DISCOURSES OF STANDARDIZATION: CASE STUDY—THE HMONG IN THE WEST

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Should a linguist, today, ever happen to pause and query the ethics of his own
discourse, he might well respond by doing something else

Kristeva, 1974 [1980] *The ethics of linguistics*

Knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides
what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?

Lytotard, 1979 [1984] *The postmodern condition*

 téléchargement, téléchargement

*Hmooob tshuaj, Hmooob rhaub*

('Hmong medicine—Hmong prepare it')

*Hmong proverb*
ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates language standardization from linguistic, sociolinguistic and critical applied linguistic perspectives.

It arises from my involvement with a local ex-refugee Hmong community, who asked me a few years ago to assist in an ongoing standardization project; working first on orthography establishment, then moving on to dictionary work.

This work has led me to consider what directs the phenomenon, the goals and the procedures of standardization. An intricate web of ideologies, intergroup relations, linguistic considerations and practical requirements motivate and shape the course it follows. Speakers and researchers, the minority community and the dominant culture all influence its processes and outcomes.

For my primary Hmong consultancy group, a strong socio-politico-religious position leads the standardization agenda, manifested particularly in the choice of a unique script. Throughout the wider Hmong community, values including orthodoxy, progressivism and nationism interact with communicative, pedagogical, scientific and technological imperatives, as well as the broader context of recent relocation to a western environment. This complex of conditions informs the salient problems and directions discussed.

My approach comprises (i) a descriptive linguistic and sociolinguistic assessment of how particular aspects of language are treated in standardisation, and (ii) a post-Foucauldian investigation of how the processes of standardization are given form as possible objects of thought, discussion or action.

In order to explore these questions:

(i) I ground my case study in a descriptive and analytical presentation of the language and linguistics topics most salient to standardisation. Base linguistic issues include phonology and word formation. Key language planning issues are standard dialect, orthography, lexical elaboration, tools of standardisation and dissemination. Contentions and solutions are discussed for each issue which arises, as seen from various positions from both inside and outside the Hmong-speaking community. The focuses and projects of many different subgroups are incorporated, and the local dictionary project discussed in depth.

(ii) I excavate and construct the discourse formations—that is, the structures which predispose the particular ideas, principles and directions of standardization that emerge. I examine the strategies people employ in their movement within these discourse
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formations, and explore how the discourses are perpetually reworked and reconstituted in the process of their actualisation during the standardization processes.

The strong orientation of this thesis on the one hand to the work and ideas of the speech community, and on the other hand to exploring the underlying structures shaping language and linguistics work, calls attention to the some of structures implicit in the research itself. Specifically, this thesis foregrounds considerations of the changing roles of researchers and speakers, the legitimisation of certain kinds of knowledge, and the differences in what can be understood of the object of research depending on the discursive position of the viewer. I develop working principles which pursue diversity of viewing positions, emphasise the knowledge and perspectives of speakers, and privilege the small and particular over the dominant and central.

The thesis as a whole contributes to:

- furthering current understanding of linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of the Hmong language and its standardization
- expanding linguistic theory to incorporate social conditions and discursive bases as an inextricable part of the language ecology.
This is to certify that:

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work

(ii) due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used

(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.
PREFACE

The description of Hmong standardisation in process is based largely on the work of the Hmong community in the USA and Australia. Public forums, discussions, internet communications and material from websites are reported and synthesised. Full permission has been obtained from the Hmong Language Institute of Australia to quote and discuss their work. While it has not been possible to seek comparable permission from the whole of the broader Hmong community, I have circulated notices about my research on the internet a number of times, inviting response, and have received several positive replies including offers of assistance. Sources of all quotes and ideas including those from unpublished sources are given in the text.

Appendix C is an adapted version of Eira (1998), which in turn derives largely from a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Dept of Linguistics & Applied Linguistics, University of Melbourne, 1996.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis has been made possible by the generosity of many people, both academically and personally.

In the first place, the close study of the local Hmong projects has only been possible through the untiring participation of members of the Hmong Language Institute of Australia. Particular thanks are due to Mr. Lam Hjaj, Mr. Xuy Nom Loob and Mr. Yaj Nom Soua, who answered questions, corrected my Hmong, proofread dictionary drafts and provided a welcoming environment for my visits for the duration of my candidature. I am also grateful to Mr. Sui Xyooj, Mr. Xyooj Xyooj, Mr. Yaj Nom Lis, Mr. Yaj Txiab and Mr. Yaj Tswv Hawj for their assistance in the early days of my involvement, and to Suzy Pinchen, then working with the Coolaroo Community Health Centre, who introduced me to the Hmong community in the first place and liaised between the community and the university in the initial stages.

I am indebted to Mr. Ntxawg Lis Yjia 'Young' Lee for his enthusiasm as a teacher at the Hmong language learning intensive, through the South East Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) 1998.

Several individuals and organisations have provided me with information and access to community activities. Mr. Xab Tzexa Cherta Lee spent a good deal of time writing to me about his own research in Hmong and sending me drafts of his forthcoming publications. Mark Thompson at the Saturn Riverfront School in St Paul, together with Yee Yang, generously hosting my visit to the school to observe the context of use of the Saturn Hmong Talking Dictionaries, gave me hard copies of the dictionaries at various stages of development, together with other locally published materials, and provided me with a great deal of information and resource contacts. The Hmong Language Institute in California and in Minnesota were also welcoming hosts, talking freely with me about their work and encouraging me in mine. The Hmong LG email network, targeted primarily to Hmong people wishing to discuss language issues and contribute to language planning efforts, welcomed my queries, and several contributors, namely True Txayeeb, Yaj Txiaj Vwj and Sao Xiong, wrote to me personally about their knowledge of Hmong language and culture, gave their opinions on various language issues, and assisted with translations. In Melbourne, Pao Saykao assisted me

1While I was putting the final touches on this thesis, news was circulated that one of the maintainers of Hmong LG, Tswv Xyooj Xyi, died of cancer, on 19/12/2000. He was a young man who put in enormous
with publicising achievements of the HLIA and myself, talked to me about his own positions on orthography development, and provided me with further resources.

I am fortunate to have had Jean Mulder as academic supervisor, whose approach to research incorporates both the scientific and the political, and who understands the importance of human processes in language, fieldwork and language planning activities. She was able to work with my idiosyncratic style while also judging the points at which assistance or insistence was necessary, and was always supportive of investigations on or over the edge of the dominant discourses of our discipline.

Additional academic support was most appreciated from Brian Lynch and Janet Fletcher, who read several chapters, and stood in for Jean during periods of leave. In particular, Brian provided inspiring criticism of my treatment of discourse analysis, while Janet pinpointed the gaps and fragilities in the phonetics and phonology section.

A number of people sent me copies of their unpublished work which proved extremely useful: thanks to Nerida Jarkey, Peter Mühlhäuser and Walter Bisang. Nick Enfield and Stephen Morey gave me copies of items difficult to obtain outside of Laos.

Crucial to my ability to carry out my research and writing up have been a number of scholarships and grants I received: from the University of Melbourne, an Australian Postgraduate Award supporting me for most of my candidature, a Faculty travel grant and a Departmental fieldwork grant, making possible my trip to the USA to visit other Hmong groups; and a SEASSI tuition scholarship allowing me to study Hmong intensively for nine weeks. The provision of a small office in my final year by the University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association (UMPA) was essential to my writeup phase. Especial thanks are due to Jim Dangaris, UMPA Information Technology officer, who achieves the rare balance of skill and approachability, and the indefatigable Jude Rossiter, UMPA Executive Officer, who seems to prioritise every postgraduate student individually.

Last but certainly not least I would not have maintained either the inspiration for my work or the warmth of my spirit without the continuous support of my dearest friends, Tonya Stebbins and Duncan Markham, and my partner Wyrd. All three read most of my thesis at several stages, often at very short notice. Tonya discussed fieldwork practices and linguistics philosophy with me, maintained a sense of perspective on deadlines, university and language community politics, and the various disasters of everyday life, and always managed to find my work exciting.

enormous efforts to the Hmong community at large and language planning work. His comments figure prominently in sections of this thesis.
Duncan was meticulous in his reading of my phonetics and phonology and a patient listener to every new development in my academic and personal processes. Wyrdya picked holes in my politics, collected analogies from physics texts, accepted every change in plans, decisions, time frames and my emotional state, and maintained an unflagging belief in my abilities on my behalf.

While all of the above people have contributed greatly to the thesis in different ways, the ways in which I have made use of their knowledge and assistance, and particularly any misinterpretations and errors which have crept through, of course remain my own responsibility.
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TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

(1) Hmong words

Caub Fab ᵇᵯⁿ ᵇᵯⁿ

See (iii) Key organisations

cuav ᶇᵯⁿ

Alloy, impure (esp. of metals). Used metaphorically by the HLIA of non-orthodox or non-
ḥ₃₉ ᵃᵱ Phaj hauj writing.

dab neeg ᵇᵯⁿ ᵇᵯⁿ

A large body of Hmong oral literature, including histories and prophetic narratives.

kab ᵇᵯⁿ

Rows. Conventional ordering of vowel+tone graphemes and consonant graphemes in
the ᶢᵯⁿ ᵃᵱ Phaj hauj.

mab suav ᵇᵯⁿ ᵇᵯⁿ

Non-Hmong person

qeej ᵇᵯⁿ

A reeded instrument made of bamboo pipes which embodies significant cultural and
ritualistic symbology. It has a central role at funerals, the performer playing a very
extensive ritual piece which is designed to lead the soul to the otherworld at the same
time as deterring harmful spirits. The player performs a complex spinning ritual dance at
the same time as the music. The qeej ᵇᵯⁿ and its dance are also performed for
entertainment and for competition.

seev ᵇᵯⁿ

A prosodic phenomenon of vowel lengthening and free rising tone associated with
certain clause-final particles.

tseem ᵇᵯⁿ

Pure (esp. of metals). Used metaphorically by the HLIA of the orthodox version of the ᶢᵯⁿ
ᵱᵱ Phaj hauj.

²All Hmong words are ordered according to RPA and roman standard ordering.
txiv (niam) neeb ᵃNSUserDefaults ᶊʃ��
Practitioner who diagnoses illness or other trouble, and practises healing, divination, and regular rituals promoting peace and prosperity, on the basis of inspired understanding as well as learned skills and knowledge. She has a central role at ceremonies such as weddings. ᵃNSUserDefaults ʃ�� txiv neeb (lit. father+spirit) is the general term or specific to a male; ᵃNSUserDefaults ʃ�� niam neeb (lit. mother+spirit) is less commonly used, and refers specifically to a female.

ua neeb ᵃNSUserDefaults ᶊʃ��
Practise spirit ritual.

(ii) Key people

Cher Vang Kong
Hmong Christian minister in California and the originator of the ᵃNSUserDefaults ᵃ standardUserDefaults Ntawv Pajntaub script.

Jay Kue
Designer of an adapted version of the ᵃNSUserDefaults ᵃ standardUserDefaults Phaj hauj, and fonts and software for their use on the internet. Fonts, software and introductory information are available from the Hmong Script Software website at Cwjmem Homepage: <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Pines/5884>. (See also Hmong Script Software under (iii) Key organisations.)

 viewController ViewController Paj Cai Vwj
See Caub Fab ViewController ViewController under (iii) Key organisations.

Kub Yaj нная Kou Yang
Leader in the tradition of Yaj Soob LwjgetString getString currently recognised by the HLIA.

Lis Nom Loob нная getString getString Lee Nao Long
Core member of the HLIA.

Mark Thompson
See Saturn Riverfront School under Key organisations.

Pao Saykao
Leading figure in the broad Melbourne Hmong community and maintainer of the Hmong LG email network.
Tswv Xyooj K Si
Prominent figure in Hmong language planning and maintainer of the Hmong LG email network.

Txais Lis 6\v AKI Chai Lee
Leader in the tradition of Yaj Soob Lwj\w Duif \ullf tin active at Ban Vinai and still recognised by some. Author of several texts in Phaj hauj.

Txawj Lis Xab\w AID §A Tzexa Cherta Lee'
Hmong linguist and author of several works on Hmong orthography and historical linguistics.

Vaj Txiaj Kuam\w Duif Yang Chia Koua
Founding member of the Motthem Family and co-author of Smalley et al (1990), amongst other works.

Yaj Lis Hwj\w Duif Yang Lee Hue
Core member of the HLIA.

Yaj Nom Lis\w AID Yang Nao Lee
Member of the HLIA.

Yaj Nom Suav\w Duif Yang Nao Shoua
Core member of the HLIA.

Yaj Ntxawg Lis\w AID 'Young' Lee
Hmong intensive course teacher at South East Asian Studies Summer Institute 1998.

Yaj Nyiaj Yig\w AID Yang Gnia Yee
Key member of the Motthem Family and co-author of Smalley et al (1990), amongst other works.

Yaj Soob Lwj\w Duif Yang Shong Lue
Originator of the Phaj hauj script, held to be inspired by otherworld powers.

(iii) Key organisations

Ban Vinai
One of the largest refugee camps in Thailand immediately following the war in Vietnam and Laos. Many supporters of the Phaj hauj lived in this camp for some time during the refugee period, including most of the people now involved in the HL1.
**Terms and abbreviations**

**Caub Fab**(‘Chao Fa’)

The name given, first, to a Hmong guerilla band who fought under ֶInRange ֵInRange ֶInRange ֵInRange Paj Cai Vwj against the French colonists and Lao authorities in the twenties. This group were and are believed by some to have realised part of a prophetic narrative concerned with the rise of the Hmong to national autonomy, and were accredited with signs of supernatural privilege including miraculous displays of power. Secondly, the followers of ֶInRange ֵInRange ֶInRange Yaj Soob Lwj were associated by many with this same group, by dint of their connection with ֶInRange ֵInRange ֶInRange Yaj Soob Lwj, as a further manifestation of the same spiritual power and inspiration as ֶInRange ֵInRange ֶInRange Paj Cai Vwj. Although most members of the HLI reject the title, many Hmong outside of this group still associate the ֶInRange ֵInRange Phaj hauj with the ֶInRange ֵInRange Caub Fab.

**HLI**

Hmoob Koomhaum txhawb nqa moj kuab txuici ‘Hmong Language Institute’. The main international organisation working in development and dissemination of the ֶInRange ֵInRange Phaj hauj or, according to context, the American as distinct from the Australian branches of this body.

**HLIA**

Hmoob Koomhaum txhawb nqa moj kuab txuici Auvtaslias ‘Hmong Language Institute of Australia’. The Australian branch of the HLI.

**Hmong ABC bookshop and crafts**

The largest retail source of books and other materials in and about Hmong. The business has a mailorder catalogue online at <http://www.lomation.com/hmongabc/>.

**Hmong LG (Hmong Language Group)**

An email discussion forum targeted to Hmong language development, known initially as Hmong Language Users Group or HLUG. The Hmong LG home page is located at <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/4908/> . This network, begun late in 1996, is run by prominent Hmong and interested non-Hmong people including Pao Saykao, Craig Rice and Tswv Xyooj. Membership is free and open, and requests, notices, queries, advice and ongoing discussions on any topics connected with the Hmong language are circulated regularly in HmD, MNts, and/or English.

**Hmong Script Software**

An independent website offering fonts and teaching materials for the ֶInRange ֵInRange Phaj hauj, in a slightly adapted version more suited to writer/readers of both dialects. The site is located at <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Pines/5884/>.
Motthem Family 59 (ລ້ວ† ໝັກ Moj them 59)

The first formal association teaching Hmong culture and values in the tradition of ຽາວ ວ້າຍ Yaj Soob Lwj, and later literacy in ຽາວ ສາກ Phaj hauj. The name means ‘Collaboration 59’, referring to the year that ຽາວ ວ້າຍ Yaj Soob Lwj began teaching. The group is sometimes referred to as Pahawh 59, or Project Family 59.

Saturn Riverfront School

A primary school in St Paul which hosts the Saturn Hmong talking Dictionaries, by Mark Thompson, Yee Yang et al. The school runs a substantial bilingual programme for children of various immigrant groups including Hmong.

Unicode

An international organisation is engaged in the long-term project of developing a standard ASCII encoding for every world script (with the possible exception of Chinese!) towards eventually making them all available for such purposes as facilitating readability of all extant languages on the internet, perhaps as a standard package with computer sales. The ‘Pahawh’ proposal is being undertaken by Michael Everson, and can be found at <http://www.indigo.ie/egt/standards/iso10646/pdf/hmong.pdf> (latest update November 2000).

(iv) Linguistic and discourse theory terms

Accreditation

The inclusion of a given idea, activity, artefact as valid within a particular discourse.

Concept

The relations between statements, forming a body of knowledge valid in a particular time and place.

Counteridentification

Direct resistance to a dominant discourse.

Denaturalisation

Dissolving the illusion that a particular discourse or ideology is natural or inevitable, making it visible and open to question.

Discourse

A system of meaning formed by linking entities having no natural or universal connection. A discourse both creates the possibility for and sets limits on the range of ideas, linguistic texts and actions which can emerge and be comprehensible within the field it defines.
Discursive formation, discourse formation
The larger set of relations constructed between discourses to form a complex way of
organising meaning in a given community, space and time.

Disidentification
Declining to take up any of the possible subject positions open within the dominant
discourse.

Grapheme
A single character or graph within a writing system.

Grapheme unit
A combination of graphemic elements which together represent a single sound or
phoneme, such as a complex consonant or vowel+tone unit.

Hegemony
A status of dominance which is set up in such a way that both those who benefit from the
status quo and those who are disadvantaged by it, contribute to its perpetuation. A
hegemonic discourse is usually naturalised to a significant extent.

Identification
Accepting oneself as someone referred to, described, named in the terms of a given
discourse; someone who thinks, says, writes the texts the discourse makes available.

Ideology
A given position within a discourse; a set of beliefs with which a person identifies.

Linguistic artefacts
Language-based items with cultural meaning, such as a dictionary, a traditional narrative,
an orthography.

Local, localisation
A particular historical time and space in which a discursive formation is actualised.

Location
Person, institution or artefact which embodies or represents the authority of a given
discourse.

Minority
A group with relatively little power in the context of a majority or dominant group. The
minority group may or may not be fewer in number than the dominant group.
Narrative

Culturally established ideas of the progression of human existence; a framework used to form a cohesive and coherent whole with which to understand events and circumstances.

Naturalisation

The particular instantiation of a discourse which is so ingrained in the community consciousness that it has the status of common sense. The largely unchallenged assumptions on which a community operates.

Object

A field of possible knowledge produced and delimited by a discourse.

Order of discourse

The hierarchical structure of discourses that establishes certain practices, institutions and ideologies as the norm and others as marginal in a particular period and situation.

Practices

Ways in which discourses are formed and realised in an actual time and place. Practices include the formation of objects, statements, concepts, and themes.

Preword

Classifier-like nominal element which provides the general semantic category of the compound it forms with the following element. A common word formation procedure in Southeast Asian languages including Hmong.

Speech community, language community

Group of people defined by the linguistic or sociolinguistic question under consideration. Specific membership of groups identified is not static, and groups can be identified at various levels of scope as appropriate to the issue at hand.

Standardisation

The choice, development and dissemination of a standard language or writing system.

Statement

Formulated representations of knowledge including, but not restricted to, linguistic texts.

Storycloth

An embroidery which depicts a historical or mythic event or period of time. These are commonly made in Southeast Asia, by minority ethnic peoples including Hmong.
Strategy

The means employed by persons and groups to achieve certain ends, whether or not this is the conscious design of the procedure, characterisation or action.

Theme

A combination of concepts into larger theoretical ideas threading through several discourses.

(v) Abbreviations

HmD  Hmong Daw (ći nă Hmoob Dawb)
MNts  Mong Njua (Moob Ntsuab)
RPA  Roman Popular Alphabet
HLI  Hmong Language Institute
HLIA  Hmong Language Institute of Australia

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<th>PERF</th>
<th>PROG</th>
<th>CAUS</th>
<th>IRR</th>
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<td>Onomatopoeia</td>
<td>Particle</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>Post verbal intensives</td>
<td>Interrogative forming yes/no questions</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to explore the framework which shapes standardization processes. To do this, two tasks are necessary.

(i) I make a comprehensive survey of what is occurring in language standardization in my case study, the Hmong ex-refugee community in the west. My particular focus is the work of a small group in Melbourne who are establishing an original script.

(ii) I investigate how networks of ideas, goals, activities, organisations and linguistic artefacts realise and reshape structures of legitimation. These structures are the discourses of standardization.

The thesis is structured as a set of themes revisited from different perspectives in turn. This structure reflects principles central to the work: that different kinds of knowledge are to be gained from different viewing positions; and that everything is connected to everything else at every point. In Part I (Chapters One–Three), a relatively static and abstracted background is presented. A descriptive linguistics approach, incorporating sociolinguistic aspects, is followed by a Foucauldian discourse analysis approach, introducing specific discourses that arise in the case study. These are the tools and materials of the thesis. The chapters of Part II (Four–Six) mirror those of Part I, applying these tools and materials to the complex unfolding of standardisation in process, and its analysis in terms of discourse theory.

The whole is imaged as a tapestry; weaving the weft threads of the case study across warp threads of social, conceptual and structural configurations. Likewise, a tapestry is the metaphor for the object of study itself; which is comprised of many contributing ideas and splinter groups, many shades of difference highlighting and countering one another, distinguishable but not ultimately separate. The metaphor is derived from an important practice of Hmong people; the making of ᡋᥫフケ ᫕ᥫᨒᥫ้ำ 'embroideries', weavings and storycloths. These pieces are used for both decoration and symbolism, on ceremonial and festive occasions and, more recently, as visual histories.

Chapter One Setting up the loom introduces the three aspects which make up the topic: discourse theory, standardization, and the Hmong case study. Leaving more comprehensive explication till later chapters, here I establish:

• the defining limits of my work
• the principles on which I approach and represent my research

• the identification of my primary sources and relevant subgroups in the Hmong community

• the conventions used in the thesis.

In Chapter Two Yarns I introduce my case study. The perspective presented here is of linguistic analysis and the status quo according to particular sections of the Hmong community; a launching place from which to describe the fluid and diverse processes of standardization in Chapter Four. I synthesise previous work on various aspects of linguistics and sociolinguistics, identifying problems and extending analysis on the basis of my own research. I have selected only those aspects of Hmong which are particularly pertinent to the topic of standardisation in the west:

• salient aspects of Hmong history and cultural narratives

• the current geographic and social situation

• dialects in the west

• major writing systems

• the phonology of the language

• its morphological structure

Chapter Three Shuttles introduces the second framework: my approach to critical discourse analysis, and the kinds of discourses which are relevant to a study of standardisation. This chapter explains my theoretical position, its heritage in a Foucauldian tradition, and its relevance to this topic. I address potential problems in the theory and its application. I introduce six major discourses which constitute the central stream of analysis in this thesis, and show how they are realised in the general arena of linguistics and language planning. My aim is to describe the discourses on the one hand as relevant to the community engaged in standardization work, and on the other hand as pertinent to academic research and representation, in preparation for analysis of the case study in these terms in Chapter Five.

I focus on:

• the definition and construction of discourses

• the meaning and relevance of intertextuality
Introduction

- its relation to subjectivity and representation
- the structuring of power
- the importance of a local study.

Chapter Four Storycloth describes in detail the processes of standardization under way in Hmong, with particular emphasis on the work and perspectives of my primary consultants. Taking off from the background of Chapter Two, the scene is now shown to be kaleidoscopic: comprised of multiple concurrent activities and groups, and incorporating factors of change and disagreement.

Key issues considered are:

- selection of standard dialect
- selection of standard writing system
- orthographic development, dialectal representation, details of spelling and written conventions
- strategies for elaboration of lexical fields, loans and purification
- location and representation of word boundaries
- establishment of language planning authority/ies; dissemination and maintenance of standard forms
- development of dictionaries, focussing especially on the dictionary project I have been involved in with the HLIA.

In Chapter Five The back of the work I bring theoretical and practical bases together in overt form. I explain how the six major discourses introduced in Chapter Three emerge as motivating principles and formative environment of the standardization processes described in Chapter Four. This extends the theoretical base to its potential for application to descriptive linguistics. I focus on:

- the ways that the processes of standardisation are produced and restricted by the discourses
- the ways that standardisation in turn reproduces and reconfigures the discourses
- other discourses which interweave with these major formations
• different ideological positions evident within a single discourse

• how the discourses interact with each other in support, opposition and adaptation

• the location of authority, as exemplified in the very local study of the local dictionary project

I close with a consideration of the reasons for emergence of standardisation, possible counterpositions, and a summary of the discourse formation as observed over the course of this thesis.

Chapter Six Tying off threads provides an overview of the findings of the thesis. I bring together the use of discourses as legitimation in Hmong standardisation, the conditions under which standardisation in Hmong emerged, counterpositions to standardisation and the structure of the larger discursive formation. I suggest possible fruitful directions which ensue from the present work. I summarise the status quo of Hmong standardisation and indicate likely directions in the foreseeable future.
PART I.

WARP AND WEFT
1. SETTING UP THE LOOM

1.1 The topic: Defining limits

1.1.1 Discourse theory

In the course of this thesis I critically synthesise earlier work in discourse theory, considering potential problem areas, and establishing my own position in regard to the theory, which includes extending its application more directly to descriptive linguistics work.

The variant concepts of discourse in linguistic analysis are disparate to the point of being 'incommensurable', to quote Pennycook (1994). Beginning with the analysis of discourse as simply a level of language structure superordinate to syntax (classically, Brown and Yule 1983), the range extends through a sociopolitically contextualised Critical Discourse Analysis which focuses on the linguistic text (Hodge and Kress 1979 [1993]; Halliday and Martin 1993), or shifts towards analysis of ideological paradigms as reflected or revealed in linguistic texts (Fairclough 1992; Lemke 1995), to analysis of the paradigms themselves as productive and restrictive of possible texts (see Said 1978; Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990; Pennycook 1998). This last perspective is the one I am most interested in. It derives as much from social theory and literary criticism as from linguistics work, and is most directly reliant on the work of Foucault. Of particular significance for my approach are his more purely theoretical works, especially Foucault (1969 [1972]) and (1971), but I incorporate also the practical applications of his theory in Foucault (1975 [1979]), (1976 [1981]) and elsewhere.

The details of my theoretical position are explained fully in §3.2, together with the distinctions between the various approaches. Essential questions with which I am concerned are:

(i) What authorises, motivates and directs the practices of standardization?

(ii) By what means are the disparate elements of standardisation connected together into a coherent construct? What are the conceptual, physical, organisational, and linguistic components of this framework?

(iii) What kinds of things are ascribed validity as areas of knowledge, principles of operation, goals?

(iv) How do the practices of standardization realise the underlying framework, and how do they re-form it? What is the place of choice and agency within this determining structure?
1. Setting up the loom

The subject of my research is not texts themselves (in the sense of strings of language), nor even meta texts (language about language), but the formal directing of conditions for acceptable (linguistic) texts—that is, standardization. The discourses of standardization are the practices, beliefs, social structures and language events which direct these conditions.

This notwithstanding, in the course of my investigation, I examine some linguistic texts and meta texts, as well as the treatment in standardisation of elements of language including morphology, orthography and the lexicon; the kinds of authority structures established; dictionaries and other linguistic artefacts produced—all towards the aim of understanding what shapes the way in which this deliberate structuring of language conditions is considered and carried out.

1.1.2 Standardization

A study of standardisation is more a study of the actions and processes of people and organisations than of what happens in language per se. It is a study of prescription, of the goal of directing language use and/or assigning usages to categories of correctness or typicality. Standardisation is linked strongly with the wider field of language planning—in fact, in the comprehensive survey of the field in Eastman (1983), the term standardisation is sometimes used interchangeably with language planning, sometimes refers only to orthography and literacy development, sometimes expands to encompass all activities geared towards constraining linguistic diversity, and sometimes indicates the establishment of a standard language as a precursor to language planning.

Language planning, in the often-quoted sequence established by Einar Haugen (eg Haugen 1966 [1972]), comprises:

- **selection** of a standard (language, dialect, writing system...)
- **codification** of that standard (eg the preparation of 'a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary'—Haugen 1959:8)
- **elaboration** eg developing lexical resources

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1.1 The topic: Defining limits

In this sense, language planning is entirely based in the choice, development and dissemination of a standard, and hence all the above activities can be subsumed under the term standardisation. This is the scope of the term as I use it in this thesis. Other agendas in the broader field of language planning which are related to the Hmong standardisation effort include language maintenance and preservation of cultural-linguistic traditions; these are touched on in the present work as relevant. However, the field of language planning also includes goals and activities beyond the scope of Hmong standardisation, such as language revival, implementation of a regional language, or strategies to support or constrain multilingualism in a nation state. The study of Hmong standardisation in the above terms, then, investigates:

- **selection** of dialect and writing system
- **codification** grammatical analysis, orthographic development and the production of dictionaries
- **elaboration** of the lexicon
- **implementation** in standards academies, schools and publications.

Where the case study for the present work differs from most recent considerations of standardisation is that the process is generally 'undertaken by those who are in a position of power' (Williams 1981, quoted in Tollefson 1991:221) and hence often (and appropriately) viewed as a form of control over a (political) minority (see for instance Haugen 1985). In the Hmong case, however, standardisation is being carried out by a minority on their own language within a foreign environment. Undoubtedly hierarchies of power are relevant here too, but their configuration and implementation are both more subtle and more responsive to change.

As an intentional activity based in linguistic or sociolinguistic research, language planning is a phenomenon of only around forty years, but according to Luke, McHoul and Mey (1990), its emergence as a field in its own right merely shifted to linguistic domains a process whereby:

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2 For slight variations in the definition and/or labelling of these four elements, and also variant analyses of the components of language planning, see Eastman (1983), especially Chapter Four.

3 See Eastman (1983) also for a history of this phenomenon.
1. Setting up the loom

social influences acted as *de facto* forces for the deployment, development, registration, formalization and use of language, often unintentionally establishing a seemingly natural path of institutional and bureaucratic intervention and non-intervention in language development, change and death. Larger social agendas of educational, social and economic policy tended to circumscribe *a priori* any deliberate language planning.

Luke, McHoul and Mey (1990):26

Along with Luke, McHoul and Mey (1990), I argue that these 'larger social agendas' are still largely what is driving language planning, but the focus on development of language as such has tended to separate out the political and social forces from discussion. The approach to language planning described by Luke, McHoul and Mey (1990) therefore constitutes an attempt to remove language from its discursive context, while the study of standardisation in the present work contributes to recontextualising it, investigating how it is situated in discourse.

1.1.3 Hmong case study

The case study of this thesis comprises the standardisation work of Hmong people in the west: in particular, Australia and the USA. It is a case study that arises from my involvement in the language work of part of the Melbourne Hmong community over the past five years—initially in response to a request for assistance in establishing their chosen writing system, then moving on to a major dictionary project.4

Standardisation in Hmong is for the most part self-determined; that is, it is motivated and carried out primarily by members of the speech community. What this means for this thesis is that goals, procedures, focuses and analyses of speakers are placed in the foreground. The case study itself constitutes a description, not so much of a language, but of the work of a language community on their language.

The broad geographic distinction I make between Hmong in Asian and in western countries reflects the differences of language context and standardisation status developing between

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4In 1995 ᵒ⁵ ᵐ ᵐ Naeb Yaj, a member of the community, had a dream. Two men were carrying huge packages towards her. They told her that unless the Hmong people wanted this ᆵ Phaj hjaij, they would take it away. She begged them to leave the packages for the Hmong. It was this dream that motivated her husband ᵐ ᵐ Lis Loob and others to start work on establishing the script, leading soon afterwards to my being invited to participate. (Told by ᵐ ᵐ Lis Loob.)
speech communities so defined. In Laos before the refugee period, Hmong was a well-established first language used for regular daily communication between fairly cohesive groups of Hmong people. The general pattern was for Hmong to live in mostly-Hmong villages; some people, usually young men, travelling for purposes of study (in the official language of the region), but otherwise remaining in the village to participate in a largely subsistence economy. In the present scenario in the west however, the numbers of Hmong speakers living within reasonable proximity of each other are very small, and the established community of origin is scattered between states and even continents. As well as significantly altering the ratio of Hmong speakers in an individual's local community, this has the effect of restricting both the type of interchange of skills between Hmong, and the recourse to higher Hmong authorities, that were available in Laos. The rising generation are thoroughly acculturated to the mainstream in the countries in which they are now living. So although the Hmong are classifiable as a minority group in both Asian and western countries, it is only in the west that the bulk of their daily interactions must be carried out in a non-Hmong-speaking environment. Furthermore, since there is now only sporadic contact between expatriate Hmong and those 'back home', a condition of ongoing language vitality in, say, Laos or Thailand, has little bearing on the language competence of Hmong children growing up in Australia or America.

