
'Do you cough up blood?'
Koj puas txog txog siav ... thaum koj ua hauj lwm?
'Do you have shortness of breath ... when you do work?
... thaum koj tsis ua dab tsi?
'... when you're not doing anything?'
Koj puas mob hauv siab thaum koj ua pa?
'Do you have chest pains when you breathe?'

10. CARDIAC

Koj puas mob hauv siab ... thaum koj ua hauj lwm?
'Do you have chest pains ... when you do work?
...thaum koj tsis ua dab tsi?
'... when you're not doing anything?'
Koj puas nphob vog/Koj puas o tes o taw?
'Do you have edema / Do you have swollen hands and feet?'
Koj lub plawv puas dhia heev heev?
'Do you have palpitations?'

11. GI

Koj puas mob plab mog?
'Do you have abdominal pain?'
Koj puas xeev siab?
'Do you have nausea?'
Koj puas ntuav?
'Do you vomit?'
Koj puas zawv plab?
'Do you have diarrhea?'
Koj puas kem quav?
'Are you constipated?'
Koj tso quav puas los ntshav?
'Is there blood in your stool?'
Koj puas daj ntseg?
'Do you have jaundice?'

12. GU

Koj puas mob dab tsi thaum koj tso zis?
'Do you have any pain while urinating?'
Txhua txhua hnub, koj puas tso zis ntau ntau zaum?
'Do you urinate very (too) frequently?'
Koj tso zis puas los ntshav?
'Is there blood in your urine?'
Koj puas mob raum?
'Do you have kidney trouble?'
Koj puas tau ua rwj ntawm qhov chaws mos los dua?
'Have you ever had genital ulcers?'
Koj puas tau mob kas cees/mob yees/mob uav?
'Have you ever had any venereal diseases?'
Koj ua dab tsi rau, cov kab mob kas cees ntawd thiaj zooo lawm/thiaj khees lawm?
'What did you do to cure that venereal disease?'

13. NEUROLOGICAL

Koj puas tau qaug dab peg los dua?
'Have you ever had seizures?'
Koj puas daj muag heev?
'Are you often dizzy?'
Koj puas tau mob heev heev ua rau koj tsis nco qab tsheej tsam?
'Have you lost consciousness?'
Koj pob ntseg puas quaj?
'Do your ears ring?'
Koj puas hnov lus tseeb?/Koj hnov lus puas nyuaj?
'Do you hear clearly?/Do you have difficulty hearing?'
Koj puas muaj tej qho loog loog?
'Do you feel numb (somewhere)?'
Koj puas mob rhiab nkuav?
'Do you feel a tingling?'
Koj puas pom kev zoo?
'Do you see well?'
Koj ib ce puas tsaug tsaug?
'Do you feel weak?'
Koj puas mob dab tsi ntxiv?
'Do you have any other problems?'

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Abstract:
"Hmong For Beginners" was written by Annie Jaisser and her co-authors (Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle, David Strecker, Lopao Vang and Lyfu Vang) from materials they developed in the 1980s when Hmong was first being introduced as a language of instruction for the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI). The book was published by the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at UC Berleley in 1995 and is now out of print. This electronic version is intended to make the materials available to those interested in the Hmong language but with limited access to print materials about the language.

NOUN PHRASE STRUCTURE

STRUCTURE OF THE NOUN PHRASE

Hmong noun phrases can include the following constituents (parentheses indicate optional elements):

(possessive) + (quantifier) + (classifier) + noun + (adjective) + (demonstrative)

Each of these constituents as well as rules governing the optionality or non-optionality of the various elements is discussed in detail in the appropriate sections below. To get started, though, some general comments about each constituent along with illustrative examples will be helpful.

I. NOUN PHRASE = NOUN

Minimally, a noun phrase is made up of a noun, common as in (1a) or proper as in (1b-c).

1. a. *tsev*
   'house'

   b. *Nplias*
   'Blia (girl's name—literally, "grasshopper")'

   c. *Txiv ntxawm Xyooj*
   uncle Xiong
   'Uncle Xiong (father's younger brother)'

II. NOUN PHRASE = CLASSIFIER + NOUN

Hmong nouns are invariable; they are not marked for gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter), number (singular vs. plural), or case (nominative, accusative, dative, etc.). What characterizes them is the fact that they have a classifier associated with them which points to certain properties of the noun—natural kind (e.g., human, animal, animate vs. non-animate), shape, function, etc. The classifier for 'house' is *lub*; it is one of the two most common classifiers in Hmong, comes before the noun, and should be learned at the same time as the noun. Noun phrases with classifiers often, but not always, translate as definite noun phrases in English since one of the grammatical functions of classifiers is to make definite reference (see "Discourse Functions of Classifiers" for details).

2. ***lub*** *tsev*
   clf house
   '(the) house'

NOTE: There can be only one classifier per noun phrase.

III. NOUN PHRASE = QUANTIFIER + CLASSIFIER + NOUN

Quantifiers come in two flavors: numeral quantifiers such as one, two, three, etc. as in (3a), and non-numeral quantifiers such as much/many, few, little, etc. as in (3b). Quantifiers come before the classifier + noun sequence (but see section on non-numeral quantifiers for other possibilities).

3. a. ***tsib lub tsev***
   five clf house
   'five houses'

   b. ***ntau lub tsev***
   many clf house
   'many houses'

IV. NOUN PHRASE = POSSESSIVE + CLASSIFIER + NOUN

Possessives take the form of simple personal pronouns and come before the classifier + noun sequence.

4. ***kuv lub tsev***
   I/my clf house
   'my house'

V. NOUN PHRASE = CLASSIFIER + NOUN + DEMONSTRATIVE

Demonstratives, on the other hand, come AFTER the classifier + noun sequence.

5. ***lub tsev no***
   clf house this
   'this house'

VI. NOUN PHRASE = CLASSIFIER + NOUN + ADJECTIVE

There is no adjective class per se in Hmong, but stative verbs (e.g., to be big/white/old/full, etc.) can be used as adjectives. The great majority of them follow the noun they modify, as seen in (6).

6. ***lub tsev loj***
   clf house big
   'the big house'

There are, however, a few common adjectives which occur before the noun, following the Chinese pattern. These include *niag* 1. 'large, great, major'; 2. 'old (denigrating)'; *me nyuam* 'little'; *tuam* 'great' (from the Chinese numeral "one"); and *qub* 'former, original.' *Qub* can also occur in the canonical adjective slot; it then means 'old, worn (of things).' This contrast is illustrated in (7).

7. a. *lub tsev* ***qub***
   clf house old
   'the old house'

   b. *lub* ***qub*** *tsev*
   clf former house
   'the former/original house'

Finally, noun phrases can be made up of pronouns or classifiers standing in for nouns:

VII. NOUN PHRASE = PRONOUN

The same set of pronouns can be used in subject and object noun phrase position, and there is no gender distinction in the third person singular.

8. *Nag hmo* ***kuv*** *pom* ***nws.***
   last night I see him/her/it
   'I saw him/her/it last night.'

VIII. NOUN PHRASE = CLASSIFIER USED PRONOMINALLY

When the referent of a noun can be understood from the spoken or written context, the noun is typically omitted, leaving its classifier standing in for it pronominally.

9. a. *Lub tsev no yog kuv lub tsev.*
   clf house this be my clf house
   'This house is my house.'

   b. *Lub no yog kuv lub.*
   clf this be my clf
   'This one is mine.'

NOUN CLASSIFIERS

I. INTRODUCTION

Languages have different ways of grouping nouns into categories; for instance, European languages such as French, Spanish, or German use gender (masculine, feminine, neuter) as an organizing principle. In many languages of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Southeast Asia, nouns fall into different classes on the basis of criteria other than gender. All the nouns fitting into a given category are used with a part of speech called a classifier.

There is a concept resembling classifiers in English: note that we talk of *a grain of salt* (not *a salt*), *a bar of soap* (not *a soap*), *an ear or a kernel of corn* (not *a corn*), *a drop, body, or glass of water* (not *a water*), etc. In other words, when we want to individuate and count mass nouns such as salt, soap, corn, water, we have to use special measure words such as grain, bar, ear, kernel, drop, body, glass, etc. These measure words are akin to classifiers. Their usage is limited to a fairly small number of nouns in English, but in Hmong and other classifier languages, *every* noun has a classifier associated with it. Hence, as it is best to learn the gender of a noun along with the noun itself in languages such as French, Spanish, or German, it is best to learn the classifier along with the noun when acquiring vocabulary in languages such as Hmong, Chinese, Vietnamese, Lao, Thai, and Khmer.

In classifier system languages, nouns are divided into classes according to properties shared by the nouns in a given category. In Hmong, for example, nouns referring to *spoken* words (e.g., story, legend, song, prayer) are considered to fall into a natural category and thus occur with the classifier *zaj*. The classification criteria range from universally recognized noun attributes such as natural kind (human, animal, mineral), shape (long, flat, round), function (tool, vehicle), material (wood, cloth, bamboo), etc. to more language/culture specific ones. (Thai has a special classifier for monks, for instance.) Class membership is sometimes also motivated by more abstract principles such as metaphor, metonymy, or mythology.

By revealing how nouns are considered to be members of a natural class, and by exposing us to unfamiliar cognitive categories, classifiers give us insights not only into the Hmong world view, but also into the human mind. Discovering how nouns are grouped together is a great deal of fun, and the best strategy to familiarize yourself with classifiers is to get your hands dirty. Hence the section on classifiers starts out with two hands-on exercises which will help you figure out the principles underlying noun categorization. The first exercise introduces two common classifiers, *daim* and *lub*, via pictures. The second exercise is an exercise in semantic categorization: you will look at several common classifiers and determine with which classes of nouns they occur; using your findings you will also be asked to guess the classifier for certain nouns and to justify your choices.

Next comes a summary explanation of the most common classifiers in Hmong, followed by two exercises in which you are asked to fill in the correct classifier.

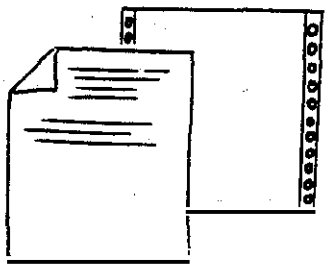
So far classifiers have been discussed with respect to the *meaning* of the nouns with which they occur. To complete the picture it is necessary to know *why* and *when* classifiers are used; the next section focuses on the discourse functions of classifiers as well as the grammatical constructions in which they occur.

The section concludes with the description of a game activity designed to provide oral practice in associating particular classifiers with particular nouns.

II. *DAIM* OR *LUB*?

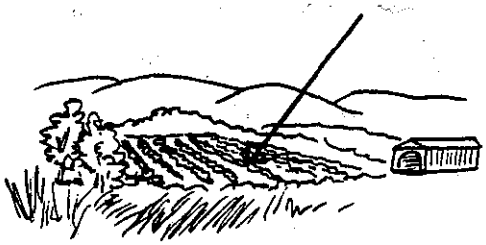
Daim and *lub* are two of the most common classifiers in Hmong. Look at the pictures in (1-8), and try to figure out why *daim* is used in (1-4) and *lub* in (5-8). Hint: concentrate on the *daim* examples first. What characteristic(s) do the nouns associated with *daim* share that the ones with *lub* do not ? Test out your hypotheses by filling in *daim* or *lub* in (9-16).

1.



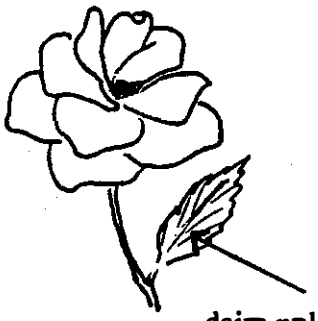
daim ntawv

2.



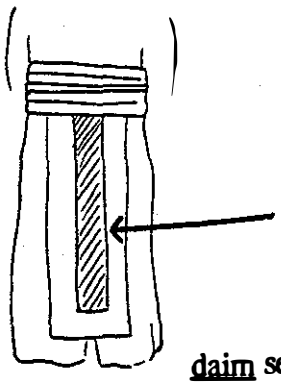
daim teb

3.



daim nplooj

4.

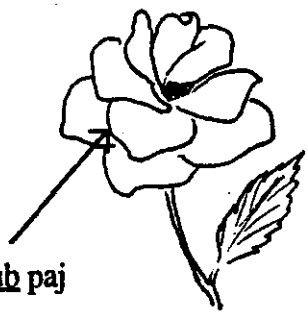


daim sev

5.

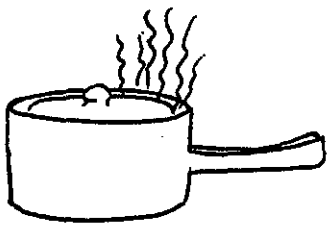
lub pob

6.



lub paj

7.



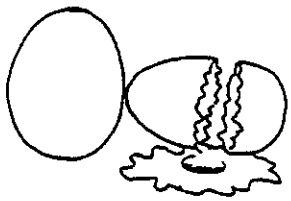
lub lauj kaub

8.

lub kaus mom

Fill in the classifier using either *daim* or *lub*. Justify your choice with a short statement.

9.



_____ qe

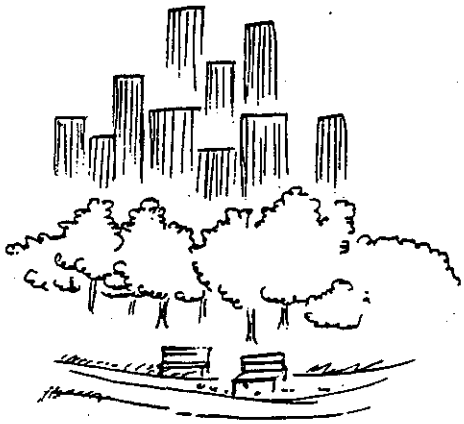
Why?

10.

_____ duab

Why?

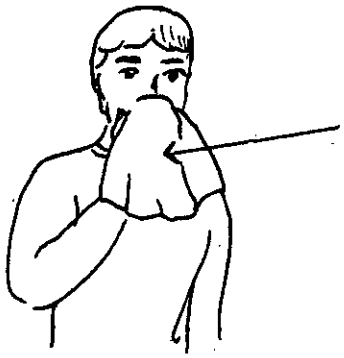
11.



_____ nroog

Why?

12.



_____ phuam so ntswg

Why?

13.

_____ liaj

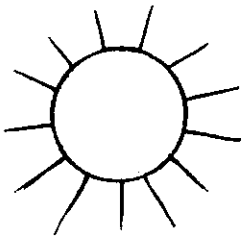
Why?

14.

_____ tiab

Why?

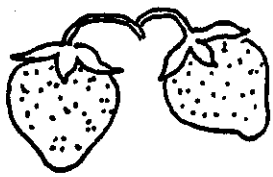
15.



_____ hnub

Why?

16.



_____ txiv pos liab

Why?

III. HMONG CLASSIFIER EXERCISE

As you have noticed, Hmong nouns appear in a *single* form: there are no plural suffixes, no grammatical genders, no definite/indefinite articles, etc. What characterizes them is that they have a classifier associated with them; the choice of which classifier goes with a particular noun is determined by what the noun refers to. For instance, all nouns referring to words traditionally considered *spoken*—i.e., shared and/or passed on via the long-standing oral tradition characteristic of Hmong culture—are preceded by the classifier *zaj*; this set of spoken words includes story, legend, song, prayer, saying, etc. While as many as seventy-five classifiers have been recorded for the language, we will look only at some of the most common ones in this exercise.

Part A: Carefully examine the data below and determine with which semantic categories of nouns the following classifiers are associated.

1. *rab*: _____
2. *daim*: _____
3. *txoj*: _____
4. *phau*: _____
5. *tawb*: _____
6. *tsab*: _____

1. *txoj hlua*	rope	17. *daim pam*	blanket
2. *daim txiag*	(wooden) board	18. *phau ntawv*	book
3. *rab rauj*	hammer	19. *rab ciaj*	pliers
4. *daim nplooj*	leaf of a tree	20. *rab diav*	spoon
5. *tawb qaub ncaug*	spit, spittle	21. *daim teb*	field
6. *rab phom*	rifle	22. *tsab ntawv*	letter (mail)
7. *daim tiab*	skirt	23. *txoj xov*	string, twine
8. *tsab xov*	(written) message	24. *tawb quav*	dung
9. *daim ntawv*	sheet of paper	25. *txoj hmoov*	destiny, fate
10. *rab hneev*	crossbow	26. *rab kaw*	saw
11. *phau nyiaj*	wad (of money)	27. *daim liaj*	rice paddy
12. *txoj hmab*	creeper (vine)	28. *rab hlau*	hoe
13. *rab koob*	needle	29. *daim sev*	apron
14. *txoj sia*	life	30. *rab txiab*	scissors
15. *tawb zis*	urine	31. *txoj kev*	road, path
16. *txoj hauj lwm*	work		

Part B: Classifiers and body parts. Carefully examine the data below and determine with which characteristics of body parts the following classifiers are associated.

1. *txhais*: _____
2. *tus*: _____
3. *txoj*: _____
4. *lub*: _____

1. *lub siab*	liver	14. *txhais tes*	hand
2. *tus nplaig*	tongue	15. *txoj hnyuv*	intestines
3. *lub cev*	body	16. *tus tw*	tail
4. *txoj leeg*	nerves	17. *lub xub pwg*	shoulder
5. *lub plawv*	heart	18. *txoj hlab ntsha*	veins
6. *tus qau*	penis	19. *lub hauv caug*	knee
7. *lub taub hau*	head	20. *txhais ceg*	leg
8. *txhais caj npab*	arm	21. *tus pob txha*	bone
9. *lub mis*	breast	22. *lub ntaws*	navel
10. *txoj sawv*	tendons	23. *txhais ko taw*	foot
11. *txhais ncej puab*	thigh	24. *lub qhov muag*	eye
12. *lub pob ntseg*	ear	25. *tus ntiv tes*	finger
13. *txoj hlab ntaws*	umbilical cord	26. *lub pim*	vagina

Part C: Using your answers to Parts A and B, determine which classifier is associated with the words listed below. *Briefly justify your choice of classifier.*

		Classifier	Why?
1. *qhib ntsia*	screwdriver	_____	_____
2. *plab*	stomach, abdomen	_____	_____
3. *ntawv sau*	notebook	_____	_____
4. *xov hlau*	iron wire	_____	_____
5. *tav*	rib	_____	_____
6. *duab*	photograph, picture	_____	_____

7.	*caj hlaub*	lower leg	_____	_____
8.	*duav hlau*	shovel	_____	_____
9.	*hauv siab*	chest (body part)	_____	_____
10.	*ntaub*	(piece of) cloth	_____	_____
11.	*ntiv taw*	toe	_____	_____
12.	*diav rawg*	fork	_____	_____
13.	*raum*	kidney	_____	_____
14.	*kab das*	blackboard	_____	_____
15.	*quav twm*	cow dung	_____	_____

And what's your guess for #16?

16.	*cai*	law	_____	_____

IV. SOME COMMON CLASSIFIERS*

Daim	Flat things such as fields, pages, etc.
Lub	Round or bulky objects, clothes (see also note below).
Nkawm	Things that come in pairs such as earrings, socks, etc.
Phau	Books or things that come in volumes.
Rab	Instruments, utensils.
Tus	People, animals, things that are long and cylindrical (see also note below).
Tsob	Plants, bushes, foliage.
Txoj	Things that come in length such as threads, wire, rope, roads, etc.
Txhais	Arms, hands, feet.

A. A NOTE ON THE CLASSIFIERS TUS AND LUB

Tus and *lub* are the most common classifiers in Hmong; *tus* is used with nouns referring to human beings, animals, things that closely affect people (such as illness), and things that come in "short" lengths (such as tree); *lub* is used with nouns referring not only to round and bulky things, but also to buildings (such as house), places (such as village), and means of transportation (such as car, boat, etc.), which all fall into the "container" category. To the best of our knowledge, *lub* is the most inclusive classifier in Hmong, and hence functions as a general purpose classifier; this is supported by the fact that new loanwords from English or French often (possibly exclusively, but this is not yet known for a fact) appear with this classifier. If you do not know the classifier for a noun, it is better to use the general purpose classifier *lub* than no classifier at all.

B. EXERCISES

Exercise 1: Match the following nouns with the appropriate classifier.

1.	_____	*pam*	blanket	11.	_____	*duab*	picture
2.	_____	*tes*	hand	12.	_____	*paj*	flower
3.	_____	*diav*	spoon	13.	_____	*paj*	plant
4.	_____	*ntoo*	tree	14.	_____	*tsev*	house
5.	_____	*cwj mem*	pen	15.	_____	*tsheb*	car
6.	_____	*xov tooj*	telephone	16.	_____	*hlua*	rope
7.	_____	*ntawv*	page of paper	17.	_____	*khau*	shoe
8.	_____	*miv*	cat	18.	_____	*duab*	shadow
9.	_____	*teb*	farm field	19.	_____	*khob*	cup
10.	_____	*ntawv*	book	20.	_____	*ceg*	leg

* For a more comprehensive list of classifiers, see Heimbach (1969: Appendix 2, pp. 455-56).

Exercise 2: Complete the following sentences by inserting the appropriate classifier.

1. Hnub no kuv noj ib ____ qe.
2. Maiv muaj ib ____ tsho me me.
3. Kab Npauj tsis nyiam ____ miv xim dub.
4. Kuv tsis muaj ib ____ diav noj mov.
5. Nyuj ____ taub hau loj loj.
6. ____ paj ntawd muaj cuaj ____ paj.
7. Nruas niaj hnub ntxuav nws ____ tes.
8. ____ hlua nyob qhov twg?
9. ____ pam ntawd loj heev.
10. Muaj xya ____ cwj mem nyob ntawm ____ rooj zaum.

V. DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS OF CLASSIFIERS

So far we have discussed classifiers from a semantic point of view, paying close attention to the meaning of the nouns with which they are associated. We saw that in this respect, the function of classifiers is to group nouns into categories according to certain semantic principles. To complete the picture we must now turn to the grammatical functions of classifiers in order to understand when to use them and when not. As with some other aspects of Hmong grammar (e.g., time reference), one must look beyond phrases and sentences in isolation and analyze classifier usage in natural spoken and written discourse to fully understand the functions of classifiers and the types of grammatical constructions in which they occur. While it is true that a noun accompanied by its classifier typically translates as a singular definite noun phrase (see Mottin 1978, p. 29: *lub tsev* 'the house' [translation mine]), this covers only part of the picture, and classifiers should not be systematically equated with definite articles. Doing so would fail to capture a broader generalization with respect to classifier usage and prevent you from grasping the motivations underlying classifier usage in connected speech and texts.

In natural discourse, a typical scenario may go as follows: a speaker or a writer introduces a topic of discussion—e.g., houses for sale; to make general reference to houses, the bare noun *tsev* 'houses' is used. The speaker may start with a general statement such as "Houses are expensive," and then move on to introduce the idea of one particular house, "I saw one/a house." This would be expressed with *ib* 'one' followed by the classifier and the noun: *ib lub tsev* 'one/a house.' From this we see that one of the functions of classifiers is to individuate—i.e., to single out one item, one instance from within a larger set. (Folk tales typically start out this way: *Puag thaum ub muaj ib tug zaj*... 'Long, long ago there was a dragon... .')

After singling out a particular house, the speaker may make specific comments about it: "The house is nice and large; it has three bedrooms; ...the house is in a good neighborhood, etc." To refer to the specific house for the first time, the classifier followed by the noun is used: *lub tsev* 'the house.' From this we see that another function of classifiers is to make specific, definite reference after something has been singled out: from *ib lub tsev* 'one/a house' we move to *lub tsev* 'the house'; this is the area where classifier + noun typically translates as definite article + noun. As the speaker goes on to say more things about the house, the classifier no longer needs to be used because the house is now referentially salient—i.e., stands out from the speaker's point of view. S/he can make further comments about the house by simply using the bare noun *tsev*. In English though, "the house" would continue to be used as the speaker goes on talking about *tsev*.

After making several remarks about the house using *tsev*, the speaker may mention that a friend of his/hers also saw the house and liked it: "Tong liked the house too." Here *tsev*, even though it has already been specifically discussed and is given information, would appear with the classifier because we have shifted from the speaker's to the friend's point of view, and the noun phrase is referentially salient vis-à-vis Tong. Hence yet another function of classifiers is to bring a noun phrase to the forefront of attention when there has been a shift in point of view.

The speaker may continue by saying that s/he wants to buy *lub tsev no* 'this house' and conclude by referring to it as *kuv lub tsev* 'my house.' This establishes a new kind of relationship between the speaker and the house and draws attention to the noun phrase, so it comes as no surprise that the classifier is used with demonstratives and possessives.

To summarize, while bare nouns are used to make general initial reference as well as ongoing reference once a referent has been established, nouns accompanied by classifiers are used to make the referent stand out in some fashion. As pointed out by Riddle (1989a), classifiers function to increase precision of reference and are indicators of relative referential salience.

Nouns take on a more precise reference when modifying elements are added to them; this means that classifiers are used with nouns in the following grammatical constructions:

1. In noun phrases with numerals:

Lauj Pov muaj ***ib tug*** *ntxhais.*
Lopao have one clf daughter
'Lopao has one/a daughter.'

Muaj ***tsib phau*** *ntawv liab nyob ntawd.*
be five clf book red located there
'There are five red books over there.'

2. In noun phrases with demonstratives (pointing words):

Daim *ntawv* ***no*** *yog kuv li.*
clf paper this be mine
'This sheet of paper is mine.'

Lub *tsev* ***ntawd*** *loj loj.*
clf house that big big
'That house is very big.'

3. When specific, definite reference is being made after something has been singled out for discussion:

Tus *me nyuam nyiam* ***tus*** *dev.*
clf child like clf dog
'The child likes the dog.'
(We have been previously introduced to both the child and the dog.)

Tus *tub puas nyiam* ***rab*** *hneev?*
clf boy Q like clf crossbow
'Does the boy like the crossbow?'
(We have been previously introduced to both the boy and the crossbow.)

4. In noun phrases with possessives:

N ***w s lub*** *npe huua Lauj Pov.*
his clf name is called Lopao
'His name is Lopao.'

Kuv nyiam ***kuv tus*** *xib fwb.*
I like my clf teacher
'I like my teacher.'

NOTE: when the possessive relationship is obvious from a Hmong perspective, the classifier can be omitted:

kuv tsev 'my house'
kuv tes 'my hand'
kuv poj niam 'my wife'

5. In possessive noun phrases before the possessor and before the possessed:

Tus *me nyuam* ***daim*** *tiab liab.*
clf child clf skirt red
'The child's skirt is red.'

Tus *tsov* ***tus*** *hniav loj loj.*
clf tiger clf teeth big big
'The tiger's teeth are very big.'

6. In noun phrases with non-numeral quantifiers:

Peb pom ***ntau lub*** *tsev.*
we see many clf houses
'We see many houses.'

Neb muaj ***pes tsawg tus*** *menyuam?*
you-two have how many clf child
'How many children do you(-two) have?'

Tshuav ***tsawg*** ***tus*** *ntoo.*
remain few clf tree
'Few trees are left.'

Tus txiv neeb kho tau ***txhia*** ***tus*** *mob.*
clf shaman cure can every clf illness
'The shaman can cure all illnesses.'

A. FUNCTIONS OF CLASSIFIERS IN WORD FORMATION

Classifiers not only play an important referential salience role in noun phrases, but also crucial functions at the word formation level by narrowing down the reference of certain nouns. In the classifier exercise, we saw that a noun with a general meaning such as *ntawv* 'paper' gets its specific meaning from the unit classifier (e.g., *phau ntawv* 'book,' *daim ntawv* 'sheet of paper,' etc). The unit classifier also narrows down the reference of *dej* 'water,'

dej	vs.	***tus*** *dej*
'water'		'river'

serves to remove the reference ambiguity of the homophones *txiv* 'fruit' and *txiv* 'husband,'

lub *txiv*	vs.	***tus*** *txiv*
clf fruit		clf husband
'fruit'		'husband'

allows nouns to be derived from verbs,

tus *sau*	***tus*** *tsav tsheb*	***tus*** *saib*	***tus*** *pab*
clf write	clf drive car	clf look, observe	clf help
'author'	'driver'	'supervisor'	'assistant'

and serves to distinguish among key kinship terms:

txiv	'father'	vs.	***tus*** *txiv*	'husband'
niam	'mother'	vs.	***tus*** *niam*	'sister' (female speaking)
			tus *poj niam*	'wife'

B. CLASSIFIERS AS PRONOUNS

Classifiers can also function as pronouns, standing in for a noun that has been previously mentioned and hence does not need to be repeated. In most of the noun phrase examples given above, the classifiers can be used in this fashion, as seen below. In the left-hand column examples, the classifiers occur in full noun phrases. In their right-hand column counterparts, the head noun has been deleted to avoid repetition, thus illustrating the pronominal usage of classifiers. Note that the classifiers do not stand completely alone; they are still accompanied by some type of

modifier (numeral, demonstrative, possessive, quantifier, etc.), but the head noun is left out because it can be understood from the discourse context.

Lauj Pov muaj ***ib tug ntxhais.***
'Lopao has one/a daughter.'

Lauj Pov muaj ***ib tug.***
'Lopao has one.'

Lub tsev ntawd *loj loj.*
'That house is very big.'

Lub ntawd *loj loj.*
'That one is very big.'

Nws lub npe *hu ua Lauj Pov.*
'His name is Lopao.'

Nws lub *hu ua Lauj Pov.*
'His is Lopao.'

Lauj Pov lub tsev *tsis liab.*
'"Lopao's house is not red.'

Lauj Pov lub *tsis liab.*
'Lopao's is not red.'

Peb pom ***ntau lub tsev.***
'We see many houses.'

Peb pom ***ntau lub.***
'We see many.'

Neb muaj ***pes tsawg tus menyuam?***
'How many children do you(-two) have?'

Neb muaj ***pes tsawg tus?***
'How many do you(-two) have?'

Tshuav ***tsawg tus ntoo.***
'Few trees are left.'

Tshuav ***tsawg tus.***
'Few are left.'

VI. A TECHNIQUE FOR TEACHING/LEARNING NOUN CLASSIFIERS IN HMONG*

Elizabeth M. Riddle

The "scavenger hunt" described here is an activity for Hmong language students to practice the use of noun classifiers. This activity is simple to do in a class, but requires fairly careful preparation on the part of the instructor beforehand (but see note at end).

A. TEACHING GOAL. To give students practice in associating particular classifiers with particular nouns in the context of oral communication. It is important to clearly explain this goal to the students in advance.

B. OBJECT OF THE GAME. To "scavenge" all the items on one's list from other students, who have the items hidden in paper bags, by asking them questions using the appropriate classifiers.

C. PREPARATION. Gather objects representing common nouns (at the appropriate vocabulary level for your students) which take different classifiers. For example, in Hmong the nouns translated as 'pencil' and 'cat' take the classifier *tus*; 'spoon' and 'scissors' take *rab*; 'chair,' 'car,' and 'shirt' take *lub*; 'paper' and 'skirt' take *daim*, and so on. Use toys, miniatures, and pictures of items as needed, and put together sets of four to six for each student, representing a mixture of classifiers.

Make up a different list of items for each student to gather by drawing pictures on numbered index cards, each with a different set of the four to six of the objects you have collected and representing a variety of classifiers as well. It is better to draw pictures rather than write out the words because this gives the students practice in recalling noun vocabulary as well as classifiers, making the activity more challenging and more interesting.

Now put each set of objects you have gathered into a large, numbered paper bag, one for each student. Since the students will be seeking the objects on their lists and handing out objects to other students from their bags, it is important to make sure that they do not have anything in their own bags that is on their own lists. Giving each student a card and bag with the same number will help you to keep track of this. Also make sure that no one bag has all of the items for one list, and inform the students of this in advance.

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* This is adapted from Riddle (1989/90).

D. PLAY. The game is played as follows. Each student is given a list of objects to find and a bag with a different set of objects to give out. Instruct the students not to show their lists to each other. The students then walk around the room asking each other questions such as "Do you have a book?," "Do you have a pen?," "Do you have a spoon?," according to their lists in order to "scavenge" the items on their lists. In Hmong, the question calls for the use of the number one plus a classifier, thus providing the desired practice. For example, one student would ask another,

*Koj puas muaj ib **lub** tsheb?*
you Q have 1 clf car
'Do you have a car?'

The student asked monitors the choice of classifier. If it is correct, that student answers the question, handing over any item requested which he or she has. If the classifier is incorrect, the monitoring student says *Nug dua* 'Ask again' to give the requester a second chance to use the correct form. The total number of chances to be given should be stated in advance by the instructor. If a student cannot come up with the correct classifier after several chances, s/he should look it up before proceeding further. Once the correct form has been used, if the student asked does not have the item requested, he or she says so. The instructor can circulate around the room to give assistance as needed, or else can play along with the students.

To increase interest and encourage concentration, the game can be played as a race, with the first student gathering all the items on his or her list the winner, but it is important that all students be allowed to complete the game. It takes about 10-20 minutes to play, depending on the number of objects to be collected and the number of participants.

This game forces students to think repeatedly about which classifier goes with which noun and to practice using them in the speech context of seeking information that they genuinely lack. It is thus more effective than a rote activity such as a pattern practice because there are real consequences to using the correct classifiers.

E. NOTE. Preparation for this activity can be done collectively. For instance, the instructor can ask the students to bring objects representing nouns they have learned, collecting the objects after students state what they brought (*Kuv muaj ib **tug** miv* 'I have a cat'). The instructor can also enroll the help of students who are good at drawing to draw the objects on index cards; alternately, everybody can participate in the drawing activity via a Total Physical Response exercise ("Draw a car," "Draw a pencil," etc.), and the instructor can select the best drawings for the scavenger hunt.

THE GENERAL PLURAL MARKER *COV*

Compare the noun phrases in (1) with the noun phrases in (2):

1. a. *ib lub tsev*
   one clf house
   'one/a house'

   b. *lub tsev*
   clf house
   'the house'

2. a. *cov tsev*
   group house
   'the houses'

   b. *cov menyuam*
   group child
   'the children'

   c. *cov ntoo*
   group tree
   'the trees, the forest'

   d. *cov mov*
   group rice
   'cooked rice'

   e. *cov dej*
   group water
   'water'

   f. *cov nyiaj*
   group silver
   'silver'

The noun phrases in (1) appear in the singular and are characterized by the presence of the unit classifier (*lub*) associated with the given noun (*tsev*). As we saw in the section on "When Must a Classifier Be Used?," the function of unit classifiers is to individuate—i.e., to mark a noun as singular—and to make definite reference.

The noun phrases in (2), on the other hand, emphasize the plurality or collectivity of the noun and are characterized by the presence of a group classifier, *cov* . Using *cov* before a noun is a common way of marking the noun as plural. *Cov* can be used to pluralize any noun—human or non-human, animate or inanimate, concrete or abstract, count (2 a-c) or mass (2 d-f)—and thus functions as a general plural marker in Hmong. Note that when *cov* is used to pluralize a noun, the unit classifier found in singular noun phrases is no longer used: while *lub* occurs in singular noun phrases such as *ib lub tsev* and *lub tsev*, *cov *lub tsev* is ungrammatical, as indicated by the asterisk. This is because of the historical origin of *cov*: *cov* is derived from a classifier meaning "bunches or clusters of fruit," and while its meaning has broadened to a general group classifier used as a plural marker, grammatically it still fits into the classifier slot in the structure of the noun phrase.† Since Hmong does not allow more than one classifier per noun phrase, the unit classifier found in singular noun phrases gives way to the group classifier *cov* in the plural. The only

† For details on this, see Ratliff (1991).

exception to this rule occurs with the nouns *ntawv* 'paper, with reference to writing' and *lus* 'speech, words'; these nouns, being general and vague in reference, appear with more than one unit classifier and get their precise meaning from the unit classifier with which they are paired (see answer sheet to Hmong classifier exercise for nouns that can select more than one classifier). Since it is the unit classifiers with which *ntawv* and *lus* appear that give these underspecified nouns their exact meaning, these unit classifiers are retained in plural noun phrases with *cov*, as seen below:

3. a. *ib daig ntawv* — *daim* = clf for flat things (note t.c. in *ib daig*)
one clf paper
'one/a sheet of paper'
Plural: *cov daim ntawv*
'the sheets of paper'

b. *ib phau ntawv* — *phau* = clf for piles of things
one clf paper
'one/a book'
Plural: *cov phau ntawv*
'the books'

c. *ib tsab ntawv* — *tsab* = clf for written messages
one clf paper
'one/a letter (piece of mail)'
Plural: *cov tsab ntawv*
'the letters (pieces of mail)'

4. a. *ib lo lus* — *lo* = clf for mouthfuls
one clf speech
'one/a word'
Plural: *cov lo lus*
'the words'

b. *ib kab lus* — *kab* = 'line'
one clf speech
'one/a line of writing'
Plural: *cov kab lus*
'the lines of writing'

c. *ib zag lus* — *zaj* = clf for spoken words such as sayings, songs, stories (note t.c. in *ib zag*)
one clf speech
'one/a sentence'
Plural: *cov zag lus*
'the sentences'

Cov also frequently occurs preceded by the numeral *ib* 'one'; the collocation *ib co* (note t.c.) is used for small indefinite quantities; it typically translates as 'a little, some' with mass nouns as in (5a-b), and as 'a group of, a few, some' with count nouns as in (5c-d):

5. a. *ib co dej*
   one group water
   'a little/some water'
   b. *ib co txhuv*
   one group hulled rice
   'a little/some hulled rice'
   c. *ib co liab*
   one group monkey
   'a group of/a few/some monkeys.'
   d. *ib co me nyaum*
   one group child
   'a group of/a few/some children.'

As one would expect, plural noun phrases with *cov* also occur with demonstratives and possessives, as seen in (6a-c):

6. a. *cov ntoo no*
   group tree this
   'these trees'

   b. *cov neeg ntawd*
   group man that
   'those men'

   c. *koj cov me nyuam mloog lus, kuv cov tsis mloog lus*
   your group child listen speech my group neg listen speech
   'Your children obey, mine don't.'

QUANTIFIERS

I. NUMERAL QUANTIFIERS

A. *BASIC NUMERALS*

1	*ib*
2	*ob*
3	*peb*
4	*plaub*
5	*tsib*
6	*rau*
7	*xya*
8	*yim*
9	*cuaj*
10	*kaum*
11	*kaum ib*
12	*kaum ob*
13	*kaumpeb*
14	*kaumplaub*
15	*kaum tsib*
16	*kaumrau*
17	*kaum xya*
18	*kaum yim*
19	*kaum cuaj*
20	*nees nkaum*

For "10's," 30 and above, *caum* is used (watch for tone change)

30	*peb caug*
40	*plaub caug*
50	*tsibcaug*
60	*rau caum*
70	*xyacaum*
80	*yim caum*
90	*cuaj caum*

For "100's," *pua* is used (watch for tone change)

100	*ib puas*
200	*ob puas*
300	*peb puas*
400	*plaub puas*
500	*tsib puas*
600	*raupua*
700	*xya pua*
800	*yimpua*
900	*cuaj puas*
1,000	*ib txhiab*
2,000	*ob txhiab*, etc.
10,000	*ib vam*
20,000	*ob vam*, etc.
1,000,000	*ib plhom, ib lab*

1994	*ib*	*txhiab*	*cuaj*	*puas*	*cuaj*	*caum*	*plaub*
	1	1,000	9	100	9	10	4

B. SPECIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE NUMERAL IB 'ONE'

The numeral *ib* 'one' serves as the equivalent of the indefinite article "a," as seen in (1):

1. *Nplias muaj ib lub tsheb*
   Blia have one clf car
   'Nplias has a car.'

When *ib* is followed by a noun without an intervening classifier, the collocation expresses the entirety of the noun (2a-c), or points to the fact that the noun is used as a measure word (3a-d):

2. a. *ib tse* (t.c. from *tsev* 'house')
   one house
   'a household—i.e., all the people who can live in the house'

   b. *ib ce* (t.c. from *cev* 'body')
   one body
   'the entire body'

   c. *ib zog* (t.c. from *zos* 'village')
   one village
   'the whole village'

3. a. *ib davhlau*
   one plane
   'one planeful (of goods)'

   b. *ib rooj*
   one table
   'one tableful'

   c. *ib vog* (t.c. from *voj* 'circle')
   one moment
   'one circle, a circular slice or flat section'

   d. *ib teg* (t.c. from *tes* 'hand')
   one hand
   'one blow of the hand'

Recall also the common collocation is *ib co* 'a little, a few, some, a group of' used for small indefinite quantities. (See "The General Plural Marker *cov*" for details.)

II. NON-NUMERAL QUANTIFIERS

The most common non-numeral quantifiers—i.e., words such as much/many, some, few, every, etc.—are listed and illustrated below.

A. NTAU 'MUCH, MANY, A LOT OF'; COOB 'MANY, A LOT OF'

Ntau and *coob* both refer to large quantities, but while *ntau* can be used with animate as well as inanimate nouns, *coob* can be used only with nouns referring to animate beings. *Ntau* and *coob* fit into either of the following slots in noun phrases:

ntau/coob 'much, many'+ classifier + noun
or
classifier + noun + *ntau/coob* 'much, many'

1. *Koj yuav ntsib ntau tus neeg.*
   you fut meet many clf people
   'You'll meet a lot of people.'

2. *Lawv kawm ntau phau ntawv.*
   they study many clf book
   'They studied many books.'

3. *Peb tsis muaj nplej ntau.*
   we neg have rice much
   'We don't have a lot of/much rice.'

4. *Coob tus neeg mus ua teb.*
   many clf people go work in the fields
   'Many people went to work in the fields.'

5. *Muaj npua tuag coob.*
   be pig dead many
   'Many pigs died.'

When *ntau* and *coob* come after the noun, they can be reduplicated for emphasis:

6. *Lawv muaj nyiaj muaj kub ntau ntau.*
   they have silver have gold much much
   'They are very rich.'

7. *tib neeg coob coob.*
   individual many many
   'a multitude, a crowd'

Ntau and *coob* can also function as adverbs, like "a lot" can in English:

8. *Nws ua hauj lwm ntau ntau.*
   s/he work a lot a lot
   'S/he works a lot/very hard.'

9. *Lawv tuaj coob.*
   they come many
   'They came in great numbers.'

B. TSAWG 'LITTLE, FEW'

Tsawg refers to small quantities, and like *ntau* and *coob*, it can fit into either of the following slots in noun phrases:

tsawg 'little, few' + classifier + noun
or
classifier + noun + *tsawg* 'little, few'

10. *Tshuav tsawg tus ntoo.*
    remain few clf tree
    'Few trees are left.'

11. *Muaj tsawg lub tsev yug npua.*
    be few clf house raise pig
    'There are few families who raise pigs.'

12. *Muaj nqaij tsawg.*
    be meat little
    'There is little meat.'

Like *ntau* and *coob*, *tsawg* can both be reduplicated for emphasis when it follows the noun (13), and function as an adverb, like "little" can in English (14):

13. *Muaj nqaij tsawg tsawg.*
    be meat little little
    'There is very little meat.'

14. *Npis noj tsawg.*
    Bee eat little
    'Bee eats little/Bee doesn't eat much.'

C. SAWV DAWS 'ALL, EVERY'

Sawv daws refers to all the members in a group and is used with nouns referring to human beings only.* This quantifier is typically used in subject position and comes after the noun or pronoun in the noun phrase, which can begin with an optional *tas* 'all':†

(*tas* 'all') + noun/pronoun + *sawv daws* 'all, every'

15. *Peb sawv daws ua teb.*
    we all work in the fields
    'We all work in the fields/All of us work in the fields.'

16. *Nej me nyuam sawv daws tuaj ntawm no!*
    you-pl child all come here
    'You children all come here!'

Sawv daws can also be used by itself as a pronoun meaning 'everybody, everyone'

17. *Sawv daws mus tsev lawm.*
    everybody go house perf
    'Everybody has gone home.'

D. TXHIA/TXHUA 'ALL, EVERY'

Contrary to *sawv daws*, *txhia/txhua* can be used with any noun, and comes before the classifier and the noun in a noun phrase (which, again, can start with an optional *tas* 'all'):

(*tas* 'all') + *txhia/txhua* 'all, every' + classifier + noun

18. *(Tas) txhia tus me nyuam mus.*
    all every cfl child go
    'All the children went.'

19. *Tus txiv neeb kho tau txhia tus mob.*
    clf shaman cure able every clf illness
    'The shaman can cure all illnesses.'

---

* It can also be used with reference to animals when they are personified, as in folk tales and storytelling.

† In natural spoken and written discourse, *sawv daws* and *txhia/txhua* 'all, every' (see section D) typically appear in conjunction with *tas*, *huv*, *tib si*, and/or *puav leej*, which all mean 'all, altogether,' as seen below:

Tas cov txiv neeb sawv daws puav leej tuaj tas huv tib si.
all group shaman every all, altogether come all all all, altogether
'All the shamans came, each and every one of them.'

(See section on parataxis for details.)

20. *Xyoo no mob txhua lub tsev.*
year this be ill every clf house
'All the households are sick this year/There is illness in every household this year.'

At the present stage of research it is not clear what the difference between *txhia* and *txhua* is, if there is any. In terms of usage though, the two often occur together sequentially as in (21), or appear as the "A's" in the ABAC four-word phrases so frequently used in Hmong (see section on four-word phrases), as in (22-23):

21. *Peb nyob zoo txhua txhia tus.*
we be well every every clf
'We are all well.'

22. *Peb nco txog nej txhia leej txhia tus.*
we remember reach you every clf every clf
'We think about all of you (literally, each and every one of you).'

23. *Txhia hnub txhua hmo nws kawm ntawv.*
every day every night s/he study
'S/he studies every day and every night.'

E. NIAJ/NEJ 'EACH, EVERY'

Niaj and *nej* are variants which can be used interchangeably; they point to single instantiations of the noun they modify, rather than entirety (cf. *niaj hnub* 'each day' vs. *tas hnub* 'all day [long]'):

24. *niaj tus neeg*
each clf person
'each person'

25. *niaj xyoo, hlis, hnub*
each year, month, day
'each year, month, day'

26. *niaj zaus*
each time
'each time, occasion'

F. TEJ 'A FEW, SOME, CERTAIN (PEOPLE, THINGS)'

Tej is a quantifier which can be used to pluralize noun phrases (27-28); in this respect it is similar to the pluralizer *cov*, but used less frequently. As is the case with *cov*, *tej* can appear only

before the noun and cannot be reduplicated for emphasis (i.e., noun + *tej* and noun + *tej tej* are ungrammatical). But contrary to *cov*, it can be followed by a classifier in a noun phrase (29); hence it fits into the quantifier slot (rather than the classifier slot like *cov*) in the structure of the noun phrase. It can also be followed by a classifier used pronominally and by a demonstrative (30-31). In terms of meaning, it refers to an indefinite quantity and can translate as 'a few, some, a group, certain (people, things).' Used by itself, it refers to "people", "things" in general (32-33). Finally, recall from the section on pronouns that *tej* also appears in the pronominal phrases *lawv tej* and *luag tej* 'others; other people; they/them.' (See section on pronouns for details.)

27. *Peb Hmoob nyiam nyob pem tej roob.*
we Hmong like live up quant mountain
'We Hmong like to live up in the mountains.'

28. *Nws mus xyuas tej kwv tij.*
s/he go visit quant relatives
'S/he went to visit (her) relatives.'

29. *Kuv pom tej tus me nyuam.*
I see quant clf child
'I saw a few children.'

30. a. *tej tus* 'some people, certain people'
b. *tej yam* 'some things, certain kinds of things'
c. *tej no* 'these'

31. *Tej tus ua zoo, tej tus ua phem.*
quant clf do good quant clf do evil
'Some people do good, some people do evil.'

32. a. *nyob tom tej*
be loc quant
'at their place'

b. *mus tom tej*
go loc quant
'go to their place'

33. a. *zoo dua tej*
good comp quant
'better than those or them'

b. *zoo tshaj tej*
good superl quant
'the best of all/better than everything else'

PRONOUNS

I. SUBJECT, OBJECT, AND POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

One area of the Hmong language which is relatively easy to acquire is the pronoun system. The same set of pronouns is used in subject, object, and possessive positions; this means that you have only one pronoun to learn for English "I," "me," and "my" for the first person singular pronoun. As you can see in (1-3) below, the grammatical function of the pronoun is clear from its position in the sentence: subject pronouns occur before the verb, object pronouns after the verb, and possessive ones before the classifier + noun sequences in possessive noun phrases.

A further simplification in the system is the fact that there is no gender distinction in the third person singular as there is in English, meaning that you have only one pronoun to learn for "he," "she," and "it."

However, there is one area where the Hmong system is richer than the English system: when referring to **two** people in the first, second, and third person plural—"we (two)," "you (two)," "they (two)"—special **dual** pronouns are used. The other plural pronouns are used for three or more.

The full set of pronouns is given below, with illustrative examples following.

