



AN INVESTIGATION OF MULTI-VERB CONSTRUCTIONS
IN HMONG NTSUAB

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ABSTRACT

This research study focuses on Hmong Ntsuab, a Hmong-Mien language spoken primarily in China, Southeast Asia, Australia, the United States, and France. It is also known as Green Hmong, Mong Njua, Mong Leeg, Striped Mong, or Blue Hmong (Taweesak 1984: 3).

Hmong Ntsuab makes wide use of multi-verb constructions. This study clarifies some of the ambiguity of these types of constructions and offers the following contributions: It provides a documentation of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab based on data elicited from five native speakers, a classification of these multi-verb constructions according to structural categories, a description of how the verbs in these constructions pattern within each category based on constituency testing, and a response to the SVC theoretical disagreements which provides a way forward into serial verb research, suggesting a classification of multi-verb constructions based on the semantic and syntactic patterning of the verbs.

This research employs a descriptive approach to analyzing multi-verb constructions, as modeled by N. J. Enfield in his study of multi-verb constructions in Lao (2008). Through specific constituency testing, unique inter-verb relationships are displayed in grammatical characteristics, including patterns of distribution, clause separability, and headship. Findings show that multi-verb constructions in different structural categories display some different grammatical properties and multi-verb constructions in the same category display a similar set of grammatical properties.

ชื่อเรื่อง:	การศึกษาหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียงในภาษาม้งเขี้ยว
ผู้จัดทำ:	อลิษาเบธ ซารา ไมสเตอร์
หลักสูตร:	หลักสูตรศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยพายัพ จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ ประเทศไทย
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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาภาษาม้งเขี้ยว ซึ่งจัดอยู่ในตระกูลภาษาแม่-เย้า พูดกันในประเทศจีน ประเทศในภูมิภาค เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ ออสเตรเลีย สหรัฐอเมริกา และฝรั่งเศส มีชื่อเรียกอื่นอื่น อีกหลายชื่อ เช่น ม้งดำ ม้งจ้าว ม้งเล้ง ม้งลาย ม้งน้ำเงิน (ทวิศักดิ์ 1983: 3)

ประโยชน์ส่วนใหญ่ของภาษาม้งมีโครงสร้างแบบกริยาพหู การวิจัยนี้ศึกษาหน่วยกริยาเรียง ชนิดต่างๆ โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อให้มีหลักฐานเอกสารเกี่ยวกับหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียง ในภาษาม้งเขี้ยว ซึ่งข้อมูลที่ใช้ได้มา จากการสัมภาษณ์ชาวม้งเขี้ยวจำนวน 5 คน เพื่อจำแนกหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียงตามลักษณะทางโครงสร้าง ไวยากรณ์ เพื่อศึกษารูปแบบ การเรียงของคำกริยาในแต่ละหมวดโดยการทดสอบความเป็นหน่วยประกอบ และเพื่อแสดง ข้อเสนอแนะในการวิจัยทางด้านหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียง

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

APPL	Applicative
ATTRIB	Attributive verb
BENF	Benefactive
CAUS	Causative
CLF	Classifier
CLFP	Classifier phrase
CLINK	Clause linker
COMP	Complementizer
COMPP	Complementizer phrase
DET	Determiner
LOC	Locative
MVC	Multi-verb construction
NP	Noun phrase
NP ^{POSS}	Noun phrase of possession
NP ^{POSSESSED}	Possessed noun phrase
NP ^{POSSESSOR}	Possessor noun phrase
NEG	Negation particle
NUM	Number
PART	Particle
POSS	Possessor
QST	Question particle
QUANT	Quantifier
S	Sentence
SVC	Serial verb construction
TAM	Tense aspect modality marker
V1	Initial verb
V2	Second verb
V1-V2	Unmarked verb sequence
VP	Verb phrase
XP	Unspecified phrase

Chapter 1

Introduction

The following Hmong Ntsuab construction utilizes five verbs in succession: *tsaw* ‘able’, *rov* ‘return’, *qaab* ‘back’, *moog* ‘go’, *khaw* ‘collect’ (1). This example was elicited from a Hmong Ntsuab speaker who was telling a story about Hmong funeral customs.

(1)

<i>tug</i>	<i>tuag</i>	<i>tshab</i>	<i>leb</i>	<i>tsaw</i>	<i>rov</i>	<i>qaab</i>	<i>moog</i>	<i>khaw</i>
CLF	die	so	PART	able	return	back	go	collect
	<i>nwg</i>	<i>cov</i>		<i>neev</i>	<i>taws</i>			
	s/he	CLF-group		imprint	foot			

‘The dead person is therefore able to return back (to the places he has been before) and gather up his footprints.’

Whether they are called serial verbs, consecutivization, concatenation, or other names, it is clear that multi-verb constructions are common in many languages, Hmong Ntsuab being one of them. They appear to be strings of unmarked verbs on the surface but, only upon further study, does it become clear that these verbs have various inter-verb semantic and syntactic relationships with each other. This study provides an investigation, description, and classification of Hmong Ntsuab multi-verb constructions, which is based on N.J. Enfield’s study of V1-V2 constructions in Lao (2008).

Chapter one begins with an introduction to the Hmong Ntsuab people, the Hmong Ntsuab language family, and the methodology of the study, including background information on the language resource persons, and previous Hmong language research. It concludes with a brief discussion of the orthography used in this paper.

Chapter two provides an overview of the basic grammar of Hmong Ntsuab and an introduction to some clausal structures that employ multiple verbs. Included is a discussion of key grammatical characteristics of Hmong Ntsuab, which contribute to the formation of multi-verb constructions.

Chapter three supplies the reader with background information on the topic of multi-verb constructions. In addition, definitions for serial verb constructions and other multi-verb constructions are addressed and clarified. This chapter also consists of a review of main verb grammatical properties in Hmong Ntsuab and a discussion of the constituency tests used to divide and classify multi-verb constructions in this study.

Chapter four goes on to detail nine structural categories of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab and provides a description of the grammatical features of the multi-verb structures in each category based on the constituency tests outlined in chapter three.

This study ends with some concluding remarks and suggested areas for further research.

1.1 Hmong language family

The Hmong language belongs to the Hmong-Mien language family. Most speakers of the approximately thirty-five languages in this family live in China, and Chinese linguists generally refer to this language as Miao (or Meo), and this family as Miao-Yao and not Hmong-Mien (Goddard 2005: 36). In this study, the term “Hmong” will be used, as “Miao” tends to have a negative connotation among Hmong speakers and Hmong people prefer to be called Hmong and not Miao.

There is much debate over the broader affiliations of the Hmong-Mien language family. Some claim that it belongs under the Sino-Tibetan language family, others insist on affiliation with the Austro-Thai family, and still others argue for inclusion in the Austro-Asian family (Arisawa 2006: 8). For now, many linguists, such as Matisoff (2001), prefer to consider this language family as a separate group altogether.

Hmong Daw (White Hmong) and Hmong Ntsuab (Green Hmong or Blue Hmong) are the two main language varieties of Hmong. They are mutually intelligible (Jarkey 2006: 115) and very similar in their phonology and grammar (Taweesak 1984: 7). Hmong Ntsuab is the variety focused on in this study. It is also known as Green Hmong, Mong Njua, Mong Leeg (Striped Mong), or Blue Hmong (Taweesak 1984: 3). Figure 1, below, is a simplified version of the family tree structure listed by Matisoff (2001: 299). See Appendix 1 for the entire figure.

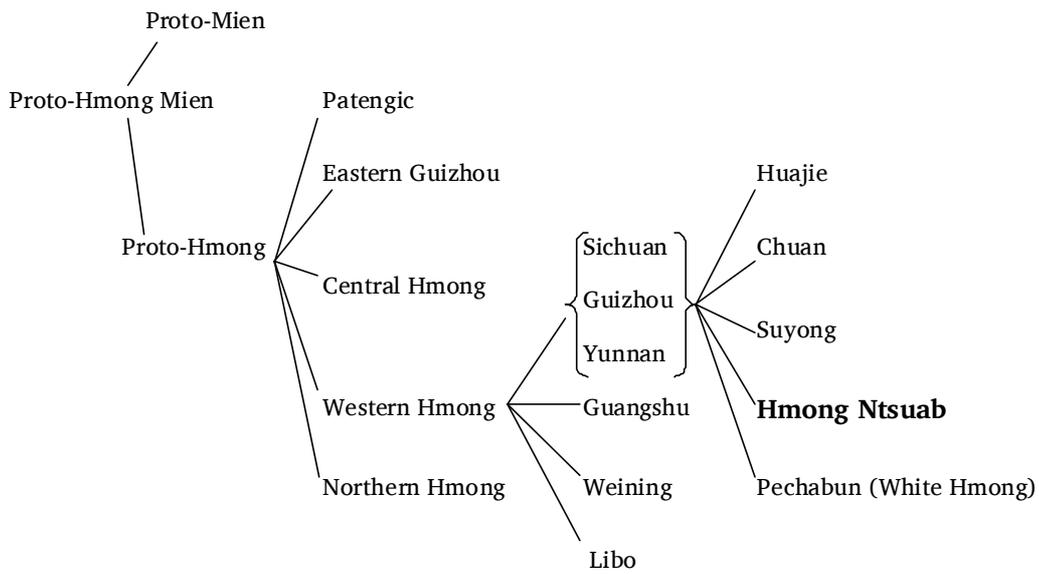


Figure 1. The Hmong-Mien language family

1.2 Hmong speakers

Hmong people are said to have originated from China and have begun migrating south to Vietnam in the 18th century, to Laos in the mid-1800's, and to Thailand during World War II (Taweesak 1984: 4). Estimates for numbers of Hmong speakers across Southwestern China and Southeast Asia vary from approximately five million people (Goddard 2005: 36) to six million people (Smalley et al. 1990: 3) to nine million people (Jarkey 2006: 115, Tapp et al. 2004: xiii). Due to the mass resettlement of Hmong people after the Vietnam War, many Hmong now reside in the United States, Australia, and France as well (Goddard 2005: 36). There are over 190,000 Hmong speakers living in these three countries (Jarkey 2006: 115). The Hmong speakers who served as language resource persons in this study come from various locations in Thailand, where approximately 125,000 Hmong people reside (Mongkol and Thaworn 1995).

1.3 Previous Hmong research

The Hmong people, culture, and language have been studied for many years. In his thorough overview of previous Hmong research, beginning in the early 1990s, Nicholas Tapp explains that notable foundational contributions came from Geddes, Cooper, Lemoine, Morechand, Savina, Bernatzik, Mickey, Lin, Ruey, and Lombard-Salmon (2004: 3-7). Topics from these authors range from shamanism, customs,

society, economy, religion, history and other ethnographic accounts of the Hmong. In addition to these ethnographic and anthropologic studies, the Hmong language has also been widely researched.

Although much of the Hmong-Mien research in linguistics has been conducted by Chinese linguists (Goddard 2005: 36), Western researchers have also contributed to literature on the Hmong language. Considerable contributions to Hmong linguistic research have come from missionaries, such as Barney, Smalley, Bertrais, Mottin, Downer, Pollard, and Hudspeth (Tapp 2004: 6-7). Additional linguistic research contributions have come from Ratliff (1992), Clark (1989), Lyman (1979), Riddle (1989), Bisang (1993), and Jarkey (2006). After the dispersal of Hmong refugees to Western countries in the mid-1970s, and the increased awareness in the West regarding the Hmong, research in Hmong studies began to flourish (Tapp 2004: 8-9). The researchers and works referenced above are not by any means comprehensive. However, they do provide a sufficient overview of Hmong ethnographic and linguistic research and a solid jumping point for further research.

1.4 Background information on LRPs

The Hmong Ntsuab data used in this study was supplied by five language resource persons (LRPs), all of which were native Hmong Ntsuab speakers. Two of them were from Baan Ruam Thai Phathana 9 Village in Tak province in Thailand. The third LRP was from Mae Jaem district, Chiang Mai province, in Thailand. The fourth LRP was a Hmong Ntsuab man originally from Laos. The fifth LRP was a male from Baan Ruam Thai Phathana 1 Village. These LRP's will be referred to as LRP A, B, C, D, and E respectively, for ease of reference.

Both of the first two LRPs were living in Chiang Mai city (Tambon Sriphum, Amphoe Muang) at the time of elicitation, which was conducted in late 2008. LRP "A" was a 19 year old male who was born in Tambon Maelamung (Amphoe Umphang, Tak Province). He also lived in Ka Nian Ki for a few years because of unrest in the area. He then moved to Baan Ruam Thai Phathana 9 Village (in Tambon Ruam Thai, Amphoe Phop Phra, Tak Province). He moved to Chiang Mai to study the Bible after that, and had been living there for two years at the time of elicitation. LRP "A" spoke Hmong Ntsuab as his first language. He also spoke Central Thai and English, and was studying Greek. His parents both spoke Hmong Ntsuab. His father spoke Central Thai and his mother could understand Central Thai but could not speak it.

LRP “B” was a 27 year old male who was born in Naan Province but moved to Peki Village (in Tambon Maelamung, Amphoe Umphang, Tak Province) when he was young. He moved to Ruam Thai Phathana 9 Village (in Tambon Ruam Thai, Amphoe Phop Phra, Tak Province) and lived there for three years. After three years, he moved to Chiang Mai to study the Bible for five years. He moved back to his home Village of Ruam Thai Phathana 9 for the next few years and then back to Chiang Mai to continue studies. He had been living in Chiang Mai for five months at the time of elicitation. LRP “B” spoke three languages. His first language was Hmong Ntsuab, his second was Central Thai, and his third was English. His father and mother were originally from Naan Province. They both spoke Hmong Ntsuab as their first language. His father could also speak Central Thai and Lao but his mother could only understand a little Central Thai. LRP “B” was married with two small children. His wife spoke Hmong Ntsuab and Central Thai. The children could only speak Hmong Ntsuab, but could understand Central Thai as well.

LRP “C” was a 23 year old female who was born in Pha Pu Chom Village, (in Tambon Kuat Chaan, Amphoe Mae Taeng, Chiang Mai Province). She lived there for 21 years, until she married, at which time she moved to Mae Jae Village (in Tambon Mae Na Chon, Amphoe Mae Jaem, Chiang Mai Province). However, from the age of 19 until 23 (her age at the time of elicitation), LRP “C” had been studying at Mae Jo University in Chiang Mai and had the chance to return to these two villages during school breaks only. She was studying food science and technology and was in her last semester of university. LRP “C” spoke many languages: Hmong Ntsuab, Hmong Daw, Central Thai, Northern Thai, English, and Lahu. Hmong Ntsuab was her mother tongue. Her father and mother spoke Hmong Ntsuab (as their first language), as well as Central Thai, and Northern Thai. Both her father and mother were born in the same village as her and, at the time of elicitation, still lived together in that village.

LRP “D” was a 48 year old male who was born in Laos, where he lived for about ten years. He crossed the border to Thailand with his family and lived along the border for two years. He then moved to Baan Nam Seeng, where he lived for seven or eight years and received citizenship. After this, he moved to Umphang where he lived for four or five years, until the Thai government resettled his family and village to Baan Ruam Thai Phathana 9 (in Tambon Ruam Thai, Amphoe Phop Phra, Tak Province), where he was living at the time of elicitation in early 2010. He had studied formally up until 5th grade in Laos and was a native Hmong Ntsuab speaker. He could also speak Hmong Daw, Lao, and Thai and had studied French and Chinese but could no

longer recall them. He worked as a farmer and was married, with five children. His wife could speak Hmong Ntsuab and understand some Central Thai.

LRP “E” was a 22 year old male, studying agriculture at a vocational college in Chiang Mai at the time of elicitation in early 2010. He was born in Tambon Maelamung (Amphoe Umphang, Tak Province) from where he moved to Baan Ruam Thai Phathana 19 Village (in Tambon Ruam Thai, Amphoe Phop Phra, Tak Province). After that he moved to Chiang Mai to study and had been living there for four years at the time of elicitation. LRP “E” spoke Hmong Ntsuab as his first language. He also spoke Central Thai and English. His parents both spoke Hmong Ntsuab and Central Thai.

1.5 Methodology

The Hmong Ntsuab data supplied by all five language resource persons (LRPs) was elicited by this researcher, using Central Thai as the medium language.

1.5.1 Elicitation

Data from LRPs “A” and “B” was elicited at Payap University, in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from November 11th to December 1st, 2008, in ten sessions with these two LRPs. Each of the sessions was approximately two hours and was recorded. 436 Hmong Ntsuab words and 32 basic sentences were elicited from these two LRPs.

The data from LRP “C” was elicited in Mae Jae Village in Mae Jaem District, Chiang Mai Province, in Thailand, from December 4-6 of 2008. 134 sentences and four stories were elicited as well as 24 conversational sentences. All sentences and stories were recorded. The recordings were then played back, at which time the LRP provided a gloss and free translation in Central Thai.

Data from LRP “D” was elicited in Baan Ruam Thai Phathana 9 Village in Tak Province from January 27th to February 15th in 2010 in five 3-hour sessions. All elicitation was recorded. A number of multi-verb constructions, based on Enfield’s study of Lao V1-V2 constructions, were elicited from LRP “D”, who also provided data used to test the verbs and to determine the grammatical distinctions between multi-verb constructions. In addition, LRP “D” provided many of the spellings for the Hmong orthography used in this study.

Data from LRP “E” was elicited on four separate occasions, once in late 2009, twice in February of 2010, and once in March of 2010. Elicitation was conducted at By Grace Coffee shop in Chiang Mai, Thailand. LRP “E” provided much of the original

data for the multi-verb constructions, which was later elicited in more detail from LRP “D”. LRP “E” also helped to double-check and clarify the conclusions of the elicited data from LRP “D”. Elicitation sessions with LRP “E” were not recorded and lasted for 2-3 hours each.

1.5.2 Organization and categorization of data

Although some data was transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and some transcribed using the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), all elicited data in this study was entered into Fieldworks using the RPA Hmong orthography alone, in an attempt to standardize the data. The Hmong orthography is further discussed below (section 1.6). English glosses, parts of speech and free translations were also entered into Fieldworks. The data was then organized, based on Enfield’s categorization of multi-verb constructions in Lao (2008). Lao categories prescribed by Enfield were discarded when Hmong Ntsuab data was not found for that category.

1.6 Notes on Hmong orthography

Over the years many Hmong orthographies have been developed. Some utilize a Thai-based script, such as the one developed in 1932 by a Vietnamese missionary (Smalley et al. 1990: 150). Several are based on Chinese: one uses Chinese characters and is used in Sichuan province in China (Coulmas 2002: 213) and another one is based on Chinese Pinyin (338). Still another Hmong orthography exists, called Pawah Hmong, which was developed in Laos and Vietnam in the 1950’s and 1960’s (Smalley et al. 1990). Different Roman-based scripts exist as well, two of which are the Pollard Miao script and the Romanized Popular Alphabet (Coulmas 2002: 213-214). The Pollard Miao script uses inverted Roman capital letters and is used in southern China (214). It was developed by a British missionary Samuel Pollard (338). The Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) was developed in Laos in the 1950’s by missionaries and Hmong language informants (213). Several other Hmong orthographies exist as well (Smalley et al. 1990: 149-163).

Because so many Hmong orthographies have been developed, there is some notable hesitation in deciding which orthography to use in Hmong research. In this study, the orthography used in all examples and in the appendixes is the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA). Although many other Hmong orthographies exist, this orthography was chosen because of its prevalence, worldwide acceptance, and widespread use in Hmong literature, dictionaries, and scholarship (Smalley et al.

1990: 150). It must be noted that, even within the Romanized Popular Alphabet, variant spellings also exist. Spellings used in this research are primarily based on spellings provided by LRP “D” (section 1.4 and section 1.5.1). See Appendix 3 for Hmong a orthography and pronunciation guide.

1.7 Objectives and hypotheses

Hmong Ntsuab makes use of many types of multi-verb constructions. Because these constructions can appear as strings of consecutive unmarked verbs on the surface, this creates some difficulty in the structural analysis and interpretation of meaning among non-native speakers. Upon further study, however, it is possible to categorize the different types of multi-verb constructions and clarify some of the relationships of the verbs in the constructions in Hmong Ntsuab. Through specific testing, these unique relationships are displayed in grammatical characteristics, including patterns of distribution, clause separability, and headship.

This study seeks to provide a description of, and an organized classification of, Hmong Ntsuab multi-verb constructions, based on the structural categories outlined in N. J. Enfield’s study of V1-V2 constructions in Lao (2008). It includes a discussion of the grammatical features of main verbs, a description of the tests used to clarify verb relationships in multi-verb constructions, and a description of the grammatical distinctions of each multi-verb structural category, supported by elicited Hmong Ntsuab examples.

In relation to the objectives outlined above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- 1) Multi-verb constructions do exist in Hmong Ntsuab.
- 2) These multi-verb constructions can be classified into structural categories, as proposed by Enfield in his description of multi-verb constructions in Lao (2008).
- 3) Multi-verb constructions in different categories display some different grammatical properties and multi-verb constructions in the same category display a similar set of grammatical properties.