The speech community in the west is comprised almost entirely of ex-refugees from the recent war in Laos, together with those born outside of Asia since relocation. The suddenness and recency of immigration means that the Hmong people are in the process of dealing with the effects of war and its aftermath, the shock of relocation, separation from people as well as homelands, and adjustment to the new environment. The Hmong in the west are not only a minority, they are a minority of dispersion and in a state of transition. The projects and directions of Hmong language work reflect this context: in attitudes to identity in the past, present and future; and to the influence of other languages and cultures, and the place of the Hmong people and language beside them. These conditions contribute to the emergence of a

5I take Laos as the prototype because this is the country of origin of most immigrant Hmong. According to my primary consultants, Hmong living situations pattern on broadly similar principles in other Asian countries.

6Some interaction and intermarriage is evident with, for instance, Khmu' and Karen people.

7Living patterns may have changed since the war. My primary consultants say that Hmong are no longer permitted to live in the mountains.
1. Setting up the loom

concentrated standardisation effort in Hmong in the west which is not paralleled in Asia. Several
factors implicated in this as a response to relocation are immediately evident:

- A sense of urgency about language and cultural identity maintenance. This is evidenced
  most frequently in the form of concern expressed by both parents (about children) and
  young adults (about themselves) at the loss of traditional knowledge and an associated
  language attrition.\(^8\)

- The greater focus necessary on maintaining connections between dispersed families and
  clans.

- A heightened awareness of the need sensed by many for Hmong to become fully
  established as a language of literacy in order for it to compete equally with other languages
  and nations of the world.

- The prominent, normalised status of formal education in the countries of immigration,
  encouraging the establishment of formal literacy teaching in Hmong. The rising generation
  is becoming more heavily reliant on literacy as a tool of language education and broader
  human interaction than their parents' generation.

- A major shift in the set of concepts which are foregrounded in daily life. Many concepts
  formerly inconsequential to speakers are now highly salient, and the rising generation lives
  in a significantly different world to the one in which previous generations grew up and made
  their contributions to language development.

- Greater freedom of minority language use and education in the new countries of residence.

- Improved access to publication and communications technology.

These factors together have brought the establishment of a written mode, language standards,
and code elaboration to a high priority since refugee resettlement. So the Hmong language is
being developed in western countries in ways which highlight and are gradually increasing the
distance between Hmong and its status in the west, and the varieties spoken in Laos and
Thailand.

Within the broad definition of my case study as language standardisation in Hmong in the west, I
foreground the projects of the small community subgroup that I have been working with, who

\(^8\)See for instance HYCAP (1994).
are currently known as the Hmong Language Institute of Australia (HLIA). This is the Melbourne branch of the organisation whose focus is to establish the script known as the ᵇ₃ᵦ̌ᵣ ᵇ₃ᵦ̌ Phaj hauj Hmooob⁹ in the affiliated Hmong communities, in Australia, the USA and elsewhere.¹⁰ Spiritual knowledge and a particular interpretation of Hmong cultural narratives have a strong unifying, motivating and directing role in these groups. This underlies the prominent placement in their standardisation work of a) religious considerations and b) script choice, which then has major implications for the orientation of this thesis.

Further details of the sociolinguistic context of my case study are given in §2.2. The theme of Hmong standardisation is then grounded in an analysis of features of the language and its use, before I embark on a comprehensive description and then discursive analysis of language development carried out in the last twenty years in the west.

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⁹ All Hmong words in italics are written in the Roman Popular Alphabet, while the non-roman script is the ᵇ₃ᵦ̌ᵣ ᵇ₃ᵦ̌ Phaj hauj Hmooob. For the conventions I use in this thesis for writing Hmong words see §1.4.1; and for an explanation of how to read both writing systems see Appendix A.

¹⁰ Outside of these communities, most Hmong in the west use a roman script orthography, the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA).
1 Setting up the loom

1.2 Principles and approaches

1.2.1 Connections and contexts

This thesis incorporates linguistic, sociolinguistic, applied linguistic, and critical discourse analysis approaches. It provides a linguistic analysis of the Hmong language in regard to standardisation issues, such as phonemic representation in orthography; investigates questions of sociolinguistics, such as the status of different dialects, and of applied linguistics, such as literacy acquisition; and analyses all aspects of standardisation with tools of critical discourse analysis. This last aspect also entails looking outward from my base discipline towards social theory, literary criticism and cultural studies.

In utilising the resources of several disciplines, or subdisciplines, I am acknowledging in practice the interconnectedness of approaches, the need to retain contextualisation in the study of language, and the usefulness of viewing a single object of study from many perspectives. These are important principles that I bring to bear on the present study at different levels of form and content.\textsuperscript{11}

In §3.2.4 I discuss the way the principle of interconnectedness has emerged in textually oriented studies, as a theory of intertextuality, popularized in the west initially through Kristeva and her interpretation of Bakhtin's translinguistics.\textsuperscript{12} The theory makes explicit the connections between what is available to be said, thought or enacted in the present, and the dual context of (a) utterances/writings which have already been produced, and (b) social environment. It also makes explicit the way that the contexts of both sender and receiver are implicated, as both participate in constructing meaning. So these three contributors—sender, receiver and context—are brought together in the production of the text.

\textsuperscript{11}The essential interconnectedness of all aspects of being is a realisation emerging in areas of thought as diverse as physics, psychology, spiritual movements and environmental studies. One example from physics is the discovery of instantaneous communication between particles separated by distances up to light years apart. Alaine Aspect's 1982 tests of Bell's inequality theory demonstrated that 'there is found to be some residual cooperation; more than can be explained by any theory that assumes the independent reality of the external world' (Davies 1983:106).

\textsuperscript{12}See especially Kristeva (1969 [1980]).
1.2 Principles and approaches

The importance of this theory for my present purposes is that, firstly, it provides a way of understanding the connections between events, approaches, statements or ideas. The emergence of conceptual structures and their realisations from these connections is the productive side of discourse theory. Secondly, while the theory of intertextuality shows that any number and configuration of such connections are possible, it also provides a way of understanding how they are in practice restricted, according to the contexts available—an effect of discourse which is a major focus of Foucault's work. So meanings are neither universal nor random, but are conditioned by the historical, social and textual conditions under which they are produced.

Given this, it becomes possible to make sense of connections that are in fact made, but which are outside of the set of connections available for the observer to make:

Each community and every subcommunity within it has its own system of intertextuality: its own set of important or valued texts, its own preferred discourses, and particularly its own habits of deciding which texts should be read in the context of which others, and why, and how.

*Lemke (1995):10*

The goal of this thesis to explore the systems of intertextuality at work in the case study is facilitated by a principle that all decisions are comprehensible within the discourse which produces them. I cannot fully take up a viewing position of someone brought up in a discursive environment which incorporates shamanic ritual, spiritual reincarnation, communication with higher beings through trance states. But I can move towards a mediated understanding of the unfamiliar discourse by enquiring and listening without an agenda of criticism, which learning will then extend my range of possible subject positions. I can also take up different subject positions within the range that is already available to me, which is of course wider than purely the scientist. And finally, I can also accept things to be valid regardless of my capacity to understand them, since they are evidently valid to other people who comprehend things that I do not, in which case the task of representation will focus on reproducing what has been told to me.

My primary consultants, the people who contribute to the Hmong email networks, myself, and the writers that I refer to, are all speaking/writing as subjects within our own contexts, which

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13 This is discussed in Foucault (1979 [1972]) as a condition of rarity of statements and discursive formations. By this is meant the extreme selectivity of the discourses circumscribing what may emerge, in comparison to the vastness of what might be available outside of this circumscription. (See especially Part III Chapter 4.)
1. Setting up the loom

predispose us to certain viewing positions. These are conditions which make representation of objective truth a theoretical ideal.\(^1\) The fact that these positions precede the fact of viewing is not in itself problematic. What would be problematic in the present context would be if the researcher were to ignore the prior status of such positions—if I were to treat what I see as objective fact unmediated by my available modes of viewing. Investigating the composition of these conditioned positions from which to see—that is, of these discourses—is a major goal of the present study.

It seems advisable at this point to state very clearly, following Harré, Brockmeier and Muhlhäusler (1999), that to propose a deconstruction of the discourses of Hmong standardization processes as I am doing here is in no way an adverse criticism of those processes. In fact the opposite is the case: as touched on in §3.2.3, my theoretical/philosophical position is that the greater understanding of such processes to be gained by this work can be used to facilitate greater appreciation and inclusivity of work based in the whole range of different discursive contexts; improved communication between people of different discursive contexts; towards further 'sapping' of the invisible power of hegemonic discourses; and ultimately in the interests of agency of minority language communities in regard to their language and its planning.

That deconstruction can resemble criticism is, I think, an effect of a set of common beliefs including that to demonstrate understanding of what underlies something is to gain some kind of superiority over it; that to know what 'makes something tick' somehow equates to knowing that the something was an illusion that has now been disenfranchised. This is very similar to the idea that there is a distinction between viewpoints based in ideology and viewpoints based in reality. Ideology is bad, reality is good. But in the present philosophical framework, reality can only ever be imaged from the framework of the imager. In the same way, investigating what are the discourses in which a phenomena is constructed is not to deny the reality or the validity of those discourses, or of the practices they give shape to and of which they are formed. It is simply to gain understanding, in the hope of this understanding being used to constructive ends for people involved at any level.

Principles of methodology into which the theoretical base briefly outlined above is distilled include:

+ that I include various kinds of context in my discussion

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\(^1\) The famous early demonstration of this in the physical world is Einstein's exposition of measurement in the context of a moving train. In Einstein (1916 [1961]), he found that such staples as length and duration are variable in themselves, not simply in their assessment, according to the position of the observer.
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- that I assume all perspectives to have meaning
- that I take up a writing position that overtly acknowledges my involvement in what I study
- that the case study is weighted towards the small part of it that I am involved in
- that I take up several of the viewing positions available to me in turn.

1.2.2 Identification and representation

Since what is available to be said, thought or enacted is conditioned by the operative discourses of the subject, it follows that identification of participants is a necessary point of reference towards identifying the discourses which shape a given practice. However, it should be noted that the conditioning of perspective extends to the way that people identify and characterise themselves and others. The delineation and defining characteristics of the outgroup are in an interdependent relationship with the delineation and defining characteristics of the ingroup.

For instance, as ingroup workers, members of the Hmong Language Institute of Australia may represent themselves as cohesive; as defined by their commonalities, and perhaps also in terms of disjunction with the culture and institutions that I or other outgroup members represent. HLIA members sometimes characterise other Hmong groups in terms of their policies, procedures, etc, that differ from their own working group.

Conversely, as an outgroup worker, my tendency is to view the Hmong people I work with as defined in opposition to myself. I am likely to foreground that which is outside of my own framework of reference, and to portray these things as being characteristic of the people I am working with and attempting to represent. Elements in the case study which are different to my experience of my own language and its practices will appear more prominent—terms for reckoning of a lunar calendar, word classes absent from English, a deceased spiritual leader as the focus of decision-making about orthography.

Consequently, even the identification of participants is necessarily interpretive, so that representation at all levels is 'always already' mediated through the discourses of the observer. A profile of the participants, then, is not an attempt to 'draw the curtain', since 'the curtain is the painting', but to set the ensuing discussion in the context of whose view is being

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15 'I do not know whether behind appearances there lives and moves a secret essence superior to me. Nor do I ask; I do not care. I create phenomena in swarms, and paint with a full palette a gigantic and
1. Setting up the loom

represented, thereby providing some inroad as to what the discursive conditions in operation might be.

The first link between the Hmong community and my thesis is myself. Because I am at once studying the process of standardization and working on some of the very standardisation projects which make up that process, I am inextricably part of what I study. One of the clearest examples of this is that in two parallel Hmong Language Institute dictionary projects, the one being carried out in California by only Hmong people is monolingual, whereas the one I am involved in here in Melbourne is a Hmong–English translation dictionary. The Hmong project participants see my involvement as necessary to the inclusion of English.

Moreover, everything that I observe of the speech practices of my primary consultants, opinions they express, forms in which they write, and decisions they make about preferred pronunciation, spelling or lexical choice—occurs in the context of my presence. Not only am I there, but almost always I am there on formal language business, with myself and my agendas as a primary focus at the time. This undoubtedly has an effect on what is said and written in the first place.

For these reasons, following Lemke (1995), at this point I include a profile of myself.16

For the purposes of the present context, I am a non-Hmong, female, parent generation participant with English as my first language, limited Hmong communicative competence in LE rū Hmoob Dawb HmD, and reasonable literacy skills in both the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA) and the êk ñà rE Phaj hauj Hmoob. I am predisposed by certain life experiences and philosophies I have consequently developed to accept a wide range of possible views of reality, and to focus on politics affecting minority groups. I have been meeting with Hmong people since early 1995; very formally at first, and since late in 1998, in homes on an approximately weekly basis. My main roles and tasks have been making fonts and providing other technological skills, preparing texts for publication, learning Hmong language and acquiring literacy in êk ñà Phaj hauj, developing a dictionary, raising awareness in the general and academic community about Hmong ex-refugees in Australia, in particular the HLIA and the êk ñà Phaj hauj script, and providing advice and advocacy concerning Australian administrative and commercial bodies.

16 A profile of my consultants and other sources is provided in §1.3.
1.2 Principles and approaches

Because identity is so closely linked with representation, it is crucial to acknowledge the sources of representation—of the language, of a policy, of a culture. For the present work I maintain two guidelines towards accurate identification of sources: I aim to avoid (i) underspecification of groups, and (ii) implications of their homogeneity. These guidelines warrant a brief explanation.

(i) Underspecification

A coffee table book entitled *People of the golden triangle* (Lewis and Lewis 1984) includes many beautiful pictures of ‘Hmong’ jewellery, tools and clothing. The Hmong who showed me this book, however, are not conversant with many of the items shown, identifying some as ‘Blue Mong’, some as obsolete, and some as possibly used by Thai Hmong, while some are unfamiliar altogether. So the book presents an unqualified image of the Hmong which thereby misrepresents some people who identify under that label. Certainly it is outside of the scope of Lewis and Lewis (1984) to provide an in-depth analysis of cultural identity and the many patterns of division that characterise the people collectively known as Hmong. The problem could be dealt with adequately in this case by inclusion of some simple statements noting perhaps who the consultants were, where the pictures were taken, or whose possessions are illustrated.

In the book *Mother of writing* (Smalley et al 1990), a detailed and scholarly account of the development of the Hmong a̱ n̄ Phaj hauj writing system, ‘Version Three’ is represented as being current. Although this version was current among those who worked with Vang, one of the authors, many other Hmong in America, Australia and Thailand were and still are using ‘Version Two’. It is not inaccurate to say that Version Three was current. However, it is inaccurate to imply that it is the only or even the major version current. The wide availability of this otherwise excellent monograph has resulted in several further publications which have not had recourse to direct consultancy with the current organised a̱ n̄ Phaj hauj communities, and which have assumed the same thing (eg Ratliff 1996). The snowball effect of this makes it harder for these communities to establish a different status quo. In this case, a closer and clearer identification of the subject group could have avoided the undesirable implications of universal application.

(ii) Implied homogeneity

The use of a label to refer to a group of people tacitly implies homogeneity of that group.

A growing awareness of this problem in the eighties was given impetus by, amongst others, Henry Louis Gates’ collection of essays entitled *Race* writing and difference (Gates 1985 [1986]). In his introduction, Gates writes:

>The sense of difference defined in popular usages of the term ‘race’ has both described and inscribed differences of language, belief system, artistic tradition,
1. Setting up the loom

and gene pool, as well as all sorts of supposedly natural attributes such as rhythm, fidelity, and so forth...I was amazed to hear a member of the House of Lords describe the differences between Irish Protestants and Catholics in terms of their 'distinct and clearly definable differences of race'.

Gates (1985 [1986]):5

Gates' point here is that to apply a label of racial designation to a group of people has significant power to attribute any and all characteristics culturally associated with that label to the individuals in the group. A person so labelled comes to be seen as an embodiment of those characteristics rather than as themselves, with the strengths, interests and so on which they have potential to realise. The label and its interpretation come to determine what a person may and may not achieve. Gates (1986), describing the process by which the poetry of Phillis Wheatley was eventually published, explains how the belief (by Angloamericans) that 'Blacks and other people of color could not write' (p9) lead to governmental statutes legislating that such a thing could not come to pass. In 1740 in South Carolina, it was made illegal to:

teach, or cause any slave or slaves to be taught to write, or...employ any slave as a scribe in any manner of writing whatsoever...

Gates (1986):9

Furthermore, variation (change across groups) and variability (change over time) are essential characteristics of both people and language, as of any living phenomenon. The ramifications of this for linguistic description are all-pervasive. Although it is a theoretical axiom that the natural state of languages is one of continuous change, this principle has not as yet fully overturned the tendency in research practice to freeze languages, especially endangered languages, at a given point—perhaps 'pre-contact'. Synchronously, it is in a linguistic sense quite misleading to speak of single definable or separable languages at all, let alone to describe identifiable

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17Phillis Wheatley is known as the first Black American poet to write in English. In 1772, she brought a set of works before a white male panel, whose task was to decide whether or not she could have written it.

18Gates explains that this belief reflected not only the lack of literacy education available to people of color, but also the relationship in white discourse between writing and superiority of reason. Reserving for themselves the ability to write therefore arose from and maintained the discourse of white supremacy.

19Thieberger (1999), discussing a range of possible meanings of language 'maintenance' or even 'revival' in Australian languages, warns against 'the trap of portrayal of indigenous culture as either traditional (=true) or non-traditional (=degenerate)'.
boundaries of dialects and varieties within a language group. This principle has interesting interactions with the nature of the community project I work with, since it is first and foremost a conservative and prescriptive project focussed on recording a particular variety in an orthodox framework. The tensions inherent in this are discussed in §4.7.1 and §5.3.2.3.

Standardisation in Hmong does not take place uniformly. The whole of that ethnic grouping is not in agreement, nor working on the same tasks nor even in a single direction. To simply use the broad designation 'Hmong' runs the risk of implying that anyone working on standardization in the Hmong language is producing polices or tools which are targeted to or will be useable by all Hmong speakers, which is simply not the case. A general account, then, is not a more accurate description of the situation than a local account.

Throughout this thesis, I make use of several different delineations of both speech community and consultancy group, as appropriate to different areas of discussion and analysis (see §1.3). Specific membership of groups identified is not static, but changes according to the linguistic and sociolinguistic question under consideration. This referential tool, then, should be understood to refer to something inherently subject to variation and change.

1.2.3 Roles of researcher and consultant

My thesis is oriented to the work and perspectives of the speech community. Since all perspectives are culturally conditioned, the attempt to represent an Other in this way ideally includes a deferral of the right to determine what constitutes a valid or coherent position. This principle aims to support a move emerging amongst speakers of minority languages, linguists, and others, to shift ownership, responsibility and rights of knowledge back to the speech communities in practical terms. It revises the role of the trained outgroup worker from that of expert executive to that of consultant assistant.

Many speakers of minority languages are no longer content to accept the control of outsiders over planning of their languages. Sometimes this control has been overtly assimilationist to the point of genocidal (Day 1985). Sometimes it has been exercised as an outworking of postcolonial policies through often well-intentioned motives including the development of education and access to the dominant culture. Most directly relevant to my case study, this control has sometimes manifested in the form of incoming language workers with privilege in terms of training, cultural position and access to resources, who have an interest in research for its own sake and/or for the purposes of literacy education, language maintenance or preservation of cultural records. Outgroup members in this last category have primarily been linguists, missionaries, anthropologists and educators from powerful cultures.
1. Setting up the loom

Regardless of the potential usefulness of the skills and resources of outsiders, work has been carried out in modes which have to a large degree minimised the importance of speaker approach and opinion, and often sidestepped questions of custodianship in language as well as culture. The common identity of the outgroup worker as a member of the dominant culture is in itself both a consequence and a perpetuation of the imbalances of power and access characterising relations between groups. In this situation, the discourses of the dominant culture tend to function as the assumed framework for research and language planning. They provide default systems of determining what is important and what is valid.

Mudrooroo (1995) explains how a submission of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) in 1988 exemplified some of the problems this assumption poses for Indigenous Australians. The submission on self-determination proposed that Aboriginal people needed to establish 'community councils and executive management infrastructures within Aboriginal communities.' With 'community' defined by implication throughout the submission as fixed settlements with a stable population, and ignoring the relevance of kinship structures as a basis for legal organisation:

What this meant was that Murri, Koori, Nyungar and other such ways of doing things were outside of the scope of the DAA, and that in order to get DAA funding, Indigenous communities were obliged to set up replicas of western-style organisations which cut across existing kinship and family structures and undermined them...when Indigenous and Master ways clash, it is usually the Indigenous ways which must change and adapt, for the Master's ways are the right ways and he has the means and the power to enforce them.

Mudrooroo (1995):79

One of the possible uses of investigating the composition of the motivating discourses of different groups, as I am undertaking in this thesis, is to make visible, and thereby open to question, this assumed knowledge/power framework. In linguistics work it frequently occurs that an outgroup worker from a dominant group, and based in a framework of scientism and professionalism, finds themselves working with representatives of a minority ethnic/cultural group with a different set of operative discourses. These may prioritise, perhaps symbolic separation from another group, or the directives of an absent authority figure. In such situations of structural power imbalance, an ongoing deconstruction of the dominant discourses, together with developing understanding of the Other discourses in effect, can make significant inroads towards ensuring that the minority discourses are not marginalised as tangential to the (outgroup worker's) central questions, trivialised as inexpert, etc. As Lemke explains:
1.2 Principles and approaches

The traditional assumption is that only one view can be the right view...but I only believe that some views are useful to some people for some purposes.

Lemke (1995):4

Respect for ownership or custodianship of linguistic/cultural artefacts has arisen as a standard informing principle, notably in regard to work with Australian indigenous languages. Informed consent from the consultants must be obtained for work to be accepted under university auspices, and work on culturally restricted data may be placed under constraints as to general accessibility. However, even though this has been put in place on a functional level, a deeper-lying issue remains. There continues to be an assumption of the inalienable rights of research to access any knowledges—whether the justification is posterity, the advancement of knowledge, education, or improving on current practices. This can be seen, for instance, in the typical pattern in which the initiative for a project begins with outgroup researchers, who must then establish trust with their target community in order to obtain permission, cooperation and consultancy.\(^{20}\) I would question, however, the presumption that the threat of the loss of knowledge to posterity necessarily takes priority over custodianship principles.\(^{21}\)

A theoretical tension is evident here between, on the one hand, the dismantling of notions of objective representation, the individual as an island, pure races, empirically definable communities—and on the other hand the developing consciousness of colonialism, appropriation, imperialism, and rights of agency and speech. The latter type of awareness gives rise to the principle that only those directly concerned with or affected by a given phenomenon (linguistic artefact, social practice, historical narrative etc.) are authorised to represent it and to govern its distribution. The former type leads to the position that there is no such thing as an authentic, original, unmediated or pure representation—and we are only beginning to understand the interdependence of peoples as well as of animals, plants and other natural elements (see for instance Harmon 1995; Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlehäuser 1999).

I think this is a tension which we have not as yet been fully able to resolve on a theoretical level. What does seem clear as a working principle is that those of us who have greater access to

\(^{20}\) I discuss issues of ownership of work further in §3.2.4 and §3.3.2.

\(^{21}\) In 'the information age'—or so life in some cultures is currently described—it is perhaps hard to see the loss of knowledge as anything other than negative. It is worth noticing, however, that this too is an ideology of a particular time and culture.
1. Setting up the loom

advantage, power, agency and freedom of speech have a responsibility to defer control over ownership, representation and distribution of cultural elements to those of us who are situated lower on the cline of access. The ruling discourses are not sufficiently transparent, nor is the level of their operation sufficiently individualised, for people to simply exchange their status by an act of will, and this would not in any case effect a change in the structures of power. Advantage is assigned to certain persons and groups regardless of how or whether they employ it. Rather than declining to use advantage, then, the more productive course of action might be to direct its use towards contributing to change and greater equality of access.

In the case study for the present work, the process of standardization amongst ex-refugee Hmong in the west, speakers have taken on the work of standardization of their language to the highest degree: establishing literacy, elaborating the lexicon, developing tools of standardization and dissemination. This demands a marked shift of position from that described above for outgroup assistants and researchers like myself.

The state of transition we have entered into in regard to who is accredited to know and to enact, and on whose behalf, interacts with the recent prominence of the political and philosophical problem of how (or if) to represent an Other. Pennycook (1998), introducing his monograph on the relationship between colonialism and the spread of English, both states and responds to this problem:

*What I am trying to get at is the effects on the colonizers of colonial practices. This move is...on the one hand to avoid the often patronising attempts to speak on behalf of other people, to claim to interpret others' lives for them, and on the other, to deal with the cultural and political contexts of which I am a part, a self-reflexive move to try to explore the ways colonialism has constructed Western ways of being. This allows me to explore the complicities of my position and invite others to do so too.*

_Pennycook (1998):28_

Unlike Pennycook, in the present work I am continuing the practice of speaking about others' experience. While I certainly agree with Pennycook and others that there are serious concerns to address in the practice of representing minority Others, I think there are also problems in perpetuating the focus on the dominant western Selves. Related to this, to withdraw participation in work with minority languages would be an oversimplistic response, where their

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22See Harris (1990) for an argument for extending the boundaries of the linguistics discipline to include the question of who is empowered to speak, and the ramifications of that extension.
speakers are still in a position of comparatively low access to resources such as funding, official recognition, and certain kinds of training. I hope in this thesis to assist in developing alternative means of 'exploring the complicities of my position', and to extend current thinking in a direction that may form part of a route to increasing the agency of minority groups in regard to their languages.

The description of language, language communities and language work in my research seeks out the points of view of speakers. Since my focus is on standardisation processes rather than language per se, it is possible to maintain this principle even where this kind of knowledge is at variance with the kind to be gained through linguistic analysis. For instance, whether there are seven or eight distinctive tonemes in Hmong is a question for phonological analysis; but in regard to current standardisation processes the question of how the tones are perceived and represented by speakers is the more significant. The strategy of focussing on speaker perception also aims to support the broadening of the kinds of knowledge that are treated as valuable.

1.2.4 Localisation

Any statement, piece of research, view, or idea emerges in the context of discourses and their interconnections which shape the speaker/writer's enunciation at that time. Alternatively, from the reverse point of view, discourses themselves have existence only in the local realisation. As Foucault has demonstrated in his historical studies time and again, a discursive formation is:

a body of anonymous historical rules, always determined in the time and space that defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area

Foucault (1969 [1972]):117

Several writers besides Foucault have called for a localised account of linguistic and/or cultural phenomena. Two examples indicate the range of possible uses of this approach.

Fairclough (1995) views localised analysis as necessary to address the problems of theoretical relativism in the face of devastating human actions in world history 'which require judgements of truth and falsity' (p19). He calls for a practice 'which integrates "micro" and "macro" research

See Cameron et al (1993) for a more detailed consideration of the problems and possible responses in this kind of situation.

Some speakers are also linguists, which increases the interaction of these different kinds of questions.
1. Setting up the loom

(ibid:37). Local study facilitates analysis of the particular configurations of discourses that have produced such occurrences, in the hope of learning from their impact on wider historical processes. The issue of theoretical relativism is taken up further in §3.2.

Mühlhäusler (1996) notes that 'studies of the important microprocesses that lead to radical changes in the larger picture' (p50) are lacking in regard to the Pacific area. He also touches on the more general concern that discussions of such phenomena as language decline tend to be 'based on common-sense speculation rather than empirical study' (ibid). A series of microscopic, local studies is a necessary building block towards the aim of building up an ecology of languages/language communities/language change. Accumulation of many such local-level studies builds up a picture of the whole through the perspective of (any number of) its parts.

I assume that an investigation of the microscopic is relevant to understanding the macroscopic. This does not mean that I view findings from a small-scale study as representative of the larger-scale situation, but rather that the small is part of the ongoing reciprocal process of forming and being formed by the operative discourses (see also §5.3.2.4). This thesis aims to contribute to the building of a theoretical framework that:

show[s] us how to connect each individual social event with the larger patterns of social relationships that persist from one event to the next. We need to be able to relate the *discourse*, the words and deeds and of the here-and-now, to the *Discourses*, the social habits of speech and action in the community as a whole. We need a *unitary* theory which integrates and connects microsocial events with macrosocial structures and processes.

*Lemke (1995):20*

The principle of localisation leads me to the stance that, to be as accurate as possible, an analysis of prevailing discourses, their interactions, and their impact needs to avoid generalisation, or looking for the most common or most representative linguistic or cultural scenarios. In comparison to that kind of approach, the research object of this work would quite possibly appear out of balance. For researchers with a differently positioned field of investigation, and for Hmong outside of or marginal to my consultancy groups, my perspective may at times seem skewed. My position is that this is an *a priori* condition of all perspectives, although this may not be so easily apparent when the position taken has a conventional status or is the position of the majority in a given context.

Given all of the above, the most logical and potentially useful procedure open to me is to investigate and represent my research object overtly from the position I am closest to. This means that:
1.2 Principles and approaches

(a) I rely strongly on the views, statements and activities of the Hmong in the local standardisation projects I am involved in and those I have direct contact with; and

(b) I take stock of the discourse(s) from which my research methodology proceeds.

Furthermore, as a matter of respect and towards a solution to the problems of authority of representation, it is appropriate to approach Hmong concerns starting from the people who have authorised me to speak about their goals, projects and guiding principles. Throughout this thesis, and particularly in regard to orthographic issues, I foreground the perspective shared with me by my primary consultants. I then expand the view from this point, at times shifting to a less local frame of reference and at times to one that is more familiar to my own position, to encompass as much as possible of the widening and overlapping circles of subgroups and projects which comprise Hmong standardisation in the west.
1. Setting up the loom

1.3 Consultants and communities

In this section I identify Hmong communities who I refer to in the course of this thesis. I do this in two ways. Firstly, I give a profile for each of six subgroups that has formed a consultancy group or source of information for this thesis. Secondly, I set out the identifying factors which distinguish functionally different speech communities within the larger Hmong community, in regard to standardisation procedures and effects. Subgroups of each type overlap and interrelate and, as discussed in §1.2, the specific membership of different groups shifts at different times and depending on the question in focus. At this point my purpose is simply to give a brief profile of these groups of speakers for purposes of reference throughout my thesis; I defer a more detailed discussion of history, language family, and relevant cultural narratives to §2.2.

1.3.1 Sources and consultants

Groups (I)–(IV) are connected as a set of concentric circles, each group described being a subset of the one following. Following the description of Group (I), I concentrate on those characteristics of the wider circles which distinguish them from this Group. Unless otherwise specified, it can be assumed that aspects of the profile such as dialect of identification and literacy status follow similar patterns.

(I) The innermost circle

My primary consultants comprise a small group of Hmong speakers: three to six men, mostly parent generation. Since late 1998 the core group has comprised Yaj Lis Hwj Yang Lee Hue, Yaj Nom Loob Lee Nao Long, and Yaj Nom Suav Yang Nao Shoua: earlier it also included Yaj Nom Lis Yang Nao Lee, Yaj Yxai Yang Chia, and Yaj Tswv Hawj Yang Chue Her.25

All six currently live in the Broadmeadows area, an outlying suburb of Melbourne, and are united by their prominence in the Hmoob Koomhaum txhawb nqa moj kuab txuaj Auvtaasilas26 (Hmong Language Institute of Australia, henceforth HLIA),

25 I still see these latter three intermittently; that is, they have shifted into Group (IV).

26 Lit. ‘Hmong community for the promotion of knowledge of written language in Australia’. Other locations can be substituted according to the branch in question, eg Hmoob Koomhaum txhawb nqa moj kuab txuaj Fresno.
honouring the memory of the originator of the 8K Phaj hauj Hmoob script, Yaj Soob Lwj and working to establish the Phaj hauj in their community. More recently, this group has begun to operate under the authority of a newly emerged leader in the tradition of Yaj Soob Lwj named Kub Yaj Kou Yang, now teaching in Thailand.