	Singular		**Dual**		**Plural**	
1st person	*kuv*	I me my	*wb*	we (two) us (two) our (two)	*peb*	we us our
2nd person	*koj*	you you your	*neb*	you (two) you (two) your (two)	*nej*	you (all) you (all) your
3rd person	*nws*	he/she/it him/her/it his/hers/its	*nkawd** *(nkawv)*	they (two) them (two) their (two)	*lawv*	they them their

1. ***Kuv*** *mus lawm.*
   I go perf
   'I went.'

* This pronoun is derived from *nkawm* 'pair; couple,' and many Hmong speakers have regularized the marginal low rising *-d* tone to the more common mid rising *-v* tone.

2. *Npis pom* ***kuv.***
   Bee see me
   'Bee saw me.'

3. ***kuv*** *lub tsev*
   my clf house
   'my house'

4. *Nag hmo* ***peb*** *pom* ***neb.***
   last night I see you (two)
   'We saw you (two) last night.'

5. ***N ws*** *daim tiab zoo nkauj kawg.*
   her clf skirt beautiful very
   'Her skirt is very beautiful.'

II. REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

The pronouns given above also serve as reflexive pronouns, as seen in (6) and (7):

6. ***Kuv*** *yuav ua* ***kuv.***
   I fut do myself
   'I'll do it myself.'

7. ***Koj*** *puas pom* ***koj?***
   you Q see yourself
   'Did you see it yourself?'

III. OTHER PRONOUNS

In addition to the pronouns given above, there are a few other pronouns which are used frequently:

A. THE INDEFINITE PRONOUN YUS

Yus is a pronoun with an indefinite meaning—equivalent to the English indefinite pronouns "one" or "you," as in "One/you can't do that here." This usage is illustrated in (8):

8. ***Yus*** *tsis paub* ***yus*** *tsis txhob hais.*
   one neg know one neg neg imp say
   'When one doesn't know, one doesn't say anything.'

As pointed out by Heimbach (p.430), *yus* can also be used "in place of the first person pronoun *kuv* when politely speaking of one's self (similar to the English use of 'one')." This is illustrated in (9):

9. *Nej hnub **yus** ua hauj lwm tas zog.*
   each day one do work all strength
   'Every day I work as hard as I can.'

NOTE: *Yus* also appears in the phrase ***yus tua yus*** 'suicide (literally, one kill oneself).'

B. THE PRONOUNS LAWV TEJ, LUAG, LUAG TEJ 'OTHERS, OTHER PEOPLE; THEY/THEM'

In the third person plural, *lawv tej, luag*, or *luag tej* 'others, other people; they/them' are often used as alternatives to *lawv* 'they.' This is especially the case when the referent is vague and does not include oneself and one's own group—i.e., when one is talking about "them," "the others." This is illustrated in (10):

10. ***Luag** hais li.*
    they speak like that
    'They say that.'

11. *Yuav tsum pab **luag tej**.*
    must help others
    'One must help others.'

NOTE: The usage of the pronouns discussed in sections (A) and (B) above is difficult to illustrate in isolated sentences. The best strategy to develop a feel for them is to make a note of their usage in real conversations and texts.

IV. PRONOUN USAGE

In natural spoken and written discourse (rather than in isolated sentences as in the examples given above for illustrative purposes), pronouns are typically omitted when their referent can be understood from the context. Once who or what is being talked about has been established, it is redundant from the Hmong point of view to keep repeating the same referent.* Hence, (12b) below is not only a perfectly grammatical Hmong sentence, but also the most idiomatic way to answer the question in (12a); it is clear from the question that the subject in the answer is "I" and the object "him [Bee]," so there is no need to express the pronouns overtly:

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* The same is true of time reference: once the time frame of an event (e.g., yesterday, a long time ago, etc.) has been established, there is no need to repeat it by marking the verb also (see section on tense).

12a. *Koj puas pom Npis?*
you Q see Bee
'Did you see Bee?'

b. *Pom xwb.*
see indeed
'I did./Yes, I saw him.'

It is difficult to illustrate this phenomenon out of context with isolated sentences; the best way to familiarize yourself with it is to pay attention when listening to Hmong speakers and when reading stories, and to notice that pronouns are not repeated as long as the referent is clear and recoverable from the context.

DEMONSTRATIVES

I. DEMONSTRATIVES IN NOUN PHRASES

Demonstratives (pointing words) come AFTER the noun in Hmong, and since they give a noun definite reference, the noun must be preceded by its classifier. Hence the sequence is:

CLASSIFIER + NOUN + **DEMONSTRATIVE**
lub tsev ***no***
clf house this
'this house'

The most common demonstratives are listed and illustrated in the table below.

Demonstrative	Translation	Example
no	'this' (near me, the speaker)	*Lub tsev* ***no*** *loj loj* clf house this big big 'This house (near me) is very big.'
ko	'that' (near you, the hearer)	*Lub tsev* ***ko*** *loj loj* clf house that big big 'That house (near you) is very big.'
ntawd	'that' (nearby)	*Lub tsev* ***ntawd*** *loj loj* clf house that big big 'That house (nearby) is very big.'

Notice that English does not have an equivalent for the second demonstrative, *ko* 'that (near the hearer).' Hence, you will have to make a conscious effort to remember using *ko* instead of *ntawd* when referring to something close to your interlocutor.

II. THE PRONOMINAL USAGE OF DEMONSTRATIVES

The demonstratives listed above can be used as pronouns—i.e., without the noun—when the referent of this noun is clear from the context. When used pronominally, the demonstratives still occur with the classifier of the noun referred to, as illustrated in the (b) versions of the sentences below:

1. a. *Lub tsev no loj loj*
clf house this big big
'This house is very big.'

b. ***Lub no*** *loj loj*
clf this big big
'This one is very big.'

2. a. *Tus menyuam ko me me*
clf child that small small
'That child (near you) is very small.'

b. ***Tus ko*** *me me*
clf that small small
'That one (near you) is very small.'

3. a. *Peb pom ob lub tsev ntawd*
we see two clf house that
'We saw those two houses.'

b. *Peb pom ob* ***lub ntawd***
we see two clf that
'We saw those two.'

When the referent is vague, *qhov* is used in lieu of the classifier:

qhov no	'this'
qhov ko	'that near you'
qhov ntawd	'that nearby'

NOTE: *qhov no*, *qhov ko*, and *qhov ntawd* can also mean 'here,' 'there (near you),' and 'there (nearby),' respectively.

FUNCTIONS OF THE MARGINAL *-D* TONE

In addition to the seven basic tones of Hmong there is an eighth, more marginal tone which is characterized by a low fall-rise contour (213 on a five-point pitch scale) and a slightly longer duration than the basic tones, and which is represented by a final *-d* in the RPA. As pointed out in the section on pronouns, the *-d* tone occurs in the third-person plural dual pronoun ***nkawd*** 'they (two),' which developed out of the corresponding *-m* tone noun ***nkawm*** 'pair, couple.' As you will see below, *-d* tone words are related to *-m* tone words in the majority of cases.

I. THE *-D* TONE IN DEMONSTRATIVE NOUNS

Consider these examples from Bertrais's dictionary, paying close attention to the *-m* and *-d* tone words:

1. ***nram / nrad*** 'down'

a.				b.		
nyob	***nram***	*teb*		*nyob*	***nrad***	
be	down	field		be	down there	
'down below in the field'				'down there'		

2. ***nraum / nraud*** 'outside'

a.			b.		
nyob	***nraum***	*zoov*	*nyob*	*sab*	***nraud***
be	outside	forest	be	side	outside
'outside'			'outside, on the other side'		

3. ***ntawm / ntawd*** 'here, there (nearby)'

a.			b.	
nyob	***ntawm***	*kev*	*nyob*	***ntawd***
be	here	trail	be	there
'on the trail'			'there (a small distance away)'	

4. ***pem / ped*** 'up'

a.			b.	
nyob	***pem***	*roob*	*nyob*	***ped***
be	up	mountain	be	up there
'up on the mountain'			'up there'	

5. ***saum / saud*** 'above'

a.			b.	
nyob	***saum***	*nthob*	*nyob*	***saud***
be	above	platform	be	above there
'on the storage platform'			'above there'	

6. ***tim / tid*** 'opposite'

a.			b.	
nyob	***tim***	*nej*	*nyob*	***tid***
be	opposite	you	be	over there
'at your place'			'over there'	

7. *tom / tod* 'there'

a. *mus* *tom* *khw*
go there market
'go to the market'

b. *mus* *lawm* *tod*
go distance there
'go over there'

8. *thaum / thaud* 'time when'

a. *thaum* *ntawd*
time there
'at that time'

b. *puag* *txheej* *thaud*
many generation time
'in the old days'

The *-m* tone words in the (a) sentences are high-frequency space and time reference words which function as the first element of a prepositional phrase. As you can see, they have *-d* tone counterparts in the (b) sentences. These *-d* tone words point to a place or time familiar to the speakers involved, either because they have talked about it before, or because it is clear from the speech context. Notice that the *-d* tone words behave differently from the *-m* tone words in terms of their grammatical function: they are not followed by a noun; instead they occur as independent elements at the end of a phrase. Because of their pointing function and because they occur as independent elements, a good way of referring to them is to call them "demonstrative nouns." There are a few more tonal doublets such as the ones in (1-8):

9. *qaum / qaud* 'back, top part of'

a. *qaum* *tes*
back hand
'the back of the hand'

b. *nyob nraum kuv sab nraub qaud*
be outside my side middle back
'behind my back'

10. *sim / sid* 'time'

a. *tam* *sim* *no*
time this
'right away'

b. *tam sid*
'right away'

11. *chim / chid* 'moment'

a. *ib* *chim* *kuv* *tuaj*
one moment I come
'I'm coming in a minute.'

b. *thawj* *chid*
first moment
'at the beginning'

12. *npaum / npaud* 'measure'

a. *Koj* *yuav* *npaum* *li* *cas?*
you take measure like how
'How much are you taking?'

b. *Kuv* *yuav* *tsis* *tas* *npaud*
I take not all measure
'I'm not taking as much as that.'

II. OTHER FUNCTIONS AND MEANINGS OF THE *-D* TONE

In addition to the demonstrative noun function of the *-d* tone discussed above, there are at least three other areas where the *-d* tone is used.

A. THE DEFINITE REFERENCE FUNCTION

The *-d* tone can be substituted for the *-m* tone to make definite reference to an animate *-m* tone noun which has just been introduced. This usage of the *-d* tone as a definite reference marker is illustrated with *me nyuam* 'child' in (13):

13. *Nws muaj ob tug me nyuam. Ces ob tug me nyuad chis chis.*
    s/he have two clf child then two clf child angry angry
    'She had two children. Then those two children were very angry.'

B. THE VOCATIVE FUNCTION

The *-d* tone can also be used with animate *-m* tone words as a vocative marker, meaning that it can be used to call out to someone, as seen in (14):

14. *Me nyuad!*
    'Children!'

C. THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND STYLISTIC FUNCTION

Finally, the *-d* tone can be used as a variant of the *-m* tone in certain words for sociolinguistic and stylistic reasons. This is an area of the language which needs further investigation to be better understood. Pending further refinements, we can say that using the *-d* tone instead of the *-m* tone either reveals something about the speaker's attitude toward what s/he is saying (this is similar to different nuances being conveyed via intonation in English), or that the *-d* tone is a marker for a more literary or formal level of language use:

15. a. *niam* mother
    b. *niad!* mother!

16. a. *tej zaum* maybe (60% likely according to some speakers)
    b. *tejzaud* maybe (40% likely according to the same speakers)

17. a. *muam* sister (man speaking)
    b. *leejmuad* Miss
    person sister

According to Dr. Yang Dao, (15b) is rude, and "one would not call one's own mother that way"; this judgment is conveyed via the *-d* tone. In (17b), however, the *-d* tone is considered to be a marker of polite and respectful language as used in courtship or in folk tales.

III. CONCLUSION

As you can see from the above, the *-d* tone is not an independent tone which serves to differentiate words like the seven other tones. It is clearly related to the *-m* tone, and its functions are limited to the areas discussed above.

TONE CHANGE*

As if eight tones were not hard enough to master, there are also some instances when the basic tone of a word changes, as you may have noticed. For the basic tone of a word to change, there are some necessary preconditions:

(1) The affected word must be preceded by a "trigger" word with a *j* tone or a *b* tone;

(2) The "trigger" word and the affected word must have a close grammatical relationship (numeral-classifier sequences and compounds are two examples; see "Tone Change Environments" below); and

(3) The affected word must have a *j* tone, a *v* tone, an *s* tone, a *ø* tone, or an *m* tone (note: not a *b* tone, a *g* tone, or a *d* tone).

I. EXAMPLES OF THE FIVE POSSIBLE TONE CHANGES

s changes to *g*:

tus me nyuam clf child 'the child'	*ib tug me nyuam* one clf child 'a child'
tus npua clf pig 'the pig'	*peb tug npua* three clf pig 'three pigs' (Note: *peb tus npua* would be 'our pigs' instead of 'three pigs')

m changes to *g*:

daim ntawv clf paper 'the sheet of paper'	*cuajdaig ntawv* nine clf paper 'nine sheets of paper'
rau caum six tens 'sixty'	*peb caug* three tens 'thirty'

j changes to *g*:

lub ntuj clf sky 'the sky'	*nrab ntug* midle sky 'in the heavens'
dej 'water'	*paj deg* flower water 'bubbles'

* For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Ratliff (1992).

ntsej muag	*lub pob ntseg*
ear face	clf clumpear
'face'	'the ear'

ø changes to *s*:

ib tsob ntoo	*pob ntoos*
one clf tree	clump tree
'a tree'	'stump'
raupua	*cuajpuas*
6 100	9 100
'six hundred'	'nine hundred'
tus npua	*zaub npuas*
clf pig	vegetable pig
'the pig'	'pig-food'

v changes to *ø*:

tus qav	*tus nabqa*
clf frog	clf snake frog
'the frog'	'the lizard'
lub qhov	*poob qho*
clf hole	to fall hole
'the hole'	'of the sun setting'
lub tsev	*ib tse neeg*
clf house	one house people
'the house'	'a household'

Remember, though, that these changes are not automatic. Even if the right preconditions exist, the change may not occur. Historically speaking, there was a time when the tone changes described above occurred like clockwork and could be considered rules. Now, however, the tone change system of the language is in the process of disappearing, so that the changes may or may not occur. Thus, they can no longer be considered as rules, and you will find a great deal of variation not only from speaker to speaker, but also within a single speaker. Like all languages, Hmong changes over time, and the gradual loss of the tone change system is one manifestation of this.

II. TONE CHANGE ENVIRONMENTS

The most common grammatical constructions in which the tone changes discussed above can occur are the following :

A. CONSTRUCTIONS INVOLVING NUMERALS

Since the numerals 1-5 and 9 are words with tones which can trigger tone change (i.e., *-b* and *-j*), and since they are frequently used in everyday language, you will find numerous examples of the type of constructions given below.

a. Numeral-classifier:

ib tug (< tus) me nyuam one clf child 'one/a child'	*ib co (< cov) me nyuam* one group/pl clf child '(a group of) children'
tsib daig (< daim) ntawv five clf paper 'five sheets of paper'	*cuaj nkawg (< nkawm) khau* nine clf shoe 'nine pairs of shoes'

b. Numeral-numeral constructions:

• Numerals 3-5 + *caum* '10's' (30 and above)

peb caug (< caum) 3 10's 'thirty'	*plaub caug (< caum)* 4 10's 'forty'	*tsib caug (< caum)* 5 10's 'fifty'

Note: In *cuaj caum* (9 + 10's, 'ninety') *caum* does not undergo the expected tone change.

• Numeral 1-5 or 9 + *pua* '100'

ib puas (< pua) 1 100 'one hundred'	*ob puas (< pua)* 2 100 'two hundred'	*cuaj puas (< pua)* 9 100 'nine hundred'

ib txhiab cuaj puas cuaj caum ib
1 1,000 9 100 9 10's 1
'1991'

Note: *vam* '10,000,' a fairly recent loanword from Chinese, does not undergo tone change after the numerals 1-5 and 9, as exemplified below.

ib vam	'10,000'
plaub vam	'40,000'
cuaj vam	'90,000'

c. *Ib* 'one' + nouns used as measure words, or nouns the entirety of which is being expressed:

ib hmos (< hmo) one night 'one night'	*ib zaug (< zaus)* one time, occasion, turn 'once, one occasion'	*ib xyoos (< xyoo)* one year 'one year'
ib ce (< cev) one body 'the entire body'	*ib zog (< zos)* one village 'the whole village'	

B. CONSTRUCTIONS WITH SIB 'EACH OTHER' + VERB WITH A J, V, S, Ø, OR M TONE

sib ceg (< cem) e.o. scold 'to scold each other'	*sib tog (< tom)* e.o. bite 'to bite each other'	*sib tuas (< tua)* e.o. kill 'to kill each other'
sib zeg (< zes) e.o. tease 'to tease each other'	*sib tw (< twv)* e.o. compete 'to compete with each other'	*sib qawg (< qawm)* e.o. show affection 'to show affection for each other'

Again, remember that tone change does not have to occur after *sib*, and that you will come across the phrases listed above with no tone change about as often as with tone change. Also, as far as we know, the *sib* + verb constructions with tone change do not exhibit any differences in meaning from their counterparts with no tone change.*

C. CERTAIN COMPOUNDS

nab qa (< qav) snake frog 'lizard'	*nqaij npuas (< npua)* meat pig 'pig meat'	*nqaij nyug (< nyuj)* meat cow 'cow meat'
teb chaws (< chaw) land place 'country'	*nyiaj txiag (< txiaj)* silver money '(silver) money'	*ciab mu (< muv)* wax bee 'bee wax'
(dab) noj hlis (< hli) spirit eat moon 'an eclipse of the moon'	*kaj ntug (< ntuj)* bright sky 'morning'	*poob phlus (< phlu)* fall cheek 'lose face'†

D. TIPS TO FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH TONE CHANGE CONSTRUCTIONS

1) Since there is a great deal of variation in this area of the language, the best strategy is to follow the practices of the native speaker(s) with whom you are in contact. Listen carefully to the way they speak and imitate them.
2) A good way to learn the compounds listed in section C above is to make a list of them as you progress in your Hmong studies.
3) As a learning strategy, you may consider putting a hyphen between the two words involved in a tone change construction to remind yourself of the change.

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* *Sib* can also be pronounced *sis*. This variant is frequently used by Hmong from Laos, and does not trigger tone change in the following verb since it bears a low tone.

† As you know, *poob* is typically used as an intransitive verb meaning 'to fall,' but it can also be used metaphorically as a transitive verb meaning 'to lose'—e.g., *poob-nyiag* (fall-money) = 'to lose money' or *poob-phlus* (fall-cheek) = 'to lose face.'

COMPOUNDS

I. (NON-)TRANSPARENT COMPOUNDS

One mechanism on which languages rely to form new words is compounding—i.e., creating words which have at least two component parts. A type of compounding shared by many of the world's languages involves the juxtaposition of two clearly recognizable elements and results in a compound whose meaning is transparent if you consider the meaning of its components—e.g., English houseboat, coffee cake, teapot, or blackboard. As is to be expected, compounds of this type are also common in Hmong, except that the modifier follows its head:

Compound	Meaning of Head + Modifier	Meaning of Compound
chaw pw	'place, region' + 'to lie down'	'sleeping place, bed(room)'
chaw noj mov	'place, region' + 'to eat rice'	'eating room, kitchen'
rojnpua	'oil, fat' + 'pig'	'pig fat'
roj av	'oil, fat' + 'earth'	'gas, oil'
paj kws	'flower' + 'corn'	'popcorn'
pajntaub	'flower' + 'cloth'	'embroidery'

In a few compounds one of the components does not have an independent meaning in modern Hmong (cf. English "cranberry"); there are also a few cases where neither element has an independent meaning:

nim no	(no meaning) + 'this'	'now'
tag kis	'finish(ed)' + (no meaning)	'tomorrow'
twj ywm	(no meaning) + (no meaning)	'(be) quiet'

In the compounds described above the component parts are not related in meaning. Hmong is also characterized by a type of compounding not found in English in which the two component words are closely related in meaning. These compounds constitute yet another hallmark of Hmong style and fall into two categories: synonym compounds and "two-halves" compounds (see the following two sections below). Finally, there are two-syllable compounds in which the first syllable is a shape prefix which picks out an aspect of the physical shape of the head noun (see the third section below).

II. SYNONYM COMPOUNDS

Synonym compounds are made up of two words which are identical or very close in meaning (note that the effect is one of amplitude rather than redundancy):

me nyuam	'small' + 'small'	'child, small'
pojniam	'female' + 'female'	'woman, wife'
nyiaj txiag	'silver' + 'coins' (note tone change)	'money'

teb chaws	'land' + 'place' (note tone change)	'country'
kwj ha	'gulley' + 'valley'(note tone change)	'valley'
tes taw	'hand' + 'foot'	'animal limbs'
kab ntsaum	'bug' + 'ant'	'bugs'
toj roob	'hill' + 'mountain'	'hills, mountains'
txhij txhua	'complete' + 'all'	'all, every'
nruabnrab	'middle' + 'middle'	'middle'

III. "TWO-HALVES" COMPOUNDS

"Two-halves" compounds are made up of two words with complementary meanings.

kwv tij	'younger brother' + 'older brother'	'kin, brothers'
viv ncaus	'younger sister' + 'older sister'*	'sister(s)'
niam txiv	'mother' + 'father'	'parents'
nkauj nraug†	'girl' + 'boy' (note tone change)	'young couple'
ris tsho	'pants' + 'shirt'	'suit (of clothing)'
ntsej muag	'ears' + 'eyes'	'face'

IV. SHAPE PREFIX COMPOUNDS

Shape prefix compounds are two-syllable compounds in which the first syllable is a shape noun, which can be thought of as a shape prefix. A good way to illustrate what a shape prefix is is to take the noun *tes*, which is typically translated as 'hand.' This noun should actually be understood as "the protuberance at the end of the forearm" since it includes the wrist, which we do not include in our notion of "hand." Hence, *tes* is found in two-syllable compounds where the first part is a shape prefix which picks out an aspect of the shape of the head noun *tes* and describes a component of "the protuberance at the end of the forearm." Consider the following examples (for the tone change in the head noun *tes*, see next paragraph):

Compound	Translation	=	Shape Prefix	+	Head Noun
dab teg	'wrist'	=	*dab* 'narrowing'	+	*tes* 'hand'
pob teg	'wrist bone'	=	*pob* 'round object'	+	*tes* 'hand'
taub teg	'fingertip'	=	*taub* 'gourd-shaped'	+	*tes* 'hand'

Shape prefixes are not classifiers because the whole compound (shape prefix-head noun) can be preceded by a classifier—e.g., *lub dab-teg* 'wrist.' In addition, given the proper conditions

* This compound is no longer separable.

† Poetic.

(see section on tone change), shape prefixes can induce tone change in the following noun while classifiers as a rule do not have the power to do that.*

Shape prefix compounds represent a resource of the language for expanding its lexicon; additional, high-frequency examples (arranged by shape prefix) are given below. Where it occurs, tone change (t.c.) is indicated in parentheses.

Shape Prefix	Compound	Translation
pob	*lub pob ntoos* (t.c.)	'tree stump'
'round object, clump, blob'	*lub pob ntseg* (t.c.)	'ear' (the whole thing)
	lub pob zeb	'rock'
	lub pob a (t.c.)	'clod of earth'
	lub pob taws (t.c.)	'ankle bone'
taub	*lub taub hau*	'head'
'gourd-shaped object'	*lub taub teg* (t.c.)	'fingertip'
	lub taub ntseg (t.c.)	'ear lobe'
	lub taub nkawg (t.c.)	'mass of hornets' (nest or swarm)
qhov	*lub qhov rooj*	'door'
'hole'	*lub qhov rais*	'window'
	lub qhov muag	'eye'
	lub qhov ncauj	'mouth'
ko	*txhais ko taw*	'foot'
'handle'	*tus ko tw*	'tail'
caj	*tus caj dab*	'neck'
'ridge'	*tus caj ntswm*	'nose ridge'

With regard to meaning, shape prefixes do the same job as some classifiers do: they indicate the shape (or an aspect of the shape) of the noun under consideration; classifiers such as *daim* (flat), *lub* (round, bulky), *tus* (short length), and *txoj* (long length) also pick out the shape (or one aspect of the shape) of the noun with which they are paired. With regard to grammatical structure, however, shape prefixes occur in two-syllable compounds which are learned as a single vocabulary item, while classifiers occur only in the grammatical constructions described in the "When Must a Classifier Be Used?" section.

* For the few exceptions to this rule, see Ratliff (1992: Chapter II, Section 4.2).

POSSESSIVE NOUN PHRASES

In English possessive noun phrases such as the teacher's house, the boy's crossbow, and the pig's tail, the possessor comes first and the item possessed comes second. The same is true in Hmong, with both possessor and possessed preceded by their respective classifier (except with proper nouns as well as *txiv* 'father' and *niam* 'mother,' which do not take a classifier):

classifier + possessor + classifier + possessed

Possessive noun phrases are illustrated below.

1. *tus xib fwb lub tsev*
   clf teacher clf house
   'the teacher's house'

2. *tus tub rab hneev*
   clf boy clf crossbow
   'the boy's crossbow'

3. *tus npua tus tw*
   clf pig clf tail
   'the pig's tail'

4. *tus qaib lub qe*
   clf chicken clf egg
   'the chicken's egg'

5. *Neeb lub tsev*
   Neng clf house
   'Neng's house'

6. *tus me nyuam niam*
   clf child mother
   'the child's mother'

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VERB PHRASE STRUCTURE

DIFFERENT CORRESPONDENCES TO ENGLISH "TO BE"

The verb "to be" has several equivalents in Hmong. To help you choose the correct one, think about what the verb "to be" means in a given English sentence and how it could be paraphrased. For instance, in the sentence "The house is in the mountains," "is" could be paraphrased as "is located" (hence *nyob* would be used in Hmong), whereas in "There is a book on the table," "is" refers to the existence of something (hence *muaj* would be used in Hmong). Below are the most common Hmong equivalents of English "to be" along with an exercise to help you practice their usages.

I. YOG 'to be' in the sense of "to be equal" or "to be true"

1. No *yog* when the predicate is an adjective in English:

Nws mluas.	'S/he is very sad.'	(**not** **Nws yog mluas mluas.*)
Koj siab.	'You are tall.'	(**not** **Koj yog siab.*)

2. *Yog* is used when the predicate is a noun phrase:

Nws yog ib tug xib fwb.	'He is a teacher.'
Tus no yog tus hlob.	'This one is the oldest.'

3. *Yog* can also be used to introduce the equivalent of an English 'if' clause (*yog* = literally, 'be it the case'):

Yog li ces tsis cheem koj.	'If that's the case, I won't keep you then.'
Yog koj mus mas kuv mus thiab.	'If you're going, I'm going too.'

4. As we shall see in the section on Questions and Answers below, *yog* can also show up in the tag question *puas yog?* (literally, is that the case?):

Maiv muaj ob tug nus, puas yog?	'My has two brothers, doesn't she/right?'

II. NYOB 'to be' in the sense of "to be located, to be situated," hence also 'to live'

Me lub tsev nyob tsis deb tsis ze cov roob loj loj.	'Marilyn's house is neither far nor close to the mountains.'

Kuv nrog kuv tus txiv thiab kuv tus ntxhais nyob. 'I live with my husband and my daughter.'

III. MUAJ 'to be' in the sense of "to exist"

1. In constructions equivalent to English existential "there is/are":

Muaj xya leej nyob hauv·no. 'There are seven people living here.'
Puas muaj neeg nyob tsev? 'Is there anybody home?'

2. In age expressions:

Kuv tus ntxhais muaj yim xyoo xwb. 'My daughter is only eight years old.'

****

Practice exercise: Insert *yog*, *muaj*, *nyob*, or leave blank if appropriate.

1. Ntxawm _____ plaub caug rau xyoo. 'Ntxawm is forty six years old.'
2. Mas _____ nkees vim tias nws tsaug zog tsis txaus. 'Mas is tired because he did not get enough sleep.'
3. Kuv _____ ib tug ntxhais kawm ntawv. 'I'm a (female) student.'
4. Tsis _____ dab tsi noj. 'There is nothing to eat.'
5. Maiv _____ tshaib tshaib plab. 'Maiv is very hungry.'
6. Neeb _____ ib tug ntxhais Ziv Poom. 'Neeb is a Japanese girl.'
7. Nws tsis _____ hauv tsev. 'She's not at home.'
8. Peb sawv daws _____ hauv teb chaws As mes lis kas. 'We all live in the United States.'
9. Lawv _____ zoo siab. 'They're happy.'
10. Kab Npauj lub tsev _____ ze lub pas dej. 'Kab Npauj's house is near the lake.'

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I. "YES-NO" QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. The main way to ask a yes-no question is to insert *puas* before the verb you are questioning:

Nej ***puas nyiam*** *txiv puv luj?*	'Do you (pl.) like pineapple?'
Koj ***puas muaj*** *koj phau ntawv Hmoob?*	'Do you (sg.) have your Hmong book?'

The way to answer these questions is to repeat the verb with or without the negative *tsis*, depending on whether you want to give an affirmative or a negative answer:

Affirmative answer:	*Nej* ***puas nyiam*** *txiv puv luj?* 'Do you (pl.) like pineapple?'	***Nyiam.*** 'Yes, we do.'
Negative answer:	*Koj* ***puas muaj*** *koj phau ntawv Hmoob?* 'Do you (sg.) have your Hmong book?'	***Tsis muaj.*** 'No, I don't.'

2. Another way to ask a yes-no question is to add *puas yog* (literally, 'Is that the case?'; equivalent to French "n'est-ce pas?") at the end of a statement. *Puas yog* can be added to *any* statement to turn it into a yes-no question. Typically, this pattern is used when the speaker is seeking confirmation of what s/he is saying.

Lauj Pov muaj ob tug muam, ***puas yog?***
'Lopao has two sisters, doesn't he/right?'

Answer: ***yog*** (confirms what the speaker said) or ***tsis yog*** (contradicts what the speaker said).

3. Polite requests can appear in the form of a yes-no question by adding *puas tau?*—which is equivalent to 'could you please/would you please?'—at the end of the request:

Hais dua, ***puas tau?***
'Could you please say that again?'

Thov koj mus qhib lub qhov rooj, ***puas tau?***
'Would you please go and open the door?'

Answer: ***tau*** (listener agrees to request) or ***tsis tau*** (listener turns down request)

4. Adding the particle *los* at the end of a sentence will turn it into a type of yes-no question which expects a *positive* answer. The sentence is typically formulaic or states the obvious, and the speaker is merely seeking confirmation as a way of making "small talk." S/he is not seeking a true/false type of answer as is the case with the yes-no questions discussed in (1) and (2):

Koj tuaj ***los?***	Hi! (literally, something like 'So, you've come/arrived, have you?')
Koj cheb/zov tsev ***los?***	(conversational opener: 'So, you're sweeping/taking care of the house, are you?')

Answer: Verb + particle *os*—e.g., *Tuaj os.*

II. "OR" QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Insert *los* (meaning 'or' here, not 'come') between the two options:
   Tus no yog ib tug menyuam tub ***los*** *ib tug menyuam ntxhais?*
   'Is it a baby boy or a baby girl?'

Answer with one option, or with the whole sentence:
   (Tus no yog) ib tug menyuam tub.
   '(It's) a baby boy.'

2. The tag question *tas lawm los tsis tau?* 'finished or not?' often appears at the end of a statement as a way of asking somebody whether s/he has finished doing what is expressed in the statement. This construction is frequently used in spoken Hmong. Notice that while it appears in the form of an or question in Hmong, it typically translates as a yes-no question with 'yet' in English:

Koj noj mov ***tas lawm los tsis tau?***	Have you finished eating yet or not?

Answer: ***tas lawm*** (positive answer: 'Yes, I have') or ***(tseem) tsis tau*** (negative answer: 'Not yet').

III. REPORTER'S/"WH" QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In Hmong, the question word (what, who, where, when, why, etc.) occurs in the same slot as the answer to the question—i.e., not at the beginning of the question as in English:

1. What?: *dab tsi* (also spelled *dabtsi*)?*

*Koj noj **dab tsi**?*	'What are you eating?'
Kuv noj pob kws.	'I'm eating corn.'
*Xim **dab tsi**?*	'What color?'
Xim dub.	'Black.'

2. Who?: *leej twg?/twg twg?*

***Leej twg/Twg twg** xav mus ua si?*	'Who wants to go and have fun?'
Lauj Pov xav mus ua si.	'Lopao wants to go and have fun.'

3. Which?: *twg?*

*Koj yuav mus tom khw hnub **twg**?*	'Which day are you going to the market?'
Mus hnub vas Xaum.	'I'm going on Saturday.'

4. Why?: *Vim li cas?/Ua (li. cas.?*
   Because: *Vim tias/rau qhov/vim yog*

***Vim li cas** koj nkees nkees li?*	'Why are you so tired?'
***Vim tias/Vim yog** kuv mus ua si ntauntau!*	'Because I stayed out too late/had too much fun!'
***Ua cas** koj zoo zoo siab?*	'Why are you so happy?'
***Rau qhov** kuv txais tau ib tsab ntawv lawm.*	'Because I received a letter.'

5. How much/many?: *pes tsawg*

*Nws muaj **pes tsawg** tus menyuam?*	'How many children does s/he have?'
*Nws muaj **ob** tug menyuam.*	'S/he has two children.'

6. Where?: *qhov twg?*

*Lauj Pov tuaj **qhov twg** tuaj?*	'Where does Lopao come from?'
*Nws tuaj **tim Minnesota** tuaj.*	'He comes from Minnesota.'

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* In spoken Hmong this is often pronounced *atsi*.

7. How?: *licas?*

Nws lub npe hu ***li cas****?*	'What's her name?'
Nws lub npe hu ua Maiv.	'Her name is My.'
Koj mus tod ***li cas****?*	'How are you going there?'
Kuv yuav mus taw.	'I'm going on foot/I'm walking.'
Hnub no huab cua zoo ***li cas****?*	'How's the weather today?'
Hnub no tshav ntuj.	'It's bright and sunny today.'

8. What kind?: *yam li cas?*

Muaj tsiaj ***yam li cas*** *nyob saum Npis lub taub hau?*	'What kind of animal is sitting on Npi's head?'
Muaj ib tug dev nyob saum Npis lub taub hau.	'A dog is sitting on Npi's head.'

NEGATION

I. THE CERTAIN FALSITY NEGATIVE MARKER *TSIS*

While turning a positive statement into a negative one is a fairly complex matter in English,* the same is not true of Hmong: when the falsity of the proposition expressed by the clause is certain, the proposition is negated simply by inserting the negative marker *tsis* in front of the verb:

1 a. *Kuv paub*
I know
'I know.'

b. *Kuv* ***tsis*** *paub.*
I neg know
'I don't know.'

When there is more than one verb—a frequent occurrence in Hmong—the negative marker is placed before the verb which is being negated semantically:

2 a. *Kuv tsaug zog txaus.*
I sleep suffice
'I got enough sleep.'

b. *Kuv tsaug zog* ***tsis txaus.***
I sleep neg suffice
'I didn't get enough sleep.'

In comparative constructions† *tsis* occurs before the stative verb modified by *dua*:

3. *Tus noog no* ***tsis*** *loj dua tus noog ntawd.*
clf bird this big neg comp clf bird that
'This bird is not bigger than that bird.'

In superlative constructions, *tsis* occurs either before the first verb or before *tshaj*:

4 a. *Tus noog no* ***tsis*** *loj tshaj.*
clf bird this neg big surpass
'This bird is not the biggest.'

b. *Tus noog no loj* ***tsis*** *tshaj.*
clf bird this big neg surpass
'This bird is not the biggest.'

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* The main complexity stems from the fact that sentences with auxiliaries are negated by adding "not" (or its contracted form, "n't") after the auxiliary while sentences with ordinary verbs need the auxiliary "do" before "not"/"n't", cf. "She can't go" vs. "She didn't go."

† For details see "Comparative and Superlative Constructions" section.

II. THE UNCERTAIN FALSITY NEGATIVE MARKER *(TSIS) TXHOB*

As seen in the examples in the section above, the negative marker *tsis* is used when the falsity of the proposition expressed by the clause is certain. On the other hand, when the falsity of the proposition is not certain, the special negative marker *txhob*—optionally preceded by *tsis* with no apparent difference in meaning—is used. Uncertain falsity is characteristic of negative imperative constructions* (as in 5), since issuing a negative command does not guarantee success, and of constructions involving speculation (as in 6) or hope (as in 7). The contrast between the two negative markers is clearly illustrated in 6: *(tsis) txhob* appears in the if-clause, which refers to a speculative state of affairs, while *tsis* is found in the main clause, which refers to an actual state of affairs.

5. ***(Koj) (tsis) txhob*** *hais li ntawd!*
   you neg neg uncert speak like that
   'Don't speak like that!'

6. *Yog kuv* ***(tsis) txhob*** *ua, peb twb tsis swb lawm.*
   if I neg neg uncert do we sure neg lose perf
   'If I hadn't done this, we would not have lost.'

7. ***(Tsis) txhob*** *mus los mas.*
   neg neg uncert go prt prt
   'Don't go (please).'

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* Imperative constructions typically have the same grammatical structure as basic declarative constructions, as seen below (note that the second-person pronoun is optional):

(Koj) mus.
you go
'Go!'

VERB SERIALIZATION

Paying close attention to the verbs, consider the following sentences from *"Dab neeg nab qatsiav"* 'The school lizard,' by Lyfu Vang, found in the reading section.

From *"Dab neeg nab qa tsiav"* #1

1. *Ib tug nab qa tsiav* ***khiav*** ***tawm*** ***los.***
   run come out come
   'A lizard escaped—literally, came running out.'

2. *Tub Sawm* ***sawv*** ***mus*** ***ntes*** *tus nab qa tsiav*
   rise, get up go catch

   tab sis nws ***khiav tawm*** *tim lub qhov rooj* ***mus*** *lawm.*
   run come out go
   'Sawm got up to catch the lizard, but it ran out the door.'

3. *Tub Sawm thiaj li* ***rov qab*** ***los*** ***zaum.***
   return come sit
   'So Sawm sat down again.' [*rov (qab)* + Verb = 'to do Verb again/to re-Verb']

From *"Dab neeg nab qa tsiav"* #2

4. *Nws tus nab qa tsiav* ***nkag*** ***nkag*** ***nyob*** *saum nws lub rooj sau ntawv.*
   crawl crawl be located
   'His lizard crawled around on top of his desk.'

5. *Tub Riam thiaj* ***mus*** ***sawv*** ***ntsug*** *tim lub qhov rais.*
   go stand upright
   'So Riam went and stood by the window.'

From *"Dab neeg nab qa tsiav"* #3

6. *Ib tug nabqa tsiav* ***nkag tawm*** *tim lub qhov rooj* ***los.***
   crawl come out come
   'A lizard crawled in through the door.'

7. *Nws maj mam* ***nkag*** ***los*** ***nres*** *ze ze ntawm Maiv Tooj lub rooj zaum.*
   crawl come stop
   'It slowly crawled very close to Maiv Tooj's chair.'

8. *tus nabqa tsiav thiaj li* ***khiav tawm*** *tim lub qhov rooj* ***rov qab*** ***mus*** *lawm.*
run come out return go
'... the lizard went running out the door again.'

9. *Tus xibfwb thiaj li* ***sawv*** ***mus*** ***qhib*** *lub qhov rooj.*
get up, rise go open
'The teacher (got up and) opened the door.'

From *"Dab neeg nab qa tsiav" #4*

10. *Maiv Tooj ho yuav* ***nce*** ***mus*** *saum nws lub rooj zaum.*
climb go
'Maiv Tooj climbed on top of her chair.'

11. *Ib tug nab qa tsiav* ***khiav los*** *ze ze ntawm lawv cov rooj zaum.*
run come
'A lizard was running around very close to their chairs.'

12. *Maiv Tooj* ***qw qw kom*** *Tub Riam* ***mus qhib*** *lub qhov rooj.*
shout shout order go open
'Maiv Tooj shouted at Riam to go and open the door.'

13. *Tus nab qa tsiav twb* ***khiav tawm*** *tim lub qhov rais* ***mus*** *lawm.*
run come out go
'The lizard ran out through the window.'

As you can see in all of these examples, Hmong likes to string verbs together without any coordination and/or subordination markers. It is not uncommon to find strings of up to four or five verbs sharing the same subject, as illustrated in the following example:

14. *Yam zoo tshaj plaws mas, nej yuav tsum* ***mus nrhiav nug xyuas saib***
thing good most top you must go look for ask visit see

luag muaj kev pab hom dab tsi nyob ncig ib cheeb tsam ntawm nej
others have way help kind what be-at around environs at you

'The best thing to do is for you to find people who live in your neighborhood who can help you with different things.'

This phenomenon of stringing verbs together is referred to as verb serialization and is a feature characteristic of many languages of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Typically, verb serialization involves:

a. A concatenation of two or more verbs sharing the same subject (and sometimes an object)
b. No overt marking of subordination or coordination
c. Taking what is conceived of as a single, unitary action/activity/event in English, breaking it down into its different component parts, and stating all the subparts explictly via a string of verbs. These verbs can occur side by side or can have elements sandwiched in between them—elements such as a direct object after a transitive verb or a location phrase after an intransitive verb.

A good way to begin studying verb serialization in Hmong is to look at constructions in which it is typically used.

I. MOTION + DIRECTION SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

In this type of verb serialization, the string of verbs starts with one or more action verbs involving motion (e.g., *khiav* 'run,' *nce* 'climb,' *nqa* 'pick up and carry in the hand(s),' *nkag* 'crawl,' etc.) and ends with a verb describing the direction of movement in relation to the speaker and hearer. The most common directional verbs are *mus* 'go' and *los* 'come'; *los* indicates motion toward the speaker or point of reference, while *mus* refers to motion away from the speaker or point of reference. Examples 1, 2 (second clause), 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 13 from *"Dab neeg nab qatsiav"* above, as well as the examples below, illustrate this very common type of serialization. Typically, these strings of verbs correspond to a single verb or a verb followed by a preposition in English.

15. *Lawv* ***nce nkag mus*** vs. *Lawv* ***nce nkag los***
they climb crawl go — they climb crawl come
'They climbed out.' — 'They climbed in.'

16. ***Nqa*** *taws* ***mus*** vs. ***Nqa*** *taws* ***los***
carry wood go — carry wood come
'Take the wood.' — 'Bring the wood.'

17. ... *peb yawg* *hlob Vaj Pov* ***tau khiav tawm*** *teb chaws*
our grandfather elder Vaj Pov attain run come out country
'... our leader Vang Pao fled the country'

18 a. *Nws* ***nqa*** *nws rab hneev* ***los*** *tsev.*
s/he carry her/his clf crossbow come home
'S/he brought his/her crossbow home.'

b. *Nws* ***nqa*** *nws rab hneev* ***mus.***
s/he carry her/his clf crossbow go
'S/he took his/her crossbow.'

19. *Ntshav* ***tawm*** ***tawm*** *hauv tus qav lub qhov ncauj* ***los.***
blood come out come out inside clf frog clf mouth come
'Blood was streaming out of the frog's mouth.'

Looking over all these examples and others following the same pattern, you should begin to feel that motion verbs such as *khiav*, *nce*, *nqa*, and *nkag* are not complete without a directional verb such as *mus* or *los*.*

II. CAUSATIVE SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

These serial verb constructions describe *direct* causation: the first verb describes the direct action of the subject on the object, which causes the change described by the second verb, as seen in (20-25) below. Note that while all the verbs in the motion + direction type of serial verb construction shared the same subject, in the causative type the object of the first verb in the series is interpreted as the subject of the second.

20. *Nws* ***ntaus*** *tus dev* ***khiav*** *kiag.*
s/he hit clf dog run int
'S/he hit the dog so that it ran away.'

21. *Lawv* ***tua*** *tus txiv neej* ***tuag.***
they shoot clf man die
'They shot the man dead./The man was shot to death.'

22. *Lawv* ***ua*** *lub tsev* ***siab siab.***
they make clf house high high
'They built the house very high.'

23. *Peb* ***khawb*** *lub qhov* ***tob tob.***†
we dig clf hole deep deep
'We dug the hole very deep.'

24. ***Pov*** *pob* ***los*** *rau kuv.*
throw ball come to me
'Throw the ball (so that it comes) to me.'

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* Another common directional verb is *tuaj*, which, although it translates as 'come' like *los*, has a different shade of meaning: whereas *los* means 'come (back) to a place where one resides or belongs,' *tuaj* means 'come to a place where one does not reside or belong (i.e., temporarily).' See example (36) for an illustration of the meaning of *tuaj*.

† Recall that while *tob* 'deep' and *siab* 'high, tall' are considered to be adjectives in English, they are treated as verbs in Hmong. (See "Different Correspondences to English 'To Be'" for details.)

25. *Npis* ***xa*** *ib tsab ntawv* ***mus*** *rau nws niam.*
Bee send clf letter go to his mother
'Bee sent a letter (so that it went) to his mother.'*

III. DISPOSAL SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

As suggested by their name, disposal serial verb constructions generally describe situations in which the subject of the first verb disposes of, destroys, or relinquishes the object in some way, as seen in (26-30). As is the case with the causative constructions discussed above, there is a noun phrase between the two verbs involved in the series. However, while in the causative type this noun phrase is interpreted as being both the object of the first verb and the subject of the second verb, in the disposal type the shared noun phrase is the object of both the first and the second verbs.

26. *Tus tub* ***pov*** *nws rab hnęev* ***tseg.***
clf boy throw his clf crossbow leave, abandon
'The boy threw his crossbow down.'

27. *Lawv* ***xa*** *ib qho khoom* ***pub*** ***kuv.***
they send some thing give present me
'They sent some things to me (as a present).'

28. *...* ***koj*** *thiaj li* ***tom kuv noj***
... you so bite me eat
'... so you can gobble me up'

29. *Nws* ***muab*** *pojniam* ***nrauj*** *lawm.*
he take wife divorce perf
'He divorced his wife.'

30. *Ces txawm* ***muab*** ***pov*** ***rau*** *tshav ntuj.*†
and then take throw put in sunlight
'So then they took it and threw it into the sunlight.'

NOTE: There are a lot of sentences which follow the grammatical pattern found in (29-30) but which do not have a "disposal" meaning: while the first verb is also ***muab*** 'take,' the second verb

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* It is interesting to compare the causative serial verb constructions in (24-25) with a motion + direction construction such as (15) *Lawv nce nkag mus/los* 'They climbed in/out.' Both types of constructions include the directional verbs *mus* and *los*. However, there is a difference between the two types of constructions in terms of *who* does the moving: in the motion + direction type, it is the subject of the first verb (which is the subject of all the verbs in the series) which does the moving; in the causative type it is the object of the first verb which moves as a result of what the subject does.

† The subject "they" and the object "it" are both derived from the larger context of the story.

does not necessarily describe how the object is "disposed of," but simply how it is dealt with or what happens to it. This is illustrated in (31-32):

31. ***Muab*** *lawv* ***cais*** *raws li* *lawv* *lub cev* *thiab* *lawv* *qhov feem.*
take them separate from according to their clf body and their type
'Classify them according to their shape and type.'

32. *Pog Xeev Laus* *thiab* *Yawg Xeev Laus* *nkawd* *yug* *tau* *ib* *tug* *ntxhais;*
Mrs. Seng Lor and Mr. Seng Lor they-two give birth get one clf daughter

nkawm muab hu ua *Muam Nkauj Liag,* ***no.***
pair take call Mua Ngao Lia this

'Mr. and Mrs. Seng Lor gave birth to a daughter; they named her Mua Ngao Lia.'

IV. INSTRUMENTAL SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

Instrumental serial verb constructions are equivalent to English "to do X with Y." The most common verbs to occur as the first element of these constructions are *xuas* 'grasp, hold, grope,' *muab* 'take (in hand),' and *siv* 'use.' They are followed by the instrument used to carry out the action, after which comes the verb describing the purpose to which the instrument is put—e.g., 'to take-key-to-open', 'to use-knife-to-cut,' etc. In sentences with *xuas* or *muab* the handling of the instrument is emphasized, whereas in sentences with *siv* the notion of utilization is stressed. These points are illustrated in the examples below:

33 a. *Nws* *tau* ***xuas*** *yuam sij* ***qhib*** *qhov rooj* *lawm.*
s/he attain grasp key open door perf
'S/he opened the door with a key.'

b. *Nws* *tau* ***muab*** *yuam sij* ***qhib*** *qhov rooj* *lawm.*
s/he attain take key open door perf
'S/he opened the door with a key.'

c. *Nws* *tau* ***siv*** *yuam sij* ***qhib*** *qhov rooj* *lawm.*
s/he attain use key open door perf
'S/he opened the door with a key.'

34 a. *Tus* *neeg* *caum* *nqaij* *tau* ***xuas*** *phom* ***tua*** *tus* *noog.*
clf person chase meat attain grasp gun kill clf bird
'The hunter killed the bird with a gun.'

b. *Tus* *neeg* *caum* *nqaij* *tau* ***muab*** *phom* ***tua*** *tus* *noog.*

clf person chase meat attain take gun kill clf bird
'The hunter killed the bird with a gun.'

c. *Tus neeg caum nqaij tau* ***siv*** *phom* ***tua*** *tus noog.*
clf person chase meat attain use gun kill clf bird
'The hunter killed the bird with a gun/used a gun to kill the bird.'