1.8 Scope and limitations

This study provides a description of some types of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab. The theoretical debate regarding what qualifies as a “serial verb construction” is largely avoided due to the nature of this descriptive approach. This

means that the elicited Hmong Ntsuab multi-verb constructions are structurally categorized according to objective grammatical properties. These constructions are limited to those multi-verb constructions that, as Enfield explains, “normally form prosodically integrated units” (2007: 339). They will not be discussed in terms of whether or not they are deemed acceptable under narrower definitions of “serial verb constructions.”¹

The language used during elicitation with all five language resource persons (LRPs) was Central Thai. This may limit the results of the research to only multi-verb constructions that are able to be expressed in Thai, and may leave out some uniquely Hmong Ntsuab constructions. This research is also limited to the structural categories provided by Enfield in his study of Lao (2008), which may or may not be a full representation of V1-V2 categories in Hmong Ntsuab. Some Hmong-specific characteristics of MVCs have been discovered through this research, such as the unique patterning of headship in handling-despatch constructions (section 4.2.1) and the usage of the preverbal particle *pua* in interrogative structures.

¹ See section 3.1 for a discussion of SVC and MVC properties.

Chapter 2

Hmong Grammar

The following chapter provides an introduction to Hmong Ntsuab grammar, starting with an overview of the typology of the language, the basic word order, and some clause types. It continues with a discussion of modifiers in the noun phrase and the verb complex, and concludes with a review of polar question formation and the clause linker *kuj*.

2.1 Typology

The basic structure and word order employed in Hmong Ntsuab will now be discussed. This will be followed by a look at some simple and complex clause types.

2.1.1 Basic structure

Words in Hmong are largely monosyllabic (with each syllable having its own tone) and monomorphemic (with no derivational or inflectional affixation). Although some bisyllabic and compounded words do exist, they are, by far, the minority (Fuller 1988: 24). Marking for tense, aspect, and modality (TAM) is accomplished through either context or separate TAM words, generally appearing before the main verb. Exceptions do exist, particularly with the forms *lawm* ‘finish’ and *tau* ‘get’, which occur post-verbally (Jarkey 2006: 116). These forms are discussed further below (section 4.1).

2.1.2 Word order and clause types

Hmong Ntsuab is a nominative-accusative language with a basic word order of subject – verb – object (SVO): SV for intransitive clauses and SVO for transitive clauses. This is demonstrated below in simple intransitive clauses (section 2.1.2.1) and transitive clauses (section 2.1.2.2). Some additional clause types, such as semi-transitive clauses, verb-initial clauses, and ditransitive clauses, are introduced as well.

2.1.2.1 Intransitive clauses

Intransitive verbs take a single argument and form intransitive clauses, which do not have objects (Dryer 2007: 250). In Hmong Ntsuab these clauses are formed with a subject noun phrase followed by an intransitive verb. The first example below shows a structure with a patient subject *dev* ‘dog’ and an intransitive verb *tuag* ‘die’ (2).

(2)

dev tuag
dog die
'(The) dog died.'

In the next example, *nwg* ‘she’ is the agent subject noun phrase and *qaaj* ‘snore’ is the intransitive verb (3).

(3)

nwg qaaj
s/he snore
'She snores.'

2.1.2.2 Semi-transitive clauses

Semi-transitive clauses “behave in some ways like intransitive clauses, but in other ways like transitive clauses” (Dryer 2007: 270). In Hmong Ntsuab, semi-transitive clauses are often motion clauses, which employ motion verbs such as *moog* ‘go’. These motion clauses are used to “introduce the goal of the motion,” (Jarkey 2006: 117), which is typically a prepositional phrase. This is demonstrated in the following example (4) where an argument of *moog* ‘go’ is the prepositional phrase *tom kav* ‘to (the) market’.

(4)

nwg moog tom kav
s/he go at market
'She goes to (the) market.'

2.1.2.3 Semi-transitive object motion clauses

These clauses frequently occur as multi-verb constructions which are formed by a noun phrase preceding the main verb, followed by another noun phrase, which proceeds the motion verb and a locative prepositional phrase following the motion verb. These constructions employ a SVOV-LOC word order. Clark explains that the locative prepositional phrase is “inherent in the verb” (1989: 178) and is “part of the

matrix of the relevant class of verbs” (1989: 177). This helps to distinguish locative prepositional phrases from optional adjuncts. An example of a semi-transitive object motion construction follows (5), where *dej* ‘water’ is the object in motion and *moog* ‘go’ is the motion verb, followed by *tom kav* ‘to the market’, the prepositional phrase.

(5)

puab coj dej moog tom kav
 s/he take water go at market
 'He took (the) water to (the) market.'

When used in a semi-transitive motion clause, the motion verb *moog* ‘go’ has two semantic arguments, however, as Dryer puts it, “neither is an agent in the narrow sense of someone or something that volitionally causes the event denoted by the verb” (2007: 270). In the example above, (5) the two semantic arguments are *dej* ‘water’ and *kav* ‘(the) market’, neither of which functions as an agent, and *kav* ‘market’ appears in a prepositional phrase.

Semi-transitive verbs, such as *moog* ‘go’, can also be used intransitively in similar multi-verb constructions (6). In these cases, the verb *moog* ‘go’ functions differently as it is used to indicate the direction of the action but does not take an object complement.

(6)

puab coj dej moog
 s/he take water go
 'He took (the) water away.'

2.1.2.4 Transitive clauses

Transitive clauses are formed with a subject noun phrase preceding the transitive verb and an object noun phrase following the transitive verb. In the first example below (7), *qob yawg* ‘man’ is the subject noun phrase, *ntaus* ‘hit’ is the transitive verb, and *dev* ‘dog’ is the object noun phrase.

(7)

qob yawg ntaus dev
 CLF male hit dog
 'The man hit (the) dog.'

In the next example, (8) *miv nyuam ob peb leeg* ‘the children’ is the subject noun phrase, *noj* ‘eat’ is the transitive verb, and *mov* ‘cooked.rice’ is the object noun phrase.

(8)

miv nyuam ob peb leeg noj mov
child(ren) two three CLF eat rice
'The children eat rice.'

2.1.2.5 Ditransitive clauses

Ditransitive clauses are those which contain “at least two non-subject arguments,” which are often referred to as indirect objects and direct objects in English (Dryer 2007: 253). True ditransitive clauses do not exist in Hmong Ntsuab as a single verb cannot introduce three arguments². However, something similar to a ditransitive clause is often formed with two verbs. For discussion in this section, this type of construction will be called a “three-argument clause.” These clauses are often used to form despatch constructions in Hmong Ntsuab (section 4.2).

In these types of three-argument clauses, the word order is SVOVO, where the subject noun phrase precedes the first verb. This first verb is followed by the object noun phrase, another verb, and then the indirect object noun phrase. The example below (9) shows *miv nyuam tub* ‘the boy’ as the subject noun phrase, *muab* ‘take’ as the first verb, and *dai ntau* ‘the book’ as the object noun phrase. Here, *tsuab* ‘BENF’ is the second verb and *miv nyuam ntsai* ‘the girl’ is the indirect object noun phrase.

(9)

miv nyuam tub muab dai ntau tsuab miv nyuam ntsai
child(ren) male take CLF book BENF child(ren) female
'(The) boy gave the book to (the) girl.'

In Hmong Ntsuab multi-verb constructions are often used to include another argument in the clause. Although only despatch constructions were discussed here, three-argument clauses are used to convey other semantic purposes as well. These types of constructions will be discussed in more detail below (section 4.5.1.2, section 4.7, and section 4.9.1.1).

²Although, in English, a single verb such as ‘give’ can introduce three arguments, in Hmong Ntsuab, this is not grammatical: **miv nyuam tub tsuab miv nyuam ntsai dai ntau* [child-male give child-female CLF-book] Intended: ‘The boy gave the girl the book’, **miv nyuam tub muab miv nyuam ntsai dai ntau* [child-male take child-female CLF-book] Intended: ‘The boy took the girl the book’.

2.1.2.6 Verb-initial clauses

Clauses with a VO word order exist in Hmong Ntsuab as well. As outlined by Fuller, there are three clause types in Hmong which allow verb initial sentences. They are existential clauses, imperative clauses, and conditional clauses (1988: 25-26). Two examples demonstrate existential clauses in Hmong Ntsuab; the first employs the initial verb *yog* ‘is’, which is followed by the object *noj peb caug* ‘New Years festival celebration’ (10) and the second employs the verb *muaj* ‘have’, followed by the object *ntaab ntaus* ‘many bees’ (11).

(10)

yog noj peb caug pi kig
is celebrate New Year Festival tomorrow

‘(There) is (the) celebration (of the) New Years Festival tomorrow.’

(11)

muaj ntaab ntaus
have bee many

‘(There) are many bees.’

The next examples demonstrate an imperative clause with the verb-initial *moog* ‘go’ (12) and a conditional clause which begins with the copula *yog* (13).

(12)

moog ntsuav luaj kaub
go wash pot

‘Go wash (the) pot.’

(13)

yog yug caug dej taag te yug kuj
is we soak water finish and we then

muab coj lug khaw tsab
take bring come collect put

‘(If it) is (the case) we finish rinsing (them) with water and we then bring (them) to store.’

Some of these verb-initial clauses may also be known as zero-intransitive or ambient clauses (10)(11), which “semantically do not involve any arguments” (Dryer 2007: 267). Because of the prevalence of ellipsis in Hmong Ntsuab (section 2.4.1), it is often difficult to determine whether these verb-initial clauses are pro-drop and have a semantic argument or are zero anaphora and do not. For now they will be called “verb-initial clauses” and are included to show that clauses with no overt syntactic subject do exist in Hmong Ntsuab.

2.1.3 Summary

Words in Hmong Ntsuab are generally monosyllabic and monomorphemic. Basic word order is SV(O), although exceptions to this order do exist. Hmong Ntsuab makes use of transitive clauses, intransitive clauses and a number of other clause types. Although most verbs are clearly transitive or intransitive (Jarkey 2006: 117), it is the ones that are not which are of interest to this study, as they are used in multi-verb constructions to perform various semantic functions. Because this section is intended to serve as an introduction to word order and clause types in Hmong Ntsuab, only a few examples were discussed here, however, variations of MVCs will be detailed in Chapter four.

2.2 Notes on the noun phrase

Hmong Ntsuab does not mark nouns for number, case, or gender (Jarkey 2006: 116). Hmong Ntsuab noun phrases tend to be left-headed as the modifiers follow the head, with the exception of classifier phrases and some possessors (Fuller 1988: 27). These are discussed separately below (section 2.2.1. and section 2.2.2). The relative order of elements in a noun phrase follows:

POSS – CLFP – N – ATTRIB – DET – QUANT – COMPP

Modifying constituents in a noun phrase may be possessor nouns, classifier phrases, stative attributives, determiners, quantifiers, or complementiser phrases. Some modifying attributives often can be repeated multiple times within a noun phrase. The phrase structure rule for the noun phrase is shown below:

NP → (POSS) (CLFP) N (XP*) (COMPP)

CLFP → (QUANT) CLF

XP → ATTRIB*

XP → QUANTP

QUANTP → $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{NUM (NUM)} \\ \text{QUANT (QUANT)} \end{array} \right\}$

XP → DET

COMPP → COMP S

Three examples (14) (15) (16) are now provided to support this NP phrase structure rule.

(14)

lub tsev lab qub
CLF house red old
'The old red house'

(15)

cov tsev lab hov ntaus ntaus
CLF-group house red those many many
'Those many red houses'

(16)

peb tug tswv neeg luj luj kw muab dej tsuab kuv
three CLF man big big COMP take water BENF I
'The three large men who bring me water.'

Although attributives are explained here to be head noun modifiers, there are instances when they are better analyzed as predicates. These cases are explained further below (section 2.4.2).

2.2.1 Classifiers

Classifiers are used to “categorize, enumerate, specify and define other nouns” (Clark: 1989 182). Hmong Ntsuab does not mark nouns for number, case, or gender but does employ classifiers in cases where the noun is quantified and “instantiated” (Jarkey 2006: 116). The classifier phrase in Hmong Ntsuab contains a classifier, which may be modified by a quantifier. The quantifier can contain one (or two) numbers or it can contain quantifying word(s). Numbers and quantifying words cannot co-occur. The classifier can occur as a head noun substitute as well.

CLFP → (QUANT) CLF

Unique to Hmong Ntsuab is the position of the classifier phrase in the relative ordering of elements. As shown in the phrase structure rules and examples above (14) (15) (16), the head noun can be modified by a *pre-head* classifier phrase. However, elicited data shows that the head noun can also be modified by a *post-head* classifier phrase. This is an alternate position. A simple alternate phrase structure rule is shown below.

NP → N (CLFP)

CLFP → (QUANT) CLF

$$\text{QUANT} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NUM (NUM)} \\ \text{QUANT} \end{array} \right\}$$

The following example (17) shows the alternate position of the classifier phrase, following the noun. This could be a structure that has been borrowed through language contact from Thai. It could also be a topicalization technique. Although the classifier phrase may occur either before the head noun or after it, the noun phrase cannot have more than one classifier phrase modifying the head noun.

(17)

tuj ob lub
 cabinet two CLF
 'Two cabinets'

2.2.2 Possession

Hmong Ntsuab has two constructions for possession. In one, the possessive particle *le* follows the possessor noun phrase (NP^{POSSESSOR}) creating NP¹. This NP¹ occurs after the object being possessed (NP^{POSSESSED}). This rule is shown below.

$$\text{NP}^1 \rightarrow \text{NP}^{\text{POSSESSOR}} \textit{le}$$

$$\text{NP}^{\text{POSS}} \rightarrow \text{NP}^{\text{POSSESSED}} \text{NP}^1$$

The Hmong Ntsuab example below demonstrates this type of possession construction (18). In this example, *lub tsev hov* 'that house' forms the object being possessed (NP^{POSSESSED}) and *tswv neeg* 'the man' forms the possessor (NP^{POSSESSOR}) marked by the possessor particle *le*.

(18)

lub tsev hov tswv neeg le
 CLF house that man POSS
 '(The) man's (that) house'

In the other possession construction, word order indicates possession: the possessor (NP^{POSSESSOR}) precedes the object being possessed (NP^{POSSESSED}). The rule below shows this NP possession structure.

$$\text{NP}^{\text{POSS}} \rightarrow \text{NP}^{\text{POSSESSOR}} \text{NP}^{\text{POSSESSED}}$$

Two examples below demonstrate this type of possession. In the first example (19), *tug tswv neeg kw tuaj teb tshaw suav tuaj* 'the man that came from China' forms NP^{POSSESSOR}, and *lub tsev lab* 'the red house' forms NP^{POSSESSED}.

(19)

tug tswv neeg kw tuaj teb tshaw suav tuaj lub tsev lab
CLF man COMP come country China come CLF house red
'The man that came (from) China's red house'

In the second example (20), the NP^{POSSESSOR}, *kuv* 'I', precedes the NP^{POSSESSED} *dai ntau* 'the book', conveying the sense 'my book'.

(20)

kuv dai ntau yog dai hov
I CLF book is CLF that
'That is my book.'

In addition, both ways to show possession (word order and a possession marker) can be employed in the same sentence. One LRP mentioned that this is sometimes done for greater clarity. This rule is shown below.

NP^{POSS} → NP¹ NP^{POSSESSED}

The next example shows this (21). Although the possessor *koj* 'you' (NP^{POSSESSOR}) precedes the object being possessed (NP^{POSSESSED}) *nyaj* 'money', the possessive marker *le* is still used.

(21)

nwg khaw koj le nyaj
s/he collect you POSS money
'He keeps your money.'

2.2.3 Summary

This overview has listed and described some modifying elements in a noun phrase and has shown that head-modifier order is generally maintained. Examples are provided of when it is not.

2.3 Notes on verbs

A discussion on verb modifiers is important and necessary, as it will contribute to understanding some types of modification in the verb complex and the order in which some modification occurs. A comprehensive presentation of the relative ordering of elements in the verb complex will not be attempted here as labels for all types of modification and co-occurrence restrictions have not been determined. According to Fuller, VO languages tend to have the word order head-modifier and OV languages tend to have the word order modifier-head (1988: 25). As Hmong

Ntsuab demonstrates some characteristics of both VO and OV languages (Fuller 1988: 27), determination of the relative ordering is often difficult, as the head may occur before modifying elements in some cases and after modifying elements in other cases.

Verb modification serves many functions in the verb complex. In Hmong Ntsuab, marking for tense, aspect, and modality (TAM) is accomplished both through context and through verbal particles (Jarkey 2006: 116). These are discussed below (sections 2.3.1-2.3.6). In addition, verbs may be modified by intensifiers, permission and possibility auxiliaries, and imperatives (Fuller 1988: 26-27). Most verb modification occurs preverbally but some occurs postverbally.

2.3.1 Context

It is not always necessary to overtly mark a verb in Hmong Ntsuab for time because it can often be inferred through context. For this reason, when taken out of context, some constructions may be ambiguous. For example, the following construction (22) may be interpreted as the past tense '(The) woman went to (the) market' or the present simple '(The) woman goes to (the) market', depending on the context.

(22)

maum khuav moog tom kav
woman go at market

'(The) woman went to (the) market.' or '(The) woman goes to (the) market.'

2.3.2 Temporal modification

In cases where context does not supply enough information, it is possible for the temporal setting to be overtly marked by verbal particles. These particles appear directly before the verb they are modifying. The next example (23) employs the temporal particle *yuav* 'will', marking irrealis/future tense, before the verb complex *moog kawm* 'go study'.

(23)

kuv yuav moog kawm ntau
I will go study book

'I will go study.'

2.3.3 Aspectual modification

Various types of aspectual modification are used in Hmong Ntsuab as well. The example (24) employs the postverbal *lawm* 'finish' to indicate perfective aspect, and

example (25) employs the preverbal *saa swm* ‘presently’ to indicate the imperfective. Another type of imperfective is shown in example (26), where the stative verb *yaus* ‘young’ is preverbally modified by *tseem* ‘still’.

(24)

eb tawg cig lawm eb yug muab tsab huv qhov tsub
 umm fire catch finish umm we take put on stove
 'Umm, (when the) fire (has) caught, umm, we take (the pot and) put (it) on (the) stove.'

(25)

koj saa swm ua mov
 you presently do rice
 'You (are) making rice.'

(26)

nwg tseem yaus
 s/he still young
 'He (is) still young.'

2.3.4 Adverbial modification

Adverbial phrases are also employed to indicate temporal setting. Example (27) shows two adverbial phrases, *naag taag kig* ‘yesterday morning’ and *thaum tswb moos* ‘at five o’clock’, modifying the clause.

(27)

naag taag kig kuv sawv thaum tswb moos
 yesterday morning I arise when five o'clock
 'Yesterday morning, I arose at five o'clock.'

Adverbial modification, such as this, generally applies to the whole clause and not only to the verb.

2.3.5 More verb modification

Other verb modifiers can appear before the verb or after the verb. In example (28) the verb *has* ‘say’ is postverbally modified by the reduplicated *qeeb* ‘slow’.

(28)

has qeeb qeeb
 say slow slow
 'Speak slowly.'

In example (29), the verb *npaaj* ‘prepare’ is preverbally modified by the temporal particle *yuav* ‘will’ and the imperative modal *cum* ‘must’. It is also modified

postverbally by the verb *ca* ‘keep’ (see section 4.3 for more on this type of verb complex).

(29)

puab yuav cum npaaj ca ua ntej lawm
 s/he will must prepare keep do before finish
 'They will need to prepare (and) make (this outfit in) advance.'

2.3.6 Negation

Verbs in Hmong Ntsuab are generally negated preverbally (30). In cases where verbs are also marked for future tense, as in example (31), the negation occurs after the future tense marker *yuav* ‘will’ but before the main verb *muas* ‘soft’.

(30)

nwg tsi tsav ntooj
 s/he NEG cut tree
 'She (did) not cut (the) wood.'

(31)

moob tseeg has ta yog yug tsi tsab ncev ma
 Hmong believe say COMP is we NEG put salt PART
zaub ntsuab yuav tsi muas ma
 vegetable green will NEG soft PART
 'Hmong people believe (and) say that, if we (do) not add salt, (the) green vegetables will not be soft.'

In some cases verbs may be negated medially. This may occur when more than one verb is present in a multi-verb construction and when the second verb is a modal auxiliary such as *tau* ‘can’ (32).

(32)

nwg tsav tsi tau
 s/he cut NEG can
 'She cannot cut (the wood).'

In addition, medial negation occurs in resultative constructions, in some causative constructions, and in some complement constructions. These types of constructions are discussed further in Chapter four. Interesting patterns of negation are also present in the formation of polar questions. These are discussed below (section 3.2.4).

2.3.7 Summary

Verb modification may occur through verbal particles, aspect words, intensifiers, permission and possibility auxiliaries, imperatives, and other markers. Negation occurs in two positions: preverbally and medially. Verb modification can occur both preverbally and postverbally and, as a result, Hmong Ntsuab demonstrates some characteristics of both VO languages and OV languages. Now for a discussion of some additional grammatical features of Hmong Ntsuab.

2.4 Additional grammatical features

This section provides an explanation of some of the grammatical features of Hmong Ntsuab which contribute to allowing (indeed, sometimes even requiring) long strings of verbs to occur, complete with a discussion on ambiguity in the structural and semantic interpretation of some of these multi-verb constructions. Crucial to the understanding of the frequency of the occurrence of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab, is the wide use of subject and object ellipsis. Equally essential, is the realization that many verbs also seem to function as adjectives, prepositions, adverbs, and tense-aspect-modality markers. Finally, polar question formation and the uses of the clause linker *kuj* are discussed as a foundation for the tests and examples detailed in Chapter three and Chapter four.