Members of Group (I) identify as speakers of the dialect Hmoob Dawb Hmong Daw (henceforth HmD), and also have some knowledge of Moob Ntsuab Mong Njua (henceforth MNts). They also have varying degrees of knowledge of Lao, Thai and French. They are literate at various levels in at least Hmong (in two scripts) and Lao, some in Thai and French as well. Their English competence ranges from quite limited to a high level of fluency and literacy.

This is the core group that I have been meeting with regularly over the past five years, working on community language projects including font design and the development of a bilingual dictionary. They also teach me Hmong language and Phaj hauj writing, and discuss with me many aspects of Hmong writing and culture towards the preparation of this thesis.

(II) Casual participants

Unofficial participants in the innermost circle are Poj Sua Muas, Neeb Yaj, Tshuab Xyooj, the wives of Yaj Lis Hwj, Lis Nom Loob and Yaj Nom Suav Yang Nao Shoua respectively, and the mother of Yaj Lis Hwj, Xyo Lis. These women prefer to speak in Hmong almost exclusively, and do not appear to read and write. They sit in informally on consultancy sessions, and contribute when they feel something has been explained badly or incompletely, or when asked something specific. In

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27 The Phaj hauj means simply 'writing' or 'written language'. It is also, however, commonly used both by the HLI and other Hmong to refer to this particular script, so I will follow this usage throughout. Phaj hauj can also be followed by such modifying terms as Hmoob 'Hmong', Askiv 'English' and so on.

28 I do not transcribe this dialect name into Phaj hauj as spelling in MNts in this script is only very weakly established to date. For a full explanation of this and other transcription conventions in this thesis see §1.4.1.

29 Lee Yang's mother is not addressed or referred to by name; it is more polite to refer to her in terms of her son, which I will do henceforth. Family and close friends call her Pog 'Grandmother'.

25
1. Setting up the loom

particular, Lee’s mother, who is a ṭằ ṭằ niem neeb,\textsuperscript{30} is often asked for clarification of terms and practices in that field.

The rising generation of the households are also present intermittently during sessions, but do not participate on the whole beyond occasionally being asked for an English equivalent for a Hmong term. Lee’s son ṭằ ū̀ Yaj Xyooj Yang Xiong is involved with HLIA work in that he is currently the main person responsible for font making, but he is not involved in consultancy as such. ṭằ ū̀ Yaj Nom Suav’s older son ṭằ ū̀ Yaj Xais sometimes talks to me about Hmong language and culture in Australia. The young people speak to me in English except for basic greetings.

There are occasional visitors as well, who are usually not introduced: I presume that these belong to Group (III) below.

(III) HLIA workers and households

Although I rarely meet with them myself, the primary consultancy group overtly represent the wider group of people in the community working on the ū̀ ū̀ Phaj hauj project: the decision-making committee, the teachers at an HLIA-run community school, and a group of community representatives who meet occasionally to discuss concerns and progress. The committee currently comprises only four people, three of whom are now acting as my primary consultants. Policy at various levels of scope, from the appearance of the font to funding sources for the school, must be agreed on by the committee. Teaching has been undertaken by different people over the last few years, numbering perhaps half a dozen in all. The community representatives comprise upwards of twenty men, mostly parent generation. Membership of this group appears to be open, formed of interested people who happen to come on the day. Community networks are close and active, so that informal interactions are also frequent. Some live outside of the Broadmeadows area, in other suburbs of Melbourne.

The circle then widens to include all of the wider Hmong community affiliated with the HLIA. Sometimes visitors from associated groups in Queensland or Tasmania are present.

\textsuperscript{30}Or ṭằ ṭằ, the generic term or specifically for a male. ṭằ ṭằ biv neeb practices diagnosis of illness or other trouble, healing, divination, and regular rituals promoting peace and prosperity, on the basis of inspired understanding as well as learned skills and knowledge. (See Terms and abbreviations.) There is no adequate term for this role in English. The term shaman is sometimes used, but is problematic because it is often loaded with implications of primitivism and other negative associations.
1.3 Consultants and communities

All of this community either were born in Hmong-speaking communities in Laos or in some cases Thailand, or are children of the same, growing up in households where Hmong is the usual language spoken. The young people\(^{31}\) are generally fluent in Hmong and English, and commonly literate in both. Although this group is affiliated with the HLIA, their Hmong literacy is sometimes stronger in RPA.\(^{32}\) There is some concern of language loss in the rising generation (see §2.1).

My contact with Group (III) is restricted to significant social functions such as a baby-welcoming ceremony, and occasional visits to the community school, which caters for up to 50 students of school age. The largest community celebrations, such as those held at New Year, cater for 500 people or more, sometimes including non-HLIA Hmong households.\(^{33}\)

(IV) The Hmong Language Institute

The HLIA maintain links with affiliated groups internationally, especially those in the USA and Thailand. Central branches operate in at least California, St Paul and Melbourne, and there are associated groups in other American states, Queensland and Tasmania, France, French Guyana and possibly Canada. What links these groups is their adherence to the ᥂ Nh Phaj hauj, its originator and the associated teachings, despite differences in response and interpretation.

I have visited and occasionally write to the Hmoob Koomhaum txhawb nqa moj kuab txujci (Hmong Language Institute, henceforth HLI)\(^{34}\) branches in Minnesota and California. The operation of the HLI California stands out from both the Melbourne and the Minnesota branches in two ways: (i) the participation of women is official and of much higher profile—for instance, women are represented as teachers and spokespeople—and (ii) the branch boasts several people highly skilled in communications technology. This

\(^{31}\)That is, up to around twenty-five years old. The comments of this sentence do not necessarily refer to all people of this age group however, as it depends also on the time of immigration from Thailand. There are still relatively young people who have not been in Australia more than a few years.

\(^{32}\)I say this from casual observation; the strong preference of core members of the HLIA that ᥂ Nh Phaj hauj be exclusively implemented means that this parameter is difficult to assess.

\(^{33}\)Much larger New Year celebrations are also held in which most of the wider Hmong community in Melbourne participate; I have been invited to the upcoming celebration for 2001.

\(^{34}\)I use the term Hmong Language Institute or HLI to refer to the entire organisation, including the Australian branch.
1. Setting up the loom

branch provides a standardisation, publication and education effort operated entirely by Hmong people. Although the community has limited financial resources, they run an office as well as a school, and produce various publications for use by all the HLI branches. Key figures include Ning Pia Her (President 1997–), Ân Kāj Yis Lis (President 1995–96), Vang Peng Yang (IT consultant & font designer), Chue Vang Xiong (Founding President 1989–94), Pachou Xiong, Blia Mao Xiong, and même Hwaj Muas Herr Moua.

(V) Hmong LG

The HLI represents a significant but minority subgroup of those engaged in language standardisation in the wider ex-refugee Hmong community. By far the greater part of community work presumes a written base of the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA). Much of the material for my wider study is drawn from the discussions of Hmong LG (Hmong Language Group), a lively email discussion forum targeted to Hmong language development.35 This network, begun late in 1996, is run by prominent Hmong and interested non-Hmong people including Pao Saykao, Craig Rice and Tswv Xyoojxk. Membership is free and open, and requests, notices, queries, advice and ongoing discussions on any topics connected with the Hmong language are circulated regularly in HmD, MNts, and/or English. This connection provides me with information from a substantial range of Hmong subgroups including MNts speakers, Hmong linguists, young people, Christian Hmong, etc, as well as a few other non-Hmong with some involvement in the communities. Contributors from a number of different countries are represented, but since the majority of Hmong refugees were relocated to the USA, this is the country where most standardisation work is based, and hence the location of most contributors to Hmong LG.

(VI) Other sources

The HLIA community, that is, Groups (I)–(III), are the only Hmong people in Melbourne I have any ongoing involvement with. This means that the HLIA community represents for the most part what I understand of Hmong people in Melbourne generally, in terms of their style and standard of living, language and culture maintenance concerns for the rising generation, etc—with the important exception that the remainder of this community uses a roman script writing system, the RPA. This indicates a significant division on many levels, which is a theme developed throughout this thesis.

35This email network was initially known as Hmong Language Users Group or HLUG. The Hmong LG home page is located at <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/4908/>. 

28
My knowledge of other parts of the Melbourne Hmong community comes from community arts events and publicly available sources such as local newspapers. I have also talked occasionally with leading community member Pao Saykao, who is active in standardisation and community cohesion efforts.

A few individual Hmong in the USA who I have contacted through Hmong LG have been assisting me with further information on Hmong language and culture questions, and their own perspectives on standardisation issues. These include Yaj Tshiaj Wuab Xwee, 'True'Txayeeb,36 and Sao Xiong. An American Hmong linguist Ñv ñn Ña Txawj Lis Xab ('Tzea Cherta Lee') has sent me several articles and other information. My Hmong teacher at the 1998 South East Asian Studies Summer Institute at the University of Oregon, Yaj Ntxawg Lis ñn ñnx ('Young' Lee), provided me with a great deal of interesting insight into language standardisation and language maintenance in the USA. The co-authors of the Saturn Talking Hmong Dictionaries, Mark Thompson (a non-Hmong) and Yee Yang, hosted my visit to the Saturn School in St Paul to observe language maintenance programs for Hmong children, as well as giving me copies of the Saturn dictionaries and other community publications such as a collection of stories by local teenagers (HYCAP 1994).

Finally, since I have no interaction with the early Ññ ññ Phaj hauj proponents in the west centred around Ññ ññ Ña Vaj Tshiaj KuamVang Chia Koua, a book entitled Mother of writing, co-authored by Ññ ññ Ña Vaj Tshiaj Kuam, Ññ ññ Ññ Yaj Nyiaj Yig Yang Gnia Yee and William Smalley,37 functions as my primary source for information about that community and its practices. Similarly, Hmong websites other than those mentioned above have also functioned as primary sources, particularly Hmong Script Software at <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Pines/5884>, which promotes an alternative version of the Ññ ññ Phaj hauj, and offers fonts and teaching materials, and Lomation at <http://www.lomation.com>, which provides a free demo version of their Hmong–English dictionary.

Conclusions

The hierarchy of pre-eminence for the dissertation as a whole is informed by the connected circles of my consultancy groups. The priorities of my primary consultant group and the concentric circles of the HLIA community have ramifications for the degree of emphasis placed

36 Scare quotes indicates preferred names in English where these are not direct transliterations.

1. Setting up the loom

on the various projects discussed. This is an orientation which 'starts in the middle', since the HLIA is neither the earliest, the largest, nor the most influential group even amongst those disseminating knowledge of the Phaj hauj. Starting from this initial centre of reference, then moving out to encompass the wider circles comprising the Hmong community as described above, certain features of and approaches to Hmong language planning come to the fore. These include:

- the circumstances and language planning status particular to ex-refugee Hmong in the west
- the question of the scope of the Hmong community and the status of minority groups within a minority group
- the views of the Hmong Language Institute, particularly the Australian branch in Melbourne; and then of contributors to the email network Hmong LG
- the significance of religio-political position and orthodoxy; especially the ramifications for language standardisation processes of the tradition of Yaj Soob Lwj
- concepts of advancement; progressivism and conservatism; the negotiation and maintenance of cultural identity
- standardisation in Phaj hauj, Version Two, including technological concerns, literacy access and education; and then standardisation in the RPA, including spelling reform and considerations of dialectal variation
- dictionary development
- lexical elaboration, word classes and word boundaries
- the relationships between language development, language status, language maintenance, global communication and technology.

1.3.2 Speech community categories

Significant factors forming broad subgroups among the Hmong community for standardisation purposes are region, dialect and script. I explain these factors in detail in §2.2 and §2.3.

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38I have borrowed this phrase from Daniel Dennett’s characterisation of his approach to Darwin’s theory (Dennett 1995).
In Eira (2000), I discuss a possible range of scope of the term 'speech community'. At the macro level, the Hmong speech community could be considered to comprise all speakers worldwide. This position provides a way of acknowledging the connections between people and the language varieties they use. At intermediate levels, a working definition of the speech community could be postulated that is limited by, perhaps, a given area of residence and hence communication environments. For speakers of some languages, religion serves to restrict interaction and thereby distinguish speech communities. At the most detailed levels, the factors taken into account will need to be all those which are instrumental in effecting a communicating subgroup operating on a cohesive and distinguishable basis in regard to the issue at hand.

This is not a theoretical basis for which a model can be worked out and overlaid on any language situation in advance. Rather, it requires an approach from the opposite direction, assessing what factors are relevant to a given situation on its own terms. This approach facilitates accurate delineation of the subgroup, towards a clearer understanding of the patterns of language use and language planning work particular to the people involved.

Below I give a set of categories designed to serve this purpose, for the range of questions that fall under the scope of the present study. These categories are not intended to cover all subgroups of Hmong outside of this context. I explain the relevance of each of these categories to delineation of Hmong subgroups as the defining features of each come into focus over the course of my thesis.

1. Region

(i) Hmong in Laos and refugee or ex-refugee Hmong in Thailand.

(ii) Ex-refugee Hmong and living in western countries, and children born to them since immigration:

* English-speaking areas

---in Melbourne
---in Australia
---in the USA

39 Sometimes closer definition by state or smaller region will also be required for Hmong in the USA.
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- French-speaking areas.\(^{40}\)

2. Dialect

(iii) Hmong identifying as speakers of HmD.

(iv) Hmong identifying as speakers of MNts.

3. Script

(v) Those whose primary Hmong script of literacy is the Roman Popular Alphabet

- Progressive users of the RPA, working on adaptations to the writing system
- Conservative users of the RPA, continuing with established conventions of usage.

(vi) Those whose primary Hmong script of literacy is the ꜏Lots ꜏Paj ꜏Hmoob, and those working on standardisation in ꜏Lots ꜏Paj ꜏Hauj

- The international HLI
  —California branch (Fresno)
  —Minnesota branch (St Paul)
  —Australian branch (Melbourne—HLIA)

- Early proponents of the ꜏Lots ꜏Paj ꜏Hauj in America, associated with ꜏Lots ꜏Vaj ꜏.Txiaj
  KuamVang Chia Koua

- Others, working as individuals.

(vii) A church led by the Hmong Christian minister Cher Vang Kong in California. The church teaches a script which originates with Kong, which he calls the ꜏Naaw ꜏Paj ꜏Ntaub ꜏Lots ꜏Khauj (see §2.3.3).

Speech community definitions will sometimes comprise a combination of the above: for instance, a group may be delineated according to dialect and primary script.

\(^{40}\) France, French Guyana, some parts of Canada. As my focus is on Australia and then the USA, differentiation within this category is not necessary for the present study.
1.4 Conventions

In this section I establish the conventions I use in regard to the writing systems, reference to dialectal or ethnic subgroups, and representation of dialectal variation. Selecting these conventions provides a vignette of some of the political issues surrounding standardisation choices. It is not possible to make choices of representation in the present work without evoking some of these issues; nor is it possible to make politically neutral choices. By way of example of what is involved, I outline the problems of deciding on script choice in some detail. The factors identified as problematic are developed in later sections of this thesis, especially in Chapter Four.

1.4.1 Writing conventions

The RPA is the writing system which has the greatest currency in the west among Hmong reader/writers. Because it is based on the roman script, it is also the more accessible system for people who do not speak Hmong but do read English.

The ai< nir Phaj hauj is the minority script. It is, however, the script of my primary consultants. Their commitment to this script is such that they decline to make use of materials in RPA. Hence accessibility is not only a matter of practicality but also of political inclusiveness. Although my thesis is targeted to academics, some Hmong are academics and some of those prefer ai< nir Phaj hauj. It is likely also that some other Hmong, including some members of the HLIA, may wish to read some parts of this work. Furthermore, my position on representation issues as discussed in §1.2 includes that I start from the position of primary consultants as far as possible.

There is at present no standard system for transliterating between Hmong and English.

Given the above, it seems advisable to use both scripts for all Hmong words and quotes. Although it may seem strange to transliterate things like names and dictionary excerpts from RPA into ai< nir Phaj hauj, since I transliterate names in the opposite direction in the interests of practical accessibility, the former too must be done. Where written representation itself is the point under discussion, transliterations are not provided.

I also use both RPA and ai< nir Phaj hauj for the names of other scripts. Usually these are written in RPA only.
1. Setting up the loom

A problem which remains is that the Phaj hauj representation of MNts (Moob Ntsuab) is at such an early stage of establishment that transliterating MNts words into this script would not necessarily provide a readily accessible reading for MNts readers.\(^{42}\) The HLIA position is that one system is adequate for both dialects. There are practical as well as political problems with this idea however. Jay Kue of Hmong Script Software has devised some additional graphemes for MNts, but these are not used by the HLI, the main disseminating organisation for Phaj hauj, and some of the specific implementation intended by Jay Kue remains unclear.\(^{43}\) My solution for the time being is to avoid transliterating words or texts which are specifically MNts\(^{44}\) into Phaj hauj.

There are different usages of both RPA and Phaj hauj current. By default I use two commonly implemented versions of the RPA: one which approximates that in Heimbach 1969 [1979],\(^{45}\) and a common adaptation of that version which incorporates several additional grapheme units to represent sounds specific to MNts. For Phaj hauj, I use the version preferred by my primary consultants.\(^{46}\) Both scripts are used for each Hmong text or word, placing the writer's script first, followed by transliteration into the other script.\(^{47}\) The default script in first position, that is, where Hmong words are not from quotes, is the Phaj hauj. In any quotes from written material, I retain any variants used by the writer, and note distinctions.

Where a conventional English transliteration has been established for a particular term I include this at first mention. IPA transcriptions are included where details of pronunciation and/or

\(^{42}\) Similarly, the occasional reference to dialects other than these two will not be transliterated.

\(^{43}\) These issues are discussed in §4.2.

\(^{44}\) Many words are spelt the same in both dialects.

\(^{45}\) With two exceptions: (i) I omit the 'rare and asystematic' vowels and tones represented in that work (see §2.4.2), and (ii) I use <ml hml> as per McKibben 1992 [1994] rather than <nl hnl> as per Heimbach (see §4.3.2).

\(^{46}\) Reading guides to these versions of the writing systems are provided in Appendix A, together with a table of equivalences between RPA and Phaj hauj. A brief introduction to the structure of both scripts can be found in §2.3,\(^{46}\) and variants are discussed in §4.2.

\(^{47}\) Occasionally it happens that a term found in RPA is ambiguous as to word boundaries, in which case it is not possible to transliterate it into Phaj hauj: for example, the name Tomas Muas could be To-mas Muas or Tom-as Muas. (There is also a possibility in this case that it is an English name.)
phonological structure are relevant to the topic at hand. Names sometimes appear in English orthography only, in cases where this is the form in which I have encountered them and no conventional transliteration has been established. Where people conventionally use names in English which are not direct transliterations of the Hmong names, these are indicated by scare quotes.

Hmong personal names are not rigidly ordered, and different parts of a person’s name may be used in different contexts. In general, I write a particular name in whichever form I have most often found it. For names which occur with high frequency, I give the full version of the name in its formal order on first occurrence (i.e. clan name first for males, last for females), and may subsequently use a shortened version where the referent is clear; for instance: ūf um Yaj Soob Lwj Yang Shong Lue may occur as ūf um Soob Lwj.

1.4.2 Dialects and subgroups

I use the dialect ūf Hmoob Dawb HmD by default, as it is the dialect of my primary consultants. This includes the use of the term ūf Hmoob or Hmong to refer to the broadest definition of the ethnic or language group. Again, for any quotes, the dialect of the writer is retained; and the term Moob or Mong is used where a specific referent known to be of that group is indicated. Where it is relevant to overtly specify inclusion of both groups, I use H/Moob or H/Mong as practised by some writers (see Hmong LG 1996–).

Dialect groupings are loosely associated with cultural subgroups, distinguished by, for example, conventions of housing floorplans and certain ritual practices (see Falk 1991). Referring terms typically derive from colour terms thought by some to reflect some aspects of traditional dress. For instance:

48 This is complicated by the fact that some names double as clan names and personal names—where it is unclear, I simply use the order I have come across most often. Note that, because the clan name does not directly equate to the surname required of Hmong in the west, some Hmong have taken on a surname apart from their clan name. Examples are ‘Bliatout’ and ‘Saykao’ (according to Bryan Thao, the latter is a Thao clan subgroup name (Hmong LG (1996–): mid 1998)). Such surnames are always placed last after the English model. This kind of surname is discussed in detail by Pao Saykao in Hmong LG:14/11/99.

49 Names of people referred to frequently are listed under Terms and abbreviations.

50 This policy contributes to the dominance of this dialect group, which is an issue I address in §4.2.
1. Setting up the loom

"Vim le caag txhaj hu ua Moob Ntsuab? Yog lug ntawm tug nthu tab dlawb kws muab nraaj cab ua lub plawv tab, coj lug raus nkaaj es hloov ua ntsuab lawm txhaj hu tas Moob Ntsuab."

"Why are they called Moob Ntsuab? Because it came from white edge of the skirt that is embroidered (following the design) into a central (concentric circle design) skirt, that is dipped in nkaaj (a green dye) that changes into green, so that is why they are called Moob Ntsuab."

Commonly, cultural subgroups are referred to by the same name as the dialect, but the correlation is not one-to-one. Someone identifying as, say, Moob Leeg, might be an L1 speaker of UE nā Hmoob Dawb, and it is not unheard of for people to exchange their cultural identification group if it is expedient for, perhaps, social or financial reasons. Furthermore, some variation of referring terms is apparent between speakers, and people tend to be strongly attached to the name they hold to be correct. It is unclear to me at this stage what precisely determines which name is selected. Some people use a particular name to refer to the dialect, or to varieties within a dialect, and another for a cultural or ethnic subgroup; there may also be variation according to area of origin, either in recent history or at some previous point in time.

Because of the confusion and/or differences of opinion, different names can be found in different texts. It should be noted also that terms may give rise to offence, especially when English translations are used, and especially for MNts speakers (see for instance discussions in Hmong LG, December 1996). I come back to this issue in §4.1. In Table 1.1 I provide a table of names I have encountered, and the alternatives with which they are exchanged elsewhere:

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51 Thanks to Sao Xiong for free translation.
1.4 Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmong roman orthography (RPA)</th>
<th>English transcription</th>
<th>English term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hmoob Dawb / Moob Dlawb</td>
<td>Hmong Daw</td>
<td>White Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmoob Ntsuab / Moob Ntsuab</td>
<td>Hmong/Mong Njua</td>
<td>Green/Blue Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmoob Lees / Moob Leeg</td>
<td>Hmong/Mong Leng</td>
<td>Green/Blue Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmoob Txais / Moob Txais</td>
<td>(no conventional transcription)</td>
<td>Striped Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab Hmob/Hmoob Nraug</td>
<td>A-Hmao</td>
<td>Flowery Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmoob Dub</td>
<td>(no conventional transcription)</td>
<td>Black Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmub</td>
<td>(no conventional transcription)</td>
<td>Black Hmong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 Names of Hmong cultural/dialectal groupings
Sources: Small (1976); Tapp (1989); Small et al (1990); FCAC (1996); Lee T.C. (forthcoming); Hmong LG (1996–)

For the most part, where I need to specify one or the other dialect or culture subgroup, I use the names Hmoob Dawb (HmD) and Moob Ntsuab (MNts). Where I refer to someone who states a

52 The first spelling represents the Hmoob Dawb (HmD) convention and pronunciation; the second represents Moob Ntsuab / Moob Leeg convention and pronunciation.

53 Moob Leeg sometimes refers to a subgroup of Moob Ntsuab, and sometimes to a cultural subgroup who generally speak Moob Ntsuab, but the terms are also used interchangeably.

54 Generally a cultural subgroup of the Hmoob Dawb, but this term is sometimes used to refer to Moob Leeg.

55 I have not come across this term in Hmong.

56 The small number of Hmong clan names has meant that there are five writers I refer to who use the surname ‘Lee’. I differentiate these throughout the thesis by their initials or by the name in the phonetic script. Texts by Hmong writers with other names are distinguishable by their co-authors.
1. Setting up the loom

different preferred group name for their own group, I defer to that usage. In general, I use abbreviated rather than full forms, in an attempt to minimise possible offence to people who prefer terms other than the ones I am using. This also avoids the problem of a lack of appropriate जैन जैन transliteration for 'Moob Ntsuab'.
2. YARNS
LINGUISTIC AND
SOCIOLINGUISTIC BASES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the linguistic and sociolinguistic profile of my case study. It identifies the Hmong people working in and affected by standardisation, their current situation and the circumstances which lead to it. Because this thesis is not only an analysis of the linguistic elements of standardisation but focuses on its discursive conditions, I introduce both linguistic features and a cultural narrative which is central to the work of my primary consultants in a very direct way, and to the work of other groups in a more heavily interpreted form.

The areas of linguistic description I have selected in this chapter reflect the orientation of this thesis: that is, I describe those elements of language which are a focus of the Hmong community in their current standardisation programs. Morphology is attracting some attention, orthography more, syntax virtually none. In this chapter I describe scripts currently in use and the phonetics and phonology of Hmong, including dialectal differentiation, and provide some analysis of word classes and word formation processes.

The description in this chapter is a highly functional one, oriented to what is needed to understand features of standardisation as they are studied in this thesis. For instance, the section on phonetics and phonology is oriented towards identifying the issues for orthographic development and establishing the transcriptions I have chosen. The section on word formation prepares for discussion in Chapter Four on the representation of polysyllabic forms.

My aim in this chapter is to present an essentially static description: a photograph rather than a movie. This is not intended to imply a closed or frozen condition of the Hmong people or language, but to present as far as possible a simple, practical and current snapshot. From this point of departure the fluidity of standardization processes across time and groups can be examined in later chapters—the many changes, complexities, factions, and directions that are emerging in the community, and their underlying discourses. Furthermore, I avoid as far as possible in this chapter questions of cause and consequence, leaving this also to later discussion.
2. Yarns

2.2 Contexts

Crucial to the standardisation work in process in the Hmong community are certain key elements of common history, characterisations of current cultural and linguistic identity, and future expectations. Because the speech communities represented in this thesis are almost exclusively ex-refugees, plus children born since relocation, conditions of life in the aftermath of war and relocation also constitute part of the essential factors shaping the standardisation process. These then are the kinds of context set out in this section.

2.2.1 The Hmong in the west

2.2.1.1 A brief history of migration

Together with some other Chinese minority groups, the Hmong are likely to be aboriginals of China, having settled in the Yangtze Basin in prehistoric times (Vang and Lewis 1984 [1990]; Ballard 1985; Bliatout et al 1988; HYCAP 1994). Although no records are available specifying where the ancestors of these people came from, Hmong narratives tell of dark lands covered in snow, which some identify as Mongolia (Vang and Lewis 1984 [1990]; HYCAP 1994). During the Han dynasty, there began a long period of pressure to assimilate and subsequent persecution. From the early 1800s, following a series of massive defeats, many Hmong people began to flee China; mostly to Vietnam and Laos, and also Burma.

Although no census is available, Vang and Lewis (1984 [1990]) and Bliatout et al (1988) are in agreement that before the war in Laos in the sixties and seventies, the Hmong numbered around 300,000. Bliatout et al (1988) records an estimate of 400,000 Hmong in Vietnam and 80,000 in Thailand at around the same time. Censuses taken in the People's Republic of China record over 5 million Hmong in that country in 1982, then over 7 million in 1990—however, these counts include other ethnic minorities including speakers of other Western Hmongic languages in the same category. Recent statistics estimate numbers of Hmong at 558,000 in Vietnam, 260,000 in Laos, and in Thailand 126,300 living in villages,¹ but probably a few thousand more in towns and cities.

Following the events of the mid seventies in Laos—the defeat of the CIA's 'secret army', comprised largely of Hmong people under General Vang Pao, the withdrawal of American

¹Thanks to David Bradley for these recent figures, which are sourced from (respectively): Various government publications (1997), Chazée (1999), Thai Ministry of Interior (1997).
forces, the establishment of the new Pathet Lao government and the beginning of severe reprisals for Hmong people—a wave of refugee entry from Laos to Thailand ensued. According to Vang and Lewis (1984 [1990]), around 150,000 Hmong succeeded in escaping across the Mekong River, although an unknown number were killed en route. In 1986, approximately 45,000 refugees were encamped at the Ban Vinai settlement alone. Some lived there for fifteen years. Relocation to western countries began in 1976, most arriving in the USA during 1979–80. By the early nineties, when repatriation programs for refugees still in Thailand were beginning, nearly 100,000 had been relocated to parts of the USA, and many thousands more to countries including France, French Guyana and Australia.

The exact numbers currently living in Australia are hard to obtain, since there is no separate category for 'Hmong' on Australian census data. One recent estimate is 3,000. A large proportion of Australian Hmong have settled in Melbourne. Secondary migration is still ongoing however, which tends to be on a fairly large scale because of the strong propensity of Hmong people to live in groups of connected households. In the USA, the first wave of secondary migration saw the influx of thousands of Hmong to California within a few years, in the hope of improved farming conditions. By 1987, 47,000 Hmong had arrived in that state; Wisconsin and Minnesota ranking second in popularity at 13,200 and 10,000 respectively. More recently, due to growing disillusionment with living standards and governmental policies in California, families including some from the HLI have begun shifting to Minnesota. Secondary migration is a pattern in Australia also: for instance, a significant network of related households is currently in the process of moving from Melbourne to a farming community in Queensland.

2 Many stories of the Hmong experience of this war have now been written, and some produced on video: one widely available account approved by the Hmong I have talked to is Hamilton-Merritt (1993), by an American journalist eye-witness.

3 The border of Laos and Thailand.

4 Minnesota Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees (1986).

5 Yaj Nom Suav (p.c.)


8 Figures collected by Yang Dao through Hmong community leaders and published in Bliatout et al (1988).
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What this very brief introduction shows is that prominent elements in the history held in common by Hmong people include oppression, outsider status, independence, migration, and a search for lands and freedom. This historical narrative, as will be seen, strongly informs the Hmong concept of themselves as a nation, and provides a ground for certain cultural beliefs, values and goals which in turn have a strong effect on the directions of language planning agendas.

2.2.1.2 Transition to the west

The profile of the Hmong community in the west is characterised by the emphasis of immigration policies on young, nuclear families having employable skills. For instance, acceptance for immigration to Australia is usually based on a parent-generation head of household, plus his/her nuclear family as defined on the basis of the official norms in this country. For the Hmong, this has been problematic in several respects. In the first place, Hmong social structure is clan-based on a patriarchal model. The household from a Hmong perspective is likely to include a husband and one or more wives, any daughters who have not married, any sons and the wife or wives of each, plus the children of each wife. So immigration restricted to the family as officially recognised in Australia has serious effects on both clan and household structure (see Falk 1994). It has also resulted in a lack of aged people and therefore traditional knowledge and skills, especially given that cultural education of the rising generation (now the parent generation) was disrupted in the period of war.

In Australia, this lack was addressed to an extent by successful lobbying by Hmong in the late eighties for a number of special immigration approvals under cultural skills criteria: knowledge of traditional rites, especially funeral; healing and spirit rituals; and playing of the vrr qeej, an instrument embodying significant cultural and ritualistic symbology. One elderly member of my consultancy group, a uir w niam neeb and the mother of prominent community member Yang Lee, was accepted into Australia under this scheme.

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Note that, since immigration to western countries was considered relocation, rather than refugee asylum, the basic provisions of immigration laws were generally applicable.

Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

And so on to the next generation on the same principles: the sons remain in the household; the daughters move when they marry.

See Falk (1991) for a discussion of vrr qeej music and its importance.