NOTE: When *siv* is used, the implication is that the instrument is already in the agent's hand(s). When *xuas* or *muab* are used, the agent may or may not already have the instrument in hand, depending on the context. For example, in 33, if the key needed to open the door is in full sight on top of a table—i.e., no groping is necessary to access it—it is preferrable to use *muab* (a neutral 'take (in hand)' over *xuas*. A good way to get a sense of the subtle differences among these three verbs is to ask a Hmong person to act these sentences out for you.

V. PURPOSE SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

Purpose serial verb constructions involve a motion verb such as *mus* 'go,' *los* 'come,' *tuaj* 'come (to a place where one does not reside or belong),' *sawv* 'get up, rise,' etc. and an action verb such as *ntes* 'catch,' *qhib* 'open,' *nrhiav* 'look for.' Examples 2, 9, 12, and 14 from *"Dab neeg nab qa tsiav"* above, as well as the examples below, illustrate this type of serial verb construction.

35. *Kuv nrog kuv tus txiv mus pem Chicago;* ***wb mus noj mov*** *ntawm lub*
I with my clf husband go up Chicago we go eat rice at clf

tsev noj mov Nyab Laj.
restaurant Vietnamese

'My husband and I went up to Chicago; we went [there] to eat at a Vietnamese restaurant.'

36. *Tej zaum* ***nkawd tuaj xyuas*** *wb pem Indiana thiab.*
sometimes they come visit us up Indiana too
'Sometimes they come to visit us up in Indiana too.'

VI. VERB (OBJECT) + ACCOMPLISHMENT VERB SERIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

In these serial constructions, the second verb is a verb of accomplishment such as *tau* 'get, obtain,' *raug* 'hit the target,' or *txaus* 'suffice, be enough.' The presence or absence of the negative marker *tsis* 'not' before the second verb indicates whether the action expressed by the first verb has been accomplished successfully or not, as seen in the contrast between the (a) and (b) sentences in examples 37-39:

37 a. *Tooj* ***tua*** *(phom)* ***raug.***
Tooj fire gun hit the target
'Tooj fired and hit his target.'

b. *Tooj* ***tua*** *(phom)* *tsis* ***raug.***
Tooj fire gun neg hit the mark
'Tooj missed.'

38 a. *Kuv* ***tsaug zog*** ***txaus.***
I sleep suffice
'I got enough sleep.'

b. *Kuv* ***tsaug zog*** *tsis* ***txaus.***
I sleep neg suffice
'I didn't get enough sleep.'

39 a. *Kuv* ***nrhiav*** ***tau*** *txiv neej.*
I look for get man
'I found a man.'

b. *Kuv* ***nrhiav*** *tsis* ***tau*** *txiv neej.*
I look for neg get man
'I can't find a man.'

Hence,

nrhiav	= 'to look for, search'
nrhiav tau	= 'to find'
nrhiav tsis tau	= 'to not be able to find'

VII. ELABORATION SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

These are cases of verb serialization whose primary function seems to be a stylistic one—namely, to overtly specify all the subparts of an event/situation to an extent that is not found in a language like English. In all of the examples below (and in serial verb constructions in general), the translations show that English has a much higher tolerance for vagueness in this area than Hmong does.

40. *Nws* ***nyeem*** *ntawv rau kuv niam* ***mloog.***
s/he read book to my mother listen
'S/he's reading to my mother.'

Contrary to English, the action performed by the person being read to—namely, listening—has to be stated explicitly in Hmong.

41. *Kuv mam* ***zov*** ***ntsia*** *koj* ***mus.***
I so then guard watch you go
'I'll watch you go.'

This sentence is said by a father to his young son, who is afraid of leaving the area where his father is plowing to go to the edge of the field to play. The sentence would be correct grammatically speaking without *zov* 'guard, care for, look after,' but it would not be good, idiomatic Hmong. The sentence is better with *zov*, which states explicitly the component of the situation whereby the father is taking care of the son by watching.

42. ... ***tso*** *kwv* ***tso*** *tij* ***tso*** *txiv* ***tseg***
relinquish younger brother relinquish older brother relinquish father abandon
'...leave one's relatives behind.'

Here again it is stylistically better Hmong to elaborate on the abandoning of specific relatives.

VIII. TIPS TO FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

1. Expose yourself to many instances of verb serialization by reading Hmong (the Johnson folk tales are a good way to start). This will help you develop a feel for verb serialization.

2. Think of all the different components of an action or an event, and state them explicitly.

3. Bear in mind that *los* has to be used to express motion toward the speaker or point of reference, while *mus* has to be used to express motion away from the speaker or point of reference.

4. If all else fails, ask a native speaker to act out sentences with multiple verbs for you.

TENSE AND ASPECT MARKERS

I. TENSE

Tense refers to the grammatical means a language uses to express the location in time of a situation (event, activity, or state). In languages such as English, French, German, or Spanish, we speak of the past, present, and future tenses; these languages encode the differences between tenses in the verb forms, which change depending on the tense. In English, for instance, the past tense of a verb is formed by adding the suffix "-ed" to the verb stem (e.g., They cook<u>ed</u> dinner last night). In addition, there are a finite number of verbs which have an irregular past tense (e.g., go/went, buy/bought, sleep/slept, etc.). In Asian languages, verb forms typically stay the same regardless of the location in time of a situation. This does not mean that these languages do not have tense, however. While they do not mark time reference by altering verb forms, they do locate situations along the time line via temporal adverb phrases such as "last year," "twenty years ago," "in 1900," etc. Let us compare a prototypical English and Hmong past tense sentence to illustrate this point:

1. *Nag hmo kuv mus tom khw.*
   yesterday I go loc market
   'I went to the market yesterday.'

In the English sentence the location in time of the action is indicated twice, once via the adverb yesterday and once via the change in the verb form from "go" to "went"; in Hmong (and other Asian languages), tense is simply indicated once, via the adverb *nag hmo* 'yesterday.' Hmong (along with other Asian languages) is thus easier and more economical in this respect: in natural written and spoken discourse, the time frame of a situation is established at the beginning of a story or conversation and is not referred to again unless it changes. From an Asian language point of view, having to conjugate verbs in addition to using temporal adverb phrases to mark tense seems redundant and is the source of great learning difficulties in acquiring a language such as English.

II. ASPECT

Besides being described in terms of their location on a time line via tense, situations can also be described in terms of the ways they unfold and are profiled by the speaker. To illustrate this point, let us compare and contrast the following English sentences:

2. I eat rice every day.
3. Don't bother me now; I'm eating.

In sentence (2) "I eat" refers to a *habitual* situation, occurring on a regular basis; in sentence (3), on the other hand, "I'm eating" refers to an *ongoing* situation, unfolding at the time it is being uttered. The difference between these two sentences is not a difference in tense, but rather in what is called

"aspect." Aspect refers to the grammatical means a language uses to profile a situation in terms of concepts such as "durativity" (ongoing situation), "completion" (completed situation), "iteration" (repeated situation), etc. Thus, in English, the simple present tense can be used as a grammatical device to express a habitual situation such as the one in (2), while the present progressive ["to be" + main verb + "-ing"] can serve to encode an ongoing situation such as the one in (3).

A further way of clarifying the distinction between tense and aspect is to use the following test: something is considered to be aspect rather than tense if it can co-occur with tense (or other forms of time specification such as temporal adverbs). Thus the English progressive and perfect are aspects because they can be used with any tense (present, past, or future), as seen below:

TENSE →	*PRESENT*	*PAST*	*FUTURE*
↓ ASPECT			
PROGRESSIVE	I am eating (today)	I was eating (yesterday)	I will be eating (tomorrow)
PERFECT	I have eaten (today)	I had eaten (yesterday)	I will have eaten (tomorrow)

Cross-linguistically, the most common aspect distinction is between perfective and imperfective. A helpful metaphor for illustrating this contrast is to think of a camera lens whose focus can be adjusted to allow a situation to be viewed from different perspectives and angles. With this metaphor in mind, perfective aspect refers to situations viewed synthetically "from the outside," as completed wholes with clear results or endpoints; since their terminal boundary is in sharp focus, these situations typically occur in the past and are fully realized. Imperfective aspect refers to situations viewed analytically "from the inside," with explicit reference to their internal development and leaving their endpoints out of focus. Thus imperfective aspect puts the emphasis on the situation as process and includes the progressive and the habitual aspects discussed above.

While tense is an easy area of Hmong grammar to deal with since time specification is achieved solely via temporal adverb phrases, aspect is a more challenging domain. As is the case with tense, verb forms themselves do not change in order to reflect aspect contrasts, but there are a number of verbal modifiers which are used as grammatical devices to encode aspectual differences. Most of these verbal modifiers are elements which occur before the verb;* a good case in point is the pre-verbal marker *tab tom*, which Hmong uses as the grammatical means of encoding ongoing situations, as seen in (4):

4. ***Lawv tab tom noj mov.***
   they prog eat rice
   'They're eating.'†

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* The major exception to this is the perfective aspect marker *lawm*, which occurs at the end of a sentence or clause (see section on sentence/clause + *lawm* below for details).

† Since there is no time specification in Hmong, the sentence could also translate as 'They were/will be eating.'

Sentence (4) illustrates the fact that Hmong and English share the progressive aspect on a conceptual level, but encode it differently in the grammar: while English uses the progressive made up of "to be" + main verb + "-ing," Hmong uses the pre-verbal element *tab tom.* *

The next four sections discuss the major aspect markers of Hmong in detail.

III. *TAB TOM* + VERB = SITUATION IN PROGRESS

Tab tom is an aspect marker which can appear in pre-verbal position to indicate that a situation (activity, event, state) is in progress. (5-8) illustrate this usage of *tab tom* as an indicator that a situation is in the process of unfolding:

5. *Lawv txiv mus tom khw lawm, tiam sis lawv niam* ***tab tom*** *ntxhua khaub ncaws.*
   their father go loc market perf but/and their mother prog wash clothes
   'Their father has gone to the market, and their mother is washing clothes.'

6. *Nws* ***tab tom*** *ua hauj lwm tim khw.*
   she prog work at market
   'S/he's working at the market.'

7. *Thaum kuv tus phooj ywg tuaj (kuv)* ***tab tom*** *noj mov.*
   when my clf friend come (I) prog eat rice
   'When my friend arrived I was eating.'

8. *Tam sim no Npis* ***tab tom*** *kawm ntawv tiam sis (nws) xav saib this vis.*
   right now Bee prog study but (he) want watch TV
   'Right now Bee is studying, but he wants to watch TV.'

The pre-verbal modifier *tab tom* can also indicate that a situation is about to start, as seen in (9). This is especially clear when *tab tom* appears in conjunction with the irrealis marker *yuav*, as illustrated in (10).†

9. *Npis* ***tab tom*** *nto hluas nraug; Maiv* ***tab tom*** *nto hluas nkauj thiab.*
   Bee prog reach puberty My prog reach puberty too
   'Bee is about to reach puberty; My is about to reach puberty too.' (I.e., they're about to be of marriageable age in Hmong culture.)

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* The *tab tom* +verb construction, however, is not used as frequently as the English progressive (see next section for details).

† For a definition of realis and irrealis, see footnote in *Tau* section and discussion in *Yuav* section below.

10. *Thaum tus Tsov* ***tab tom*** *yuav dhia, tus Qav txawm tuav kiag tus Tsov tus tw.*
when clf Tiger prog irrls jump clf Frog then grab int clf Tiger clf tail
'When the Tiger was about to jump, the Frog grabbed tightly onto the Tiger's tail.'

From this we can see that *tab tom* is typically the equivalent of the English progressive aspect made up of the auxiliary "to be" followed by a verb in the gerundive "-ing" form (e.g., 'Bee is studying'). In terms of usage though, there is a crucial difference between the two languages: while the progressive is used profusely in English, this is not the case in Hmong. The *tab tom* construction is used only when it is not clear from the context that a situation is in progress or about to happen. Hence, you must be careful not to fall into one of the beginner's learning traps—i.e., resorting to translation: the English progressive very rarely translates as *tab tom* + verb; most of the time, the simple verb form is used (e.g., *Nws ua hauj lwm* 'S/he's working'). This is further illustrated in the dialogues, readings, and oral comprehension stories found in this book: while *tab tom* is hardly ever used in Hmong, the progressive forms are common in the English translations of these materials. A good strategy, then, is to look at natural Hmong discourse and to notice how infrequent this construction is. Paying close attention to its actual occurrences will help you figure out when it is necessary to use it.

IV. SENTENCE/CLAUSE + *LAWM* = COMPLETED SITUATION

The word *lawm* has three different grammatical functions with a common semantic thread running through them. First, *lawm* can be used as a main verb meaning 'to leave, depart, go,' as seen in (11) below. This is the least common usage of *lawm*; *mus* 'to go' is much more common.

11. *Lawv* ***lawm*** *lauj.*
they leave prt
'They have gone.'

Second, *lawm* can be used as a location word referring to a place a certain distance away from the speaker when it is followed by a locative phrase as seen in (12-13):

12. *Cia peb mus* ***lawm*** *tom lawv.*
let we go distance there they
'Let's go to their place.'

13. *Nws khiav* ***lawm*** *pem Tsheej Maim.*
s/he run distance up Chiang Mai
'S/he escaped to Chiang Mai.'

Third (and this is the most common usage), when *lawm* is found at the end of a sentence or clause, it functions as the perfective marker in Hmong. This means that *lawm* signals the completion of a given situation (event, activity, or state), as seen in (14):

14. *Kuv noj mov* ***lawm.***
I eat rice perf
'I am finished/I am done eating.'

To illustrate the usage of *lawm* in a richer context, let's look at two instances of its occurrence in an excerpt of the oral comprehension story *"Npis npaj mov noj"* 'Bee prepares a meal (to eat)':

15. *Npis rov qab los tsev los muab ib lub lauj kaub rau dej rau, npau* ***lawm,***
Bee return home dir take one clf pot put water into boil perf
nws mam li npaws zaub paj rau. Nws cub mov thiab. Thaum tiav huv si
he then break cauliflower into he steam rice too when ready all
lawm *nws mam li noj.*
perf he then eat
'After he returns home, he puts water in a pot. After the water boils, he breaks the cauliflower into it. He also steams the rice. When everything is ready, he proceeds to eat.'

In both instances *lawm* signals the completion of a situation: in the first one the boiling of the water, and in the second one the readiness of the meal.

Since *lawm* is a completion marker, it comes as no surprise that it is used with the pre-verbal marker *twb* 'already, really', as seen in this excerpt of *"Tus tsov los xyuas"* 'Tiger shows up for a visit':

16. *Tus tsov hais tias, "Kuv yuav noj koj." Tiam sis kuv teb tias, "Koj noj kuv*
clf tiger say I fut eat you but I answer you eat me
tsis tau. Kuv twb noj koj ***lawm."***
neg can I already eat you perf
'The tiger said, "I'm going to eat you." But I answered, "You can't eat me. I've already eaten you."'

As Ratliff (1992) has pointed out, the common semantic thread that runs through the three grammatical functions of *lawm* discussed above has to do with a line between the home center and a certain distant point:

- with the main verb *lawm* 'to leave,' the focus is on the beginning of movement along the line;
- with the locative *lawm*, the focus is on the point at the end of the line—i.e., "there"; and
- with the perfective aspect marker *lawm*, the focus is on the completion of the movement.

When *lawm* occurs at the end of a clause or sentence it sometimes indicates that the action is merely underway—i.e., has left the starting point, but has not been completed yet, as seen in (17). A good way to think about this is to consider it as the completion of the outset of the action rather than the entire action. In (17), while the playing is not completed, the taking off to do so is. Context will help you catch this nuance.

17. *Tus tub tau rab hneev; nws thiaj mus uasi* ***lawm.***
clf boy get clf crossbow he then go play perf
'The boy got the crossbow and went off to play.'

As noted earlier, *lawm* is most commonly used as a perfective aspect marker to signal the completion of a situation (event, activity, state). As such, *lawm* is independent of tense: the situation can be viewed as completed not only in the past, but also in the present and future, as seen in (18):

18. *Thaum txog peb caug* ***lawm*** *sawv daws thiaj tau hnav khaub ncaws tshiab.*
when arrive New Year perf everybody then attain wear clothes new
'So when the New Year arrives, everybody gets to wear new clothes.'

As a perfective marker, *lawm* is often preceded by *tas* 'done, finished, completed,' which further underlines the completion of a situation. As discussed in the Parataxis section, one of the characteristics of Hmong style is to conjoin elements with similar meanings, and *tas lawm* can be analyzed as one such stylistic variant. The usage of *tas lawm* is illustrated in (19), an excerpt from "The Tiger and the Frog":

19. *"Koj yuav noj kuv! Kuv twb tho koj lub siab noj* ***tas lawm*** *lasas."*
you irrls eat me I already pierce your clf liver eat finished perf prt
'You're going to eat me! But I've already eaten your liver.'

V. TAU

Tau is one of the most frequently occurring elements in the Hmong verb phrase as well as one of the most challenging to interpret since it has several functions. An understanding of its core meaning combined with a look at its position vis-à-vis other elements in the verb phrase will help you come to grips with its multiple usages.

A. TAU AS A MAIN VERB = 'TO GET, TO OBTAIN'

i. Tau used by itself = 'to get, to obtain'

When *tau* is used by itself in a verb phrase, it functions as a transitive verb meaning 'to get, to obtain,' as illustrated in (20-21):

20. *Koj yuav tsum cog zaub coj mus muag, koj* ***tau*** *nyiaj, koj mam li*
you must plant vegetables take go sell you get money you then
yuav nplhaib.
buy ring
'You must plant vegetables for sale, and you'll get money to buy the ring.'

21. *Tus tub* ***tau*** *rab hneev; nws thiaj mus uasi lawm.*
clf boy get clf crossbow he then go play perf
'The boy got his crossbow and went off to play.'

As a transitive verb, *tau* shares the grammatical properties of other transitive verbs: it can be preceded by the question marker *puas*, the negative marker *tsis*, or the progressive aspect marker *tab tom*. It can also be used in conjunction with the completion aspect marker *lawm* (see section on aspect marker combinations); finally, like all verbs, it can be be reduplicated to convey the iterative aspect—i.e., *tau tau* = 'keep getting.'

ii. Verb + <u>tau</u> 'to get, to obtain' = actual accomplishment of action

When *tau* follows another verb, it indicates the actual accomplishment of the purpose of an action and points to the <u>yield</u> of the action expressed by the verb. This is clearly illustrated in the contrast between *xav* and *xav* ***tau*** in (22): in the first part of the sentence, *xav* simply refers to the act of thinking (hard, since *xav* is reduplicated) about something, whereas in the second part, the occurrence of ***tau*** after *xav* means that the thinking has actually yielded a result—namely, getting an idea:

22. *Tus qav xav xav ib pliag, tus qav xav* ***tau*** *tswv yim.*
clf frog think think awhile clf frog think get idea
'The frog thought it over for awhile and got an idea.'

This verb + *tau* construction falls into the broader category of serial verb constructions made up of a verb followed by an accomplishment verb (see section on verb serialization for details). The notion of *tau* confirming the result/yield of an action is further illustrated below. Note the following helpful translations:

'to find' = *nrhiav* ***tau***—i.e., 'to look for' + 'to get, obtain'
'to chase' = *caum* ***tau***—i.e., 'to chase' + 'to get, obtain'

23. *Nws yug* ***tau*** *ib tug tub tag.*
she give birth get one clf son finish
'She gave birth to a boy.'

24. A: *Koj yuav* ***tau*** *dab tsi?*
you buy get what
'What did you buy?'
B: *Kuv yuav* ***tau*** *ib co qe, nqaij qaib, zaub.*
I buy get some egg chicken greens
'I bought some eggs, chicken, greens.'

25. *Kuv nrhiav* ***tau*** *phau ntawv.*
I look for get clf book
'I found the book.'

26. *Me nyuam caum* ***tau*** *ib tug npaujnpaim zoo nkauj.*
child chase get one clf butterfly beautiful
'The child caught a beautiful butterfly.'

B. TAU AS AN AUXILIARY VERB

Over time, *tau* evolved into an auxiliary (helping) verb in addition to being a main verb. As an auxiliary verb, *tau* can occur both in pre-verbal position and in post-verbal position, with correspondingly different shades of meaning, as discussed below.*

i. Tau + verb = 'to get to, to manage to V' = tau as attainment marker

When *tau* occurs before a main verb, it functions as an aspect marker† conveying the attainment or fulfillment of the situation (activity, event, state) described by the verb. The situation can take place in the past, present, or future, as seen in the examples below. In Hmong, the time frame of a situation is given at the discourse level (i.e., entire conversation, story, etc.) rather than the isolated sentence level, so you will need to look at the larger context of a sentence to figure out the time reference if it is not explicitly stated. If you know from context that a sentence refers to the past, *tau* + verb translates as a past tense in English.

27. *Lawv* ***tau*** *noj nqaij nyug.*
they attain eat meat beef
'They ate beef.'

But if there is an explicit past time marker such as an adverb referring to the past, *tau* is optional and is typically left out entirely, as seen in (28) and (29) respectively:

28. *Nag hmo niam tais* ***(tau)*** *hais ib zag dab neeg*
last night grandmother (attain) tell one clf story
'Grandmother told us a story last night.'

29. *Nag hmo sawv ntxov muaj ib tug tsov tuaj hauv kuv lub tsev.*
yesterday morning be one clf tiger come to my clf house
'Yesterday morning, a tiger came to my house.'

---

* The pattern whereby a main verb meaning 'to get, to obtain' has developed into both a pre-verbal and a post-verbal auxiliary with the same meaning differences as in Hmong is found in other Asian languages (e.g., Chinese, Thai, Mien, Vietnamese, Khmer, Lahu, and other Hmong dialects).

† See sections on tense and aspect above for details on the notion of aspect.

In much of the literature on Hmong grammar, *tau* + verb has been described as the equivalent of the English past tense. While it is true that an attained situation is often a past situation and that *tau* + verb typically translates as a past tense in this case, this description covers only part of the picture and is misleading in gaining an understanding of the *tau* + verb construction. Rather than fish for a one-word translation for *tau*, it is better to think of it as a word referring to a state of affairs that has been successfully reached or that is going to be reached. *Tau* should definitely not be equated with the past tense in English. *Tau* is not a tense marker; it functions as an aspect marker, and the fulfillment of the situation can take place not only in the past, but also in the present and in the future, as seen in (30-32). Hence, a more accurate way of describing the *tau* + verb construction would be to analyze it as meaning 'to get to/to manage to V, to reach the state described by V, to have the opportunity to V' (where V = main verb):*

30. *Thaum txog pebcaug lawm sawv daws thiaj* ***tau*** *hnav khaub ncaws tshiab.*
when arrive New Year perf everybody then attain wear clothes new
'So when the New Year arrives, everybody gets to wear new clothes.'

31. *Kuv niam hluas nyob hauv Oregon; nws tsis* ***tau*** *yuav txiv.*
my younger sister live in Oregon she neg attain getmarried
'My younger sister lives in Oregon; she's not married (yet).'

32. *Tus Tsov hais tias, "Qav, koj nyob qhov twg? Koj puas* ***tau*** *dhia?*
clf Tiger say Frog you be where you Q attain jump
'The Tiger said, "Frog, where are you? Have you jumped over yet?"'

ii. Verb + <u>tau</u> = 'can, be able to V' = <u>tau</u> as potential mode marker

When *tau* occurs after a main verb, it functions as a potential mode marker expressing possibility, permissibility, ability. As such, it translates as 'can, be able to'; the verb + *tau* construction is illustrated in (33):

33. *Qav, wb sib twv dhia hla tus cav no saib leej twg dhia* ***tau*** *deb dua*
Frog we-two recip compete jump go across clf log this see who jump can far comp.
'Frog, let's have a race jumping over this log to see who can jump farther.'

As will be seen in the section on modality markers, "can, be able to" covers a large meaning territory in English that is broken down into at least three separate words in Hmong: *tau*, *taus*, and *txawj*. For further details on *tau* as a potential mode marker and on the distinction between *tau*, *taus*, and *txawj*, see below.

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* Another way of describing this construction is to label it "realis," a term used to refer to situations which actually occur, regardless of time reference. Its "irrealis" counterpart is the *yuav* + *V* construction, which points to unrealized, hypothetical situations (see section on *Yuav* for details).

NOTE: Both the potential mode *tau* (section B.ii) and the accomplishment *tau* (section A.ii) occur in the same order in the verb phrase—i.e., verb + *tau*—and you may wonder how to distinguish between them. A good strategy is to see if *tau* occurs after a transitive action verb potentially resulting in something real or good, if it is followed by a direct object, and if it can be analyzed as meaning "to get, to obtain"; if so, you are dealing with the accomplishment *tau*. While there is always a direct object in the verb + accomplishment *tau* construction, this is not necessarily the case with the potential mode *tau*; the verbs involved in that construction can be either transitive or intransitive. And, as usual, context will help you in distinguishing between the two as well.

C. TAU + TIME PHRASE CONSTRUCTIONS = DURATION, PAST TIME REFERENCE

When *tau* is followed by a time phrase (e.g., two years, five months, etc.), the construction as a whole expresses either duration from a point in time in the past up to the present, or a past time reference. This usage of *tau* is illustrated in (34-37); note how the *tau* + time phrase construction can occur either at the beginning or at the end of the sentence.

34. ***Tau*** *xya hli los no Npis tsis tau sau tuaj rau peb.*
attain seven month come here Bee neg attain write come to us
'It's been seven months that Bee hasn't written to us/Bee hasn't written to us for seven months.'

35. ***Tau*** *plaub xyoos tas los lawm Npis nyob Fab kis teb.*
attain four years finish come perf Bee be France
'Bee was in France four years ago.'

36. *Npis nyob Fab kis teb* ***tau*** *plaub xyoos los lawm.*
Bee be France attain four years come perf
'Bee has been in France for four years.'

37. *Npis tau nyob Fab kis teb* ***tau*** *plaub xyoos los lawm.*
Bee attain be France land attain four years come perf
'Bee was in France for four years.'

D. TAU IN OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS

i. Tseem tsis tau V or tseem V (object) tsis tau = 'not ... yet'

When ***tseem*** 'still' is used by itself in a verb phrase, it occurs before the verb, and the ***tseem*** + verb construction refers to an action or an event which is still going on, as seen below:

38. *Niam txiv* ***tseem*** *nyob hauv Los Tsuas teb.*
parents still be in Laos country
'My parents still live in Laos.'

When ***tseem*** 'still' is used in conjunction with the negative phrase *tsis tau*, the construction as a whole refers to something which has not happened yet. This applies both with the pre-verbal aspect marker *tau* and the post-verbal potential mode *tau*, as seen in (39-40) and (41) respectively:

39. *Npis* ***tseem tsis tau*** *noj mov.*
Bee still not attain eat
'Bee hasn't eaten yet.'

40. *Mus hnub vas xuv los hnub vas xaum, kuv* ***tseem tsis tau*** *paub*
go day Friday or day Saturday I still neg attain know
'I don't know yet whether to go on Friday or on Saturday.'

41. *Maiv Qhua* ***tseem*** *hais lus* ***tsis tau.***
Maiv Qhua still say words neg can
'Maiv Qhua can't talk yet.'

ii. X ... <u>puas tau?</u> = polite request

As discussed in the "Questions and Answers" section, *tau* is found in the tag ***puas tau?***, which can be appended to any imperative statement to turn it into a polite request equivalent to English "Could you/Would you please (do X)?" This is illustrated below:

42. *Hais dua,* ***puas tau?***
say again Q can
'Could you/Would you please say that again?'

43. *Thov koj mus qhib lub qhov rooj,* ***puas tau?***
ask you go open clf door Q can
'Could you/Would you please go and open the door?'

iii. X + <u>los tau</u> = consent, agreement

Tau is also found in the phrase ***los tau***, which can be added to a statement to express consent/ agreement with what your interlocutor is saying. In conversation, ***los tau*** occurs in the high-frequency phrase *Ua li* ***los tau***, which is used to express agreement with what has just been said or suggested and translates as 'as you wish/okay, let's do it/sure.'

44. *Tus qav hais tias, "Koj dhia uantej."*
clf Frog say you jump first
'The Frog said, "You jump first."'

Tus tsov teb hais tias: "Ua li ntawd ***los tau.***"
clf Tiger answer saying do like that consent
'The Tiger answered, "Okay, let's do it."'

45. *Tus Qav teb dua tias: "Koj xav dhia dua* ***los tau,*** *tsis ua li cas."*
clf Frog answer again saying you want jump again consent no problem
'Again, the Frog said, "You're willing to jump again? That's fine with me."'

iv. X + tas lawm los tsis tau? = 'X + finished or not?'

As can be seen in the "Questions and Answers" section, *tau* appears as the last element of the high-frequency tag question *tas lawm los tsis tau?* 'finished or not?' This tag quesion occurs at the end of a statement as a way of asking somebody whether s/he has finished doing what is expressed in the statement, as seen in (46):

46. *Koj noj mov* ***tas lawm los tsis tau?***
you eat rice finish perf or neg attain
'Have you finished eating yet?'

Positive answer: ***Tas lawm*** 'Yes, I have.'
Negative answer: ***(Tseem) tsis tau*** 'No, not yet.'

Note also the usage of ***los tau*** in the following:
tus twg ***los tau*** 'anyone'
qhov twg ***los tau*** 'anywhere'

VI. YUAV

A. YUAV + VERB = IRREALIS SITUATION

When it is used before a main verb, *yuav* indicates that a situation (activity, event, state) has not happened. Quite often, it points to the fact that a situation is going to unfold, and hence translates as a future in English, as seen in (47):

47. *Tus tsov hais tias, "Kuv* ***yuav*** *noj koj."*
clf tiger say I irrls eat you
'The tiger said, "I'm going to eat you."'

However, just as it is misleading to analyze *tau* as a past tense marker (see above), it is misleading to consider *yuav* as a future tense marker in Hmong. We saw that when there is an explicit past time reference in the discourse (e.g., last year, yesterday), *tau* is optional and typically left out. The same is true of *yuav* when it is used to refer to a situation that is going to unfold: when there is a temporal adverb with future time reference at the discourse level (e.g., tomorrow, next week, etc.), *yuav* is typically omitted.

A more accurate way of describing the *yuav* + verb construction is to analyze it as describing situations which belong to the realm of the unfulfilled or unrealized, not just situations which will happen at some future point—hence its irrealis marker label. Irrealis is a term used to refer to situations which have not (yet) happened; this includes hypothetical or non-occurring situations with past, present, or future time reference. In Hmong the *yuav*+ verb construction is used to describe such irrealis situations;* the fact that it is used to refer not only to future situations, but also to hypothetical and non-occurring ones is clearly illustrated in (48-50) below. In (48) the first *yuav*+ verb construction points to an intended future action on the Tiger's part, and the second one to a state of speculation as to what to do on the Frog's part; in (49) the *yuav*+ verb construction refers to the Frog's hypothetical death, and in (50) it is preceded by the progressive marker *tab tom* to point to a situation which is about to happen but has not quite done so yet.

48. *Tus Tsov hais tias, "Kuv tshaib tshaib plab li kuv yuav noj koj."*
clf Tiger say I hungry hungry stomach int I irrls eat you

Tus Qav tsis paub yuav ua li cas li.
clf Frog neg know irrls do what int

'The Tiger said, "I'm very hungry and I'm going to eat you." The Frog didn't know what to do.'

49. *Tus Qav mob mob nws twb yuav tuag, tab sis nws tseem hais taus lus.*
clf Frog hurt hurt he really irrls die but he still speak can words
'The Frog was hurting so badly that he thought he was going to die for sure, but he could still talk.'

50. *Thaum tus Tsov tab tom yuav dhia, tus Qav txawm tuav kiag tus Tsov tus tw.*
when clf Tiger prog irrls jump clf Frog then grab int clf Tiger clf tail
'When the Tiger was about to jump, the Frog grabbed tightly onto the Tiger's tail.'

---

* Its realis counterpart would be the *tau* + verb construction discussed under B.i in the section on *Tau*.

B. OTHER MEANINGS OF YUAV

Yuav can also be a main verb with different meanings (see below), so you will have to pay close attention to its position in the verb phrase and to the context in which it is used to determine the intended meaning. As a main verb, *yuav* can have the following meanings:

- *yuav* = 'to take, to obtain'; 'to buy' (when money is involved)

  Note also these common phrases:
  yuav poj niam = 'to take a wife, to get married'
  yuav txiv = 'to take a husband, to get married'

- *yuav* = 'to want, to desire'

These meanings are illustrated in (51-53):

51. *Koj yuav tsum cog zaub coj mus muag, koj tau nyiaj, koj mam li*
    you must plant vegetables take go sell you get money you then

    yuav *nplhaib.*
    buy ring

    'You must plant vegetables for sale, and you'll get money to buy the ring.'

51. *Kuv niam hluas nyob hauv Oregon; nws tsis tau* ***yuav*** *txiv.*
    my younger sister live in Oregon she neg attain get married
    'My younger sister lives in Oregon; she's not married (yet).'

53. *Tub Riam* ***yuav*** *zaum. Tub Sawm ho* ***yuav*** *sawv.*
    son Tria want sit down son Sher then want get up
    'Tria wants to sit down. Then Sher wants to get up.'

NOTE: *Yuav* also occurs as the first element in the *yuav tsum/yuav tau* + verb construction, which expresses obligation (e.g., *Kuv yuav tsum/yuav tau mus.* 'I must go.'). See section on "Modality Markers" for details.

MODALITY MARKERS

I. THE MODAL VERBS "MUST" AND "CAN"

A. "MUST": YUAV TSUM, YUAV TAU

The notion of obligation is conveyed by inserting either *yuav tsum* or *yuav tau* before the verb (*yuav tsum* being the more common form of the two), as seen in the examples below:

a. *Koj mus.*
you go
'You go.'

Koj ***yuav tsum*** *mus.*
you must go
'You must go.'

b. *Lub ntiajteb no me hwv. Peb* ***yuav tau*** *muab ua kom loj dav.*
clf world this small int. we must take make so that big wide
'The world is so small. We have to make it bigger and wider.'

B. "CAN": TXAWJ, TAUS, TAU

"Can" covers a large meaning territory in English that is broken down into at least three separate words in Hmong: *txawj*, *taus*, and *tau*. All three are typically translated as "can" in English, as seen in the examples below (note that *txawj* occurs before the main verb while *taus* and *tau* occur after the main verb):

a. *Nws* ***txawj*** *hais lus Fab kis*
s/he can speak words French
'S/he can speak French.'

b. *Nws khiav* ***taus***
s/he run can
'S/he can run.'

c. *Nws mus* ***tau***
s/he go can
'S/he can go.'

Although *txawj*, *taus*, and *tau* all translate as "can" each of them covers a different portion of the large meaning territory covered by "can" in English; hence *txawj*, *taus*, and *tau* cannot be used interchangeably. To help you figure out which shade of meaning each expresses, look at the illustrated example sentences on the next three pages. The illustrations, along with the contrast between the positive and the negative versions of each sentence, should help you figure out the meaning of each example sentence (if not, translations are provided in the appendix). **Hint:** to determine the meaning differences between *txawj*, *taus*, and *tau*, try to find a way of paraphrasing "can" in each case and to think about in what sense "can" is used.

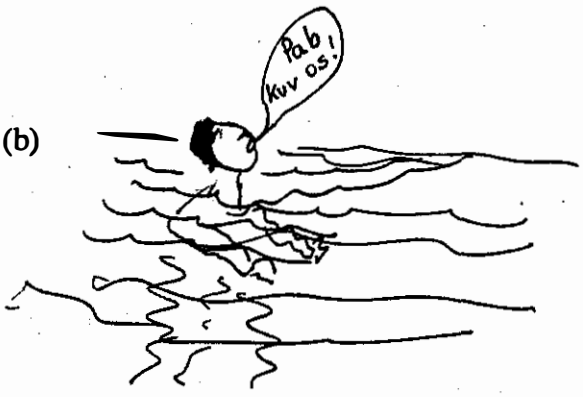
II. *TXAWJ* VS. *TAUS* VS. *TAU*

A. *TXAWJ*

1. (a)

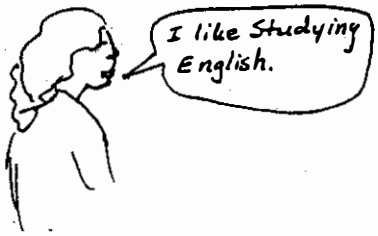
Nws **txawj** ua luam dej.

(b)



Nws **tsis txawj** ua luam dej.

2. (a)



Nws **txawj** hais lus As kiv.

(b)

Nws **tsis txawj** hais lus As kiv.

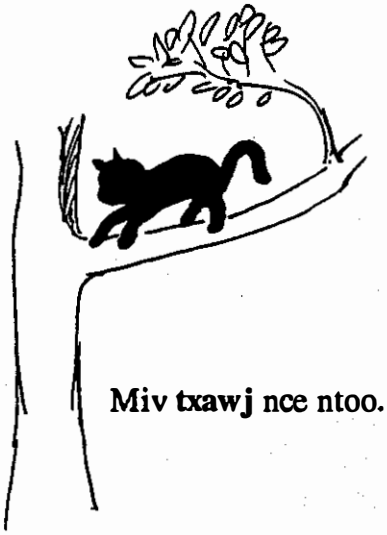
3. (a)

Nws **txawj** ua mov noj.

(b)

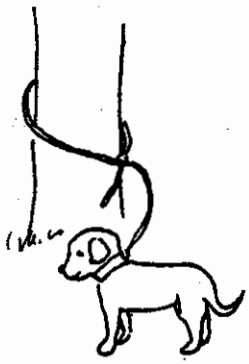
Nws **tsis txawj** ua mov noj.

4. (a)



Miv **txawj** nce ntoo.

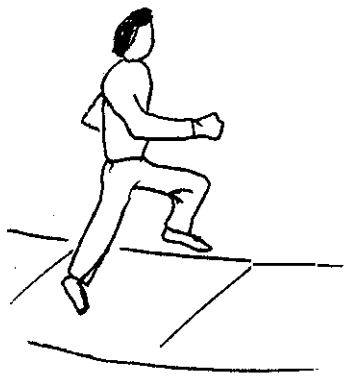
(b)



Dev **tsis txawj** nce ntoo.

B. TAUS

1. (a)

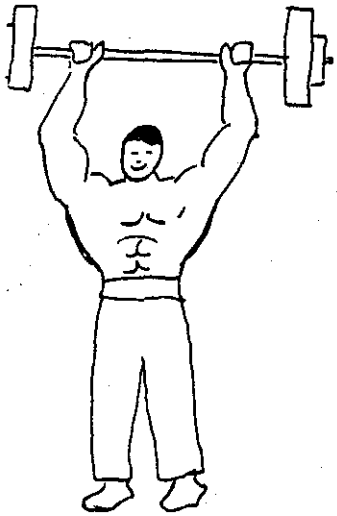


Nws khiav **taus.**

(b)

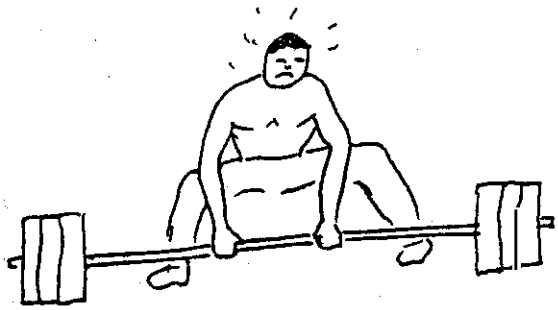
Nws khiav **tsis taus.**

2. (a)



Nws nqa **taus.**

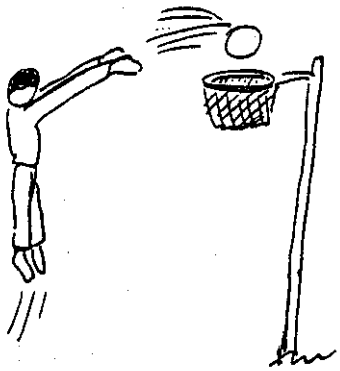
(b)



Nws nqa **tsis taus.**

C. ***TAU***

1. (a)

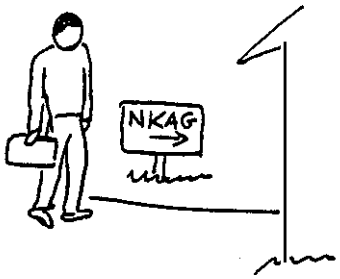


Nws pov npas **tau.**

(b)

Nws pov npas **tsis tau.**

2. (a)

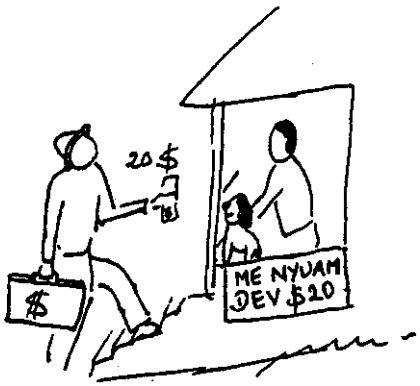


Nws mus **tau.**

(b)

Nws mus **tsis tau.**

3. (a)



Nws muas tus me nyuam dev **tau**
(vim tias nws muaj nyiaj).

(b)

Nws muas dab tsi los **tsis tau**
(vim tias nws tsis muaj nyiaj).

D. TXAWJ, TAUS, AND TAU: THREE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF ENGLISH "CAN"

From the illustrated example sentences with *txawj*, we can see that *txawj* means "can" in the sense of "know how to," and hence expresses an acquired ability—e.g.,

Nws ***txawj*** *ua luam dej.*	'He can swim.'
Nws ***txawj*** *hais lus As kiv.*	'She can speak English.'

To understand the difference between *taus* and *tau*, it is best to start looking at the contexts in which *taus* is used and to contrast them with contexts in which *tau* is used. From the illustrated example sentences we can see that *taus* is used when one is asserting one's (or someone else's) physical ability or inability to do something:

Nws khiav ***taus.***	'He can run.'
Nws nqa ***taus.***	'He can lift it.'
Tus poj niam laus sawv tsis ***taus.***	'The old woman can't get up.'
Kuv haus cawv tsis ***taus.***	'I can't drink alcohol.'

Taus is also used to indicate that one has or does not have the resources to do something:

Kuv pab koj tsis ***taus.***	'I can't (don't have the means) to help you.'
Nej muas lub tog zaum ntawd tsis ***taus.***	'You can't afford to buy that sofa.' [as opposed to:]
Nej muas kuv tus cwj mem tsis ***tau.***	'You can't buy my pen (because I won't let you).'

The renowned Hmong scholar Yang Dao has given the following explanation of the difference:

external hindrance or lack of hindrance: *tau*

Kuv nyob ntawm no tsis ***tau*** *li.*	'I can't stay here any longer.' (perhaps because I have another appointment)

versus

internal hindrance or lack of hindrance, whether physical or psychological: *taus*

Kuv nyob ntawm no tsis ***taus*** *li.*	'I can't stay here any longer.' (perhaps because I can't stand your cigarette smoke, or perhaps because I can't stand you)

To summarize the difference between *taus* and *tau*, we can say that *taus* is to be used when there is a personal hindrance or lack of hindrance; that hindrance can be physical, psychological, or due to the extent or nature of one's holdings. Elsewhere *tau* is used.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *TXAWJ*, *TAUS*, AND *TAU*: SUMMARY TABLE

	MEANING	EXAMPLE
TXAWJ	"Can" in the sense of "know how to"; acquired ability.	1. *Poj niam Hmoob* ***txawj*** *ua paj ntaub; kuv* ***tsis txawj.*** 'Hmong women can do embroidery; I can't.' 2. *Lawv* ***txawj*** *ua luam dej.* 'They can swim.'
TAUS	Personal, internal hindrance or lack thereof; hindrance can be physical as in (1), psychological as in (2), or due to the extent or nature of one's resources as in (3). Often used in the negative.	1. *Nws khiav* ***tsis taus.*** 'He can't run.' (because he has a broken leg) 2. *Kuv nyob ntawm no* ***tsis taus*** *li.* 'I can't stay here any longer.' (because I can't stand you) 3. *Kuv pab koj* ***tsis taus.*** 'I can't help you.' (because I don't have the means to)
TAU	External hindrance or lack thereof, permission, possibility, right to, etc.; least restricted in meaning and usage.	1. *Nws mus* ***tau.*** 'He can go (in).' [the store is open] 2. *Nws mus* ***tsis tau.*** 'He can't go (in).' [the store is closed] 3. *Kuv nyob ntawm no* ***tsis tau*** *li.* 'I can't stay here any longer.' (because I have another appointment)

From all this we can see that *txawj* and *taus* are more restricted in meaning than *tau*. Hence a good strategy for making the proper choice among the three words is to think about what "can" means in English, and to go through a process of elimination: if "can" cannot be paraphrased with "know how to," or if there is no personal hindrance (as described above) involved, use *tau*. [NOTE: The story *"Khoua"* above illustrates the difference between the three in a clear fashion.]

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THE RECIPROCAL MARKER *SIB/SIS* 'EACH OTHER'

Among the elements which can modify the meaning of a main verb is the pre-verbal modifier *sib*, which indicates reciprocal action and translates as 'Verb **each other**' in English. You are probably already familiar with this construction since it is found in the high-frequency leave-taking formulaic phrase ***Sib ntsib dua***, as illustrated in (1):

1. ***Sib*** *ntsib dua*
   recip meet again
   'See you later/Goodbye/Bye—literally, meet each other again.'

The reciprocal action *sib* + Verb construction is further illustrated in the following excerpts from *"Tus Tsov thiab tus Qav"* 'The Tiger and the Frog' (2-3) and *"Dab Neeg Nab Qa Tsiav"* 'The School Lizard' (4):

2. *Puag thaum ub, muaj ib tug Qav thiab ib tug Tsov nkawd los* ***sib*** *ntsib.*
   a long time ago be one clf Frog and one clf Tiger they-two come recip meet
   'A long time ago, a Tiger met a Frog.'
   [A more literal translation would read '... a Frog and a Tiger met each other.']

3. *Tus Tsov thiaj hais rau tus Qav tias: "Qav, wb* ***sib*** *twv dhia."*
   clf Tiger so say to clf Frog that Frog we-two recip compete jump
   'So he said to the Frog, "Frog, let's have a jumping contest."'

4. *Thaum lawv* ***sib*** *qw* ***sib*** *qw, tus nab qa tsiav khiav tawm tim lub qhov rais mus lawm.*
   while they recip shout recip shout clf lizard run out loc clf door go perf
   'While they're all screaming at each other, the lizard runs out through the window.'

Since it has a high-level tone, *sib* can trigger a tone change in the following verb if this verb bears a *j*, *v*, *s*, *ø*, or *m* tone; see section on "Tone Change" for details and examples. As pointed out in that section as well, *sib* can also be pronounced *sis*, with no meaning difference between the two. The *sis* variant is frequently used by Hmong from Laos and does not trigger tone change in the following verb since it bears a low tone.

SPATIAL DEICTICS
(Location Words)

Spatial deictics are words used to point or refer to different locations in space relative to the speaker and to the hearer (when present). Three of these types of words, the demonstratives *no* 'this (near me, the speaker),' *ko* 'that (near you, the hearer),' and *ntawd* 'that (nearby),' occur at the end of a noun phrase and are discussed in detail in the section on demonstratives. Other deictics function like location nouns or like prepositions (see I.B for details); the most common ones are discussed below.

I. COMMON SPATIAL DEICTICS

A. TRADITIONAL MEANINGS

The table below lists the most common spatial reference words along with their traditional meanings and some interpretative comments. Since the Hmong are by tradition mountain dwellers, it comes as no surprise that many of the deictics refer to locations along the vertical axis, and that they are used with reference to features of the native landscape such as mountains, slopes, and valleys. You should be aware that while the translations given are the best approximations we can come up with in English, deictics can only be characterized accurately with reference to real world speech situations and to three-dimensional topography. In addition, since the Hmong now living in Western hemisphere countries can no longer use their native topography as a reference point, a few of the deictics below have acquired new metaphorical extensions in these communities to accommodate new language needs; these changes are discussed in section II.