2.4.1 Ellipsis

Enfield defines ellipsis as “the normal form of anaphora for referents which are contextually retrievable” (2008: 86). Hmong Ntsuab makes wide use of both subject argument and object argument ellipsis. The following example (33) shows subject ellipsis³.

(33)
muaj dai ntau ib dai
have CLF book one CLF
'(I) have one book.'

³ When taken out of context, there are two possible readings to these types of sentences. The first reading interprets this as an existential clause with a free translation of ‘There is a book’. The lack of a subject is common in existential clauses in Hmong Ntsuab, which are formed with the verb *muaj* ‘have’ or with the verb *yog* ‘is’. In fact, in existential clauses, there is no subject. It is not ellipted, rather, it simply does not exist. In the second type of reading, however, the clause is a clause of possession. In this reading, the subject ‘I’ is ellipted.

The next example (34) shows object ellipsis multiple times in the utterance. The object, a corpse, was ellipsed three times in this sentence, which comes from a Hmong story about funeral customs. When this sentence is taken outside of the context of the story, what the speaker is referring to becomes unclear.

(34)

coj moog paam tsuab tom tshaav ib nub txug ntsua
 take go period.of.time give at outside one day arrive until

thaum peb moos tsaus ntuj te puab le mav coj moog
 when three o'clock when night and s/he then take go

zai los coj moog loog
 hide PART take go bury

'(They will) take (it) out into the open for one day until three o'clock in the afternoon and they then take (it) to 'hide' or take (it) to bury.'

In these examples (33) (34), ellipsis is used for expedience and efficiency in speech, when the referents are active in the discourse, and understood through context. Explicitly adding the referents to the sentences would not be ungrammatical, it would simply be unnecessary. However, in some Hmong Ntsuab constructions ellipsis is obligatory. For example, in same-subject control complement constructions object ellipsis is mandatory. As noted by Clark, this is when a verb “allows an embedded verb whose logical subject is coreferential with the subject of the main verb” (1989: 221). This is what Enfield terms “syntactic control of coreference” (2008: 87). An example of a same-subject control complement construction follows (35).

(35)

puab xaav noog nkauj
 they want listen music
 'They want (to) listen (to) music.'

Since the subject is coreferential, it does not need to be repeated and is actually not allowed to be repeated. Below (36), the intended meaning is 'They want themselves (to) listen (to) music.' However, this type of construction is ungrammatical in Hmong Ntsuab (36).

(36)

* *puab xaav puab noog nkauj*
 they want they listen music

In cases where the second verb takes a different subject, such as in *xaav* ‘want’ constructions, simply adding a second subject to the construction is not allowed (37). In these cases, it is necessary to add an additional verb *kua* ‘give’, which serves to indicate a second non-coreferential subject (38). This is similar to what Enfield describes in Lao (2008: 87).

(37)

* *puab xaav koj noog nkauj*
 they want you listen music

(38)

puab xaav kua (koj) noog nkauj
 they want APPL you listen music
 'They want you (to) listen (to) music.'

This additional *kua* ‘give’ verb is obligatory. However, the second non-coreferential subject can be ellipted because the addition of the second verb is sufficient in indicating the introduction of another participant. It is exactly grammatical features such as these that contribute to the creation of surface strings of verbs in Hmong Ntsuab.

2.4.2 Attributive verbs

Attributive verbs, or stative verbs, are what speakers of western languages would often consider adjectives, as they convey concepts such as ‘heavy’, ‘delicious’, ‘cold’, ‘young’, ‘good’, ‘far’, and ‘big’, among others. In Hmong Ntsuab, these forms are considered verbs, as they can appear as the only predicate in a sentence. The following two examples demonstrate the attributive verbs *tshaag* ‘cold’ and *tshab* ‘new’ in sentences (39) (40).

(39)

dej tshaag
 water cold
 '(The) water (is) cold.'

(40)

lub tshe kauj vaab hov tshab
 CLF bicycle that new
 'That bicycle (is) new.'

Attributive verbs in Hmong Ntsuab often take modification as well. In the example below (41), the attributive verb *yaus* ‘young’ is preverbally modified by the tense-aspect-modality marker *tseem* ‘still’.

(41)

nwg tseem yaus
s/he still young
'He (is) still young.'

Some ambiguity arises when it is noted that Hmong Ntsuab makes use of many of these same forms as nominal modifiers as well (42).

(42)

qa qaab nyob huv tsev
chicken delicious stay in house
'(The) delicious chicken is in (the) house.'

In some cases the meaning of the form may be ambiguous without contextual cues. In the following construction, *qaab* 'delicious' could be interpreted as an adjective (43) or as an attributive verb (44).

(43)

qa qaab
chicken delicious
'Delicious chicken'

(44)

qa qaab
chicken delicious
'Chicken (is) delicious.'

Because of this ambiguity, contextual cues are important in deciphering the function and meaning of many of these forms. If someone was asked "What did you eat today?", and the answer *qa qaab* [chicken delicious] was given, then the form *qaab* 'delicious' would be interpreted as an adjective and the answer would mean 'delicious chicken'. However, if the question asked was "Is the chicken delicious?," then the answer *qa qaab* [chicken delicious] would be interpreted as '(The) chicken (is) delicious.' To clarify ambiguous situations additional contextual information must be provided.

These examples demonstrate how the nature of attributive verbs, which may function as adjectives in certain grammatical contexts, contributes to the frequency of the appearance of strings of verbs in Hmong Ntsuab. However, sometimes, what may appear to be a verb is actually functioning as an adjective in a construction. Now for a discussion on ambiguity due to the prepositional and adverbial functions of some of these verb forms.

2.4.3 Synchronically derived forms

Ambiguity due to attributive verbs and their dual function as adjectives has already been discussed in the previous section. However, the areal feature of synchronically derived prepositions and adverbs from source verbs also contributes to both the increased number of verb-like forms in a multi-verb construction and the ambiguity in deciphering the meaning and structure behind surface strings of verbs. This is because a word that is a verb can often also be used for either prepositional or adverbial functions in a sentence.

2.4.3.1 Synchronically derived prepositions

Synchronically derived prepositions are what Enfield would term “deverbal prepositions,” as they are “verbs [that] ‘become’ prepositions when they appear elsewhere as main verbs” and are “marked not by morphological material but by syntactic position” (Enfield 2008: 153). Clark states that these prepositions are “verbs which have a distinct locus marking, and their derived prepositions mark their nouns goal or location Locus... and in some cases Time case relation” (1989: 190). She lists four White Hmong words that fit this definition: *txug* ‘arrive at’ – ‘reaching’, *rau* ‘put in/onto’ – ‘to’, *nyob* ‘be at’ – ‘at, in, on’, *nrog* ‘be with’ – ‘with’ (192). Hmong Ntsuab makes use of these same four forms as both source verbs and derived prepositions. Note that although the spelling and pronunciation may change across dialects, the Hmong Ntsuab words are essentially the same words.

The Hmong Ntsuab verb form *txug* ‘arrive’, for example, can function as a goal locus preposition meaning ‘regarding, about’ (45) (46) or as a time expression meaning ‘until’ (47) (48).

(45)

kuv xaav txug tom hao tej
I think regarding at future
'I think about (the) future.'

(46)

peb has txug lug moob
we say regarding CLF Hmong
'We talked about Hmong people.'

(47)

yog puab paam txug nub kw muaj noob nyoog zoo
is they period.of.time until day COMP have time good

kw puab yuav coj moog zai los coj moog loog
COMP they will take go hide or take go bury
'They (keep the body for a) period of time, until (the) day that (is) good, when they will take (it) to 'hide' or take (it) to bury.'

(48)

noj mov taag thaum taav sub peb kuj rov qaab moog dos ncoj
eat rice finish when noon we then return back go pick grass

hab lwg nploo txug thaum tswb moos tsaus ntuj
and pick leaf until when five o'clock at night
'(When we) finished eating cooked rice at noon, we then went back to pick grass and pick leaves until five o'clock at night.'

The remaining three verbs, *rau* 'put in/onto', *nyob* 'be at', and *nrog* 'be with', also serve as prepositions when they appear in certain syntactic positions. The verb *rau* 'put in/onto' can also be interpreted to mean 'to', and is used both as a goal preposition and as a marking of location phrases, the verb *nyob* 'be at' is used as a location locus preposition meaning 'at, in, on', and the verb *nrog* 'be with' can also be used as the comitative preposition 'with' (Clark 1989: 194-196). Constructions with these types of verbs are discussed further in Chapter four (section 4.6).

2.4.3.2 Synchronically derived adverbs

Synchronically derived adverbs are derived from verbs. In V1-V2 constructions, Enfield refers to these verbs as "adverbial complements," which make a 'predication... about the phrase headed by V1' (2008: 138). Clark mentions that, in White Hmong, some verbs can form prepositions and adverbs and lists three of these verbs and their adverbial reading: *mus* 'away', derived from 'go', *txug* 'reaching', derived from 'arrive', and *rau* 'into', from 'put into' (1989: 198-199). Hmong Ntsuab makes use of these derived adverbs as well.

The adverb *txug* 'reaching' is derived from the same verb form, *txug* 'arrive', which produced the preposition *txug* 'regarding', as discussed above (section 2.4.3.1). Below, this adverbial usage is demonstrated in two Hmong Ntsuab sentences (49) (50).

(49)

nwg lug txug naag moog
s/he come arrive yesterday
'She came (here) arriving yesterday.'

(50)

miv nyuam lug txug tsev pua tsi muaj leeg tug nyob
child(ren) come arrive house but NEG have CLF CLF stay
'(The) child came, reaching (the) house, but (there) was not anyone there.'

The fact that this verb, *txug*, and other forms, may function as a verb 'arrive' or adverb 'reaching' contributes to the ambiguity in interpreting strings of verbs. Because of this ambiguity, constructions containing what appear to be many verbs are easily mis-interpreted as being multi-verb constructions, although often some of these perceived verbs are, in fact, functioning as adverbs or adjectives modifying verbs, and are in a subordinate position. These types of constructions are discussed further in Chapter four (section 4.5.2 and section 4.5.3).

2.4.4 Aspect-modality marking

As noted by Enfield in Lao, some verbs can also function as tense aspect-modality (TAM) markers (2008: 113-114). In Hmong Ntsuab, this is also the case. For example, the verb *tau* may function as a transitive main verb in one setting and as a TAM marker in another setting⁴. The following example shows the verb *tau* 'acquire' as the single verb in a transitive construction (51).

(51)

peb tau ib tug cuv
we acquire one CLF tiger
'We acquired a tiger.'

As a tense-aspect-modality marker *tau* appears in the V1 position, immediately before another verb. The examples below (52) (53) (54) show *tau* 'succeed' marking achievement.

(52)

kuv tau ua teb
I succeed do field
'I worked (the) field.'

⁴ This verb may also function as a secondary verb meaning 'able'. As the secondary verb it appears in the V2 position: *kuv ua tau* [I do able] 'I can do (it).' Marybeth Clark notes that this verb *tau* may also function as a benefactive marker meaning 'get' and as a durative time phrase (1989: 217).

(53)

kuv tsi tau ua teb
I NEG succeed do field
'I did not work (the) field.'

(54)

koj pua tau ua teb
you QST succeed do field
'Did you work (the) field?'

These and other TAM markers are “transparently related to existing verbs” and thus termed “deverbal.” Constructions that make use of these types of verbs are discussed further in Chapter four (section 4.1).

2.4.5 Polar question formation

There are many methods of forming polar questions in Hmong Ntsuab. One way is the use of “alternative propositions”, where “the verb put into question is stated in a positive proposition and then is opposed by a negative preposition of the same verb” (55) (Clark 1989: 209). Another way is to employ a “full alternating pattern”, which makes use of a “full explicit positive-negative alternation with the alternative ‘or’: V-or-not-V” (56) (Clark 1989: 210).

(55)

koj noj tsi noj
you eat NEG eat
'(Are) you eating?'

(56)

koj noj los tsi noj
you eat or NEG eat
'(Are) you eating or not eating?'

Two more methods of forming polar questions are by using “tag questions”, where “the two verbs are different” (57) and by merely using the alternative form *los* ‘or’ (58) (Clark 1989: 213).

(57)

koj noj mov lawm los tsi tau
you eat rice finish or NEG succeed
'(Did) you eat food already or not?'

(58)

koj noj los
you eat or
'You ate, right?'

The final way to form a polar question in Hmong Ntsuab, and the method used for testing MVCs in this study, is by adding the preverbal interrogative particle *pua* to a declarative sentence. This particle does not appear sentence-finally, but rather, sentence-medially, immediately preceding a verb. The interrogative particle may appear immediately after the subject and precede the initial verb, as in example (59), or may precede the final verb (60).

(59)

koj pua tau muab pov tseg
you QST succeed take throw keep
'Did you throw (it) away?'

(60)

koj xaav ta puab pua moog
you think COMP s/he QST go
'Do you think she went?'

To answer a polar question of this variety, one can either reply with a portion of the initial declarative sentence or simply repeat the main verb. The latter is by far the quickest and most common response in conversation. The preverbal interrogative particle *pua* never occurs as a response (Clark 1989: 214). The examples below show a polar question (61) and two acceptable answers (62) (63).

(61)

puab poob choj pua tuag
they fall bridge QST die
'(Did) they fall (from the) bridge (to their) death?'

(62)

poob tuag
fall die
'(They) fell (to their) death.'

(63)

tuag
die
'(They fell to their) death.'

2.4.6 The clause linker *kuj*

The Hmong Ntsuab particle *kuj* is similar to what Enfield explains to be the focus particle/clause linker *ka* in Lao (2008: 99). He explains that this particle may serve a variety of other discourse functions including aiding to express the benefactive, contrast, focus, or hesitation/pausing, and can be translated in many ways, as ‘also’, ‘too’, ‘so’, ‘then’, and ‘for to’ (2008: 99-101). Similar to Lao (Enfield 2008: 99), the Hmong Ntsuab *kuj* often appears after the sentential subject and immediately before V1. Some examples of *kuj* are shown below. It serves to convey ‘also’/‘too’ (64) (65), ‘so’ (66), and ‘then’ (67).

(64)

puab cov kuj muab qab rau miv nyuam
they CLF also take chicken give child(ren)
'They also gave chicken (to the) children.'

(65)

kuv kuj pum lug
I also see come
'I also see (them) come.'

(66)

puab kuj poob tuag
they so fall die
'So they fell (to their) death.'

(67)

yug dles zaub ntsuab
we gather vegetable green

lug teb yug kuj muab lug caug dej
come and we then take come soak water

'We gather (the) green vegetables and we then bring (them to) soak (in) water.'

In the next example (68), *kuj* serves to indicate ‘for... to’, as described by Enfield (2008: 100).

(68)

kuv noj mov kuj zoo
I eat rice CLINK good
'For me to eat rice is good.'

There are a number of restrictions on the appearance of this particle in Hmong Ntsuab. For example, *kuj* can not appear before S in OSVV. This is similar to what

Enfield describes about *ka* in Lao, in that it cannot appear “before left position and subject” (2008: 100) in a sentence with the object fronted (69).

(69)

* *qab kuj puab cov muab rau miv nyuam*
chicken CLINK they CLF take give child(ren)

Because it is a sentence-level marker, *ka* cannot appear inside a “tightly subordinating” clause, like relative clauses in Lao (Enfield 2008: 99). This is the same of *kuj* in Hmong Ntsuab (70).

(70)

* *qab kw puab kuj muab rau miv nyuam*
chicken COMP they CLINK take give child(ren)

Although this particle probably has some focusing function in Hmong Ntsuab, not enough data has been compiled to confirm this. It will be referred to as a “clause linker” from now on with the understanding that it most likely serves a number of other functions as well. As described further in Chapter three (section 3.2.3), because of the various functions and restrictions on this clause linker, it is useful for testing verb relationships in multi-verb constructions, as they relate to the insertability of *kuj*.

2.4.7 Summary

This section has provided an overview of various grammatical features of Hmong Ntsuab, intended to serve as the foundation for the further discussion of constituency tests and the specific multi-verb constructions presented in Chapter three and Chapter four.

Chapter 3

SVC and MVC Discussion and Constituency Tests

Before delving into the description and categorization of particular multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab, the following topics will be presented: a literature review of serial verb constructions and multi-verb constructions, a clear list of definitions of the key terms to be used in the following chapter, an explanation of what constitutes a member of the verb category in Hmong Ntsuab, and a discussion about the structural category constituency tests to be used in dividing multi-verb constructions.

3.1 SVC and MVC discussion

Many linguists have conducted research into serial verb constructions in languages around the world. Goddard notes that serial verbs were first discovered in African languages but have been found to occur in Asia, the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, and Australia (2005: 120). Mark Sebba provides a detailed history of linguistic analysis in West African, Caribbean Creole, and East Asian languages, beginning with the earliest known reference by Christaller in 1875. In his document, Christaller describes the two types of “verbal combinations” he observed in Twi, terming them “essential combination” and “accidental combination.” Essential combinations, he explains, have a main verb and an auxiliary verb while accidental combinations have “two or more sentences... thrown or contracted into one, and the verbs are coordinate in sense as well as in form” (Sebba 1987: 5-6). Although this is a very simple description, by dividing the verb combination types in this manner, Christaller provided the first known acknowledgement of serial verbs.

Since Christaller’s time, descriptions of the phenomena of serial verbs in languages have become much more detailed, as many additional studies have been conducted, analyzing various aspects of serial verb constructions, in an attempt to understand and define them better. There, however, is still considerable disagreement regarding many aspects of serial verb research. Researchers continue to disagree on

terminology, underlying structures, the determination of the category “verb,” and the methods of sub-classifying the various types of serial verb constructions.

3.1.1 SVC definitions

Marybeth Clark speaks of serial verbs in a poetic manner stating that serial verbs “spin ideas as it were from a reel, with a minimum of interruptive elements” (1992: 145). Some definitions are found to be as general as: constructions that “use two or more verbs to describe complex events” (Quigley 2002: 14). Others are specific and the source of contention, such as the insistence that serial verbs use two or more verbs, which are lexical verbs, not auxiliary verbs (Wilawan 1995: 54), and that they must be “capable of appearing as the only verb in a simple sentence” (Sebba 1987: 39).

Definitions also address the arguments of SVCs: prototypically, only one overtly expressed (syntactic) subject is present in a serial verb construction (Goddard 2005), which contains at least one shared argument (Aikhenvald no date: 18). The subject of a serial verb is co-referential with the subject of the main verb (Clark 1992: 147), but sentences having the object of one verb as the semantic subject of the second verb may be considered a type of serial verb construction (Aikhenvald no date: 22, Sebba 1987: 87, 43-44).

More definitions include conditions on clauses, events, and propositions such as the following: all verbs must appear in one clause (Foley and Olsen 1985, Baker 1989). They must refer to what is perceived as a “single unitary event” (Aikhenvald no date: 14) or “conceptual event” (Jarkey to appear: 112) and express a single proposition. In the case of sub-events, they are considered facets of a “macro-event” (Payne no date). Interpretation of the event may depend on cultural context (Goddard 2005: 122-124).

Some definitions specify temporal properties of serial verb constructions: The time of a serial verb must be simultaneous with the time of the preceding verb (Clark 1992: 148), unless it expresses a motion event, in which case the time may be after the preceding verb. The same tense, negation, and other TAMs must apply to the whole construction (Aikhenvald 2006). In SVCs, TAMs may be marked only once, or, when marked more than once, each verb is marked as having the same tense, aspect, mood, and/or polarity as the main verb.

These are just a sampling of the possible stipulations when defining SVCs. In reality, what often happens is that researchers create definitions according to what they

deem applicable for the particular language(s) they are studying. In Mandarin Chinese, for example, serial verbs are allowed to have different objects and in White Hmong they are allowed different locative arguments (Aikhenvald no date: 20). In Clark's research, she argues that part of the definition of serial verbs must be that they share a nominative NP and are not predictable (1992: 148). She also disagrees that serialization has "equi-NP deletion" as Fuller claims (1989). Depending on the language and the linguist, different elements are either allowed or not allowed in the definition of serial verb constructions.

3.1.2 Terminology

To make matters more complicated, sometimes the term "serial verb" is not used at all. This phenomenon, or variations of it, is often referred to using terminology such as "complex verb phrases" (Omar 1976), "verb concatenation" (Smith 1979, Hansson 1985), "serialization" (Clark 1992, Filbeck 1975, Jenkins 2006, Goddard 2005) and "consecutivization." Definitions include key terms such as "series of... adjacent verbs" (Smith 1979), "strings of verbs" (Hansson 1985), and "two or more verbs" (Sebba 1987, Goddard 2005).

3.1.3 Underlying structure

In addition, there is also some confusion and disagreement over the structure of so-called serial verb constructions, including debate about if they contain one or more underlying sentence (Sebba 1987: 35) and uncertainty about whether to analyze serial verbs as phrase structures, lexical structures, or transformation (Sebba 1987: 7-26). Defining whether serial verbs are instances of subordination or coordination is another much debated topic. Supriya Wilawan, for example, argues that many supposed "serial verb constructions" are merely instances of nonfinite subordination (1992: 1237).

3.1.4 Verb category

Furthermore, there is additional uncertainty as to how to determine verb category as it relates to serial verb constructions. Some linguists include auxiliary verbs, control verbs, and even what might be considered adverbs, adjectives, and prepositions as verbs in what they accept as serial verb constructions. Filbeck, for example, analyzes the Thai word *klap* 'back' as a verb and not as an adverb, including it in examples of serial verb constructions (1975: 113). Some disagree with this judgment. Others,

such as Wilawan only consider constructions with transitive verbs to be SVCs (1995: 54).