See Terms and abbreviations.
The Hmong community in Australia, being particularly few in number, is further disintegrated in sociocultural terms by the lack of adequate clan representation. The clan is the level at which support can be expected, even from strangers. In 1978, some Hmong scholars and leaders including Pao Saykao founded the Hmong Australia Society in order to encourage a more encompassing solidarity based on Hmong ethnicity rather than on clan solidarity.\textsuperscript{14} However, marriage is exogamous, so that to marry another Hmong person, a partner outside of one's own clan must be found. This then can pose problems for the clans most strongly represented in Australia: А̀н Лис 'Lee', А̀р Яй 'Yang', then А̀о Ваь 'Vang' and А̀о Тоь 'Thao'. Since the clan is patrilineal, if a girl marries a non-Hmong, her children will not be considered Hmong.

There remains in both Australia and the USA a tension over the desire to identify as Hmong and the desire to acculturate to western norms. An article in HYCAP (1994) observes that:

There are three kinds of Hmong young people...The American-Hmongs are trying to achieve the American definition of success...But nevertheless, they cling to their Hmong loyalty and identity. On the other hand, the Hmong-Americans are trying to achieve the Hmong definition of success...Finally, the Rebels...tend to reject everything that strikes them as Hmong, and instead they grasp what is in their view the American culture.

\textit{Dave Moore in HYCAP (1994):120}

Some social organisations including the Scouting Association have initiated specifically targeted social groups and activities aiming to assist some of these young people to develop a functioning group identity that recognises and incorporates cultures of both heritage and immigration (HYCAP 1994). In the aftermath of war and escape, and subsequent arrival in new countries with new cultures, serious symptoms of 'dis-ease' have appeared amongst some Hmong groups, particularly in the USA. Amongst the young in some areas, violent street gangs have arisen. Amongst mostly older people, a syndrome sometimes referred to as Sudden Adult Death in Asian Populations (SADAP) has developed at an alarming rate.\textsuperscript{15} A general clash of Hmong and western medical ideologies and practices has been particularly problematic in the resettlement period, giving rise to occasionally life-threatening misunderstandings on both

\textsuperscript{14}It also emphasises the delineation of community based on region.

\textsuperscript{15}This syndrome is especially prevalent in ex-refugee populations. People appear to simply lose all physical energy, such as ability to breathe or sustain a waking state, and die within days or weeks. The physiological causes are as yet unknown. See articles in Downing and Olney (1982); Hendricks, Downing and Deinhard (1986).
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sides of the fence (see especially Fadiman 1997; also Hendricks, Downing and Deinhard 1986; Rice 1994).

The transition to life in the west figures prominently in the processes of standardisation in Hmong.\(^\text{16}\) The need to acculturate, the need to transfer core elements of the earlier culture, and the need to come to terms with the events leading up to relocation are evidenced in the activities, focuses and ideologies that emerge.

2.2.1.3 Dispersion and divergence

Due to the circumstances surrounding Hmong arrival in the west, the wave of migration to the west has been rapid and initial destinations not always under the control of the people migrating. The dispersion of communities, families and clans throughout the countries of immigration gives rise to two sociolinguistic conditions of divergence:

(i) The Hmong language has begun to undergo transition in different directions in different subgroups.

Particularly salient here is the process of elaboration of the lexicon. The location of standardisation work in the countries of immigration, with a very different set of cultural elements prominent in day-to-day life, gives rise to a strong campaign for code elaboration in the interests of ongoing language viability. In part because of the reduced contact between Hmong people now living in areas far removed from each other, code elaboration is developing in different directions (see §4.4.1.1).

(ii) People in different areas are living under different conditions of minority language policy, finances, education, and lifestyle choices. This has an effect on how much time, money and energy is available towards language maintenance efforts.

By way of example, the kinds of resources available for heritage language education varies widely depending on area of residence. For instance, the Saturn School, a government school in St Paul, Minnesota, focuses on providing limited bilingual education to many disadvantaged

\(^\text{16}\) Downing and Olney (1982) and Hendricks, Downing and Deinhard (1986) comprise excellent collections of writing by Hmong and others on the Hmong experience of transition to the west. Donnelly (1994) focuses particularly on the experiences of women refugees in the USA. For further accounts and analyses specific to Australia, see especially work by Hmong anthropologist Gary Yia Lee (eg Lee G.Y. 1984 [1986] and 1996). In America, Hmong-published journals and newspapers such as Yang (1985–) (a twice-yearly journal) or Hmong Tribune (1998–) (a Twin Cities newspaper) provide invaluable information and resources.
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NESB\textsuperscript{17} children, including a large proportion of children of Hmong refugees. In California on the other hand, bilingual education was banned in regular schools throughout the state by a bill passed by referendum in 1998 (Proposition #227). As regards Phaj hauj-based teaching, although there are several community schools in the USA set up primarily for this purpose, many interested Hmong in large areas of America have no school within a reasonable distance.\textsuperscript{18}

The circumstances of Hmong speakers living in different continents, countries, or smaller geographical divisions are significant enough to warrant considering Hmong of various areas as distinct speech communities. To do so allows acknowledgment that language status, of individuals and of whole communities, is subject to different conditions in different locations; permits examination of the linguistic divergence that has been developing since relocation; and delimits the scope of relevance of research findings and standardisation efforts.

2.2.2 Language families

2.2.2.1 A family tree?

The genetic affiliation of Hmong remains contentious to date. There are some who question the usefulness of ascertaining the genealogical descent of languages in the first place, given that actual languages in the process of history interweave with and borrow attributes from contact languages, just as their speakers intermarry with and borrow cultural practices from speakers of other languages. A tree, then, with a single root and its generations of diverging branches, may not be the appropriate model for understanding language development. Mühlhäusler (1996) proposes a 'modified "family" metaphor' in which:

\textsuperscript{17}Non–English-Speaking Background.

\textsuperscript{18}As indicated through the dozens of inquiries received through the HLI website at <http://www.linguistics.unimelb.edu.au/research/hmong/> since it was launched in 1997.
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family trees are extended to cater for convergent development and interbreeding between members of different as well as the same generations. Relatedness between different languages of a family can be captured best by using a Wittgensteinian notion of 'family resemblances' rather than conceiving of languages as similar because of a shared set of constant properties.

Mühlhäuser (1996):27

This idea is in line with current approaches to race, which reject notions of a pure race or identification of an individual in terms of a single racial heritage (see §1.2.2). Even within evolutionary theory, it is becoming apparent that genealogical lines cross and exchange more than the classical model implies. Undoubtedly there is such a thing as 'a language' or 'an ethnic group', but the definition of such entities relies less on idealised lines of pure descent and more on socially constructed criteria of identification. The relevance of a genealogical history of Hmong for my present purposes, then, lies not so much in what it might show about the historical structure, relationships and directions of the language, as in that speakers look to it to validate notions such as common linguistic heritage, original forms of words or phonemes, or a distinction between native and foreign elements of the language. Most of the focus in this regard is on the relatively recent history of the dialects Hmoob Dawb (HmD) and Mcob Ntsuab (MNts).

Below I give a brief survey of the current assessment of the genealogical tree of Hmong. Some of the typological characteristics that Hmong shares with other languages of Southeast Asia are provided in Appendix B, as a background to points of phonology and grammar discussed later in this chapter. In §2.2.2.2 I introduce the current sociolinguistic status of the two dialects of immigration.

19An earlier alternative proposal is found in Grace (1981b): 'we might attempt to develop a second, complementary model of linguistic diachrony—one in which a community of languages is seen as the entity undergoing change' (p267).

20A fascinating and accessible account of the complexity of the 'tree' of life is found in Dennett (1995), Chapter Four. See also Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999) for a critique of various metaphors which relate language and biological species.

21I do not transliterate MNts words into 'Phaj hauj because of the early stage of development of 'Phaj hauj conventions for this dialect to date (see §1.4.1).
Hmong forms part of the Western Hmongic branch of the Hmong–Mien family (Chazée 1999, amongst others):\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Fig. 2.1 The Hmong–Mien family}
(adapted from Ratliff 1986b)\textsuperscript{23}

Older sources, in particular Lemoine (1972), recognise three distinct Hmongic languages; while later work has established as many as eighteen, mostly spoken in China (Ratliff 1986b, referring to unpublished work of Strecker). Hmong is considered to have been identifiable as a distinct language from at least 4,000 years ago (Vang and Lewis 1984 [1990]).

Beyond this, the larger language family of Hmong–Mien is not fully established. Earlier sources tended to argue for a Sino-Tibetan origin, supported by the occurrence of common features including lexical tone and monosyllabicity; but more recent work locates it within the Austro-Asiatic group, supported by features such as common word order patterns.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} This is referred to in some, mostly older, sources as Miao–Yao; terms which are now dispreferred as many speakers of both Hmong and Mien find them offensive.

\textsuperscript{23} Lee T.C. (1996) lists as Eastern Hmongic (คำมือ นิยม ดื่ม อุ่อ Hmoob hnub tua) Qob Xyoob and Qeem Xyeemm, as Central Hmongic (คำมือ นิยม ดื่ม อุ่อ Hmoob Nruab NrabTeb) Qas Hmub, Qas Naws, and Hob, and as Western Hmongic (คำมือ นิยม อุ่อ อุ่ Hmoob hnub poob) Hmoob, Ab Hmob, Hmob, and Hmub.

\textsuperscript{24} For discussion see Lemoine (1972); Ruhlen (1976); Ballard (1985); Ratliff (1986b) and Jarkey (1991).
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2.2.2.2 Dialects in the west

As stated in §1.3.2, speakers of two major dialects have migrated to the west: HmD (siē ūi Hmoob Dawb) and MNts (Moob Ntsuab). This is because these are the predominant dialects of Hmong in Laos, the former country of residence of most immigrant Hmong. In other Southeast Asian countries also live speakers of Ab Hmob, Hmob, Hmub and more distantly related languages (Lee T.C. 1996). Discussion of these dialects is beyond the scope of this thesis as they are not spoken in the west and are not a focus of standardisation by Hmong people (see §1.1.3 for discussion of the correlation between country and standardisation activity).

In the west, as well as in Laos, HmD speakers outnumber MNts speakers considerably. In Melbourne for example, according to mū Nom Suav (p.c.) there are only two or three extended families of MNts speakers, as against perhaps twenty of HmD speakers. Txhiaj Vwj Yaj ūi ᵇ ṭ of Hmos Corp (p.c.) estimates the proportion of MNts speakers in America to be at most 25 percent. In Thailand, MNts is more prevalent.²⁵ On a smaller scale, dialect does not appear to be rigidly defined by area; nor does it seem to be a strong factor in determining settlement or secondary migration patterns outside of Asia.

Unlike other Hmong dialects, HmD and MNts are mutually intelligible, adult speakers often having reasonable command of both.²⁶ Amongst my HmD-speaking consultants, pronunciations and words considered to be MNts are sometimes heard. Marriage between people of different dialects and/or subgroups is commonplace.²⁷ Despite this free interaction between dialects, speakers have a definite conception of where the division lies between the two.

²⁵ Before the war, the ratio of MNts to HmD speakers in Thailand was estimated at nearly 3:2 (Young 1966, quoted in Smalley 1976b). This ratio has been affected since by the refugee influx of HmD speakers from Laos.

²⁶ Even as a learner of HmD, I find written MNts readily comprehensible—although I have not had opportunity to hear it spoken beyond a few words.

²⁷ See §1.4.2 for an explanation of the relationship between dialect and subgroup.
In the west, because the community of Hmong speakers is both more dispersed, and interwoven with an English-speaking society, it is becoming clear that young people are no longer acquiring fluency in both dialects:

...cex cov mivnyuas tsuas siv cov lug lawv le cov kws puab nam hab bxiv tau siv hab xwb...peb muaj coob leej Moob Leeg kws tub tsi paub tas lu lug "phau ntawv" tag-tag yog "phoo ntawv", "nomtsuwv" yog "numtsuwv", "bxiv" yog "bxwv, hab tseem tshuav ntau-ntau hwm lulug nbxiv hab.

'the children can only use the language of their parents...there are many Moob Leeg children who don't know that phau ntawv is just the same as phoo ntawv 'book', nomtsuwv is numtsuwv 'official', bxiv is bxwv 'father', and many more words besides.'

Moob Laj leeb, Hmong LG : early 1998

Variations between the two dialects which for the parent generation had been automatically assimilated are beginning to pose a problem, in both conversation and literacy settings, for the rising generation. Because of this new situation, it is no longer true for all H/Mong that:

yog Moob Dlawb Moob Leeg los peb yeej sis totaub zoo

'whether it's Hmoob Dawbor Moob Leeg we understand each other'

Nyah Looj Muas èeè ëWr, Hmong LG : March 1997

Partly due to this shift in language acquisition norms, and partly as a function of the standardisation process itself, the question of the official place and treatment of the two dialects has now come to the fore (see §4.2 for details).

HmD and MNts are distinguished primarily by some predictable phonetic alternations, which are set out in §2.4.3, and a small degree of lexical variation. Speakers of the two different dialects also use slightly differing orthographic systems of the RPA, details of which are given in §4.3.2. The two systems are different enough for speakers to complain when public notices etc. are not written in their dialect:

...when I was a translator for the Fresno Unified School District, when a letter in Hmong Daw was sent home, Hmong parents would call in asking why the letter

28 For instance, ëëj ëj poj niem (HmD) vs quas puj (MNts) 'wife'. Thanks to Martha Ratiff for this example.
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was not written in Hmong Njua. When a letter was sent in Hmong Njua, Hmong Daw parents would call in asking why the letter was in Hmong Njua.


Whether this sort of occurrence is a function of comprehension difficulties or more a sociopolitical objection is a question I return to in §4.2.1.1.

The phonological and sociolinguistic differences between these two dialects warrant consideration of each of the two varieties in their own right. In terms of identification of speech communities, dialect is emerging as a more significant focal point of group differentiation among ex-refugee Hmong now than it was previously, due to changes in speaker competence and the focus on standardisation heightening politics of standard variety selection. Dialect is also a factor in orthographic development, which I discuss as regards each script in use in §2.3. Again, different speech communities are distinguished by demonstrable differences in terms of their speakers' language maintenance needs and their differing contribution to standardisation issues.

2.2.3 A cultural narrative

The term 'Hmong' has an associative semantics of 'free people' (HYCAP 1994; FCAC 1996). Although some objections have been raised to this on the grounds of a lack of etymological accuracy, this does not alter the fact that the concept of being Hmong is firmly linked to goals of freedom. An anonymous contributor to HYCAP (1994) says:

It is ironic that we call ourselves 'free people' while our parents and grandparents remind us that we have always been subjected to domination and persecution...

HYCAP (1994): 16

This narrative of the eventual progress from oppression to freedom and autonomy is reflected in or in part arises from an oral history of the Hmong people in mythic form known as the ,__ āu dab neeg (see Johnson 1985 or Vang and Lewis 1984 [1990] for a selection in Hmong and English). This literature encodes not only historical events such as war and migration, but also

29 See §3.2.1.2 for an explanation of the concept narrative in the context of discourse theory. Other useful descriptions can be found in, for instance, Harré, Brockmeier and Mühthäusler (1999):70ff.

30 I use the Hmong term for these mythic histories as, again, English is lacking in a suitable equivalent. Comparable media can be found in other language/cultures, including the Coast Tsimshian adawx and the
2.2 Contexts

cultural values, goals and expectations which in their modern interpretations carry significant weight in particular trends of standardisation.31

2.2.3.1 The ᵇᵃⁿ ʳʸ ˒ⁿᵃⁿ ˒ⁿᵉᵉⁿ

Typically for the medium, the ᵇᵃⁿ ʳʸ ˒ⁿᵃⁿ ˒ⁿᵉᵉⁿ record in literary form events of the past, political history, and patterns of migration; while emphasising lessons which can be learned, universal principles at work in local experience, causes and effects, hopes and expectations for the future, and the development of the practices by which the particular ethnic group identify themselves. Oral literature provides a discursive framework through which historical events of the past and present can be interpreted. It is in the ᵇᵃⁿ ʳʸ ˒ⁿᵃⁿ ˒ⁿᵉᵉⁿ that, in mythic form, some important cultural narratives of Hmong identity and the path to freedom are set down.

In the ᵇᵃⁿ ʳʸ ˒ⁿᵃⁿ ˒ⁿᵉᵉⁿ, the search for autonomy is represented in close parallel with a goal of literacy, hence forming connections between language planning and national identity for the present context. Political independence, spiritual direction and an identifiable Hmong literacy base are interwoven in the narrative of the means to freedom. The connections between these three elements can be schematised as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Literacy} & \iff \text{Political power} \\
\text{Religion} & \iff \text{Moral rejuvenation} \\
& \iff \text{National unitary identity} \\
& \implies \text{Lands} \\
& \equiv \text{Indigenous ruler/autonomous rule}
\end{align*}
\]

Fig. 2.2 Literacy, religion, nation
(reproduced from Eira 1998)

A detailed explication of this literature and the connections it forms32 is available in Tapp (1989). Hamilton-Merritt (1993) discusses some of its ramifications for Hmong involvement in the wars in Laos. The narrative also has significant explanatory power for some of the directions that have arisen in standardisation, to the degree that this work is produced by concepts of identity and

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31 Some of these histories and similar cultural narrative elements are shared with other ethnic groups of the same region, such as the Karen (see also §3.3.2.1).

32 Tapp (1989) includes a detailed consideration in the light of the ᵇᵃⁿ ᵇᵃⁿ ˒ⁿᵃⁿ ˒ⁿᵉᵉⁿ of the Hmong peoples' response to not only the ᵇᵃⁿ ʰᵃⁿ ˒ⁿʰᵃˡ Phaj hauj, but also the Pollard script.
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political status. A particular interpretation of the narrative is a defining characteristic of the HLI, who identify 𝑒𝑛́ 𝑤𝑖́𝑙́ 𝑡=` Yaj Soob Lwj as a messiah fulfilling the prophetic anticipation of a leader who brings writing.\textsuperscript{33} Below I summarise those aspects of the 𝑒𝑛́ 𝑤𝑖́𝑙́ 𝑡=` dab neeg most relevant to understanding how the narratives they develop inform the standardisation agenda, for adherents of 𝑒𝑛́ 𝑤𝑖́𝑙́ 𝑡=` Yaj Soob Lwj and also for the broader Hmong community.

The 𝑒𝑛́ 𝑤𝑖́𝑙́ 𝑡=` dab neeg combine the three major themes of political, religious and literary autonomy in two phases: loss and return.

Stories exploring the loss phase serve to construct a historical framework and establish the interconnectedness of the themes of writing, lands and sovereignty. These stories function to assert the need and right of the Hmong to have writing. They associate the loss of literacy with loss or lack of political power, and tell of situations of emergency, flight and hunger.

According to the leaders, a long time ago, everybody moved, and crossed the great waters. The Mab Suav (酡 酡—who Chinese and others) carried their books across on their heads, so that they would be able to learn letters. But we Hmong were so afraid of our books getting wet that we could not do that, and we were hungry, so we ate them all up. That is the reason why now we can only be clever inside, in our hearts and only remember in our hearts, not in books.


The return phase is particularly significant as a framework within which the appearance of 𝑒𝑛́ 𝑤𝑖́𝑙́ 𝑡=` Yaj Soob Lwj and his script are significant for some Hmong in the present. A messiah emerges, recognisable as he brings the Hmong lost writing system through divine inspiration.\textsuperscript{34} He inspires the Hmong to a revolution in spiritual condition, political freedom and intellectual attainment:

\textit{__________________________________________}

\textsuperscript{33} A fuller explication of the prophetic histories in this light is given in Eira (1996).

\textsuperscript{34} I use the masculine pronoun as all recognised messiah figures to date have been male. However, as the stories quoted show, females do not seem to be automatically excluded as candidates, and \textit{txiv neeb} can be female or male.
For three years they waited before the child was born, and it was born carrying a book and a pen under its arm, and became the king of America.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Xeeb Thoj ŝa ŭi}, \textit{ibid}:135

The discipline of education, together with the access to knowledge and the discursive skills which literacy brings, are seen as prerequisite to the Hmong attaining recognition, power and positions of authority in the world:

Eventually the sister said, 'Oh! Let's go together and test to see which of us can learn wisdom the best, and who will become the Huab Tais (fähig ĥ̂ ĵ̂̄)\textsuperscript{36} in charge of the Ancient Dragon.' And the brother said, 'All right, but since you're the oldest, I'll let you try first.' The sister inscribed four characters and threw them into the four branches of heaven ...

\textit{Xeeb Thoj ŝa ŭi}, \textit{ibid}:154–5

2.2.3.2 Interpretations for the present

Oral tradition provides a framework within which to interpret current reality, while current reality extends and manifests that tradition. It is common in the treatment of the Ŧ̆̂̂ ŝu dab neeg is to revise, extend and reinterpret stories and their meanings in the light of historical events. This is a strategy much more readily available to oral than to written literature.\textsuperscript{37} For example, in the increasing acceptance of Christianity, many Christian concepts and story elements have begun to appear in Ŧ̆̂̂ ŝu dab neeg retellings. This adaptation process is practiced even in recent historical texts. In current versions of the life of Ŧ̆̂ ŝu Ŧ̆̂ ŧa \textit{Yaj Soob Lwj}, the master selected twelve disciples, then, as did the early Christians, a further twelve when these were disbanded. Parallel to Christ, his leadership began at the age of 30, and was cut off after three years by political assassination. In this way, the oral transmission of Hmong history incorporates the symbology of entry into the new culture.

Below I give a few examples in relation to the three themes outlined above: political power, religious autonomy, intellectual attainment.

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\textsuperscript{35}The introduction of 'America' in this retelling is an example of how these stories are commonly adapted to contemporary contexts (see §2.2.3.2).

\textsuperscript{36}Emperor in the spiritual realm.

2. Yarns

The aifl air dab neeg predict the attainment of lands and the reinstatement of a Hmong ruler, via
unification under a messiah. Frequently therefore, the appearance of a messiah figure has been
interpreted as a call to arms—or conversely, a state of political unrest is conducive to the
appearance of a messiah. ñul ñul Yaj Soob Lwj emerged as such a messiah in the sixties
during the war in the Laos, and is linked to the operation of a guerilla movement. Both ñul ñul Yaj Soob Lwj and this guerilla movement are in turn linked to a previous manifestation of the
same tradition, ñul ñu Paj Cai Vwj, who was the leader of a guerilla uprising against the
French colonists and Lao authorities in the twenties.38

The aifl BU dab neeg associate political power with education. The lack of demonstrable
articulatory skills in an official western setting serves for some Hmong to explain why, in the late
seventies, world powers such as the UN resisted attaching any credence to Hmong accounts of
'yellow rain'—the chemical warfare many were subject to during their escape from Laos.39 At the
Hmong New Year celebration in 1993, General Vang Pao applauded the fact that in America all
Hmong children could go to school as the means for the Hmong to 'catch up with the other
human races' (quoted by Yee Chang, HYCAP 1994:139).

The aifl BU dab neeg associate spiritual progress with political status. A Hmong priest at Ban
Vinaí refugee camp explained the development of a religion after the teaching of ñul ñul Yaj
Soob Lwj as:

'a religion like other people', since people with organised religions had states and
countries of their own, as they wished the Hmong to have

Tapp (1989): 129

The aifl air dab neeg have not lost their relevance for the new life in the west. A creation story
tells how the first person in the world brought from the underworld a flower, whose seeds were
the ultimate source of everything needed for survival: corn, rice, people, animals, sun and
moon. A young American Hmong in the nineties, looking to grasp positive aspects of the

38 ñul ñu Caub Fab is the name given to these two bands of guerilla fighters who, in both cases, were
outside of the HLI associate the ñul Phaj hauj with the ñul ñu Caub Fab (see for instance §4.4.2). The
strength of this particular narrative interpretation can be seen in that some people now retrospectively
accredit ñul ñu Paj Cai with a Hmong script. (AlQ Sif Lie Yaj, p.c.)

refugee transition, frames his question: "Where is that flower to be found in America?" (Yee Chang, HYCAP 1994:139).

Essential principles associated with this narrative tradition which recur as motivations expressed for particular directions in standardisation include:

- The sense of a common history
- The goal of political autonomy and the hope of Hmong-governed lands
- The relation between intellectual attainment and world recognition.

A still more direct manifestation of the narrative fundamentally directs the work of the HLI. In Eira (1998), I list the various points at which the story of əə tō Yaj Soob Lwj matches traditional expectations of a messiah figure; Smalley et al (1990) provide a comprehensive account from the perspectives of both a Hmong disciple of əə tō Yaj Soob Lwj (吸取 作为 Vaj Txiaj Kuan) and an American missionary linguist (William Smalley). Here I need only specify why this recognition holds particular relevance for the central focus of my case study:

- əə tō Yaj Soob Lwj taught a new and unique writing system for Hmong (the əə ər ər Phaj hauj Hmoob).^40
- Disciples of əə tō Yaj Soob Lwj currently function as community leaders in matters including language planning and standardisation.41
- Orthodox perpetuation of əə tō Yaj Soob Lwj's legacy involves not only an orthography but also preferred terminology, particular approaches to dialect and treatment of loanwords.
- Hmong language planning groups are deeply divided into adherents and non-adherents to this interpretation of the narrative tradition.
- Among proponents of the əə ər Phaj hauj, further divisions are forming over interpretations of the teaching and degree of orthodoxy.

In the description of Hmong processes of standardisation in Chapter Four, the themes of literacy and nation are realised in directions for orthography development, lexicon, standards

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^40 Divine intervention is not uncommonly associated with scripts. See also Cooper (1991).

41 This includes direct disciples and subsequent leaders in the same tradition.
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organisations and elsewhere. The connections formed in the narrative are further developed in terms of technological literacy. In Chapter Five I discuss explicitly how these realisations occur, and explore the complex interweaving of themes introduced here.
That there are two Hmong scripts current in the west—the \textit{èk ën Phaj hauj Hmoob} and the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA)—is a critical factor demarcating subgroups of Hmong for the purposes of language standardisation efforts. Since these two scripts reflect two major streams of cultural allegiance, language materials in one script are largely inaccessible to the other group, not only because they may not be readable, but also because they may be unacceptable for sociopolitical reasons.

Both these orthographies only began to emerge in the fifties and sixties,\textsuperscript{42} prior to which no written form of the language had been well established,\textsuperscript{43} with the exception of the script devised by Samuel Pollard of the China Inland Mission late in the nineteenth century, which gained some headway in parts of China.\textsuperscript{44} Other orthographies for Hmong have been developed and to some extent implemented; but they were/are subject to limited conditions of use, and have not been objects of development by Hmong people.\textsuperscript{45} A summary is provided in Appendix C.\textsuperscript{46} The RPA and the \textit{èk ën Phaj hauj} are the only two which have gained currency outside of Asia, and so these are the focus of the discussion to follow. A third system has

\textsuperscript{42}The first version of the \textit{èk ën Phaj hauj} appeared in 1959, while the RPA was developed initially in 1952–53. Neither began to spread significantly until the sixties.

\textsuperscript{43}At least in historical times. As explained in §2.2.3.1, tradition has it that a Hmong writing system was extant in ancient times—an idea supported in contemporary Hmong society by features such as the kind and level of legal organisation in evidence.

\textsuperscript{44}Tapp (1989) provides an interpretative discussion of the Pollard script, an original script developed originally for Hmong Bo, in terms of its interpretation by some Hmong of the time as a fulfilment of the prophetic histories found in the \textit{èk δrab neeg}. See Enwall (1994) for a major account of this script in linguistic terms.

\textsuperscript{45}A possible exception to this is a mysterious script known as the \textit{èk δhì Ntawv Pual Tsvm} or Sayaboury script. This is viewed by some as another messianic script given to a Hmong person by inspiration (see Wimuttikosol and Smalley 1998).

\textsuperscript{46}See also Lemoine (1972); Smalley et al (1990); Eira (1998). Some further references dealing with individual scripts are included in Appendix C.
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emerged in the USA since relocation—this also is subject to limited conditions of use and is discussed in §2.3.3.

This section is intended purely as a discussion of the structure and general histories of the scripts in use. Some points raised in regard to phonological representation are discussed together with the description of Hmong phonology in §2.4; points of controversy and variation between groups are discussed in §4.3. A reading guide to the ǎnb nī̂̂c Phaj hauj Hmoob and the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA) as used in this thesis is given in Appendix A.

2.3.1 ǎnb nī̂̂c Phaj hauj Hmoob

The ǎnb nī̂̂c Phaj hauj was received and developed through several versions by ǎnb būj Yaj Soob Lwj (Yang Shong Lue) up until his death in 1971. There is disagreement among its proponents as to which of these versions have orthodox status. Consequently, different referring terms can be found, and not all versions are named by all groups. The entire set of possible versions is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HLI term</th>
<th>Term in Smalley et al (1990)</th>
<th>Term used in this thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ǎnx ṅā lawj ib</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c ꔼ Phaj hauj Paj</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c lawj ib ‘Stage One’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Stage One’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ǎnx ṅā lawj ob</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c ꔼ ntsiab Dua Ob</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c lawj ob ‘Stage Two’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Stage Two’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. (none)</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c ꔼ ntsiab Dua Peb</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c ntsiab Dua Peb ‘Stage Three’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Third stage reduced version’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(lit. ‘Kernel Pahawh Version Three’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. (none)</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c ꔼ txha Phaj hauj Txha47</td>
<td>ꔼ nī̂̂c ꔼ txha ‘Stage Four’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Final version’ (lit. ‘Bone Pahawh’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Stages of the ǎnb nī̂̂c Phaj hauj Hmoob

It is generally agreed that the first version taught, ꔼ nī̂̂c lawj ib ‘Stage One’ is not intended for general use. Basic principles of the writing system such as the practice of tabling the graphemes

47 Also referred to in Lee T.C. (1996) as lawj txha (ǹjīm nī̂̂c).
2.3 Orthographies

in a kab or rows, the internal written order of a word (see below), and the names of graphemes, were set up at this stage. The lawj ob is considerably less regular than later versions. Phaj hauj Txha ‘Stage Four’ was produced only a month before Soob Lwj died and has never been in regular use. Only the second and third versions have been passed on as functional varieties since the war and the ensuing migrations out of Asia.48

The HLI in Australia teach and write lawj ob ‘Stage Two’, which is the version used in this thesis. With some variations, this version is also used by the HLI in the USA and elsewhere, and amongst some individuals not connected with this group.49 Points of variation between usages of this version are discussed in §4.3.1.

Below I discuss lawj ob as implemented by the HLI. Phaj hauj Ntsiab Dua Peci ‘Stage Three’ is discussed in §4.3.1.2.

2.3.1.1 Dissemination of the Phaj hauj in the west

The teaching begun by Yaj Soob Lwj in Laos, of the script as well as more philosophical and spiritual matters, was continued in the refugee camps in Northern Thailand—particularly at Ban Vinai, where a temple was built for this purpose. In the wave of refugee immigration to the USA, two major groups of Phaj hauj proponents formed in California and Minnesota, centred around survivors of the refugee period who had a more or less direct connection with Yaj Soob Lwj and his teaching. Most of these people came through Ban Vinai.

An association known as the Motthem Family formed in the USA, and began teaching Hmong culture and values in this tradition, but not literacy per se at first. During the eighties, under the influence of a major disciple of Yaj Soob Lwj, Vaj Txiaj KuamVang

48 Since in this dissertation my focus is the current status of Hmong, only these two versions will be described. For a detailed discussion of Phaj hauj Paj and Phaj hauj Txha see Smalley et al (1990).


50 That is, ‘Collaboration 59’ (the year that Yaj Soob Lwj began teaching). This group is sometimes referred to as Pahawh, or Project Family 59.
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Chia Koua,\textsuperscript{51} and boosted by the introduction of typewriters and word processing tools made possible primarily by æn \textsuperscript{5} Huy \textsuperscript{5} Yaaj \textsuperscript{5} Nyaj \textsuperscript{5} Yiig \textsuperscript{5} Yang \textsuperscript{5} Gnia \textsuperscript{5} Yee, some publications using æn \textsuperscript{5} Phaj \textsuperscript{5} hauj \textsuperscript{5} Ntsiab \textsuperscript{5} Dua \textsuperscript{5} Peh \textsuperscript{5} 'Stage Three' were made available. Thus formal teaching of the æn \textsuperscript{5} Phaj \textsuperscript{5} hauj began in Minnesota (Smalley et al 1990).