DEICTIC	TRANSLATION	COMMENTS
1. *pem*	'Uphill (from), above, on the uphill side, up'	• Used for the vertical dimension going upward with reference to the mountain; opposite of *nram* (see #2) • Has new metaphorical extensions in the U.S. (see section II)
2. *nram*	a) 'Downhill (from), down below, down, towards the valley' b) 'Below' (as in a text)	• Used for the vertical dimension going downward with reference to the valley; opposite of *pem* (see #1) • This metaphorical extension is on the rise in the U.S. (see section II); opposite of *saum* (see #6b)
3. *ntawm*	'Here/there (nearby)'	• Refers to a location relatively close to the speaker (the location being a point—in contrast with *hauv* 'in, inside, within,' where the location is a surface, area, stretch, expanse)

4. *tom*	'(Over) there, at a certain distance'	• Refers to a location farther than *ntawm* • Most frequently used default deictic
5. *tim*	'Opposite (from), on the other side, across from, facing'	• Stands in contrast with *tom* (see #4) • Used to refer to a location opposite the speaker, with reference to a feature of the landscape such as a mountain, river, road, boundary, obstacle, etc.—regardless of distance • Even though not just mountains are involved, *tim* seems to refer to a spatial relationship pertinent to mountain dwelling
6. *saum*	a) 'On, above, on top of' b) 'Above' (as in a text)	• Not used relative to mountains; contrasts with *hauv* (see #8) or *nraum* (see #7a), depending on the context • This metaphorical extension is on the rise in the U.S. (see section II); opposite of *nram* (see #2)
7. *nraum*	a) 'Outside' b) 'In back of, on the reverse/other side of, behind'	• Contrasts with *hauv* (see #8) or *nruab* (see #10) • Typically used in relation to the mountains
8. *hauv*	'In, inside, within'	• Contrasts with *nraum* (see #7a) or *saum* (see #6a), depending on the context
9. *qaum*	'Top part or top side of, upper side of, back of'	• Typically used in phrases such as *qaum tes* 'back of the hand,' *qaum taw* 'top of the foot,' *qaum nplooj* 'upper side of a leaf,' *lub nraub qaum* 'the back (of a person),' etc.
10. *nruab*	'In the middle/midst/center of'	• When *nruab* is followed by *nrab* '(one) half, mid (horizontal),' it can mean either '(in the) middle/midst/center' or 'between X and Y'

Some of the deictics listed above can be used in combination with other elements; the most common of these elements are:

a. *qab* 'under side of, at the bottom/base/foot of, lower side of':
   hauv qab 'under, underneath'
   tom qab 'behind, in the back'
   nram qab 'down below'

b. *ntej* 'in front of, before':

hauv ntej	'in front of, ahead of'

Nram ntej, however, is used in the time dimension since it means 'ago, previously, the period up till now' (see section III for details on the use of spatial deictics in the temporal dimension).

c. *sab* 'side, direction':

sab tid	'on the opposite side'
sab nraud	'on the back side'
sab tim roob or *sab roob tid*	'on the side of the opposite mountain'
sab nraum roob or *sab roob nraud*	'on the back side of the mountain'

i. Intensification of the meaning of deictics

The meaning of some of the deictics discussed above can be intensified in the following ways:

a. By adding *puag* <u>before</u> the deictic:

puag pem	'far up(hill), far up there, far up the mountain'
puag nram	'far down(hill), far down there, far down the valley'
puag tom	'far over there'
puag tim	'far over there across the valley'

b. By adding *ub* <u>after</u> the deictic:

pem ub	'far up(hill), far up there, far up the mountain'
nram ub	'far down(hill), far down there, far down the valley'
tom ub	'far over there'
tim ub	'far over there across the valley'

c. By using both *puag* and *ub* to express the greatest degree of intensification:

puag pem ub	'way up(hill), way up there, way up the mountain'
puag nram ub	'way down(hill), way down there, way down the valley'
puag tom ub	'way over there'
puag tim ub	'way over there across the valley'

B. GRAMMATICAL FUNCTIONS

The deictics discussed above typically function as prepositions found at the head of a prepositional phrase describing a location. This is illustrated below:

1. *Muaj ib hnub Npis mus* ***tom*** *vaj tsiaj.*
   be one day Bee go to garden animal
   'One day Bee went to the zoo.'

2. *Nkawd mus txog* ***ntawm*** *ib tug cav loj loj nyob tav kev.*
   they-two go arrive at one clf log big big be at across road
   'They of them went over to a big log which was lying across the path.'

3. *Ntshav tawm tawm* ***hauv*** *tus Qav lub qhov ncauj los.*
   blood come out come out within clf Frog clf mouth come
   'Blood was streaming out of the Frog's mouth.'

4. *Tus me nyuam dev nyiam nyiam zaum* ***saum*** *Npis lub taub hau.*
   clf child dog like like sit on top of Bee clf head
   'The puppy loves to sit on top of Bee's head.'

Sometimes the deictics are also used on their own as location nouns; when used as such they can be followed by the demonstrative *no* 'this (place)':

5. *Los* ***ntawm*** *no.*
   come here this
   'Come here.'

6. *Kuv nyob* ***tom*** *no os.*
   I be at there this prt
   'I'm over here.'

Also, recall from the section on demonstratives that when deictics #1-7 in the table above are used independently as demonstrative nouns at the end of a phrase, they bear the *-d* tone. The contrast between the prepositional function and the demonstrative noun function with the concomitant tone change is illustrated below:

7. a. *nyob pem roob*
   be up mountain
   'up on the mountain'

   b. *nyob ped*
   be up there
   'up there'

See "Functions of the Marginal *-d* Tone" for further details.

To summarize, deictics can function as prepositions heading prepositional phrases and as independent location or demonstrative nouns. Since strict part-of-speech categorization is difficult and elusive at best in Hmong (see section on flexible grammar for more on this), spending a lot of time wondering—let alone worrying about—to which Western-style part of speech an element belongs is counterproductive. Making a note of the various grammatical functions of a given element is enough. Your time will be better spent focusing on the meanings of deictics, moving beyond the limitations of two-dimensional pen and paper explanations, and studying them from a three-dimensional perspective, as well as developing a good understanding of their usage in real world speech situations.

II. METAPHORICAL USES OF *NRAM*, *PEM*, AND *TIM* IN THE UNITED STATES

Since some of the Hmong spatial deictics evolved from geographical features such as the mountains, slopes, valleys, and the uphill and downhill sides of things, it makes sense that these deictics would undergo a shift in meaning and be reinterpreted to accommodate new language needs now that the Hmong can no longer use the mountains as their main reference point. Preliminary research on this topic* has revealed new metaphorical extensions for *nram* 'downhill,' *pem* 'uphill,' and *tim* 'opposite'; the reinterpretations of the original meaning of these deictics is discussed below. Note that some of these metaphorical extensions seem to have their roots in Southeast Asia (see the second footnote below, for example) but have gained momentum in the Western hemisphere, and others seem to be entirely innovative.

A. NRAM 'DOWNHILL' HAS BEEN REINTERPRETED AS A) "SOUTH,"† AND B) "BELOW (IN TEXT)":

a. *Nram*—'downhill' as "south"

8. *Peb phauj Nkaj uas tuaj nyob* ***nram*** *Indiana muaj ib tus ntxhais.*
   our aunt Nkaj who come live downhill Indiana have one clf daughter
   'Our aunt Nkaj, who lives down in Indiana, has a daughter.' [speaker is north of Indiana]

b. *Nram*—'downhill' as "below (in text)"

9. *Daim ntawv muaj ntsiab lus raws li* ***nram*** *no.*
   clf paper have content word according to downhill this
   'On the paper were the words below.'

NOTE: This metaphorical extension of *nram* in a text seems to have started in Southeast Asia (Mottin has an example in his grammar), but its usage has become more widespread in the United States—no doubt correlating with a rise in usage of the written language.

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* See Ratliff (1990) for details.

† Without using cardinal point nomenclature per se, north and south have traditionally been defined with respect to altitude. Since for the Hmong the north corresponds to the mountainous regions of Asia, it has been called "the high part of the country/the highlands," and since the south corresponds to the plains of the delta it has been referred to as "the low part of the country/the lowlands":

pem qaum teb uphill-top part-country = 'high part of the country/highlands'—i.e., 'north'
nram qab teb downhill-bottom part-country = 'low part of the country/lowlands'—i.e., 'south'

East and west, on the other hand, have traditionally been defined with respect to the rising and setting of the sun:

sab hnub tawm side-sun-come out = 'side where the sun rises'—i.e., 'east'
sab hnub poob side-sun-fall = 'side where the sun sets'—i.e., 'west.'

B. <u>PEM</u> 'UPHILL' HAS BEEN REINTERPRETED AS A) "NORTH", AND B) "HIGHER UP ON X, WHERE X IS NOT A MOUNTAIN":

a. *Pem*— 'uphill' as "north"

10. *Hnub vas xaum, kuv nrog kuv tus txiv mus* ***pem*** *Chicago.*
day Saturday I be with my clf husband go uphill Chicago
'On Saturday my husband and I went up to Chicago.' [Chicago is located north of speaker.]

11. *Iraq txawm rau phab hnub poob sab* ***ped.***
Iraq then place side sun fall side uphill
'And Iraq lies to the northwest.'

b. *Pem*— 'uphill' as "higher up on X, where X is not a mountain"

12. *Nkawd rhais ruam los* ***pem*** *lub tsheb thiab tsav tsheb los tsev lawm.*
they-two tuck up step return uphill clf car and drive car return home perf
'The two of them got back into the car and drove home.'

13. *Nws muab ob lub ceg ris qaws txog* ***pem*** *qab hauv caug kom*
he grasp two clf let pants roll arrive uphill back inside knee cause
txias zog tuaj.
cold breeze come
'He rolled up his pant legs up above the knee to stay cool.'

NOTE: *Pem* in (b) seems to be a novel usage in the United States.

C. <u>TIM</u> 'OPPOSITE (A NATURAL OBSTACLE SUCH AS A MOUNTAIN, RIVER, ROAD, ETC.)' HAS BEEN INTERPRETED AS "OPPOSITE" WITH NO FEATURE OF THE LANDSCAPE INVOLVED:

14. *Nplias ntsia nws tus duab* ***tim*** *daim iav.*
Nplias regard herself clf image opposite clf glass
'Nplias looked at herself in the mirror.'

15. *...koj thiab kuv tau ua ke* ***tim*** *ntsej* ***tim*** *muag.*
you and I get together opposite ear opposite eye
'...you and I get together face-to-face.'

16. *...thiab zaum lub sofa sab* ***tid*** *uas ntsia ntsoov Nplooj.*
and sit clf sofa side opposite in order regard fixedly Nplooj
'...and she sat on the other side of the sofa and looked intently at Nplooj.'

NOTE: This broadening of the meaning of *tim* seems also to have started in the United States.

Some observations are necessary:

- These findings regarding the meaning shifts of *nram*, *pem*, and *tim* are preliminary and should be considered tentative in light of their short history.

- Since these are incipient changes, you will encounter a high degree of uncertainty among native speakers when it comes to defining the exact meaning and usage of the deictics currently being reinterpreted. For example, the difference between *tim* and *tom* is extremely difficult to pin down now that the meaning of *tim* has broadened (see above). While it appears that *tom* is still the default deictic and *tim* the "opposite" deictic, actual usage reveals that the difference between the two is subtle and hard to characterize—akin to the difference between "there" and "over there" in English. The following explanations have been advanced by various native speakers to account for the difference between *tim* and *tom*:

***TIM* + LOCATION**		***TOM* + LOCATION**
- Location known and capable of being visualized	*vs.*	Location unknown and not visualized
- Location definite, with clear boundaries	*vs.*	Location indefinite, with fuzzy boundaries
- Clear mental picture of location	*vs.*	Unclear mental picture of location
- Vast and/or distant location	*vs.*	Location not as vast and/or distant
- Specific, familiar location	*vs.*	General, vague location

One person also suggested that the choice between the two was conditioned by the speaker's position relative to what s/he was talking about, but was not more specific than that.

These explanations are helpful, but do not account for all actual usage cases since the meaning of *tim* is in a state of flux. Be prepared for native speaker uncertainty and for creative suggestions to account for the meaning shifts of the deictics discussed above; this is part of the fun of witnessing language change in progress!

- Idiomatic usage has begun to develop and will probably increase. For example, there are cases where *pem* means "on ground level" and even "down."

III. USE OF SPATIAL DEICTICS IN THE TIME DIMENSION

Some of the spatial deictics discussed above can also be used in the time dimension (notice that this is also the case in other languages—e.g., in English "before" can mean before in either space or time; the same is true of "ahead"). These include:

Space dimension		**Time dimension**
nram 'downhill'	→	'ago'
saum 'above/on top of'	→	'from now'
nruab 'in the middle/midst of'	→	'during'

as well as the following combinations:

nram ntej	'previously, the period up till now'
tom qab	1. 'in the past'; 2. 'in the future, later' (depending on the context)
tom ntej	1. 'before (in time)'; 2. 'in the future' (depending on the context)*

The usage of spatial deictics in the time dimension is illustrated in the examples below:

17. *Lawv twb mus tas* ***nram*** *ntej* ***nram*** *ntxov.*
they already go finish downhill first downhill early
'They already went a long time ago.'

18. *Ob peb hnub* ***saum*** *no kuv nrog koj tham.*
two three day above this I with you talk
'I'll talk to you in a couple of days.'

19. ***nruab*** *hnub*
middle day
'daytime, in the day, during the day'

20. *Lawv tsis paub* ***nruab*** *hnub tsis paub hmo ntuj, lawv ua tsis tseg*
they neg know daytime neg know nighttime they do neg abandon, leave
'They don't know night from day; they work all the time.'

IV. CONCLUSION

The Hmong spatial deictic system is characterized by a high degree of specificity and precise detail with respect to the vertical dimension. In the United States and other parts of the Western hemisphere where the Hmong have resettled, this system is moving to a vaguer, more abstract one due to the loss of the native topography, the exposure to a different one, and the need to meet new linguistic needs. Independently of where in the world the Hmong are, however, spatial deictics are best studied from a three-dimensional perspective using concrete objects and features from your environment and relying on native speaker demonstrations. Also helpful are visualization and demonstration exercises using the spatial settings and changes found in stories such as *"Dabneeg nabqatsiav"* 'The school lizard' and *"Tus Tsov thiab tus Qav"* 'The Tiger and the Frog.'

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* If this seems confusing, it is. Context will help you distinguish between the two meanings, though. Time reference phrases have not been the object of systematic study in Hmong; hence for the time being you will have to start with the introductory material found in this book and in Motttin's grammar, and learn more about them as they come up in your Hmong studies. Also, see "*Tau* + Time Phrase Constructions" above for ways of expressing duration and past time reference.

COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Comparative constructions are used for comparisons between two elements while superlative ones are used where more than two elements are involved. These constructions are discussed in turn below.

I. COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

A. The comparative construction equivalent to the English "adjective + **-er/more** + adjective + **than**" (as in "This book is cheaper/**more** expensive **than** that one") is typically formed by adding *dua** after the "adjective":†

1. *Tus noog no loj **dua** tus noog ntawd.*
   clf bird this big comp clf bird that
   'This bird is bigger than that bird.'

2. *Lawv noj nrawm **dua** peb.*
   they eat fast comp we
   'They eat faster than we do.'

3. *Qav, wb sib twv dhia hla tus cav no saib leej twg dhia tau deb **dua**.*
   Frog we rec compete jump across clf log this see who jump can far comp
   'Frog, let's jump over this log to see who can jump farther.'

B. The comparative construction equivalent to the English construction "**as** + adjective + **as**" (as in "This book is **as** expensive **as** that one") is formed by adding either *cuag* 'equal (to), same as' or *luaj* 'equal (to), same as, like' after the stative verb in Hmong:

4a. *Tus noog no loj **cuag** tus noog ntawd.*
   clf bird this big equal clf bird that
   'This bird is as big as that one.'

b. *Tus noog no loj **luaj** tus noog ntawd.*
   clf bird this big equal clf bird that
   'This bird is as big as that one.'

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* This *dua* is different from the *dua* which signals the repetition of an action at another point in time and typically translates as 'again,' as illustrated in the high-frequency leave-taking formulaic phrase *Sib ntsib **dua*** 'See you later/Goodbye/Bye—literally, meet each other again.' The *dua* used in comparative constructions is derived from a verb meaning "to (sur)pass, to go beyond, to top something." To help you distinguish between the two, look at their distribution: the comparative *dua* typically follows stative verbs (see note below), whereas the "again" *dua* occurs after action verbs.

† Recall from the "Structure of the Noun Phrase" that English adjectives such as big, white, old, full, etc. are actually considered to be stative verbs (i.e., to be big, to be white, to be old, to be full, etc.) in Hmong, and hence are not preceded by *yog* 'to be.'

When a noun rather than a stative verb is involved in the comparison of equals (e.g., **as much** money **as/as many** children **as**), Hmong uses *npaum (li)* 'equal (to), as much/as many as' after the noun:

5. *Lawv muaj me nyuam* ***npaum*** *(li) peb.*
   they have child equal we
   'They have as many children as we do.'

Npaum is also used for comparing multiple amounts in equality comparison constructions:

6. *Npis lub tsev loj plaub* ***npaug*** *peb lub.*
   Bee clf house big four equal our clf
   'Bee's house is four times as big as ours.'

II. SUPERLATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

The superlative construction equivalent to the English "**the** + adjective + **-est/the most** + adjective" (as in "This book is **the cheapest/the most** expensive") is typically formed by adding *tshaj* after the "adjective." *Tshaj* is actually a main verb which means "to surpass, to be surplus or more than enough, to be better" and translates as a superlative in English when it follows a stative verb in Hmong:

7. *Tus noog no loj* ***tshaj.***
   clf bird this big surpass
   'This bird is the biggest.'

8. *Lub tsev ntawd zoo* ***tshaj.***
   clf house that good surpass
   'That house is the best.'

9. *Npis me* ***tshaj*** *cov.*
   Bee small surpass group
   'Bee is the smallest (among them/in the group.)'

The construction "stative verb + *tshaj*" translates as a superlative when the entity being described is singled out in a group of similar entities, either implicitly as in (7-8) or explicitly as in (9). The same construction can also be used to compare two entities to each other, with the second element following *tshaj*, as seen in (10). In that case, the construction translates as a comparative and is equivalent to the "stative verb + *dua*" construction described above.

10. *Npis me* ***tshaj*** *kuv.*
Bee small surpass I
'Bee is smaller than me.'

Since *tshaj* is a main verb meaning "to surpass," it can also follow an action verb in a serial verb construction, which translates as a comparative construction in English as well:

11. *Npis kawm ntawv* ***tshaj*** *kuv ob xyoos.*
Bee study surpass I two year
'Bee studied two years more than I did.'

SENTENCE/DISCOURSE STRUCTURE; HALLMARKS OF HMONG STYLE

THE TOPIC MARKERS *MAS* AND *NE**

Many Hmong sentences have the same subject-predicate structure as English sentences do: *Npis pom ib tug noog* 'Bee saw a bird.' Others, however, have a sentence structure commonly found in Asian languages: instead of starting with a subject, they start with a topic. Topics are not the same as subjects. You can have both in a sentence, as in "Beans, I like" in the following interchange:

Jane to visiting cousin: Let's see; what vegetable should we have with dinner? I've got peas, spinach ... (voice trails off while she looks in freezer).
Cousin: I'm not too fond of spinach ...
Jane (breaks in): Oh, and I've got beans.
Cousin: Beans, I like. Let's have beans.

In the sentence "Beans, I like," "beans" is the topic, "I" is the subject, and "like" is the comment or new information conveyed about the topic of the sentence. This type of sentence structure occurs frequently in Hmong.

Two mid-sentence particles serve the function of marking the topic of the sentence—i.e., whatever comes before these particles is what the sentence is about. Whatever comes after these particles is the comment or new information—i.e., what is being asserted about the topic that precedes the particles. These particles are *mas* and *ne*.

If it helps, think of *mas* and *ne* as words that follow the language equivalent of a set up in volleyball. They "set up" the topic so that the rest of the sentence can get the message across the net. Or you may think of these particles as colons when they occur mid-sentence. Or, with some mental word order switching, you can translate them as "as to (topic)" or "as far as (topic) is/are concerned."

In general, *ne* seems to follow shorter topics than *mas*, as in the abbreviated question *Koj ne?* 'And (what/how about) you?' It also seems to be limited to the function of questioning the topic (what precedes) and might be translated as 'How about X?'

Mas is more complex in its usage. Here are some examples:

1. *Nyob Teb Chaws Nplog, lub caij hlawv teb no* ***mas*** *faj suab sawv laum ntuj heev.*
   'In Laos, at the time of burning the fields [which we have been discussing], a smoke fills the skies [new information].'

2. *Mi tsiaj txhu, mi nas mi noog thiab mi kab mi ntsaum* ***mas*** *tuag tag li.*
   'Little animals, little rats and birds, little bugs and ants, as for all these, they were dead.'

When *mas* occurs at the beginning of a sentence, the entire preceding sentence is considered the topic.

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* For more information on *mas* and *ne*, see Fuller (1985).

EXPRESSIVES*

One of the hallmarks of Hmong style is the use of expressives. Expressives are two-word phrases which "capture the speaker's perception of the essence of the thing described, not only its sound but also its movement, its persistence, its visibility, and other innate characteristics, through his/her determination of the resemblance between sound and meaning" (Ratliff 1992:139). Below are some typical examples.

nkij nkawj	of gnawing on bones
mij mej	of mosquitos or other insects flying around your ear
vig vwg	1. strong wind; 2. fast traffic; 3. small airplane motor
nplhib nplheeb	1. silverware or other metal rattling; 2. pin coming out of hand grenade
dig dug	boiling of thick liquid like corn mash (thick, ponderous bubbles)
nkij nkuaj	of bones cracking
duj duam	of walking as though one's leg were broken
cuj coos	of movement of a sick chicken or of a mad person
luj les	sound of a vacuum cleaner, bees, or an airplane
rhuj rhuav	1. sound of cutting vegetation; 2. sound of a bird shuffling through leaves looking for insects
pliv ploov	1. of ducks diving underwater; 2. the sound of an empty bottle submerged in water filling up; 3. the sound of one's stomach after one has had a lot to drink and then goes running
zib zeb	of a big pig fighting

To help you grasp the essence of expressives, think of them as descriptive capsule "sound pictures" of the passing scene—of things that are perceived by one of the five senses, such as sounds and movements. *They are real Hmong words and are used with great frequency in everyday language*, but they do not fit into any of the classic (Western) word classes, such as noun, verb, adjective, or adverb. Instead, they constitute a part of speech of their own which does not have a counterpart in English. Phrases such as razzle-dazzle, wishy-washy, namby-pamby, shilly-shally, ding-dong, and sing-song come closest to reflecting what expressives are, but these

* Ratliff (1992) has an entire chapter devoted to this topic as well as a twenty-page appendix that lists and gives associations for a large number of these two-word expressive phrases.

phrases do not constitute a separate part of speech like in Hmong, are considered colloquial, and have limited usage in English—contrary to Hmong, where expressives abound and are used frequently in both the spoken and the written language. Expressives are found in a few other Asian languages—e.g., Korean.

The majority of these two-word expressive phrases have a predictable shape:

1. The two words must begin with the same consonant;
2. The two words must have different vowels;
3. If the tones of the two words are the same, the vowel of the first word will be *i*; and
4. If the tones of the two words are different, the tone of the first word will be *j* and the vowel of the first word will be *u*.

The "meanings" of these expressive phrases are always hard to pin down. Rather than give you a "meaning," a Hmong speaker will give you only a *situation* in which it would be appropriate to use the phrase (such as "You put a lizard in a jar and add a few drops of red pepper sauce"), but you can count on the fact that there will be many other appropriate situations for the phrase. While the meanings of expressives are elusive from a Western point of view, it is important to remember that from a Hmong perspective expressives have precise meanings which are shared by the community and do not vary significantly from one speaker to another.

Finally, some connections can be drawn between the tones, consonants, and vowels chosen to fill the six positions in these phrases ($C_1V_1T_1$ - $C_1V_2T_1$ or T_2) and the core meaning (which is often quite abstract). In other words, sound symbolism is involved. For example, C_1**ij**-C_1V_2**j** expressives refer to energetic, fast, short sounds, and C_1**i s**-C_1V_2**s** expressives refer to flat, continuous, unending sights and sounds.

FOUR-WORD PHRASES
(Coordinative Constructions)

Another hallmark of Hmong style is the four-word phrase. Four-word phrases typically follow an ABAC pattern where the A's are identical (or synonymous), and where B and C are closely related in meaning—e.g., *npaj mov npaj zaub* 'prepare-rice-prepare-vegetables,' meaning "to prepare food." You will encounter many of these four-word phrases in both spoken and written Hmong. *They are not "fancy"*; they are part of the regular language. The goal is to feel so comfortable hearing and seeing these that one day you will find yourself using them.

Below are some examples of four-word phrases either found in this book or in common use in everyday language. Notice that there are a few four-word phrases in which one of the components no longer has a literal meaning in modern Hmong.

Four-Word Phrase	Literal Translation	Meaning
npaj mov npaj zaub	prepare-rice-prepare-vegetables	'to prepare food'
npaj nqaij npaj mov	prepare-meat-prepare-rice	'to prepare food'
tu mov tu zaub	look-after-rice-look-after-vegetables	'to prepare food'
kev noj kev haus	way-eat-way-drink	'subsistence'
ua noj ua haus	do-eat-do-drink	'earn a living'
kev tshaib kev nqhis	way-hunger-way-thirst	'famine'
tuag tshaib tuag nqhis	die-hunger-die-thirst	'die of famine'
cua daj cua dub	wind-yellow-wind-black	'storm, bad wind'
tua nas tua noog	kill-rodents-kill-birds	'to hunt small animals'
siab loj siab dav	liver-big-liver-wide	'generous, big-hearted'
txaij liab txaij ntsuab	striped-red-striped-green	'with red and green stripes'
ya mus ya los	fly-go-fly-come	'to fly around, to hover'
tsis deb tsis ze	not-far-not-close	'at a reasonable distance'
ua ub ua no	do-this-do-that	'to do this and that'
yam ub yam no	kind-this-kind-that	'of different kinds, various'
ua liajua teb	do-paddy-do-field	'to farm'

tu vaj tu tsev	look-after-garden-look-after-house	'to take care of one's home'
tu liaj tu teb	look-after-paddy-look-after-field	'to take care of the fields'
tu tub tu kiv	look-after-son-look-after-?	'to take care of the children'
kev tsov kev rog	way-?-way-war	'war, fighting'
khiav tsov khiav rog	run-?-run-war	'flee from war'
txhia hnub txhua hmo	every-day-every-night	'every day and night'

CONCESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Concessive constructions are constructions made up of a subordinate clause beginning with conjunctions such as even if, even though, although, though, followed (or preceded) by a main clause—e.g., 'Even if it rains, I'll go'; 'Although it's expensive, I'll buy it.' In Hmong any of the following can be used as equivalents:

Tab *Tab yog* *Tab txawm (tias)* *Txawm yog*	+ subordinate clause + *los* + main clause

Examples:

Txawm yog *rab hneev me me xwb* ***los****, kuv tus tub kuj zoo siab kawg.*
'Although the crossbow is tiny, my son is very happy.'

Tab yog *nws hu* ***los****, kuv tsis mus.*
'Even if s/he calls me, I'm not going.'

Tab yog *kuv tuag* ***los****, kuv tsis hais.*
'Even if I were to die, I would not speak/say a word.'

Tab yog *nws tuaj* ***los****, txhob hu kuv.*
'Even if s/he comes, don't call me.'

Tab *nag los* ***los****, kuv yuav mus.*
'Even if it rains, I'll go.'

Tab yog *ntuj los nag* ***los****, kuv mus.*
'Even though it's raining, I'm going.'

SUBORDINATION AND PARATAXIS

When looking at Hmong sentences and texts, one is struck by the lack of coordinating and subordinating elements among words, phrases, and clauses. One is faced with a seemingly endless juxtaposition of grammatical units strung together without the use of any overt conjunction. This phenomenon is known as parataxis and is characteristic of Hmong at different levels of grammatical structure, as discussed in section II below. However, in light of our familiarity with subordination as a mechanism for creating hierarchy within sentences, let us start with an overview of the main subordinating conjunctions found in Hmong.

I. SUBORDINATION

A. *THE COMPLEMENTIZER** *(HAIS) TIAS 'THAT'*

This complementizer is made up of *tias* preceded by the optional element *(hais)*, which is historically derived from the still existing main verb of saying *hais* 'to say, to speak' but has been grammaticized over time to serve as an optional part of the conjunction. It comes as no surprise then that one of the functions of *(hais) tias* is quotative rather than subordinating: *(hais) tias* is used to introduce direct speech quotations following main verbs involving speech such as *hais* 'to say, to speak,' *dag* 'to lie,' *hu* 'to call,' *cem* 'to scold,' *nug* 'to ask,' *teb* 'to answer,' *xav* 'to think,' *qhia* 'to teach, to inform,' *nco* 'to remember,' etc. This quotative function of *(hais) tias* is illustrated below:

1. *Tus Tsov hais rau tus Qav (hais)tias: 'Qav, wb sib twv dhia.'*
   clf Tiger say to clf Frog quotative Frog we-two recip compete jump
   'The Tiger said to the Frog, "Frog, let's have a jumping contest."'

The other function of *(hais) tias* is a subordinating one: *(hais) tias* serves to introduce subordinate clauses reporting a proposition after main clause verbs involving perception such as *pom* 'to see,' *paub* 'to know,' *ntshai* 'to fear, to be afraid of,' *hnov* 'to hear,' *ntseeg* 'to believe,' *xav* 'to think,' *nco* 'to remember,' etc. *(Hais) tias* can also follow *hais* to report a direct speech quotation.† The subordinating function of *(hais) tias* 'that' is illustrated below:

2. *Npis tsis paub (hais)tias muaj dais xim dawb.*
   Bee neg know that exist bear color white
   'Bee didn't know that white bears existed.'

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* I use "(subordinating) conjunction," "subordinator," and "complementizer" interchangeably to refer to words which introduce a subordinate/embedded clause (for example, that, when, so that, etc.)

† In a more marginal function *(hais) tias* can also optionally occur after *yog* 'to be' when *yog* introduces the equivalent of an English if-clause (see section on *yog* above) as well as after *vim* 'because.'

B. THE COMPLEMENTIZER KOM 'SO THAT, IN ORDER TO'

This complementizer is transparently related to the main verb *kom* 'to tell, to order (somebody to do something),' as in *Kuv kom Npis mus* 'I told/ordered Bee to go.' As a subordinator, *kom* is used to introduce embedded clauses expressing a desired action following volition verbs such as *xav* 'to want,' *nyiam* 'to like,' *thov* 'to ask, to beg,' *txwv* 'to forbid,' etc.:

3. *Tus Tsov tsis xav kom tus Qav rov qab noj dua nws ntxiv lawm.*
   clf Tiger neg want that clf Frog again eat again him more perf
   'The Tiger didn't want the Frog to eat more of him.'

Kom can also introduce subordinate clauses expressing a purpose or an intention:

4. *Zaum no tus Tsov sib sib zog dhia kom tus Qav dhia tsis yeej.*
   time this clf Tiger recip recip strength jump so that clf Frog jump neg possible
   'This time, the Tiger mustered all the strength he could to jump so that the Frog wouldn't beat him.'

C. THE RELATIVE MARKER UAS 'THAT, WHICH, WHO(M), WHOSE'

There is only one relative marker in Hmong, *uas*. It serves the grammatical function of introducing any type of relative clause:

5. *Nws nyiam noj cov khoom uas tsis ntsim txob.*
   she like eat group things that neg spicy pepper
   'She likes to eat things that are not spicy.'

6. *Niam xav muas cov tsho tiv no uas luv nqi lawm.*
   mother want buy group coat that lower price perf
   'Mother wants to buy coats that have been reduced in price (i.e., on sale).'

7. *... cov hluas uas niam txiv muajmuaj nyiaj...*
   group young that parents have have silver
   '...young people whose parents are rich...'

D. CONCLUSION

Hmong has few words which function as subordinating conjunctions, and the ones it does have are restricted in usage. The use of *(hais) tias* as a subordinator is more limited than its English equivalent "that" and *(hais) tias* also has a separate, quotative function. *Kom*, which is used to indicate causation in its subordinating function, is still clearly related to the main verb *kom* 'to tell, to order (somebody to do something).'* As to the relative marker *uas*, there are many

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* For more details on complementation, see Jaisser (1984a and 1984b).

cases where it is optional; it is used to narrow down the degree of specificity and/or definiteness of the head noun, and its occurrence is conditioned by discourse factors such as the speech context, pragmatic knowledge of the world, etc. so that one must look at entire chunks of discourse to understand its usage.*

II. PARATAXIS†

Verb serialization as discussed above is a form of parataxis: verbs are concatenated without any overt marking of coordination or subordination. Also as seen above, possessive noun phrases are formed by merely juxtaposing the relevant noun phrases: the possessor and the item possessed appear without any intervening element alluding to the hierachy in the relationship.

There are several other forms of parataxis. The most basic involves stringing together two identical elements; this phenomenon is known as reduplication and is common with verbs and non-numeral quantifiers such as *ntau* 'much, many, a lot (of),' *coob* 'many, a lot (of),' and *tsawg* 'little, few' (see above for examples with these quantifiers). Reduplication is typically used for emphasis, as seen in (7) above and in (8) below:

8. ***Rau rau*** *siab kawm ntawv.*
   put put liver study paper
   'Really put your heart into your studies.'

On a larger scale, entire clauses can be joined together paratactically, as illustrated in (9) below—a revealing example from Riddle 1991. The first clause, which ends with *los*, is directly attached to the next part of the sentence, which in turn is juxtaposed to the last part of the sentence starting with *tsis tau noj*. Sentences like these are typical.

9. *Leej twg txawj txuag tau me ntsis nyiaj los nws coj mus muas*
   someone can preserve get a little money come s/he take go buy
   tsis tau noj tsis tau hnav.
   neg get eat neg get wear
   'If anyone manages to save a little money and goes to buy something, s/he won't get anything to eat or wear.'

Time clauses such as the one in (10) are another example of parataxis: they are typically translated as starting with "when" or "while" in English, but *thaum*—the word which introduces them in Hmong—is actually a noun meaning "time" so that there is no conjunction involved here either.

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* For more details on the relative marker *uas*, see Riddle (1993).

† For more details on parataxis, see Riddle (1991).

10. *Thaum lawv sib qw sib qw, tus nab qa tsiav khiav tawm tim lub qhov rais mus lawm.*
time they recip shout recip shout clf lizard run out loc clf door go perf
'While they're all screaming at each other, the lizard runs out through the window.'

This tendency to string together elements without any overt marking of coordination or subordination is reminiscent of another stylistic norm in Hmong—namely, the use of paratactically conjoined words that are either synonymous or related in meaning. The fixed four-word phrases discussed above are a case in point, in both casual and elegant speech. Without following the formula involved in four-word phrases, it is also a common rhetorical device to string together synonymous phrases. This is illustrated in (11) with *huv* 'all, altogether,' *tas* 'all, in its entirety,' *tib si* 'all, altogether,' and *puav leej* 'all, altogether'; using all of these may seem redundant and repetitive to us but is not in Hmong.

11. *Tas cov txiv neeb sawv daws puav leej tuaj tas huv tib si.*
all group shaman every all, altogether one come all all all, altogether
'All the shamans came (each and every one of them).'

All these paratactically conjoined structures present a decoding challenge when studying Hmong. Reading a lot to become familiar with them and asking a native speaker to explain the situations described are helpful strategies.

CONVERSATION PARTICLES

Hmong conversational exchanges are characterized by the presence of what dictionaries label "emphatic particles"—words such as *os*, *naj*, *los mas*, *as*, *lauj*, etc. These conversational particles are also found in other languages of Asia and Southeast Asia (for example, in Thai, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Japanese, etc.). They are a phenomenon of the spoken language and as such do not occur in written prose. They are, however, found in written dialogues since these emulate speech. Conversational particles typically occur at the end of utterances and are elusive in nature: they cannot be translated or elicited like other words can, and native speakers are at a loss to characterize them and explain their usage. Yet they are omnipresent in everyday conversation and not using them instantly reveals one as a non-native speaker—thus testifying to their crucial role in oiling the wheels of fluid and fluent conversation. These particles are the topic of my dissertation research, and some preliminary findings are listed below.

I. THE PARTICLE *NAWB*

Analysis of a story largely made up of dialogue revealed that utterances ending with *nawb* appeared at the end of conversations when talk was winding down. Furthermore, *nawb* was used at the end of highly formulaic phrases such as expressions of gratitude and leave-taking:

1. *Ua tsaug ntau kawg nawb.*
   give thanks a lot extremely prt
   'Thank you so much.'

2. *Mus zoo koj nawb.*
   go be well you prt
   '(Good)bye, take care.'

When asked what *nawb* conjured up in his mind, a native speaker gave me the following example situation: two friends who have just been spending a little time together decide to go somewhere together (home, to a movie). One of them says to the other:

3. *Peb mus nawb.*
   we go prt
   'Come on, let's go.'

What the English translation fails to reveal is that *nawb* implies that the speaker is beckoning his interlocutor, and indeed he made a beckoning gesture while uttering (3). Using *nawb* adds a "please listen to what I'm saying" note to the utterance and requires a certain degree of intimacy between the two conversation partners. Hence, if *nawb* functions as a device for beckoning an interlocutor's attention, it comes as no surprise that it occurs at the end of highly formulaic phrases such as expressions of gratitude and leave-taking when the conversation is winding down: *nawb* may serve to counteract the tendency on the listener's part to stop paying close attention to what is being said and to keep the channels of communication alive between the speaker and the hearer.

II. THE PARTICLE *POB*

Analysis of utterances ending with *pob* revealed that its presence implied that the speaker was not sure about the information s/he was conveying in response to a wh- question (what? where? how? how long? how far? when? etc.). This is illustrated in (4), which is said in response to "How long have you lived in this neighborhood?," and in (5), which is uttered in response to "What are you going to do over the summer break?" Note how the uncertainty built into *pob* is further reinforced by the presence of elements overtly conveying doubt, elements such as *kwv yees* 'probably, I guess,' *tej zau/md* 'maybe,' *ntshai* 'maybe, I'm afraid,' *xyov* 'I don't know,' etc.

4. *Peb nyob tau kwv yees ob xyoos no lawm pob.*
   we live attain probably two years this perf prt
   'We've lived here for probably two years.'

5. *Xyov, tej zaud ntshai tsuas yog kawm ntawv summer xwb pob.*
   uncertainty maybe maybe only be the case study letters summer only prt
   'I don't know; maybe I'm just going to go to summer school.'

There are also instances where this particle bears the high falling rather than the high level tone. The element of uncertainty is also present in these cases, but the utterances have the grammatical structure of yes-no questions rather than statements in answer to a wh-question. This seems to point to an intonational difference between *pob* and *poj*. The latter is illustrated below:

6. *Muaj zog me ntsis lawm poj?*
   have strength alittle perf prt
   'Has your strength come back a little (I wonder)?'

III. OTHER PARTICLES

It is important to bear in mind that the information I have reported here on the particles *nawb* and *pob* represents preliminary findings and that additional research is needed to describe them fully. The same is true of the other conversation particles, the most important of which are as follows:

as	*ntag, ntad*
lauj	*oj, ov, os, og*
maj, mas	*sas, sad*
los mas	*sob, soj*
nab, naj, nav, na, nas	*yom*

It is interesting to note that the tones which involve more than changes in pitch play only a marginal role: the breathy tone is found in only two of the particles listed above and the *-m* tone in only one. Pending further research, I conclude by reiterating the vital role particles play in making conversational exchanges flow smoothly. They convey intonational differences as well as speaker/listener attitudes and feelings.

"FLEXIBLE" GRAMMAR: THE CASE AGAINST STRICT PART OF SPEECH CATEGORIZATION

One of the interesting and challenging features of Hmong grammar is the fact that a given word can belong to more than one part of speech. *Rau* and *tuaj* are a good case in point: they can be interpreted in English as either verbs or prepositions. As a main verb *rau* means "to put, to place," as seen in (1) and (3); as a preposition it means "to" in the benefactive sense, as seen in (2-3). As to *tuaj*, as a main verb it means "to come (to a place where one does not reside or belong)," as seen in (4-5), and as a preposition it means "from," as illustrated in (5).

1. ***Rau rau*** *siab kawm ntawv.*
   put put liver study paper
   'Really put your heart into your studies.'

2. *Npis hais* ***rau*** *kuv tias....*
   Bee say **to** me that
   'Bee said to me/told me that... .'

3. *Muab* ***rau rau*** *hauv.*
   grasp **place to** inside
   'Put it inside.'

4. *Koj* ***tuaj*** *los? Kuv* ***tuaj*** *os.*
   you **come** prt I come prt
   'So, you've come?' 'Yes, indeed, I have.'

5. *Kuv* ***tuaj*** *tim Michigan* ***tuaj.***
   I **come** loc Michigan **from**
   'I come from Michigan.'

I have discussed other multiple word class membership cases elsewhere in this book. As seen above, the word *lawm* can function as a main verb meaning "to leave," as a location word referring to a place a certain distance away from the speaker, and as a perfective marker signaling the completion of a given situation. The word *tsev* can be used as a noun meaning "house" and as a measure word after the numeral *ib* 'one,' yielding *ib tse* (t.c.) 'a household'; additional words functioning in the same manner are found in "Special Functions of the Numeral *Ib* 'One.'" In the section on deictics we saw that deictics can function as prepositions heading prepositional phrases and as independent location or demonstrative nouns. In the section on subordination we saw that *kom* can be a main verb and a complementizer.

Furthermore, words may not be in the same part of speech in English and in Hmong: for example, adjectives in English such as big, beautiful, tall, etc. are stative verbs in Hmong, and the English preposition "with" functions as a main verb in Hmong, as seen in (6):

6. *Kuv* ***nrog*** *kuv tus txiv mus tsev.*
   I **be with** my clf husband go home
   'I went home with my husband.'

When studying the Hmong language, one of the traps to avoid is strict part of speech categorization; it is simply counterproductive. The best strategy in becoming comfortable with multiple part of speech membership is to refrain from matching up Hmong and English parts of speech, and to focus on keeping track of the different functions a given Hmong word can have. Relax and let your mind expand to allow two or more functions to be associated with one word. Adopting a broader view based on the semantic thread that runs through the multiple usages of a word is far more revealing than fitting it into a word class.

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"Hmong For Beginners" was written by Annie Jaisser and her co-authors (Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle, David Strecker, Lopao Vang and Lyfu Vang) from materials they developed in the 1980s when Hmong was first being introduced as a language of instruction for the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI). The book was published by the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at UC Berleley in 1995 and is now out of print. This electronic version is intended to make the materials available to those interested in the Hmong language but with limited access to print materials about the language.

APPENDIX 1: ANSWER KEYS TO EXERCISES

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

COV NAJ NPAWB

Sample answer key:

(a)	25	27	29	26	23	nees nkaum cuaj
(b)	15	27	59	11	43	kaum tsib
(c)	25	57	79	26	32	peb caug ob
(d)	18	14	11	17	15	kaum ib
(e)	16	13	19	12	17	kaumrau
(f)	99	92	97	96	90	cuaj caum xya
(g)	102	120	100	110	120	ib puas ob
(h)	77	70	79	76	78	xya caum yim
(i)	67	60	90	66	69	rau caum cuaj
(j)	102	120	100	110	122	ib puas nees nkaum
(k)	15	27	59	86	43	tsib caug cuaj
(l)	120	170	190	110	160	ib puas cuaj caum
(m)	87	70	77	72	78	xya caum xya
(n)	49	62	17	26	60	plaub caug cuaj
(o)	142	176	193	180	169	ib puas cuaj caum peb

TONE PERCEPTION EXERCISE

Fill in the tone letters. (Leave blank if mid "zero" tone).

Pua_**g**_ ta__ ko_**j**_ mu_**s**_ da_**b**_ tsi__ law_**m**_? Ku_**v**_ mu_**s**_ yua_**v**_ khoo_**m**_ to_**m**_ khw__ law_**m**_. Ko_**j**_ yua_**v**_ tau__ da_**b**_ tsi__? Ku_**v**_ yua_**v**_ tau__ i_**b**_ co__ qe__, nqai_**j**_ qai_**b**_, zau_**b**_ xa_**v**_ la_**v**_, zau_**b**_ pa_**j**_, pia_**m**_ tha_**j**_, thia_**b**_ txhu_**v**_.

INITIAL CONSONANT PERCEPTION EXERCISE

Fill in the consonant you hear. (Possible consonants: d, dh, k, kh, r, rh, q, qh, ts, tsh.)

1. _**q**_uaj
2. _**rh**_eev
3. _**kh**_o
4. _**d**_uab
5. _**tsh**_uaj
6. _**qh**_uav
7. _**r**_ub
8. _**k**_aj
9. _**tsh**_o
10. _**dh**_au
11. _**k**_o
12. _**ts**_eem
13. _**r**_uv
14. _**q**_eeb
15. _**q**_aij

WORD PERCEPTION EXERCISE

Underline the word that you hear for each line.

1.	ib	<u>yim</u>
2.	ruam	<u>cuaj</u>
3.	<u>nres</u>	ntses
4.	tamsis no	<u>tiam sis</u>
5.	neb	<u>nej</u>
6.	ntxiv	<u>txiv</u>
7.	<u>koj</u>	kov
8.	<u>txhiab</u>	thiab
9.	caum	<u>rau</u>
10.	loj	<u>los</u>
11.	<u>ntawm</u>	ntawd
12.	<u>nkoj</u>	koj
13.	<u>tus</u>	tug
14.	<u>thiab</u>	tiab
15.	kuv	<u>kub</u>

STORIES FOR ORAL COMPREHENSION PRACTICE

NPIS NPAJ MOV NOJ

1. Tsis yog.
2. Yog.
3. a.
4. a.
5. Tsis ua.
6. b.
7. Tsis cub.
8. Cub.
9. Noj.
10. Tsis qab.
11. Tsis tshaib plab.

TSOV TSIS NOJ TSHEB

1. Tsis yog.
2. Tsis muaj.
3. Mus nrhiav tib neeg noj lawm.
4. Tsis noj.
5. (Tuaj hauv) kuv lub tsev.
6. Tau.
7. Noj tsiaj.
8. Tsis yog.
9. Tsis yog.
10. Dais, kheb, tsov, tsov txaij (leopard), tsov ntxhuav, tsov dub (black panther), hma, etc.
11. Muaj.

MAIV QHUA

1. Tsis taus.
2. Nws tseem tsis muaj hniav.
3. Tsis tau.
4. Me.
5. b.
6. Muaj ib tug me nyuam xwb.
7. Tsis muaj.
8. Tsis yog.
9. c.
10. Tsis muaj.

NPIS MUS TOM LUB VAJ TSIAJ

1. c.
2. c.
3. Nyiam.
4. Tsis yog. (Nws pom ib tug dais dawb.)

5. Muaj.
6. Tsis yog.
7. Yog.
8. Tsis yog.
9. b.
10. b.

NPIS THIAB NWS COV PHOOJ YWG

1. Muaj phooj ywg ntau ntau./Muaj rau tus phooj ywg.
2. Tsis yog.
3. b.
4. c.
5. Tsis yog.
6. c.
7. b.
8. Ruam (me me xwb).
9. c.
10. c.

SAIB DAIM DUAB: NPIS THIAB NWS COV PHOOJ YWG

1. Muaj ib lub xwb.
2. Muaj ib lub xwb.
3. Muaj ob txhais.
4. Muaj ob txhais.
5. Muaj ob txhais.
6. Muaj ob txhais.
7. Muaj ib tug dev nyob saum Npis lub taub hau.
8. Muaj ib tug nas nyob saum Npis ib txhais caj npab.
9. Muaj ib tug noog nyob saum Npis ib txhais tes.
10. Muaj ib tug npua nyob ze ntawm Npis ib txhais ceg.
11. Muaj ib tug miv nyob saum Npis ib txhais taw.
12. Kuv xav tias Npis nyiam tsiaj heev.
13. Kuv xav tias tsiaj nyiam Npis heev thiab.
14. Tsis muaj.
15. Muaj. (Muaj ib tug qaib nyob saum nws lub xub pwg.)

KUV LUB TSHEB

1. Tsis yog.
2. Tsis yog.
3. Xim daj.
4. Tsis nyiam.
5. (Kuv) Nyiam noj nqaij qaib, ntses, mov, zaub ntsuab, thiab txiv.

TUS ME NYUAM DEV TOM NPIS KO TAW

1. a.
2. b.

3. c.
4. c.
5. Tsis yog.
6. Tsis yog.
7. b.
8. Tsis yog.
9. b.
10. a.
11. Tsis tu siab.

TUS TSOV LOS XYUAS

1. Tsis tau.
2. c.
3. b.
4. Tsis yog.
5. Yog.

TXIV NRAUG NTSUAG THIAB COV UAS KAWM HAIS LUS HMOOB

1. Muaj ob leeg.
2. Tsis yog.
3. b.
4. Tsis yog.
5. Tsis yog. (Nws sau duab zoo heev.)
6. a.
7. Tsis muaj.
8. c.
9. b.
10. a.