Smith includes preverbs, verbal particles, and preverbal adverbs in the verb concatenations of Sedang (1979). Somphana Srichampa cites Groat (1986) as analyzing “derived prepositions” as directional verbs, but she, herself, analyzes them as coverbs in Vietnamese (1997: 143). Li and Thompson argue, on the other hand, that “coverbs” are prepositions in Chinese (Sebba 1987: 30). It must be noted here that determination of word class across languages is complicated. It is based on multiple features such as formal characteristics, syntactic function, and meaning (Kratochvil 1968: 106-115). The category of “verb,” therefore, is often reanalyzed for the purposes of the language being studied.

3.1.5 SVC categorizations and sub-types

There does not seem to be any standard agreement regarding how to categorize and sub-categorize serial verb constructions. In the past, categorization of SVC subtypes was fairly elementary. Omar divided complex verb phrases into three groups. Those in which (a) both VPs were represented by different verbs, (b) VP1 was an adjective and VP2 a verb, and (c) VP1 was a verb and VP2 an adjective (1976: 960). In recent years, some researchers prefer to divide SVCs into types according to their semantic and syntactic properties. Aikhenvald (2006) divides serial verb constructions into four sub categories: switch function SVCs, cumulative subject SVCs, event-argument SVCs, and resultative SVCs. Sudmuk (2006) divides SVCs into the following eight categories based on semantics and specific word forms: motion, posture, ‘take’, ‘use’, open class, ‘give’, causative, and resultative. Others prefer to divide SVC types based on syntactic properties alone. Jenkins divides serial verb constructions into coordinating and subordinating types of serialization (2006: 7). He also makes note of a hybrid type of SVC which allows same-subject or different-subject sub-types. Jarkey, who has conducted extensive research in White Hmong, divides Hmong SVCs into four types: Contemporaneous, Pivotal, Attainment, and Disposal (2006: 117).

3.1.6 Concluding remarks on SVCs and definitions

Despite the lack of agreement regarding the terminology, definitions, and categorization of “serial verbs,” it is apparent that unmarked multi-verb constructions are not only common in many languages, but also worth researching as a particular phenomenon. In an attempt to avoid the ongoing theoretical debate described above (section 3.1) and the restrictions associated with certain

terminology, the term “multi-verb construction” is used in this study. It is believed that the term “serial verb constructions,” as Enfield states, may be “too narrowly suggestive of certain specific types of constructions which form only a subset” of multi-verb constructions (2007: 339). “Multi-verb constructions” (MVCs) are defined below for the purposes of this study.

- a) They are verb sequences, which will be marked V1-V2, following Enfield (2008).
- b) The verbs are unmarked: there is no overt coordinating or subordinating marker to indicate the relationship between verbs in a construction.
- c) The verbs form integrated units in which they normally convey facets of one conceptual event.

In addition, as far as categorization and subtypes, this study will model Enfield’s framework and descriptive approach in his study of multi-verb constructions in Lao (2008). This approach to investigating various multi-verb constructions is a simple, thorough, and organized way to categorize and describe these constructions and better understand the types of multi-verb constructions and their inter-verb relationships in Lao. Enfield divides multi-verb constructions, into what he calls “structural categories,” based on the varying semantic and grammatical relations between the verbs, as determined by constituency tests. These constituency tests are further explained below (section 3.2). Here, the term “structural category” is defined for the purposes of this study.

- a) Structural categories are based on the semantic and grammatical properties of the verbs in multi-verb constructions.
- b) Structural categories include the following: deverbal aspect/modality marking constructions, despatch expressions, disposal constructions, sequences of complex motion, secondary predication constructions, oblique phrases/adjunction, causative constructions, complementation, and coordinating constructions.
- c) Some of these structural categories can be further broken down into sub-categories.

The following section (section 3.2), discusses what constitutes a member of the verb category and the various structural category constituency tests. This will help lay the foundation for the description and categorization of some types of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab presented in Chapter four.

3.2 Verb tests and constituency tests

The following section begins with a discussion of some of the tests which demonstrate the grammatical features of prototypical main verbs in Hmong Ntsuab (section 3.2.1). These tests serve to verify that each verb in the multi-verb constructions is a main verb, or is able to function as a main verb in certain grammatical contexts. This main verb section is followed by an explanation of the constituency tests which are used to clarify the relationships of unmarked verbs in multi-verb sequences in Hmong Ntsuab. An understanding of the verb relationships aids in distinguishing and classifying the various types of MVCs. Five constituency tests are discussed:

- Clause separability
- Yes-answer
- Fronting of object complements
- Insertion of a left aspectual marking
- Insertion of a clause linker

3.2.1 Grammatical features of canonical main verbs

Verbs may be defined as members of the “parts-of-speech class in which occur most of the words that express actions, processes and the like” or as forms that foreground “temporal relations” (Schachter and Shopen 2007: 9). Enfield defines verbs as “members of the class of words accessible to a defined set of grammatical markings and processes associated with words denoting semantically prototypical actions/events” (2008: 84). In many languages, verbs have the “normal grammatical features of main verbs” and pass the following tests: they can be directly negated, can take direct irrealis marking, can take marking of achievement and marking of perfect aspect, and/or can be used as nominal attributives in noun phrases (Enfield 2008: 103).

3.2.1.1 Features of verb class in Hmong Ntsuab

Hmong Ntsuab words may be determined to be members of the verb class based on similar tests. The Hmong Ntsuab verb *moog* ‘go’ will be used to provide examples of these tests, as it passes all the tests. Verbs in Hmong Ntsuab can take direct negation with the preverbal negation marker *tsi* (71) and can take direct irrealis with the preverbal *yuav* (72).

(71)

kuv tsi moog teb
I NEG go field
'I do not go (to the) field.'

(72)

pi kig puab yuav moog Chiang Mai
tomorrow they will go Chiang Mai
'Tomorrow, they will go (to) Chiang Mai.'

Verbs such as *moog* 'go' can also be marked for attainment with preverbal *laij* (73) or preverbal *tau* (74), and can take direct marking of "current relevant state" (Enfield 2008: 103) with postverbal *lawm* (75).

(73)

naag moog puab laij moog kuv tsev
yesterday they ATT go I house
'Yesterday, they went (to) my house.'

(74)

naag moog puab tau moog kuv tsev
yesterday they ATT go I house
'Yesterday, they went (to) my house.'

(75)

kuv moog lawm
I go finish
'I went already.'

The final two examples below show that the verb *moog* 'go' may also be used as an attributive in a noun phrase (76) and may be overtly linked to the modified noun by the relativiser *kw* (77).

(76)

yuav ntau muab tuab neeg moog Chiang Mai
take book BENF CLF person go Chiang Mai
'Give (the) book to the person going (to) Chiang Mai.'

(77)

yuav ntau muab tuab neeg kw moog Chiang Mai
take book BENF CLF person COMP go Chiang Mai
'Give (the) book to the person that (is) going (to) Chiang Mai.'

3.2.1.2 Further clarification

Before continuing to the discussion of the various structural tests, it is important to note that all the verbs used in each of the MVC structural categories in this study were tested to check that they could, in fact, function as verbs. However, some of the surface forms used in this study may serve other grammatical functions as well, due to varying degrees of grammaticalization. When forms are not functioning as verbs, they may not possess all the grammatical features of main verbs. As Enfield describes it, “verbs in secondary or subordinate function often are not accessible to some or all of these properties” (2008: 103).

In keeping with Enfield’s framework, a few verbs with this duality of grammatical function are included in the MVCs in this study, as they provide additional valuable data as particular MVC types and are useful for comparison to other MVC types.

3.2.1.3 Summary

The vast majority of the verbs detailed in the multi-verb constructions in Chapter four possess all the grammatical features of main verbs. They can be directly marked for modification in various ways. The few exceptions that exist are a result of the varying grammatical functions of the surface form. Verbs with multiple grammatical functions which are less accessible to some of the grammatical features of main verbs are still included in a few of the different multi-verb construction types in this study. The following section begins the discussion of constituency tests that are used to clarify the relationships of verbs in unmarked sequences.

3.2.2 Clause separability test

A clause separability test can be used to distinguish between some types of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab. Enfield defines “clause separability” as a MVC that “can be paraphrased with insertion of overt marking which forces a reading of the verbs as each belonging to an independent clause, and where this causes no significant changes in the basic semantic relationship between those verbs” (2008: 103-104). Although Enfield does not define what a “significant change” is, for the purposes of this study a significant change in the semantic relationship of the verbs will be considered one that affects the temporal sequence, the specific semantic relationship, the definition of the individual verbs, or the meaning of the combined verbs.

Examples of clause-separability tests below show the insertion of overt elements, such as the coordinator *hab* ‘and’, which create two separate clauses. This type of test serves as an aid in determining the relationship between verbs in that construction. The verbs in MVCs that are clause separable are generally not subordinating, and have a looser semantic and syntactic relationship than those that are not clause separable.

3.2.2.1 Clause separable constructions

Some types of MVCs, such as resultatives (section 4.5.1) and verb chains (section 4.9.1) are clause-separable. The purposive verb chain construction *moog kawm* ‘go study’ is clause-separable and not subordinating, as clause separation does not change the relationship of the verbs, as shown in the comparison of the two examples below (78) (79).

(78)

puab txau sab moog Chiang Mai kawm ntau
 they interested go Chiang Mai study book
 'They (are) interested (in) going (to) Chiang Mai (to) study.'

(79)

puab txau sab moog Chiang Mai hab kawm ntau
 they interested go Chiang Mai and study book
 'They (are) interested (in) going (to) Chiang Mai and studying.'

The insertion of the coordinating conjunction *hab* ‘and’ does not cause a significant change to the semantic content on the whole or to the V1-V2 semantic relationship. As demonstrated in the gloss and free translation the verbs maintain their individual meanings after clause separation. In addition, the temporal sequence of the verbs is maintained and the inter-verb relationship does not change, as V2 occurs because of V1 in both constructions. This clause separability indicates a fairly loose syntactic relationship between verbs.

3.2.2.2 Constructions that are not clause separable

The examples above (78) (79) show a MVC that is clause-separable, however, testing other types of MVCs in Hmong Ntsuab, shows that many of them are not clause-separable. Certain types of subordinating constructions, such as despatch constructions (section 4.2) are not clause-separable. This is shown in the comparison of the two examples below (80) and (81). Significant semantic change in the

meaning of the verbs *muab* ‘take’ and *tsuab* ‘give’ is noted when the clauses are separated (81).

(80)

nwg muab ntau tsuab fw sw
s/he take book APPL teacher
'She gave (the) book to (the) teacher.'

(81)

nwg muab ntau hab tsuab fw sw
s/he take book and give teacher
'She took (the) book and gave (it to the) teacher.'

When the two verbs *muab* *tsuab* exist in one clause, they combine to convey the single conceptual event of ‘giving’, occurring at one point in time, as demonstrated in the free translation of the first example above (80). When the clauses are separated, the verbs convey two separate events *muab* ‘taking’ and *tsuab* ‘giving’, with a consecutive temporal relationship (81). Since the separation of clauses causes a significant change in the semantic relationship of the verbs, the construction is not considered to be clause separable. This may indicate a tight relationship between verbs.

3.2.2.3 Constructions that are not clause-separable due to ungrammaticality

Above (section 3.2.2.2), some MVCs that are not clause-separable due to significant semantic change are detailed. In other MVC types, however, the construction is not clause-separable because testing for clause separability actually results in an ungrammatical construction. This is demonstrated in the examples of a deverbal construction below (82) (83), where V1 is *txeev* ‘accustomed’ and V2 is *moog* ‘go’. Deverbal constructions are discussed further in (section 4.1).

(82)

kuv txeev moog Chiang Mai
I accustomed go Chiang Mai
'I have gone (to) Chiang Mai.'

(83)

* *kuv txeev hab moog Chiang Mai*
I accustomed and go Chiang Mai

When forcing the separation of clauses results in an ungrammatical construction (83), the construction is not considered to be clause-separable. In addition, the ungrammaticality of the resulting construction may indicate that the verbs have an

even tighter subordinating relationship than those discussed above (section 3.2.2.2) where semantic change is noted.

3.2.2.4 Summary

As demonstrated, multi-verb relationships can be tested through the insertion of the conjunction *hab* ‘and’ between verbs to create two separate clauses. In testing for clause-separability some MVCs are not clause-separable but others are. Clause-separability indicates a loose semantic and syntactic relationship between verbs and non clause-separability indicates a tighter relationship between verbs. It is proposed that the tightest relationship between verbs is demonstrated when forcing clause-separability results in an ungrammatical construction.

3.2.3 Insertability of the clause linker *kuj* test

The various functions and constraints of the clause linker *kuj* have already been discussed in detail in Chapter two (section 2.4.6). *kuj* can be used to separate clauses, similar to the conjunction *hab* ‘and’. However, *kuj* can also serve to link clauses or indicate semantic relationships between clauses. Because of this, it is included as a separate test from the clause separability test detailed above (section 3.2.2).

In testing for the insertability of the clause linker *kuj*, it is important to remember that it commonly appears directly before V1 and its appearance in this location does not seem to cause any significant semantic change in the relationship of the verbs as shown in the comparison of the following examples (84) (85). In fact, when *kuj* appears before V1 it is usually serving to link the following clause to a previous clause or sentence (85).

(84)

puab poob tuag
they fall die
'They fell (to their) death.'

(85)

puab kuj poob tuag
they then fall die
'They then fell (to their) death.'

It is when *kuj* is medially inserted, between verbs, that different patterns are observed in the various types of multi-verb constructions. The following distinctions can be made based on this test: MVCs that allow medial insertion of *kuj*, MVCs that

do not allow medial insertion of *kuj* due to significant semantic change, as previously defined (section 3.2.2), and MVCs that do not allow medial insertion of *kuj* due to a resulting ungrammaticality.

3.2.3.1 Medial insertion of *kuj* allowed

Multi-verb constructions, such as projected resultatives (section 4.5.1.3) allow the medial insertion of *kuj*, as displayed in the examples below (86) (87).

(86)

nwg ncha pum
s/he seek find
'She looked (and) found (it).'

(87)

nwg ncha kuj pum
s/he seek so find
'She looked so (she) found (it).'

In MVCs like this, the medial insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, results in a construction with a similar meaning and does not alter the semantic relationship of the verbs. The projected V2 *pum* 'find' is a result of the occurrence of V1 *ncha* 'seek' in both sentences (86) (87). The temporal sequence does not change.

3.2.3.2 Medial insertion of *kuj* not allowed due to semantic change

In some constructions, the clause linker *kuj* may be inserted immediately before V1 or before V2 and still result in a grammatical construction. However, in some of these cases, insertion of *kuj* before V2 often creates a different reading, changing the relationship of the verbs. This is demonstrated in the comparison of the different-subject control complementation constructions below (88) (89).

(88)

kuv pum lug
I see come
'I see (them) come.'

(89)

kuv pum kuj lug
I see so come
'I see (them) so (they) come.'

When *kuj* appears after V1 *pum* 'see' and immediately before V2 *lug* 'come' (89), it forces a reading of two distinct clauses and changes the semantic relationship

between the verbs, where *pum* ‘seeing’ is considered to cause *lug* ‘coming’. In addition, the temporal sequence of the verbs is changed to V2 occurring after V1 and not simultaneous as in the first construction (88). This is not the same relationship that the verbs had before the insertion of *kuj*. As Enfield explains it, if you were to insert the clause linker between verbs it would ‘disallow a reading in which the lower clause... were subordinate to the higher verb... and would instead force a biclausal coordination reading’ (2008: 112). It is no longer possible to consider the verbs to portray the same event, or sub events of the same event. In cases like this, when there is a significant semantic change due to the medial insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, insertion is considered to be not allowed. Different-subject control complementation constructions are discussed further below (section 4.8.1.2).

3.2.3.3 Medial insertion not allowed due to ungrammaticality

In some constructions, such as causatives (section 4.7), the insertion of *kuj* in between verbs results in an ungrammatical construction. Consider the following causative construction (90).

(90)

kuv ua rau koj tu sab
 I do CAUS you sad heart
 'I made you sad.'

In these types of MVCs medial insertion of the clause linker *kuj* is clearly not allowed, as it results in an ungrammatical construction (91).

(91)

* *kuv ua kuj rau koj tu sab*
 I do so give you sad heart

3.2.3.4 Other semantic considerations

In some constructions, the semantic scope of the verbs and arguments must be considered, as they may be ambiguous. The example below (92) employs the same two verbs (*ua* ‘do’ and *rau* ‘CAUS/BENF’) as the above example (90). Here, the medial verb insertion of the clause linker *kuj* does not result in an ungrammatical construction, as shown above (91), but it does result in meaning change (93). Clearly, *ua rau* does not form the same type of constructions in these two examples (90) (92).

(92)

kuv ua mov rau koj noj
I do rice BENF you eat
'I made rice for you (to) eat.'

(93)

kuv ua mov kuj rau koj noj
I do rice then give you eat
'I made rice then gave (it to) you (to) eat.'

3.2.3.5 Summary

When considering the clause linker *kuj*, it becomes clear that the semantic usages and grammatical constraints on it make it useful in conducting structural testing. It is helpful in clarifying the organizational structure of some clauses in MVCs. Testing for the insertion of *kuj* between verbs helps to distinguish between MVCs which allow the insertion of *kuj*, MVCs that do not allow the insertion of *kuj* due to semantic change, and MVCs that do not allow the insertion of *kuj* due to ungrammaticality.

3.2.4 Polar questions and the yes-answer test

As discussed above (section 3.2.4), there are many methods of forming polar questions in Hmong Ntsuab. The method employed in the yes-answer test makes use of the preverbal interrogative particle *pua*. The examples below show this type of polar question (94) and a V1-V2 answer to that question (95).

(94)

puab poob choj pua tuag
they fall bridge QST die
'(Did) they fall (from the) bridge (to their) death?'

(95)

poob tuag
fall die
'(They) fell (to their) death.'

In all the constructions surveyed in this study, polar questions are able to be answered by repeating both verbs (V1-V2), as in the above example (95). However, depending on the construction type, there exists a variety of other answers, each of which indicates a particular relationship among the verbs in the construction. When a particular yes-answer is not allowed, it is because it is odd, ungrammatical, or not

a straight answer to the question⁵. Possible answers include V1, V2, V1-V2, and V1 or V2. Each of these answer-types and their significance to this study will now be discussed.

3.2.4.1 V1-answers

The quickest and most common response to polar questions often involves a simple repetition of one verb. In cases like this, the yes-answer test is helpful in determining the main verb in a MVC because, as explained by Enfield, in “answering... by means of repetition of some portion of the question, the main verb... is necessary and sufficient as a yes-answer” (2008: 105). In answering a polar question, some MVC types, such as preverbal deverbals (section 4.1.1) prefer a V1-answer (96) (97).

(96)

koj pua txeev moog Chiang Mai
you QST accustomed go Chiang Mai
'Have you gone (to) Chiang Mai?'

(97)

txeev
accustomed
'(I) have.'

In this case, a V2 answer is not quite a straight answer to the question (98).

(98)

? *moog*
go
'(I) went.'

This strong preference for a V1 answer is important as it contributes to understanding the relationships of the verbs in these types of constructions. It indicates that V1 serves as the main verb in this multi-verb construction, as it is both necessary and alone sufficient when answering the question. This structure is indicated by the following brackets: $[V_1 [V_2]_{VP}]_{VP}$

3.2.4.2 V2-answers

In the same-subject resultative (section 4.5.1.1) examples above (94) (95), V1-V2 was shown to be a possible answer to the polar question. Because all constructions

⁵ Constructions are denoted with the following symbols: odd “%”, not a straight answer to the question “?”, ungrammatical “**”.

allow this answer type, this result is unremarkable. In fact, in speaking with the language resource persons when using the yes-answer test, it was explained that, although V1-V2 is a possible answer, *tuag* ‘die’ V2 is the preferred answer (100). This is because, in same-subject resultatives, V1 *poob* ‘falling’ is entailed. The question (99) is not asking if the subject fell (V1) but if he died (V2).

(99)

puab poob choj pua tuag
 they fall bridge QST die
 '(Did) they fall (from the) bridge (to their) death?'

(100)

tuag
 die
 '(They fell to their) death.'

Answering with V2 alone is sufficient because of V1 entailment, and the fuller V1-V2 answer is unnecessary. This preference for the V2-answer indicates that V2 *tuag* ‘die’ serves as the main verb in this multi-verb construction. This structure is indicated by the following brackets: $[[V_1]_{VP} V_2]_{VP}$

3.2.4.3 V1-V2 answers

Although all MVCs in this study allow a V1-V2 answer, some constructions *require* a V1-V2 answer. This is the case with left-marking adverbial compounds (section 4.5.3.2), as shown in the polar question (101) and answer (102) below.

(101)

nwg pws pua saib TV
 s/he recline QST watch television
 '(Does) he recline (to) watch TV?'

(102)

pws saib
 recline watch
 '(He) reclines (to) watch (TV).'

(103)

? *saib*
 watch
 '(He) watches (TV).'

(104)

? *pws*
recline
'(He) reclines.'