At around the same time, another association was forming from among the same two concentrated pockets of Hmong settlement. The æn \textsuperscript{5} Phaj \textsuperscript{5} hauj \textsuperscript{5} Ntsiab \textsuperscript{5} Dua \textsuperscript{5} Peh \textsuperscript{5} Hmooob \textsuperscript{5} koom \textsuperscript{5} haum \textsuperscript{5} bhwab \textsuperscript{5} nqa \textsuperscript{5} moj \textsuperscript{5} kuab \textsuperscript{5} bzoj \textsuperscript{5} ci \textsuperscript{5} Hmong Language Institute (HLI) held some very similar aims to the Moththem Family, but differed as to which version of the æn \textsuperscript{5} Phaj \textsuperscript{5} hauj should be established. For the HLI, æn \textsuperscript{5} Kaoj \textsuperscript{5} ob \textsuperscript{5} 'Stage Two' is the authentic version. The international HLI is now the only organised group implementing æn \textsuperscript{5} Phaj \textsuperscript{5} hauj, and they have become the central authority on the script due to their ongoing teaching programs, information technology development, public resource role, publishing efforts and international branch associations.

The Australian branch of the HLI is based in Melbourne, and maintains links with sympathetic groups in Queensland and Tasmania. With a core membership comprised of a few key disciples of æn \textsuperscript{5} Yaaj \textsuperscript{5} Siaob \textsuperscript{5} Loj \textsuperscript{5} arriving in Australia via the same refugee camps as the American organisations, this group affiliated officially with the international HLI in the mid nineties. Initially drawing strongly on the authority, resources and experience of the American branches, the group has since moved steadily towards full independent operation (see §5.3.2.2 for further discussion of this process). Late in 1998, following a trip to Thailand to study under the new teacher æn \textsuperscript{5} Kub \textsuperscript{5} Yaaj by group representatives æn \textsuperscript{5} Lis \textsuperscript{5} Yaaj and æn \textsuperscript{5} Nm \textsuperscript{5} Suaav, the Melbourne branch began to develop its own orthographic variety which better reflects their conception of an orthodox æn \textsuperscript{5} Phaj \textsuperscript{5} hauj \textsuperscript{5} Kaoj \textsuperscript{5} ob as originally taught, and other aspects of the new wave of teaching coming out of Thailand.

Computer fonts have been produced by æn \textsuperscript{5} Yiig \textsuperscript{5} Yaaj \textsuperscript{5} Siaob \textsuperscript{5} Yiig, the HLI in California and the HLI in Melbourne, and by a small number of individuals and/or organisations not associated with the HLI.\textsuperscript{52} To date, choice of font has been a clear-cut function of area of residence or group identification, and font availability. Vang Peng of the HLI in California produced a set of four prototype fonts in 1996-97, and has since continued to develop the range of styles

\textsuperscript{51} Vaj Tsysaj Kuam is one of the co-authors of Smalley et al (1990).

\textsuperscript{52} For instance, the Hmong Script Software site Kue (1998) makes an extended font for æn \textsuperscript{5} Phaj \textsuperscript{5} hauj available (see §4.3.1.3), although to my knowledge this extended set has not been used in a public capacity such as published material so far. The Hmong linguist Æn \textsuperscript{5} Siaob \textsuperscript{5} Tsysaj \textsuperscript{5} Lis \textsuperscript{5} Xab 'Tzexa Cherta Lee' has developed a font Atrivasoob for private use, which he has also passed on to me.
2.3 Orthographies

available. The California fonts are used in recent HLI publications. This grapheme set has also spread further due to the availability of one of their fonts on the internet. It has recently been used, for instance, in a series of columns introducing people to the script published in Hmong Tribune (1998–), Minnesota. Naadaa is also the font which I have used in academic publications to date, and in the present work. After initially using Vang Peng’s four prototype fonts, the HLIA have now developed their own, to be launched early in 2001 (see §4.3.1.4). The font by ăšt ůă YajNyiaj Yig is used in Smalley et al (1990) and various other publications by or associated with ăšt ŭă in Vaj Txiaj Kuam and the Motthem Family.

2.3.1.2 Features of the writing system

As an essentially phonemic script, the elements of the ăšt ŭă Phaj hauj script represent the three components of Hmong syllable structure: consonant or ŭă YajNyiaj Yig las qauv nkaws, vowel or ŭă YajNyiaj Yig yub qauv nkaws, and tone or ŭă YajNyiaj Yig lub suab—CVt. (Details of Hmong phonology are given in §2.4.) There are two types of grapheme unit, a consonant unit and a combined vowel+tone unit, each comprising a basic grapheme and a diacritic.

The vowel+tone units are conventionally arranged into ă kab as follows:

53 Under direction of the HLIA, I set up a website (Eira and HLIA 1997) for this purpose in 1997, now at the URL <http://www.linguistics.unimelb.edu.au/research/hmong/>. This provides free download of Vang Peng’s PC font naadaa plus a version which I adapted for Macintosh.

54 A ‘Pahawh’ proposal is also included in the Unicode project, which is a large-scale endeavour to assign ASCII numbers to graphemes in all world scripts for such purposes as facilitating readability of all extant languages on the internet. The ‘Pahawh’ proposal, being undertaken by Michael Everson, started from a base of the style used by ăšt ŭă YajNyiaj Yig of the Motthem Family, but the current aim is to reconcile in the final version the various forms currently in use, as well as possibly including all the graphemes needed for the various Stages. The current status of the proposal can be found at <http://www.indigo.ie/egt/standards/iso10646/pdf/hmong.pdf>.

55 The order and combination of phonemes in each ă kab are the same as in ŭă YajNyiaj Yig, but many of the graphemes are different.
The use of two basic graphemes for each "yub qauv nkaws" vowel combines with the ลย คิม 'diacritics' to allow eight possible combinations of vowel and tone (งน ทับ lub suab), of which seven are used in this version. Diacritics do not correspond to a particular tone, but are applied to different tones for each "kab" (compare the "kab" for ง and จ). This lack of regularisation has little effect on the fluent reader, but from my observations in dictionary workshops, diacritic selection for tone seems to be the most common mistake made in writing Hmong. Furthermore, the distinction between tone /H/ and /h/ is not reflected in the HLIA orthography but is (mostly) predictable from context (see §2.4.2.2). Note also that the basic grapheme selected by this tone pair is not predictable: while tones /I, V, ./ consistently select one set of basic graphemes, tones /A, ɪ, / consistently select the other set (see §4.3.1 for further discussion of this point):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vowel/ tone</th>
<th>ง</th>
<th>ง</th>
<th>ง</th>
<th>ง</th>
<th>ง</th>
<th>ง</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ɔː</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɔ</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aː</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɔː</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
<td>ง</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Vowel+tone grapheme units
2.3 Orthographies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone group I</th>
<th>Irregular</th>
<th>Tone group II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1/1</td>
<td>1/1/1</td>
<td>1/1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>τ</td>
<td>λ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>η</td>
<td>η</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>μ</td>
<td>μ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>σ</td>
<td>σ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 Tone groups in ṭʰiŋ ȵiř Phaj hauj

There is overlap between the set of diacritics used for vowel+tone graphemes and for consonant graphemes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>diacritic</th>
<th>*</th>
<th>**</th>
<th>−</th>
<th>−</th>
<th>(θ)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>name</td>
<td>ȵv ȵv水果</td>
<td>ȵv ȵv水果</td>
<td>ȵv ȵv水果</td>
<td>ȵv ȵv水果</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPA</td>
<td>cim tub</td>
<td>cim tub</td>
<td>cim tub</td>
<td>cim tub</td>
<td>cim tub, cim tub, cim tub, cim tub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>used with:</td>
<td>V, C</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V, C</td>
<td>V, C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 ṭʰiŋ ȵiř Phaj hauj Diacritics

In the case of the ṭʰiŋ ȵiř ᵽaŋ las qauv nkaws 'consonant', the diacritic has a purely economical function: since there are 57 consonant phonemes to be represented, the use of three diacritics (including zero) reduces the number of basic graphemes to 19 (but see also discussion of MNts usage in §4.3.1.3). There is nothing featural or otherwise predictable about the selection of diacritic in the consonant ṭ kab 'rows'. The set of consonant phonemes represented in a single ṭ kab is arbitrarily determined. The order of consonant ṭ kab is as follows:
In áb áfr áb á Phaj hauj Hmoob, the pronouncing order of the segments

<Consonant-Vowel+Tone>

is not reflected in the written order of grapheme units, which is

<Vowel+Tone-Consonant>:
Smalley et al (1990) explain the order of the segments in terms of perception of the vowel as the nucleus of the syllable, with the tone written as a diacritic and the consonant 'appende...as a satellite, a qualification of the vowel' (Smalley et al 1990:60). The position of the HLIA is that this feature of writing must be maintained in order to preserve the historico-religious integrity of the script (see §5.2.3.1).

The phoneme /k/ is represented by a zero consonant. Smalley et al (1990) analyse the /k/ as inherent on the vowel grapheme, but since zero is positively featured in the specification of both tone and consonant, the representation of /k/ could also be interpreted as another instance of a positive use of zero.

Similarly, a consonant written without a preceding vowel+tone unit is pronounced with a following /au/. Although overt representation of this vowel+tone unit is available, it is generally used only where necessary for disambiguation, for formal writing, and sometimes for citation forms:

Non-linear writing is not an uncommon feature of South and Southeast Asian scripts. Commonly the consonant is treated as the basic grapheme, with a vowel element appended as a diacritic or forming a ligature. For instance, in Devanagari, used for Hindi, Nepali and Marathi and sometimes other languages, a vowel which follows a consonant may be written above, below, to the left or to the right of the consonant grapheme:

(Overleaf)

See also Bright (1996) or Wheatley (1996) and elsewhere in the same volume for examples of inherent vowels in other scripts. I am not aware of other examples of inherent or zero consonants, but this reversal is consistent with the treatment in ǎk ǹg Phaj hauj of the vowel, rather than the consonant, as the basic grapheme.

Possible exceptions to this are <f-r h-f>, which are sometimes pronounced [mau + hau + qua].
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.2

a. ? nws muaj ntev ntev
   3SG have long.time+REDUP

b. nws muaj kev ntau ntau
   3SG have way many+REDUP

'S/he has a lot to do.'

In Ex. 2.2 (a), it is not clear whether <H+A=h> is intended to be read as a single word, since <H> has no qualifying consonant grapheme and <A> has no qualifying vowel+tone grapheme. In Ex. 2.2 (b), the vowel /au/ is made explicit, making the reading unambiguous.

A range of additional graphemes are in use, including numerals or ꞏzauv, arithmetic symbols or ꞏxyeem, and time words such as ꞏxyoo 'year'. A table of those in current use by the HLIA at the time of writing is included in Appendix A, and further logographic symbols are listed in Smalley et al (1990).

Two additional graphemes requiring some explanation are <ę> and <ı>. The grapheme <ę> indicates reduplication of the preceding syllable, a common morphological process, as in:

Ex. 2.3

a. ꞏme
   me
   'very small; a very little'
   (compare ꞏme me 'small; a little')

b. ꞏnyob
   nyob
   'live/stay a long time'
   (compare ꞏnyob nyob 'live/stay')

The grapheme <ı> ꞏvos seev indicates a composite feature of vowel lengthening and a rising intonation associated with zero-initial particles at the ends of some phrases (see §2.4.2.3 for a full explanation):
2.3 Orthographies

Ex. 2.4

a. kuv tuaj os
1SG come PART

'Hello (lit. 'I'm here!')

b. cuv dej cuv dub ov bawm nplawm puag tim qab ntug tuaj
cyclone PART CONJ whip far over.there horizon come

'The cyclone whipped them away far off to the horizon'

Johnson (1985):4

Notating the secondary features of rising intonation and vowel lengthening (seev) renders overt representation of the zero initial redundant, as it is predictable in particles with this composite feature.59

Other punctuation symbols familiar to roman script users occur also in Phaj hauj Hmoob: <, . ; " - > and various forms of parentheses.

The official position on orthographic word length in Phaj hauj is that it should be coterminous with the syllable. This policy is followed in formal writing and especially in typed or printed matter; but in informal handwriting, several syllables are often strung together.

The principle of one-syllable:one-word unit was established in early versions of RPA, which may have provided a model for its implementation in Phaj hauj. This principle is justified by the HLIA as a means avoiding the problem of diacritic placement, since diacritics in all extant fonts are implemented as overstrike characters typed after the basic grapheme. Because these diacritics take up no visible space on the screen or printout, the cursor cannot easily be positioned in the right place when editing is required. The extra spacing which results from monosyllabic notation is also seen as an advantage, since the high frequency of diacritics in this script risks visual overcrowding and reduced ease of reading. However, the issue of word boundary location is an important and complex one in the wider Hmong-speaking community, taking in questions of morphology, semantics and historical derivation, and which I discuss in detail in §4.4.2 (see also Eira 1999). Possibly then, the current Phaj hauj solution and the

59 See §2.4.2.3.1 for a discussion of the phonemic status of the zero consonant, and §4.3.1.1 for an alternative orthographic convention in Phaj hauj.
2. Yarns

reasons given for it are oversimplistic and may be called into question at a later stage of standardization of the orthography.

The only apparent exceptions to the monosyllable rule are found in reduplicative compounds. Firstly, where the reduplication symbol `<>' is used, this symbol directly follows the basic monosyllable (see Ex. 2.3). Secondly, I have come across hyphenation in a very few reduplicative temporal deictics. Since this is a very restricted sample set, it is not possible to make firm statements about the motivating factors. It is interesting, however, that in compounds such as ṣāha nyobnyob 'live a long time', the reduplication functions to emphasise and extend the crucial component of the basic word meaning; whereas in the hyphenated compounds I have come across, the reduplication has a semantically reiterative function:

Ex. 2.5

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ŋā } & \text{ hnub } \quad \text{‘day’} \\
\text{ŋā-ŋā } & \text{ hnub-hnub } \quad \text{day+REDUP: ‘day before yesterday’} \\
\text{ŋā-ŋā ŋā } & \text{ hnub-hnub ub } \quad \text{day+REDUP+farthest.extent:} \\
& \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \text{‘day before the day before yesterday’}
\end{align*}
\]

2.3.2 Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA)

2.3.2.1 Introduction

The Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA) was produced in collaboration between Protestant and Catholic missions in Laos during the fifties by Smalley and Barney in collaboration with Fr. Bertrais (see Barney and Smalley 1953). The primary motivation for the collaboration between Protestant and Catholic missions was the principle that one language community should have a single orthography—an aim not without competition at the time from other proposals being developed (see Appendix C). The RPA is now the majority writing system for Hmong.

60 So does the non-phonetic grapheme `<>' , described above.

61 The following minor variations exist between usages in the two camps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smalley/Barney</th>
<th>Bertrais</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nl</td>
<td>ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hnl</td>
<td>hml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In current practice this variation no longer reflects either denominational affiliation or country of residence: the `<>' variants are used in Heimbach (1969 [1979]); McKibben (1992 [1994]) lists the `<m>'
2.3 Orthographies throughout the west, in Laos and Thailand, and possibly also elsewhere in Asia, and is used in major dictionaries including Heimbach 1969 [1979], Xiong, Xiong and Xiong 1984 [1983], McKibben 1992 [1994], and Thompson, Yang et al 1996 [1999]).

It has remained until recently for the Hmong people themselves to begin developing the orthography and establishing implementation conventions. A fairly prominent minority are working on adapting the system as originally taught to better suit speaker perceptions and preferences. These revisions are discussed in §4.3.2.

At the present status of standardisation, the older orthography is in use by the majority, with a small range of variation, while a revised version-in-progress is also in use, and can be seen for example in internet communications. Below I describe a central version of the older orthography in common use, which I refer to henceforth as Basic RPA.

2.3.2.2 Features of the writing system

The RPA is based on a featural system whereby each articulation component of a given segment is separately represented. Grapheme units are made up of between one and four roman letters which represent components of the complex sounds. Features marked are:

(i) basic consonant
   a. start and end points of affricates
   b. prenasalisation
   c. aspiration/devoicing
   d. lateral release
   e. palatalisation

(ii) basic vowel
   a. length
   b. nasalisation

variants in a preface but uses both; while Phaj hauj-RPA charts produced by the HLI (California) use the <m> variants.

62 There is lack of agreement on the currency of the RPA in Laos. Some report its free use by Hmong people (Nick Enfield, p.c.), while others have observed that Hmong are still reluctant to write openly in their language for fear of government disapproval (Costello 1996).

63 This is the version used throughout this thesis, except that I retain the variant forms used by writers quoted.
2. Yarns

c. start and end points of diphthongs

(iii) tone.

The end result, ideally, is that grapheme complexes are perceived as single units, thereby yielding a phonemic orthography in effect. Many of the possible combinations of this list do occur, so that although the syllable structure is (C)V, it can take up to seven letters to spell a monosyllabic word:

Ex. 2.6

a. ntseeg /Ntfei/ 'believe'
   (C [+prenasalisation, + affrication], V [+ length, + nasalisation], tone)

b. nplhaib /pafl/ '(finger-)ring'
   (C [+prenasalisation, + lateral release, + aspiration], diphthong, tone)

The potential advantage of a featural over a phonemic base as such is one of economy in the set of graphemes required. The reuse of letters as components of several phonemes obviates the need to learn a different grapheme for each of more than seventy phonemes.64

Tone is represented in the RPA by a syllable-final grapheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>RPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>₁</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>₂</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>₃</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>₄</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>₅</td>
<td>(ɔ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>₆</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>₇</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>₈</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.6 Tone representation in the RPA

64 The actual number depends on the dialect spoken (see §2.4.2 and §2.4.3).
The composite feature known to Hmong as seev (see above) is not notated in current Hmong usage. The first versions of RPA marked the zero initial consonant, but this practice has for the most part become obsolete, so that some writers now are left with an awareness of a distinction which needs to be made orthographically, but are unsure how to make it. This has occurred despite its use in dictionaries such as Heimbach. What appears to have happened here is a trend commonly found in popular orthographies which are heavily reliant on diacritics: the diacritics tend to fall into disuse. However, the apparent salience of the seev (that is, intonation) in these particles, rather than the zero consonant, is also implicated here (see phonological discussion in §2.4.2.3). Possibly a solution which uses an actual grapheme to mark the composite feature, as in Phaj hauj, would be more enduring.

Although in early RPA usage the word unit was consistently represented as monosyllabic, considerable variation in orthographic word boundaries can now be found among RPA writers. This question is discussed in detail in §4.4.2.1.

### 2.3.3 A recent proposal: The Ntawv paj ntaub

Another indigenous script attributed to divine inspiration has a small, local following in California. In the tradition of Yaj Soob Lwj and his predecessors, a Hmong Christian minister, Cher Vang Kong, also dreamed a Hmong script in the late eighties, called the Ntawv Hmoob paj ntaub. Kong teaches the script through his church and has had basic religious texts such as hymns printed in it. A video which both documents and teaches the script has also been produced. Interestingly enough, Kong does not see the Ntawv paj ntaub as in competition with other Hmong messianic scripts, but only as a potential replacement of the RPA (Lee T.C. 1995).

Like the Phaj hauj, the Ntawv paj ntaub has a unique script base, and provides graphemes for vowels, tones, consonants and numbers. The structure of the system compromises between a featural organising principle (as per the RPA) and a phonemic one (as

---

65 Note that overt marking of the zero consonant has also been eliminated in the Melbourne version of Phaj hauj, although seev intonation is marked in all versions.

66 As seen for instance in the language name Sm'algyax 'Coast Tsimshian', which tends to be written <Sm'algyax>, losing the orthographic distinction between // <a> and // <a> (Stebbins 1999). Bill McGregor (p.c.) notes a similar problem in orthographic development for Kimberley languages.

67 Lit. 'Hmong embroidery writing'.
2. Yarns

per the êk n̥r Phaj hauj. In the consonants, the symbol for /h/ is also used to mark aspiration (including aspiration/voicelessness in nasals and laterals). Otherwise, each consonant phoneme is assigned to a unique grapheme.¹⁶⁸

Ex. 2.7⁶⁹

![Graphemes for Hmong](image)

While long (nasalised) vowels are written with a single grapheme as in êk n̥r Phaj hauj, diphthongs are written as digraphs representing their start and end points:

Ex. 2.8

Short vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phoneme</th>
<th>grapheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>ฎา</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>ฎี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/o/</td>
<td>ฎอ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>ฎู</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Long vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phoneme</th>
<th>grapheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/aː/</td>
<td>ฎาː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/eː/</td>
<td>ฎีː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/oː/</td>
<td>ฎอː</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phoneme</th>
<th>grapheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ai/</td>
<td>ฎai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/au/</td>
<td>ฎau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ia/</td>
<td>ฎia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁶⁸ The linguistic information in this section is derived from a contribution to Hmong LG by Bo Lee, Aug 1999, and a chart partially transcribed into RPA, given to me by a member of the HLIA.

¹⁶⁹ The chart I have lists only one grapheme with aspiration incorporated, labelled (in RPA) Ntha. Since this conflicts with the description of aspiration representation by Bo Lee, which is apparent in all other cases in my chart, this maybe a misprint. Possibly it should read Tta, which would then provide graphemes for the only definitely attested MNts sounds which HmD does not have ([t̥ ʰ]) plus the aspirated form ([t̥ ʰ]).

¹⁷⁰ Note that the monophthong graphemes combined to represent this diphthong imply [ae] rather than [au].
Tone diacritics are completely independent of the vowels. Only seven tones are represented, as is the practice among the HLIA.\textsuperscript{71}

This yields on the one hand an economy of the total number of graphemes (fifty required in all\textsuperscript{72}, plus tone diacritics, as against eighty-three plus diacritics for \texttt{Phaj hauj lawj ob} ‘Stage Two’); and on the other hand an economy of the number of graphemes needed for a single syllable (no more than four plus tone diacritic, as against up to seven in the RPA).

In a letter to Hmong LG (August 1997), Bo Lee promotes the \texttt{Ntawv pajtaub} on two counts:

(i) A symbol is assigned for \texttt{seev} (see §2.4.2.3):

\begin{quote}
tsis zoo le...ntawv Lastees Moob (has cov lug seev seev tsis tau)
\end{quote}

‘unlike... Latin Hmong writing [RPA] (which doesn’t have \texttt{seev} words)’

\textit{Bo Lee, Hmong LG: Aug 1999}

(ii) The script acknowledges MNts writers as well as HmD—at least in the vowel system:

\begin{quote}
tsis zoo le cov ntawv Hmoob Phajhauj (sau tau ua lus Hmoob Dawb xwb)
\end{quote}

‘unlike \texttt{Hmoob Phajhauj} (which you can only write in \texttt{Hmoob Dawb})’

\textit{Bo Lee, ibid}

Words are written in CV\textsuperscript{1} order, with compounds represented as a single word.

\subsection*{2.3.4 Closing comments}

Script and orthography development embody many of the types of concerns evident elsewhere in Hmong standardisation. The brief descriptions provided in this section hint at religious symbolism, questions of scientific accuracy and technological access, and divisions between

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{71} The sample I have also includes seven unidentified diacritic-like symbols which, without either a sample of written language in which they appear or access to someone who knows the script, I have not been able to interpret. They are not mentioned by Bo Lee (whose email address I have been unable to obtain as yet).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{72} This includes both glottal stop and \texttt{seev}.
\end{quote}
2. Yarns

Hmong speakers manifested in the specific implementation of the scripts. Because of the symbolic loading of written forms, and because of the close connection between standardisation and writing, the choice of script and orthography is significant to all aspects of standardisation in Hmong, and is discussed in terms of each area of development in ensuing chapters.
2.4 Phonetics and phonology

The phonological analysis of Hmong has particular relevance to this thesis, because of its strong implications for orthography development, which is in turn such a central component of the standardization of Hmong. Orthography development in the roman script was based on a featural analysis of the segments and tones of Hmong from the outset, and later revisions have reflected the reconsideration of some aspects of these analyses by Hmong speakers. The ŝăn Phaj hauj script, designed on a more broadly phonemic principle, thereby contributes directly to an understanding of speaker perception of Hmong sound contrasts. Discussion of the relative merits of one or the other script, or of specific implementations as orthographies, frequently hinges on the degree to which the particular variety constitutes an intuitively satisfying representation of Hmong sound structure.

Research in the area of Hmong phonetics and phonology is still relatively sparse, and some contentious issues remain. In this section I set out the phonemes of Hmong, with reference to earlier research, and add my own perspective to aspects of the analysis already available. The evidence I draw on includes the perceptions of speakers implied by orthographic usage in the community. My primary consultants being HmD speakers, I concentrate on describing the phonology of this dialect. §2.4.3 provides a comparative summary of the phonetic differences between the two dialects of immigration to the west.

2.4.1 Previous analyses

The main sources for phonological analysis in Hmong are Smalley (1976b), and more recently Jarkey (1991). The former, which draws also on Smalley’s prior collaborative work in Barney and Smalley (1952) and (1953), itemises the vowel and consonant segments and tonemes, with a strong cross-dialectal approach (in HmD and MNts), and some discussion of phonotactics. The focus of the article is problems of orthography development, particularly in the Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA) by Smalley, Barney and Bertrais, and the Thai-based script by Whitelock and Smalley.73 Jarkey (1991) expands on the level of articulatory detail of this work, building also on earlier work such as Jarkey (1987).

Smalley et al (1990), oriented to description of the ŝăn Phaj hauj Hmoob script, includes a pronunciation-based account, which balances technical description with more general

73 See also Smalley et al (1963), (1990); Eira (1998). The Whitelock Thai- script is also included in Appendix C of this thesis.
2. Yarns

accessibility.74 Smalley's introduction to Heimbach (1969 [1979]) comprises a functional
summary of his earlier work including some additional observations by Heimbach and Bertrais.

Enwall (1994), focussing on description of the Pollard script, provides a historical approach, as
do Lee T.C. (1996) and (forthcoming), while Lee T.C. (in press) concentrates on synchronic
dialect variation and ramifications for orthography development.

Further analysis of tone can be found in Downer (1967), and its implications for
morphosemantics in Jarkey (1991); McKibben (1996) and references therein, and especially

As this brief list shows, the main orientation of much work on phonetics and phonology in
Hmong to date is orthographic representation—because of the relative recency of enduring
orthography work in Hmong; and because of its prominent position in the discursive life of the
speech community.

For the analysis below, I refer mostly to Smalley (1976b) and Jarkey (1991) (for the remainder of
§2.4 'Smalley' and 'Jarkey' respectively), extending this work on the basis of insights gained
from my teacher-consultants in the Hmong Language Institute of Australia and Yej Ntxawg Lis ërf
ë[n À] (SEASSI 1998). Slight differences between Smalley and Jarkey, and between either of
these and my own interpretation, may be due in part to the particular consultancy base each
derives from: Smalley's work was established in Laos, although Smalley et al (1990) was co-
written with American Hmong, while Jarkey works with consultants in Sydney. My transcriptions
are on the whole broader than Jarkey's, since the focus of my analysis is on establishing
systematic contrasts rather than providing phonetic detail.

2.4.2 Segments and tones

Before describing the phonology of Hmong, it would be useful to introduce its phonotactics.
The syllable structure of Hmong is generally represented as:

\[(\text{Consonant})-\text{Vowel+Tone} \]
\[(\text{C})\text{V}^t\]

There are no apparent restrictions on co-occurrence between C and V, or between V and \(^t\).
Restrictions pertaining to co-occurrence between C and \(^t\) are that tone /\(J\)/ does not occur with

74 Lee (1991), an orthography primer, should also be mentioned, as one of the earlier published
sources of the phonological analysis assumed and implied in the ë[n À] Phaj hauj.
any consonant with aspiration (including voiceless sonorants), or with the voiceless fricatives. There is good reason for viewing this set of consonants as a natural class (see further explanation in §2.4.2.3). For a comprehensive account of distribution and frequencies of occurrence in general, see Smalley (1976b).

2.4.2.1 Vowels

Hmong Daw has six short vowels and five diphthongs, plus two long vowels, making a total of thirteen vowel phonemes. The vowel phonemes are set out in Fig 2.3:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Monophthongs:} & \quad \text{i} \quad \text{u} \\
\text{Diphthongs:} & \quad \text{ia} \quad \text{ai} \quad \text{au} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Fig 2.3 Vowel phonemes

The most significant difference between the vowel analyses in Smalley, in Jarkey, and in the present work, is the interpretation of the long vowels. Long vowels are nasalised and, in HmD, predictably followed by [ŋ]. This is the only position in which a coda occurs in Hmong. The phonetic realisation of these vowels, then, is:

Ex. 2.9

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{he:/} & \quad \rightarrow \quad [\text{e}:\text{n}] \\
\text{ho:/} & \quad \rightarrow \quad [\text{o}:\text{n}] \\
\end{align*}
\]

Smalley’s transcriptions mark nasalisation on these vowels instead of length, while Jarkey marks both, and also the predictable final [ŋ].

---

75 I treat the vowel segment first, then the tone, then the consonant, as is practised in the HLI.

76 For purposes of the ensuing discussion I retain Jarkey and Smalley’s transcriptions when referring to their respective analyses, except that I substitute current IPA symbols.
2. Yarns

I select length as the basic parameter distinguishing these vowels from their simple counterparts. This is because nasalisation of other vowels also occurs as a predictable allophonic variation following a nasal consonant, which entails that, while [+nasal -long] vowels do occur, [-nasal +length] vowels do not. In other words, if length is analysed as the distinctive parameter on a phonological level, nasalisation is predictable. Furthermore, the velar nasal coda does not occur following [+nasal -long] vowels. This suggests that the coda is associated with length rather than nasalisation.

Smalley does not overtly mention the length parameter of these vowels in Smaliey (1976b), but the popular orthography he co-created implies it as basic:

Ex. 2.10

| Long vowels | /ɛː/ | /ɔː/ |
| RPA representation | <ee> | <oo> |

Since in HmD there is no case where a long vowel lacks a coda, or where a coda follows a short vowel or diphthong, it is reasonable to treat the coda as predictable following a long vowel (but see discussion of MNts in §2.4.3.1). Interestingly, neither RPA nor Phaj hauj scripts overtly mark the coda.

Smalley and Jarkey note different realisations of the long vowels. In the case of /ɛː/, Smalley assesses the HmD phone as [ə], citing [e] as the equivalent for MNts. Jarkey on the other hand lists both [ɛːə] and [ɔːə] as free allophones of /ɛː/ in HmD.

In the case of /ɔː/, Jarkey notes the free alternation of [ɔːr] and [ɔː] in HmD, while Smalley records a diphthongised pronunciation [ɔː] only for MNts.

---

77 In Heimbach (1969 [1979]), Smalley notes a single instance of a short, nasalised vowel which is not preceded by a velar consonant: in a particle [hɔ ɬ] (written hons by Heimbach). Since only one example is listed, and especially since it is a phrase-final particle, which is likely to undergo surface variation (see §2.4.2.3), I suggest that this occurrence reflects free allophonic variation. However, asystematic nasalisation of vowels without lengthening occurs on other vowels too: in particular, HmD pronunciation of the first vowel of ȾAskiv 'English' is often nasalised: a transfer of its pronunciation in the originating language encouraged by the availability of nasalisation of /a/ in MNts.


79 However, I retain it in my phonetic transcription where necessary for clarification.
Other vowels display only minor variation from the basic transcriptions in this chart. Centralisation of /ai/ is common. According to Jarkey, this is a predictable alternation occurring in the environment of tones /I, I/: but nonetheless she selects the centralised form [էэ] as unmarked in her vowel chart. Smalley notes a single occurrence of [i:] recorded as a phrase-final particle in Heimbach (1969 [1979]) as hwww [hi: ɹ]. According to David 'Choj' Mortenson (Hmong LG: August 1997), this generally occurs in conjunction with the emphatic heev hnc: ɪ̯: hæv hwww. Hence it is probably a reduplicative variant. For details of further allophonic variations see Jarkey.

2.4.2.2 Tones

Description and transcription

Jarkey lists eight contrastive tones, while Smalley lists seven, including the eighth as a predictable alternation of one toneme. This is a controversial point, the phonological aspects of which I discuss below. Auditory description and hence transcription of the tones also differs between Smalley and Jarkey, which may reflect individual or areal pronunciations. Table 2.7 gives the principle values in symbol form as transcribed by each source, and in the present work.