NOUN PHRASE STRUCTURE

NOUN CLASSIFIERS

DAIM OR LUB? ANSWER KEY

Daim is the classifier used with nouns referring to objects considered to be flat: a sheet of paper (1), a field (2), a leaf (3), an apron (4). *Lub*, on the other hand, occurs with nouns referring to objects characterized by roundness and/or bulkiness: a ball (5), a flower (6), a cooking pot (7), a hat (8). Hence,

9.	*daim duab*	picture, photograph	flat
10.	*lub qe*	egg	round, bulky
11.	*lub nroog*	city	bulky
12.	*daim phuam so ntswg*	handkerchief	flat
13.	*daim liaj*	rice paddy	flat
14.	*daim tiab*	skirt	flat*
15.	*lub hnub*	sun	round
16.	*lub txiv pos liab*	strawberry	round, bulky

HMONG CLASSIFIER EXERCISE: ANSWER SHEET

While comparing your answers with the ones given below, bear in mind that the purpose of this exercise is to get a glimpse of the Hmong world view, not to get "correct" answers. You may discover that your answers, while "correct" from your (Western) point of view, are not "correct" from the Hmong perspective. The best thing to do in this case is to talk to Hmong people about this topic, and to have them explain how they view classifier-noun associations which are puzzling to you.

Part A

A good strategy to figure out the semantic categories of the nouns with which the given classifiers are associated is to group together the nouns which share the same classifier. This yields the following:

1. *rab*

3. *rabrauj*	hammer	20. *rabdiav*	spoon
6. *rab phom*	rifle	26. *rab kaw*	saw
10. *rab hneev*	crossbow	28. *rabhlau*	hoe
13. *rab koob*	needle	30. *rabtxiab*	scissors
19. *rabciaj*	pliers		

* Hmong skirts are of the wrap-around style and hence lie out flat.

2. *daim*

2. *daim txiag*	(wooden) board	17. *daim pam*	blanket
4. *daim nplooj*	leaf of a tree	21. *daim teb*	field
7. *daimtiab*	skirt	27. *daimliaj*	rice paddy
9. *daim ntawv*	sheet of paper	29. *daim sev*	apron

3. *txoj*

1. *txoj hlua*	rope	23. *txoj xov*	string, twine
12. *txoj hmab*	creeper (vine)	25. *txoj hmoov*	destiny, fate
14. *txoj sia*	life	31. *txoj kev*	road, path
16. *txoj hauj lwm*	work		

4. *phau*

11. *phau nyiaj*	wad (of money)	18. *phau ntawv*	book

5. *tawb*

5. *tawb qaub ncauj*	spit, spittle	24. *tawb quav*	dung
15. *tawb zis*	urine		

6. *tsab*

8. *tsab xov*	(written) message	22. *tsab ntawv*	letter (mail)

The next step is to determine what semantic properties the nouns associated with each of the classifiers have in common. This yields the following:

1. *rab*: used with nouns referring to *implements* (tools, kitchen utensils) and *weapons*.

2. *daim*: used with nouns referring to *flat things* and *surfaces*.

3. *txoj*: used with nouns referring to *long and thin things*. It is also used with *abstract nouns*, which are metaphorically considered to be long: life(time), destiny, work (the latter may require a stretch of the imagination, but this is a different culture, after all).

4. *phau*: used with nouns referring to *stacks of things, things piled up on each other*.

5. *tawb*: used with nouns referring to *bodily excretions*.

6. *tsab*: used with nouns referring to *written* messages. (Recall from the introduction to this exercise that there is a separate classifier for *spoken* words, *zaj*.)

While, as seen above, a given classifier typically categorizes various nouns according to a particular semantic principle, the reverse can also be true. A given noun can select more than one classifier, and hence have a different meaning depending on the classifier. As you may have noticed, the noun *ntawv* is a case in point: ***daim*** *ntawv* (#9) means "sheet of paper" since *daim* categorizes flat things; ***phau*** *ntawv* (#18) means "book" since *phau* is used for stacks of things; and ***tsab*** *ntawv* (#22) means "letter (piece of mail)" since *tsab* is associated with written messages. A good way to think of this is to remember that the noun *ntawv* has the general meaning of "paper" and that the classifier picks out which aspect of the paper is emphasized. Another example of a noun which can occur with more than one classifier is the noun *xov*: ***tsab*** *xov* (#8) means "(written) message," while ***txoj*** *xov* (#23) means "string/twine." This reinforces the necessity to learn nouns together with their classifier, since classifiers can affect meaning.

Part B

Again, a good strategy is to start by grouping together the nouns that share the same classifier. This yields the following:

1. *txhais*

8. *txhais caj npab*	arm	20. *txhais ceg*	leg
11. *txhais ncej puab*	thigh	23. *txhais ko taw*	foot
14. *txhais tes*	hand		

2. *tus*

2. *tus nplaig*	tongue	21. *tus pob txha*	bone
6. *tus qau*	penis	25. *tus ntiv tes*	finger
16. *tus tw*	tail		

3. *txoj*

4. *txojleeg*	nerves	15. *txoj hnyuv*	intestines
10. *txoj sawv*	tendons	18. *txoj hlab ntsha*	veins
13. *txoj hlab ntaws*	umbilical cord		

4. *lub*

1. *lub siab*	liver	17. *lub xub pwg*	shoulder
3. *lub cev*	body	19. *lub hauv caug*	knee
5. *lub plawv*	heart	22. *lub ntaws*	navel
7. *lub taub hau*	head	24. *lub qhov muag*	eye
9. *lub mis*	breast	26. *lub pim*	vagina
12. *lub pob ntseg*	ear		

As in Part A, the next step is to determine what semantic properties are shared by the body parts associated with each of the classifiers. This yields the following:

1. ***txhais***: used for arms, legs, hands, and feet—i.e., *limbs and their extremities.*

2. ***tus***: used with *body parts that come in "short" lengths.* (Compare and contrast with ***txoj*** below.)

3. ***txoj***: used with *body parts that come in "long" lengths* and are *thin* and *flexible.* (Recall from Part A that ***txoj*** is also used with non-body-part nouns referring to long and thin things.)

4. ***lub***: used with *round and/or bulky body parts* (a kind of "elsewhere" category).

Part C

By referring to the findings of Parts A and B, we can match the given words with the following classifiers:

1. *qhib ntsia*	screwdriver	*rab*
2. *plab*	stomach, abdomen	*lub*
3. *ntawv sau*	notebook	*phau*
4. *xov hlau*	iron wire	*txoj*
5. *tav*	rib	*tus*
6. *duab*	photograph, picture	*daim*
7. *cajhlaub*	lower leg	*txhais*
8. *duavhlau*	shovel	*rab*
9. *hauvsiab*	chest (as body part)	*lub*
10. *ntaub*	(piece) of cloth	*daim*
11. *ntiv taw*	toe	*tus*
12. *diav rawg*	fork	*rab*
13. *raum*	kidney	*lub*
14. *kab das*	blackboard	*daim*
15. *quav twm*	cow-dung	*tawb*
16. *cai*	law	*txoj*

(Recall from Part A that *txoj* is used with abstract nouns which are metaphorically considered to be long; also consider "the long arm of the law" in English.)

NOTE: Should you have chosen *tsab* for #3 (notebook) and/or #14 (blackboard), the following will help clarify the "proper" choice of classifier: some classifiers preempt others; in this case, although notebooks and blackboards are used for writing, they do not directly refer to written messages. For "notebook" the salient feature in the Hmong world view is that it is made up of a stack of sheets of paper (hence *phau*), and for "blackboard" the salient feature is that it is a flat surface (hence *daim*).

*SOME COMMON CLASSIFIERS: ANSWER KEY**

Daim	Flat things such as fields, pages, etc.
Lub	Round or bulky objects, clothes.
Nkawm	Things that come in pairs such as earrings, socks, etc.
Phau	Books or things that come in volumes.
Rab	Instruments, utensils.
Tus	People, animals, things that are long and cylindrical.
Tsob	Plants, bushes, foliage.
Txoj	Things that come in length such as threads, wire, rope, roads, etc.
Txhais	Arms, hands, feet.

Exercise 1: Match the following nouns with the appropriate classifier.

1.	***daim***	*pam*	blanket	11.	***daim***	*duab*	picture
2.	***txhais***	*tes*	hand	12.	***lub***	*paj*	flower
3.	***rab***	*diav*	spoon	13.	***tsob***	*paj*	plant
4.	***tsob***	*ntoo*	tree	14.	***lub***	*tsev*	house
5.	***tus***	*cwj mem*	pen	15.	***lub***	*tsheb*	car
6.	***lub***	*xov tooj*	telephone	16.	***txoj***	*hlua*	rope
7.	***daim***	*ntawv*	page of paper	17.	***nkawm***	*khau*	shoe
8.	***tus***	*miv*	cat	18.	***tus***	*duab*	shadow
9.	***daim***	*teb*	farm field	19.	***lub***	*khob*	cup
10.	***phau***	*ntawv*	book	20.	***txhais***	*ceg*	leg

Exercise 2: Complete the following sentences by inserting the appropriate classifier.

1. Hnub no kuv noj ib *lub* qe.
2. Maiv muaj ib *lub* tsho me me.
3. Kab Npauj tsis nyiam *tus* miv xim dub.
4. Kuv tsis muaj ib *rab* diav noj mov.
5. Nyuj *lub* taub hau loj loj.
6. *Tsob* paj ntawd muaj cuaj *lub* paj.
7. Nruas niaj hnub ntxuav nws *txhais* tes.
8. *Txoj* hlua nyob qhov twg?
9. *Daim* pam ntawd loj heev.
10. Muaj xya *tus* cwj mem nyob ntawm *lub* rooj zaum.

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* For a more comprehensive list of classifiers, see Heimbach (1969: Appendix 2, pp. 455-56).

APPENDIX 2: TRANSLATIONS

STORIES FOR ORAL COMPREHENSION PRACTICE

BEE PREPARES A MEAL

Today Bee is very hungry, but he doesn't have anything to eat. So he goes to the store and buys some eggs, cauliflower, and rice.

After he returns home, he puts water in a pot. After the water boils, he breaks the cauliflower into it. He also steams the rice. When everything is ready, he proceeds to eat. The food does not taste good, but he gets enough to eat.

TIGERS DON'T EAT CARS

Yesterday morning a tiger came to my house. I said, "Hello. What brings you here?" The tiger replied, "I've come to eat you."

I asked, "Oh! Tigers eat cars, don't they?" The tiger said, "No, they don't. We only eat people!" I said, "If that's the case, you can't eat me. I'm a car. People live way over there." So the tiger took off to look for people to eat.

KHOUA

Bee has an older brother. His name is Kao. Kao has a child. Her name is Khoua. Khoua can't talk yet, but she sure can laugh.

Khoua doesn't have teeth yet, so she can't eat meat. Consequently Kao and his wife steam rice for her (to eat).

BEE GOES TO THE ZOO

One day Bee went to the zoo. He was very happy. He likes to look at animals. When he went to the zoo for the first time, he saw a white bear. He didn't know that white bears existed. So he said, "That bear is very sick, isn't it?" Bee's mother said, "No, that bear is not sick."

BEE AND HIS FRIENDS

Bee has a lot of friends. Look at the picture and you'll find out what Bee's friends are like.

One friend is a puppy. The puppy likes to sit on top of Bee's head. One day the puppy fell down. He landed on top of the pig's head. The pig was offended. He said to the puppy,

"How can you be so stupid!"

MY CAR

My car's name is Blia. It's a "Bug" (literally, a turtle-shaped car). It's yellow.

I like my car. Sometimes it's hungry. So I feed it gas. It doesn't like to eat rice, vegetables, and meat.

My car and I are not alike. I don't like to eat gas. I like to eat rice, vegetables, and meat.

THE PUPPY BITES BEE'S FOOT

One day Bee went to visit one of his friends. Her name is Blia. Blia has a little puppy. Its name is Blackie because its hair is black.

Blackie likes to bite people's feet for fun. When Bee came to visit Blia, Blackie bit his foot. Bee didn't like it at all. But he didn't do anything because Blia is his friend.

TIGER SHOWS UP FOR A VISIT

One day a tiger came to my house. The tiger said, "I'm going to eat you." But I answered, "You can't eat me. I've already eaten you."

This made the tiger cry very hard. So I took pity on him and fixed some chicken for him to eat.

THE ORPHAN AND THE HMONG STUDENTS

Once upon a time there was a poor orphan. He didn't have a mother and he didn't have a father. He didn't have fields and he didn't have a house. He didn't have a puppy to play with.

One day a very beautiful woman showed up. The woman said to the orphan, "Hello. I've come to study Hmong. Would you be willing to teach me?"

The orphan said, "Oh woman! I am so wretched. You must be joking. I can't teach you."

At that moment a very handsome young man showed up. The man said to the orphan, "Hello. I've come to study Hmong. Would you be willing to teach me too?"

The orphan didn't answer anything. But the king in the heavens took mercy on these two people who wanted to study Hmong. He sent his daughter and his son to instruct them. The orphan helped out too, and he drew beautiful pictures.

READING UNITS

A LETTER

June 23, 1989

Dear Kaub,

How are you? I received your letter. I am happy and I thank you (for it). Everybody in my family is fine. I'm thinking about you and your wife and children, all of you.

Love (literally, "See you later"),

Bee

GOING UP TO CHICAGO

On Saturday my husband and I went up to Chicago. We went to eat at a Vietnamese restaurant. We ate pork, rice, and spring rolls for dinner. Inside the spring rolls we wrapped up bean sprouts, lettuce, mint, cucumber, and Chinese parsley. We drank water. Then we ate a sweet banana dessert, but we didn't drink coffee because we don't like it. Vietnamese food is very tasty and inexpensive. We want to go back to this Vietnamese restaurant again.

WASHING CLOTHES

There are five people in this family. There is a father, a mother, and three children. The children's father has gone to the market, and their mother is washing clothes. The two older children are helping their mother dry clothes. The younger child is playing with her dog. She's having a lot of fun.

BUYING CLOTHES

Mother wants to buy winter coats for her children. She needs to get a small coat and a large coat. The children would like blue coats. Mother wants to buy the coats on sale (literally, "coats that have been reduced in price").

MY FAMILY

My mother and father have eight children. They have four sons and four daughters. The daughters are the older children, the sons the younger. I am the oldest. So I have three younger sisters and four younger brothers.

When we were still little, we all lived together in a large house in the state of Connecticut. Now we don't live together anymore. My parents live in Florida. One of my sisters and her husband also live in Florida. They have a daughter. She's two years old. Her name is Nicole.

One of my sisters and her husband live in North Carolina near the ocean. They have a son named Christopher. He is four.

One of my sisters and two of my brothers still live in Connecticut, but they don't live in the same city. My sister lives in Hartford and she is not married. One of my brothers lives in a city called Orange. He's married and has a son named Justin. Justin is eight. One of my brothers who lives in Connecticut is not married yet, but he's going to get married next year.

My two brothers who live in New York are not married either. One of them has a job, but the other one is still a student. In June and in July they are going down to Central America. They're going there to visit several countries and study Spanish.

My husband and I live in Indiana. We go to visit my parents down in Florida a couple of times a year. Sometimes they come to visit us up in Indiana too. Sometimes we go to Connecticut, to New York and down to North Carolina to visit my sisters and my brothers.

1. Tus sau yog tus ntxhais yau, puas yog?
   Tsis yog; yog tus (ntxhais) hlob.

2. Tus sau, nws txiv thiab nws niam muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam?
   Muaj yim tus (me nyuam).

3. Thaum tus sau yog me nyuam hluas nws tsev neeg nyob qhov twg?
   Nyob hauv lub xeev Connecticut.

4. Tam sim no, nws txiv thiab nws niam nyob ze xeev Indiana, puas yog?
   Tsis yog; nyob nram lub xeev Florida.

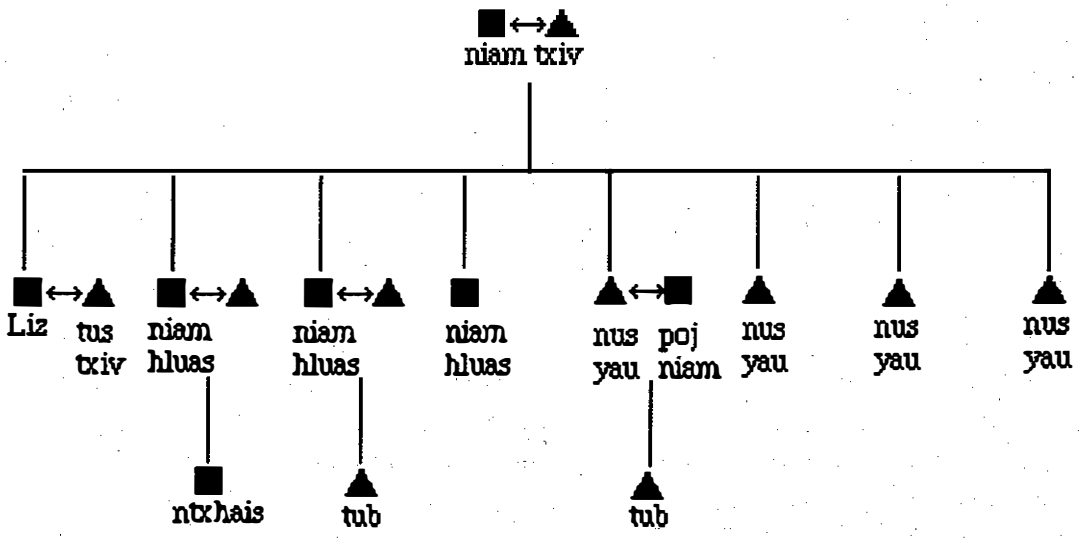
5. Tus sau cov niam hluas nyob qhov twg?
   Ib tug nyob nram lub xeev Florida, ib tug hauv lub xeev North Carolina, ib tug hauv lub xeev Connecticut.

6. Tus sau nyob qhov twg?
   Nyob hauv lub xeev Indiana.

7. Cov nus uas nyob hauv New York tab tom ua dab tsi?
   Ib tug ua hauj lwm, ib tug tseem kawm ntawv.

8. Koj puas xav tias tus sau nyiam mus xyuas nws tsev neeg?
   Xav xav!

9. Draw the author's family tree and label it with the appropriate kinship terms.



DOING NEEDLEWORK

The women prepare fancy clothing and set it aside for the New Year celebration. They put all their heart into doing embroidery and sewing clothes. So when the New Year arrives everybody gets to wear something new.

The women pound the rice in the footmill, winnow the rice, carry water, pound cooked rice into rice cakes which they toast (for everybody to eat), and do other kinds of chores.

1. Leej twg npaj zam? *Cov poj niam npaj zam.*

2. Cov poj niam ua hauj lwm dab tsi? *Ua yam ntau hauj lwm: ua paj ntaub, xaws khaub ncaws, tuav txhuv, tsoov txhuv, ris dej, ua ncuav rau sawv daws noj.*

3. Thaum txog peb caug lawm sawv daws thiaj yuav tau hnav dab tsi? *Sawv daws thiaj yuav tau hnav khaub ncaws tshiab.*

THE SCHOOL LIZARD

 # 1: THE LIZARD CAN RUN

The teacher opened his desk. A lizard escaped. The students laughed. Maiv Tooj laughed and coughed. Riam knocked on his desk. Sawm got up to catch the lizard, but it ran out the door. So Sawm sat down again.

 # 2: THE TEACHER KEEPS A LIZARD

The teacher, whose name was Yawg Laum, was raising a lizard. His lizard crawled around on top of his desk. His lizard made a student by the name of Maiv Tooj laugh. Maiv Tooj's laughing made a student by the name of Riam laugh and cough. So Riam went and stood by the window.

 # 3: WHILE THE TEACHER SLEEPS...

A lizard crawled in through the door. It slowly crawled very close to Maiv Tooj's chair. When Maiv Tooj pointed her finger at the lizard, it went running out the door again.

Sawm saw Maiv Tooj do that, and it made him laugh. Riam had no idea as to what was going on, so he was not very happy. Consequently he knocked on his desk. This caused the teacher, who was sound asleep, to suddenly wake up. The teacher did not know what was going on. So he got up, opened the door, and said, "Come in!"

 # 4: AFRAID OF THE LIZARD

Riam wanted to sit down. Then Sawm wanted to get up. Then Maiv Tooj climbed on top of her chair. All the students behaved this way because there was a lizard running around very close to their chairs. The teacher then told Maiv Tooj to open the door. Maiv Tooj pointed her finger and shouted at Riam to go and open the door. Riam turned around and told Sawm to open the door. While they were all screaming at each other, the lizard ran out through the window.

THE TIGER AND THE FROG

A long time ago, a Tiger met a Frog. The Tiger was very hungry. So he said to the Frog, "Frog, let's have a jumping contest. If you win, we'll leave it at that, but if you don't win I'll get to eat you." The Frog thought about the proposition for a few minutes and got an idea. So he replied to the Tiger, "I'll do as you said." They went over to a big log which was lying across the path, and the Tiger said, "Frog, let's have a race jumping over this log to see who can jump farther." After contemplating the log, the Frog said, "Tiger, let's do as you said. You jump first." At that moment the Tiger wanted to eat the Frog very badly, so he said, "Okay, let's do it." When the Tiger was about to jump, the Frog grabbed tightly onto the Tiger's tail. The Tiger leaped over the log to the other side in one bound. When the Tiger jumped, his tail flung the Frog ahead of him. When the Tiger reached the other side he said, "Frog, you can jump now." The Frog replied from ahead of the Tiger, "I am over here." The Tiger was puzzled; he couldn't figure out how the Frog had managed to jump ahead of him. The Tiger just couldn't believe the Frog, so he said again, "You are so strong. Let's jump over to the other side again." The Frog, again, said, "I'll do as you said." When the Tiger was about to jump, the Frog grabbed onto the Tiger's tail again. The Tiger leaped over the log to the other side in one bound. His tail flung the Frog ahead of him again. When the Tiger reached the other side, he said, "Frog, where are you? Have you jumped over yet?" The Frog answered from ahead of the Tiger, "I am over here." Now the Tiger was angry at the Frog because he could not jump farther than him. So the Tiger again said in anger to the Frog, "Since you are so strong, let's jump over one more time to find out who won." Again, the Frog said, "You're willing to jump again? That's fine with me." This time the Tiger mustered all the strength he could to jump so that the Frog wouldn't beat him, but the Frog held onto his tail again. When the Tiger leaped across the log, his tail sent the Frog flying into a huge tree. Blood was streaming out of the Frog's mouth because he hit the tree so hard. The Tiger called again, "Frog, where are you?" The Frog was hurting so badly that he thought he was going to die for sure, but he could still talk. So he replied to the Tiger, "I'm over here." This time the Tiger flew into a rage and said to the Frog, "I'm very hungry and I'm going to eat you." The Frog didn't know what to do. So he said, "You're going to eat me! But I've already eaten your liver. Look at me, my mouth is bloody all over." The Tiger walked over to look at the Frog's mouth, and saw that it was true. Now the Tiger was very afraid of the Frog, so he ran away in great leaps and bounds* until he disappeared into the forest because he didn't want the Frog to eat more of him. The Frog was seriously hurt, so he went to rest under the shade of a tree. After sleeping for awhile he got up. He listened to his body to make sure that there were no broken bones, and slowly started jumping along the path.

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* Literally, "jumping higher than the ceiling." *(Lub) nthab* refers to the storage platform overhead in a traditional Hmong home, and *qab nthab* refers to the area right underneath it—i.e., the "ceiling."

GRAMMAR UNITS

TXAWJ, *TAUS*, AND *TAU*: TRANSLATION OF EXAMPLE SENTENCES

TXAWJ

1.	a.	*Nws* ***txawj*** *ua luam dej.*	'He can swim.'
	b.	*Nws* ***tsis txawj*** *ua luam dej.*	'She can't swim.'
2.	a.	*Nws* ***txawj*** *hais lus Askiv.*	'She can speak English.'
	b.	*Nws* ***tsis txawj*** *hais lus Askiv.*	'She can't speak English.'
3.	a.	*Nws* ***txawj*** *ua mov noj.*	'She can cook.'
	b.	*Nws* ***tsis txawj*** *ua mov noj.*	'She can't cook.'
4.	a.	*Miv* ***txawj*** *nce ntoo.*	'The cat can climb the tree.'
	b.	*Dev* ***tsis txawj*** *nce ntoo.*	'The dog can't climb the tree.'

TAUS

1.	a.	*Nws khiav* ***taus.***	'He can run.'
	b.	*Nws khiav* ***tsis taus.***	'He can't run.'
2.	a.	*Nws nqa* ***taus.***	'He can lift it.'
	b.	*Nws nqa* ***tsis taus.***	'He can't lift it.'

TAU

1.	a.	*Nws pov npas* ***tau.***	'He can throw the ball.'
	b.	*Nws pov npas* ***tsis tau.***	'She can't throw the ball.'
2.	a.	*Nws mus* ***tau.***	'He can go (in).'
	b.	*Nws mus* ***tsis tau.***	'He can't go (in).'
3.	a.	*Nws muas tus me nyuam dev* ***tau*** *(vim tias nws muaj nyiaj).*	'He can buy the puppy (because he has money).'
	b.	*Nws muas dab tsi los* ***tsis tau*** *(vim tias nws tsis muaj nyiaj).*	'He can't buy anything (because he doesn't have any money).'

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Abstract:
"Hmong For Beginners" was written by Annie Jaisser and her co-authors (Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle, David Strecker, Lopao Vang and Lyfu Vang) from materials they developed in the 1980s when Hmong was first being introduced as a language of instruction for the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI). The book was published by the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at UC Berleley in 1995 and is now out of print. This electronic version is intended to make the materials available to those interested in the Hmong language but with limited access to print materials about the language.

English-Hmong Glossary

by Elizabeth Riddle

This is a brief glossary rather than a full dictionary and is not meant to be comprehensive. In addition to including all the Hmong words contained in the text, other common words are included such as beginners in the language might find useful in a variety of circumstances when interacting with Hmong people or reading simple texts such as folk tales. As in any language, usage varies across regions and individuals. The items included here represent the usage of many, but not necessarily all, speakers of White Hmong.

The following conventions are used. Parts of speech are labeled for most individual words (but not complex phrases containing more than one part of speech except where useful for disambiguation) in order to help distinguish senses and usage. It must be kept in mind that Hmong parts of speech classification is more flexible than that of English and there is often no simple correspondence or single classification. Where the part of speech of the English and Hmong words is the same, it is given before any parentheses. Where the part of speech is different, or where there is more than one classification for a given English entry in Hmong, it is given within parentheses, where additional meanings or other explanatory material are also given. In some cases the part of speech classification is not clearcut or is difficult to explain fully in a brief entry. In those cases the decision was made according to what might most help a beginner whose point of departure is English to get a sense of the basic Hmong usage.

An entry is repeated within the parentheses along with any other possible senses when it is a reasonably close translation of the Hmong item or items. The entry is not repeated within the parentheses when there is no true Hmong equivalent and the translation is only an approximate paraphrase which may be used in some situations. In many cases a number of possible English senses, but not necessarily all, are given in parentheses in order to give a sense of the range of meaning of a Hmong item. In any given case the Hmong trasnslation(s) do(es) not necessarily correspond to all senses or all uses of the English items given in the parentheses. Context must always be taken into consideration.

Classifiers for nouns which generally take them are given in square brackets immediately before the Hmong nouns. When the classifier is an integral part of the Hmong noun and forms a compound with it, it is not put in square brackets, but simply included as part of the word. It still performs the classifier functions. Other nouns for which no classifiers are given either self-classify or do not normally use an individual classifier (i.e. other than the plural or group word *cov*).

Items within parentheses in the Hmong translations are optional, ultimately depending on context. Lines indicate where in a phrase an item appears. A slash indicates alternate forms, such as alternate pronunciations for the same meaning. For items where there is a commonly used translation borrowed from Lao, this is labelled (L), and from English, (E). No attempt has been made to provide consistent etymological information. This labelling is done simply to help indicate the generally perceived status of an item in everyday usage.

Following one common convention and that used in the textbook, a space is left between each syllable of a word, which has the effect of making the tone letter salient. It should be noted, however, that others prefer to omit spaces between syllables inside words.

The following abbreviations are used: ADV - adverb, CLF - classifier, CONJ - conjunction, DEM - demonstrative, esp.- especially, INT - interjection, L - Lao, lit. - literally, NEG - negative, N - noun, OBJ - object (to indicate a form used as a grammatical object of a verb, used here only in those cases where ambiguity would otherwise result), PREP - preposition, POSS - possessive modifier, PRO - pronoun, Q - quantifier, V - verb.

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A

AM ADV (___ AM) ___ (teev/moos) thaum sawv ntxov

abandon V (abandon, cast away, discard, leave behind, reject) tseg

abdomen N (stomach) [lub] plab
- N (lower abdominal area) [lub] plab mog

able V (able, can as acquired ability, know how to) txawj
- V(able, can as situational, external possibility) tau
- V (able, can as physical, internal ability/resources) taus

abnormal (V be abnormal, as for a medical test, unusual) (L) tsis thas ma das

abortion (V abort, have an abortion) rho me nyuam

about (ADV about, approximately, ADV probably, V guess) kwv yees
- ADV (about, in vicinity of, around) ib ncig
- (PREP about, concerning, V arrive at) txog
- (talk about) hais txog
- (how about__?) __ne

above PREP (higher than, on top of) saum
- ADV (in a higher position) saud
- PREP (up, uphill, [up] above) pem

absent (V has not come) tsis tuaj

absolutely ADV kiag (li)

accept V (accept, catch something thrown, receive) txais

accident (V collide, as of cars) sib tsoo

according to PREP raws li

account N (bank account) naj nbawb cia nyiaj

accustomed (V be accustomed to, be willing, agreeable) kam
- (V be familiar) swm

ache V (ache, hurt, be sick) mob
- N (pain, sickness) [tus] mob
- (V have an earache) mob ntsej rag
- (V have a headache) dias taub hau
- (V have a toothache) mob hniav
- (V have a stomachache) mob plab

across PREP (opposite, facing, across the valley, [over] to [laterally, east-west]) tim
- ADV (over there) tid
- (V go across, cross) hla
- (PREP across, through, after [time], V go across, cross over, pass through/by) dhau

act V (act, do, make, produce) ua

add V (add, added to, join to, make an increment to) ntxiv
- (V added to, CONJ plus in math) ntxiv rau
- (V put extra, surpass) tshaj

address N [lub/tus] chaw nyob, qhov chaw nyob

adult N [tus] neeg laus

advice N [lo] lus ntuas, lus qhuab ntuas

advise V (advise against an intended course of action, seek to dissuade) txw
- V (advise, recommend, admonish) qhuab qhia
- V (exhort, rebuke) ntuas
- V (advise, explain, inform, instruct, show, teach, tell) qhia

affect V (be affected, afflicted with, suffer, encounter) raug

affection (V show affection) qawm

afflict (V be afflicted with, affect, suffer, encounter) raug

afford (V be able to buy) yuav tau

afraid (V be afraid, frightened, fear) ntshai
- (V be fearful, startled, suddenly afraid) siab poob nthav

after PREP (after, afterward, behind) tom qab
- (V after the passing of a particular time) dhau ___
- (after a day/days, another day) lwm hnub tso
- (after finishing an action) V + tag
- (after midnight) ib tag hmo dua
- (CONJ after that, [and] then, so then) ces
- (the day after tomorrow) nag nag kis/nas kis

afternoon N yav tav su dua , tav su dua, caij tav su
- (from 1-4 PM) hnub qaib
- (late afternoon, 4-6PM) yuav tsaus ntuj, yav tsaus ntuj

afterward ADV tom qab no, rov yav zaum tom qab

again (ADV again, more than, used to form comparative, V surpass) dua
- ADV (again, V add to) ntxiv (dua)

against (V turn against) fav xeeb
- (V turn against, change the mind, have a change of heart) ntxeev siab

age N (length of time, period, epoch, season [lub] caij
- (time, years, a person's age) hnub nyoog

agency N (place) [lub] tsev kab xwm

ago ADV (long ago) thaum ub
- ADV (a very long time ago) puag thaum, puag ta
- ADV (just, a moment ago) nyuam qhuav
- ADV (previously, period up till now) nram ntej

agree V (agree to, consent, give permission) tso lus, pluam lus
- V (agree, be willing) nyoo
- V (agree to, be willing, admit) yeem
- V (concur in an opinion, agree with) raug
- V (approve of, agree with) pom zoo
- V (think the same) xav li nws thiab
- V (agree with the heart) dhos siab, hum siab

agreeable (V be agreeable to, willing) kam, nyoo

agreement N (written agreement) [daim] ntawv cog lus

ahead PREP (ahead of, in front of) tom ntej
- ADV (ahead, before in time or location, previous) ntej

aid V (aid, help) pab
• N [txoj] kev pab

aim V (a gun) tsom (phom)

air N (air as gaseous substance, breath, gas) pa
• N (atmosphere, the air) hav cua
• N (air-conditioning) cua txias

airplane N [lub] dav hlau, (L) nyooj hoom

airport N [lub] tshav dav hlau, (L) tshav nyooj hoom

alcohol N (for drinking) (dej) cawv

alike ADV (same, same as) ib yam, tib yam li

alive (V be alive, living) ciaj (siav), ua ciaj, muaj sia
• (be alive, dwell, live at, stay at, be at) nyob

all Q (all, every) txhia, txhua (txhia)
• (ADV all, completely, finished) tas/g nrho, tas
• (ADV all, completely) txhua nrho
• (ADV all, altogether) huv (si), huv tib si, tib si
• (PRO all of people, everybody) puav leej

allergic (V something doesn't agree with one, not fit) tsis haum

allow V (allow, abandon, free, leave, let, permit, place, release, relinquish) tso
• V (allow, permit, let, put aside, store) cia
• V (allow, permit, let, give as a gift) pub

almost ADV yuav luag

alone ADV ib leeg

along (V go along, by the side of) raws, taug
• (V follow along a route) lam

aloud (V be loud, make a noise, sound, ring) nrov

alphabet N cov tsiaj ntawv

already ADV (already, marker of perfective aspect) lawm
• ADV (already, really, even, indeed) twb
• (V be finished) tas, tag

also (ADV also, CONJ and) thiab
• ADV (also, moreover, consequently, therefore) kuj
• ADV (also, the same) ib yam

althongh ADV (although, though, even if/though) tab (yog), tab txawm (tias), txawm yog/tias + subordinate clause + los + main clause
• ADV (although, even if, if only) tab (yog)

altogether ADV (altogether, all) huv (si), huv (tib si)

always ADV (always, all the time) txhua lub caij
• (always, from the beginning, originally) ib txwm
• (always, repeatedly) pheej

am V (all forms of be) yog

ambulance N [lub] tsheb thauj neeg mob

America N (America, the United States) (Teb chaws) As mes lis kas, As mes lis kas teb, As mes liv kas, A me li kas, Mi li kas, Mi kas, Mis kuj

American (V be American) As mes liv kas, etc.
• N (person) [tus] neeg As mes liv kas, etc.

among PREP txij li
• (within) hauv

and (CONJ and, ADV also) thiab
• (ADV and then, and so, then) ces
• (ADV and then, thereupon) ntxawm
• (ADV and then, therefore) thiaj li, mam li
• (ADV and so, and then, so, therefore) ho
• (ADV and so, also, moreover, consequently) kuj
• (and [how about] ___ ?) ___ ne?

angry (V be angry) chim, chim siab, npau taws
• (V be angry, lose one's balance) npau siab, siab npau
• (V be prone to anger, hot tempered) siab kub, siabceev

animal N [tus] tsiaj
• N (animals of all types) tsiaj txhu
• N (wild animal) [tus] tsiaj qus
• N (domestic animal) [tus] tsiaj nyeg

animism N (native Hmong religion) kev cai dab qhuas

ankle N [lub] dab taws
• (ankle bone) [lub] pob taws

another Q (another, other, a second, next) lwm
• (additional one) ib _____ ntxiv
• (another time) ib zaug ntxiv, lwm zaug, lwm lub caij
• (ADV again) dua

answer V teb (lus)
• N [lo] lus teb

ant N [tus] ntsaum

anus N [lub] qhov qhuav

anyone PRO (used in statements, questions: anyone/body [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], someone/body, no one/body [+ NEG on V], who) leej twg
• PRO (anyone/body at all) tus twg los tau

anything PRO (used in statements, questions: anything [+NEG on V for NEG meaning], something, what) dab tsi, ab tsi
• PRO (anything at all) ib yam dab tsi

anyway ADV txawm li cas los

anywhere ADV (used in statements, questions: anywhere [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], nowhere [+ NEG on V], somewhere, where) qhov twg
• ADV (anywhere at all) qhov twg los tau

apartment N [lub] chav tsev, tsev kem

apologize V thov zam txim
• V (apologize, "excuse me/I'm sorry") thov txim

appear V (appear, be like, be similar, be the same, seem) zoo li
• V (appear, emerge, show up) tshwm

apple N [lub] (E) txiv ev paum, txiv zuaj

apply V (apply oneself to something) rau siab
• V (apply for, make an application, sign up for) sau npe

appointment N kev teem caij sib ntsib
• (V make an appointment for a meeting, doctor) teem caij
• (V appoint to a position) tsa

appreciate V nuj nqis, nco txiaj ntsis

approve V (approve of, agree with) pom zoo

April N [lub] plaub hlis ntuj

apron N [daim] sev

argue V (argue, quarrel) sib ceg, sib cav, sib cam
• V (argue a price, bargain) nyom nqi/nqe

arm N (body) [txhais] caj npab

army N pawg tub rog, pab tub rog

around ADV (as in going around, about, looking around someplace) ib ncig
• (V turn around, revolve) tig

arrest V (arrest, catch) ntes
• V (arrest, be closed, close, close up, shut in) kaw

arrive V (arrive at, until, to a certain point, about) txog
• V (arrive at, come to) los txog

arrow N [xib] xub

as (ADV, CONJ as, like, V be like, similar, the same) xws li
• CONJ (as ___ as) ___ xws li
• (V be as much/many as, equal to) npaum (li)
• (V be as, be in the same way, be according to, follow after) raws li

ashamed (V be ashamed, embarrassed, shy) txaj muag

Asia N [lub] Es xias

ask V (a question) nug/noog
• V (ask or order someone to do something) kom
• V (ask for, beg) thov

asleep (V be asleep) tsaug zog

assistant N tus pab

association N (association, organization) [lub] tsev khoom haum

at PREP (at, to (nearby)) ntawm
• PREP (over at, over to) tom
• PREP (over at, over to, esp. laterally, east-west, across the valley, farther than tom) tim
• PREP (up at, up to [geographic elevation], up in the north) pem
• PREP (down at, down to [geographic elevation], down in the south) nram
• (ADV at the same time) ib txhij

attach V (be attached, stuck to) txuas

attack V (kill each other) sib tua
• V (attack, beat, fight, hit, play piano, strike, type) ntaus

attempt V sim

attention N [txoj] kev xyaum xim

attic N (attic, loft, storage platform) [lub] nthab

August N [lub] yim hli ntuj

aunt N [tus] (father's older or younger sister) phauj
• N (mother's older sister) niam tais hlob
• N (mother's younger sister) niam tais yau
• N (mother's older/younger brother's wife) niam dablaug
• N (father's older brother's wife) niam hlob
• N (father's younger brother's wife) niam ntxawm

Australia N [lub] Au ta li as

author N tus sau

autumn N [lub] caij nplooj (ntoos) zeeg

available (V for a person to be available, free, at leisure) khoom

awaken V (for a person to awaken) tsim
• V (to awaken someone) tsa

away (V cast away, discard, leave, abandon) tseg
• (V throw away) pov tseg
• (V be far away) deb

ax N [rab] taus

B

baby N [tus] mos liab, me nyuam mos liab
- N (baby carrier) [daim] nyias (ev me nyuam)

babysit V (guard, watch over) zov
- N (babysitter) [tus] neeg zov me nyuam

back N [lub] (body) nraub qaum
- N (back, top side of something) [lub] qaum
- (V [go] back, return; ADV again) rov qab
- (V put back) coj mus cia
- (PREP in back of; behind, after; ADV in the back) tom qab
- (PREP in the back of) tom sab rau qaum
- (PREP in back of, on the other side of, behind, outside) nraum

bad (V be bad) tsis zoo
- (V be bad, evil, ugly) phem

bag N (bag, pocket, purse, sack) [lub] hnab

bake V (bake, barbecue, roast, toast) ci

ball N [lub] pob, npas
- N (Hmong cloth New Year's ball) mov pob
- (V to toss balls at Hmong New Year) pov pob

ballad N (traditional Hmong ballad) [zaj] kwv txhiaj

bamboo N [tus for single length] xyoob
- N (bamboo shoot) [tus] ntsuag xyoob
- N (bamboo tray) [lub] vab

banana N [lub] txiv tsawb

barbecue V (barbecue, bake, roast, toast) ci

bargain V hias nqi/nqe
- V (bargain, argue a price) nyom nqi/nqe

bark N (tree) [daim] tawv ntoo
- V (dog) tsem

basin N (basin, trough, tub) [lub] dab

basket N [lub] tawb
- N (round basket) [lub] pob tawb
- N (basket for back) [lub] kawm

bat N (animal) [tus] puav

bathe V da dej

bathroom N [lub] tsev dej, chav da dej, (L) hoob nab

bathtub N (bathtub, sink, tub) [lub] dab dej

be V (all forms of be) yog
- V (be at, stay, live) nyob
- V (be/become a kind of worker or have a particular profession) ua ___
- V (there is/are) muaj
- V (be ___ years old) muaj ___ xyoo lawm

bean N (beans, legumes, peas) [tus, pluav] taum
- N (long beans) [tus] taum lag
- N (bean curd) taum hwv
- N (bean sprouts) [tus] taum pauv

bear N (animal) [tus] dais
- V (bear, endure, as pain) nyiaj

beard N [cov] fwj/hwj txwv

beat V (beat, slap, whip) nplawm
- V (beat, attack, fight, hit, play piano, strike, type) ntaus
- V (beat, collide) tsoo
- V (beat, pound, grasp) tuav
- V (beat someone in a game, win) yeej

beautiful (V be beautiful) zoo nkauj
- (V dress up beautifully) ua zam

because CONJ vim (tias/yog), rau qhov

become V (become, change into) txia, hloov (los) ua
- V (become/be a kind of worker or have a particular profession, do) ua ___

bed N (bed, bedroom) [lub] txaj

bedroom N [lub] kem tsev pw, chav pw, txaj (pw)

bee N [tus] muv

beef N nqaij nyug
- N (ground beef) nqaij nyug zom

beer N npias

before PREP (before in time or location) tom ntej
- ADV (before, ahead, first, preceding) ua ntej
- ADV (before, some time ago) thaum ub

beg V (beg, ask for, 'please') thov

begin V pib, chiv, chiv keeb
- N (beginner) [tus] nyuam qhuav pib
- N (beginning) chiv thawj, chiv keeb

behind PREP (behind, after, in back of) tom qab
- PREP (behind, in the back of) tom sab rau qaum
- PREP (behind, in back of, on the other side, outside) nraum
- ADV (behind, on the other side, outside) nraud
- N (one's behind, buttocks) [lub] pob/caj tw, ntsag

belief N (beliefs, customs, ways, laws) [txoj] kev cai

believe V ntseeg

bell N [lub] tswb

belong V (lit. be ___ 's) yog ___ li

below PREP (below, under)hauv qab, nram qab
- PREP (down below, below in a text) nram
- ADV (down below)nrad

belt N [txoj] siv
- N (variegated band around Hmong women's head wrap) [txoj] siv ceeb
- N (Hmong belt of silver money) [txoj] hlab nyiaj
- (V wear, put on, wrap around waist for belt, sash) sia

bench N (bench, seat, chair) [lub] rooj zaum

best (V be the best) zoo tshaj (plaws), zoo kawg, zoo kawg nkaus

better (V be better) zoo dua, zoo tshaj

between PREP (between, in the middle, in the center) (hauv) nruab nrab

bicycle N [lub] nees zab, tsheb kauj vab, (L) luv tees, luv thij

big (V be big) loj

bird N [tus] noog

birth (V for humans to give birth, raise, feed and care for) yug
- (V for animals to give birth) xya

birthday N [lub] hnub yug

bit Q (a little bit, small amount) ntsis
- (ADV a little bit) me ntsis
- Q (a little bit of something) ib nyag qhov
- ADV (a little bit of time, a moment) ib pliag
- ADV (not a bit, not at all) hlo li

bite V tom

bitter (V be bitter) iab

black (V be black) (xim) dub
- N (the color black) xim dub

blackboard N [daim] (L) kab das

blanket N [daim] pam, pam vov

bleed V ntshav los, ntshav tawm

blind (V be blind) dig muag

block N (city block) [lub] (E) nplov
- (V block street, way) tav kev

blond (V be blond/e, yellow) (xim) daj

blood N ntshav

blouse N [lub] tsho poj niam

blow V (blow air from mouth, play a wind instrument) tshuab
- (V blow on a leaf to call to people over a long distance) tshuab nplooj

blue (V be blue) (xim) xiav
- (V be blue, used only of sky; otherwise = green) ntsuab
- (Blue/Green Hmong) Hmoob ntsuab, Hmoob leeg
- N (the color blue) xim xiav

board N (wooden board) [daim] txiag

boat N (boat, ship) [lub] nkoj

body N [lub] cev

boil V (be boiling, bubble up) npau
- (boil something in liquid) hau

bone N [tus] pob txha

book N phau ntawv

bookcase N [lub] txee rau ntawv

boot N (boot, shoe) [txhais] khau
- (a pair of shoes) nkawm khau
- (V wear, put on boots, gloves, leg wrappings, shoes, socks) rau

border N (country) [tus] (ciaj) ciam te

born (V be born) xeeb, yug (los/ua)

borrow V qev/qiv
- V (borrow, receive) txais

boss N tus saib xyuas hauj lwm

both Q (of things) ob yam
- Q (of people) ob leeg
- (PRO they two) nkawd

bother V (bother, make trouble for someone) thab
- (bother, annoy, cause trouble for) siv

bottle N [lub] fwj/hwj

bottom N (of things) qhov hauv qab
- N (body) [lub] pob/caj tw, ntsag

bow N (cross bow) [rab] hneev

bowl N [lub] tais
- N (small rice bowl) [lub] ntim

box N [lub] thawv
- N (cardboard [paper] box) [lub] thawv ntawv

boy N (boy, son) [tus] tub
- N (boyfriend, young man) hluas nraug

bra N [lub] khiab mis

bracelet N [txoj] saw caj npab (tes), xauv tes
- N (solid Hmong bracelet) [lub] kauj toog npab, tooj npab
- (V wear, put on bracelet, earrings, eyeglasses, necklace, watch) coj

brain N [thooj] paj hlwb

branch N (of a tree) [tus] ceg

brave (V be brave, be strong) siab loj, siab tawv, siab loj siab tawv, siab tuab

bread N mov ci, mov mog, (L) qhaub cib

break V (break, break up, shatter) tawg
- V (break in two, break off) lov
- V (be broken in two, broken off) dam
- V (break apart, to part) tu
- V (break down, be broken down, not working) puas
- V (break off, broken off) ntais
- V (break/pinch off) npaws
- V (break a law) txhaum
- V (break a promise, tear down) rhuav
- (V be broken, ruined, useless) piam
- V (take a break, rest, relax) so

breakfast N pluas tshais
- V noj tshais

breast N [lub] mis

breath N (breath, air, gas) pa
- (a deep breath) ib pa loj loj
- (take a breath) ua ib pa
- (hold the breath) pem pa
- (be out/short of breath) txog txog siav

breathe V ua pa

bride N (girl) [tus] ntxhais
- N (daughter-in-law) nyab

bridegroom N (bridegroom, groom) nraug vauv
- N (son-in-law) [tus] vauv

bridge N [tus] choj

bright (V be bright, shine) ci
- (V be smart) ntse

bring V nqa + los/tuaj/mus
- V (bring along) coj los

broccoli N [lub] zaub paj ntsuab

broom N [rab] khaub ruab

brother N [tus] (male's older brother) tij laug
- N (male's younger brother) kwv
- N (female's older or younger brother) nus
- N (brother-in-law, uncle = mother's brother) dab laug

brown (V/N be brown, the color brown) xim kas fes

brush V txhuam
- (brush teeth) txhuam hniav
- N [rab] txhuam

bucket N [lub] thoob

buffalo N (water buffalo) [tus] twm

bug N [tus] kab
- N (different kinds of bugs) kab ntsaum

build V (construct, make) txua
- V (make, do) ua
- V (build something between two points) tuam
- V (build cities, roads) rhawv
- V (build a fire) rauv

building N [lub] tsev (loj)

bull N (bull, cow) [tus] nyuj
- N (older male) [tus] txiv nyuj
- N (younger male) [tus] heev nyuj, phaw nyuj

bunch (CLF bunch, cluster of fruit) tauv, ib tau
- (CLF group, some, plural marker) cov
- (Q bunch, some) ib co
- (CLF bunch for bananas) thij
- (CLF bunch, bundle) re
- (CLF one bunch, bundle) ib res