In these cases, a single-verb answer is not allowed because it is not a straight answer to the question (103) (104). This is different than the constructions described above (96) (99) where it is possible for polar questions to be answered with a single verb as well. These types of MVCs require a V1-V2 answer, which indicates a fairly equal head status among the two verbs in these types of constructions. This structure is indicated by the following brackets: $[[V_1]_{VP} [V_2]_{VP}]_{VP}$

3.2.4.4 V1 or V2 answers

In the final type of answer, it is possible for either verb to suffice as a single-verb answer to a polar question. This flexibility is seen in certain types of verb compounds where V1 and V2 are synonyms (section 4.9.2). The following examples (105) (106) (107), which make use of the near-synonyms *ntswb* 'meet' and *pum* 'see', show this.

(105)

koj pua ntswb pum nwg tom teb
you QST meet see s/he at field
'(Did) you encounter him at (the) field?'

(106)

ntswb
meet
'(I) met (him).'

(107)

pum
see
'(I) saw (him).'

The structure of these types of MVCs is indicated by the following brackets:

$[V_1 V_2]_{VP}$

3.2.4.5 Summary

When answering polar questions in Hmong Nstuab, different types of MVCs prefer different answers. This yes-answer test is used to divide up the types of MVCs, as some constructions strongly prefer a one-verb answer, others require a two-verb

(V1-V2) answer, and still others can use either verb (V1 or V2) as an answer. These preferences indicate the headship qualities of verbs in otherwise unmarked constructions.

3.2.5 Fronting of object complement test

As previously discussed, (section 2.4.1) object complements in multi-verb constructions are often able to be ellipped when they are contextually retrievable (108) (109).

(108)

puab coj TV lug noog
they take television come listen
'They bring (the) TV (to) listen (to).'

(109)

puab coj lug noog
they take come listen
'They bring (it to) listen (to).'

Although the ellipsis of object complements is very common across MVC types, the movement of object complements is more restricted. Because of this restriction, testing the various types of multi-verb constructions, to see if object complements are able to be fronted, aids in distinguishing between MVC types.

3.2.5.1 Frontable

Certain multi-verb constructions allow the fronting of object complements. This is shown in the example of a different-subject control complement construction (section 4.8.1.2 and section 4.8.1.3) below, with the fronted object 'television' (110).

(110)

TV puab coj lug noog
television they take come listen
'(The) TV, they brought (to) listen (to).'

Constructions such as these, which allow the fronting of their object complements, generally consist of verbs in a tightly connected relationship. In the above example (110), the verbs *coj* and *lug* are working together to convey the single conceptual event of 'bringing', and not two sub-events of 'taking' and 'coming'. The fronting of the object complement does not affect the understanding of the event. This is dissimilar to constructions that do not allow object fronting.

3.2.5.2 Not frontable

Some types of MVCs do not allow the fronting of object complements. Examples of resultative constructions (section 4.5.1) demonstrate this below (111) (112) (113) (114).

(111)

puab poob choj tuag
they fall bridge die

'They fell (from the) bridge (to their) death.'

(112)

% *choj puab poob tuag*
bridge they fall die

(113)

puab ntsau nyuj tuag
they crash cow die

'They crashed (into the) cow (to their) death.'

(114)

* *nyuj puab ntsau tuag*
cow they crash die

Constructions that do not allow the fronting of their object complements tend to contain verbs that are more loosely connected. In the MVC examples above, the V1 and V2 represent temporally sequential sub-elements of the single conceptual event where *poob* 'falling' results in *tuag* 'dying' and *ntsau* 'crashing' results in *tuag* 'dying'. The removal, or displacement, of the object complement affects the understanding of the sub-parts of the event and, therefore, the understanding of the event as a whole.

3.2.5.3 Summary

This object complement fronting test serves to divide multi-verb constructions into two types: MVCs which allow object complements to be fronted and MVCs that do not allow the fronting of object complements. It also aids in the further understanding of the relationship of the verbs in the MVCs. Interestingly, MVCs that are clause separable generally do not allow object complement fronting.

3.2.6 Insertability of *tsi* 'NEG' aspect-modality marking test

In multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab, certain left aspect-modality marking is common on the verbs, such as *tsi* 'NEG'. Some MVCs allow this marking of

negation immediately before V1 and some MVCs allow it immediately before V2, at which point it is termed “medial negation.” This distinction in placement of this left aspect-modality marker serves to divide MVCs into those that do not allow medial negation and those that allow medial negation.

3.2.6.1 Medial negation not allowed

Certain multi-verb constructions, such as verb compounds (section 4.9.2) do not allow medial negation (115).

(115)

* *kuv ntswb tsi pum nwg tom teb*
 I meet NEG see s/he at field

The inability to be medially negated indicates a tight syntactic relationship between the two verbs in these types of constructions. In fact, as Enfield puts it, verb compounds in Lao are “effectively a single verb” (2008: 172). In this particular example (115), the two Hmong Ntsuab verbs *ntswb* ‘meet’ and *pum* ‘see’ demonstrate that same sense. In addition, the inability to take medial negation indicates a particular semantic relationship between verbs in the construction. The verbs in this example, *ntswb* ‘meet’ and *pum* ‘see’, are synonyms in which V1 ‘meeting’ entails V2 ‘seeing’. Because of this, the negation of V2 alone is not allowed.

3.2.6.2 Medial negation allowed

Other multi-verb constructions, such as resultatives (section 4.5.1), allow medial negation (116).

(116)

puab poob choj tsi tuag
 they fall bridge NEG die
 'They fell (from the) bridge (but did) not die.'

The fact that resultatives allow medial negation indicates that, syntactically, these MVCs are not as tightly bound as the verb compounds discussed above (section 3.2.6.1). Semantically, these types of constructions have a temporally sequential relationship, and can be considered to be somewhat independent as sub-events of a single conceptual event, making it possible for V2 to not occur, even though V1 occurs. This means that *poob* ‘falling’ can occur without *tuag* ‘dying’. In these constructions, the negation of V2 entails V1.

3.2.6.3 Summary

This negation test serves to divide MVCs into two groups: MVCs that do not allow medial negation and MVCs that allow medial negation. Furthermore, negation patterns provide insight into the differing semantic and syntactic relationships of the verbs in multi-verb constructions.

Chapter 4

Structural Categories

The following chapter closely follows the organization of nine multi-verb structural categories as outlined by N. J. Enfield in *Verbs and multi-verb constructions in Lao* (2008: 113-172). These categories are used to classify various multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab. The particularities of each category are explained first, followed by a description of the grammatical features of the multi-verb constructions in that category, complete with Hmong Ntsuab examples. Some categories are further broken down into sub-categories. Table 1, below, shows a list of the structural categories and sub-categories with a sample Hmong Ntsuab MVC for each category. A summary chart showing the differences of the grammatical features across categories is provided in Appendix 2.

Table 1 Structural categories and sample constructions

Structural category	Sample construction
deverbal: preverbal	<i>tseev moog</i> 'accustomed' 'go'
deverbal: postverbal	<i>moog lawm</i> 'go' 'finish'
despatch: handling-despatch	<i>muab rau</i> 'take' 'give'
despatch: communication-despatch-reception	<i>ha rua noog</i> 'say' 'give' 'listen'
disposal	<i>coj moog nkawm</i> 'lead' 'go' 'study'
complex motion	<i>dla nqeg moog</i> 'run' 'descend' 'go'
resultative: same subj	<i>poob tuag</i> 'fall' 'die'
resultative: different subj	<i>to tuag</i> 'stab' 'die'
resultative: projected	<i>ncha pum</i> 'seek' 'find'
resultative: reiterative	<i>tua tuag</i> 'kill' 'die'
adverbial complement: right headed stative	<i>khaw nuab</i> 'collect' 'difficult'
adverbial complement: left-headed	<i>maaj sau</i> 'hurry' 'write'

Structural category	Sample construction
adverbial compound: right-marking	<i>nrab muab</i> 'grab' 'take'
adverbial compound: right-marking active	<i>ua sis</i> 'do' 'play'
adverbial compound: left-marking	<i>pws saib</i> 'recline' 'watch'
depictive: left-marking	<i>nyob nyeem</i> 'sit' 'read'
oblique: deverbial preposition	<i>ua rau</i> 'do' 'give'
causative: simple	<i>kua moog</i> 'give' 'go'
causative: simple	<i>ua tawg</i> 'do' 'break'
causative: complex	<i>ua rau</i> 'do' 'give'
causative: complex	<i>khaiv kuam moog</i> 'order' 'give' 'go'
complement, contrl, same-subj	<i>xaav moog</i> 'want' 'go'
complement, contrl, diff-subj	<i>xaav kua</i> 'want' 'give'
complement, contrl, diff-subj, flat	<i>kua lug</i> 'give' 'come'
complement, non-control	<i>xaav ta moog</i> 'think' 'say' 'go'
VP chain: parallel	<i>khaw khaw</i> 'collect' 'collect'
VP chain: purposive	<i>moog nkawv</i> 'go' 'study'
VP chain: sequential	<i>nruav nkaag</i> 'brush' 'enter'
verb compound	<i>ntswb pum</i> 'meet' 'see'

4.1 Deverbial aspect-modality marking

In Hmong Ntsuab, similar to Lao (Enfield 2008: 113), main verbs can also serve as aspect-modality markers. These verbs are termed “deverbial” markers because, although they may be functioning as aspect-modality markers, they are “transparently related to existing verbs” (2008: 114). Many aspect-modality markers are deverbial but some are not. This section does not attempt to describe the entire class of aspect-modality markers in Hmong Ntsuab, but only considers the ones that are deverbial.

Before continuing on to the discussion of the structural properties of deverbial MVCs, it is important to remember that, as previously discussed (section 3.2.1), when verbs are not functioning as main verbs they may not possess all the grammatical features of main verbs. This is especially crucial when dealing with deverbial markers, as they

are in the process of grammaticalization and have a dual grammatical function by nature. As Enfield puts it: “It is not always possible to say when a [verb] has become ‘grammatical’ and is no longer ‘lexical.’” For this reason, and in keeping with the structural categories outlined by Enfield, they are still considered in some MVCs of this study.

Because the same surface form may function as a verbal marker in one setting and a main verb in another, surface strings of, what seem to be, multiple main verbs are common. Deverbals often combine with other verbs in multi-verb constructions. Hmong Ntsuab makes use of both preverbal deverbals and postverbal deverbals in MVCs⁶. The grammatical features of the verbs in these two types of multi-verb constructions are discussed below.

4.1.1 Preverbal deverbals aspect-modality

Some preverbal deverbals aspect-modality markers in Hmong Ntsuab include *txug* ‘arrive’, *cum* ‘must’, and *txeev* ‘accustomed’. Preverbal deverbals MVCs demonstrate unique grammatical properties. Consider the following preverbal deverbals MVC, where V1 *txeev* ‘accustomed’ is the preverbal deverbals aspect-modality marker⁷ and V2 is *moog* ‘go’, as demonstrated in the simple declarative sentence below (117).

(117)

kuv txeev moog Chiang Mai
 I accustomed go Chiang Mai
 'I have gone (to) Chiang Mai.'

Testing shows that the verbs in these types of constructions are tightly bound, as insertion of elements creates ungrammatical constructions. For example, the multi-verb construction *txeev moog* ‘accustomed’ ‘go’ is not clause separable with the coordinator *hab* ‘and’ (118) or the clause linker *kuj* (119), as the creation of independent clauses results in ungrammatical sentences.

(118)

* *kuv txeev hab moog Chiang Mai*
 I accustomed and go Chiang Mai

⁶ Some verbs may appear as either the first verb in a two-verb string or as the second verb in the string, such as the verb *tau* ‘succeed, can’, which was discussed in Chapter two (section 2.4.4).

⁷ Although this preverbal deverbals aspect-modality marker, *txeev*, passes many of the main verb headship tests, such as taking direct negation, and taking direct post-verbal modification, it seems to be restricted in its use as a verb.

(119)

* *kuv txeev kuj moog Chiang Mai*
I accustomed so go Chiang Mai

In addition, this multi-verb construction takes negation on the initial verb (120) but is unable to take medial negation (121).

(120)

kuv tsi txeev moog Chiang Mai
I NEG accustomed go Chiang Mai
'I have never gone (to) Chiang Mai.'

(121)

* *kuv txeev tsi moog Chiang Mai*
I accustomed NEG go Chiang Mai

As far as the yes-answer test, V1, the verb *txeev* 'accustomed', is the best single-verb response to a polar question (122). Although it is also possible to answer the question with V2 *moog* 'go' alone, and be understood, this is not a direct answer to the question (124). The preferred yes-answer is V1 alone (123), indicating that V1 is the head of the construction.

(122)

koj pua txeev moog Chiang Mai
you QST accustomed go Chiang Mai
'Have you gone (to) Chiang Mai?'

(123)

txeev
accustomed
'(I) have.'

(124)

? *moog*
go
'(I) went.'

Another indication of the tight relationship of the verbs in these types of constructions is shown in the fronting of object complements test. Preverbal deverbal MVCs allow object complements to be fronted, as shown in the example below (125).

(125)

Chiang Mai kuv tsi txeev moog
Chiang Mai I NEG accustomed go
'(To) Chiang Mai, I have never gone.'

4.1.2 Postverbal deverbal aspect-modality

Postverbal deverbal aspect-modality markers in Hmong Ntsuab are not as prevalent as their preverbal counterparts. However, they do exist. One example of a postverbal deverbal aspect-modality marker is *lawm* ‘finish, already’. An example of a postverbal deverbal aspect-modality MVC is demonstrated below, where *moog* ‘go’ is V1 and *lawm* ‘already’ is the postverbal deverbal form. This multi-verb construction is shown in the simple declarative sentence below (126).

(126)

kuv moog lawm
I go finish
'I went already.'

Testing of this multi-verb construction shows that it is not clause-separable, whether independent clauses are created using the coordinating conjunction *hab* ‘and’ (127), the clause linker *kuj* (128), or even with the adverbial expression *dlaug ntawm lug* ‘after that’ (129).

(127)

* *kuv moog Chiang Mai hab lawm*
I go Chiang Mai and finish

(128)

* *kuv moog Chiang Mai kuj lawm*
I go Chiang Mai so finish

(129)

* *kuv moog Chiang Mai dlaug ntawm lug lawm*
I go Chiang Mai after that come finish

This type of V1-V2 construction takes negation on V1 (130) but is unable to take medial negation (131).

(130)

kuv tsi moog lawm
I NEG go finish
'I (am) not going anymore.'

(131)

* *kuv moog tsi lawm*
I go NEG finish

It is able to take medial negation only when an additional verb, such as *tau* 'can', is inserted in the verb string (132), which is not medial negation of *moog lawm* but of *moog tau*, a different MVC.

(132)

kuv moog tsi tau lawm
I go NEG can finish
'I cannot go anymore.'

In answering a polar question (133), V1-V2 is the preferred answer (134). V1 is also acceptable as a single verb answer (135). V2 is not acceptable (136). This indicates that V1 *moog* 'go' is the head of this construction.

(133)

puab pua moog lawm
they QST go finish
'(Did) they go already?'

(134)

moog lawm
go finish
'(They) went already.'

(135)

moog
go
'(They) went.'

(136)

* *lawm*
finish

Similar to preverbal deverbals, postverbal deverbals allow object complements to be fronted (137), indicating a tight relationship between the verbs.

(137)

tsev puab moog lawm
house they go finish
'(The) house, they went (to) already.'

4.1.3 Summary

The verbs in both preverbal and postverbal deverbals seem to be very tightly bound. There has been no clear definition in literature regarding how to determine the "tightness" or "looseness" of verbs. For the purposes of this study, a construction

that is clause separable, does not allow the fronting of object complements, and allows the insertion of other elements between verbs will be considered less tight than constructions that do not allow these things. In addition, constructions that have a clear head seem to be more tightly bound than those that do not. There is the potential to further define tightness using semantic relationships or syntactic configuration. However, a full range of tests are beyond the scope of this study.

For deverbal constructions, discussed above (section 4.1), no elements can appear between the verbs and object complements may be fronted. Medial negation is not allowed and V1 must be directly negated to negate the whole construction. Preverbal deverbal MVCs and postverbal deverbal MVCs differ in what they prefer as a yes-answer to a polar question. Although both types of constructions allow V1 as a yes-answer, postverbal deverbals prefer V1-V2. This may be an indication of the existence of a stronger V1 headship in preverbal deverbals.

4.2 Despatch expressions

Enfield describes Lao verbs of “despatch” as those “expressing some kind of transfer or placement” (2008: 123). He then explains that despatch expressions are used in three argument clauses and that there are three types of despatch expressions in Lao: “handling-despatch” constructions, “despatch-despatch” constructions, and “communications-despatch-reception” constructions (2008: 123-124). These types of despatch expressions are used in three argument clauses in Hmong Ntsuab as well, although further study must be done to provide clear examples of despatch-despatch constructions. The various types of despatch expressions are discussed below.

4.2.1 Handling-despatch

A handling verb is defined as a verb “describing the way in which something is handled” and a handling-despatch construction as one that “typically describes transfer or placement” (Enfield 2008: 123). An example of this type of construction in Hmong Ntsuab follows (138), where V1 *muab* ‘take’ is the handling verb, V2 *nkaag* ‘enter’ is the despatch verb, and where the three arguments are *kuv* ‘I’, *koob* ‘pin’, and *qhov* ‘hole’.

(138)

kuv muab koob nkaag qhov
I take pin enter hole
'I put (the) pin in (the) hole.'

Another example of a handling-despatch construction follows (139) where the three arguments are *puab* ‘they’, *qab* ‘chicken’, and *miv nyuam* ‘children’ and where the handling verb is *muab* ‘take’ and the despatch verb is *rau* ‘give’. This construction will be discussed in detail below.

(139)

puab muab qab rau miv nyuam
they take chicken give child(ren)
'They gave (the) chicken to (the) children.'

In this multi-verb construction *muab rau* ‘take’ ‘give’, V1 and V2, are not clause separable with *hab* ‘and’ or *kuj*. With a forced reading, clause separation with *hab* ‘and’ creates the understanding of two separate events as shown below (140). However, this is unnatural and considered an odd construction by native speakers.

(140)

% *puab muab qab hab rau miv nyuam*
they take chicken and give child(ren)
'They took chicken and gave (it to the) children.'

In terms of responding to polar questions (141) with these types of constructions, a V1-V2 answer appears to be the most complete answer. However, in casual speech, there seems to be a strong preference for the single verb answer V1 (142). Answering with V2 alone is ungrammatical (143).

(141)

puab pua muab rau miv nyuam
they QST take give child(ren)
'(Did) they take (it to the) children?'

(142)

muab
take
'(They) took (it).'

(143)

* *rau*
give

In negation, the negation marker *tsi* occurs before V1 and negates both V1 and V2 (144). Medial negation is not allowed in this type of construction (145).

(144)

puab tsi muab qab rau miv nyuam
they NEG take chicken give child(ren)
'They (did) not take (the) chicken to (the) children.'

(145)

* *puab muab qab tsi rau miv nyuam*
they take chicken NEG give child(ren)

This type of construction allows the fronting of object complements (146).

(146)

qab puab muab rau miv nyuam
chicken they take give child(ren)
'(The) chicken, they gave to (the) children.'

4.2.2 Despatch-despatch

Despatch-despatch constructions occur when both V1 and V2 are three participant verbs, one expressing despatch and the other expressing a more specific type of despatch (Enfield 2008: 123-124). These constructions prove difficult to elicit in Hmong Ntsuab, as language resource persons explained that the examples of more specific types of despatch in Lao, such as *moop* 'hand.over' in *moop haj* and *song* 'send' in *song haj* (124) were not used in the same manner in Hmong Ntsuab. Further study is needed to determine if these types of constructions exist in Hmong and if they pattern in the same way as other despatch constructions.

4.2.3 Communications-despatch

This despatch category contains constructions that make use of a verb of communication, a verb of despatch, and a verb of reception (Enfield 2008: 124). An example of this type of construction follows (147) where *has* 'say' is the verb of communication, *rua* 'give' is the verb of despatch, and *noog* 'listen' is the verb of reception.

(147)

nwg has lug nruag rua miv nyuam noog
s/he say folktale give child(ren) listen
'He told (a) folktale for (the) children (to) listen (to).'

The verbs in communications-despatch constructions follow the same grammatical patterning of other types of despatch so they will not be discussed further.

4.2.4 Summary

Despatch constructions demonstrate a tight relationship between verbs as they do not allow medial negation, are not clause separable, and allow object complement fronting. In addition, they tend to have a strong left-headed structure, with the other verbs subordinating. This is indicated in the preference for V1 answers in polar questions. Further study is needed to determine if all types of despatch, including despatch-despatch constructions, pattern in the same way.

4.3 Disposal constructions

“Disposal constructions” are similar to despatch constructions but are defined as those constructions where “the addition of a second verb does not bring an extra participant into the clause” (Enfield 2008: 125). The examples below demonstrate a single-verb sentence (148) and a disposal construction (149) in Hmong Ntsuab. Note that the addition of *V2 kawm* ‘study’ does not require the addition of another argument.

(148)

puab nqaag ntau
they carry book
'They carried (the) book.'

(149)

puab nqaag ntau moog kawm
they carry book go study
'They carried (the) book away (to) study.'

Some more Hmong Ntsuab disposal constructions are shown below (150) (151) (152).

(150)

puab coj TV lug noog
they take television come listen
'They brought (the) TV (to) listen (to).'

(151)

puab coj dej moog hau
they take water go drink
'They took (the) water away (to) drink.'

(152)

puab coj dej lug tshaub
they take water come boil
'They brought (the) water (to) boil.'