80 Lyman (1974) records this pronunciation as occurring among the MNts speakers of Northern Thailand.

81 The order is that conventional in HLI practice.

82 I give two examples for /I/, in order to provide a minimal pair for tone /I/, which is of very limited distribution (see below).
2. Yarns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jarkey</th>
<th>Smalley</th>
<th>Present thesis</th>
<th>Sample word</th>
<th>RPA</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>/pɔɻ/</td>
<td>pob+</td>
<td>round thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>/pɔɻ/</td>
<td>pom</td>
<td>see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>/pɔɻ/</td>
<td>pem</td>
<td>up there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>/pɔɻ/</td>
<td>po+</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>Ʉ</td>
<td>/pɔɻ/</td>
<td>pov</td>
<td>throw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Ʉ     | Ʉ       | Ʉ              | /pɔɻ/       | po   | pancreas
| Ʉ     | Ʉ       | Ʉ              | /pɔɻ/       | pos  | thorn |
| Ʉ     | Ʉ       | Ʉ              | /pɔɻ/       | pog  | grand-mother |
| Ʉ     | Ʉ       | Ʉ              | /pɔɻ/       | ped  | that up there |

Table 2.7 Tones

As indicated by Jarkey’s transcriptions, and in two cases also in Smalley’s, three tonemes are associated with an additional articulatory parameter besides characteristics of pitch. A vowel with tone /A/ is followed by a short glottal ‘catch’, and tone /J/ vowels are articulated with breathy voice. Vowels with tone /I/ are lengthened, and the pitch of this tone does not rise smoothly, but features a slight mid-syllable hiatus—a momentary pause on a level pitch. These additional articulatory parameters are associated with the tonemes themselves: a long vowel with tone /I/ superimposed undergoes additional lengthening, and the breathy voice parameter of tone /J/ is perceptible regardless of the phonation of the consonant.

The significant differences between Smalley and Jarkey, and my own analysis on the basis of my consultants’ pronunciations, are:

- Tone /A/ generally falls over a wide range, as in Jarkey, rather than from high to mid, as in Smalley.
- Tone /J/ is pronounced with a falling pitch towards the end of the contour (as in Jarkey) in careful pronunciation; but in casual speech it is generally level, as in Smalley.

83 Or possibly 'spleen' (Heimbach 1969 [1979]).

84 In this last point I stand in disagreement with Jarkey (1991), who claims that this tone neutralises the distinction between aspirated and non-aspirated consonants (p22). Presumably by this it is meant that breathy voice entails aspiration, but in my perception the ‘thunder voice’, as my consultants sometimes call breathy voice, is auditorily distinct from aspiration.
2.4 Phonetics and phonology

- Similarly, the falling contour of tone /I/ emphasised by Jarkey is evident in careful pronunciation, but the pitch is often near-level, as in Smalley, in casual speech. The critical identifying pitch characteristic is lowness rather than contour. A still more critical identification factor, however, is its association with breathy voice phonation.

An additional tone is proposed in Heimbach (1969 [1979]) to account for the free tone associated with some particles, which I discuss under §2.4.2.3. This phenomenon, known in Hmong as चिह seev, is specific to a restricted word class, is not generally recognised as a tone by speakers, and is better treated as a special intonation feature. 85

How many tonemes?

Seven of the tones in Hmong are uncontroversial, while the status of tone [i] is interpreted differently from source to source, and as reflected in different orthographic varieties.

The contention around tone [i] centres on the fact that it occurs predominantly in a limited lexical paradigm, marking the distinction between locative and locative noun pairs (see §2.5.1.2). The locative (with tone [i]) requires an additional noun to qualify specific location; the locative noun (with tone [u]) includes the specific location within its semantics. In this function, tone is therefore predictable by morphosyntactic environment: 86

Ex. 2.11

(i) tom [tɔŋ] 'there'; tod [tɔŋ] 'that one/that place (across) there'

a. ती तीत तिव जी तिह तित तिन तिम तिस तिन
Koj haus cov dej twg tom [tɔŋ] Lis Yej tsev?
2SG drink CL water INT there Lee Yang house

"What did you have to drink at Lee Yang's house?"

85 Another intonation feature not mentioned by Heimbach is an extremely high-pitched and long enunciation used occasionally for emphasis. Without having investigated it specifically, this phenomenon does not immediately appear to be subject to distributional restrictions such as a particular word class.

86 See McKibben (1996) for a discussion of markedness in the tone system of Hmong as a whole.
2. Yarns

b. ดี มีติ แต่ห้า กระ ตัว
Koj puas paub kev mus tod [to]\?
2sg QU know way go there
'Do you know how to get (to that place) there?'

(ii) nram [น่า] 'down there/to the south'; nrad [น่า] 'that one/that place down there OR that one/that place to the south'

a. พื้นที่ ผัก พล ต้น ว่า ผัก บุ้ง กิน ชา
Cua nplawm tuaj cés cov nplej cés ya mus poob
wind whip come and CL rice and fly go fall

b. น้ำมัน น้ำทิ้ง ระดับ บ่อ น้ำผัก เก็บ
tag huv tib si rau puag nram [น่า] tuaj
finish together to far down there level place
'The wind whipped up and the rice grains flew away and landed all together far away on the valley floor.'

c. ที่เลี้ยง วัว มามะ ฟัน ดี
Es peb cla li tuaj nrad [น่า]
PART 3pl let like come down there
'We were able to sprout (in that place) down there.'

Johnson (1985)

(iii) pem [ผี] 'up there/to the north'; ped [ผี] 'that one/that place up there OR that one/that place to the north'

a. ดี กับตึก ดีย์ พล ต้น จัก
Kuv paub Yaj Lis nyob pem [ผี]
1sg know Yang Lee live up there California
'I know Yang Lee lives up in California'

b. ดี กับตึก ดีย์ พล น้ำ
Kuv paub Yaj Lis nyob ped [ผี]
1sg know Yang Lee live up there
'I know Yang Lee lives (in that place) up there.'

HLIA
As these examples show, this alternation is clearly distinctive in the phonological sense, in that different senses are indicated by words distinguished by one or the other tone. At the same time, it is predictable on the basis of syntactic distribution and part of speech (sub)category. Consequently, at this point, analysis either as two separate tonemes or as one with regular morphotonemic alternation is justifiable.

Interestingly, this alternation does not occur in MNts, although it is possible that it is present in the more distantly related dialect, A-Hmao.

Counter to the description in Smalley, however, tone [I] is significant in a wider range of the lexicon than this. Later work by Ratliff (1992), drawing also on Downer (1967), has demonstrated that:

(a) the alternation pattern of the locatives has been transferred to a small number of other tone [\N] words:

Ex. 2.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tone [I]</th>
<th>Tone [N]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'moment'</td>
<td>[ch\N &gt; ch\I]</td>
<td>[lawm/d &gt; laiJ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'measure'</td>
<td>[nap\N &gt; nap\I]</td>
<td>[pom/d &gt; po/l]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'child'</td>
<td>[menyuam\N &gt; menyuam\I]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) some words without a tone [\N] counterpart can be observed with a tone [I] alternation:

---

87 The focus of Ratliff (1992) is on identifying signification functions for all of the tonemes of Hmong.

88 Phaj hauj has not been included in the following examples because it does not reflect the alternation pattern I am referring to.
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.13

|hnoob hmod| [r̥o̞< r̥o̞]| 'two days ago'
|tag kid| [ki< ki]| 'yesterday'

According to Ratliff (1992), certain consistencies are observable about the function and meaning of these alternations. They may occur:

(i) in the same position in the phrase as the locative nouns above—that is, phrase final and at a strong intonational locus point (but see discussion of seev in §2.4.2.3)

(ii) together with definite reference

(iii) as a stylistic variant, having 'the effect of either a) revealing something about the attitude of the speaker...or b) imparting a certain literary or formal flavor'.

So although in words outside the locative paradigm the alternation is not structurally predictable, occurring freely between speakers and utterances, it appears that the occurrence of tone [̥] retains an identifiable signification function. It remains for further research to confirm the level of consistency of this function.

Finally, and very significantly for the present purposes, there is one alternation pair in which the tone [̥] variant has developed full status as a semantically separate word:

Ex. 2.14

a. nkawm[Nkai]| CL (pairs of things)

Kuv niam muaj ib nkawm[Nkai] nr hoop zeev
1SG mother have one CL leg.wraps good PVInt

'My mother has a pair of very fine leg wraps.'
Here the [\l]-tone word has full status independent of its [\i]-tone counterpart, occurring freely in the appropriate pronoun slot unrelated to the occurrence of the [\i]-tone classifier. It is, however, a marginal member of the pronoun paradigm, and is often overlooked in lists of pronouns by Hmong speakers and non-Hmong researchers alike.\(^89\)

Strategies for dealing with the representation of tone [\i] vary considerably between subgroups of Hmong. While for RPA reader/writers, the use of <-m> to represent [\i] and <-d> to represent [\l] appears uncontroversial, different groups of Šā Phaj hauj writer/readers have opted at different times:\(^90\)

- to accord tone [\i] full separate orthographic status
- to use an interim representation of tone [\i] for teaching purposes
- to subsume tone [\i] orthographically under tone [\l], having the closest phonetic approximation to its contour.

It is noteworthy that none of these options relates tone [\l] to tone [\i], despite perception of this by non-Hmong as the basic tone for this variation on morphosemantic grounds.

The phonological status of tone [\i] as distinctive, the preliminary evidence of its separate functions described by Ratliff—in particular the distinctive semantics of nkawm/d [\Nkai \Nkai \l] and the straightforward representation of tones [\i] and [\l] by RPA reader/writers, together constitute reasonable evidence for the tonemic status of tone [\l]. The vacillating positions of Šā Phaj hauj writer/readers also indicates clearly that this tone is readily perceivable as a linguistic element by speakers—particularly since its connection with what appears to be structurally its superordinate tone goes unremarked.

\(^89\) See §2.5.1.2.

\(^90\) See §4.3.1 for details.
2. Yarns

Throughout this thesis, I represent tone /1/ as a separate toneme in IPA transcriptions even though my primary consultants do not accord it separate status in the orthography. I make this choice on semantic grounds, which appear to be uncontroversial among all groups of speakers.

Tone sandhi

Tone sandhi in Hmong is conditioned morphologically, rather than being a purely phonological phenomenon. In general terms, there is a semi-regular shift of some tones conditioned by the tone of the preceding lexeme, where the two lexemes are bound in a close morphosyntactic relationship, forming a phrasal lexeme or possibly even a compound word.

The phonological conditions for tone sandhi are:

Following tone /1/ or /N/:
- tones /N, 1, V/ are realised as tone [J]
- tone /1/ is realised as tone [i]
- tone /V/ is realised as tone [I]

Although it does not appear possible to express this phonological procedure as realising a single underlying rule, the general pattern can be characterised as responding to a trigger of [+high], and tending to effect a shift to a lower tone.

Morphosyntactic conditions for tone sandhi are comprehensively analysed in Ratliff (1992), and this is a topic I return to in the discussion of compounding in §2.5.2. Common environments of occurrence include:

**Ex. 2.15**

Numeral or other quantifier + classifier:

a. \[\text{leeg}\]  
ib \[\text{leeg}\]  
\text{one}  \text{CL (people)}  
\text{‘alone’}

---

91 These conditions are subject to the regular pattern of restriction between C and 1 noted under §2.4.2.

92 See §2.5.2 for a description of word classes.
2.4 Phonetics and phonology

**Ex. 2.16**

Two-word compounds involving semantic proximity or reduplication (see §2.5.2):

a. ྨྦ ཨ མྨ

   རྔི་པྲ་< པྲ

   **kwj**  ཡ་

   valley  valley

   'valley'

b. བྲྦྲི་ སྭ སྭ

   ལྷེབ་ཤེ་< རྷེ

   **teb**  ཤུས

   land  place

   'country'

**Ex. 2.17**

Specification:

ྨྦ སྭ སྭ

   སྭ སྭ< སྭ

   **nqaij**  རྷུ་

   meat  cow

   'beef'

**Ex. 2.18**

V+N compounds:

a. སྭ སྭ

   སྭ སྭ< སྭ

   **noj**  རྷིུས

   eat  moon

   'eclipse'
2. Yarns

b. poob nyiag
    fall    silver
    'lose money'

Ex. 2.19

Four-word phrasal lexemes, typical of figurative language:

a. muaj mob muaj nkeeg
    have        hurt        have        tired
    'be unwell'

b. suab qeeg suab nruag
    sound        qee\^3 sound        drum
    'funeral music'

While it is fair to say that the morphosyntactic requirements of close juncture are a necessary
condition for tone sandhi, it would be an overstatement to claim either that (a) all occurrences of
tone sandhi meet the phonological requirements set out above, or (b) the combination of
phonological and morphosyntactic conditions are sufficient to predict occurrence of tone
sandhi. The primary reason for this appears to be that 'tone sandhi in Hmong is...largely an
historical relic in the modern language' (Jarkey 1991:26. See also Ratliff 1986).\(^94\)

Specifically, according to Downer (1967), the tone sandhi system ceased to be productive
before (a) the incorporation of many Chinese loans,\(^95\) and (b) the merger of two historical

---

\(^93\)See Terms and abbreviations.

\(^94\)As evidenced by the parallel behaviour of reflexes of the same tone categories in a range of related
modern dialects (see Wang 1979 [trans. unpub'd]).

\(^95\)For example, \(\text{\texttt{mm}}\) \(\text{\texttt{mm}}\) \(<\text{Mandarin})\) does not undergo tone sandhi following the near-‘exceptionless’
trigger \(\text{\texttt{ib}}\) ‘one’:
reflexes of tone /I/. Furthermore, some instances can be found of promoted sandhi, or sandhi in phrasal lexemes for which the phonological trigger is usually absent in the modern language:

Ex. 2.20

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wà} & \quad (\ddagger \ddagger) \quad \text{hi} \\
\text{ua} & \quad (ib) \quad \text{ke} \\
[\text{ʔua}^*] & \quad (\ddagger \ddagger) \quad \text{ki-e} \quad (< /ke\, \ddagger/) \\
\text{do} & \quad \text{(one)} \quad \text{way:} \quad \text{('together')} 
\end{align*}
\]

In current usage, some variation as to occurrence or otherwise of tone sandhi is noticeable between individual speakers, and even between utterances of the same speaker. This may be a function of its obsolescence as a productive process, or may be otherwise motivated. Ratliff (1992) notes that some speakers view sandhi forms as 'more poetic' than their unmodified counterparts (p46). She also investigates at length the correlation between certain lexical fields or sets and sandhi participation (see Ratliff 1992).

2.4.2.3 Consonants

Description and transcription

Hmong distinguishes eight places of articulation (see Table 2.8).

In addition to the dental place of articulation, Jarkey distinguishes an apico-alveolar position, where she locates [ʔ d] and [ʔ d h]. While I agree that this is a more accurate description of the

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{và} & \quad \ddagger \ddagger \quad \text{tù} \\
\text{nyeem} & \quad \text{ib} \quad \text{mm} \\
\text{read} & \quad \text{one} \quad \text{time}
\end{align*}
\]

Ratliff (1992):33

Compare:

\[
\begin{align*}
\ddagger \ddagger & \quad \ddagger \ddagger \quad \ddagger \ddagger \quad \text{(tug < tus)} \\
\text{ib} & \quad \text{tug} \quad \text{ntxhais} \\
\text{one} & \quad \text{CL} \quad \text{daughter.}
\end{align*}
\]

96 See Chang (1972); Wang (1979 [trans. unpub'd]); Lee T.C. (1996). An introduction to the latter's analysis is included in §2.4.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Postalveolar</th>
<th>Alveopalatal</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>stop</strong></td>
<td>p</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+aspiration]</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>cʰ</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td>qʰ</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+prenasal]</td>
<td>m_b</td>
<td>m_b₁</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>j_h</td>
<td>j_k_h</td>
<td>j_q_h</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+asp, +prenasal]</td>
<td>m_p_h</td>
<td>m_p_h₁</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>j_h</td>
<td>j_k_h</td>
<td>j_q_h</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>affricate</strong></td>
<td>ts</td>
<td>kšt</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>j_h</td>
<td>j_k_h</td>
<td>j_q_h</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+aspiration]</td>
<td>ts</td>
<td>kšt</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>n_t_h</td>
<td>j_h</td>
<td>j_k_h</td>
<td>j_q_h</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+prenasal]</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m₁</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>n_g</td>
<td>n_j_h</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+asp, +prenasal]</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m₁</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>n_g</td>
<td>n_j_h</td>
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<td>j</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>nasal</strong></td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m₁</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>n_g</td>
<td>n_j_h</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[-voice]</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m₁</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>n_g</td>
<td>n_j_h</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fricative</strong></td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>f s</td>
<td>f s</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>approximant</strong></td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.8 Consonants (Phonetic transcription)

1 Phonemically [n, d] is voiceless. The voiced allophone is conditioned by [+prenasalisation -aspiration].
place of articulation of these phones, since they are distinguished from \( /t, \theta/ \) primarily by preglottalisation\(^{97}\) and voicing, the narrower place specification is more detailed than necessary for my purposes. I locate them simply as dental, as in Smalley.

Smalley conflates the alveopalatal series with the palatal, whereas my analysis is more in line with Jarkey on this point, who describes them as lamino-palatal.

In addition to place of articulation, the stop and affricate series are regularly distinguished by parameters of phonation and secondary articulations. Preglottalisation and voicing have already been mentioned, in regard to the dental series. The labial stops are initially distinguished as \([± \text{ lateral release}]/\). As Table 2.9 shows, the regularity of the stop and affricate patterning is best captured by the primary recognition of this distinction, as represented in both Smalley and Jarkey. The four possible permutations of \([± \text{ aspiration}]\) and \([± \text{ prenasalisation}]\) form the remaining distinguishing parameters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>([+\text{ aspiration}])</th>
<th>([-\text{ aspiration}])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>([+\text{ prenasalisation}])</td>
<td>(N^h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>([-\text{ prenasalisation}])</td>
<td>(Ch)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.9 Stop and affricate parameters**

The palatal stop series involve a dorsal articulation with the tongue tip behind the lower teeth. Jarkey assesses the fricative as dorsal also; however, it usually exhibits sibilant characteristics more common to a laminal articulation (see Ladefoged and Maddieson 1996:163–4).

For convenience of analysis, I have given \(/v/\) as the voiced counterpart of \(/f/\), as per Jarkey and Smalley; however, this phoneme is usually realised as \([v]/\). Ratliff notes that \(/f/\) appears to have the allophone \([\theta]/\) in all environments for some varieties.\(^{98}\) Otherwise, little allophonic variation in the consonants occurs. Jarkey notes the occurrence of a sibilant rather than rhotic release in the postalveolar series for some speakers—a variation which I have not observed among my primary...

---

\(^{97}\) Or possibly slight implosion. I retain the description *preglottalisation* as per both Jarkey and Smalley.

This feature is related to the strength and timing of the voicing, which is analysed in greater detail in Jarkey (1987).

\(^{98}\) As quoted in Jarkey p15 (p.c.).
2. Yarns

consultants and which may be more relevant to MNts (see Lyman 1974). (For details of further allophonic variation, see Jarkey.)

Details of pronunciation otherwise are reflected in the transcription in Table 2.8, including:

- I transcribe the aspiration and devoicing of sonorants as voicelessness (see below)
- Following Jarkey, I specifically notate the offglide of [g] in my phonetic transcription, as this feature is particularly prominent
- Postalveolar stops have a fricated rhotic release.

The phoneme /t̠v/ (ie as distinct from the occurrence of [t̠v] as a coda contingent on the preceding vowel) is referred to in Smalley as 'marginal': this is because it occurs only in onomatopoeic syllables, particularly in reference to animal sounds or actions. A range of other sounds marginal in this way remain un-notated in the popular orthographies—a state of affairs which some Hmong wish to rectify, but others including my primary consultants see their omission as appropriate.

The consonant chart in Table 2.8 gives a phonetic transcription. Like Smalley, I use a phonemic transcription for general purposes (see Table 2.10).

The key differences between my phonetic and phonemic transcriptions are:

- I generalise the parameter of prenasalisation, transcribing it as having nonspecific location (realised by assimilation)
- I preserve the basic voicing characteristic of the stop and affricate series, rather than specifically transcribing the occurrence of [±voice] conditioned by prenasalisation and aspiration values.

99 In IPA usage the superscript [J] indicates palatalization; here as in Jarkey it is intended only to represent the strong release characteristic of this phone.

100 One of these suggestions is a vowel <uoi>, intended to represent an interjection used by <t̠v t̠v> neeb during spirit rituals. (Yaj Ntxawg Lis a9 a9, p.c.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>labial</th>
<th>dental</th>
<th>postalveolar</th>
<th>alveopalatal</th>
<th>palatal</th>
<th>velar</th>
<th>uvular</th>
<th>glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[+lat. release]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stop</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+aspiration]</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>pʰʰ</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td>cʰ</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td>qʰ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+prenasal]</td>
<td>Np</td>
<td>Npʰl</td>
<td>Nt</td>
<td>dʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nc</td>
<td>Nk</td>
<td>Nq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+asp, +prenasal]</td>
<td>Npʰ</td>
<td>Npʰl</td>
<td>Ntʰ</td>
<td>Ntʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ncʰ</td>
<td>Nkʰ</td>
<td>Nqʰ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affricate</td>
<td>tˢ</td>
<td>tʰʰ</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tʰʰ</td>
<td>Nfʰ</td>
<td>Nj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+aspiration]</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>Ntˢ</td>
<td>Ntʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nfʰ</td>
<td>Nj</td>
<td>Nj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+prenasal]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ntʰ</td>
<td>Ntʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nfʰ</td>
<td>Nj</td>
<td>Nj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[aspl, +prenasal]</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ntʰ</td>
<td>Ntʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nfʰ</td>
<td>Nj</td>
<td>Nj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>mʰ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>ɲ</td>
<td>ɲ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[-voice]</td>
<td>mʰ</td>
<td>mʰʰ</td>
<td>nʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nɲ</td>
<td>ɲʰ</td>
<td>ɲ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fricative</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s LGBT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approximant</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s LGBT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[-voice]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
<td>ɲ LGBT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.10 Consonants (Phonemic transcription)
2. Yarns

- I treat (i) the rhotic/fricated release of postalveolar stops, (ii) the strong offglide of the palatal fricative, and (iii) the preglottalisation of voiced dentals in HmD, as predictable.

The above analysis gives rise to a number of partly interrelated analytical questions. These have ramifications for questions of representation in the orthographies, as I show in §4.4.2:

1. What is the phonemic status of the zero consonant implied by the phonotactic statement? What are the implications for the status of the glottal stop?

2. Would the sonorants I represent as voiceless, i.e. /ɾ p s ɾ p s p/, be better analysed as preaspirated?

3. Would complex phonemes be better analysed as sequences? If they are analysed as complexes, how is their primary articulation to be identified?

Zero consonant

The phonotactic representation (C)V* includes the phonetic possibility of no initial consonant. However, this is actualised almost exclusively in a highly restricted lexical paradigm: phrase-final interpersonal particles denoting emphasis or personal interaction. They frequently occur in standard formulae such as:

Ex. 2.21

a. ɲi ɲiɭi ɲi-

\[Kuv\ \ tuaj\ \ os\]
\[/kuɭ\ \ tuəɭ\ \ ɭ/\]

'I'm here!' ('Hello!')

---

101 Heimbach (1969 [1979]) records the occurrence of this onset only with /au/ and /o/; however, the HLIA claim the existence of many more (although they have not specified what these are).
2.4 Phonetics and phonology

b. แนะ ดี-
   *Zaum os*
   /zą:n ɔː/ 'Have a seat.'

These phrase-final particles are distinguished not only by the absence of an initial consonant and the restriction of their distribution to a single paradigm, but also by free (especially rising) variation of tone realisation, usually together with vowel lengthening:

**Ex. 2.22**

/ɔːl/ ➔ [ɔː]  
   ➔ [ɔːɿ]  
   ➔ [ɔːɿ]  

The Hmong refer to this composite phenomenon of intonation and length as ᵇʰ seev, but there is no term in Hmong designating the absence of an initial consonant. Furthermore, it is ᵇʰ seev which is marked in both ᵇʰ ᵇʰ Phaj hauj and ᵇʰ ᵇʰ ᵇʰ Ntawv pai ntaub, rather than the zero consonant. In RPA, the original marker for zero initial consonant, < ' >, has dropped out of general use, while at the same time reader/writers express concern that there is no way to represent ᵇʰ seev. (See further discussion of representation strategies in §4.3.1.)

---

102 Because of this free tone variation, such particles can be found written with variable tone markers in RPA.

103 Or other rising intonation patterns. The use of the symbols <l ɿ> is not intended to represent phonemic tone or identical intonation to the tones usually represented by these symbols.

104 Smalley et al (1990) refer to ᵇʰ seev as 'singing style'.

105 In versions of ᵇʰ ᵇʰ Phaj hauj outside of the HLIA, both the zero consonant and ᵇʰ seev are marked (see §4.3.1.1). This however could be attributed to the structure of the orthography (which requires two grapheme units for each syllable) more than to perception of the sound system. See also Wheatley (1996) on writing in Burmese, in which a writing system best suited to a CV syllable structure is adapted to represent final consonants.

106 Note that Heimbach (1969 [1978]) proposes an additional RPA letter <x> to represent ᵇʰ seev as an additional tone.
2. Yarns

On the one hand, it is reasonable to analyse the zero onset as having phonemic status (hence 'zero initial' rather than 'vowel initial'), since it could be seen as contrasting with a glottal initial: 107

Ex 2.23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ṭţā</th>
<th>ṭč-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>os</td>
<td>os</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭὰ-</td>
<td>ṭὰ-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'duck' PART

Alternatively, as both Smalley and Jarkey suggest, the phenomenon of zero initial could be adequately explained as a function of juncture. This would then allow analysis of Hmong syllable structure as a simple C-V*, with loss of an initial glottal stop in this lexical paradigm, conditioned by predictable cliticisation to the preceding word.

The only problem I have found with this analysis is the occurrence of a zero-initial interjective ual /uaː/ 108 (free tone) denoting surprise. In this case, the conditions of tone variability and vowel lengthening remain, but juncture with the preceding word is absent.

The consistent cooccurrence of the absence of initial consonant with special intonation and lengthening features, together with the evident speaker perception of these latter features as the most important to identification and representation, indicates that it is the prosodic rather than segmental aspects of this phenomenon which are basic to its analysis. Given the present lack of a recognised IPA symbol that could be used for a feature like ṭţē seev, I propose the use of the ṭţē ṭţē Phaj hauj symbol ṭč unct vos seev <→>:

Ex. 2.24

a. ṭē ṭē ṭē-  
   Kuv tuaj os  
   /kuː  tuaj/ ṭub/  

'I'm here!' ('Hello!')

---

107 The psychological reality of the glottal stop as a phoneme is also evidenced here, as it is by its overt representation in the ṭţē ṭţē Phaj hauj (and also ṭē ṭē ṭē Ntawv Pajntaub).

2.4 Phonetics and phonology

b. นิ่ม ชนะ

**Zaum os**

/ζau̯m os/

'Have a seat.'

Sonorants

Although in general the sonorants are considered to have a voiceless series, there are some points in favour of their being analysed as preaspirated. Phonetically, the analysis centres on voice onset time and volume of airflow. This is a question considered in Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996) for Burmese (see pp112–113 for spectrograms of voiced and voiceless nasal pairs). The suggestion in this brief study is that the openness of the glottis at the time of articulation of the nasal may support a characterization of these phones as aspirated. For Hmong, more comprehensive and comparative instrumental analysis than is currently available would be necessary in order to provide an adequate phonetic analysis of the various phonation types that are evident. With the present status of research, the issue is best viewed in terms of phonemic and perceptual factors.

As shown above, aspiration is a distinctive parameter in the Hmong system, so it is reasonable to ask whether this parameter extends to sonorants as well as stops/affricates. Aspiration is clearly involved in the articulation of the sonorants in question. The question, then, centres on the relative analytical and perceptual significance of aspiration and devoicing.

While the RPA as originally taught represented aspiration of sonorants differently to aspiration of stops/affricates, some Hmong speakers working on orthographic revision to better suit speaker perceptions are aligning the sonorant series orthographically with the stop/affricate series (see §4.3.2 for details). This suggests a perception of a shared phonetic phenomenon throughout the system.

---

109 The only study of Hmong based on instrumental techniques that I am aware of is Huffman (1985)—although a few spectrograms of prenasalised stops are published in Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996). Huffman investigates differences in glottal waveforms produced by changes in phonation, focussing on breathy voice.

110 For טיック-ไท่ฮ่าว development the issue is not of concern as each grapheme unit represents a whole cluster/complex without discrete featural representation.

111 Note also the separation in the ไท่ฮ่าว Ntawv Pajntaub of the aspiration parameter (see §2.3.3).
2. Yarns

On the other hand, aspiration is realised differently in the sonorants and in the stops/affricates: in sonorants it precedes the primary articulation, whereas the stops/affricates are postaspirated, as in [ch, jch]. Since preaspiration does occur with stops/affricates in other languages (see for example the discussion of Icelandic in Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996):70-72), the division in this case between types of aspiration in stops/affricates as opposed to sonorants may be significant to the phonological structure of the language (see also §2.4.3.4).

Voicing also occurs as a distinctive parameter in the system. Although at least in surface realisation it does not occur consistently across articulation types as does aspiration, the cooccurrence restrictions on tone mentioned under §2.4.2 suggest that voiceless fricatives, voiceless sonorants and aspirated stops/affricates may function as a single class for analytical purposes. Smalley suggests that these sounds may be 'phonemically based on aspirated norms', while the voiced fricatives, voiced sonorants and unaspirated stops/affricates could be 'phonemically based on voiced norms' (p105). This entirely workable analysis nevertheless leaves us squarely in the middle of the question, since it distinguishes the classes not on the basis of [± voice] or [± aspiration], but by opposition of [± voice] to [± aspiration].

At present, the arguments seem fairly well balanced for an analysis of either preaspiration or voicelessness. There are useful understandings of Hmong phonological structure to be gained by aligning aspirated sonorants with aspirated stops/affricates; and there are differences in the phonetic realisations in each case which justify assessing them as separate phenomena. The convention followed in this thesis of transcribing the two types of aspiration differently has the advantage of more accurately identifying which articulation in a given complex is associated with the aspiration. This is explained further below.

2.4.2.4 Phoneme complexes

None of the literature on Hmong investigates thoroughly whether onsets and syllable nuclei are better analysed as complexes or sequences. Because of the very simple syllable structure of Hmong, of course every consonant complex/sequence is in contrast with every other. What I have been referring to as parameters of aspiration, lateral release and (pre)nasalisation could alternatively be considered as the realisation of individual phonemes such as /h, l, m/. For example, this would give rise to a third possible analysis of voiceless sonorants as a sequence of [h+ sonorant]. This is an option which has been selected in analysis of some other languages:

112 The common feature [spread glottis] provides a more consistent basis for analysing these sounds as a natural class. Thanks to Martha Ratliff for this observation.
notably for Mien, of the same language family as Hmong (see Purnell 1965). It is also implied in the structure of the ū ū ū Ntwv paj ntaub (see §2.3.3).

Both Smalley and Jarkey note the question of whether a complex or sequence analysis is preferable. Smalley evades it entirely on the grounds that 'this theoretical problem has no relevance for our purposes' (ie development of a popular orthography) (p103). As Jarkey points out, however, his analysis does in fact assume individual phonemic status of each complex. Jarkey questions the usefulness of this assumption:

This has the effect of producing a very large inventory of phonemes, particularly for the consonants, and of necessitating a fairly uneconomical statement of the phonetic realisation of these phonemes.

