

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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