Note that either the directional *moog* 'go' or the directional *lug* 'come' appears between V1 and V2 in all examples and the two transitive verbs V1 and V2 share the two arguments. This is similar to Lao (2008: 126). This may be because a disposal construction without the directional results in a different reading, as shown below.

(153)

puab coj dej hau
they take water drink
'They took drinking water.'

Directionals and motion verbs will be explored more in the discussion of complex motion constructions below (section 4.4). For now, the directional that occurs between V1 and V2 will not be discussed and the focus will be on the interaction of V1 and V2 and the grammatical properties demonstrated through constituency tests.

4.3.1 Constituency tests

It is unclear whether disposal constructions are clause separable or not. The insertion of the conjunction *hab* 'and' does not appear to produce odd utterances but it does seem to affect significant meaning change in the eyes of some but not all native speakers. It is possible that this meaning change is not able to be conveyed in the English free translations. Examples of two disposal constructions (154) (156) and their clause-separated counterparts (155) (157) follow.

(154)

puab coj dej lug tshaub
they take water come boil
'They brought water (to) boil.'

(155)

puab coj dej lug hab tshaub
they take water come and boil
'They brought water and boiled (it).'

(156)

puab nqaag moog kawm
they carry go study
'They carried (the book) away (to) study.'

(157)

puab nqaag moog hab kawm
they carry go and study

'They carried (the book) away and studied (it).'

Although disposal constructions allow the insertion of elements in between the verbs, medial negation is not allowed, as it results in an ungrammatical construction (159) (160). They take negation on V1, which negates the entire construction (158).

(158)

tsi muab qab lwj moog pov tseg
NEG take chicken rot go throw keep

'(I will) not throw (the) rotten chicken away.'

(159)

* *muab qab lwj tsi moog pov tseg*
take chicken rot NEG go throw keep

(160)

* *muab qab lwj moog tsi pov tseg*
take chicken rot go NEG throw keep

Object fronting is allowed in disposal constructions (161).

(161)

qab lwj muab moog pov tseg
chicken rot take go throw keep

'(The) rotten chicken, (I) throw away.'

The preferred single-verb yes-answer for a polar question in disposal constructions is V2. This may be because V2 seems to be the least semantically bleached verb in the construction and, in answering with the single verb V2, V1 is entailed.

4.3.2 Summary

The verbs in disposal constructions pattern similar to those in despatch constructions (section 4.2). They demonstrate a tight relationship between verbs as they do not allow medial negation and allow object complement fronting. However, unlike despatch constructions, they are right-headed and not left-headed, as shown in the V2 yes-answer.

4.4 Complex motion

Motion expressions in Hmong Ntsuab may involve many facets of motion. In Hmong, verbs are used to express actions and the details of an action, which, as

Jarkey states, may include “spatial location, path, extent, and orientation... manner... duration, and... process” (Jarkey to appear: 120). Variations of these elements combine to express facets of a single action of complex motion.

Enfield distinguishes between three types of complex motion expressions: consecutive vector motion, multi-participant motion events, and manner-path-direction constructions (2008: 126-129). Since the first category describes a “multi-vector” event, or “a mover changing direction of motion a number of times,” these tend to be consecutivising constructions, or constructions making use of clause-separable clause chains (2008: 127). This type is not monoclausal and will not be discussed here (section 4.9.1). The other two types of complex motion expressions, however, are discussed below.

4.4.1 Multi-participant motion events

Enfield explains that, in Lao, the ‘path’ and ‘direction’ verbs can also take complements, such as nominals or oblique phrases, which refer to “non-figure participants” (2008: 129). The term “participant” refers to any entities, actors or objects, that are a part of the event. This is similar in Hmong Ntsuab, as shown in the first example below (162), with the nominal complements *nqeg* ‘stairs’ and *tsev* ‘house’ and in the second example below (163), with the goal *ntau ntseg* ‘catch fish’.

(162)

kuv dla nqeg ntaiv moog tsev
I run descend stairs go house
'I ran down (the) stairs (to the) house.'

(163)

puab dla nqeg moog ntau ntseg
they run descend go catch (with a net) fish
'She ran down (to) catch fish.'

This type of construction is not clause separable because the verbs are actually expressing a temporally unified event. When the verbs are separated with the conjunction *hab* ‘and’, the construction remains grammatical, however, this creates a reading of separate events and changes the relationship between the verbs. When this happens, V1 *nqeg* no longer contributes to a unified event by expressing the manner in which he went (down) but expresses an entirely different event (descending). This change in meaning can be seen in the change in the free translation of the example below, where V1 *nqeg* conveys the adverbial ‘down’ in the first example (164) and the main verb ‘descend’ in the second (165).

(164)

puab nqeg moog
they descend go
'They went down.'

(165)

puab nqeg hab moog
they descend and go
'They descended and went.'

Medial negation is not allowed in this type of constructions (166) nor is the clause linker *kuj* insertable (167) without major semantic change among the verbs.

(166)

* *nqeg tsi moog*
descend NEG go

(167)

% *puab nqeg kuj moog*
they descend so go

Note that after the clauses are separated, resulting in a reading of two events and a significant meaning change, that negation on the second verb is then allowed (168).

(168)

puab nqeg hab tsi moog
they descend and NEG go
'They descended and (did) not go.'

In answering a polar question (169), the best answer requires that all verbs from the complex motion construction be present. Answering with one verb is often inadequate or odd, as it is not a straight answer to the question, but is rather an answer that focuses on one sub-event of the larger conceptual event (170) (171) (172). In answering with only one verb, the other verbs are not necessarily entailed.

(169)

nwg pua dla nqeg moog
s/he QST run descend go
'(Did) he run down away?'

(170)

dla
run
'(He) ran.'

(171)

nqeg

descend

'(He) descended.'

(172)

moog

go

'(He) went.'

These types of constructions do allow object complement fronting (173), which is further evidence that they are conveying one conceptual event. Note that when the one single event is coerced into two separate clauses, fronting is then not allowed as it is considered odd by native speakers (174).

(173)

ntaiv kuv dla nqeg

stairs I run descend

'(The) stairs, I ran down.'

(174)

% *ntaiv kuv dla hab nqeg*

stairs I run and descend

'(The) stairs, I ran and descended.'

4.4.2 Manner-path-direction constructions

Enfield distinguishes between three facets of motion in a single motion vector, namely, manner, path, and direction. He describes *manner* as motion, “by what action the motion is conducted,” *path* as motion “with respect to spatial coordinates intrinsic to the non-figure entities in the scene,” and *direction* as motion “with respect to some relative deictic anchor” (2008: 127). Manner verbs in Hmong Ntsuab include *dla* ‘run’, *taug* ‘walk’, *caw plhaw* ‘jump’, *rau* ‘sink’, *ntaab* ‘float’, and *nkaag* ‘crawl’, among others. Path verbs include *tawm* ‘exit’, *nkaag* ‘enter’, *raw* ‘follow’, *sawv* ‘ascend’, *lug* ‘circumnavigate’, and *dlau* ‘pass’. Direction verbs seem to be limited to three verbs, similar to what Enfield describes in Lao. They are *moog* ‘go’, *lug* ‘come’, and *rov* ‘return’. An example of a manner-path-direction construction in Hmong Ntsuab follows (175).

(175)

noog yaa tawm moog

bird fly exit go

'(The) bird flew away.'

These types of constructions pattern like the multi-participant motion events discussed above (section 4.4.1) so they will not be discussed further here.

4.4.3 Summary

Both types of complex motion expressions explained above (section 4.4.1 and section 4.4.2) tend to contain verbs in a fairly tight relationship. This is evident in the fact that these types of constructions are not clause separable. Medial negation is also not allowed nor is the clause linker *kuj* insertable without major semantic change. These constructions all allow the fronting of the object complement as well. These features indicate a semantically and syntactically tight relationship between verbs.

In answering a polar question, the best answer requires that all verbs from the complex motion construction be present. Answering with one verb is often inadequate or odd. This demonstrates the relative headlessness of the construction and the fairly equal status of the verbs.

4.5 Secondary predication constructions

Enfield defines secondary predication constructions as those that are “V1-V2 constructions in which one of the verbs... makes a secondary predication in addition to that of the main verb phrase” (2008: 129). He divides secondary predication into three semantic types: resultative, adverbial, and depictive. Secondary predication constructions in Hmong Ntsuab may be divided into these semantic types, which may have sub-types as well.

4.5.1 Resultatives

In resultative secondary predication, one of the verbs “expresses something that happens or is the case because the primary predication happens or is the case” (Enfield 2008: 130). These types of constructions are also known as “Pivotal SVCs” (Jarkey to appear: 114). As Enfield explains, multi-verb resultative constructions often convey one conceptually unitary event. However, the two verbs represent separate components of the event. He explains these to be “conceptually unitary yet multi-component event descriptions” (2008: 132). Events that would be expressed in English with one verb (such as ‘killing’ a duck) are often expressed in Lao with two verbs (*paat* ‘slice’, *taaj* ‘die’) which detail separate event components (132). Similar to Lao, Hmong Ntsuab employs multi-verb constructions to convey these types of

resultative events. A number of sub-types within the resultative category will be discussed below.

4.5.1.1 Typical same-subject resultatives

Both verbs in same-subject resultatives share a subject. In the examples below (176) (177), the shared subject is *puab* ‘they’.

(176)

puab poob choj tuag
they fall bridge die

'They fell (from the) bridge (to their) death.'

(177)

puab ntsau nyuj tuag
they crash cow die

'They crashed (into the) cow and died.'

In same-subject resultatives, because the subjects of V1 and V2 are coreferential, either of the verb phrases can be omitted resulting in a grammatical sentence (178) (179). Note, however, that the removal of one of the verbs changes the sentence to one representing only one sub-component.

(178)

puab poob choj
they fall bridge

'They fell (from the) bridge.'

(179)

puab tuag
they die

'They died.'

Note also that, when removing V1 the object complement *choj* ‘bridge’ must be removed as well (180), as it is the direct object complement of V1 alone and not the subject of V2.

(180)

* *puab choj tuag*
they bridge die

Same-subject resultatives allow the insertion of *hab* ‘and’ (181), and the insertion of the clause linker *kuj* (182). They are clause separable, as forcing a reading of two separate clauses does not significantly alter the meaning.

(181)

puab poob choj hab tuag
they fall bridge and die
'They fell (from the) bridge and died.'

(182)

puab poob choj kuj tuag
they fall bridge so die
'They fell (from the) bridge so (they) died.'

It is possible that clause separability is allowed in these types of constructions because a temporal sequence is implied in the V1-V2 relationship of these resultatives. Aikenveld explains that “the order of components... is iconic... [and] the order tends to replicate the order of occurrence of subevents” (no date: 21). In this example, V1 (falling from the bridge) must occur first in order for V2 (dying) to occur.

However, the verbs do not only have a temporal relationship but also a unique semantic “relation of condition or consequence” (Enfield 2008: 133), where V1 causes a result (V2) to happen but where V1 can also occur without V2 happening. This means that, although dying occurs because of falling, falling can occur without dying. This is shown in the construction with medial negation below (183). In this construction the negation of V2 entails V1.

(183)

puab poob choj tsi tuag
they fall bridge NEG die
'They fell (from the) bridge (but did) not die.'

The fact that same-subject resultatives have a cause and effect semantic relationship, and that they allow medial negation and the subsequent entailment of V1, indicates that these resultatives have a unique semantic relationship.

The preferred yes-answer to a polar question further supports this notion of the unique semantic relationship between verbs. In these constructions, V2 is the preferred yes-answer, as demonstrated below (184) (185).

(184)

puab poob choj pua tuag
they fall bridge QST die
'(Did) they fall (from the) bridge (to their) death?'

(185)

tuag
die

'(They fell to their) death.'

It is unnecessary to answer this polar question as V1-V2. Only V2 'dying' is necessary because V1 'falling' is entailed. Note that the free translation is '(They fell to their) death' and not '(They) died'. As 'falling' is assumed to have already happened, the real question here is whether, as a result of falling (entailed), dying occurred or not. Because of this, the V2 answer is sufficient.

Generally, MVCs that are clause separable do not allow object complement fronting. It appears that same-subject resultative MVCs do not allow the fronting of object complements (186), as LRP's express that this type of object fronting construction is odd.

(186)

% *choj puab poob tuag*
bridge they fall die

This may be because the relationship of the fronted object complement to the verbs must be explicitly specified. When this happens, the resulting construction is grammatical (187).

(187)

ntawm tug choj puab poob tuag
that CLF bridge they fall die
'(From) that bridge, they fell (to their) death.'

4.5.1.2 Typical different-subject resultatives

Different-subject resultatives are also known as "switch-subject cause-effect serial verbs" (Aikhenvald no date: 21). In these types of constructions, V1 and V2 do not share a subject, but each have their own subject. In the example below (188), *kuv* 'I' is the subject of V1 (*to* 'stab'), and *tug neeg* 'CLF' 'person' is the subject of V2 (*tuag* 'die').

(188)

kuv to tug neeg tuag
I stab CLF person die
'I stabbed the person (to) death.'

Different-subject resultatives pattern like same-subject resultatives in that they allow the insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, are clause separable with *hab* 'and', and allow

medial negation with V1 entailment. Object complement fronting is not allowed and V2 is the preferred yes-answer to a polar question.

4.5.1.3 Projected resultatives

Projected resultative constructions are composed of a projected accomplishment V1 and a resultative V2. The projected accomplishment verb has an intended result or purpose, but the intended result is not guaranteed: “instead of entailing the successful result of [the] ensuing event, the entailment is that in undertaking the activity, the subject’s *purpose* is to achieve that result” and the resultative verb is the “realization of this result” (Enfield 2008: 135-136). In the Hmong Nstuab example below (189), the purpose of V1 is the successful accomplishment of V2. The addition of the resultative V2 shows the successful accomplishment of the purpose of V1.

(189)

nwg ncha puab pum
s/he seek they find
'She found them.'

Projected resultatives tend to be same-subject resultatives. They pattern like the same-subject resultatives and different-subject resultatives detailed above (section 4.5.1.1 and section 4.5.1.2).

4.5.1.4 Reiterative resultatives

In reiterative resultatives “a single result event component... is specified twice.” Once in the “internal semantic structure” of V1 and then again when it is “explicitly reiterated... in resultative V2 function” (Enfield 2007: 137). The Hmong Ntsuab examples below show a same-subject reiterative (190) and a different-subject reiterative (191). These examples demonstrate how the semantics of the V1 *tua* ‘kill’ encompass both an event (the killing) and a result (dying). This result (dying) is emphasized again by the addition of V2 *tuag* ‘die’.

(190)

kuv tua kuv tuag
I kill I die
'I killed myself.'

(191)

kuv tua nyuj tuag
I kill cow die
'I killed (the) cow.'

Reiterative resultative constructions pattern differently than other types of resultative constructions. For example, in these constructions medial negation is allowed. However, unlike other resultative constructions (section 4.5.1.1, section 4.5.1.2, and section 4.5.1.3), in reiteratives, the negation of V2 does not entail V1. The example below (192) shows a construction that conveys that, in attempting to kill the cow, the cow did not die.

(192)

kuv tua nyuj tsi tuag

I kill cow NEG die

'I (tried to) kill (the) cow (but it did) not die.'

Another difference between these MVCs and other types of resultative constructions is shown in the preferred yes-answer to a polar question (193). Whereas other types prefer a V2-answer, reiterative resultative constructions prefer a V1-V2 answer (194).

(193)

puab tua noog pua tuag

they kill bird QST die

'(Did) they kill (the) bird dead?'

(194)

tua tuag

kill die

'(They) killed (it) dead.'

Single verb answers are grammatical as well (195) (196), but they are odd in that they do not provide a straight answer to the question⁸.

(195)

? *tua*

kill

'(They) killed (it).'

⁸ Different native Hmong Ntsuab speakers explain that, depending on context, it is possible for this question to be answered by V2 or V1. It is possible that the V2 answer *tuag* 'die' entails V1 *tua* 'kill' within a particular context, similar to what was explain in the polar question discussion on same-subject resultatives (section 4.5.1.1). If that is the case then for *tuag* [die] '(They killed the bird) dead' would be a more representative free translation than '(It) died'. However, in answering with V1 alone, it is assumed that V2 already occurred. Perhaps a bird is noticed to have died. In that case, the question *puab tua noog pua tuag* [they kill bird QST die] might be better represented with the following free translation: '(Did) they kill (the) bird?' and not '(Did) they kill (the) bird dead?' Further study is needed to clarify the subtleties of this construction.

(196)
? *tuag*
die
'(It) died.'

Aside from the lack of V1 entailment in medial negation and the preferred yes-answer in a polar question, reiterative resultative constructions pattern like the other types of resultative MVCs.

4.5.1.5 Summary

The verbs in resultative constructions seem to be more syntactically loose than some of the previously discussed construction types (section 4.1, section 4.2, and section 4.3), possibly due to the temporally sequential nature of the verbs. This is shown in that they allow elements to be inserted medially and do not allow object fronting, except under specific conditions.

The verbs in resultative constructions have tight and specific semantic relationships such that they are normally connected by condition and consequence but that the condition may not always result in the consequence. This semantic relationship becomes evident in the pattern of resultatives allowing *kuj* to be medially inserted, as this clause linker often means ‘so’ or ‘then’ and indicates that a condition/consequence relationship between verbs exists. It is also evident in the clear pattern of medial negation, which all resultative types display, and subsequent entailment of V1, which all but reiterative resultatives (section 4.5.1.4) display.

In contrast, other types of constructions, such as VP chains, are clause separable but do not allow medial negation (section 4.9.1). Both construction types typically display a temporal relationship between the verbs, allowing the clauses to be separated by the conjunction *hab* ‘and’. However, verbs in VP chains do not have a condition/consequence relationship but are in a more distributive or parallel relationship (Enfield 2008: 170). This relationship does not allow medial negation, indicating that VP chains have a looser, less specific semantic relationship than resultatives.

4.5.2 Adverbial complementation

Adverbial complementation occurs when the “secondary verb says something about the manner of the primary predication” (Enfield 2008: 130). Enfield divides adverbial complementation constructions into two types: right-headed and left-

headed (138-147). In right-headed complementation constructions the preferred yes-answer to a polar question is V2. In left-headed constructions the preferred answer is V1. In Hmong Ntsuab there are two sub-types of adverbial complementation: right-headed and left-headed⁹.

4.5.2.1 Right-headed adverbial complementation

In MVCs with right-headed adverbial complements, V2 is usually a “stative verb with semantic scope over preceding material, making a predication – some evaluation of manner or style – about the phrase headed by V1” (2008: 138). The following example (197) shows this type of MVC in Hmong Ntsuab, where the V2 stative verb is *nyaav* ‘heavy’ which functions to further clarify the manner of V1 *ua* ‘do’.

(197)

puab ua num nyuab
 they do work heavy
 'They work hard.'

Right-headed complement MVCs in Hmong Ntsuab pattern similar to typical resultative constructions (section 4.5.1.1 and section 4.5.1.2), which prefer V2 as a yes-answer and allow medial negation and the insertion of the clause linker *kuj*. However, unlike resultatives, right-headed complements allow object complement fronting (198) and are not clause separable with the conjunction *hab* ‘and’ (199) (200).

(198)

pob kw puab khaw nyuab
 corn they collect heavy
 '(The) corn, they collect (with) difficulty.'

(199)

* *puab khaw pob kw hab nyuab*
 they collect corn and heavy

⁹ Enfield describes that the Lao language also has both active and stative right-headed complementation. Right-headed active MVCs occur when V2 is an active verb which provides additional information about V1 (Enfield 2008: 146). These types of constructions were difficult to elicit in Hmong Ntsuab as the Lao examples, such as *qaan lin* ‘read’ ‘play’ (146), resulted in adverbial compounds in Hmong Ntsuab (section 4.5.3). It is possible that right headed active complements do not exist in Hmong Ntsuab or that they exist but the examples are not the same as the Lao constructions. Further study is needed to clarify this.

(200)

* *puab ua num hab nyuab*
they do work and heavy

This indicates that verbs in right-headed complements, although they do have a fairly specific semantic relationship similar to resultative constructions, are syntactically tighter than those in resultative constructions.

4.5.2.2 Left-headed adverbial complementation

Left-headed adverbial complementation is also possible in Hmong Nstuab. The example below (201) shows *tsawm* ‘quick’ as the V1 complement-taking predicate in a left-headed construction.

(201)

puab tsawm sau ntau
they hurry write book
'They quickly wrote (the) book.'

Although V1 has an adverbial function, it still acts as the head in this construction, as it is the preferred yes-answer (203) to a polar question (202).

(202)

puab pua tsawm sau
they QST hurry write
'(Did) they quickly write (the book)?'

(203)

tsawm
hurry
'(They) quickly (wrote).'

Unlike right-headed constructions detailed above (section 4.5.2.1), in left-headed complementation, medial negation is not allowed and neither is the insertion of the clause linker *kuj* between V1 and V2. In addition, an object cannot intervene between these verbs.

Similar to right-headed constructions, left-headed complement MVCs are not clause separable with *hab* ‘and’. The insertion of *hab* creates a reading of two separate events, altering the semantic relationship of the verbs to one that does not allow an adverbial reading of *maaj* ‘hurriedly’ but forces an intransitive verb reading for *maaj* ‘hurry’ (205).

(204)

puab maaj sau ntau
they hurry write book
'They hurriedly wrote (the) book.'