Burma N Phaj mab teb

Burmese (V be Burmese) Phaj mab
- N (Burmese language) lus Phaj mab
- N (Burmese person) [tus] neeg Phaj mab

burn V (be burning, burned, hot) kub
- V (burn something) hlawv

bury V (bury a body) los
- V (bury a person, turn over earth, cultivate) faus
- V (bury something in the ground) log

bus N [lub] tsheb ntiav loj, (E) npav
- N (bus station) [lub] chaw nres tsheb ntiav loj
- N (bus stop) [lub] chaw tos luv npav, chaw tos tsheb ntiav loj

business N [txoj] kev ua lag (ua) luam
- (V do business, do trade) ua lag ua luam

busy (V be busy, not be free, not at leisure) tsis (tau) khoom, muaj num ntau

but CONJ tiam sis, tab sis

butcher V (kill ___ to eat) tua ___ noj
- N [tus] neeg tua tsiaj

butterfly N [tus] npauj npaim

buttocks N [lub] pob/caj tw, ntsag

button N [lub] (me nyuam) khawm
- V khaws

buy V muas
- V (buy, get) yuav

by PREP (by, near) ze ntawd, los ntawm
- PREP (by doing) los ntawm

C

cab N (taxicab) [lub] tsheb tav xis

cabbage N [lub] zaub qhwv

cake N (Hmong New Year's rice cake) [lub] ncuav

call V hu
- V (be called, name, to name) hu ua
- V (call on the phone) hu xov tooj, hu tes les foos

camera N [lub] yees duab, (L) khoob thais duab

can V (can, able as acquired ability, know how to) txawj
- V (can, able as situational, external possibility) tau
- V (can, able as physical, internal ability, resources) taus

can N (container) [lub] kos poos
- (N canned foods) kaub poom zaub

candle N [tus] roj ntses, tswm ciab, roj ntses

car N [lub] tsheb, (L) luv (fais)

card N [daim] menyuam ntawv txhav
- N (playing card) [daim] phaib

care V (care for, take care of) tu
- (don't care about) tsis quav ntsej

careful (V be careful, ADV carefully) ceev faj, maj mam

careless (V be careless) luam thuam, tsis saib xyuas, tsis tu

carpenter N [tus] kws ua vaj tse

carpet N [daim] ntaub pua tsev

carrot N [tus] ntug daj, zaub ntug hauv paus

carry V (carry in hand) nqa
- (carry on back, usually children) ev
- (carry on back, usually things) ris
- (carry over shoulder) kwv

case (CONJ in that case) mam li

cash N (money) nyiaj

cashier N [tus] neeg sau nyiaj, neeg khaws nyiaj

cat N [tus] miv

catch V (catch, chase) caum
- V (catch, capture, arrest) ntes
- V (catch a ball, receive) txais

cattle N [cov] nyuj twm

cauliflower N [lub] zaub paj

cause V (cause, bring into effect, tell/ask/order to do) kom, ua kom

celebrate V (idiom: celebrate Hmong New Year) noj (tsiab) peb caug

cent N (cent, penny) [lub] xees

center N (center, heart of) [lub] (hauv) plawv
- (N middle, PREP in the middle) nruab nrab

century N [lub] tiam neej

ceremony N [txoj] kab ke

chair N [lub] rooj zaum

chalk N [tus] hmoov sib, cwj mem av dawb

chalkboard N [daim] (L) kab das

chance N (time) [lub] sij hawm
- N (fate, fortune) [txoj] hmoov (hmoo when used with txoj)

change V (change, exchange, trade) pauv, hloov
- V (change one's mind, change of heart) hloov siab
- N (money returned to customer) nyiaj ntxiv

chapter N tshooj, toom

chase V (chase, catch) caum
- V (chase after) raws, raws khiav

chat V tham
- V (chat together, converse, discuss) sib tham

cheap (V be cheap) pheej yig

cheat V tsis ncaj, (L) khib lav

cheek N [lub] plhu

cheerful V (be cheerful) ua kom zoo siab

chest N (body) [lub] hauv siab

chick N [tus] me nyuam qaib

chicken N (animal) [tus] qaib
- N (meat) nqaij qaib
- N (hen) [tus] poj qaib
- N (chicken coop/roost) cooj

child N [tus] me nyuam

chin N [lub] puab tsaig

China N [lub] Suav teb, Teb chaws Suav, Tuam tshoj teb, Tsoob kuj

Chinese (V be Chinese) Suav
- (N Chinese language) lus Suav
- (N Chinese person) [tus] neeg Suav

chocolate N tshas kos las

choice N [txoj] kev xaiv

choose N xaiv

chop V (chop up, cut fine) tsuav
• V (chop, cut as firewood, hair) txiav

chopstick N [rab] rawg
• (CLF pair of) txwm

church N (place) [lub] tsev teev ntuj

cigarette N [tus] luam yeeb
• (V light ___) hlawv
• (V put out ___) tua
• (V smoke ___ , drink) haus

cilantro N (cilantro, coriander leaves, Chinese parsley) zaub txhwb

circle N [lub] voj

citizenship N (citizenship, nationality, ethnicity, of another surname) haiv neeg

city N (large city) [lub] nroog
• N (small city, town, village) [lub] zos

clan N [lub] (clan, surname) xeem

classroom N [lub] chav kawm ntawv

clean (V be clean, not dirty) huv
• V (to clean) tu kom huv
• (V be clear of extraneous matter, smooth. level) du

clear (V be clear, as of ideas, hearing, sight) meej
• (V be clear, fresh, as water) ntshiab

clerk N (salesperson) [tus] neeg muag khoom

clever (V be clever, sharp) ntse

climb V nce

clock N [lub] teev, (L) moos

close V (close, close up, arrest, be closed, shut in) kaw

close (V be close to, near) ze

closet N [lub] txee dai khaub ncaws

cloth N [daim] ntaub
• N (traditional Hmong "flower cloth," pandau) paj ntaub

clothes N [cev] khaub ncaws, ris tsho

cloud N [tauv] huab

cloudy (V be cloudy) pos huab

coast N [lub] ntug dej hiav txwv

coat N (winter coat) [lub] tsho tiv no
• N (raincoat) tsho tiv nag
• N (sport coat) tsho loj

cockroach N [tus] laum

coconut N [lub] txiv plaws poom
• [lub] (L) txiv mav poj

coffee N kav fes, (dej) kas fes

coin N [lub] (nyiaj) npib, npib nyiaj

cold (V be cold for weather, person) no
• (V be cold for liquids, meat, wind) txias
• (V have a cold) mob khaub thuas

collar N [lub] caj daj tshos

collect V (gather) sau
• V (collect something flowing) cug

college N [lub] tsev kawm ntawv theem siab

collide V (sib) tsoo

color N (L) xim, kob

comb V (hair) ntsis
• N (for hair) [lub] zuag

come V (come back to where one belongs or is from) tuaj
• V (come to place not where one is from) los
• V (invitation to come into one's home) los tsev os
• V (come into, enter) nkag los
• V (come/be from ___) tuaj ___ tuaj
• V (come out) tawm los
• V (come out from) tawm hauv los
• V (come back) rov qab los

comfort V (comfort, console) nplij

comfortable (V be comfortable to body) zoo nyob
• (for a person to be comfortable, feel well) xis nyob

common (V be common) zoo sib xws, hom niaj hnub ua

Communism N (txoj) kev cai koom tshas/pheej

Communist (V be Communist) koom tshas
• (V be Red) liab

company N (business) [lub] tsev ua khoom ub no

compare V (sib) piv, ua piv txwv

comparison N [zaj] piv txwv

compete V (with someone) sib twv

complain V (complain, murmur, scold) yws

complete V (finish action ___ , do/be done completely) ___ tas (lawm)
- V (finish with result that something is ready) ua ___ tiav
- V (can't complete something) ua tsis tsheej
- (V be completed) (ua) tas, tas lawm, tag, tiav, ua tsheej lawm
- (V be whole) txhij, (txhij) txhua
- (ADV completed, finished) lawm
- (V pre-verbal auxiliary expresses completion/attainment of the action of the verb) tau
- (ADV completely, intensely, all) tas/g nrho
- (ADV completely) thoob plaws, yam puv txaus nkaus

concern (V be concerned, regret) khuv xim

concerning (PREP about) hais txog

confused (V be confused, mind not clear) siab fab

connect V (connect, join together, be physically connected to something) txuas

conquer V (conquer, win) yeej

consequently ADV (consequently, also, moreover, therefore) kuj
- ADV (consequently, thereupon, therefore, then, after that) txawm
- ADV (consequently, so, so then, therefore, thus, thereby) thiaj (li)

constipated (V be constipated) cam quav

contain V (have) muaj

continually ADV (constantly, always) pheej
- (neverending) tas mus li
- (all the time) txhia hnub txhua hmo

continue V ntxiv mus

contraceptives N khoom ua kom tsis txhob xeeb tub, khoom ua kom tsis txhob muaj me nyuam

cook V ua mov noj, ua ___ noj, ua noj ua haus
- (V be cooked, ripe) siav

cool (V be cool, cold, as for liquids, meat, wind) txias

cooperate V (do with, do together) nrog ua, sib koom ua

copy V (copy, photocopy, press, print, xerox) luam
- V (copy a cassette tape) theej

corn N [lub] pob kws

corner N [lub] (ceg) kaum, kaum kev

correct (V be correct, be, exist) yog
- (V be correct) yog lawm lauj, thwj
- V (correct/fix something) kho kom raug, pab kho

cost V (cost a price) raug nqi/nqe
- (How much does it cost?) Raug nqi/nqe pes tsawg
- N (price) [tus] nqi/nqe

cotton N (substance) paj, rwb
- N (cloth) ntaub pag

couch N [lub] rooj (zaum) ntev

cough V hnoos

could V (can ___ in future) yuav ___ tau
- (ADV as in something could/will happen soon if something is not done soon) nyob tsam
- (ADV as in something could happen, maybe) tej zaum + SUBJECT ho + V

count V suav

country N (nation) [lub] teb chaws
- N (rural, field) [daim] teb, tiaj

couple N (pair) nkawm
- N (poetic: young couple) nkauj nraug

court N (of law) [lub] tsev hais plaub (ntug)

cousin N [tus] (male cousin of different surname) npawg
- N (female cousin of different surname, as called by male) muam npaws
- N (male cousin as called by female) yaum dab
- N (female cousin as called by female, sister) viv ncaus

cover V (cover as to hide) npog
- V (cover up/over, as with a hand) khwb
- V (cover an opening with a finger, hand) pos
- V (cover from above as shelter) roos
- V (cover [over], roof over) vov
- V (cover with a blanket) vov pam
- N [daim] npog

cow N [tus] nyuj

crab N (animal) [tus] raub ris, roob ris
- N (meat) nqaij raub ris, nqaij roob ris

craftsman N (craftsperson, expert) [tus] kws

crash V (crash from a collision) tsoo ua kom tawg
- V (airplane falling) poob

crawl V (crawl, go underneath, enter) nkag

crazy (V be crazy) vwm

create V tsim, kwv yees ua

crocodile N [tus] khej

crop(s) N qoob loo

cross V bla
- V (cross over, pass [through/by], surpass, exceed)dhau

crossbow N [rab] hneev

crossroad N (txoj) kev tshuam

crowd N neeg nyob coob ua ke

cruel (V be cruel) siab phem, siab txia ntshav

cry V quaj
- V (cry out) qw
- V (cry out, call, sing) hu

cucumber N [lub] dib

cultivate V (turn over soil, bury) faus
- V (farm) ua teb

cup N [lub] khob

cure V (cure, heal someone, fix, repair) kho

currently (ADV now/still happening) sam sim

curtain N [daim] ntaub (npog) qhov rai

custom N (law, rule, custom) [txoj] cai, kev cai

cut V (cut open, do surgery, operate) phais
- V (cut with slicing motion, slice) suam, blais
- V (cut hair, wood into pieces) txiav
- V (cut into pieces) txhoov
- V (cut up, chop) tsuav
- V (cut/chop down a tree, wood) ntov

D

daily ADV (every day) niaj hnub

damage N [txoj] kev puas
- V ua puas

dance V (L) ua las voos

dark (V be dark) tsaus
- (V be nighttime) tsaus ntuj
- (V be darker, blacker) dub dua

date N (calendar) [lub] hnub tim, (L) vas nthib

daughter N [tus] (me nyuam) ntxhais
- N (daughter-in-law) [tus] nyab

dawn N (daylight) [lub] kaj ntug
- N (early dawn) [lub] kaj ntug txoog

day N (day, sun) [lub] hnub
- (ADV day before yesterday) bnub hnub
- (ADV day after tomorrow) nag kis, neeg kis
- (ADV daytime, during the day, middle of the day) nruab hnub

dead (V be dead) tuag (lawm)

deaf (V be deaf) lag ntseg

dear (V salutation in a letter) nco qab, nco txog, nyob zoo
- (N loved one) tus hlub

death N [txoj] kev/qhov tuag, kev ploj (kev) tuag

deceive V (deceive, lie, cheat) dag
- V (deceive, entice) ntxias

December N [lub] kaum ob hlis ntuj

decide V txiav txim (siab), txiav siab
- V (choose) xaiv

decision N [txoj] kev txiav (txim) siab

decrease V tsawg zus

deep (V be deep) tob

deer N [tus] muas lwj
- N (barking deer) [tus] kauv

defecate V tso quav

defend V (defend, obscure the view, protect, shelter) thaiv

delay V (lit. inconvenience) sav tsam
- V (lit. make slow) ua kom qeeb

delicious (V be delicious) qab

dentist N [tus] kws kho hniav

deny V tsis kam txais

departure N [txoj] kev tawm mus taug kev

depend V (for a situation to depend on someone, be up to) nyob ntawm, xij peem
- V (be dependent on, rely on) vam khom

deposit N (bank) nyiaj tso ua ntej

depressed (V be depressed, sad, worried) tu siab

descendant N (progeny) xeeb ntxwv, xeeb leej

describe V piav (qhia txog)
- (N description) [txoj] kev piav qhia txog

deserve V ntxim

desk N (furniture) [lub] rooj sau ntawv

dessert N (sweets) khoom qab zib

destroy V (ruin) ua kom puas
- V (dismantle and throw away) rhuav pov tseg (tas)

develop V (photography) ntxuav duab

diarrhea N (mob) zawv plab, thoj plab, raws plab

dictionary N phau ntawv txhais lus

die V tuag

different (V be different) txawv
• Q (lit. other, another, a second, next) lwm

difficult (V be difficult) nyuaj

dig V (dig, scratch out, hoe) khawb
• V (dig out, hoe out) nthua

dime N [lub] npib kaum xee

dinner N pluas hmo

direction N (side) sab

directly (ADV straight) ncaj nraim

dirt N (dirt, earth, floor, ground, soil) av
• N (dirt on unwashed skin) kauv

dirty (V be dirty) lo lo av, lo phem

disagree V tsis sib xeem

disappear V ploj

disappointed (V be disappointed) poob siab

discount N [txoj] kev luv nqi/nqe
• V (lower a price) luv nqi/nqe

discourage V tsus
• (V be discouraged) tsis muaj siab
• (V be discouraged, distressed) poob siab

discover V nrhiav pom

discuss V (sib) sab laj
• V (discuss, chat, converse) sib tham

disease N [tus] kab mob, [txoj] kev mob kev nkees

disgusting (V be disgusting) qias neeg, vuab tshuab

dish N (plate) [lub] phaj
• (N dishes including all eating utensils) tais diav
• (N dish towel) [daim] ntaub so tais diav

dishonest (V be dishonest) siab nkhaus

dislike V tsis nyiam

disobedient (V be disobedient) tawv ncauj, tsis ris siab

dissatisfied (V be displeased) xu siab
•(V dislike) tsis nyiam

distant (V be far) deb

divide V (distribute) faib
• V (divide, separate from, divorce) ncaim
• V (put a portion aside) qee

divorce N [txoj] kev sib nrauj
• V nrauj, ncaim

dizzy (V be dizzy) daj muag, nraug zeeg muag, qhov muag kiv

do V (do, act, make, produce) ua

doctor N [tus] kws kho mob

dog N [tus] dev, aub

dollar N dos las, daus las

domestic (V be domestic, of animals) nyeg

done (V be done, finished, completed) tag

don't (ADV general NEG) tsis
• (ADV NEG for commands, uncertainty) (tsis) txhob

door N [lub] qhov rooj

down PREP (down, down to, downhill) nram
• (ADV down, down to) nrad
• (PREP down below, under) hauv qab

downstairs ADV theem hauv qab
•(PREP downstairs from) sab hauv

downtown N [lub] plawv zos/nroog

drag V luag

dragon N [tus] zaj

draw V (a picture) sau duab

drawer N [daim] rub tawm

dream (N) [zaj] npau suav
•V ua npau suav

dress N [lub] cev tiab
• N (dress, skirt) [daim] tiab
• V(dress up, dress beautifully) ua zam
• V (get dressed, wear clothes) hnav khaub ncaws, hnav ris tsho

drink V (drink, smoke, as cigarettes) haus

drive V (vehicle) tsav
•N (driver) tus tsav

drop V (let drop) ua poob
• V (for someone, something to drop, fall) poob
• (N drop of liquid) tee

drug N (drug, medicine) tshuaj

drugstore N [lub] tsev thov tshuaj

drunk (V be drunk) qaug cawv

dry V (be dry, arid) qhuav
• V (dry by the fire) txhiab
• V (cause to dry in the sun, in a clothes dryer) ziab

dryer N (clothes) [lub] tshuab ziab khaub ncaws

duck N [tus] os

dull (V be dull, not sharp) npub

dumb (V be unintelligent, stupid) ruam, siab ruam

during ADV (during, [time] when) thaum

dusk N tsaus ntuj zuag, tsaus zem zuag
- N (4-6 PM) yuav/yav tsaus ntuj

dust N plua tshuav, hmoov

dusty (V be dusty, dirty) paug plua tshauv (cho cho), cho pa av, muaj plua plav

E

each Q (each, every) niaj
- Q (each, every, all) txhua, txhia
- (each/every day) niaj hnub
- (each/every time) txhia zaus
- (each/every year) txhuaib xyoo
- (each other, reciprocal sense) sib/sis
- (each ___ own) nyias___nyias

eager (V be eager, want to do) xav ua

eagle N [tus] dav

ear N [lub] pob ntseg
- N (ear drops) tshuaj mob pob ntseg
- N (ear of corn) lub pob kws
- (V have an earache) mob ntseg

early ADV ntxov

earn V (money) tau nyiaj

earring N [lub] qhws ntsej, qhws pob ntseg, kauj plua
- V (wear, put on earrings, bracelet, eyeglasses, necklace, watch) coj

earth N (world) [lub] ntiaj teb
- N (earth, dirt, floor, ground, soil) av

east N (name of direction) sab hnub tuaj, sab hnub tawm

easy (V be easy) yooj yim

eat V noj
- (eat a meal) noj mov

eclipse N (moon) dab noj hlis

edema (V have edema) nphob vog

edge N (shore of a body of water) ntug
- N (edge of a cliff) npoo
- N (edge of a bladed instrument, tooth) hniav

effective (V be effective, meet the need) ntxim

egg N [lub] qe
- (N egg shell) [daim] plhaub qe/qes
- (N egg yolk) [lub] nkaub qes daj, nkaub qe
- (N egg white) [lub] hli qe

eggplant N [lub] lws

eight Q yim

eighteen Q kaum yim

eighteenth (V be eighteenth) thib kaum ib

eighth (V be eighth) thib yim

eightieth (V be eightieth) thib yim caum

eighty Q yim caum

elbow N [lub] luj tshib

elder (V be older/oldest in a family) hlob
- (N elders) tej laus

elect V xaiv tsa
- V (lit. choose) xaiv

electricity N (L) fais fab, hluav taws xob

elementary (N elementary school) [lub] tsev kawm ntawv theem pib

elephant N [tus] ntxhw

eleven Q kaum ib

eleventh (V be eleventh) thib kaum ib

elope V kbiav raws lwm tus mus

embarrassed (V be embarrassed, shy, ashamed) txaj muag

embrace V puag

embroider V ua paj ntaub

embroidery N (piece of embroidery, Hmong "flower cloth," pandau) [daim] paj ntaub

emergency N (affair, matter, things, business) xwm

employ V (hire) ntiav

empty V (pour out) nchuav
- (V be empty, dry, having nothing) qhuav nquas
- (V be finished, gone) tas

encourage V (encourage, urge, persuade) yaum

end (N end of, extremity, V finish, be final) kawg
- (N time) yav kawg/tas
- (V be ended) tag/kawg lawm, tas,
- (ADV ended, complete, superlative degree) kawg nkaus
- (ADV at/in the end, finally) thaum kawg

enemy N [tus] yeeb ncuab

energetic (V be not tired) nquag

energetically (V use/have strength) siv zog, muaj zog(qees)(zis)

energy N [lub] zog

engine N [lub] tshuab tsheb

English (V be English) As kiv
- N (English language) lus As kiv
- N (American English language) lus Mis kas
- (N English person) [tus] neeg As kiv

enjoy V (have fun) yam lom zem, lom zem

enough V (be enough) txaus (lawm)

enroll V (enroll, register) saunpe cia
- V (enroll, register, sign one's name) sau npe

enter V nkag mus/los

entire Q (whole, complete, all, each, every) txhua

entrance N [lub] qhov rooj nkag

envelope N [lub] hnab ntawv

envious (V be envious) khib siab

environs N (neighborhood) (ib) cheebtsam

envy V khib

equal (V be equal to each other) sib npaug (li)
- (V be equal to, as much/many as) npaum (li)

erase V (erase, brush, scrub) txhuam
- V (erase, wipe) so

error N qhov yuam kev

escape V (escape, run out of/away from) khiav tawm
- V (escape, release, be released, be saved) dim, khiav dim

Europe N Sab Aws lauv

even (V be smooth, level, clear of extraneous matter) du
- (ADV to express unexpected fact) twb
- (CONJ even if) tab (yog), tab txawm (tias) + subordinate clause + los
- (CONJ even though) txawm (yog/tias), txawm yog li ntawd los

evening N (6-7 PM) tsaus ntuj zuag
- N (approximately 7 PM to 12 AM) (yav/thaum/caij) tsaus ntuj
- N (night, nighttime) hmo ntuj, tav hmo

ever (V to have ever done ___) tau ___

every Q (every, each)niaj
- Q (every, all, each) txhua, txhia
- (every/each day) niaj hnub
- (every/each time) txhia zaus
- (every/each year) txhuaib xyoo

everybody PRO (everyone) sawv daws, txhua leej txhua tus

everything PRO ib puas tsav yam, txhua tsav txhua yam

everywhere ADV txhua (txhua) qhov, txhua chaw, qhov txhia qhov chaw

evil N [txoj] kev phem
- (V be evil) siab phem, phem

exact (V be exact) haum nkaus, txaus nkaus

exactly ADV zoo tib yam nkaus, (zoo) nkaus li

examine V xam

example N (example) [tus] piv txwv
- (for example) piv txwv

exceed V (exceed, surpass, pass through/by, cross over)dhau
- V (surpass, be more/surplus, add to) tshaj

excellent (V be excellent) zoo tas zog

except (CONJ but) tiam sis, tab sis
- (ADV except for, excepting) tsuas yog
- (V excepting, be lacking) tshuav

exchange V sib pauv, sib hloov
- V (exchange, change, trade) pauv

excuse N [txoj] kev tso siab
- (V 'excuse me') thov txim

exist V (exist, be) yog
- (V there is/are) muaj

exit N [lub] qhov rooj tawm
- V tawm mus/los/tuaj

expect V (want that) xav kom

expensive (V be expensive) kim

expert N (expert, craftsperson) [tus] kws

explain V (explain, translate) txhais
- V (explain, advise, inform, show, teach, tell) qhia
- V (explain, describe, tell a story, narrate) piav

explanation N [zaj] lus piav

explode V (explode, shatter, break) tawg

explore V (explore, look for, try to find) nrhiav
- V (explore, hunt for, search out) tshawb

extend V (extend to, reach to) cuag

extinguish V (a fire) tua hluav taws

extra (V be extra, more, add to, make up what is lacking) ntxiv
- (V be remaining, left over) seem

extract V (extract, pull out, as teeth) rho

eye N (body) [lub] qhov muag

eyebrow N (eyebrow, eyelash) [cov] plaub muag

eyeglasses N [lub] tsom qhov muag
- (V put on, wear eyeglasses, bracelet, earrings, necklace, watch) coj

eyelashes N (eyelash, eyebrow) [cov] plaub muag

eyelid N [daim] tawv muag

F

face N (person) [lub] ntsej muag
- N (mountain) phab toj
- (V lose face) poob phlus, poob ntsej muag
- (V have face, respect, honor) muaj phlus, poob ntsej muag

factory N [lub] tsev ua khoom

fail V (fail, fall) poob
- (not able to compete, guess) twv tsis tau

fair N (market) tsev khw teem caij
- (V be fair, just) ua ncaj

fake (V be fake, false, counterfeit) cuav

fall V (fall, fail) poob
- V (be shed, shaken off, leaves falling) zeeg
- V (fall down, stumble) ntog
- (V rain falling, rain) los nag
- N (autumn) [lub] caij (ntuj) nplooj (ntoos) zeeg

false (V be false, fake, counterfeit) cuav
- (V be untrue) tsis yog
- (V be false, be a lie) dag

family N (family, household) tsev neeg

famous (V be famous) muaj koob npe

fan N (electric) [lub] (tshuab) kiv cua
- N (non-mechanical hand fan) [rab] ntxuam

far (V be far) deb
- (ADV far down) puag nrad
- (ADV far over) puag saud
- (ADV far over there) tom ub
- (ADV way far over there) puag tom ub

farm N liaj teb
- V ua liaj ua teb

farmer N [tus] neeg ua liaj teb

farther ADV deb dua

fast ADV ceev

fat N (fat, gas, gasoline, grease, oil) roj
- (V be obese [impolite]) rog

fate N (destiny, luck) [txoj] hmoov

father N [usually used without CLF or with leej] txiv
- N (father-in-law) txiv, yawm txiv
- N (priest) [tus] txiv plig

fault N qhov yuam kev

favor N [lub] txiaj ntsim, txiaj ntsha txiaj ntsim

fear V (be afraid, be fearful of something) ntshai

fearful (V be fearful, timid) siab nyias

feather N [tus] plaub noog

February N [lub] ob hlis ntuj

feed V pub (rau)

feel V (feel with hands, handle, touch) kov
- V (feel, grope, take hold of, use) xuas
- V (feel, sense, hear) hnov
- V (think) xav tias

feeling N [txoj] kev xav

female N (human) [tus] poj niam
- N (for humans, birds) poj
- N (for animals) maum

fence N (txoj) laj kab

fever N [tus] npaws
- (V have a fever) ua npaws, lub cev kub, kub ib œ

few Q (a few, some) ib co
- Q (a few, a couple) ob peb
- Q (few, a little, not much/many) tsawg
- Q (very few/little) tsawg tsawg li

field N (flat) [lub] tiaj
- N (rolling, hilly) [daim] teb
- N (field of rice paddies) [daim] liaj
- N (fields, farm) liaj teb
- N (broadlevel area as for playing field, airfield) [lub] tshav

fifteen Q kaum tsib

fifteenth (V be fifteenth) thib kaum tsib

fifth (V be fifth) thib tsib

fiftieth (V be fiftieth) thib tsib caug

fifty Q tsib caug

fight V (for animals do) sib tog
- V (for people, physically) sib ntaus
- V (fight in resistance, resist) tiv
- V (fight in war) sib ntaus sib tua
- V (make war) ua rog
- (argue) sib ceg

fill V (add until full) ntxiv rau kom puv
- (fill in a hole) txhub
- (fill up a vehicle with gas) sam roj
- (fill, plug up, strangle, as smoke filling the sky) laum

film N (camera) duab ua zog

final (V be final, ended, finish, N end of, extremity) kawg
- ADV (finally, at/in the end) thaum kawg

find V ([try to] find, look for) nrhiav
- V (succeed in finding) nrhiav tau
- V (find out) nrhiav, saib

fine (V be soft and delicate) mos
- (V be thin) nyias
- V (impose a fine) nplua

finger N [tus] ntiv tes
- N (fingernail) [tus] rau tes
- N (fingertip) [lub] taub teg

finish V (finish off, deal with completely) khees
- V (finish, be final, ended, N end of, extremity) kawg
- (V be finished, completed, done) tas (lawm), tag
- (V be finished, completed, ready) tiav

fire N [cub] hluav taws
- V (set fire to) hlawv
- V (fire a gun, shoot a gun, bow and arrow, kill) tua
- V (fire from a job, release, relinquish) txo

fireplace N [lub] qhov cub

firewood N taws
- N (bundle of firewood) tsuam taws

first (V be first) thib/qhov ib
- (Q first, original) thawj
- (ADV first of all) thawj qhov
- (ADV first time) thawj zaug
- (ADV do something first, before) uas ntej

fish N (animal) [tus] ntses
- N (meat) nqaij ntses
- (V) nuv ntses
- (N fish sauce) (L) nab(m) pas, txuj lom ntses

fit V (fit, be suitable) haum
- V (fit, fit together) dhos

five Q tsib

fix V (fix, repair, cure, heal someone) kho
- (V be fixed in place, steady; ADV fixedly, intently) ntsoov

flag N [tus for flag + pole, daim for flag itself] chij

flashlight N [lub] teeb nyem

flat (V be flat, even, level, peaceful, still) tus
- (V be flat, even, level, smooth) tiaj (tus)

flatten V (flatten, shape with hands, form, mold) puab

flea N [tus] dev mub

flee V (run away, escape) khiav tawm
- V (flee from war) khiav tsov khiav rog

float V ntab (saum dej)

floor N (floor surface in a house) npoo tsev
- N (floor, dirt, earth, ground, soil) av
- (PREP on the floor, ground) hauv av
- (N story of a building, layer, level, part) theem

flour N hmoov nplej

flow V ntws

flower N [lub] paj

flu (V have the flu) ua daus no

flute N [lub] raj

fly V (bird, airplane) ya
- V (fly around, hover) ya mus ya los
- V (passenger in an airplane) caij dav hlau
- V (to pilot a plane, drive) tsav
- N (insect) [tus] yoov
- N (housefly) [tus] yoov mos ntsuab

fog N huab
- N (cloud, fog) pos huab
- (V be foggy) pos pos huab

fold V tais

folk (N folk tale) [zaj] dab neeg

follow V (follow somebody) lawv___qab
- V (follow after) raws, raws ___ qab
- V (follow a path, follow along a stream) taug
- V (follow a path, follow rules, practice) xyaum

food N mov noj, zaub mov, khoom noj

foot N [txhais] (ko) taw

for PREP (for someone, to) rau
- (V be for a period of time, get) tau ---

forbid V txwv (txiv)

force N (force, energy, strength) [lub] zog
- V (force someone to do) yuam

forehead N [lub] hauv pliaj

foreign (V be foreign) pej kum, txawv teb chaws

forest N (forest, jungle) [lub] hav zoov
- N (forest, emphasis on trees) [lub] hav ntoo

forever ADV ib sim neej, ib txhis tsis kawg, tag ib sim

forget V (not remember) tsis nco (qab)

forgive V zam txim

fork N [rab] (diav) rawg

form V (form, shape with hands, mold, flatten) puab
• V (create) tsim

former (V be former, old [things], original) qub

formerly ADV li qub

fortunate (V be fortunate, happy, glad) zoo siab
• (V have luck) muaj hmoo

fortune N (fortune, luck, fate, destiny) [txoj] hmoov

fortieth (V be fortieth) thib plaub caug

forty Q plaub caug

forward ADV (forward, ahead, before) tom ntej

four Q plaub

fourteen Q kaum plaub

fourteenth (V be fourteenth) thib kaum plaub

fourth (V be fourth) thib plaub

fox N [tus] hma

France N (lub) Fab kis teb, Teb chaws Fab kis

free (V be free from capture) dim
• (V be free of charge) dawb
• (V be free, not busy, at leisure) khoom
• (V to free, let go) daws
• (V to free, abandon, allow, leave, let, permit, place, put, release, relinquish) tso

freeze (freeze something) ua kom khov

French (V be French) Fab kis
• (N French language) lus Fab kis
• (N French person) [tus] neeg Fab kis

fresh (V be fresh, as fish, new) tshiab
• (V be fresh, clear, as water) ntshiab

Friday N [lub] Hnub rau, Hnub vas xuv

friend N [tus] phooj ywg

friendly (V be friendly) raug (sib) zoo

frighten V ua kom poob siab ntshai
• V (frighten purposely, scare, intimidate) hem

frightened (V be frightened, scared, worried) poob siab

frog N [tus] qav

from PREP los ntawm
• PREP (from, at) ntawm
• (V be/come from a place) tuaj ___ tuaj
• (V come from a place as on a trip) los ___ los
• (ADV from the beginning) txwm, thaum pib los
• (ADV from now on) txij no mus
• (ADV ___ from now) ___ saum no

front N (front surface) [lub] ntiag
• (ADV in/to/at the front) pem hauv ntej, tom ntej

frost N (frost, ice, snow) te

frown V hnya

fruit N [lub] txiv (ntoo)

fry V (fry with or without fat, stir fry) kib
•V (toss and fry, scramble with fat) nthee

fuel N roj (ej xas)

full (V be full, filled) puv
• (V be full, satisfied when eating) tsau (plab)

fun N [txoj] kev lom zem
• (V be/have fun) lom zem

funeral N [txoj] kev pam tuag
• (N funeral songs) [zaj] txiv xaiv

funny (V be funny) txaus luag, zoo luag

fur N (fur, hair, feather) plaub

furniture N (a piece of furniture) [lub] rooj
• (N household furniture) [lub] rooj tog txaj chaws

further (ADV more, extra, V add to) ntxiv

furthermore ADV tsis tas li ntawd

future N [lub] neej yav tom ntej

G

gain V (get, attain) tau
• V (win) yeej

game N (abstract sense) [txoj] kev ua si

garage N (place to keep cars) [lub] chaw rau tsheb

garbage N (sometbing to be thrown away) yam pov tseg
• (food-type garbage) qub zaub qub mov

garden N [lub] vaj

garlic N [lub] qij
• (one clove) ib nplais qij

gas N (gas, fat, gasoline, grease, oil) roj
• N (natural gas) roj zeb ntsuam
• N (gas station) [lub] chaw muag roj tsheb
• V (pass gas) tso paus
• V (have gas) nchi

gasoline N roj av, roj tsheb
• N (gasoline, fat, gas, grease, oil) roj

gather V (gather, bring together) puav
• (V gather together/up, collect, harvest) sau
• (V gather, pick up) khaws

generous (V be generous) siab dawb, (siab loj) siab dav

genital (N euphemism for male/female genital area, genitals, groin) qhov chaw mos

gentle (V be gentle) muag nteev

get V (get, attain) tau
- V (get, receive) txais
- V (get, obtain, buy, marry) yuav
- V (get off/down, descend) nqis/nqes
- V (get on, board, ascend, go up, climb) nce
- V (get out, go out, go away, leave) tawm mus
- V (get up, stand up, arise) sawv

ghost N (ghost, spirit of a dead person who returns to trouble the living) xyw

gift N [lub] khoom pub cia saib dab muag, khoom pub dawb, (txiaj ntsha) txiaj ntsim

ginger N qhiav

girl N [tus] ntxhais
- (N girlfriend of a male, young unmarried woman) hluas nkauj

give V (take in hand, give, give with the hand, hand over) muab
- V (give to) muab rau
- V (give expecting nothing in return, feed) pub
- V (give a ride to, transport) thauj
- V (give birth) yug (tau/me nyuam), tau me nyuam

glad (V be glad, happy, fortunate) zoo siab

glass N (drinking glass) [lub] khob
- N (glass substance, mirror) iav

glasses N (eyeglasses) [lub] tsom iav (qhov muag), tsom qhov muag
- (V wear, put on eyeglasses, earrings, bracelet. watch, necklace) coj

glove N[lub] hnab looj tes
- (N a pair of) nkawm
- (V wear, put on gloves, boots, leg wrappings, shoes, socks) rau

glutinous (N glutinous/sticky rice) mov nplaum

gnat N [tus] yoov qaib

go V mus, (L) pais
- V (go around, encircle) ncig
- V (go away, go out, get out, leave) tawm mus
- V (go back) rov qab mus
- V (go down, get down/off, descend) nqis/nqes
- V (go up, ascend, climb, get on, board) nce

goal N (work) luag hauj lwm

goat N [tus] tshis

god N [tus] huab tais ntuj
- N (Christian God) Vaj tswv

gold N (substance) (thooj) kub
- (N color gold, V be gold in color) xim kub

gong N (gong, drum) [lub] nruas
- N (gong used in spirit rites) nruas neeb
- N (gong beaten at death) nruas tuag

good (V be good, ADV well) zoo
- (V be good-hearted, generous) siab zoo
- (good buy, good deal) zoo nqi, zoo yuav
- (good luck) hmoov zoo
- (good news) xov zoo
- (good-bye/see you again) sib ntsib dua
- (good-bye to one leaving one's home and come again) mus ho tuaj os
- (good-bye and take care) mus zoo
- (good-bye to one leaving one's home [and take care]) mus (zoo) koj nawj

goose N [tus] os gus

gourd N [lub] (plhuaj) taub

govern V (govern, rule [a country]) kav (teb chaws)
- V (govern, control, restrain, subdue) tswj

government N [tus] tseem fwv, (L) [lub] lav thab npas

governor N [tus] tswv xeev

grade N (school grade, level) [lub] nqe
- (L) (school grade, room) [lub] hoob

gradually ADV zuj zus

graduate V kawm (ntawv) tiav

grain N (a grain, kernal) ntsiav
- N (grain, seed) [lub] noob
- N (grain as crop) noob qoob/loo, noob qoob (noob) loo

grammar N txuj ci xeem lus, kev cai ntawv

grandchild N [tus] xeeb ntxwv

granddaughter N [tus] ntxhais xeeb ntxwv

grandfather N (father's father) [tus] yawg
- N (mother's father) [tus] yawm txiv

grandmother N (father's mother) [tus] pog
- N (mother's mother) [tus] niam tais

grandson N [tus] tub xeeb ntxwv

grape N [lub] txiv cawv
- (CLF for bunch, cluster of fruit) tauv

grapefruit N [lub] txiv lws zoov

grasp V (grasp, hold in hand) tuav
- V (take hold of, grasp, grope, feel) xuas
- V (hold in the arms, embrace) puag

grass N [tsob] nyom

grasshopper N [tus] kooj

grateful (V for ___ to be grateful to ___) ___ ris ___ txiaj

grave N [lub] (qhov) ntxa

gray (N gray color; V be gray in color) xim txho, xim dub dawb muag lias

grease N (grease, fat, gas, gasoline, oil) roj

great (V be good, ADV well) zoo
- (V be important) tseem ceeb heev
- (V be big) loj

green • (V be green, also used for sky) ntsuab
- N xim ntsuab
- (Green/Blue Hmong) Hmoob Nstuab, Hmoob Leeg
- N (vegetable greens) zaub ntsuab

grind (V) zom

grocery N (grocery store) [lub] tsev muag zaub mov

groin N (euphemism for male/female genital area, genitals, groin) qhov chaw mos

ground N (ground, dirt, earth, floor, soil) [daim for surface sense] av
- (on the ground/floor) hauv av

group (CLF group, herd, flock) pab
- (CLF group, stack, pile) pawg
- (CLF group, class, kind, bunch) cov
- N (group, bunch, lots) yam cov
- (Q a group, some) ib co
- (Q a group, class, some) tej

grow V (for one to grow, grow up, be grown up, be the elder/eldest) hlob
- V (grow as to put forth leaves or shoots) hlav
- V (grow as to cultivate on a farm) ua teb
- V (grow by planting, plant) cog

guard V (guard, watch over) zov, saib xyuas
- N [tus] neeg zov qhov rooj

guava N [lub] (txiv) cuab thoj

guess V kwv yees
- V (guess, compete, defy, taunt) twv
- N [txoj] kev kwv yees

guest N [tus] qhua

guide V coj kev

guilty (V be guilty) muaj txim (txhaum)

gun N [rab] phom

Guyana N Nkws yas teb

H

hail N (hailstone) [lub] lawg
- V los lawg

hair N [txawj for a single hair, cov for mass of hair] plaub hau

half Q (one) (ib) nrab
- Q (half of a piece of food, fruit) ib sab
- Q ([one] half of a vertical measurement) ntav, (ib nta)
- ADV (halfway) ib nta to

ham N nqaij ncej qab, nqaij las ntsev

hammer N [rab] rauj

hand N [txhais] tes
- V (hand, lift, raise) cev
- V (hand out, distribute, divide) faib

handful N ib teg, ib (tau) tes

handkerchief N [daim] phuam so ntswg

handle N [tus] ko
- V (handle with care) puag qe
- V (handle, feel with hands, touch) kov

handsome (V be handsome) zoo nraug

hang V (hang, hang up, carry baby hanging at chest) dai
- V (die by hanging) dai tuag
- V (hang, hang up, be caught/hung up on something) khuam
- V (hang up the telephone) khwb xov tooj, khwb tes les foos

happen V (appear) tshwm tuaj

happy (V be happy) zoo siab

hard (V be hard, tough, stiff, not soft, ADV do hard, with force) tawv
- (V be difficult) nyuab
- (V be hard-hearted, firm) nplooj siab tawv qhawv

harvest V sau qoob

hat N [lub] kaus mom
- (put on, wear, carry on/over head for hat, head wrap, umbrella) ntoo

hate V ntxub

have V (have, possess, there is/are) muaj
- V (have to, must) yuav tsum, yuav tau

he PRO (he, him, OBJ himself, she, OBJ her, OBJ herself, it, OBJ itself) nws

head N (body) [lub] taub hau
- N (head of village) [tus] hau zos
- (N Hmong women's head wrap) [daim] phuam

headache (V have a headache) mob taub hau

heal V (heal somebody, cure, fix, repair) kho (kom)
- V (for something to heal) nqawm
- V (be healed, have recovered) kho zoo lawm

healer N (traditional Hmong) [tus] txiv neeb

health N [txoj] kev noj qab nyob huv

healthy (V be healthy) tsis muaj mob

hear V (hear, sense, feel, smell) hnov

heart N [lub] plawv

heavy (V be heavy) hnyav

heel N (foot) [lub] luj taws, pob taw

helicopter N [lub] dav hlau kiv tshuab

hello (general greeting) nyob zoo
- (to someone coming to where one is) (koj) tuaj los
- (reply to above) (kuv) tuaj os
- (to someone on way to someplace) koj mus dab tsi/ab tsi?

help V pab
- N [txoj] kev pab

hen N [tus] poj qaib

her PRO (OBJ her, OBJ herself, she, him, OBJ himself, he, it, OBJ itself) nws
- POSS (for all 3rd person singulars) nws + CLF for most nouns

herb N (herb, condiment, spice) txuj lom

herbal (N herbal medicine) tshuaj nroj

herd N (herd, flock, group) pab

here N (this place) qhov no
- ADV ntawm no, nod

hers PRO (hers, his, its) nws li

herself PRO (OBJ herself, OBJ her, she, OBJ himself, him, OBJ itself, it) nws
- PRO (emphatic reflexive as in do by oneself for all 3rd person singulars) nws tus kheej

hiccough V ua ntsos

hide V (hide something) zais
- V (hide, be hidden) nraim
- V (hide oneself) tsiv nraim
- V (hide oneself, recede into, withdraw something) nkaum

high (V be tall) siab
- (V be high in tone or pitch) soob
- (N high school) [lub] tsev kawm ntawv theem nrab

highway N [txoj] kev loj

hill N [lub] me nyuam roob
- N (hills, mountains) toj roob

him PRO (him, OBJ himself, he, OBJ her, OBJ herself, she, it, OBJ itself) nws

himself PRO (OBJ himself, him, he, OBJ herself, OBJ her, she, OBJ itself, it) nws
- PRO (emphatic reflexive as in do by oneself for all 3rd person singulars) nws tus kheej

hip N [lub] ntsag

hire V (give a job to) txais ua hauj lwm

his POSS (his ___ , her ___ , its ___) nws + CLF for most nouns
- PRO (his, hers, its) nws li

history N (zaj) liv xwm, hais lub neej dhau los

hit V (hit, attack, beat, fight, play piano, strike, type) ntaus
- V (hit a target) raug
- V (for (a) car(s) to hit (each other), collide, crash) (sib) tsoo

Hmong (V be Hmong) Hmoob
- N (Hmong person) [tus] neeg Hmoob
- N (Hmong language) lus Hmoob

hoe N [rab] hlau
- V (hoe, scratch out, dig) khawb

hold V (hold in hand, grasp) tuav
- V (hold hands) sib tuav tes
- V (hold, grasp, grope) xuas
- V (hold one's breath) npo pa
- V (hold within, contain) ntim tau

hole N [lub] qhov (taub)
- V (make a hole, pierce) tho qhov

holiday N hnub so hauj lwm

hollow V (be hollow) khoob

home N [lub] vaj tse, chaw nyob
- N [lub] (house) tsev
- V (go home) mus tsev

homesick (V be homesick for one's own country) nco teb chaws
- V (be homesick, lonely) kho siab

homework N [txoj] hauj lwm xib fwb muab los ua tom tsev

honest (V be honest, straight) ncaj, siab ncaj, ncaj ncees
• (V be honest, not cheat/trick) tsis dag

honey N [cov] zib mu

hook N [tus] nqe lauj

hope V (L) vam (hais tias), vam thiab cia siab
• V (have hope) cia cia siab, muaj siab
• N [txoj] kev vam, kev xav

hopeless (V be hopeless) tsis muaj vam

horn N (animal) [tus] kub
• N (musical horn, flute, pipe, tube) [lub] raj

horse N [tus] nees

hospital N [lub] tsev kho mob

hot (V be hot to the touch) kub
• (V be hot weather, person feeling hot) sov sov
• (V be spicy) ntsim

hotel N [lub] tsev ntiav pw

hour N (hour, o'clock) teev, (L) xuab moos

house N [lub] tsev

household N (household, family) tsev neeg, yim (neeg)
• N (household goods) [lub] cuab yeej (cuab tam)

housewife N [tus] niam tsev

housework N [txoj] hauj lwm hauv tsev

how ADV (manner, amount) li cas
• ADV (amount, how much?) hov, npaum li cas
• (how far?) deb npaum li cas
• (how long?) hov ntev
• ADV (how many/much?) pes tsawg
• (V know how to do something) txawj
• (how about ___ ?) ___ ne?
• (how do you feel?) Koj puas xis nyob?

however CONJ txawm li cas los
• (CONJ however, but) tiam sis, tab sis
• (ADV however, still) tseem

hug V (embrace someone, hold in the arms) puag
• V (hug each other) sib puag

hull V (hull rice) tuav txhuv

human N (human, person, people) [tus] tib neeg
• N (human, person, man) [tus] neeg

humid (V be hot and humid) vaum

hundred Q ([one] hundred) (ib) puas

hungry (V be hungry) tshaib plab

hunt V (hunt for game) plob
• V (hunt, pursue, chase after) raws
• V (hunt animals/for meat) raws tsiaj/nqaij
• V (hunt, kill [wild] animals) tua (qus) tsiaj
• V (hunt to get meat in forest) caum nqaij
• V (look for, search, [try to] find) nrhiav

hurry V nraum nroos, tsuag tsuag
• V (be in a hurry to do something) rawm
• (V be in a hurry, busy) maj
• (V be in a hurry/rush, anxious to rush off) siab maj

hurt V (hurt oneself/someone physically) ua sab, ua raug
• V (hurt ___'s feelings) ua rau ___ tu siab
• V (have one's feelings hurt, be offended) tu siab
• V (be hurting, be sick, hurt in feelings) mob
• V (be hurt at heart, grieved, sorry, distressed) mob siab
• V (body hurts, be hurt/injured seriously) sab
• V (be hurt, injured) raug sab

husband N [tus] txiv

I

I PRO (I, me, OBJ myself) kuv

ice N (ice, frost, snow) te
• (frozen water) dej khov

ice cream N mis nyuj khov

idea N [lub] tswv yim

identification N [txoj] kev ua kom paub pom
• N (piece of identification) [daim] ntawv cob zeem npe

idle (V be idle) nyob xwb xwb
• (V be idle, unoccupied, free of charge) dawb

if (CONJ if, V be) yog
• (CONJ if only) tsuas tab yog, tab yog

ignore V (not take an interest in) tsis muab siab rau
• V (ignore a person) ua ib tug tsis pom

ill (V be ill/sick) mob

illegal (V be illegal) tsis raug raws cai

illiterate (V lit. not to know how to read) tsis paub ntawv

illness N [txoj] kev mob (kev) nkeeg, [tus] kab mob

imagine V xav saib

imitate V (imitate, follow, resemble) yoog

immediately ADV (now) tam sim (no/kiag)

immigrant N (immigrant, refugee) [tus] neeg thoj nam

impatient (V be impatient) siab luv
• (V be impatient, in a hurry) rawm

impolite (V be impolite) tsis paub cai

important (V be important) tseem ceeb

impossible (V be impossible to do) yeej yuav ua tsis tau

improve V (make something better) kho kom zoo

in PREP (in, inside) hauv
• PREP (down/south in/at) nram
• PREP (up/north in/at) pem
• PREP (over in/at) tim, tom
• (in addition) tsis tas li ntawd
• (in a couple of days [from now]) ob pep hnub saum no
• (in order that/for) yuav ua kom
• (in place of, V take the place of) theej
• (in that case/way) ua li ntawd

inappropriate (V be inappropriate) tsis raug raws

inch Q ib nti

incorrect (V be incorrect) tsis raug, tsis yog

increase V huam

indecisive (V be indecisive) siab ntau, ob siab

indeed ADV (indeed, even, really, pre-verbal intensifier) twb
• ADV (indeed, post-verbal intensifier) ntag
• ADV (indeed, just, only) xwb

individually ADV (separately) ib lub ib lub

inexpensive (V be inexpensive, cheap) pheej yig

infection N (serious infection) npuag

inform V (inform, advise, explain, show, teach, tell) qhia

information N [txoj] kev qhia ub no

injure V raug mob

ink N kua (cwj) mem

in-laws N txheeb tsav
• N (in-laws and all other relatives related to a man through any female) neej tsa

insect N (insect, bug) [tus] kab
• N (fly) [tus] yoov

inside ADV sab hauv
• ADV (inside a building) hauv tsev

instant N (instant, moment, second) pliag

instead of PREP hos (ho) (ua cas), pauv chaw, txauv chaw

instruction(s) N lus qhia txog

intelligent (V be intelligent, sharp) ntse

intend V (intentionally) txhob txwm

interest N (bank) nyiaj tsam ntxiv

interested (V be interested in ___) ___ ntxim kuv siab

interesting (V be interesting) ntxim siab, txaus siab, raug siab

interpreter N (translator) [tus] neeg txhais lus

interrupt V txiav lus

intersection N [txoj] kev tshuam

intestine N (txoj) hnyuv
• N (large intestine) hnyuv dub
• N (small intestine) hnyuv dawb

into PREP hauv, rau hauv

introduce V ua kom paub

investigate V nug xyuas

invite V caw

iron N (metal) hlau
• N (for pressing clothes) [lub] luam ris tsho, luam khaub ncaws
• V (press, flatten, print) luam
• N (ironing board) [lub] rooj luam khaub ncaws

irritate V (irritate/be irritated, offended, resentful, jealous) khib
• (V for skin to be irritated, itchy) khaus

irritating (V be irritating, provoking) meem txom

island N [lub] pov txwv dej

it PRO (it, OBJ itself, he, him, OBJ himself, she, OBJ her, OBJ herself) nws

itch V (itch, be itchy) khaus

its POSS (its, his, her) nws + CLF for most nouns
• PRO (its, his, hers) nws li

itself PRO (OBJ itself, himself, herself) nws
• (emphatic reflexive as in do by oneself for all 3rd person singulars) nws tus kheej