In other words, since the phonetic realisation of combinations of phonemes/features is systematic, an analysis with fewer phonemes is possible, assessing 'feature phonemes' as listed above as separate phonemes in all cases and relying on phonological rules to predict the surface realisation. For example, according to Smalley's analysis:

1) {N} → [a place] /_C
2) {C} → [+voice] /N_

Eira (1998) includes a consonant chart based on twenty basic articulations plus parameters of prenasalisation, aspiration, voicing and lateral release. While this analysis still assumes the separate phonemic status of each of the fifty-seven combinations, it is useful as a preliminary stage towards a simpler phonological analysis. As Jarkey points out, however, the effect of such an analysis would be to shift the descriptive complexity to the area of phonotactics.

Again, the phonological analysis implied in the indigenous writing system ëk fìr Phaj hauj gives a useful clue to speaker perception. As explained in §2.3.1, the structure of the ëk fìr Phaj hauj

---

113 In regard to Hercus' analysis of lateral release of stops in Arabana-Wanganura (Australia) (see Hercus 1973); Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996) note:

Although the distributional pattern of these elements may justify their treatment as single units from the phonological point of view, we know of no evidence in this case that they are phonetically distinct from stop and lateral clusters.
2. Yarns

system implies the separate phonemic status of fifty-seven consonants and thirteen vowels (in HmD). In support of this implied analysis, many reader/writers of the featural RPA system express difficulty or dissatisfaction with the need to mentally assimilate the visually discrete units into a perceptually single sound, some expressing approval of the êê ññ Phaj hauj in its more intuitive representation of the sounds of their language (see §4.3).\[^{114}\]

For reasons of apparent speaker perception, and in order to maintain alignment of my analysis with the preferred script of my primary consultants, in the present work I continue to use a phonotactically simple, phonologically complex analysis of fifty-seven consonant phonemes and thirteen vowels.

This choice gives rise to the question as to how the primary articulation is to be identified, for purposes of reference and representation. For most phonemes the choice is unproblematic,\[^{115}\] but some complexities come into play when assessing the status of the lateral articulation in bilabial stops and nasals. If the analysis were to follow through with the principle of identifying a single primary articulation, this would result in a single stop series with eight members and a nasal series with four, rather than one series each for the plain and the lateral release articulations:

Ex. 2.25

Series identified by primary articulation only:

\[^{114}\]RPA readers encountering an unfamiliar word will sound out the letters in a learned sequence, combining them into single complexes as they go: no -to -nto...nto -so -ntso...nt$eeg. I would expect that if the sounds were perceptually individual phonemes, the sequence would be more like: no -to -so nt$eeg.

\[^{115}\]A scale of stricture is the most usual tool of identification:

When two co-occurring articulations have different degrees of stricture, the one with the greater stricture is labelled primary and the lesser one is labelled secondary.

Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996):328

For Hmong, this principle effects a hierarchy of:

stop > affricate > nasal > lingual fricative > approximant > glottal fricative

for selection as primary articulation: so \([\text{M}^1]\) rather than \([\text{M}^\text{L}]\), \([\text{L}]\) rather than \([\text{L}^\text{L}]\) and so on.
2.4 Phonetics and phonology

stop
[+ aspiration]  p
[+ prenasal]  \(N_p\)
[+ lateral release]  \(p^l\)
[+ aspiration + prenasal]  \(N_p^h\)
[+ aspiration + lat.release]  \(p^{hl}\)
[+ prenasal, + lateral release]  \(N_p^l\)
[+ aspiration + prenasal, + lateral release]  \(N_p^{hl}\)
nasal
[- voice]  m
[+ lateral release]  \(m^l\)
[- voice + lateral release]  \(m^{pl}\)

Two series identified, by the parameter [±lateral release]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>labial</th>
<th>[+lat. release]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stop</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+ aspiration]</td>
<td>(p^h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+ prenasal]</td>
<td>(N_p)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+ aspiration + prenasal]</td>
<td>(N_p^h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+ aspiration + lat.release]</td>
<td>(p^{hl})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+ prenasal, + lateral release]</td>
<td>(N_p^l)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+ aspiration + prenasal, + lateral release]</td>
<td>(N_p^{hl})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[± voice]</td>
<td>(m^l)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[± voice + lateral release]</td>
<td>(m^{pl})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because this would obscure the consistency of the patterning, I follow the precedent of both Smalley and Jarkey of separating out these two articulatory subtypes. The question which remains, then, is whether the aspiration on the lateral release variants should be analysed as pertaining to the primary articulation or the lateral. Because of their proximity in terms of timing it is not clear on an auditory basis which of the component articulations the aspiration is primarily attached to: for instance, whether the composite phone is \(p^h + i\) or \(p + i\). Both aspiration and prenasalisation affect the surface pronunciation of the entire complex:

All segments in an aspirated sequence are voiceless except for prenasalisation.
All segments in a sequence which includes prenasalisation but not aspiration are voiced.

Smalley (1976b):90
2. Yarns

The charts in both Smalley and Jarkey associate aspiration with the primary articulation. In her phonetic transcription, however, Jarkey links it to the lateral as devoicing, while also maintaining the devoicing feature on the nasal, resulting in the series:

Ex. 2.26

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{p} & \text{p} & \text{m} & \text{p} \\
&\text{m} & \text{m} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Smalley's chart is non-committal in this case, so we have to look to the phonetic transcriptions and textual explanations for his analysis. As in Jarkey, the phonetic transcription represents the aspiration as lateral devoicing in the stop series; but in the nasal series Smalley marks it on the primary articulation. This creates a problem for phonological analysis, requiring an explanation as to why both voiced and devoiced laterals should occur as a release feature in the stop series, but only a voiced lateral in the nasal series. Furthermore, Smalley's textual explanation implies not only aspiration of the stop in the stop series (see quote above), but also the primacy of the lateral in the nasal series:

Prenasalisation has the same point of articulation as the following stop; in addition, before [l] it is [m].

This statement conflicts with the principle:

\[
\{N\} \rightarrow [\text{a place}] \quad /_{-C}
\]

as well as with the principle of identifying as the primary articulation the articulation of greatest stricture (in this case, [m] rather than [l]).

These small inconsistencies of treatment suggest that the question is not straightforward. If we look to the orthographic usage of RPA reader/writers, we find confirmation of this uncertainty among speakers. The <h> of the stop series, representing aspiration, can be found written in different positions:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ph} & \text{ph} & \text{np} & \text{np} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Possibly the complexities are exacerbated by the use of a segmental approach to phonological analysis.
Again, with the aim of providing the clearest and most consistent possible representation of the featural patterning, I prefer that aspiration be marked on the primary articulation.

### 2.4.3 Dialectal variation

I have based my analysis to this point on the HmD dialect, as the dialect of my primary consultants, and the dominant dialect in Melbourne. In this section I introduce the phonology of MNts, primarily on a comparative basis. A sizeable minority of H/Mong ex-refugees are MNts speakers, among them people highly involved in the standardisation debates. Dialect representation figures prominently in debates on standard orthography.

My primary reference for Hmong dialectology is Lee T.C. (1996); with some useful insights to be gained also from Smalley (1976b). I have also included evidence from written MNts; that is, I have assumed that a spelling convention that consistently differs from the equivalent usage in HmD indicates a difference in pronunciation.\(^{117}\)

Lee T.C. (1996) (for the remainder of this section 'Lee') provides a reconstruction of the consonants, vowels and tones of proto-Western Hmongic (\(\text{LJE uu urn Hmoob Hnub Poob}\)) on the basis of several modern dialects spoken in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and China, with a view to proposing a single, pan-dialectal orthographic representation for Hmong.\(^{118}\) The following discussion is restricted to the two dialects of immigration. I discuss MNts in terms of (i) phonological inventory and (ii) correspondences, before considering in what ways the phonology of MNts supports or challenges the HmD-based analysis above.

#### 2.4.3.1 Vowels

In Fig. 2.4 I provide an inventory of the vowel phonemes of MNts, which can be compared with Fig. 2.3 for HmD:

---

\(^{117}\) 'Consistently' here means used consistently by more than two writers. See §4.2.1.2 for discussion of MNts orthographic conventions.

\(^{118}\) Because Lee designed his article series to be maximally accessible to a general Hmong-speaking audience, he has written it entirely in RPA. IPA transcriptions, then, are supplied by myself.
2. Yarns

The vowel inventory of MNts differs from that of HmD in two ways. Firstly, long vowels are realised differently. While nasalisation is a feature of these vowels in both dialects, in MNts, the velar nasal coda is present only following /a:/:

Ex. 2.27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/e:i/</td>
<td>/e:i/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɔ:η/</td>
<td>/ɔ:η/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/ʌ:η/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, as just shown, in MNts there is one additional long vowel /a:/, but there is no diphthong /ia/. These distinctions correlate with regular alternation patterns:

---

119 Smalley (1976b) suggests that vowels following nasal or prenasalised consonants may also be pronounced differently in the two dialects. In HmD, such vowels become nasalised; in MNts they may not be. This amounts to suggesting that there is in general a lower occurrence of vowel nasalisation in MNts than in HmD.
Here it appears that the occurrence of /a/ or /a:/ in MNts is predictable on the basis of their HmD counterparts, and to some extent vice versa. However, as demonstrated in the following example, in some words the same surface forms occur in both dialects:

Ex. 2.29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nia</td>
<td>nam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/niaJ/</td>
<td>/niaJ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hais</td>
<td>has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/haiJ/</td>
<td>/haiJ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tag</td>
<td>taag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/taJ/</td>
<td>/ta:J/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Lee, the Western Hmongic vowels *ia, *ai and *a have diverged in MNts, and the two diphthongs have merged:

Ex. 2.28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ta</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabsis</td>
<td>has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/taJjJ/</td>
<td>/taJjJ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nplaig</td>
<td>has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/NPlaJl/</td>
<td>/NPlaJl/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this and the following examples I use RPA only, as a transliteration into ḫ bru Phaj hauj for HmD only would not contribute anything to the comparison between the two dialects.
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto Language</th>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*ia</td>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>/a:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ai</td>
<td>/ai/</td>
<td>/a:/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*a</td>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>/a:/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is adequate as an explanation of HmD /ia/ and MNts /a:/, since both of these are specific to one dialect. However, it does not by itself account for the occurrence in MNts of /ai/ alongside /a/. Smalley (1976b) notes that the correspondence of /ai/ : /a/ is only an irregular occurrence, but its widespread attestation suggests that it would need to be more fully explained for a complete account. Possibilities include: (i) the effects of borrowing after the loss of *ai from MNts, either from a contact language or back into MNts from HmD; (ii) selective phonologically conditioned shift of *ai to /a/ in some MNts words; or (iii) the existence of a further proto language vowel, merging with /ai/ in HmD but /a/ in MNts, while *ai remained constant in both.

The vowels /o/ and /u/ display a similar pattern:

Ex. 2.31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tsov/</td>
<td>/tsuv/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tʃʊv/</td>
<td>/tʃ u/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

but

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/roj/</td>
<td>/ʃʊj/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tʃʊj/</td>
<td>/tʃ u/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/nug/</td>
<td>/ʃ u/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃuʃ/</td>
<td>/ʃ u/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To account for the alternation between /o/ and /u/, Lee postulates three vowels in the proto language: a diphthong *ou, which diverged in the two dialects; and two monophthongs *o and *u, which remained constant in both:
2.4 Phonetics and phonology

Ex. 2.32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto language</th>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*u</td>
<td>/ʊ/</td>
<td>/ʊ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*i</td>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/i/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*u</td>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>/u/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Smalley (1976b) lists some exceptions to vowel correspondences, again based on unpublished work of Moody. These may require some further investigation, since some counterexamples are evident in my consultants' pronunciations:

Ex. 2.33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smalley</th>
<th>Smalley</th>
<th>My consultants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>MNts</td>
<td>HmD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>txhia</td>
<td>txhua</td>
<td>txhua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tsʰia/</td>
<td>/tsʰuə/</td>
<td>/tsʰuə/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>txhauv</td>
<td>txhuv</td>
<td>txhuv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tsʰauv/</td>
<td>/tsʰu1/</td>
<td>/tsʰu1/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thaum-i</td>
<td>thaum-u</td>
<td>thaum-ub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tsʰau ɪ/</td>
<td>/tsʰau ə/</td>
<td>/tsʰau ə/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This may mean that some correspondences may reflect areal, social or individual differences rather than primarily dialectal differences.

2.4.3.2 Tones

The range of tonemes in MNts is the same as in HmD, with the apparent exception of tone /IA/, as noted in 2.4 above. However, the correspondences between tones are not exact. Lee cites:

Ex. 2.34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>menyuam</td>
<td>mivnuas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/meŋnuɐ/</td>
<td>/miŋnuɐ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tes</td>
<td>teg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/teɪ/</td>
<td>/teɪ/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lee postulates an additional tone in the proto language Western Hmongic, which he labels *1. According to his analysis, tone *1 diverged and shifted in both modern dialects, resulting in two different reflexes; while *J, *N and *-l (respectively *g, *m and *s in RPA) remained constant in both:

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD/MNts</th>
<th>Proto language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This proposal works well for the alternation /A/ : /I/, this being very widely attested. The alternation /A/ : /I/ is less pervasive however, as the correlation of /A/ in both dialects occurs with high frequency. Smalley (1976b) notes, on the basis of data provided by Moody, that

---

121 Lee gives no indication of the possible pitch/contour of this tone (but see Wang 1979 [trans. unpub]).

122 According to David 'Choj' Mortenson, tone /<>/ has remained constant in some Hmong dialects of China, and is written with this grapheme for those dialects (Hmong LG: May 1998). Presumably this refers to the Pinyin-based system devised by Chinese linguists (see Appendix C).
'correspondences are considerably more irregular in the tones than in the consonants or vowels' (p101). Moody's data even includes counter-examples to the alternation /i/: /I/ such as:

Ex. 2.37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
<th>(PostVerbal Intensive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ı</td>
<td>ı</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lossis</td>
<td>lossim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/lojii/</td>
<td>/lojii/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is unclear at this stage, then, why Lee should see it as necessary to explain this correspondence as predictable, but not other low-frequency alternations such as /H/: /I/ (see /mejnuu/: /miʃnuu/, Ex. 2.34 above).

2.4.3.3 Consonants

Table 2.11 gives the consonants of MNts. This can be compared with Table 2.8 for HmD consonants.

Again, two differences are apparent in the consonant inventories of the two dialects. MNts has no voiceless nasals, although it does have a voiceless lateral. MNts also lacks a voiced dental series, but instead there is a lateral release series at this point of articulation. This series is not pre-glottalised in MNts, as are the voiced dentals in HmD. The lateral articulation is slightly affricated, and voiceless, with the possible exception of [n], although Smalley (1976b) is not clear on this. (I treat the affrication as predictable in this transcription.)

While modern HmD has only two voiced dentals, this lateral release series displays all four articulation types represented in the other stop and affricate series:

\[
\begin{bmatrix}
\pm \text{aspiration} \\
\pm \text{prenasalisation}
\end{bmatrix}
\]

This suggests that, here as in the labial series, the regularity of the patterning would be best captured by a primary recognition of the distinction [± lateral release]. However, although all four phonemes are listed in each of Lyman (1974); Smalley (1976b) and Lee T.C. (1996), none of these sources actually demonstrates an occurrence of /n/.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stop</th>
<th>Labial (+lat. release)</th>
<th>Dental (+lat. release)</th>
<th>Postalveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[+]aspiration</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t³</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+]prenasal</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>tʰh</td>
<td>cʰ</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td>qʰ</td>
<td>N Gaul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+]aspl. +prenasal</td>
<td>mₚ</td>
<td>mₚʰ</td>
<td>mₚʰ</td>
<td>mₚʰ</td>
<td>mₚʰ</td>
<td>mₚʰ</td>
<td>mₚʰ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s³</td>
<td>s³h</td>
<td>j⁴h</td>
<td>j⁴k</td>
<td>j⁴q</td>
<td>j⁴q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+]aspiration</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s³</td>
<td>s³h</td>
<td>j⁴h</td>
<td>j⁴k</td>
<td>j⁴q</td>
<td>j⁴q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+]prenasal</td>
<td>sₚ</td>
<td>sₚ³</td>
<td>sₚ³h</td>
<td>jₚ⁴h</td>
<td>jₚ⁴k</td>
<td>jₚ⁴q</td>
<td>jₚ⁴q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+]aspl. +prenasal</td>
<td>mₚₛ</td>
<td>mₚₛ³</td>
<td>mₚₛ³h</td>
<td>mₚₛ⁴h</td>
<td>mₚₛ⁴k</td>
<td>mₚₛ⁴q</td>
<td>mₚₛ⁴q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m³</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s³</td>
<td>s³</td>
<td>s³</td>
<td>s³</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[-voice]</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.11 Moob Ntsuab consonants (Phonetic transcription)
As for HmD, I use a phonemic transcription for MNts consonants in all cases where phonetic
detail is not required. In my phonemic transcription, in addition to the principles listed under
Table 2.10 for HmD, I treat the devoicing of the lateral release in MNts dental stops, as
predictable (see Table 2.12).

Two broad sets of alternations are predictable from the discussion of the consonants above.

(i) Voiced and voiceless nasals in HmD both correspond to voiced nasals in MNts. For instance:

Ex. 2.38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hmoob</td>
<td>Moob</td>
<td>‘H/Mong’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mʊb/</td>
<td>/mʊb/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hnumb</td>
<td>nub</td>
<td>‘sun’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/nʊb/</td>
<td>/nʊb/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

but note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hli</td>
<td>hli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/hɬ/</td>
<td>/hɬ/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lee posits a voicing distinction in the proto language which was lost in the nasal series in MNts.
Note however that, according to Lee, while *m₁ shifted to /m₁/, *m₁ merged with /n/.

(ii) The dental stop phonemes realised in MNts as [-voice, +lateral release] have the reflex in
HmD of voiced, pre-glottalised dental stops. Where the MNts series is prenasalised, according
to Lee these have merged in HmD with the voiceless dental series.
### Table 2.12 Moob Ntsuab consonants (Phonemic transcription)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>labial</th>
<th>dental</th>
<th>postalveolar</th>
<th>alveopalatal</th>
<th>palatal</th>
<th>velar</th>
<th>uvular</th>
<th>glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>stop</strong></td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+aspiration]</td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image14" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image15" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image16" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+prenasal]</td>
<td><img src="image17" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image18" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image19" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image20" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image21" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image22" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image23" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image24" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+asp, +prenasal]</td>
<td><img src="image25" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image26" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image27" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image28" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image29" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image30" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image31" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image32" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>affricate</strong></td>
<td><img src="image33" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image34" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image35" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image36" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image37" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image38" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image39" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image40" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+aspiration]</td>
<td><img src="image41" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image42" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image43" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image44" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image45" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image46" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image47" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image48" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+prenasal]</td>
<td><img src="image49" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image50" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image51" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image52" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image53" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image54" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image55" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image56" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+asp, +prenasal]</td>
<td><img src="image57" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image58" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image59" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image60" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image61" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image62" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image63" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image64" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>nasal</strong></td>
<td><img src="image65" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image66" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image67" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image68" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image69" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image70" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image71" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image72" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fricative</strong></td>
<td><img src="image73" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image74" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image75" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image76" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image77" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image78" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image79" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image80" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>approximant</strong></td>
<td><img src="image81" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image82" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image83" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image84" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image85" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image86" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image87" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image88" alt="Image" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image89" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image90" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image91" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image92" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image93" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image94" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image95" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image96" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image97" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.12 Moob Ntsuab consonants (Phonemic transcription)
Lee postulates a proto series in Western Hmongic whose basic articulation he labels <k>. (As Lee gives no indication of the pronunciation of this form, in this example I retain his use of RPA for the proto forms):

Ex. 2.39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto language</th>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*kd</td>
<td>?d</td>
<td>t\</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*kdh</td>
<td>?dh</td>
<td>th\</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nkl</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nkdl</td>
<td>n\h</td>
<td>n\h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*t</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*th</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nt</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*nth</td>
<td>n\h</td>
<td>n\h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, Smalley (1976b) also lists some irregular correspondences, which my consultants' pronunciations support, including:

Ex. 2.40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| thiab| hab  | 'and'
| /t\ha\   | /ha\ |
| thiaj| bhas | 'so'
| /t\ha\ | /s\ha\ |
| txhab| xob  | NEG
| /s\b\a\ | /s\a\ |
| hwj  | hwj  | 'bottle'
| /ni\  | /fi\ |

This last correspondence may arise from a regular process, since it is represented in a number of words. Notably, in most of these the onset is followed by the phoneme /i/, leading Smalley to suggest a phonologically motivated shift in one or the other dialect. However, he also quotes Whitelock as reporting an areal factor in selection of [h] over [f]: in Laos [h] is the more common in both dialects, while in Thailand [f] is frequently heard from HmD speakers.
2. Yarns

2.4.3.4 Implications for phonological analysis

Comparing the analysis of MNts phonology with that of HmD sheds further light on some of the considerations discussed in §2.4.2.

Lateral release series

The occurrence in MNts of a full set of parameters in the [+ lateral release] dental stop series supports the decision to maintain two separate labial stop series, distinguished by [- lateral release], since the featural patterning motivating this decision is evident in MNts at two places of articulation.

Aspiration and voicelessness

In §2.4.2.3 I argued for a separate analysis of types of aspiration, treating sonorants as one class for this purpose, and stops and affricates as another. However, it is evident that in MNts not all sonorants have developed in parallel. While in the nasals the distinction between the voiced and voiceless phonemes has been lost, in the lateral it has been retained, bringing into question the assumption that sonorants should be treated as a single group for analytical purposes.

On the other hand, in the [+lateral release] dental series, it appears that the lateral articulation is voiceless independently of the parameter of aspiration. This suggests that whether or not the sonorants are treated as an indivisible class, devoicing of sonorants is indeed a separate category from postaspiration of stops and affricates.

The independent occurrence of postaspiration and devoicing in this MNts dental series confirms my earlier analysis of [+lateral release] series as displaying aspiration of the primary articulation rather than devoicing of the lateral release. The distinction pattern:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{-aspiration} \\
\text{-prenasalisation} \\
\text{+aspiration} \\
\text{+prenasalisation}
\end{array}
\]

is not affected in MNts by the status of voicing on the lateral release. Although it is not clear at this stage why the lateral release in the bilabial series should be voiced while that in the dental series is voiceless, what is clear from this is that the distinction pattern identified above is the most consistent analysis of the stop and affricate series. A series distinguished by devoicing of the lateral release, as implied by Jarkey's transcription:

\[
p^{\text{l}} p_{\text{l}} m_{\text{p}}^{\text{l}} m_{\text{p}}
\]
besides masking the consistency of the aspiration pattern throughout the stop and affricate series regardless of the occurrence of lateral release, does not leave room for a way to represent the co-occurrence of aspiration and devoicing in the dental series of MNts.

2.4.3.5 Implications for standardisation

The importance of the differences between MNts and HmD phonological structure and divergent reflexes for standardisation is most noticeable in orthography development. On a theoretical level, whether a single standard orthography is feasible for both dialects depends in the first place on whether there can in fact be said to be a single phonological system. This question can be considered from two approaches. The one, as posed in Lee, is framed in terms of phonological reconstruction: are the phonemes of the modern dialects traceable to common proto phonemes? and are the respective reflexes functional equivalents in the modern phonological system(s)? The second is a synchronic approach: are the reflexes of a given proto phoneme predictable to reader/writers? This way of framing the question removes the agentless neutrality of Hmong phonology 'being said to be' a single system: it now becomes important to identify to whom it is (or is not) a single phonological system. The answer to this new question has implications for the kind of standard orthography/ies that could be considered.

If the reflexes are not fully predictable in both directions, using the pronunciation of one dialect to represent both will not result in a standard orthography. In the case of nasals for instance: if the voicing distinction in HmD were implemented in writing that series for both dialects, it would not be obvious to someone writing in MNts whether the voiced or voiceless representation should be used, since the distinction does not relate to a difference in pronunciation in that dialect. If the MNts pronunciation were implemented, it would not be obvious to an HmD reader how to pronounce a given word in HmD.

Alternatively, a neutral system which does not overtly represent the differences between dialects could be feasible. This system makes use of a much broader concept of 'phonemic' and is the principle on which Lee's work on orthography development is based (see also Bailey 1986 for a similarly wide scope principle in the context of writing world Englishes). In such a system, graphemes are selected to represent an abstract or proto form, which readers of one or another dialect then learn to associate with the respective surface realisations of the phoneme. Potentially, this approach to orthography development offers a solution to the problem inherent in phonemic scripts of their restricted capacity to deal with change not only across varieties, but over time. I discuss Lee's work in this area further in §4.2.2.

A third option would be to develop two orthographies in parallel, each focussing on intuitive representation of the sounds of their respective dialects. Whether this is workable will depend
2. Yarns

on the extent to which inter-readability is important to facilitating the desired networks of communication and information exchange in the language, how inter-readable the two orthographies would be, and the support that would be necessary to maintain accessibility of one to reader/writers of another. At this point the next layer of questions begins to emerge: whose pronunciation is to be considered standard for the dialect? I have already hinted at the diversity of pronunciation within what is being categorised as a single dialect. Even if it was decided to develop an orthography specific to each dialect, the choice of a standard variety could still be an issue.

In practice, none of these questions are separable from the ways that differences and correlations between the dialects and their varieties function on a wider level—to identify languages and speakers and their subsets, to negotiate the location of power within the broader language group, and to maintain a sense of cultural continuity. All of these factors are represented in writing system proposals, as well as the demonstration of different levels of linguistic analysis. The re-integration of conventionally 'extra-linguistic' elements such as these into central linguistics theory is one of the motivating concerns of my thesis. I return to discuss these issues at length in Chapters Four and Five.

2.4.4 Summary

Throughout the discussion of §2.4 I noted decisions as to my choice of analysis and thereby basic IPA transcription policies. In the context of the points of debate highlighted during this discussion, these decisions can be summarised as:

- I recognise eight phonemic tones
- I recognise a zero consonant, rather than treating this as an allophonic-variation of the glottal stop
- I maintain two bilabial series for each of stops and nasals, distinguished as [±lateral release]. For MNts, the same distinction is made also for dental stops.
- I treat all phonetic complexes as single phonemes rather than clusters, selecting a primary articulation for complex consonants
- I make use of a hierarchy of degree of stricture in identifying the primary articulation of consonant complexes
- I transcribe aspiration as linked to the primary articulation
- I transcribe the aspiration and devoicing of sonorants as voicelessness.
2.5 Lexicon

In this section I analyse features of morphological and lexical structure. Firstly, I discuss the word class paradigms of Hmong, and then investigate word formation processes—in particular compound forms. This also involves some consideration of loanword types. The main focuses of standardisation work by Hmong in the area of lexicon are:

- lexical elaboration
- lexical purification
- representation of polysyllabic forms
- lexicography projects.

The description of features of the lexicon in this section serves as a context for discussion of standardisation in these areas in §4.4.

2.5.1 Word classes

2.5.1.1 Introduction

The identification of word classes is important to the present topic in that:

(i) It is a category which is conventionally included in dictionary entries. Consequently it is a topic which already has a stake in the development of new dictionaries for Hmong. While identifying word classes can be of assistance in understanding the meaning and function of a lexical item, their inclusion in a dictionary also contributes to the iconic function of the dictionary—the dictionary as a symbol of a literary language. (Markers of a 'real' dictionary are further discussed in §5.2.2.1.)

(ii) Word class analysis has been proposed as necessary before compound types and their representation can be firmly established (for instance by Pao Saykao and David 'Choj' Mortenson, Hmong LG, early 1998).

(iii) The choices made in and/or for the speaker community about word class labels and identification is likely to have the effect of bringing such classes into being to a degree—at least in the sense of educated speaker perception in the future. Where these choices are or become associated with word class membership, it may also prove to contribute to
2. Yarns

language change, effecting reanalysis by speakers of features of their language in accordance with a learned grammatical framework.

(iv) Some aspects of the treatment of Hmong word classes is indicative of the role of English as a model for language. In the light of point (iii), this may become an issue in language shift. For instance, Hmong word classes which do not have close equivalents in English are weakly represented in collaborative (Hmong and non-Hmong) dictionary work, which may contribute to the reduction of paradigms such as classifiers.

The three broad criteria under which word classes and their membership are generally determined—semantic, morphological, and syntactic—are applicable to various degrees depending on the characteristics of the language under consideration. In Hmong, as in many other Southeast Asian languages, the criterion of morphology is of very restricted use.³

Because of the general tendency of Hmong to underspecification of categories including dependency relations, reference and semantic role, the usefulness of the semantic criterion is also very limited.² In this section I demonstrate that the more useful approach to word classes in Hmong is to prioritise syntactic criteria. Furthermore, since particular words shift in function according to context, it is more appropriate to view word classes primarily as syntactic slots rather than as categories assigned to individual lexical items.

The analysis of word classes is a fairly neglected area of Hmong linguistic analysis. The most comprehensive study available to date is Lee Y. (1998) (in RPA).³ A few studies of specific subtopics are available; such as Ratliff (1997), studying pronomininals; Clark (1989) and Bisang (1996), which examine some features of Hmong in a Southeast Asian language context; and Ratliff (1991) and Bisang (1993), which investigate classifiers.

Word class labels are lacking in some major dictionaries (Heimbach 1969 [1979]; Lyman 1974; Yang et al 1980). Where they are included, some significant problem areas are identifiable. Much of this can be linked to use of the conventional analysis of English word classes as a

---

¹See further discussion in §2.5.2. Appendix B gives an introduction to the typology of Hmong in the Southeast Asian context.

²See also Bisang (in prep), Bisang (1996) or Riddle (1992) for discussion of underspecification and indeterminacy in isolating languages including Hmong.

³Lee Yeeb (Lee Yeeb Liu Vi) is an Australian Hmong linguist.
2.5 Lexicon

model for Hmong, together with a focus on the word and the semantics of a given occurrence.\(^4\) Lomation (2000) tends to assign classifying prewords to the class adjective, since they have an identifiable semantic modification function.\(^5\) Actual classifiers may be labelled either adjective or pronoun—the latter reflecting its potential for pronominal use (see below). The analysis in Lee (1994) (used in Hmong Language Institute in press) distinguishes between subject, object and possessive pronouns; categories not marked on Hmong pronouns.\(^6\) I return to these sorts of problems in §4.6.3.

In §2.5.1.2 I introduce the word classes I identify for Hmong, focussing my discussion on items of particular relevance to standardisation work in terms of the points noted above. This section also serves to establish the labels I use in this thesis.

2.5.1.2 The classes

Table 2.13 provides a summary of word class labels and abbreviations used in this thesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N(oun)</th>
<th>LOC(ative)</th>
<th>V(erb)</th>
<th>PART(icle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro(noun)</td>
<td>Loc(ative)N(oun)</td>
<td>AUX(liary verb)</td>
<td>CONJ(unction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL(assifier)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adj(ectival)V(erb)</td>
<td>Interj(ection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attr(ibutive)</td>
<td></td>
<td>P(ost)V(eral)Int(ensive)</td>
<td>O(nomatopoeia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUM(eral)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adv(erb)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.13 Word classes of Hmong\(^7\)

---

\(^4\) Here the legacy of using analysis of Greek and Latin as the ideal model for word classes is being passed on to Hmong indirectly through using analysis of English as the model. A comparable criticism is applicable also even to Jean Mottin's (1978) grammar (in French).

\(^5\) These prewords are productive compound-forming nominals, such as *kab* 'bug', which precedes the names of many types of insects and similar creatures (see below).

\(^6\) A possessive particle is available, restricted to predicative usage and applicable to both pronouns and other kinds of nouns. See under Pronoun.

\(^7\) Ideally I would prefer to use Hmong labels for the classes, and so link labels strongly with the characterisation of the classes in Hmong. However, the request of the HLIA that terms ratified within that
2. Yarns

Noun

Nouns are distinguished by their position in the phrase and in that they subcategorise for a classifier (see below). The unmarked constituent order of a Hmong noun phrase is:

(POSSessive) Noun NUM(eral) CLassifier Noun Attr(ibutive) LOCative

Ex. 2.41

a. ethical gender

Ob tus ntxhais yau
Two CL daughter young
'These two girls'

b. 1sg

Kuv lub npe
1sg CL name
'My name'

Lee ( înta) (1994) includes a subclass of deverbal nouns, formed by the prefixing or cliticising of Ṣ kov, which as an independent word means 'way': Ṣ Ṣ kov kawm (NOMinaliser+learn) 'study', Ṣ Ṣ kov Ṣ kov tshaib kov nqhis (NOM+hunger+NOM+thirst) 'famine' etc. This productive word formation process proves useful for lexical elaboration. In particular, it is frequently employed in providing translation equivalents for the more heavily nominal patterns of language use of English bilingual dictionaries.