(205)

puab maaj hab sau ntau
they hurry and write book
'They hurried and wrote (the) book' (NOT 'They hurried (to) write (the) book.')

Fronting of object complements is also allowed (206).

(206)

ntau puab maaj sau
book they hurry write
'(The) book, they hurriedly wrote.'

4.5.2.3 Summary

Both right-headed and left-headed complement constructions allow object complement fronting and both are not clause separable. This indicates that these types of constructions are slightly more tightly bound, syntactically, than typical resultatives, which are clause separable and do not allow the fronting of object complements (section 4.5.1).

Where right and left-headed complement constructions differ is in their patterns of negation and insertion of *kuj*. In left-headed complementation, medial negation is not allowed and neither is the insertion of the clause linker *kuj* between V1 and V2. In right-headed complementation, these are both allowed. In addition, in answering a polar question, right-headed complement constructions prefer a V2-answer and left-headed complement constructions prefer a V1-answer. This can be attributed to the fact that Hmong Ntsuab is a head-initial language (section 2.1). In fact, both right-headed and left-headed complement constructions are similar in that they prefer the adverbial complement as the yes-answer to a polar question. This indicates that the adverbial complement is the head verb in both types of adverbial complement constructions.

4.5.3 Adverbial compounds

In Hmong Ntsuab, adverbial compounds pattern similar to adverbial complement constructions (section 4.5.2) but tend to form a slightly tighter structure as neither verb can appear alone as the grammatical head. Similar to adverbial compounds in

Lao, “the V1-V2 compound as a whole” functions as the grammatical head of the construction (Enfield 2008: 148). Hmong Ntsuab has both right-marking and left-marking adverbial compounds. Right-marking adverbial compounds can be further divided into two types.

4.5.3.1 Right-marking adverbial compounds

Enfield notes that there are two types of right-marking adverbial compounds in Lao: In one type, V1 is a semantically bleached verb and V2 a semantically specific active verb. This first type of right-marking adverbial compound seems to be very productive in Hmong Ntsuab. Two examples are shown below. In the first example of this (207), V1 is *ua* ‘do’ and *sis* ‘play’ is the specific active V2. In the next example (208), V1 is *ua* ‘do’ and *tau* ‘talented’ is the specific active V2.

(207)

puab nyob ua sis
they sit do play
'They casually sit (around).'

(208)

puab noj ua tau
they eat do talented
'They eat well.'

Enfield makes note of another type of right-marking adverbial compound in Lao, which makes use of a “semantically general active verb” (V2) and a “V1 element with more specific semantics,” (2008: 149). The following example demonstrates this type of compound (209), where *ncua* ‘take’ serves as the more semantically general V2 and *nrab* ‘grab’ as the V1 with specific semantics.

(209)

kuv nrab taub dej muab
I grab bottle water take
'I grabbed (the) water bottle.'

This second type (209) does not seem to be as productive in Hmong Ntsuab and patterns very similarly to left-headed adverbial complements, except that it prefers a V1-V2 answer to a polar question. Further study is needed here to determine the extent of usage of this type of construction in Hmong Ntusab.

Both of these types of right-marking adverbial compound constructions do not allow medial negation and do not allow the clause linker *kuj* in between V1 and V2. When object complements are present, these MVCs allow them to be fronted (210).

(210)

taub dej kuv nrab muab
bottle water I grab take
'(The) water bottle, I grabbed.'

These MVCs are also not clause separable with the conjunction *hab* 'and', as this creates an ungrammatical sentence (211).

(211)

* *puab nyob huv tsev ua hab sis*
they sit in house do and play

The preferred yes-answer to a polar question is V1-V2 for both types of right-marking adverbial compound constructions. In the second type, an object complement cannot appear between V1 and V2. All these features combine to indicate that V1 and V2 are both semantically and syntactically tightly bound in these types of constructions.

4.5.3.2 Left-marking adverbial compounds

Enfield explains that in left-marking adverbial compounds, the V1 is often a posture verb (2008: 148). This is true in Hmong Nstuab as well, as shown in the example below (212) where V1 is the posture verb *pws* 'recline' and V2 is *saib* 'watch'.

(212)

puab pws saib TV
they recline watch television
'They recline (to) watch TV.'

Left-marking adverbial compounds pattern similarly to right-marking adverbial compounds so they will not be discussed further here.

4.5.3.3 Summary

The verbs in both types of adverbial compound constructions cannot be medially negated, cannot be separated by the clause linker *kuj*, and are not clause separable with *hab* 'and'. In addition, their object complements, when present, may be fronted. These features indicate a tight syntactic relationship between the verbs in adverbial complement constructions.

Right and left-marking adverbial compounds pattern similarly to right and left-headed adverbial complements (section 4.5.2). However, the difference between these adverbial compounds and the adverbial complements is that, in these constructions, neither verb acts as the grammatical head. This is demonstrated in

responses to polar questions, where the preferred response for left-marking adverbial compounds is V1-V2. The tendency to prefer, in fact, *require*, a V1-V2 answer and not a single verb answer indicates a fairly equal syntactic status among the two verbs in these types of constructions.

4.5.4 Depictives

In depictive secondary predication, an adjunct or “non-core element” is employed, which provides “information about the state of one core argument of the clause during the time at which the main clause action takes place”, but “that property is independent of the main predication” (Enfield 2008: 150). In Hmong Nstuab, depictive secondary predication can be accomplished in a multi-verb construction.

4.5.4.1 Left-marking depictives

Left-marking depictives are those in which the secondary depictive predication is made by V1, as shown in (213), where V1 is *nyob* ‘sit’ and V2 is *nyeem* ‘read’.

(213)

puab nyob nyeem ntau
they sit read book
'Sitting, they read (a) book.'

This type of construction patterns like left-headed adverbial complement constructions (section 4.5.2.2). They do not allow the clause linker *kuj* in between V1 and V2, do not allow medial negation, and are not clause-separable with the conjunction *hab* ‘and’, as this leads to a significant change in the relationship of the two verbs. Above, in (213), *nyob* is translated as the adverbial ‘sitting’. In the clause separated depictive construction below (214), however, *nyob* is translated as the main verb ‘sit’ in the two-clause construction. This indicates the difference between the original clause (213), where V1 and V2 do not have equal status, and the separated clause (214), where neither V1 or V2 are subordinate.

(214)

puab nyob hab nyeem ntau
they sit and read book
'They sit and read (a) book.'

When object complements are present, they may be fronted (215).

(215)

ntau puab nyob nyeem
book they sit read
'(The) book, they read, sitting.'

Left-marking depictives appear very similar to left-marking adverbial compounds. They pattern differently in terms of the preferred answer to a polar question as compounds prefer a V1-V2 answer. However, both left-headed adverbial complements and left-marking depictives prefer a V1 answer. The only distinction between these two constructions is that, in left-headed adverbial complements, V1 is an adverbial verb, and in left-marking depictives, V1 is a depictive verb.

4.5.4.2 Summary

Depictives pattern similar to adverbial complements and adverbial compounds, indicating that they have a similar syntactic structure. Further study is required to explore all the possible types of depictive constructions in Hmong Ntsuab.

4.6 Oblique phrases / adjunction

Enfield explains that, in Lao, verb phrases may actually perform the function of prepositional phrases in other languages, which “rather than being coordinated with other verb phrases, are adjoined to the main phrase” (2008: 153). Although Enfield discusses two types of prepositions, denominal and deverbal, this section will only focus on deverbal prepositions, as they are the forms that may appear as main verbs in other contexts.

4.6.1 Deverbal preposition constructions

A deverbal preposition “provides a way of adding an argument to the core of the clause” but the “notion embodied in the preposition is not predicated as an event” (2008: 154). In the following Hmong Ntsuab construction (216), *nkaag* ‘enter’ serves as the deverbal preposition, by which the extra argument *tsev* ‘house’ is added.

(216)

kuv caij neeg nkaag tsev
I ride horse enter house
'I rode (the) horse into (the) house.'

In the next example (217), *rau* ‘give’ is the deverbal preposition and the extra argument is *koj* ‘you’.

(217)

kuv ua mov rau koj noj
I do rice give you eat
'I made rice (for) you (to) eat.'

In this case (217), *ua* 'do' and *rau* 'give' are used together to convey a benefactive function in what could be translated as 'for' in English.

Deverbal preposition constructions are headed by V1, as V1 is the preferred yes-answer to a polar question (218) (219).

(218)

koj pua ua mov rau miv nyuam
you QST do rice give child(ren)
'(Did) you make rice for (the) children?'

(219)

ua
do
'(I) made (it).'

These types of constructions do not allow medial negation or the insertion of the clause linker *kuj*. They allow their object complements to be fronted and they are not clause separable. This is clearly evident in that, when clause separation is coerced, the clause changes from a benefactive deverbal preposition construction to a despatch construction. This is shown in the comparison of the following two examples (220) (221).

(220)

kuv ua mov rau koj noj
I do rice give you eat
'I made rice (for) you (to) eat.'

(221)

kuv ua mov hab rau koj noj
I do rice and give you eat
'I made rice and gave (it to) you (to) eat.'

It is possible for *ua* 'do' and *rau* 'give' to convey a causative function in different context. The grammatical patterning of these two verbs in a causative construction is discussed below (section 4.7).

4.6.2 Summary

Deverbal prepositions are headed by V1 and fairly tight syntactically, in that they do not allow the insertion of any elements between V1 and V2. Insertion of elements is either ungrammatical or drastically changes the meaning of the utterance.

The verbs *ua* ‘do’ and *rau* ‘give’ may combine to convey prepositional, despatch, or causative functions. It is important to note, however, that *ua* ‘do’ and *rau* ‘give’, when used in deverbal preposition constructions, pattern differently than their despatch and causative counterparts. This is proof that it is not the mere combination of verbs that is important in deciphering meaning, but also their syntactic and semantic environments.

4.7 Causative constructions

Enfield’s description of causative MVCs in Lao relates to what he terms a “periphrastic strategy,” one that “involves no overt marking of the relationship between the main causative verb and its complement” (2008: 157). Traditional causation is defined as an “interpersonal force relation between a causer and a causee” (Cornillie and Delbecque 2007: 5). Different verbs may be used in MVCs to form causative constructions in Hmong Ntsuab.

4.7.1 Causative constructions using *kua* ‘give’

In Hmong Ntsuab, causative constructions can be formed by using the verb *kua* ‘give’ in combination with another verb. Enfield explains that, in Lao, in causative constructions that use ‘give’, “the causer... says or does something... because of which the causee does something” and where the causer knew that, “as a result of his action, that the complement event would happen” (2008: 157). This is similar to causative constructions that use *kua* ‘give’ in Hmong Ntsuab. The example below (222) shows a construction where V1 *kua* ‘give’ is used in combination with V2 *moog* ‘go’ to convey the meaning ‘to allow,’ ‘to let,’ or ‘to have’.

(222)

puab kua miv nyuam moog teb
they give child(ren) go field
'They had (the) children go (to the) field.'

These types of constructions allow the fronting of the object complement. In addition, they do not allow insertion of the clause linker *kuj* between verbs (223) and are not clause separable with the conjunction *hab* ‘and’ (224).

(223)

* *puab kua miv nyuam kuj moog teb*
they give child(ren) then go field

(224)

* *puab kua miv nyuam hab moog teb*
they give child(ren) and go field

Causative constructions that use *kua* 'give' are, interestingly enough, able to take negation on either verb (225) (226). When they are medially negated, V1 is entailed.

(225)

puab tsi kua miv nyuam moog teb
they NEG give child(ren) go field
'They (did) not have (the) children go (to the) field.'

(226)

puab kua miv nyuam tsi moog teb
they give child(ren) NEG go field
'They had (the) children not go (to the) field.'

Another interesting feature of these types of construction is that they require a V1-V2 answer (228) and not a single-verb answer (229) (230) when responding to a polar question (227).

(227)

puab pua kua miv nyuam moog teb
they QST give child(ren) go field
'(Did) they have (the) children go (to the) field?'

(228)

kua moog
give go
'(They) had (them) go.'

(229)

? *kua*
give
'(They) gave (something to them).'

(230)

? *moog*
go
'(They) went.'

This indicates that the MVC is not clearly headed by V1 or by V2 but that there involves some ambiguity of inner structure. See the section on flat different-subject

control complementation (section 4.8.1.3) for a discussion on ambiguity of the lower clause.

4.7.2 Causative constructions using *ua* ‘do’

Another type of causative MVC in Hmong Ntsuab employs the use of the verb *ua* ‘do’ in conjunction with another verb. In causative constructions with ‘do’ in Lao, the “main subject does something... and because of that the complement event occurs” (Enfield 2008: 158). This is similar in Hmong Ntsuab as well. The main subject (*puab* ‘they’) in the following example (231) has done something, because of which a complement event (*av tawg* ‘window’ ‘break’) happens.

(231)

puab ua av tawg
they do glass shatter
'They broke (the) window.'

As explained by Enfield (2008: 158), in these types of constructions, the secondary subject does not *do* something as a result of the causee, as in *kua* ‘give’ constructions above (section 4.7.1), but something *happens to* that subject as a result of the causee. In the example above (231), the secondary subject, the window, did not do anything.

These *ua* ‘do’ causative constructions pattern like *kua* ‘give’ constructions above (section 4.7.1) and will not be discussed further here.

4.7.3 Causative constructions using *ua kua* ‘do’ ‘give’ or *ua rau* ‘do’ ‘give’

Causative constructions may also be formed by combining *ua* ‘do’ and *kua* ‘give’ together with a third verb (232), or by combining *ua* ‘do’ and *rau* ‘give’ together with a third verb (233).

(232)

puab ua kua av tawg
they do CAUS glass shatter
'They caused (the) glass (to) shatter.'

(233)

puab ua rau koj tu sab
they do CAUS you sad heart
'They made you sad.'

In these types of MVCs the main subject may not intentionally cause something to happen or even be aware that something is happening (Enfield 2008: 158), as opposed to the control of main subjects in causative constructions that employ ‘give’ alone (section 4.7.1).

These causative constructions pattern almost exactly like the *kua* ‘give’ constructions and the *ua* ‘do’ constructions above (section 4.7.1 and section 4.7.2). The only difference is that these constructions require negation on V1 alone and do not allow medial negation (234) (235).

(234)

% *puab ua tsi kua av tawg*
they do NEG CAUS glass shatter
'They caused (the) glass (to) not shatter.'

(235)

* *puab ua tsi rau koj tu sab*
they do NEG give you sad heart

4.7.4 Other causative-like constructions

In addition to the strategies explained above, other verbs may combine to convey a causative function. In the first example below (236), the verbs *caij* ‘ride’ and *hlaag* ‘cross’ create a causation where the subject, *kuv* ‘I’, caused the horse to jump across the chair.

(236)

kuv caij neeg hlaag rooj
I ride horse cross.over chair
'I rode (the) horse across (the) chair.'

In the next example (237), *khaiv* ‘order’ and *kua* ‘give’ form a causative construction.

(237)

puab khaiv kua miv nyuam moog
they order give child(ren) go
'They ordered (the) children (to) go.'

These constructions, pattern similar to *ua kua* ‘do’ ‘give’ and *ua rau* ‘do’ ‘give’ constructions, as discussed above (section 4.7.3).

4.7.5 Summary

All the types of causative constructions surveyed here allow the fronting of the object complement, do not allow insertion of the clause linker *kuj* between verbs, and are not clause separable with the conjunction *hab* ‘and’. Each of the causative constructions also require V1-V2 as a yes-answer to a polar question, indicating that there is not a strong verb head in these types of constructions. Although medial negation is allowed in the simple causative constructions (section 4.7.1 and section 4.7.2), medial negation does not appear to be allowed with complex types of causative constructions (section 4.7.3 and section 4.7.4). Further research is needed to confirm this conclusion.

4.8 Complementation

Although some types of complementation have been addressed above (section 4.5.2), complementation will be more specifically explored in this section. Complementation in Hmong Ntsuab may be divided into control complementation and non-control complementation. Control is determined based on “the extent to which the temporal or argument structure properties of the complement-taking predicate will determine those of the lower predicate” (Enfield 2008: 160). This section begins with a look at control complementation.

4.8.1 Control complementation

Control complementation occurs when “there is control by the main verb of argument coreference as well as temporal relation across the two predicates” (2008: 160). Both same-subject and different-subject control complementation are possible in Hmong Ntsuab.

4.8.1.1 Same-subject

In same-subject control complementation, “the matrix verb specifies a verb phrase as its complement” (2008: 160), which can be a simple single verb or a complex verb phrase. In the following two examples (238) (239), this matrix verb is an auxiliary-verb *xaav*, meaning ‘want’.

(238)

puab xaav moog teb
they want go field
'They want (to) go (to the) field.'

(239)

puab xaav noog nkauj
they want listen music
'They want (to) listen (to) music.'

Same-subject control complementation constructions are not clause separable and their object complements can be fronted. They do not allow insertion of the clause linker *kuj* between verbs and they cannot take medial negation. They are headed by V1, as the following polar question (240) and V1 answer (241) demonstrate.

(240)

puab pua xaav moog teb
they QST think go field
'(Do) they want (to) go (to the) field?'

(241)

xaav
want
'(They) want (to).'

4.8.1.2 S-COMP different-subject

Another type of control complementation is different-subject complementation. Enfield distinguishes between “S-COMP” and “flat” different-subject control complementation (2008: 163-164). The former occurs when “the upper verb clearly takes the lower clause as a whole complement,” as indicated by the possible ellipsis of subject (2008: 162-163). Hmong Ntsuab has these types of control complement constructions. In the following S-COMP example (242), the upper verb is *xaav* ‘want’ and the lower clause complement is *kua koj noog nkauj* ‘you (to) listen (to) music’.

(242)

puab xaav kua (koj) noog nkauj
they want APPL you listen music
'They want you (to) listen (to) music.'

These pattern similarly to same-subject control complement constructions (section 4.8.1.1) in that they are not clause separable and their object complements can be fronted. They do not allow insertion of the clause linker *kuj* between verbs and they are headed by V1, indicating that “the lower clause is strongly dependent on the main verb” (162-163). In the example above (242), the preferred yes-answer to a polar question is V1 *xaav* ‘want’.

4.8.1.3 Flat different-subject

Enfield distinguishes between *S-COMP* different-subject and *flat* different-subject control complementation, defining the latter as occurring when “the main verb phrase [is] flat with respect to the relatedness of the upper verb and the lower verb phrase” (2008: 164). Hmong Ntsuab has constructions like this (243) which are causatives.

(243)

kuv kua puab lug
I APPL they come
'I have them come.'

These constructions pattern similarly to *S-COMP* constructions except that they prefer a V1-V2 answer when answering a polar question (244) (245) (246).

(244)

koj pua kua puab lug
you QST APPL they come
'(Did) you have them come?'

(245)

kua lug
APPL come
'(I) had (them) come.'

(246)

% *kua*
APPL
'(I) had (them).'

Enfield mentions that this V1-V2 answer is an indication of the “ambiguity of the lower noun phrase,” which occurs in these types of constructions because the object in the upper clause is often the subject of the lower clause (2008: 164). This is evident in the above example (243) where *puab* ‘they’ can be interpreted as the object complement of the upper clause or the subject of the lower clause.

4.8.2 Non-control complementation

Non-control complement constructions, as defined by Enfield, often make use of “verbs of speech and cognition” and are “usually marked with an overt complementiser” (2008: 165). In Hmong Ntsuab, this complementiser in these types of constructions is *ta* ‘say’ (247).

(247)

kuv xaav ta puab moog
I think say they go
'I think that they went.'

Non-control complement constructions are not clause separable and the insertion of the clause particle *kuj* is not possible between verbs without meaning change¹⁰. However, similar to different subject control complements (section 4.8.1.2 and section 4.8.1.3), these constructions allow medial negation.

Non-control complement constructions are different than other types of complement constructions (section 4.8.1) in relation to headship. The yes-answer test indicates that V1-V2-V3 is the best yes-answer to a polar question for these constructions (248) (249) (250) (251) (252).

(248)

koj pua xaav ta puab moog
you QST think say they go
'(Do) you think that they went?'

(249)

xaav ta moog
think say go
'(I) think that (they) went.'

(250)

xaav ta
think say
'(I) think so'

(251)

% xaav
think
'(I) think'

(252)

? moog
go
'(They) went.'

¹⁰ The insertion of *kuj* is allowed in the lower clause with meaning change, possibly because of the independence of the subordinating clause. As Enfield explains it, the subordinating clause in these types of constructions, “retains many of the properties of an independent sentence” (2008: 165). Further study must be done to further specify the independent qualities of these types of constructions in Hmong Ntsuab.

4.8.3 Summary

The four types of complementation constructions discussed above (section 4.8.1 and section 4.8.2) are similar in that they are not clause separable and their object complements can be fronted. They also do not allow insertion of the clause linker *kuj* between verbs. An area for further study is in patterns of negation and headship, as there appears to be significant differences among complementation construction types in this area.

4.9 Coordinating constructions

Although coordinating constructions may not be considered multi-verb constructions by some, they will be discussed here to provide a comparison against the different types of MVCs that have already been reviewed. Two types of coordinating constructions and their grammatical distinctions are discussed below: verb chains and verb compounds.

4.9.1 Verb chaining

Enfield defines a “verb (phrase) chain” as “a string of verb phrases with no overt linking morphology, usually with a single understood subject, which may or may not be overtly expressed” (2008: 170). Kroeger explains that each clause in the verb chain may refer to distinct events and different arguments may be taken by the different verbs in a clause chain (2007: 7). Sometimes, verb chains demonstrate a purposive relationship between the verbs and sometimes they display a parallel or distributive relationship. Still other times they display a sequential relationship (Enfield 2008: 170-171).