J

jacket N (any upper body garment with sleeves) [lub] tsho

jackfruit N [lub] txiv plab nyug

jail N [lub] (tsev) loj faj, tsev rau txim, nkuaj
• V (jail ___) kaw hauv nkuaj, coj ___ mus kaw rau hauv lub tsev rau txim

January N [lub] ib hlis ntuj

Japan N Ziv poom teb, Teb chaws Nyij pooj, Teb chaws Zij peem

Japanese (V be Japanese) Ziv poom, Nyij pooj, Zij peem
- N (Japanese language) lus Ziv poom/Nyij pooj/ Zij peem
- N (Japanese person) [tus] neeg Ziv poom/ Nyij pooj/ Zij peem

jar N (jar, large storage jar, clay pot) [lub] fub/hub

jaundice N daj ntseg

jaw N [lub] puab tsaig

jealous (V be jealous) khib (siab)

jewelry N lias, nyiaj-kub

job N (txoj) hauj lwm

join V (join/knot together, connect) txuas
- V (be joined, connected) sib txuas
- V (join/fit together) dhos
- V (be joined/fit together) sib dhos ua ke
- V (join in, as a discussion) koom
- V (join, bear, carry, bring) coj

joke V tso dag, lam
- V (joke, kid, fib) lam
- (response to compliment: you're kidding, flattering me) koj lam hais
- N [lo] lus tso dag

judge V (judge, decide) txiav txim
- N tus txiav txim

juice N (juice, liquid, sauce) kua
- N (fruit juice) kua txiv ntoo

July N [lub] xya hli ntuj

jump V dhia
- CLF phlawv

June N [lub] rau hli ntuj

jungle N [lub] hav zoov

just ADV (just now, just a moment ago) nyuam qhuav
- ADV (just, only) xwb, tsuas
- ADV (just starting to do, be in the process of doing) tab tom
- ADV (just so, just then) txawm sis
- ADV (just then) nim
- (V be just, fair, equal) koob pheej, ncaj ncees

K

keep V (keep, put away) (khaws) cia
- V (keep in mind) nco ntsoov
- V (keep for oneself) ceev
- V (politely keep/detain a visitor) cheem

kettle N [lub] hwj rhaub dej, lauj kaub rhaub dej

key N [tus] yuam sij, yawm sij

kick V ncaws
- V (kick backward, baby kicking in womb) tuam

kid N (child) [tus] me nyuam
- V (kid, joke, fib) lam, lam hais

kidney N [lub] raum

kill V (kill, shoot) tua

kilogram N (kilogram, kilo) [lub] ki laus
- (two kilograms) ob kis laus

kilometer N kis laus mev

kind N (kind, sort, type) hom, yam
- (V be kind, nice) siab zoo
- (V be kind, nice, generous) siab dawb
- ADV (kind of, sort of, a little, somewhat) tsem tsawv, hauj sim

king N (king, emperor, prince) [tus] huab tais
- N (king of the heavens) huab tais qaum ntuj

kiss V nwj
- N [pas] nwj

kitchen N [lub] tsev ua mov, tsev mov, chav ua noj

knee N [lub] hauv caug

knife N [rab] riam

knock V (knock at door, rap with knuckles) khob

knot V (knot/join together, connect) txuas
- N (knot in rope, string, wood) [lub] pob caus

know V paub
- V (know how to do something) txawj
- V (don't know, be uncertain) xyov

L

lacking (V be lacking, remaining, excepting) tshuav

ladder N (ladder, stair, staircase) [tus] ntaiv

lady N (woman, wife) [tus] poj niam

lake N [lub] pas dej

lamb N [tus] me nyuam yaj

lamp N [lub] teeb
- N (glass lamp) [lub] tsom teeb

land N thooj av
- N (country, nation) [lub] teb chaws

landlord N [tus] tswv tsev

language N (a language) lus, lus hais

Lao (V be Lao) Los tsuas, Nplog (considered pejorative by some)
- N (Lao language) lus Los tsuas/Nplog
- N (Lao person) [tus] neeg Los tsuas/Nplog

Laos N Los tsuas teb, Teb chaws Los Tsuas, Nplog teb, Teb chaws Nplog (considered pejorative by some)

large (V be large, big) loj
- (V be large, great, major) niag
- (V be large, great, chief) tuam

last (last year) xyoo tag (los lawm), tsaib no
- (last night) nag hmo tsaus ntuj
- (last time) zaum tag no
- (last day) hnub kawg
- N (last name, clan/surname) [lub] xeem

late (V be late, tardy) lig

later ADV (in a while) ib tsam
- ADV (afterward) tom qab

laugh V luag

laundry (V lit. wash clothes) ntxhua khaub ncaws

law N (law, custom) [txoj] (kev) cai
- N [txoj] kev cai lij choj
- N (law, court case, litigation) [txoj] kev plaub kev ntug

lawn N (lawn, grass) nyom

lawyer N [tus] neeg hais plaub ntug, kws lij choj

lay V (lay eggs) nteg
- V (lay/place something, release) tso
- V (for person to lay/lie down, recline) pw

lazy (V be lazy, tired) nkees
- (V be lazy, listless) tub nkeeg

lead V (lead for animals, take along forcibly) cab
- (lead for people, guide, bring along) coj

leader N [tus] tub coj, tus thawj coj, tus tswj hwm
- N (leader, official) [tus] nom

leaf N [daim] nplooj
- N (leaf of a tree) [daim] nplooj ntoos

leak V (___ leak through/filter through) xau ___
- V (leak ___ in drops, drip) nrog ___
- V (leak ___ in a continuous stream, flow) los ___

lean V (lean, lean against) ib
- V (lean ___ against) nres
- V (lean against, lean over) pheeb
- V (lean, be inclined to one side, slanted) qaij

learn V (learn, study) kawm

leather N (leather, hide, skin of person/animal) tawv
- N (leather, animal skin, hide) tawv tsiaj

leave V (leave, go out) tawm mus
- V (leave, depart, go) lawm
- V (leave behind, release, relinquish) tso (tseg)
- V (leave behind, abandon, cast away, discard, reject) tseg
- V (leave something for somebody) tseg cia

left (V be left vs. right) lauj
- (N left side, ADV on /to the left) sab laug
- (V be left, remaining, lacking, excepting) tshuav
- (V be left over) seem

leg N [txhais] ceg
- N (lower leg, shin) [tus] kav, caj hlaub
- N (upper leg , thigh) [tus] ncej puab
- (N traditional Hmong leg wrappings) [txhais] nrhoob
- (V put on, wear leg wrappings, boots, gloves, shoes, socks) rau

legal (V be legal) raug raws cai

leisure (V be at leisure, free, not busy) khoom

lemon N [lub] txiv qaub
- N (lemon grass) tauj qaib, tauj dub

lend V (lend, loan, borrow) qiv/qev, txais

less (ADV less than) tsawg dua, tsawg zog

lesson N zaj lus (qhia)

let V (let, permit, allow) cia
- V (let, abandon, allow, free, leave, let, permit, place, put, release, relinquish) tso
- (let's) (for two) cia wb, (for three or more) cia peb

letter N (mail) [daim] ntawv, [tsab] ntawv
- N (of the alphabet) [tus] (tsiaj) ntawv

lettuce N [lub] zaub xav lav

level N (floor, story) theem
- N (level, layer, story in a building, tier) txheej
- (V be level, even, smooth) tiaj, tiaj tus
- (V be level, smooth, clear of extraneous matter) du
- (V be level/even with) du lug

library N [lub] tsev khaws ntawv, tsev rau ntawv

lick V yaim

lid N [lub] hau

lie V (tell untruth) dag, hais lus dag
- V (lie down, recline) pw

life N (as one's daily life) [lub] neej
- N (state of being alive) [txoj] sia

lifetime N [lub] sim neej

lift V (lift, carry in hand) nqa
- V (lift up, set up/upright, erect, raise up, establish) tsa
- V (lift, raise to a higher level) cev

light N (lamp) [lub] teeb
- N (light from a light source) qhov pom kev, qhov ci ci
- (V be light from a light source) pom kev
- (V be light in weight) sib
- (V be light in color, be white) dawb
- (V light something) zes
- (V light a fire) rauv taws

lightning (V for there to be lightning) xob laim

like V nyiam
- (V be like, similar, the same, ADV like, as, CONJ like, as) zoo li, xws li
- (V be like/similar to/the same as/equal to each other) sib luag
- ADV (like, the same, similar) ib yam (li), ib yam nkaus li, tib yam, luag ib yam

lime N [lub] txiv qaub ntsuab

line N [txoj] kab

lion N [tus] tsov ntxhuav

lip N [daim] di ncauj
- N (Hmong lip/mouth harp/organ) [rab] ncas

liquid N (liquid, juice, sauce) kua

liquor N (liquor, alcohol) cawv (ntsim), dej cawv

listen V mloog

little (V be little, small) me
- (little animals) mi tsiaj txhu
- (ADV a little bit) tsawg tsawg, me ntsi
- (Q a little) me ntsi
- ADV (a little while, a little longer) ib chim, ib pliag, ib me ntsis, ib tsam

live V (live at, be alive, be located at, stay) nyob
- V (live, lead/make a life) ua neej
- (V be alive, living) ciaj

livelihood N (txoj) kev noj kev haus

liver N (body part) [nplooj for physical organ, lub for metaphorical senses] siab

living (N living room) [lub] kem tsev nyob, chav txais qhua

lizard N [tus] nab qa
- N (a type of small lizard) [tus] nab qa tsiav

loan V (loan, lend, borrow) qiv/qev, txais

lobster N (lobster) [tus] cws (hom) loj
- N (lobster, prawn, shrimp) [tus] cws

locate V (succeed in finding) nrhiav tau
- (V be located at a place, live at, be alive, stay) nyob

lock V xauv
- V (lock up, close, jail, imprison) kaw
- V (lock/close with a bar, bolt) liaj
- N [lub] xaus, ntsuas phoo

loft N (loft, attic, overhead storage platform in Hmong house) [lub] nthab

log N [tus] cav

lonely V (be lonely, homesick) kho siab

long (V be long) ntev
- (ADV a long time ago) (puag) thaum ub

look V (look [at], gaze, stare) ntsia
- V (look [at], watch, observe) saib
- V (look at, watch, [go] see, visit) xyuas (saib)
- V (look for, [try to] find) nrhiav
- V (look around) ntsia ib ncig
- V (look after, take care of) tu
- V (look alike) zoo tib yam
- V (look like, be like, be the same) zoo li
- V (look like, appear, seem) ntxim

loose (V be loose, loose-fitting) xoob
- (V be loose, come untied) plam

lose V ua poob, ua ploj
- V (become lost, lost to sight, disappear) ploj
- V (be lost in the jungle) poob zoo
- V (lose face) poob phlus, poob ntsej muag

lot ADV (a lot, much, many) ntau
- ADV (___ a lot, of an action or state) ___ ua luaj
- ADV kawg

loud ADV (loud, loudly) nrov

love V hlub
- N [lub] siab hlub

low (V be low in height) qis/qes
- (V be low in sound, pitch) laus

luck N (fate, fortune) [txoj] hmoov, koob hmoo
- (good luck) hmoov zoo
- (bad luck) hmoov phem

lucky (V be lucky) muaj hmoo

lunch N pluas su
- V (eat lunch) noj su

lung N [nplooj, lub] ntsws

M

machine N [lub] tshuab

mad (V be angry) chim (siab), npau (siab)
• (V be crazy, insane) vwm

magazine N [tsab] ntawv xov xwm

mail V (send a letter) xa (ib tsab) ntawv
• N (mail, letter) [tsab] ntawv

make V (make, act, do, produce) ua
• V (make someone do something, cause) (ua) kom
• V (make/cause to happen) ua rau

malaria (V have malaria) ua npaws

male N (a human male, man) [tus] txiv neej
• (V be male for certain large animals) phaw
• (be male for birds) lau

man N (human male) [tus] txiv neej

mango N [lub] txiv txhais

many ADV (many, much) ntau
• ADV (many, of animals, people) coob

map N [daim] ntawv qhia kev roob hav, daim duab ntiaj teb, (L) [daim] phab nthib

March N [lub] peb hlis ntuj

mark N (mark, seal, sign, stamp) [lub] cim
• V (mark something) cim
• V (make a mark, imprint) ntaus

market N (store) [lub] (tsev) khw, (L) tab laj

marry V (marry ___) yuav ___
• V (get married) sib yuav, ua tshoob,

match V (well-suited, match, as in color) phim, sib phim
• N (for lighting fire) [tus] hauv txhuam

mathematics N [txoj] kev xam phaj

mattress N [lub] pam pua saum toj

May N [lub] tsib hlis ntuj

may (V may ___ , can ___ , for permission, possibility) ___ tau
• (ADV maybe for 'might' sense of may) tej zaum/d

maybe ADV (maybe, probably) tej zaum/d

me PRO (me, I, OBJ myself) kuv

meal N (as lunch, dinner) pluas mov

mean (V be mean, cruel) siab phem
• V (have a meaning, explanation) yog hais tias
• V (have a meaning, explanation, translation) txhais hais tias

meaning N (meaning of a word, translation) txhais lus
• N (meaning of a word, essence, kernel) [lub] ntsiab

measure V ntsuas

meat N nqaij

mechanic N (auto) [tus] kws kho tsheb

medicine N (medicine, drug) tshuaj

meet V ntsib
• V (meet each other) sib ntsib
• V (meet with) cuag
• V (lit. meet again for 'goodbye') sib ntsib dua

meeting N [txoj] kev sib ntsib, (kev) sab laj

Mekong N Naj Khoos

melon N (melon, cucumber) [lub] dib

memorize V cim

memory N [lub] cim xeeb, [txoj] kev nco txog

mention V hais txog, hais tawm

merchant N [tus] neeg muag khoom

message N (written) tsab xov

messy (V be messy, disorderly) sw (sw), sw rawv

metal N (iron) hlau

middle (V be the middle) nruab nrab
• ADV ((be) in the middle) (nyob) (hauv) nruab nrab
• N (middle, center) (qhov) nruab nrab

midnight N ib tag hmo

mile N mais

milk N (cow) mis (nyuj)
• N (mother's milk) niam mis

million Q lab

mine PRO kuv li

minute N [lub] feeb, (L) nas this

mirror N [daim] (tsom) iav

miss V (long to see, remember) nco (txog)
• N (term of direct address/vocative to young woman) leej muad

mistake N qhov yuam kev
• V (make a mistake) yuamkev

misunderstand V tsis nkag siab

mix V (mix together) xyaw
- (V be mixed together) sib xyaws
- V (mix water into something, add water) tov

modern (V be modern) hom tshiab

mold V (mold, form with hands, shape, flatten) puab

moment N (moment, instant, second) pliag
- (one moment) ib pliag, ib vog

Monday N [lub] Hnub ob, (L) Hnub vas cas

money N (money, silver) nyiaj
- N (money, wealth) nyiaj txiag

monkey N [tus] liab

month N (month) [lub] hli ntuj
- N (month, moon) [lub] hli

moon N [lub] hli

more (V be more, add to) ntxiv
- ADV (amount more than) ntau dua
- ADV (comparative more ___ than) ___ dua
- ADV (comparative more ___ than, most) ___tshaj
- ADV (more than/over a certain number) ___ tawm
- ADV (the more ___ the more ___) yim ___ yim ___

moreover ADV (moreover, also, consequently) kuj
- ADV (moreover, and, also) thiab

morning N (morning, daylight) kaj ntug
- N (morning, early morning) [lub] (caij) sawv ntxov
- ADV (in the morning) thaum sawv ntxov
- ADV (this morning) tag kis no

mortar N (for pounding in) [lub] tshuaj khib
- N (for pounding rice cakes in) [lub] dab ncuav

mosquito N [tus] yoov tshaj cum

most ADV (the most, more) tshaj, tshaj plaws

motel N [lub] tsev ntiav pw

mother N [usually used without CLF or with leej] niam

mother-in-law N (wife's mother) [tus] niam tais
- N (husband's mother) [tus] niam pog

motorcycle N [lub] tsheb maus taus

mountain N [lub] roob
- N (mountains, hills) toj roob

mourn V (mourn a death) nyiav

mouse N (mouse, house rat) [tus] nas tsuag
- N (mouse, rat, rodent) [tus] nas

mouth N [lub] qhov ncauj
- N (Hmong mouth/lip organ/harp) [rab] ncas

mouthful (CLF for mouthfuls, words) lo

move V (shift, change place within a small area) txav
- V (change residence) tsiv
- V (move one's body, writhe, wriggle) nti
- V (move something, bring along, lead, guide) coj

movie N yeeb yam
- N (movie theater) [lub] tsev ntsia yeeb yam

much ADV (much, many) ntau
- ADV (much, very) heev

mud N av nkos

muddy (V be muddy) nkos (nkos li)

murder V tua neeg

muscle N thooj nqaij leeg, [tus] leeg

mushroom N [lub] nceb

music N (voice) suab kwv txhiaj
- N (instrument) paj nruas

must V yuav tsum
- V (must, need to) yuav tau

mustache N (plaub) hwj/fwj txwv

mustard N (mustard greens, leafy cabbage) zaub ntsuab

my POSS kuv + CLF for most nouns

myself PRO (OBJ myself, me, I) kuv
- PRO (emphatic reflexive as in do by oneself) kuv tus kheej

N

nail N (metal) [tus] ntsia hlau
- N (fingernail) rau tes
- V (nail) ntsia

name N [lub] npe
- N (honorary name given by in-laws to man after marriage) npe laus
- N (surname, last name, clan) xeem
- V (give a name to ___) tis ___ (lub) npe hu ua
- V (be named) lub npe hu ua

napkin N [daim] ntawv so qhov ncauj

narrow (V be narrow) nqaim
- (V be close together) ti

nation N (people) tsoom (haiv) neeg
- N (nation, country) [lub] teb chaws

nationality N haiv neeg

nausea (V have nausea, be nauseous) xeev siab

navel N (body) [lub] ntaws

near (V be near, close, ADV nearby) ze

nearly ADV (nearly, almost) yuav luag

necessary (V be necessary to have/do) yam yuav tsum
- (V be necessary, important) tseem ceeb

neck N [lub] caj dab
- N (back of neck) xub qwb

necklace N [txoj] (hlua)(saw) caj dab, (solid) [lub] xauv, kauj toog dab
- (V wear, put on necklace, bracelet, earrings, eyeglasses, watch) coj

need V (need to, must) yuav tsum, yuav tau
- V (need to get) yuav tsum tau

needle N [rab] koob

neighbor N [tus] neeg zej zos

neighborhood N (neighborhood, environs) cheeb tsam

nephew N [tus] tub xeeb ntxwv

nerve N (body) [txoj] leeg

nervous (V be nervous, fearful, afraid) poob siab

nest N [lub] zes

never ADV tsis muaj ib zaug
- ADV (have never) yeej tsis tau ib zaug

new (V be new) tshiab
- (idiom: Hmong New Year) tsiab peb caug
- (idiom: Hmong New Year's feast, celebrate Hmong New Year) noj (tsiab) peb cang
- (Happy New Year) nyob zoo xyoo tshiab

news N [txoj] xov xwm, xov, [lub, txoj] moo

newspaper N [daim] ntawv xov xwm

next (Q next, another, other, a second) lwm
- (next time) lwm lub caij, lwm zaus
- (next year) lwm xyoo
- PREP (next to) ntawm ib sa
- PREP (next to, close to) ze

nice (V for a person to be nice, good-hearted) siab zoo

nickel N (five cents) [lub] npib tsib xee/xees

nickname N [lub] npe me nyuam yaus

niece N [tus] ntxhais xeeb ntxwv
- N (nieces and nephews as a group) xeeb ntxhwv

night N hmo, hmo ntuj, tsaus ntuj
- (one night) ib hmos
- (last night) nag hmo

nine Q cuaj

nineteen Q kaum cuaj

nineteenth (V be nineteenth) thib kaum cuaj

ninetieth (V be ninetieth) thib cuaj caum

ninety Q cuaj caum

ninth (V be ninth) thib cuaj

no ADV (no, not) tsis + V
- (no, not be true) tsis yog
- (no matter what) tsis kav

nobody (nobody/one [+ NEG on V], somebody/one, anybody/one [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], who) leej twg

noise (N noise, ADV noisily, loudly) nrov
- N (noise, sound, tone in tone language, voice) [lub] suab

noodle N (egg noodles) mij
- N (large rice noodles) fawm
- N (small rice noodles) peev choj

noon N hnub ntseg, caij tav su, tav su

normal (ADV do/behave normally) xws li qub, (L) thas mas das

north PREP (up to/at/in the north, uphill) pem
- ADV (up to/at/in the north, uphill) ped
- N (name of direction) peb/sab/phab qaum teb

nose N [lub] qhov ntswg

not ADV tsis
- ADV (in imperatives, expressions of uncertainty) (tsis) txhob

notebook N phau ntawv sau

nothing PRO (nothing [+ NEG on V], anything [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], something, what) dab tsi

November N [lub] kaum ib hlis ntuj

now ADV tam sis/sim no, nim no/nyiam no/niam no/nyem no
- ADV (at this time) [lub] sij hawm no
- ADV (now, nowadays, this time period) [lub] caij no

nowadays ADV niaj hnub no, [lub] caij no

numb (V be numb) loog

number N [tus] naj npawb, (L) lej

nurse N [tus] neeg xyas neeg mob
- V (breastfeed a baby) ntxais mis

nut N [lub] txiv ntseej

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Abstract:
"Hmong For Beginners" was written by Annie Jaisser and her co-authors (Martha Ratliff, Elizabeth Riddle, David Strecker, Lopao Vang and Lyfu Vang) from materials they developed in the 1980s when Hmong was first being introduced as a language of instruction for the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI). The book was published by the Center for Southeast Asia Studies at UC Berleley in 1995 and is now out of print. This electronic version is intended to make the materials available to those interested in the Hmong language but with limited access to print materials about the language.

O

obey V mloog lus
- (obey an elder) mloog tus hlob

object N (thing) khoom
- V (object, not agree with) tsis pom zoo nrog

observe V (observe, look [at]) saib
- V (observe a prohibition) caiv

obtain V (obtain, get) yuav, tau

occasion N (an occasion, a time) [lub] zaus, sij hawm

occupation N [txoj] hauj lwm, hom hauj lwm

ocean N (ocean, sea) [lub] (dej) hiav txwv

o'clock (o'clock, N hour, time) teev, (L) moos

October N [lub] kaum hli ntuj

offend V (offend ___) tu ___ siab
- V (be offended, worried) tu siab

office N [lub] tsev kab xwm

official N (official, leader) [tus] nom (tswv)

oh INT (exclamation) ab, aub!

oil N (oil, fat, gas, gasoline, grease)roj

ointment N tshuaj hom pleev

OK (for agreement, consent) los tau

old (V be old for people) laus
- (V be older in precedence in family, grown up) hlob
- (V be old for things) qub
- (How old is she/he?) nws muaj pes tsawg xyoo lawm?

on PREP (on, on top of) saum
- PREP (on the floor/ground) hauv av
- PREP (date) tim
- PREP (be on top of) nyob saum

once ADV (one time) ib zaug
- ADV (long ago) puag ta

one Q ib
- Q (one only, single) tib
- PRO (indefinite PRO for a person, indefinite you) yus
- (N one-way ticket) daim pib mus

oneself PRO (OBJ oneself, indefinite yourself) yus
- PRO (emphatic reflexive as in do something by oneself) yus tus kheej

onion N [lub] dos
- N (green onion) [tus] dos

only ADV (used at end of sentence) xwb
- ADV (pre-verbal) tsuas
- ADV (only if, if) yog hais tias

onto PREP rau saum

open V (for door, things not opening on own and without two equal hinged parts) qhib
- V (for things opening on own or with two equal hinged parts) rua
- V (open for a book) nthuav
- (N open field, cleared and flat) tshav

operate V (operate, do surgery) phais mob
- V (operate, cut open, do surgery) phais

operation N (surgery) [txoj] kev phais (mob)

opium N (opium, opium poppies) yeeb
N (opium as drug) yaj yeeb
- (V smoke opium) haus yeeb

oppose (V be opposed to, disagree with) tsis pom zoo nrog

opposite PREP (be opposite to, across from, over there) tim
- ADV (be opposite to, across from, over there) tid

or CONJ los
- CONJ (or that) los tias
- CONJ (in questions) los sis
- CONJ (or if) los yog

orange N (fruit) [lub] txiv kab ntxwv
- (V be orange, N orange color) xim txiv kab ntxwv
- (N orange juice) kua txiv kab ntxwv

order V (order, command) hais kom
- N (an order, command) [lo] lus hais kom ua raws
- (in order to, lit. ___ causes ___) kom

organize V sib kho ua ib pab

origin N (origin, source) [lub] hauv paus

original (Q original, first) thawj

originally ADV ib txwm, yeej (los)

orphan N [tus] (me nyuam/tub/ntxhais) ntsuag

other Q (other, another, a second, next) lwm
- (another day) lwm hnub
- PRO (other people, others) luag (tej), lawv tej, luag lwm (lwm tus)
- (other kinds of things) tej yam
- (other times, occasions) tej zaug
- (N, ADV other side, outside, the back of) sab nraud

otter N [tus] ntshuab

our POSS (for 2) wb + CLF for most nouns
- POSS (for 3 or more) peb + classifier for most nouns

ours PRO (for 2) wb li
- PRO (for 3 or more) peb li

ourselves PRO (OBJ for 2) wb
- PRO (emphatic reflexive for 2 as in do by oneself) wb tus kheej
- PRO (OBJ for 3 or more) peb
- PRO (emphatic reflexive for 3 or more as in do by oneself) peb tus kheej

out (V go out from) tawm

outdoors N sab nraum zoov
- ADV nraum zoov

outside ADV nraud
- N, ADV sab nraud, sab nraum zoov
- PREP nraum

oven N [lub] qhov cub

over PREP (above, on top of, up) saum
- ADV ([way] up above) (puag) saud
- PREP (over to) tom, (more distant) tim
- ADV (over there) (near) (qhov) ntawd, (farther) (qhov) tod, (farthest) (puag) tid
- PREP (over by but close) qhov ntawm
- (V be over here) nyob tom no
- ADV (way over there) tim ub
- ADV (over ___, more than ___) ___ tawm
- ADV (all over a place, everywhere) qhov txhia chaw
- (V be over, be finished) tas, tag lawm

overweight (V be overweight, fat) rog

owe V tshuav (nuj) nqi/nqe, tshuav luag

owl N [tus] plas

own V (have) muaj

owner N [tus] tswv

P

PM ADV (___ PM) ___ (teev/moos) thaum tsaus ntuj

Pacific N (Pacific Ocean) [lub] Dej hiav txwv Pa xi fiv

pack V (pack, tie up into a package, bind, wrap up) pav
- N (pack, small package) pob

package N pob khoom
- N (a small package, pack) pob

paddy N [daim for whole paddy, zeg for section] liaj

page N [daim] phab (ntawv)

pail N [lub] thoob

pain N (abstract sense) [txoj] kev mob

paint N kua kob
- V pleev xim, pleev kua kob

pair CLF nkawm

pajamas N [cev] ris tshohnav pw

palpitations (V have palpitations) lub plawv dhia heevheev

pan N (cooking pan, pot) [lub] lauj kaub
- N (frying pan) [lub] yias

pandau N (a piece of Hmong embroidered cloth) [daim] paj ntaub

pants N [lub] ris

papaya N [lub] txiv taub ntoos, txiv maum kuab

paper N [daim] ntawv

pardon V (pardon me) thov txim

parents N niam txiv

park N (place for playing) [lub] vaj ua si
- V (a car) nres tsheb

parking N (parking place) [lub] chaw nres tsheb

part N (a fraction) feem
- Q (some) ib co

party (V lit. gather together to have fun) sib sau ua kev lom zem

pass V (pass [through/by], cross over, exceed, surpass) dhau
- V (pass by) (mus) dhau
- V (pass on, to go, surpass) dua
- V (pass as a car on the road) mus dua
- V (pass/hand out, distribute) faib
- V (pass gas) tso paus

passport N [daim] ntawv hla ciam teb

past N yav dhau los
- (V be past, finished) tas/tag lawm
- (V walk past) (mus kev) dhau

pastor N (pastor, minister, professor, teacher) [tus] xib fwb/hwb

path N (path, road, street, way) [txoj] kev

patient (V be patient, even-tempered) siab ntev
- N (sick person) [tus] neeg mob

pay V them
- V (pay attention) quav ntsej, mloog zoo zoo
- N (salary) nyiaj hli

pea N (unshelled) [tus] taum mog
- N (shelled) [lub] noob taum mog

peace N (not at war) [txoj] kev thaj yeeb (nyab xeeb)
• (V be at peace in one's heart) tus siab

peach N [lub] txiv duaj

peacock N [tus] yaj yuam

peak N (mountain peak) [lub] ncov roob

peanut N [lub] (txiv laum) fuab/huab xeeb

pear N [lub] txiv phiaj, txiv zuaj

pen N (enclosure for animals) [lub] nkuaj
• N (for writing) [tus] cwj mem

pencil N [tus] cwj mem qhuav

penis N (may be offensively explicit) [tus] qau
• N (euphemism for male/female genital area, genitals, groin) qhov chaw mos

penny N (cent) [lub] npib ib xee

people N (people, person) [cov] (tib) neeg
• N (populace, population, a people) pej xeem
• N (people of an ethnic group) haiv neeg

pepper N (spice) txob
• N (a green/bell pepper) [lub] kua txob (ntsuab)
• N (the spice black pepper) hwj/fwj txob
• N (a hot pepper) [lub] kua txob ntsim ntsim

percent ntawm ib puas

perfect V (be perfect, the best) zoo kawg

perhaps ADV (perhaps, probably) tej zaum
• ADV (perhaps, it may be) saib tsam

period N (period of time, time) yav
• N (period of several hours) tsam
• N (time period, season) [lub] caij
• N (punctuation) tee dub dub
• N (menstrual period) [lub] caij coj khaub ncaws

permanent (V be permanent, remain for a long time) ua ntev, nyob ntev

permit V (permit, abandon, allow, free, leave, let, place, put, release, relinquish) tso
• V (give permission) tso lus
• V (permit, allow, let, set aside, store) cia
• V (permit, allow, let, give as a gift) pub

person N ([a] person) [tus, (more polite) leej] (tib) neeg

perspire V tawm hws

persuade V ntxias

pestle N (pounder) [tus/rab] dauj
• N (pounder for rice cakes) [rab] dauj ncuav

petal N (flower) nplaim (paj)

pharmacy N [lub] tsev thov tshuaj

photocopy V (photocopy, copy, press, print, xerox) luam

photograph N (photograph, picture) [daim] duab
• V yees duab

phrase N zaj lus

pick V (pick as fruit, pluck, pinch) de
• V (pick as corn, break off) ntais
• V (choose) xaiv
• V (pick up, gather) khaws
• V (pick up, take in the hand) nqa hlo

picnic (V to have a picnic) noj mov hav zoov

picture N (picture, photograph) [daim] duab

piece N (use the CLF appropriate for the noun under consideration)
• (CLF + N a piece of paper) daim ntawv

pig N [tus] npua

pile (CLF a pile of something) pawg

pill N (pill, medicine) [lub] tshuaj

pillow N [lub] tog hauv ncoo

pillowcase N [lub] hnab hauv ncoo

pimple N [lub] pob kab ntxau

pin N [rab] koob ntsia
• N (pin, needle) [rab] koob

pineapple N [lub] txiv puv luj

pink (V be pink, N pink color) xim paj yeeb, xim liab dawg muag

pipe N (for carrying water) [lub] raj hlau
• N (for smoking) [tus] yeeb nkab

place V (place, put) rau
• V (place, abandon, allow, free, leave, let, permit, put, release, relinquish) tso
• N (place, location) qhov (chaw)
• N (place, region) [lub] chaw

plain N (geographic) [lub] tiaj (nras)
• N (Plain of Jars) Tiaj Rhawv Zeb

plan N (plan, scheme, wisdom, cleverness) [zaj] tswv yim

plane N (airplane) [lub] dav hlau, (L) nyoob hoom

plant (V) (plant, insert) cog
• N (foliage, vegetation) tsob
• N (house plant, flower) [lub] paj

plate N (dish) [lub] phaj

play V ua si
- (play ball) ntaus pob ua si
- V (play by hitting, as tennis, piano, hit) ntaus
- V (play instrument by blowing, blow) tshuab
- V (play instrument with reed or fingerholes, blow) tshov
- (play the Hmong keng) tshov qeej
- (play cards for fun) ua phaib ua si

playground N [lub] chaw ua si

please (V ask, beg) thov

pleased (V be pleased) txaus siab

pleat V nre

pliers N [rab] ciaj

plow V faus teb, laij teb
- N [lub] khais

plum N [lub] txiv moj mab

plus (mathematics: V added to, CONJ plus) ntxiv rau

pocket N (pocket, bag, purse, sack) [lub] hnab

point (V) (indicate) taw
- V (point with the finger) taw tes

poison N tshuaj lom
- V (poison, be poisonous) lom

police N (police officer) [tus] neeg ceev xwm
- N (policeman) [tus] tub ceev xwm

polite (V be polite) paub (kev) cai

politics N tseev tsim

pond N (pond, lake) [lub] pas dej

poor (V be poor) txom nyem, pluag

popcorn N paj pob kws

poppy N [lub] paj yeeb

population N (population, populace, a people) pej xeem

pork N nqaij npuas

port N (for boats) [lub] chaws nres nkoj

possible (V be possible, can/could do/be) yuav tau
- (V be possible in theory, might do/be) tej zaum ua tau

postage N (amount) nqi xa ntawv

post office N [lub] tsev xa ntawv

pot N (cooking pot, pan) [lub] lauj kaub

potato N [lub] qos yaj ywm
- N (sweet potato) [lub] qos liab

pound V (pound as to make rice cakes, grasp) tuav
- V (pound as metal, beat, strike, hit) ntaus
- N (weight) phos

pounder N (pounder, pestle as to make rice cakes) [rab] dauj

pour V (pour, pour out) hliv
- V (pour out) nchuav

powder N (powder, dust, flour) hmoov

power N (power, authority, air/show of authority/majesty) [lub] hwj chim
- N (power, a special power or ability as of a shaman) [lub] hwj huam
- N (political power in a country) cheej tswj teb chaws
- N (power, strength) [lub] zog loj

practice V xyaum (ua)

praise V (praise, marvel at, admire) qhuas
- V (praise, show appreciation for) qhuas zoo

pray V (pray, ask for, beg) thov
- (pray to God) thov ntuj, thov Vaj tswv

prefer V (lit. like ___ better) nyiam ___ dua

pregnant (V be pregnant) muaj menyuam
- (V be pregnant, conceive) xeeb me nyuam/tub

prepare V npaj

prescription N [daim] ntawv muas tshuaj

present V (be present, come) tuaj
- N (time) [lub] caij tam sim no
- N (gift) khoom pub dawb, khoom saib dab muag

president N (leader of a country) [tus] thawj kav teb chaws, [tus] tsoom txoov

pretend V ua txuj (tsab), tsab

pretty (V be pretty, beautiful) zoo nkauj

prevent V thaiv kev, tsis pub ua
- V (prevent, hinder, delay, inconvenience) sav tsam

previously ADV (previously, up until now, ago) nram ntej

price N [tus] nqe, nqi

priest N [tus] pov thawj, huj sam
- N (Catholic priest/father) [tus] txiv plig

prince N [tus] tub huab tais, huab tais tub
- N (prince, emperor, king) [tus] huab tais

princess N [tus] huab tais ntxhais

principal N (of a school) thawj saib tsev kawm ntawv

print V (print printed matter) luam ntawv
• V (print, copy, photocopy, press, xerox) luam

prison N (prison, jail) [lub] tsev rau txim, (tsev) loj faj, nkuaj

probably ADV (probably, maybe) tej zaum/d
• ADV (probably, in my estimation) kwv yees
• (V be probable, suspect, guess) nyaj

problem N (problem, question) [lub] teeb meem
• (no problem) tsis ua (li) cas

produce V (produce, act, do, make) ua
• V (produce, create) tsim

profession N hom bauj lwm

professor N (professor, minister, pastor, teacher) [tus] xib fwb/hwb

progress V vam mus ntxiv, vam meej

prohibition (V observe a prohibition) caiv

promise N [lo] yeem lus, lus cog tseg
• V cog lus, yeem lus

pronounce V (pronounce, say, speak, tell) hais

protect V (protect, defend, obscure the view, shelter) thaiv
• V protect, defend, guard, shelter) pov hwm

proverb N [txoj] paj lug

province N (province, state) [lub] xeev

puberty N (young marriageable woman/man who has reached puberty) [tus] bluas nkauj/nraug

pull V (grasp and pull with the hand) rub
• V (pull hand over hand) tooj
• V (pull out, extract as teeth) rho
• V (pull up/out by the roots, as weeds, hair) dob
• V (pull out of a bag, pocket, withdraw) thau

pulse N (body) mem tes

pumpkin N [lub] taub dag

pupil N (eye) [lub] ntsiab muag

purple (V be purple, N color purple) xim (xiav) tsam xem, xim paj yeeb ntsha

purse N (purse, bag, pocket, sack) [lub] hnab

push V (push, shove) thawb
• V (push aside with the hand) haiv
• V (push, put to flight) xyob
• CLF (a push into flight) xyob

put V (put, place, put on/wear boots, gloves, leg wrappings, shoes, socks) rau
• V (put, abandon, allow, free, leave, let, permit, place, release, relinquish) tso
• V (put aside) muab cia
• V (put away) ua cia
• V (put into) muab/tso rau hauv, ntim.
• V (put out a fire) tua hluav taws
• V (put together) muab tso ua ke
• V (put on, wear clothes [and neck scarves] on main part of body but not head, hands, feet) hnav
• V (put on, wear bracelet, earrings, eyeglasses, necklace, watch) coj
• V (put on, wear, wrap around waist for belt, sash) sia
• V (put on, wear, carry on/over head as for hat, head wrap, umbrella) ntoo
• V (put one's heart/mind (in)to something) rau siab

Q

question V (ask a question) nug, noog
• N [lo] lus nug/noog
• N (question, problem) [lub] teeb meem

quick/ly ADV (quick, quickly, fast) sai, tsuag, nrawm
• ADV (quick in motion) ceev
• ADV (quickly, hurriedly) zoj zeeg
• (V be quick-tempered) siab ceev

quiet (V be still, perfectly quiet) ntsiag to
• (V be/stay quiet, still) ua/nyob twj ywm

quietly ADV twj ywm

quilt N [daim] pam rwb

quarrel V sib cav

quarter N (25 cents) [lub] npib nees kaum tsib xee

queen N [tus] poj vaj txwv

R

rabbit N [tus] luav

race N (ethnic group, nationality, kind of people) haivneeg

radio N [lub] xov tooj cua, (L) vib thab nyub

radish N [lub] zaub ntug haus paus kheej

railroad N [txoj] kev tsheb ciav hlau
• (N railroad station) [lub] chaw nres tsheb ciav hlau

rain N nag
• V los nag
• (N rain coat) [lub] tsho tiv nag

rainbow N [tus] zaj sawv

raise V (raise, raise up, set up/upright, erect, establish) tsa
- V (raise, lift to higher level) cev
- V (raise as a hand) tsa, cev
- V (raise up, erect, stand ___ up) tsa hlo, tsa sawv
- V (raise horizontally) txhawb
- V (raise, rear, care for and feed, for humans to give birth) yug
- V (raise, care for, look after) tu

rap V (rap, knock with knuckles) khob

rat N (rat, rodent, mouse) [tus] nas

raw (V be raw, uncooked) nyoos

reach V (reach with arm, reach to, extend to) cuag
- V (arrive, to the point or limit of) txog
- V (reach up to, up to the point of) txij
- V (reach/arrive at a point, reach to, extend to) nto

read V nyeem (ntawv)

ready (V be ready) tiav (lawm), tau lawm
- (Are you ready? Yes/No.) Puas tau tiav? Tiav lawm/Tsis tau tiav.