4.9.1.1 Purposive verb chains

Purposive verb chains in Hmong Ntsuab usually consist of V1-V2, where V2 is the purpose of V1. The MVC *moog kawm* ‘go study’ is considered a purposive (253).

(253)

nwg txau sab moog Chiang Mai kawm ntau
s/he interested go Chiang Mai study book
'She (is) interested (in) going (to) Chiang Mai (to) study.'

These verb chains do not allow medial negation but each verb must be negated independently. They are considered clause-separable and not subordinating, as the

insertion of *hab* ‘and’, does not cause a significant change to the semantic content on the whole or to the V1-V2 semantic relationship (254).

(254)

nwg txau sab moog Chiang Mai hab kawm ntau
s/he interested go Chiang Mai and study book
'She (is) interested (in) going (to) Chiang Mai and studying.'

In purposive verb chains, the preferred yes-answer to a polar question is V1-V2. These verb chains allow the insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, indicating that the verbs have a specific semantic relationship.

4.9.1.2 Parallel verb chains

In parallel relationship verb chains, the various verbs and verb phrases have no dependence on each other in terms of “temporal, consequential, conditional, causative, or purposive relation” (2008: 170). In the example below (255), the verb phrases *khaw hov xob* ‘collect chillies’ and *khaw tawm* ‘collect peanuts’ are in a parallel relationship as a verb chain.

(255)

puab khaw hov txob khaw tawm hab lug noj
they collect chilli pepper collect peanut and come eat
'They collected chillies, collected peanuts, and brought (them to) eat.'

There is no inherent temporal relationship between the collecting of the chillies and the collecting of the peanuts and one does not depend on the other in terms of cause and result or purpose. Parallel verb chains do not allow medial negation or the insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, both of which have been shown to only occur in between verbs with a more specific and dependent semantic relationship, like causatives (section 4.7) and resultatives (section 4.5.1). They must be negated individually as they represent individual, semantically independent, events. This is further supported by the fact that they are very clearly clause separable: when the clause is restated as two clauses, the result is the same meaning.

4.9.1.3 Sequential verb chains

In other cases, the verbs in a verb chain may be fairly independent but still be in a sequential relationship, where “the events listed in the chain are understood to happen one after the other” (2008: 171). As Enfield explains, these events are often actions that are “habitually linked in the daily flow of events” (*ibid*). The following Hmong Nstuab examples (256) (257) show sequential verb chains.

(256)

rov lug ntsuav teg ua mov zaub noj
return come wash hand do rice vegetable eat
'(I) come back, wash (my) hands, (and) make food (to) eat.'

(257)

ntsuav nav nkaag txhaw pws
wash teeth enter room sleep
'(I) brush (my) teeth (and) enter (the) room (to) sleep.'

In the second example above (257), the verb phrases *nruav nav* 'brush (my) teeth' and *nkaag txhaw* 'enter (the) room' are in a sequential relationship, where the subject does one before the other, most likely habitually. The final verb *pws* 'sleep' is in a purposive relationship with the verb phrase *nkaag txhaw* 'enter (the) room'.

Sequential verb chains pattern identically to purposive verb chains (section 4.9.1.1) and almost identically to parallel verb chains (section 4.9.1.2). The only difference is that sequential verb chains allow the insertion of the clause linker *kuj* (258).

(258)

ntsuav nav kuj nkaag txhaw pws
wash teeth then enter room sleep
'(I) brushed (my) teeth so (I) entered (the) room (to) sleep.'

This indicates a tighter, more specific, (temporal) semantic relationship between the verbs in a sequential verb chain than those in a parallel verb chain.

4.9.1.4 Summary

Verb chains can be identified and distinguished from the many other types of multi-verb constructions through the examination of their grammatical patterning. As demonstrated, the verbs in verb chains are very loosely connected, both syntactically and semantically.

4.9.2 Verb compounds

Verb compounds are the result of a combination of "two or more verbs... resulting in what is effectively a single verb, with a single subject and a single object" (Enfield 2008: 172). Hmong Ntsuab makes use of verb compounds (259).

(259)

kuv ntswb pum puab
I meet see they
'I met them.'

These constructions have no clear head because they “usually involve a pair of near synonyms” (2008: 172) and, as a result, V1 or V2 is usually acceptable as a yes-answer to a polar question (260) (261) (262).

(260)

koj pua ntswb pum puab
you QST meet see they
'(Did) you encounter them?'

(261)

ntswb
meet
'(I) met (them).'

(262)

pum
see
'(I) saw (them).'

Because they contain synonymous verbs, these constructions do not take medial negation, as that would be semantically odd. They allow the fronting of object complements (263) and they are clause separable (264), but they do not allow the insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, as this insertion causes significant meaning change among the verbs (265).

(263)

puab kuv ntswb pum
they I meet see
'Them, I encountered.'

(264)

kuv ntswb hab pum puab
I meet and see they
'I met and saw them.'

(265)

% kuv ntswb kuj pum puab
I meet so see they
'I met them so I saw them.'

4.9.3 Summary

Semantically, the verbs in verb compounds work together to convey on conceptual event. Syntactically, they pattern differently from all the other constructions

surveyed in this study, in that they allow both fronting of object complements and are clause separable. Similar to verb chains (section 4.9.1), they have no clear head, not because both V1 and V2 must be present in a yes-answer but because either may be present.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study has provided a descriptive classification of a large range of Hmong Ntsuab multi-verb constructions. The following sections discuss some of the conclusions and limitations of the study with suggested areas for further research.

5.1 Conclusions

Through this study, multi-verb constructions have been shown to not only exist in Hmong Ntsuab but also to appear in different MVC types and to serve a variety of semantic purposes. Through constituency testing, some of the grammatical distinctions of each multi-verb structural category have been brought to light and described. Using these grammatical distinctions, and based on the structural categories outlined by Enfield in his study of V1-V2 constructions in Lao (2008), these multi-verb constructions have been classified into nine MVC types with various sub-categories. The multi-verb constructions in different categories have been shown to display some different grammatical properties and the multi-verb constructions in the same category shown to display a similar set of grammatical properties.

In addition, some conservative preliminary claims have been made about the tightness and looseness of the verbs in each type of MVC structural category. Tighter MVCs, such as deverbal preverbals (section 4.1.1), tend to not allow any type of medial insertion. This includes clause separation with *hab* ‘and’, clause linking with *kuj*, and medial negation with *tsi*. Tighter MVCs also tend to have a strong head verb, as shown in the preferred single-verb answer to a polar question. In addition, object complements in tighter MVCs are generally able to be fronted. These grammatical patterns are opposite for looser MVCs such as verb chains (section 4.9.1). These results show a lot of promise for syntactic and semantic investigation.

Semantically, relationships between verbs in multi-verb constructions may relate to condition, consequence, temporal sequence, causation, purpose, or other factors. The semantic relationship may influence the syntactic patterns of the construction, such as the ability of a MVC to allow the insertion of elements medially.

Overall, the results of this study have proven very similar to the results Enfield encountered in his V1-V2 study in Lao (2008). This could indicate some areal influence on Hmong-Mien languages in Southeast Asia. This influence may show that, syntactically, Tai languages and Hmong-Mien languages are more closely related than previously assumed. However, the most promising tentative conclusion is that there may be a set of universals for languages that allow these types of multi-verb constructions and that the types of patterns described in this study are not exclusively unique to any one language.

5.2 Limitations and further study

Further study should no doubt include the elicitation and compilation of additional Hmong Ntsuab MVC examples. This would aid in testing some of the preliminary conclusions of this study. With a much larger data set, it would be easier to test examples for grammatical properties and confidently conclude that the distinguishing features of each MVC category are indeed unique.

Although the data elicited, described, and categorized for this study was Hmong Ntsuab data, the language used during all elicitation was Central Thai. Thus, language resource persons only provided multi-verb constructions able to be expressed in Thai and some uniquely Hmong Ntsuab constructions may have been missed. In addition, Enfield's proposed structural categories (2008), which were the basis from which MVC elicitation was conducted, were based on Lao MVCs. Because of this the Hmong Ntsuab MVC categories in this study may or may not be a full representation of V1-V2 categories in Hmong Ntsuab. A larger data set would also assist in discovering additional MVC structural categories or sub-categories in Hmong Ntsuab, if they do exist.

In addition, an in-depth study of the Hmong Ntsuab preverbal interrogative particle *pua* is suggested for further study. This particle does not appear sentence-finally or sentence-initially, but rather, sentence-medially, immediately preceding a verb. In multi-verb constructions, the interrogative particle has been shown to precede the initial verb in some cases and the final verb in others. Because it can occur in different locations, its movement and placement may serve to indicate something of the relationship among verbs in a MVC. A study into why and when native speakers chose to employ the interrogative particle *pua* before a particular verb would prove very useful in determining headship among verbs in MVCs and in deciphering some of the more subtle meanings associated with particular MVCs.

As discussed above, (section 5.1) results from constituency tests indicate something about the tightness and looseness of the verbs in the construction. Further research into the relationship of the verbs in each MVC structural category is sure to unearth fascinating results in which MVCs structural categories could potentially be placed on a gradient based on how the verbs pattern in response to both syntactic and semantic testing.

As many categories of MVCs have been identified, a final suggested area of further study would be an investigation of the co-occurrence and relative ordering of these MVC types.

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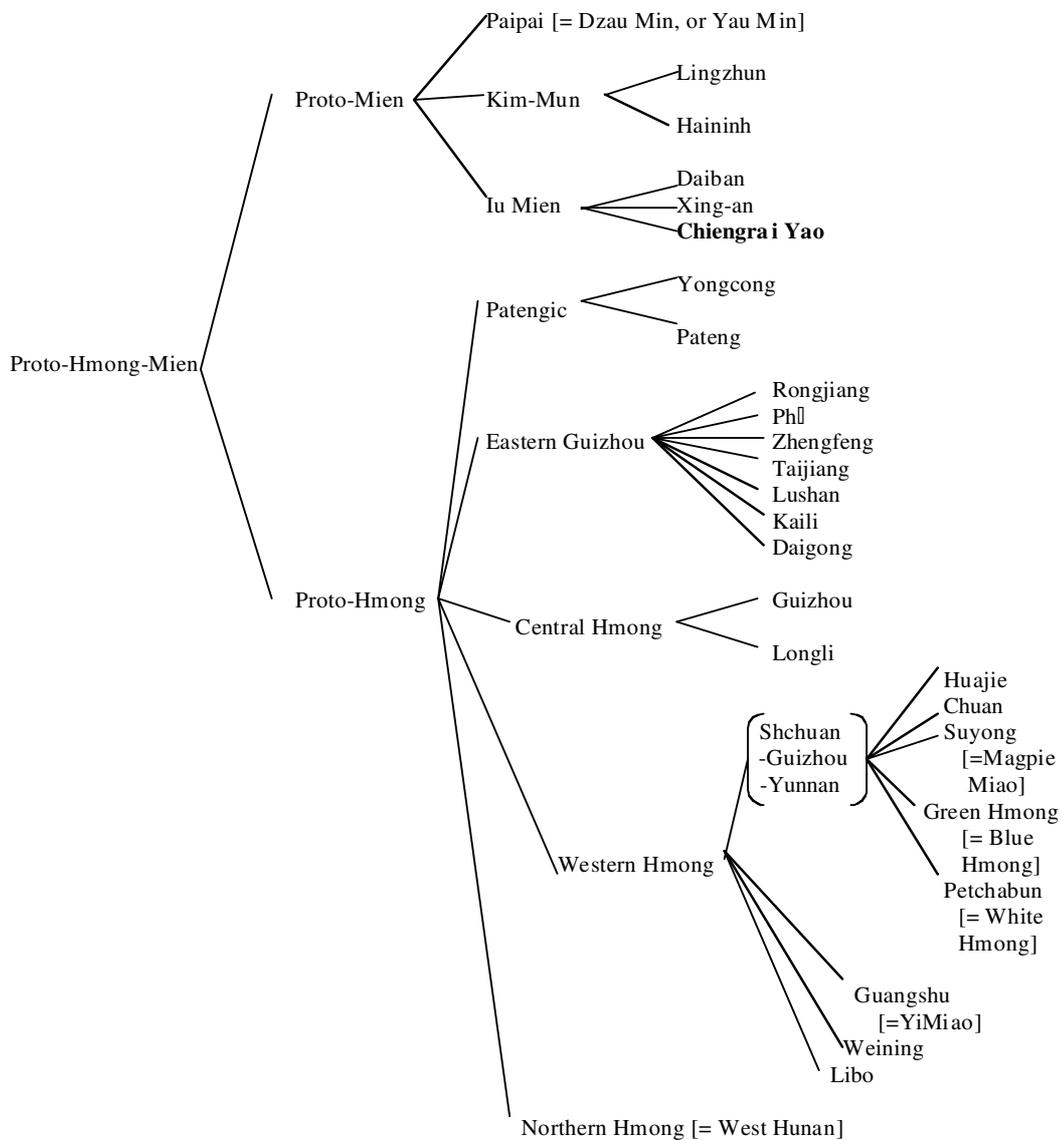
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APPENDIX 1

Hmong-Mien language family tree

Matisoff's presentation of the Hmong-Mien family (Matisoff 2001: 299), slightly altered by Arisawa (2006), is shown below.



APPENDIX 2

Summary of distinguishing features

Structural category and sample construction	OBJ fronting in main clause OK?	Clause separable with <i>hab</i> 'and'?	Yes-answer head?	Can take negation on what verb?	Medial negation OK?	With medial NEG, V1 entailed?	<i>kuj</i> insertable w/o major semantic change?
deverbal: preverbal <i>tseev moog</i> 'accustomed' 'go'	yes	no	V1	V1	no	n/a	no
deverbal: postverbal <i>moog lawm</i> 'go' 'finish'	yes	no	V1-V2	V1	no	n/a	no
despatch: handling-despatch <i>muab rau</i> 'take' 'give'	yes	no	V1?	V1	no	n/a	no
despatch: communication-despatch-reception <i>ha rua noog</i> 'say' 'give' 'listen'	yes	no	V1	V1	no	n/a	no
disposal <i>coj moog nkawm</i> 'lead' 'go' 'study'	yes	no%	V2	V1	no	n/a	no
complex motion <i>dla nqeg moog</i> 'run' 'descend' 'go'	yes	no%	V1-V2-V3	V1	no	n/a	no
resultative: same subj <i>poob tuag</i> 'fall' 'die'	no%	yes	V2	V2	yes	yes	yes

Structural category and sample construction	OBJ fronting in main clause OK?	Clause separable with <i>hab</i> 'and'?	Yes-answer head?	Can take negation on what verb?	Medial negation OK?	With medial NEG, V1 entailed?	<i>kuj</i> insertable w/o major semantic change?
resultative: different subj <i>to tuag</i> 'stab' 'die'	no%	yes	V2	V2	yes	yes	yes
resultative: projected <i>ncha pum</i> 'look.for' 'find'	no%	yes	V2	V2	yes	yes	yes
resultative: reiterative <i>tua tuag</i> 'kill' 'die'	no%	yes%	V2	V1 or V2	yes	no	yes
adverbial complement: right headed stative <i>khaw nuab</i> 'collect' 'difficult'	yes	no	V2	V2	yes	yes	yes
adverbial complement: left-headed <i>maaj sau</i> 'hurry' 'write'	yes	no	V1	V1	no	n/a	no
adverbial compound: right-marking <i>nrab muab</i> 'grab' 'take'	yes	no	V1-V2	V1	no	n/a	no
adverbial compound: right-marking active <i>ua sis</i> 'do' 'play'	n/a	no	V1-V2	V1	no	n/a	no
adverbial compound: left-marking <i>pws saib</i> 'recline' 'watch'	yes%	no	V1-V2	V1	no	n/a	no

Structural category and sample construction	OBJ fronting in main clause OK?	Clause separable with <i>hab</i> 'and'?	Yes-answer head?	Can take negation on what verb?	Medial negation OK?	With medial NEG, V1 entailed?	<i>kuj</i> insertable w/o major semantic change?
depictive: left-marking <i>nyob nyeem</i> 'sit' 'read'	yes	no	V1	V1	no	n/a	no
oblique: deverbal preposition <i>ua rau</i> 'do' 'give'	yes	no	V1	V1	no	n/a	no
causative: simple <i>kua moog</i> 'give' 'go'	yes	no	V1-V2	V1 or V2	yes	yes	no
causative: simple <i>ua tawg</i> 'do' 'break'	yes	no	V1-V2	V1 or V2	yes	yes	no
causative: complex <i>ua rau</i> 'do' 'give'	yes	no	V1-V2	V1	no%	n/a	no
causative: complex <i>khaiv kuam moog</i> 'order' 'give' 'go'	yes	no	V1-V2	V1	no%	n/a	no
complement, contrl, same-subj <i>xaav moog</i> 'want' 'go'	yes	no	V1	V1	no	n/a	no
complement, contrl, diff-subj <i>xaav kua</i> 'want' 'give'	yes	no	V1	V1 or V2	yes	yes	no

Structural category and sample construction	OBJ fronting in main clause OK?	Clause separable with <i>hab</i> 'and'?	Yes-answer head?	Can take negation on what verb?	Medial negation OK?	With medial NEG, V1 entailed?	<i>kuj</i> insertable w/o major semantic change?
complement, contrl, diff-subj, flat <i>kua lug</i> 'give' 'come'	yes	no	V1-V2	V1 or V2	yes	yes	no
complement, non-control <i>xaav ta moog</i> 'think' 'say' 'go'	yes	no	V1-V2-V3	V3	yes	yes	no
VP chain: parallel <i>khaw khaw</i> 'collect' 'collect'	no	yes	V1-V2	V1 and V2	no	n/a	no
VP chain: purposive <i>moog nkawv</i> 'go' 'study'	no	yes	V1-V2	V1 and V2	no	n/a	yes
VP chain: sequential <i>nruav nkaag</i> 'brush' 'enter'	no	yes	V1-V2	V1 and V2	no	n/a	yes
verb compound <i>ntswb pum</i> 'meet' 'see'	yes	yes?	V1 or V2	V1	no	n/a	no

APPENDIX 3

Hmong Ntsuab pronunciation keys

The following consonant chart provides IPA (inside front-slashes) and corresponding RPA spellings (in bold) for Hmong Ntsuab. It was adapted from three sources: Smalley et al (1990: 48-51, 151-154), Lyman (1974, 1979), and personal research.

	Bilabial		Labiodental		Alveolar		Postalveolar		Retroflex	Palatal		Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	/p/				/t/				/t/	/c/		/k/	/q/	
	p				t				r	c		k	q	
Aspirated Plosive	/p ^h /				/t ^h /				/t ^h /	/c ^h /		/k ^h /	/q ^h /	
	ph				th				rh	ch		kh	qh	
Prenasalized Plosive	/ ^m b/				/ ⁿ d/				/ ⁿ d/	/ ^ɲ ɟ/		/ ^ŋ g/	/ ^ʁ g/	
	np				nt				nr	nc		nk	nq	
Prenasalized Aspirate Plosive	/ ^m b ^h /				/ ⁿ d ^h /				/ ⁿ d ^h /	/ ^ɲ ɟ ^h /		/ ^ŋ g ^h /	/ ^ʁ g ^h /	
	nph				nth				nrh	nch		nkh	nqh	
Nasal		/m/				/n/					/ɲ/			
		m				n					ny			
Fricative			/f/	/v/	/s/		/s/	/z/		/ç/				/h/
			f	v	x		s	z		xy				h
Lateral Fricative					/ɬ/									
					hl									
Approximant						/l/					/j/			
						l					y			
Affricate					/ts/		/tʃ/							
					tx		ts							
Aspirated Affricate					/ts ^h /		/tʃ ^h /							
					txh		tsh							
Prenasalized Affricate					/ ⁿ dz/		/ ⁿ dʒ/							
					ntx		nts							
Prenasalized Aspirated Affricate					/ ⁿ dz ^h /		/ ⁿ dʒ ^h /							
					ntxh		ntsh							

The following vowel chart provides IPA (inside front-slashes) and corresponding RPA spellings (in bold) for Hmong Ntsuab. It was adapted from three sources: Smalley et al. (1990: 48-51, 151-154), Lyman (1974, 1979), and personal research.

	Front	Central	Back
Close	/i/ i	/ua/ ua	/ɯ/ ɯ /u/ u
Close-mid	/e/ /ẽ/ e ee		
Open-mid			/ɔ/ /õ/ o oo
Open	/ai/ ai	/a/ /ã/ a aa	/au/ aw au

Tone marking in Hmong Ntsuab occurs word-finally as one of six final consonants. The following tone chart shows tone characteristics and their corresponding RPA spelling. It was adapted from three sources: Smalley et al. (1990: 48-51, 151-154), Lyman (1974, 1979), and personal research.

	Tone Characteristics		RPA representation
Tone 1:	/44/	High Level	- b
Tone 2:	/21/²	Mid/Low Glottal (Slightly Falling with Creakiness)	- m
Tone 3:	/52/	High Falling	- j
Tone 4:	/45/	High Rising	- v
Tone 5:	/35/	Mid Rising	(unmarked)
Tone 6:	/22/	Low Level	- s
Tone 7:	/32/	Mid/Low (Slightly Falling with Breathiness)	- g