real (V be real, true) yog tiag

realize V (lit. can see that) pom tau tias

really ADV (really, truly) tiag (tiag) (li)
- ADV (really, indeed, even) twb
- ADV (very) heev, kawg (nkaus), kawg nkaus li
- ADV (really ___, ___ to a great degree) ___ ua luaj

reason N (a reason for something) qhov vim li cas

reasonable (V be reasonable as of a law or price) yog lawm

receive V (receive, accept, catch something thrown) txais
- V (receive, get) tau (txais)

recently ADV sai sai no, nyuam qhuav no

recognize V nco tau, paub tau

recommend V (recommend [to], explain, teach, inform) qhia (rau)

record N (phonograph) [daim] phaj kwv txhiaj
- N (history recorded) [zaj] xeev xwm txheej
- V (record sound) kaw
- V (record talking) kaw lus

recover V (from illness) zoo mob, kho zoo lawm

red • (V be red) liab
- N (red color) xim liab

reduce V (reduce, take some away) qee tawm
- (reduce/lower price) luv nqi/nqe

refrigerator N [lub] (L) tub yees, txee txias

refugee N (refugee, immigrant) [tus] neeg thoj nam

refuse V (lit. not be willing) tsis kam

region N (region, area) thaj tsam

register V (register as at school, enroll) sau npe cia
- V (register, enroll, sign one's name) sau npe

regret (V regret, INT what a pity) khuv xim

reject V tsis txais/yuav
- V (reject, erase, eliminate, cross out) thuam
- V (reject, abandon, cast away, discard, leave behind) tseg

relatives N kwv tij (neej tsa)
- N (relatives by marriage) neej tsa
- N (close blood relatives) txheeb, kwv tij txheeb txheeb

relax V (relax, rest, take a break) so

release V (release, abandon, allow, free, leave, let, permit, place, put, relinquish) tso

religion N (traditional Hmong religion) [txoj] kev teev dab qhuas
- N (can imply Christianity) [txoj] kev teev ntuj
- N (L) [lub] xam xa nas

rely on V (rely on, count on) vam txog
- V (rely upon, trust in, hope) vam
- V (rely on, trust in) vam khom

remain V (remain, stay, live, be alive, be located) nyob

remaining (V be remaining, lacking, excepting) tshuav
- (V be remaining, left over) seem

remember V (remember, recall past) nco qab
- V (remember, keep in memory, think of) nco txog
- V (can remember) nco tau

remove V (extract, pull out) rho
- V (remove, take off, as clothes) hle
- V (remove, take away) tshem

rent V (rent from someone, hire something/someone) ntiav
- V (rent to someone) ntiav rau
- N (rent for dwelling) [tus] nqi tsev

repair V (repair, fix, cure, heal someone) kho

repeat V (say again) hais dua

repeatedly ADV pheej

replace V (replace, change, exchange) hloov, pauv
- V (replace with, exchange for another) txauv

reply V (reply, answer) teb
• N [lo] lus teb

request V (request, ask for, beg) thov

respect N saib taus
• V txhawb nqa

rest V (rest, relax, take a break) so
• N (the rest of) dua li cov

restaurant N [lub] tsev noj mov

restroom N [lub] tsev dej, chav tawm rooj, (L) hoob nab

return V (return) rov
• V (come back) rov (qab) los/tuaj
• V (go back) rov (qab) mus

reverse (N Hmong reverse applique needlework) paj ntaub txiav

rib N [tus] tav

rice N (cooked rice) mov
• N (unhulled rice) nplej
• N (hulled, uncooked rice) txhuv
• N (finished, ready to eat rice) mov siav
• N (glutinous/sticky rice) mov nplaum
• (N rice bowl) [lub] ntim
• (N rice cake) [lub] ncuav
• (N rice noodles, small) peev choj
• (N rice noodles, large) fawm
• (N rice paddy) [daim] liaj
• (N rice plant) tsob nplej
• (N rice steamer) [lub] tsu
• (N treadmill for dehusking rice) [lub] cos

rich (V be rich, wealthy) muaj nyiaj

ride V caij
V (give a ride to, transport) thauj

ridge N (mountain ridge) [lub] caj roob

rifle N (gun) [rab] phom

right (N, ADV direction) sab xis
• (V be correct) raug, yog, thwj

ring N (jewelry) [lub, ntiv] nplhaib
• V (ring, make a noise) nrov
• V (for ears to ring, cry) quaj

rinse V yaug

rip V (rip, tear intentionally) dua
• V (rip, tear, be torn) ntuag

ripe (V be ripe, ripen, not raw, not uncooked, boiled for water) siav

rise V (go up, climb) nce
• V (get up, go up, stand up) sawv

river N tus dej

road N (road, path, street, way) [txoj] kev

roast V (roast, bake, barbecue, toast) ci

rock N (rock, stone) [lub] pob zeb

roll V (roll along, roll something along) dov
• V (roll over and over, roll along) ntog
• V (roll up into a roll, wind around) kauv
• V (roll up as a sleeve) qaws

roof N [lub] ru/ruv (tsev)

room N (a room) [lub] chav (tsev), kem (tsev)

rooster N [tus] lau qaib

root N [tus] cag

rope N (rope, string) [txoj] hlua

rot V (rot, be rotten, destroy) lwj

rough (V be rough, not smooth, free of extraneous matter) tsis du

round (V be round, circular) kheej

roundtrip (N roundtrip ticket) daim pib mus thiab los

row V (a boat) nquam

rub V (chafe, rub, rub vigorously) tshiav
• V (rub, rub off, massage) mos
• V (rub lightly, brush off, stroke, caress) plhws

rubber N roj hmab

rude (V not be polite) tsis paub cai

rug N [daim] ntaub pua taw rooj

ruin V (ruin, destroy, spoil something) ua kom puas
• (V be ruined, destroyed, useless, spoiled) puas lawm

rule V (rule, govern) kav, tswj
• N (a rule, law) [txoj] kev cai

ruler N (person governing, official) [tus] nom tswv
• N (for measuring) [tus] pas ntsuas

run V khiav
• (nose running) los ntswg

S

sack N (sack, bag, pocket, purse) [lub] hnab

sacrifice V (offer animal sacrifice to spirits) txi dab

sad (V be sad, worried, depressed) tu siab
• (V be sad, lonely, homesick) kho siab
• (V be sad, sickly, weak) mluas

sail V (sail a boat) tsav nkoj

sailboat N [lub] nkoj cua

salary N nyiaj hli

sale (V be on sale at lower price) luv nqi/nqe

salt N ntsev

saltless (V be saltless, tasteless) tsuag

salty (V be excessively salty) daw ntsev
- (V be tastily salty) qab ntsev

same (ADV the same, similar, the same as, like) ib yam (li), ib yam nkaus li, ib yam, luag ib yam
- (V be the same as/like/equal to each other) sib luag
- (V be almost exactly the same) yuav luag ib yam
- (V be the same, similar, like, ADV like, CONJ like, as) zoo li
- (V be the same, the same as) zoo ib yam li

sand N suab zeb

sandal N [lub, nkawm for pair] khau khiab

satisfied (V be satisfied) hum siab
- (V be satisfied, ADV satisfactorily) tas siab
- (V be satisfied, full) puv siab
- (V be satisfied according to wish) dhos siab
- (V be appeased) siab nqig/nqeg
- (V be happy) qab siab, zoo siab
- (V be pleased) raug siab, siab kaj, kaj siab

satisfy V ua kom txaus siab, ua kom zoo siab

Saturday N [lub] Hnub rau, Hnub vas xaum

sausage N [txoj] hnyuv ntxwm

save V (save, put aside, be surplus) tshaj
- V (save, put aside for use) txawm
- V (save, preserve, care for, keep in good condition) txuag
- V (put away, put aside, store) cia
- V (pick up and store away) khaws cia
- V (save, store up) ceev (tau cia)
- V (save money) tseg tau nyiaj
- V (save someone, rescue) cawm

saw N (tool) [rab] kaw
- V (to saw) kaw

say V (say, pronounce, speak, tell) hais

sayings N (a saying) txoj lus
- (CLF for sayings, speeches, poems, etc.) zaj
- (a traditional saying, proverb, flowery/elegant speech) [zaj] paj lus/lug

scare V ua kom ntshai
- (V be scared, afraid, fear) ntshai
- (V be scared) poob siab
- (V be scared, afraid of punishment) siab xob

scarf N [txoj] phuam qhwv caj dab, phuam kauv caj dab

school N [lub] tsev kawm ntawv

scissors N [rab] txiab

scold V cam

scratch V (scratch, scratch out, dig, hoe) khawb

scream V qw (quaj)

screw N [tus] ntsia thawv ntswj

screwdriver N [tus] qhib ntsia

scrub V (scrub with friction, brush) txbuam
- V (scrub, rub, rub with hands in water) zawv

sea N (sea, ocean) [lub] dej hiav txwv

search V (search for, look for, [try to] find) nrhiav
- V (search out, hunt for) tshawb
- V (search for something among other things) fawb

seashore N [lub] ntug hiav txwv

season N (season of the year) [lub] caij ntuj
- N (season, time, period) [lub] caij

seat N (place to sit) [lub] chaw zaum
- N (chair) [lub] rooj zaum

seatbelt N [txoj] siv pav duav

second (V be second) thib ob
- (second year) xyoo ob
- Q (a second, another, other, next) lwm
- N (a second, moment) ib pliag

secretary N [tus] kws ntawv

see V (physical perception) pom
- V (see if/whether) saib (puas)
- V ([go] see, visit, watch, look at) xyuas (saib)
- (see you later, good-bye) sib ntsib dua

seed N [lub] noob

seem V (seem, appear, be like, be similar, be the same) zoo li

seizure (V have a seizure, epilepsy) qaug dab peg

seldom ADV tsawg zaus kawg

select V (select, choose, pick) xaiv

selfish (V be selfish) qia dub

sell V muag

send V (send something) xa
- V (send someone on a trip, errand) xa ___ mus
- V (send someome on an errand) kom ___ mus
- V (send someone to do/let someone go do something) tso ___ mus
- V (send on a mission, errand) txib

sentence N (grammar) zaj lus, [txoj] kab lus/lug
- N (court judgment) lus txiav txim

sense V (sense, feel, smell, hear) hnov

separate V (to separate, separate from, divorce, divide)ncaim

September N [lub] cuaj hlis ntuj

serious (V be serious) tsis nyiam tso dag

servant N (servant, slave) [tus] qhev
- N (female servant) [tus] nkauj qhe
- N (male servant) [tus] tub qhev, tub mab tub qhe

set V (set, place, set free, release, relinquish, allow, let, permit) tso
- V (set/put aside, store, put away, save) cia
- V (set aside/down, lift off and set to one side) tsaws
- V (set aside, leave, abandon, eliminate, reject, cast away) tseg
- V (set a fire) hlawv
- V (set free) daws, tso
- V (set up, set upright, raise up, establish) tsa

seven Q xya

seventeen Q kaum xya

seventeenth (V be seventeenth) thibkaum xya

seventh (V be seventh) thib xya

seventieth (V be seventieth) thib xya caum

seventy Q xya caum

sew V xaws
- N (sewing machine) [lub] tshuab xaws khaub ncaws

shade N ntxoov ntxoo, ntxoov duab, duab ntxoov
- V ntxoov

shadow N [tus] duab (ntxoov), ntxoov duab

shady (V be shady, shaded, cloudy, overcast) ntxoov ntxoo

shake V (shake, sway, quake, move to and fro) co
- V (shake, swing from side to side, wave, quiver) yoj

shallow (V be shallow as water) ntiav

shaman N [tus] txiv neeb

shape V (shape, mold, form with hands, flatten) puab
- N (shape, picture) [tus] duab
- N (shape, body) [lub] cev

share V sib faib

sharp (V be sharp physically, mentally) ntse

shave V chais, chais plaub

she PRO (she, OBJ her, OBJ herself, he, him, OBJ himself, it, OBJ itself) nws

sheep N [tus] yaj

sheet (CLF for sheets, flat things) daim
- (sheet of paper) daim ntawv
- N (bedsheet) [daim] pam pua chaw

shelf N txee [lub]
- N (small storage shelf over fire in Hmong house) [lub] qab nthab

shin N [lub] roob hlaub

shine V (shine, be bright) ci

ship N (ship, boat) [lub] nkoj

shirt N (any upper body garment with sleeves) [lub] tsho

shiver V tshee, ua tshee tshee
- V (shiver from cold) no tshee

shoe N [tus for one, nkawm for pair] khau
- (V put on, wear shoes, boots, gloves, leg wrappings, socks) rau

shoelace N [txoj] hlua khau

shoot V (shoot, kill) tua
- V (shoot with a gun) tua phom
- N (bamboo shoot) [tus] ntsuag xyoob

shop N (shop, store) [lub] tsev muag khoom
- V (go shopping) kav khw

shore N [lub] ntug (dej)

short (V be short horizontally) luv
- (V be short vertically) qis
- (V be short in stature) qeg/qig (taub)
- (N short time) sij hawm tsis ntev
- (V be short-tempered) siab luv

shorts N [lub] ris luv

should V (must) yuav tsum

shoulder N [lub] xub pwg

shout V (shout, scream) qw
- V (shout, cry out loudly) nthe

shovel N [rab] duav hlau

show V ua (kom) pom
- V (with hand) ua tes taw
- V (show, advise, explain, inform, teach, tell) qhia
- V (put on a show) ua yeeb yam

shower V (bathe) da dej

shrimp N [tus] cws

shut V (shut, close, be closed, be turned off, lock, be locked) kaw
- V (shut as eyes) qe

shy (V be shy, embarrassed, ashamed) txaj muag

sick (V be sick) mob, tsis xis nyob

side N (side of something, direction) sab
- N (side in a conflict, side of a place) tog

sign N (sign, mark, seal, stamp) [lub] cim
- V (sign one's name) sau npe, kos npe, ntaus cim npe
- V (use sign language) piav tes

silly (V be crazy) vwm
- (V be stupid, foolish, dumb, unintelligent) ruam

silver N (silver metal, money) nyiaj
- (N silver color, V be silver in color) xim nyiaj

similar (V be similar, like, the same, ADV like, CONJ like, as) zoo li, xws li
- (ADV similar, the same [as], like) (zoo/xws) ib yam (li), ib yam nkaus (li), tib yam, luag ib yam

simple (V be simple, easy) yooj yim, tsis nyaub

since PREP (time) txij puag thaum, txij li (thaum)
- CONJ (because) rau qhov, vim

sing V (sing a song) hu nkauj
- (V sing a Hmong ballad) hais kwv txhiaj

single Q (a single, one) tib
- Q (a single, lone) twm
- (only/just one) ib + CLF ___ nkaus xwb

sink N (sink, bathtub, tub) [lub] dab dej,
- N (sink for washing face) [lub] dab ntxuav muag,
- N (sink for washing dishes) [lub] dab ntxuav tais diav
- V (as of a boat) tog

sister
- N (female's sister) [tus] viv ncaus
- N (female's older sister) [tus] niam laus
- N (female's younger sister) [tus] niam hluas
- N (males's sister) [tus] muam
- N (male's youngest sister) [tus] muam ntxawm
- N (female's sister-in-law) [tus] tis nyab
- N (male's sister-in-law) [tus] muam

sit V zaum

six Q rau

sixteen Q kaum rau

sixteenth (V be sixteenth) thib kaum rau

sixth (V be sixth) thib rau

sixtieth (V be sixtieth) thib rau caum

sixty Q rau caum

size N hom loj me

skillet N (frying pan) [lub] yias

skin N (skin of person/animal, hide, leather) [daim] tawv
- N (skin of person) [daim] cev/tawv nqaij
- N (skin of a fruit) [daim] tawv (txiv) ntoo
- V (remove skin) laws tawv

skinny (V be skinny, thin) yuag

skirt N [daim] tiab

skull N [lub] pob txha taub hau, khauj khaum taub hau

sky N [lub] ntuj

sleep V pw tsaug zog
- V (lie down, often used to imply sleep) pw
- N (sleeping bag) [lub] hnab pw

sleepy (V be sleepy) tsaug tsaug zog

sleeve N [lub] tsho tes

slice V (slice, cut with slicing motion) hlais, suam

slow ADV (slow, slowly) qeeb, maj mam

small (V be small) me, nyuag, nyuam, tsawg, me nyuam

smart (V be smart, intelligent, sharp) ntse
- (V be smart, clever, wise, have a plan) muaj tswj yim

smear V (smear, spread liquid [such as paint/oil] over a surface) pleev

smell V (smell something, sniff at) hnia
- V (sense, be conscious of odor) hnov (tsw)
- V (smell bad) tsw tsw, tsis tsw qab
- V (smell good) tsw tsw qab
- N (a smell) ntxhiab
- N (a bad smell) tsw ntxhiab

smile V luag ntxhi, luag (nyuv) nyav

smoke V (smoke a cigarette) haus luam yeeb
- V (produce smoke) ncho pa
- N pa taws
- N (smoke, haze) faj suab
- (V be smoky) pob pob li

smooth (V be smooth, level, clear of extraneous matter) du

snail N [tus] qwj

snake N [tus] nab

sneeze V txham

snow N (snow, ice, frost) [cov] te
- N (less common words for snow) npu, daus (xib daus npu)
- V los te/daus

so CONJ (so [then]) ces
- CONJ (so, so then, therefore, consequently, thus, thereby) thiaj li
- CONJ (so, and so, therefore, and then) ho
- ADV (so that, in order to) kom, yuav kom
- ADV (so ___ , to such a great extent) ___ ua luaj
- ADV (so much, as much/many as, really) diam

soap N [lub] (L) xaj npus, xum npum, xu npus, xos npus

soccer (V play soccer, lit. kick a ball in play) ncaws pob (ua si)

sock N [txhais for one, nkawm for pair] thom khwm
- (V wear, put on socks, boots, gloves, leg wrappings, shoes) rau

sofa N [lub] rooj zaum ntev

soft (V be soft, fine, small, young and tender) mos
- (V be soft, tender, pliable, weak) muag

soil N (soil, dirt, earth, ground, floor) av

soldier N [tus] tub rog, (L) [tus] thab ham

some Q ib co, ib qho, tej, puav, qee, ib kuag, ib txhia

somehow ADV ua li cas los tsis paub

someone PRO (someone/body) ib tug
- (N someone, a person) ib tug neeg
- PRO (used in statements, questions: someone/body, anyone/body [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], no one/body [+ NEG on V], who) leej twg

something PRO ib yam dab tsi
- PRO (used in statements, questions: something, anything [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], nothing [+ NEG on V], what) dab tsi, ab tsi

sometimes ADV tej zaug, zaus puav, qee zaus

somewhere ADV ib qhov chaw twg los yog
- PRO (used in statements, questions: somewhere, anywhere [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], nowhere [+ NEG on V], where) qhov twg

son N [tus] (me nyuam) tub
- N (son-in-law) [tus] vauv

song N (zaj) nkauj
- N (Hmong ballad) kwv txhiaj

soon ADV (soon, not long from now) sai sai saum no, tsis ntev saum no
- ADV (in a moment, second, instant) ib pliag, tib pliag xwb
- ADV (in around an hour) ib chim
- ADV (from an hour to a day) ib tsam
- ADV (less than ib tsam) ib me tsam

sore (V be sore, hurt, be sick) mob
- V (have a sore throat) mob qa
- N (a sore) [lub] qhov txhab

sorry (be sorry, sad, worried, depressed) tu siab
- (I'm sorry, excuse me) thov txim
- (I'm sorry to express condolence) kuv nrog/pab koj tu siab

sort N (sort, type, kind) hom, yam

soul N (human soul/spirit) [tus] plig, ntsuj (plig)
- (Hmong ceremony for calling the soul/spirit) hu plig

sound N (sound, noise, tone in tone language, voice) [lub] suab
- (N sound, noise; V make a sound, ring, be loud) nrov

soup N (vegetable) kua zaub, zaubhau

sour (V be sour) qaub

south (N name of direction) sab qab teb
- PREP (to/at/in the south, downhill, below) nram
- ADV (to/at/in the south, downhill, below) nrad

soybean N [lub] taum pauv

spare (N spare time) sij hawm tsis ua dab tsi

speak V (speak, pronounce, say, tell) hais
- V (speak, speak words) hais lus
- V (speak of/to, converse, chat) (sib) tham
- V (speak for/on behalf of, interpret, translate) txiv lus

speech N (a speech) zaj lus

speed N [txoj] kev ceev

spell V (spell out letter by letter) hais ib tug ntawv zuj zus
- V (be spelled/written, write) sau

spend V (spend, use) siv

spice N (spice, condiment, herb) txuj lom

spicy (V be spicy, not bland) ntsim

spider N [tus] kab laug sab

spill V (spill, pour) nchuav
- (spill something) ua ___ nchuav

spirit N (human spirit/soul) [tus] plig, ntsuj (plig)
- V (Hmong ceremony for calling the spirit/soul) hu plig
- N (a spirit) [tus] dab
- N (friendly or familiar spirits) neeb
- V (do Hmong spirit rites) ua neeb, ua dab

spit N (spit, spittle) [tawb] qaub ncaug

spoon N [rab] diav

spread V (spread, smear liquid [such as paint/oil] over a surface) pleev
- V (spread, increase, prosper) huam

spring N (season) [lub] caij (ntuj) nplooj ntoos hlav

squash N [lub] taub

squat V zaum khooj ywb

squirrel N [tus] nas ncuav

stable N (stable, pen, enclosure, jail) [lub] nkuaj

stair N (stair, staircase, ladder) [tus] ntaiv

stamp N (postage) [daim] nqi/nqe xa ntawv
- N (stamp, mark, seal, sign) [lub] cim

stand (V stand up, get up, rise) sawv
- V (stand up/upright) sawv ntsug
- V (be standing, stand erect, upright, stand something erect) nres
- V (stand still) nres zog

star N [lub] hnub qub

stare V (stare at) ntsia ntsoov
- V (stare at, look at, gaze) ntsia

start V (start, begin) pib
- V (start, begin, originate) chiv

startle V (startle, scare, frighten, intimidate) hem
- (V be startled) ras dheev
- (V be startled, surprised) xooj
- (V be startled, dazed, confused, subdued) yoog zog
- (V be startled, surprised, frightened, tense) ceeb

state N (as California, province) [lub] xeev

stay V (stay, be at, live, be alive) nyob

steal V (steal, do secretly) nyiag

steam V cub
- V (place beside the fire to steam and soften) ncu
- N pa dej
- N (steam from rice, a pot, condensed moisture, perspiration, sweat) hws

steamer N (rice steamer) [lub] tsu

steel N kab, kab (ntaus) hlau

step N (a step vertically) qib/qeb
- N (step, steps, levels of ascent, story of building, layer) theem
- N (a step in walking, in a situation, procedure) ruam
- V (take steps in walking) tshais ruam
- V (step on, trample) tsuj

stepdaughter N [tus] ntxhais tshiab

stepfather N txiv tshiab

stepmother N niam tshiab

stepson N [tus] tub tshiab

stick N (stick, rod, cane) [lub] pas
- V (stick on/to, be stuck to) lo

sticky (V be sticky, gluey, glutinous) nplaum
- (N sticky/glutinous rice) mov nplaum

stiff (V be stiff, hard, tough) tawv

still ADV (time) tseem
- ADV (still more, more so, comparative degree) haj yam
- (V be still, quiet, silent) ntsiag (to)
- (V be still, quiet) twj ywm

sting V plev

stir V (stir, mix) do

stomach N (stomach, abdomen) [lub] plab

stomachache (V have a stomachache) mob plab

stone N (stone, rock) [lub] pob zeb
- V (be of stone) zeb

stool N [lub] tog

stop V (motion, situation) nres
- V (stop from, prevent from action, rebuke, forbid) txwv
- V (stop, cease, end) tsum
- V (Stop it! Enough!) tsum lawm

store N [lub] tsev muag khoom
- N (market) [lub] khw, (L) tab laj
- V (store, put aside, put away) cia

storm N cua daj cua dub
- V los nag los cua hlob hlob, los los nag thiab cua daj cua dub hlob hlob

story N (folk tale) [zaj] dab neeg
- N (story in a building, layer, level, step) theem
- N (story in a building, layer, level, tier) txheej

stove N (stove, fireplace for cooking) [lub] qhov cub

straight (V be straight, honest) ncaj

strange (V lit. be different) txawv

stranger N [tus] qhua

strawberry N [lub] txiv pos (liab), txiv plauj

street N (street, road, path, way) [txoj] kev

strength N [lub] zog

string N (string, rope) [txoj] hlua
• N (string, thread, wire) [txoj] xov

striped (V be striped, multicolored) (xim) txaij

strong (V be strong) muaj zog

student N (female) [tus] ntxhais kawm ntawv
• N (male) [tus] tub kawm ntawv
• N (students) tub ntxhais kawm ntawv

study V kawm
• V (study using books) kawm ntawv

stump N (tree stump) [lub] pob ntoos, hauv paus ntoo

stupid (V be stupid, dumb, foolish, unintelligent) ruam
• (V be stupid, dazed, confused) hab

subject N (subject matter) [lub] ntsiab (lus)

succeed V ua tau zoo

such (V lit. be like that) yog zoo li ntawd

suddenly ADV dheev
• ADV (occur suddenly, in an instant) pliag ntshis

suffer V (suffer pain) sab
• V (suffer, encounter, incur, be afflicted with) raug

sufficient (be sufficient, enough) txaus

sugar N piam thaj
• N (sugar cane) kab tsib

suit N (pants and jacket) (cev) ris tsho loj

suitcase N [lub] hnab tawv rau khaub ncaws
• N (suitcase, storage box) [lub] phij xab

summer N [lub] caij (ntuj) sov

sun N (sun, day) [lub] hnub
• (suntanned) ziab tshav

Sunday N [lub] Hnub chiv, Hnub ib, Hnub vas thiv

sunflower N [lub] paj noob hlis

sunrise N [lub] hnub tuaj

sunset N [lub] hnub poob

sunshine N (sunshine, sunlight, daylight) tshav ntuj

supervisor N tus saib

supper N (pluas) hmo

sure (V to be sure of something) muaj tseeb, paub tseeb

surgery (V do surgery, operate) phais mob
• V (do surgery, cut open, operate) phais

surname N (surname, last name, clan) [lub] xeem

surpass (V surpass, ADV more than, most, N surplus, profit) tshaj
• (V surpass, ADV more than, again) dua
• V (surpass, exceed, pass [by/through], cross over) dhau

surprise V ua kom ceeb
• (V be surprised, startled) ceeb, xooj

surround V (surround, be around) nyob ncig

swallow V nqos

sweat N (sweat, condensed moisture, perspiration, steam from rice, a pot) hws
• V tawm hws

sweater N [lub] tsho tiv no me, tsho ntaub tiv no

sweep V cheb

sweet (V taste sweet) qab zib
• (N sweet potato) [lub] qos yaj ywm liab

swell V (swell, be swollen, inflamed) o

swim V ua luam dej

T

TB (V have tuberculosis) mob ntsws
• (have a TB skin test) hno tsuaj sim kev mob ntsws

table N (table, furniture) [lub] rooj

tablecloth N [daim] ntaub pua rooj

tail N [tus] tw, ko tw

take V (take, have in hand) muab
• V (take from) muab ntawm los
• V (take hold of, make use of) xuas
• V (take in the hand, grasp, hold with the hand) tuav
• V (take off, remove, as clothes) hle
• V (take ___ somewhere) coj ___ mus
• V (take to, give to) muab rau
• V (take to, carry to) nqa ___ mus
• V (take an amount of time, use) siv
• V (take a bath, shower) da dej
• V (take care of, watch, guard, as children) zov
• V (take care of) tu
• V (take care of and feed, raise, for humans to give birth) yug

- V (take/use medicine) siv tshuaj
- V (take solid medicine, eat) noj
- V (take liquid medicine, drink) haus
- V (take pictures) yees duab, (L) thaij duab

tale N (folk tale, story) [zaj] dab neeg

talk V (talk, speak, say) hais (lus)
- V (talk with, chat, converse) (sib) tham
- V (talk about) tham txog, hais txog

tall (V be tall) siab

tamarind N [lub] txiv quav

tape N (cassette) daim kaw lus, kas xev
- V (record) kaw
- (N tape recorder/player) [lub] thej

taste V (take a taste, sample) saj
- V (taste good) qab

taxes N se

tea N (liquid) dej tshuaj yej, dej ces
- N (tea leaves) nplooj ces

teach V (teach, advise, explain, inform, show, tell) qhia

teacher N [tus] xib fwb/hwb qhia ntawv, (L) nais khus
- N (teacher, minister, pastor, professor) [tus] xib fwb/hwb

teapot N [lub] fwj, fwj dej tshuaj yej, lauj kaub rau ces

tear V (tear, be torn) ntuag
- V (tear/rip intentionally, be torn by something) dua
- V (tear off as of banana leaf off its main rib) ntshi
- V (tear down, dismantle) rhuav

tear N (from eye) kua muag

tease V (tease, pester) zes

telegram N tsab xov ntaus, [tsab] ntawv xov tooj
- V (send a telegram) ntaus xov tooj

telephone N [lub] xov tooj, (E) tes les foos
- N (pay telephone) [lub] xov tooj siv nyiag
- N (telephone book) phau ntawv xov tooj
- V (call someone on the telephone) hu xov tooj

television N [lub] txais duab ua zog, (E) thi vi

tell V (tell, pronounce, say, speak) hais
- V (tell, advise, explain, inform, show, teach) qhia
- V (tell a story, narrate, talk about) piav
- V (tell someone to do something, cause) kom

temperature (as of air) [txoj] kev kub no
- N (fever) [tus] npaws
- V (have a temperature, fever) ua npaws, lub cev kub, kub ib ce

ten Q kaum
- Q (ten thousand) (ib) vam

tender (V be tender, fine, small, soft) mos
- (V be tender, soft, pliable, weak) muag

tendon N [txoj] sawv

tennis (V play tennis) ntaus pob tes niv

tenth (V be tenth) thib kaum
- Q (fraction a tenth) feem kaum

test N [txoj] kev sim
- V (put to a test, try) sim
- V (see how something will work out) saib yuav teb li cas
- V (take a test) xeem

testicle N (may be offensively explicit) [lub] noob qes
- N (euphemism for male/female genital area, genitals, groin) qhov chaw mos

Thai (V be Thai) Thaib
- N (Thai language) lus Thaib
- N (Thai person) [tus] neeg Thaib

Thailand N [lub] Thaib teb, Teb chaws Thaib

than (ADV more than, again, V surpass, used to form comparative) dua

thank (thank you) ua tsaug

that DEM (nearby) ntawd
- PRO (nearby) CLF + ntawd
- DEM (near hearer) ko
- PRO (near hearer) CLF + ko
- (CONJ that, V say that) (hais) tias
- (CONJ that, relative clause marker that, who, whom, which) uas

their POSS (for 2) nkawd + CLF for most nouns
- POSS (for 3 or more) lawv + CLF for most nouns

theirs PRO (for 2) nkawd li
- PRO (for 3 or more) lawv li

them PRO (they, them for 2) nkawd
- PRO (they, them, usually for 3 or more) lawv
- PRO (them, they, others, especially for vague reference) luag (tej)

themselves PRO (OBJ for 2) nkawd
- (emphatic reflexive as in do by oneself) nkawd tus kheej
- (OBJ for 3 or more) lawv
- (emphatic reflexive as in do by oneself) lawv tus kheej

then ADV (at that time) thaum ntawd
- ADV (then, after that, thereupon, consequently, therefore) txawm
- ADV (and then, therefore, so) ho
- ADV (so then, therefore, consequently, thereby) thiaj (li)
- ADV (then, and then, so then) ces
- ADV ([so] then, in that case, therefore) mam li

there ADV (nearby) (qhov) ntawd
- ADV (near hearer) (qhov) ko
- ADV (over there, farther than ntawd) (qhov) tod
- ADV (over there, farther than tod, across the valley) (qhov) tid
- ADV (way over there) tom/tim ub
- ADV (up there as of elevation, direction) ped
- ADV (up there above, on top of) saud
- ADV (down there) nrad

thereby ADV (thereby, thus, therefore, so then, consequently) thiaj (li)

therefore ADV (therefore, that being the case, thus) yogli ntawd
- ADV (therefore, so then, consequently, thus, thereby) thiaj (li)
- ADV (therefore, [so] then, in that case) mam li
- ADV (therefore, after that, consequently, then, thereupon) txawm

thereupon ADV (thereupon, after that, consequently, then, therefore) txawm

these PRO cov no, tej no, CLF + no

they PRO (they, them, OBJ themselves for 2) nkawd
- PRO (they, them, OBJ themselves usually for 3 or more) lawv
- PRO (they, them, others, especially for vague reference) luag (tej)

thick (V be thick, as of book, board) tuab
- (V for liquids to be thick) nyeem

thief N [tus] tub sab

thigh N [txhais] ncej puab

thin (V be thin vs. thick) nyias
- (V for a person, animal to be thin, skinny, emaciated) yuag
- (V for liquids to be thin) sab

thing N (thing, object) khoom
- N (thing, kind, sort, variety) yam
- N (thing, article, point in a speech) qhov
- N (things in general, articles) qhov txhia chaw

think V (think that) xav tias
- (V think about) xav txog
- (V think about someone/place with longing) nco txog

third (V be third) thib peb

thirsty (V be thirsty) nqhis dej

thirteen Q kaum peb

thirteenth (V be thirteenth) thib kaum peb

thirtieth (V be thirtieth) thib peb caug

thirty Q peb caug

this DEM no
- PRO qhov no, CLF + no
- (do this and that) ua ub ua no

those PRO cov ntawd, tej ntawd, CLF + ntawd
- PRO (near hearer) cov ko, tej ko, CLF + ko

thousand Q txhiab
- Q (ten thousand) (ib) vam
- Q (twenty thousand) ob vam

thread N (thread, string, wire) [txoj] xov
- N (hemp thread for weaving) seb

three Q peb

throat N caj pas, qhov qa
- N (inside and back of mouth) qa

through (PREP through, across, V pass [through/by] cross over, surpass, exceed) dhau
- (V pass through a place, cross) hla (dhau)
- (V come/flow through) los ntawm

throw V (1 hand underhand) pov
- (Hmong New Year's ball throwing) pov pob
- V (1 hand overhand) txawb
- V (throw underhand) cuam
- V (throw, scatter) nphoo
- V (2 hand underhand, throw for water) ntov
- V (throw up, vomit) ntuav
- V (throw away) (pov) tseg

thumb N [tus] ntiv tes xoo

thunder V xob quaj

Thursday N [lub] Hnub tsib, Hnub phaj hav

thus ADV (thus, therefore, so then, consequently, thereby) thiaj (li)
- ADV (thus, that being the case, therefore) yog li ntawd

ticket N daim pib

tie V (tie, bind) khi
- (ceremonial tying of strings on wrists) khi tes, khi hlua

tiger N [tus] tsov

tight (V be tight) ceev

time N (time as an entity) [lub] sij hawm
- N (time of day, hour, o'clock) teev, (L) moos
- (What time is it?) Pes tsawg moos lawm?
- N (number of times, an occasion) zaus
- N (next/another time) lwm zaus
- N (first time) thawj zaug
- (have free/leisure time to do something) muaj khoom
- N (time of year, season, period, era) [lub] caij
- N (period of time) yav
- N (time, age, a person's age) [lub] hnub nyoog/nyug
- (waste time) nkim hnub nyoog

tingle V (feel a tingling) rhiab nkuav

tire N (vehicle tire, wheel) [lub] log

tired (V be tired, lazy) nkees

to PREP (to, toward) rau
- PREP (to [nearby], at) ntawm
- PREP (over to) tom
- PREP (over to, esp. laterally [farther than tom], across the valley) tim
- PREP (up to [geographic elevation], up to the north) pem
- PREP (down to [geographic elevation], down to the south) nram
- PREP (to the point of, about, V arrive at) txog

toast V (toast, dry by the fire) txhiab
- V (toast, bake, barbecue, roast) ci

today N hnub no

toe N [tus] ntiv taw

toenail N [tus] rau taw

together ADV (together [with]) ua ke

toilet N (toilet, toilet bowl) [lub] dab tawm rooj

tomato N [lub] txiv lws suav, txiv lws liab

tomorrow ADV (tomorrow, morning) tag kis

tone N (tone in tone language, noise, sound, voice) suab

tongue N [tus] nplaig

tonight ADV hmo no

too ADV (too, also, CONJ and) thiab
- ADV (too, also, as well, moreover) kuj
- ADV (too, likewise, the same) ib yam
- ADV (excessively ___) ___ hwv
- (V be excessively ___) ___ dhau
- (that's too bad, what a pity) khuv xim

tool N (tool, equipment, utensil, household good) [lub] cuab yeej

tooth N [tus] hniav

toothache (V have a toothache) mob hniav

toothbrush N rab txhuam hniav

toothpaste N tshuaj txhuam hniav

top N (top/back side of) qaum
- N (top, tip, end)[lub] ntsis
- PREP (on top of, above) (nyob) saum
- N (Hmong toy spinning top) [lub] tuj lub

touch V (touch, handle, feel with hands) kov
- V (physically be touching) chwv raug

tough (V be tough, hard, stiff) tawv

toward PREP (toward/s, to) rau

towel N [txoj] phuam (so cev)

town N (town, small city, village) [lub] zos

toy N khoom ua si, yam ua si

trade V (trade, change, exchange) pauv

tradition N hom kev cai thaum ub

train N [lub] tsheb ciav hlau

translate V txhais lus

translator N [tus] neeg txhais lus

transport V nquam, thauj

trap V (trap, snare, make a trap) cuab

travel V (travel, follow a path) taug kev

tray N (bamboo tray) [lub] vab

treatment N (medical) [txoj] kev kho mob

tree N (tree, wood) [tus] ntoo
- N (tree foliage) tsob ntoo
- N (tree stump) [lub] pob ntoos, hauv paus ntoo
- (at the base/in the shade of a tree) hauv tsob qab ntoos

trick V (trick, lie, cheat) dag

trip V (trip, fall down) ntog
- V (trip over something, stumble) dawm
- N (journey) [txoj] kev taug kev

trouble N [txoj] kev nyuab siab, (kev) plaub
- (V make trouble) thab (plaub)

troublesome (V be troublesome, annoying, obnoxious, pesty) thab thab plaub

trough N (trough, basin, tub) [lub] dab

truck N [tus] tsheb thauj khoom

true (V be true) tseeb, muaj (tseeb) tiag
- (V be true, right, ADV really, truly) tiag
- (V be true, right, be, exist) yog

trunk N (tree) [lub] cev ntoo, [tus] cav ntoo
- N (car) qhov quav tsheb rau khoom
- N (elephant) [tus] cov ntxhw

trust V (trust in, believe) ntseeg
- V (trust in, have confidence in) muab siab rau, tso siab rau

truth N [txoj] kev tseeb

try V (try, attempt, test) sim

tub N (tub, basin, trough) [lub] dab
- N (tub, bathtub, sink) [lub] dab dej

tuberculosis (V have tuberculosis, TB) mob ntsws

Tuesday N [lub] Hnub peb, Hnub vas as qhas

turban N (Hmong woman's head wrap) [txoj] phuam
(V put on, wear, carry on/over head for head wrap, hat, umbrella) ntoo

turkey N [tus] qaib cov txwv

turn V (turn in another direction) lem
- V (turn in another direction, revolve) tig
- V (turn around, spin, be spinning) kiv
- V (turn on, as a light, set a fire) taws
- V (turn on, as a light, open) qhib
- V (turn off, as of a light, kill, shoot) tua
- V (turn against, have change of heart) fav xeeb, ntxeev siab
- V (turn over, roll over, change over) ntxeev
- N (your turn) koj thib

turnip N [lub] zaub lauj pwm

turtle N [tus] vaub kib

twelfth (V be twelfth) thib kaum ob

twelve Q kaum ob

twentieth (V be twentieth) thib nees nkaum

twenty Q nees nkaum
- Q (twenty thousand) ob vam

twice ADV (twice, two times) ob zaug
- (twice as much) ob npaug

twin N (twin children) me nyuam ntxaib

twist V (twist, be twisted, wring) ntswj

two Q ob
- Q (two or three, a few) ob peb

type V (typewrite) ntaus ntawv
- N (type, kind, sort) hom
- N (type, kind, thing) yam

typewriter N [lub] tshuab ntaus ntawv

U

ugly (V be ugly, bad) phem, tsis zoo

ulcer N (ulcer, boil, abcess) [lub] rwj

umbilical (N umbilical cord) [txoj] hlab ntaws

umbrella N [lub] kaus
- (V carry umbrella, carry on/over head, wear, put on head) ntoo

uncertain (V be uncertain) xyov

uncle N (father's older brother) [tus] txiv hlob
- N (father's younger brother) [tus] txiv ntxawm
- N (mother's brother) [tus] dab laug
- N (father's sister's husband) [tus] yij laug
- N (mother's sister's husband) [tus] yawm txiv
- N (term of respect for older man, paternal grandfather, paternal grandfather's brother) [tus] yawg

unconscious (V be unconscious) tsis nco qab lawm

uncooked (V be uncooked, fresh, green, as timber) nyoos

under PREP (under, underneath) hauv qab

underpants N (women's) [lub] tiab me me
- N (men's) [lub] ris xiv liv

understand V to taub, nkag siab

underwear N ris tsho sab hauv

undress V (lit. take off clothes) hle ris tsho

unemployment N [txoj] kev poob hauj lwm

unhappy (V be unhappy) tsis zoo siab, tsis qab siab

United States N (America) As mes liv kas teb, Teb chaws As mes liv kas, A mes lis kas, A me li kas, Mi li kas, Mi kas, Mis kas, Mis kuj

university N [lub] tsev kawm ntawv theem kawg, tsev kawm ntawv qib siab

unlock V (unlock, open, turn on) qhib

unsettled (V be unsettled in mind) siab ntxhov

until PREP txog, mus txog

unusual (V lit. be very different) txawv heev

unwilling (V be unwilling) tsis kam

up PREP (up in geographical elevation, in/up to the north, uphill) pem
- ADV (up there, uphill) ped
- (V go up, ascend, climb) nce
- (V be upright) ntsug
- (V stand upright) sawv ntsug
- (V stand up, rise, get up) sawv

upset (V be upset) tsis txaus siab, nyuaj siab
• (V be upset, angry) chim

upstairs N theem saum toj

urinate V tso zis

urine N [tawb] zis

us PRO (us, we, OBJ ourselves for 2) wb
• PRO (us, we, OBJ ourselves for 3 or more) peb

use V siv
• N (a use, usefulness, worthwhileness) qab hau

used (V be used to, familiar) swm

useful (V be useful) zoo siv
• (V be useful, have a use) muaj qab hau

usual (V be usual, normal) (L) thas mab das
ADV (as usual, like before) xws li qub

usually ADV (usually, as usual, like before) raws li ib txwm, raws li qub, xws li qub

V

vacation N [lub] caij so

vaccinate V txhaj tshuaj

vacuum N (vacuum cleaner) [lub] nqus tsev

vagina N (vagina, vulva, may be offensively explicit) [lub] pim, paum
• N (euphemism for female/male genital area, genitals, groin) qhov chaw mos

valley N [lub] hav
N (river valley) [lub] kwj ha, hav dej

valuable (V be valuable, worthy, suitable, appropriate) tsim nyog

various (N various kinds of things, different kinds) yam ub yam no

vegetable N (leafy green and other non-legumes) zaub
• (Hmong vegetable soup) zaub tsuag

vein N [txoj] hlab ntsha

venereal (N venereal disease, VD) [tus for a case] mob kas cees, mob yees, mob uav

very ADV heev, kawg (nkaus (li))

videocassette N [daim] kab xev vi di aws
• (N videocassette recorder, VCR) [lub] tso mu vis

Vietnam N Nyab laj teb, Teb chaws Nyab laj

Vietnamese (V be Vietnamese) Njab laj
• (N Vietnamese language) lus Nyab laj
• (N Vietnamese person) [tus] neeg Nyab laj

village N (village, small city, town) [lub] zos

vine N [txoj] hmab

violent (V be violent, intense, severe) heev
• (N a violent person) [tus] neeg siab heev heev

virus N kab mob

visit V (visit, look at, watch, [go] see) xyuas (saib)

voice N [lub] (voice, noise, sound, tone in tone language) suab

vomit V (vomit, throw up) ntuav

vote V pov ntawv

vulva N (vulva, vagina, may be offensively explicit) [lub] pim, paum
• N (euphemism for female/male genital area, genitals, groin) qhov chaw mos

W

wad N (wad, pile of money) phau nyiaj

waist N [lub] duav

wait V (wait [for], [go] meet) tos

wake V (wake up, awaken) tsim
• V (wake someone up, get someone up, raise, set up, erect) tsa

walk V mus kev, mus (ko) taw
• (walk around) thuv

wall N [daim] phab ntsa

wallet N [lub] hnab tawv me

want V xav
• V (want, desire) yuav
• V (want to get) xav tau
• V (want that, want someone to do something) xav kom

war N rog, kev tsov (kev) rog, kev ua tsov ua rog, kev sib ntaus sib tua,
• V (fight a war) ua rog, ua tsov ua rog, ntaus rog, sib ntaus sib tua

warm (V be warm) sov

warn V ceeb toom

wash V (wash out/off in water, as dishes, hands) ntxuav
• (V wash, scrub, as clothes) ntxhua
• (V wash by scrubbing/rubbing with hands in water, e.g. rice, clothes) zawv
• (N washing machine) [lub] tshuab ntxhua khaub ncaws

wasp N [tus] nkawj

waste V nkim
- (waste time) nkim hnub nyoog

watch N (timepiece) [lub] teev, (L) moos
- (V wear, put on watch, bracelet, earrings, eyeglasses, necklace) coj
- V (watch, stare, gaze at) ntsia
- V (watch, as TV, look at, observe, see) saib
- V (watch, look at, [go] see, visit) xyuas (saib)
- V (watch, as children, guard) zov

water N (water, soda pop) dej
- (N water buffalo) [tus] twm

watermelon N [lub] dib liab, dib dej

wax N ciab
- N (beeswax) ciab ntab

way N (way, path, road, street) [txoj] kev

we PRO (we, us, OBJ ourselves for 2 people) wb
- PRO (we, us, OBJ ourselves for 3 or more people) peb

weak (V be weak, lack strength) tsis muaj zog
- (V be weak and unsteady on feet) qaug zog
- (V be/feel weak, feeble, sickly) tsaug
- (V be weak, sickly, sad) mluas

wear V (wear, put on clothes [and neck scarves] on main part of body but not head, hands, feet) hnav
- V (wear, put on boots, gloves, leg wrappings, socks, shoes) rau
- V (wear, put on, wrap around waist for belt, sash) sia
- V (wear, put on, carry on/over head for hat, head wrap, umbrella) ntoo
- V (wear, put on bracelet, earrings, eyeglasses, necklace, watch) coj

weather N huab cua

weave V (baskets) hiab
- V (cloth) ua ntos (ntaub)

wedding N tshoob

Wednesday N [lub] Hnub plaub, (L) Hnub vas phuv

weed N (vegetation, weeds) nroj
- V (pull weeds) dob nroj
- V (hoe out weeds) nthua nroj

week N [lub] lim piam, (L) as thiv
- (last week) [lub] lim piam tag los, lim piam nram ntej
- (next week) [lub] lwm lim piam
- (this week) [lub] lim piam no

weigh V (weigh something) luj
- V (have a certain weight) hnyav

weight N qhov hnyav
- N (of a child) ceeb thawj
- (V lose weight) sem nqaij, yuag zuj zus

welcome V (welcome someone, receive) txais
- (you're welcome) tsis ua (li) cas

well N (water) qhov dej
- (V be well/good) zoo
- (V be well, fine, life going well) noj qab nyob zoo
- (ADV, well, topic/hesitation/encouraging imperative marker, CONJ particle carrying utterance forward, and) mas

west N (name of direction) sab hnub poob

wet (V be wet) ntub (dej)

what PRO (what, something, anything [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], nothing [+ NEG on V]) dab tsi, ab tsi
- (what/which ___ ?) ___ zoo li cas?
- (what/which kind?) yam zoo li cas?

wheel N (wheel, tire) [lub] log

when ADV (when in questions, whenever) thaum twg
- (CONJ in statements) thaum

where ADV (in questions) qhov twg
- (CONJ in statements, as in I know [a place] where) qhov chaw uas

whether CONJ (whether, if) yog
- (it makes no difference whether ___ or not ___) ___ tsis dua, tsis ___ tsis dua

which (general word compounded with other words to form question words) twg
- (relative clause marker which, who, whom, that, CONJ that) uas

while ADV (time when) thaum uas
- ADV (a little while ago, just now) puag ta

whisper V ntxhi

white V (be white) dawb
- N (the color white) xim dawb
- (White Hmong) Hmoob Dawb
- (N egg white) [lub] hli

who PRO (in questions: who, whom) twg twg
- PRO (in questions, statements: who, whom, someone/body, anyone/body [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], no one/body [+NEG on V]) leej twg
- (relative clause marker who, whom, whose, which, that, CONJ that) uas

whole Q (whole, entire, complete, all) tas/g nrho
- Q (whole, entire, all, every, each) txhua
- (in special expressions: whole, entire, as in my whole body) kheej

whom PRO (in questions: whom, who) twg twg
- PRO (in questions, statements: whom, who, someone/body, anyone/body [+ NEG on V for NEG meaning], no one/body [+ NEG on V]) leej twg
- (relative clause marker whom, who, whose, which, that; CONJ that) uas

whose PRO (used in questions) leej twg li
- (relative clause marker whose, who, whom, which, that; CONJ that) uas

why ADV (in questions) vim li cas, ua (li) cas
- ADV (why in statements, because) vim, vim chij, vim yog li no

wicked (V be wicked, evil, cruel) siab dub siab txia ntshav
- (V be wicked, evil, bad, ugly) phem

wide (V be wide) dav

widow N [tus] poj ntsuam

widower N [tus] yawg ntsuag

wife N [tus] poj niam
- N (older/1st wife) [tus] niam hlob
- N (younger/2nd wife) [tus] niam yau

wild (V be wild, untamed) qus
- (wild animals) tsiaj qus

will V (marker of future or unfulfilled, unrealized situations) yuav
- V (will as in volunteering, agreeing, deciding to do; one thing to happen after another) mam (li)
- V (be willing) kam

win V yeej
- (win a war/battle) ntaus rog yeej lawm

wind N [nthwv for gust] cua

wind V (wind around, roll up) kauv

window N [lub] qhov rai/rais

windy (V be windy) cua hlob

wine N cawv qab zib
- N (wine, alcohol) cawv

wing N [tus, phob, sab] tis

winnow V tsoov

winter N [lub] caij (ntuj) no

wipe V (wipe, wipe away, erase) so
- (wipe one's nose) so ntswg
- (wipe away tears) so kua muag

wire N [txoj] hlua hlau
- N (wire, string, thread) [txoj] xov

wisdom (V to have reached the age of wisdom) siab nthuav

wise (V be wise, intelligent, sharp) ntse

wish V thov (kom), hawm, thov hawm

with (PREP for accompaniment, V accompany) nrog
- (instrument sense expressed by a serial verb phrase with a verb such as muab 'take', siv 'use' + the instrument noun; e.g. Muab rab riam hlais nqaij 'Slice the meat with the knife')

within PREP (within, in) hauv

without (V not to have) tsis muaj
- (V not to accompany) tsis nrog

wok N (wok, frying pan) [lub] yias

woman N [tus] poj niam

womb N (womb, uterus) [lub] tsev me nyuam

wood N (wood, tree) ntoo
- N (firewood) [tsuam for bunches] taws
- N (one log of firewood) ib ya cav taws

woods N (woods, [small] forest/jungle) [lub] hav zoov (me me)

wool N (wool cloth) ntaub plaub tsiaj

word N [lo] lus

work N [txoj] hauj lwm
- V ua hauj lwm

worker N [tus] neeg ua hauj lwm

world N [lub] ntiaj teb

worm N [tus] cuanab

worry V(worry, be concerned, distressed, anxious) txhawj
- (V be worried, have cares) nyuaj siab
- (V be worried, scared, frightened) poob siab

worse (V be worse, more evil/wicked/ugly) phem dua

worst (V be the worst, most evil, wicked, ugly) phem tshaj

worth V (be worth/cost some price) muaj nqi/nqe, raugnqi/nqe

worthwhile (V be worthwhile, important) tseem ceeb
- (V be worthwhile, worthy of, valuable, suitable, appropriate) tsim nyog

wound N (wound, injury) [lub] qhov txhab, qhov raug mob, qhov raug sab
- V (wound, injure someone) ua sab, ua raug ___ sab
- (V be wounded, injured, suffer pain, illness) raug mob

wrap V (wrap, wrap up) qhwv

wrench N [tus] ciaj ntswj

wrist N [lub] dab teg
- N (wrist bone) pob teg

write V sau

writer N tus sau

wrong (V be wrong, incorrect) tsis yog, tsis raug
- (to make a mistake) yuam kem

X

xerox V (xerox, copy, photocopy, press, print) luam

x-ray (V take an x-ray) thaij (yees) daim duab es xam les, thaij pob txha

yam N (yam, sweet potato) [lub] qos liab

Y

Yao (V be Yao [considered less polite], Mien [more polite]) Co
- N (Yao/Mien language) lus Co
- N (Yao/Mien person) [tus] neeg Co

yard Q (0.91 meters) ib npab, 0.91 mev
- N (grassy yard of a house) [lub] tiaj nyom

yawn V rualo

year N xyoo
- (one year) ib xyoos
- (last year) xyoo tag (los lawm), tsaib no
- (the year before last) tsaib ub
- (years ago) puag tsaib ub
- (next year) lwm xyoo
- (a new year) xyoo tshiab
- (Happy New Year) nyob zoo xyoo tshiab
- (idiom: celebrate Hmong New Year) tsiab peb caug, noj peb caug, noj tsiab

yell V (yell, shout) qw
- V (yell, cry out loudly, shout at) nthe

yellow (V be yellow) daj
- N (the color yellow) xim daj

yes ADV (for acknowledgment or agreement with what has been said) aws
- (for many question contexts repeat V from question and optionally add polite particle mas)
- (V be correct, exist, be) yog (mas)

yesterday N nag hmo

yet ADV (yet, still) tseem
- (have not yet___) tseem tsis tau___, tseem ___ tsis tau

yolk N [lub] nkaub qe

you PRO (you, OBJ yourself for 1) koj
- PRO (you, OBJ yourselves for 2) neb
- PRO (you, OBJ yourselves for 3 or more) nej
- PRO (indefinite you, one, I) yus

young (V be young, younger in age) hluas
- (V be young and tender for babies, vegetables, be soft) mos
- (V be younger in age, small) yau, yaus
- (N female's younger sister) [tus] niam hluas
- (N male's younger brother) [tus] kwv
- (N youngest daughter) ntxawm
- (N youngest son) ntxawg

your POSS (for 1) koj + CLF for most nouns
- POSS (for 2) neb + CLF for most nouns
- POSS (for 3 or more) nej + CLF for most nouns

yours PRO (for 1 person) koj li
- PRO (for 2 people) neb li
- PRO (for 3 people) nej li

yourself PRO (OBJ yourself) koj
- PRO (emphatic reflexive for 1 as in do by oneself) koj tus kheej

yourselves PRO (OBJ for 2) neb
- PRO (emphatic reflexive for 2 as in do by oneself) neb tug kheej
- PRO (OBJ for 3 or more) nej
- PRO (emphatic reflexive for 3 or more as in do by oneself) nej tus kheej

Z

zero N [lub] yaj ntshis, (L) [tus] xoom

zip (N zip code) [tus] naj npawb nroog

zipper N [txoj] (saw khawm) swb

zoo N [lub] vaj (yug) tsiaj