Pronoun

The personal pronoun system of Hmong marks singular, dual and plural number (SG, DU, PL) and person:

community be promoted, together with the early stage of analysis in the primary HLI source, Lee ( înta) (1994), means that I have had to defer this goal for the time being.
Lee Y. (1998) gives the complete paradigm for personal pronouns, whereas some sources, including Heimbach (1969 [1979]), omit 3DU. This discrepancy arises because the 3DU is a marginal member of the paradigm, commonly absent from discussion of pronouns by speakers. It occurs consistently only where the additional meaning 'couple' is specified:

Ex. 2.42

a. nkwad muaj yim tus menyuan
   3DU have eight CL child
   'They have eight children.'

b. Kuv cov menyuan yog kuv niam thlab kuv txiv nkawd cov xeeb nbxwv
   1SG CL child be 1SG mother and 1SG father 3DU CL grandchild
   'My children are the grandchildren of my mother and father.'

Although nín nkawd 3DU is possible in less restricted cases, nín lawv (3PL) is commonly substituted:

Ex. 2.43

Yog lawv tham lawv ces lawv siv lus Askiv xwb
Be 3PL talk 3PL and 3PL use CL English only

'When they speak with each other they just use English.' (Said of two children.)
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Predicative possessive pronouns are formed by the semi-grammaticised postclitic ми li 'as, like', as in Ex. 2.44 (a). (The same structure is used for common or proper nouns.) Within the noun phrase, the possessive remains morphologically unmarked, as in Ex. 2.44 (b):

**Ex. 2.44**

a. 
Yog kuv li
Be 1SG POSS
'It's mine'

Jaisser (1995)

b. 
Kuv lub npe hu ua Paj Yeeb
1SG CL name call do 'Paj Yeeb'
'My name is ༈l ༈l ༈l Paj Yeeb'

Interrogative pronouns are formed by the addition of the suffix or postclitic твг INT, as in

\textit{thaum} твг (when+INT) 'when?/sometime'

\textit{lee} твг (CL(person)+INT)

'who?/someone'. This is a productive word formation process in Hmong (see also §2.5.2.2):

**Ex. 2.45**

a. 
Koj haus cov dej твг tom Lis Yaj tsev
2sg drink CL water INT there Lee Yang house
'What did you have to drink at Lee Yang's house?'

b. 
twb yuav lub тsеб твг lawm
ASP buy CL car INT ASP
'Which car did you get?'

Other pronominals include: ༈l ༈l yus 'one', ༈l ༈l nyias 'each', ༈l ༈l sawvdaws 'everyone', ༈l ༈l luag 'others':

---

8 A notable exception is ༈l ༈l dabtsi 'what?', which may be a loan from Mandarin.
Ex. 2.46

a. Everyone should thank God

Sawvdaws yuav tsum ua Vajtswv tsaug everyone should do God thanks

'Everyone should thank God'

b. In order for one to live happily, one must use one's strength

Yuav ua kom yus nyob kaj siab lug ces yus yuav tsum siv IRR do CAUS one live happily CONJ one should use

yus lub dag lub zog one strength

'In order for one to live happily, one must use one's strength'

McKibben (1992 [1994])

Classifier

All Hmong common nouns are assigned a classifier. Common classification criteria include shape and lexical field, but others are also in evidence. Note that the choice of classifier for a given noun can vary depending on the emphasis of the speaker; eg. Oil? UJM CDJI txhais hlua khau 'shoelaces' can also be found as ifiv uw coA txoj hlua khau, focussing on the characteristic of length. (See Table 2.15 overleaf):
2. Yarns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Phaj hauj</th>
<th>RPA</th>
<th>classifier gloss</th>
<th>example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shape</td>
<td>჊ ძ</td>
<td>daim</td>
<td>flat things</td>
<td>჊ ძ daim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ძ ძ</td>
<td>txoj</td>
<td>long things and</td>
<td>txoj leeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>abstract concepts</td>
<td>txoj num</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'work, business'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animacy</td>
<td>ძ ძ</td>
<td>tus</td>
<td>people and animals</td>
<td>tus noog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'bird'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language mode</td>
<td>ძ ძ</td>
<td>tsab</td>
<td>written language</td>
<td>tsab xoxwm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'newspaper'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ძ ძ</td>
<td>zai</td>
<td>item of language</td>
<td>zai dab neeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'myth/story'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set membership</td>
<td>ძ ძ</td>
<td>nkawm</td>
<td>pair</td>
<td>nkawm nrhoob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'pair of leg wraps'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lexical field</td>
<td>ძ ძ</td>
<td>txhais</td>
<td>hands and feet</td>
<td>txhais hlua khau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'shoelaces'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ძ ძ</td>
<td>rab</td>
<td>tools</td>
<td>rab riam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'knife'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.15 Classifiers

There is also a set of collective classifiers which substitute for the basic classifier under certain conditions. The most common of these is ძ ძ cov, which is substituted for other classifiers where plurality is specified, and also has a basic classifier function for mass nouns such as ძ ძ nyom 'grass'.

A possibly open-ended type of collective classifier is productively formed from nouns which denote a container of some sort:
2.5 Lexicon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phaj hauj</th>
<th>RPA</th>
<th>gloss</th>
<th>meaning as classifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ɲi5</td>
<td>thoob</td>
<td>'bucket'</td>
<td>bucketful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɲi5</td>
<td>tais</td>
<td>'bowl'</td>
<td>bowlful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.16 Classifiers of containment

Classifiers do not invariably appear in the noun phrase. Rather, their occurrence is conditioned by factors of definiteness, salience and instantiation (see Jarkey 1991 for further details). Alternatively, they may be used pronominaly:

Ex. 2.47

puas  muaj  tus  pab  koj  ua
QU have CL help 2SG do

'Is there someone to help you?'

Classifiers sometimes add meaning to the nominal form, having a disambiguating function. In this case, neither classifier nor noun is omissible:

Ex. 2.48

daim ntawv  phau ntawv  tsab ntawv  nplooj ntawv
CL 'flat'+paper  CL 'stacked'+paper  CL 'written'+paper  CL 'leaf-like'+paper

'piece of paper'  'book'  'letter'  'page'

9 They appear, however, to be obligatory with Quantifiers and in possessive constructions (see Clark 1989).

10 An alternative analysis is that in cases such as these the noun undergoes ellipsis. Some, however, have gone so far as to analyse the classifier as a type of nominal—Clark (1989), for instance, categorises it as a classifying noun.
2. Yarns

As Jarkey (1991) points out, these semantically loaded forms are still categorisable as classifiers because they fill the classifier slot in the noun phrase. In contrast, other kinds of classifying prewords may be affixed or criticised to nouns, but these compound forms still require a classifier:

Ex. 2.49

a.  tảัง ตััก นั้น
   cov pob zeb
   CL round.thing stone
   'the stones'

b. มะผื จร่ ตััก นั้น
   ib lub pob tawb
   one CL round.thing basket
   (a type of round, crosswoven basket / a small net cage)

A very few words, notably นิม niam 'mother' and ไท้ txiv 'father', are not assigned a classifier at all. In fact, while ไท้ txiv by itself means 'father', ไท้ txiv (CL+father) means 'husband'.

Here it is the absence of a classifier which specifies meaning.

The number of classifiers in use may be reducing, partly as a natural process of language change and partly as a consequence of language maintenance problems in the new environment and the rapid phase of lexical elaboration which is current. Many of the classifiers listed in Heimbach (1969 [1979]) are unknown to my primary consultants, and a limited set are assigned to loanwords and new terms—especially ลับ lub, which has the broad meaning of 'round, bulky object' but appears to be the default classifier for new terms. ไช้ tsoj (extended lengths or abstract concepts), ใหม daim (flat things) and ตุส tus (animate, or moderate lengths) are also commonly selected.

---

11 The same is true of the collective classifiers, although Ratliff (1991) notes that ไท้ cov may be undergoing grammaticalisation as a plural marker.

12 With the exception of the conventionalised collocation ไท้ yuav txiv 'marry' (of a woman).

13 This clearly reflects a distinction of alienable:inalienable, but one which is not predictable or systematic. See Clark (1989) for a comparative study.

14 For example, ไท้ txiv สำ tus ojwim 'the pen'.
2.5 Lexicon

**Attributive**

Attributives\(^{15}\) are a component of the noun phrase, whose syntactic slot is located after the head:

**Ex. 2.50**

a. \(\text{muaj tsheb ntau ntau}\)
   - have car many
   - 'There are a lot of cars'

b. \(\text{Kuv muaj mov noj mentsis xwb}\)
   - 1sg have food little only
   - 'I've only got a small amount of food.'

c. \(\text{Txoj saw kub no cuav xwb tsis tseeb}\)
   - CL chain gold this alloy only NEG pure
   - 'This gold chain is alloy, not pure'

 Both Lee Y. (1998) and Jarkey (1991) describe a restricted class of noun modifiers which occur directly before the noun, the former source assigning these to a separate subclass. The only examples offered are:

**Ex. 2.51**

- \(\text{hiuas 'young'}\)
- \(\text{qub 'old/former'}\)
- \(\text{niag 'great'}\)
- \(\text{nyuag 'little'}\)
- \(\text{me 'little'}\)

Because the class is so limited (in fact Jarkey 1991, who lists only the first four, states that these are the only constituents which can appear between the classifier and noun) this construction may indicate a type of compound formation rather than a subclass of modifier:

\(^{15}\)This is the term used in Jarkey (1991).
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.52

A young man left on the shelf doesn't have a girl to marry.

Numeral

The unmarked numeral position is as part of the noun phrase, directly preceding the classifier:

Ex. 2.53

a.  Two cats
   ob tus miv
   one CL cat
   'two cats'

In this respect numerals can resemble quantifying attributives. However, while an attributive can stand in for the noun phrase, a numeral cannot. Compare:

Ex. 2.54

a. Attributive

   Muaj ntau-ntau
   have many
   'There's a lot.'

b. Numeral

   Muaj ob tus
   have two CL
   'There's two.'
Hmong distinguishes two types of locational deictic, which pattern as pairs of words distinguished at the phonological level only by a tonemic alternation. The crucial distinction between the pairs is that LOC is essentially prepositional and requires a head noun, while LocN identifies an object or area at a particular location and is itself the head:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOC</th>
<th>LocN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jm</td>
<td>हि</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pem</td>
<td>ped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'up there'</td>
<td>'that up there'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>नूम</td>
<td>गनि</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saum</td>
<td>saud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'on top'</td>
<td>'that on top'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>आे</td>
<td>उे</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nram</td>
<td>rad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'down there'</td>
<td>'that down there'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>तिम</td>
<td>tid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'over there'</td>
<td>'that over there'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(at the same height, in a straight line of sight)

Table 2.17 LOC and LocN pairs

---

16 See §2.4.3.3 for explanation of the phonological aspect of this alternation.

17 Most of the central members of this set are related strongly to mountain topography. These kinds of terms have broadened to incorporate a more general reference, such as the new meaning 'north' for जमी/रमी pem/ped. The earlier meaning is still considered primary.
2. Yarns

LOC and LocN can occur in not only spatial but also temporal contexts.\(^{18}\)

Ex. 2.55

```
Tomqab ntawd kuv thiaj li has kom peb mus
```

After that 1SG so speak CAUS 1PL go

'And then I said we should go'.

Both LOC and LocN are used to specify a referent,\(^{19}\) and hence have a demonstrative or determinative function. They are used to fill the syntactic slot labelled Demonstrative in Jarkey (1991). This analysis is supported by Clark (1989):

There is evidence to suggest that Hmong does not have determiners but uses special nouns for determinative purposes.

\[\text{Clark (1989):59}\]

Even the more semantically neutral demonstrative 'no' 'this', falls into this class, since (i) it implies spatial deixis in relation to speaker or hearer, and (ii) it tends to follow the same morphotonemic pattern as above, alternating LOC and LocN forms:

Ex. 2.56

```
a. nS w ffiA w u liirr n HKH riia
Tus heev nyuj no muaj kaum xyoo lwm
```

CL bull this have ten year COMPL

'This bull is ten years old.'

---

\(^{18}\)According to Heimbach (1969 [1979]), even deictics which are primarily temporal also exhibit the morphotonemic alternation discussed above (eg 'thaum' 'when' / 'thaud' 'at that time'). I have not yet come across an example of this in use.

\(^{19}\)LOC also appears with a more neutrally prepositional function, lacking the determinative element:

```
Daim duab dai tim phab ntsa
```

CL picture hang over.there wall

'The picture is on the wall'.

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2.5 Lexicon

Verb

The unmarked position for the verb or verb complex is after S and before O:

Ex. 2.57

a. Liab xis pobkws
   Monkey like corn
   'Monkeys like corn.'

b. Ob hnub tag no kuv nyob xwb
two day finish DEM 1SG stay only
'These last two days I just stayed home.'

c. haus dej os
drink water PART
'Have a drink'.

Characteristic of Hmong verb phrases is the serial verb construction, which is analysed in depth in Jarkey (1991). In these constructions, complex verbal meanings are accumulated by stringing together two or more verb phrases, including the objects of transitive verbs, in succession:

Ex. 2.58

a. ob tug dais muab cov menyuam npuav nqa dua nram kwj hav
two CL bear take CL child carry.in. carry pass down valley
   the.mouth
'The two bears picked up their cubs and carried them down into the valley'

Yaj Ntxawg Lis 𝒆eba 分管 ‘Young’ Lee
2. Yarns

b. นิส ติ้น นิส ติ้น นิส
   Nws twb tawm mus tau 10 feeb lawm
3SG AUX come.out go AUX ten minute ASP
   'She left 10 minutes ago.'

A subclass of verbs can also be identified, displaying a degree of semantic bleaching, and indicating such functions as direction of action:

Ex. 2.59

a. หมู่ ซีบ ด้วย ไช่ เมื่อ ติ้น
tub zwj ceeb dhau los lawm
CL week beyond come AUX
   'over the last week'

b. مجتمع ระดับ แต่
   Noob qoob noob tsa siav bhij siav bhua los tag...
crops completely.ripe come finish
   'The crops were completely ripe...'

Johnson (1985)

Auxiliary verb

Members of this class include a number of verbs which are also used with semi-grammaticised functions.20 As Pawley (1993) notes for Kalam:

   in most cases the 'grammatical' uses of verbs are not distinguishable, semantically, morphologically or syntactically, from the 'lexical' functions.

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This has ramifications for the assignment of word class labels, a question I return to in §2.5.1.3.

20Space only permits a few examples of this very interesting feature of Hmong and other languages including Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese (see also Enfield 1996), and Kalam (Pawley 1993).
2.5 Lexicon

(l) Aspect markers

Like other languages of Southeast Asia, Hmong does not mark tense as such (see also Bisang in prep). Although τι ταου is commonly found translated as 'past tense', members of this class are better categorised as aspect markers:

Ex. 2.60

a. τι τι ε的女人 买 5ι ταου τι 5ι ταου
tin tin naen bui 1sg buy CL gloves
Kuv yuav lub hnhb looj tes
1sg buy CL gloves
'I am buying/bought/will buy some gloves' (no aspect marker)

b. τι τι 

Yuav ταου 5ι lub hnhb looj tes
buy PERF one CL gloves
'I bought a pair of gloves' (time deixis implied by aspect marker)

c. τι τι ε的女人 买 5ι ταου τι 5ι ταου

Naghmo kuv yuav ib lub hnhb looj tes
yesterday 1sg buy one CL gloves
'I bought a pair of gloves yesterday' (no aspect marker: time deixis identified by temporal adverb)

d. τι τι ε的女人 买 5ι ταου τι 5ι ταου

Tus pojiam tseem tsis ταου yug tus menyuam
CL woman PROG NEG PERF birth CL child
'The woman has not given birth yet' (PERF indicates the accomplishment characteristic of the verb τι ταου 'birth'; PROG indicates that the (non-)occurrence is ongoing, rather than, for instance, that the woman has never been pregnant.)

The perfective marker τι ταου illustrated above is also a fully lexical verb meaning 'get'. It has another partly grammaticalised sense as a potentiality marker. This three-way correlation is a feature noticeable in other Southeast Asian languages.21 Enfield (1996) shows how in Khmer, for instance, the verb baan 'get' can appear before another verb in a modal function, resulting in 'a kind of past-tense' (p76):

---

21 See also Pawley (1993) on Kalam verbs with both lexical and grammatical functions, depending on context.
2. Yams

Ex. 2.61

\[ m\ddot{\text{u}}ng \quad \text{baan} \quad \text{prap} \quad \text{k\ddot{h}om} \quad \text{tngay} \quad \text{mun} \quad \text{nuh} \]

aunt \text{ get} \ t\text{ell} \ 1\text{p} \ \text{day before that}

'Aunt told me the day before that'

(Jacob 1968:120, quoted in Enfield (1996):76)

In Lao, the verb \text{daji} occurs (i) with the lexical meaning 'get', (ii) in a completive aspect function, and (iii) as a postverbal modal element 'equivalent to English can V':

Ex. 2.62

\[ \text{dếng} \quad \text{vàw} \quad \text{pháasâa} \quad \text{lâaw} \quad (\ddot{\text{b}}\ddot{\text{o}}\text{-}) \quad \text{daji} \]

Dang \ speak \ language \ Lao \ NEG \ get

'Dang can(not) speak Lao'

Enfield (1996):77

(ii) Potentiality markers: \text{dji} \ tau and \text{dji} \ taus.

As a potential marker, \text{dji} \ tau\textsuperscript{22} contrasts with \text{dji} \ taus: according to Yang Dao (Jaisser 1995), \text{dji} \ tau is used when the potential is focussed on external circumstances such as permission; \text{dji} \ taus when it is focussed on internal circumstances such as desire:\textsuperscript{23}

Ex. 2.63

a. \text{dji} \ \text{tâm} \ \text{dâh} \ \text{dji} \ \text{tên} \ \text{(âc} \ \text{âm} \ \text{diê} \ \text{êv})

\[ \text{Kuv} \ \text{nyob} \ \text{tsis} \ \text{tau} \ \text{nod} \ (\text{vim} \ \text{tsis} \ \text{raug} \ \text{cai}) \]

1SG \ live \ NEG \ POT \ here \ because \ NEG \ according.to \ law.

'I can't stay here (because it's illegal)'

\textsuperscript{22}Either \text{dji} \ or \text{dji} \ may be written: \text{dji} \ is the formal choice and has the advantage in this context of reflecting the relationship between \text{dji} \ tau and \text{dji} \ taus, but \text{dji} \ is by far the more common.

\textsuperscript{23}\text{dji} \ tau and \text{dji} \ taus, along with a third word, \text{di} \ \text{txawj}, are commonly translated 'can': the latter of these is a verb with a meaning closer to 'know, know how'.

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b. ฝัง ตั้ง แล้ว ฝัง ตั้ง (มี ตั้ง บ้า ที่นั่ง ห้อง)

    Kuv nyob tsis tau ko (vim kuv xav mus tsev)
    1SG live NEG POT here because 1SG want go house
    'I can't stay here (because I want to go home)'

c. ฝัง ตั้ง แล้ว ฝัง ตั้ง (มี ตั้ง ติ่ง ฝัง ติ่ง ห้อง)

    Kuv mus tsis tau (vim kuv laus pes kuv kaw)
    1SG go NEG POT because 3PL IRR imprison 1SG shut
    'I can't go (because they would imprison me)'

d. ฝัง ตั้ง แล้ว ฝัง ตั้ง (มี ตั้ง ติ่ง ห้อง)

    Kuv mus tsis tau (vim kuv laus heev)
    1SG go NEG POT because 1SG old PVInt
    'I can't go (because I'm too old)'

e. ฝัง ตั้ง แล้ว ฝัง ตั้ง (มี ตั้ง ติ่ง ฝัง ติ่ง ที่นั่ง)

    Kuv noj tsis tau (vim kuv noj tsis tau kov khoom no)
    1SG eat NEG POT because 1SG eat NEG POT CL thing this
    'I can't eat it (because I'm not allowed this kind of food)'

f. ฝัง ตั้ง แล้ว ฝัง ตั้ง (มี ตั้ง ติ่ง ห้อง)

    Kuv noj tsis tau (vim kuv tsau los)
    1SG eat NEG POT because 1SG full come
    'I can't eat it (because I'm full)'

HLIA

(iii) Irrealis: ฝัง yuav.

The irrealis ฝัง yuav is also commonly translated as a (future) tense marker. However, as in the case of the aspect markers, the time deixis which is sometimes associated with IRR clauses is implied rather than stated. That its primary function is as an irrealis marker is demonstrated by examples such as:

Ex. 2.64

a. ฝัง ตั้ง ฝัง

    Yuav txhuam
    IRR collide

    'We nearly hit it' (not, 'We're going to hit it!')
2. Yarns

b. 1SG IRR NEG go 
   "I probably won't go' (not, 'I won't go')

c. 2SG IRR go house NEG PERF 
   'Do you want to go home yet?'

d. IRR eat pig come should cut testicles come.out 
   'You should castrate a pig you are going to eat.'

As can be seen in this last example, IRR also forms compounds with meanings 'should' (IRR go) and 'must' (IRR listen speak). As a fully lexical verb, it has the meaning 'buy' or 'acquire'.

Lis Y. (1998) also identifies as auxiliary verbs the following, all of which are constituents of the verb phrase:

- reciprocal: RECIP bite 
  'fighting/biting each other'

- negator: NEG listen speak 
  'not listening'

- interrogative: which forms yes/no questions:

---

24 It is with this sense that compounds having the meaning 'marry' are formed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yuav</td>
<td>acquire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>txiv</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pojiam</td>
<td>woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sib</td>
<td>RECIP acquire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'marry' (of a woman) 
'marry' (of a man) 
'marry' (of a couple)
Ex. 2.65

Koj  puas  paub  kev  mus  tod?
2SG  QU25  know  way  go  there

'Do you know how to get there?'

AdjV

This class is sometimes labelled 'adjective' (for example in Lee Y. (1998)), a potentially misleading label when applied to Hmong, since its members can be syntactically aligned with either verbs or nouns. Li and Thompson (1981) use the label *adjectival verb* to refer to a similar position in Mandarin.26 The class is semantically distinguishable from the central verb class on the grounds that they refer to states or qualities. The following examples show substitution of AdjV by a member of a verb or noun class:

Ex. 2.66

a. AdjV in a Verb slot

Lawv  zoo  rau  peb  kawg li.
3pl  good  give  1PL  PVInt

'They are very good for us.'

Compare with a V in the same slot:

b. Lawv  hu  xovtooj  rau  peb  tiag
3pl  call+telephone  give  1PL  PVInt

'They really will call us.'

25 I gloss these as QU to distinguish them from interrogative pronouns (see under Pronouns above).

26 The incomplete differentiation of adjectives and prepositions from verbs is a feature exhibited by isolating languages outside of the Southeast Asian region also—see for instance the comparison of Yoruba with Hmong in Riddle and Stahlke (1992).
2. Yarns

c) AdjV in a Noun slot

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{daim} & \text{dawb} \quad \text{yog} \quad \text{kuv} \quad \text{li} \\
\text{CL} & \text{white} \quad \text{be} \quad \text{1SG} \quad \text{POSS}
\end{array}
\]

"The white one is mine"

Lee (1994):62

Compare with a N in the same slot:

d) \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{daim} & \text{tiab} \quad \text{yog} \quad \text{kuv} \quad \text{li} \\
\text{CL} & \text{skirt} \quad \text{be} \quad \text{1SG} \quad \text{POSS}
\end{array}
\]

"The skirt is mine"

The unmarked position of AdjV is the verb slot (Riddle 1994), motivating the label Adjectival Verb:

Ex. 2.67

a. \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{kuv} & \text{tus} \quad \text{miv} \quad \text{loj} \\
\text{1sg} & \text{CL} \quad \text{cat} \quad \text{big}
\end{array}
\]

b. \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{kob} & \text{dub} \\
\text{colour} & \text{black}
\end{array}
\]

c. \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{noj} & \text{mov} \\
\text{eat} & \text{rice}^{27}
\end{array}
\]

d. \[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{quaj} \\
\text{cry}
\end{array}
\]

'My cat is big/is black/is sick/is eating/is yowling.'

While at first it might appear that a zero copula could be postulated in constructions such as these, the analysis of AdjV as filling a verb slot is supported by:

(i) the overt appearance of the verb \text{wuf yog} 'be' in equational constructions:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{daim} & \text{tus} \quad \text{miv} \quad \text{loj} \\
\text{1sg} & \text{CL} \quad \text{cat} \quad \text{big}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{kob} & \text{dub} \\
\text{colour} & \text{black}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{noj} & \text{mov} \\
\text{eat} & \text{rice}^{27}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{quaj} \\
\text{cry}
\end{array}
\]

Note that this is a compound word with the simple meaning of 'eat', rather than a transitive verb plus object.
2.5 Lexicon

Ex. 2.68

Poj ntsuam yog tus poj niam ua txiv tau tuag lawm
widow be CL woman do husband PERF die COMPL
'A widow is a woman whose husband has died.'

(ii) the use of the AdjV alone in answer to yes/no questions:

Ex. 2.69

a. koi tus miv loj puas yog? Loj.
   'Is your cat big?' 'Yes.'

b. koj muaj ob tug ntxhais puas yog? Muaj.
   'Do you have two daughters?' 'Yes.'

or equational 'be':

   c. koj yaj xeem Yaj puas yog? Yog.
      'Is your clan Yang?' 'Yes.'

(iii) the lack of orthographic evidence that a zero copula has psychological reality—unlike, for instance, in Russian, where in some circumstances the zero copula may be represented in written form by a long dash.

An AdjV fills the verb slot in a clause. This contrasts with the class of nominal modifiers which form part of the noun phrase (Attributives), which do not obviate the need for a verb in the clause. AdjV may be modified by a Post Verbal Intensive:
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.70

ديل كلتي مه ماتوري مه دي مه يام
Kuv mus tsis taus vim kuv laus heev
1SG go NEG POT because 1SG old PVInt
'I can't go (because I'm too old)'

or occur with verbal auxiliaries such as مه tsis (NEG):

Ex. 2.71

تدي مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه
Txoj saw kub no cuav xwb tsis tseeb
CL chain gold this alloy only NEG pure
'This gold chain is alloy, not pure28

In these and other characteristics it is quite comparable to similar classes in other languages of Southeast Asia (see for instance Li and Thompson 1981 on Mandarin) or isolating languages outside of this area (see Riddle and Stahlke 1992 on Hmong and Yoruba).

The fact that AdjV can also function nominally, however, separates it from the verb class. Speakers frequently identify words appearing in this class as adjectives. Although this can be taken as evidence that there is a recognisable distinction between words of this class and of the verb class, it is unclear to what extent the selection of words for this label is a function of transfer from English.

28ميل Tsis does not occur with a nominal alone, as in:

*ديل مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه
qhow no tsis saw kub
thing this NEG chain gold
'This is not a gold chain'

To express this meaning, the copula would be necessary:

ديل مه مه مه مه مه مه مه مه
qhow no tsis yog saw kub
thing this NEG be chain gold
'This is not a gold chain'.

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PostVerbal Intensives

These emphatic particles are dependants of the verb and generally occur immediately after it. In Ex. 2.72 (b) the PVInt is clause final but not directly following the verb; while Ex. 2.74 demonstrates a postverbal position which is not also clause-final. Many occur freely with any verb or predicate, while some are restricted to one or a small group:

Ex. 2.72

(i) Free

a. งวิ งวิ งวิ งวิ งวิ งวิ
tus ntoo ntawd loj heev
CL tree that big PVInt
'This tree is enormous.'

b. งวิ งวิ งวิ งวิ งวิ งวิ
los nag heev
come rain PVInt
'It's raining heavily.'

(ii) Restricted: Psych verbs

Kuv yuav tsum nco qab ntsoov
1SG must remember PVInt
'I really must remember'

Similarly, many have only very general meanings in their own right, such as กว้ kwaw 'last, end':

29 This is the usual term for these in Hmong (see for instance Heimbach (1969 [1979])).
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.73

Lis tau txaj muag kawg
Lee ASP embarrassed PVInt
'Lee was utterly embarrassed.'

while some have more specific lexical meanings, such as tiag 'true':

Ex. 2.74

Nyiaj ntxeem tiag kom dhau
Patience & hard work PVInt CAUS beyond
'Patience and hard work really will get you through.'

Adverb

Adverbs typically follow the phrase over which they have scope:

Ex. 2.75

a. Nws tseev kom wb mus tsev tamsim no
3SG insist make 1DU go house right now
'S/he insists that we go home right now'

b. Kuv sau ceev heev
1SG write fast PVInt
'I write very fast'

c. Neeg siv lo lus ntau dua
person use CL word many pass
'People like to use this word more frequently'

As for LOC and LocN, some words in this class are underspecified as to temporal or spatial reference outside of a context:
2.5 Lexicon

Ex. 2.76

a. トムクバ くふ うあ ほある おも トムクバ くふ うあ ほある おも

Tomqab kuv ua hauliwm tag, kuv yuav mus tsev

After 1SG do work finish 1SG IRR go home

'After I finish work, I'll go home'

b. ハウ トムクバ ハウ トムクバ

Lawv tuaj tomqab

3PL come after

'They are behind us' (in the queue)

Particle

Spoken Hmong in particular is characterised by a number of clause-final discourse particles. An important subclass of these serve to add emphasis, but are distinct from Post Verbal Intensives as they focus on the interactive context of the utterance, they are not dependants of the verb, and they have no semantic modifying function. As noted in §2.4.2.3, this subclass is distinguished by vowel lengthening and free tone variation (ŋee seev), which is represented in different ways in the developing ংং নির Phaj hauj orthographic systems (see §4.3.1):

Ex. 2.77

a. ト ト ト

Kuv tuaj os

1SG come PART

'I'm here!' ('Hello!')

b. ト ト ト

Haus dej os

Drink water PART

'Have a drink!'

Clause-final particles aside from this subclass may have fully lexical meanings in other contexts which leave traces in their use as discourse particles:
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.78

a. ći 产业基地 &typeface=Arial;&lt;@’ typeface=Arial;&lt;@’
  Koj xav li cas xwb?
  2SG think as what only
  'What do you think?'
  (idential xwb softens the question, making it a 'small' request)

b. ći 产业基地 &typeface=Arial;&lt;@’ typeface=Arial;&lt;@’
  Nyob ntxiv thiab!
  Stay further and
  'Stay a while!' (thiab implies an ensuing action or state)

  HLIA

Compare in a fully lexical function:

c. 产业基地 产业基地 产业基地
  Yuam kev ib los xwb
  mistake one come only
  'There was only one mistake.'

  HLIA

d. 产业基地 产业基地 产业基地 产业基地
  Lus Hmoob thiab lus Askiv tsis zoo ibyam
  CL Hmong and CL English NEG good same
  'Hmong and English are completely different.'

  Yaj Ntxawg Lis 产业基地

Conjunction

These include both clause-internal conjunctions and those connecting clauses:

Ex. 2.79

a. 产业基地 产业基地 产业基地 产业基地
  xyov hmoov zoo los hmoov phem li
  unsure luck good or luck bad as
  'I don't know if it's good luck or bad luck.'

  McKibben (1992 [1994])
Finally, some additional word classes are in evidence, the most important being interjections, onomatopoeia, and expressives (for further discussion and examples of these poetic four-part structures see Ratliff 1992, or Vang and Lewis 1990):

Ex. 2.80

a. Interjections

\[ \text{Nev!} \quad \text{Aws!} \]

"See!' ("I told you so!") Yes! (Often pronounced with falling contour)

b. Onomatopoeia

\[ \text{nqov} \quad \text{gig gog} \]

'Moo!' (the sound of tigers fighting)

c. Expressives

\[ \text{lus nyiaj lus kub} \]

word silver word gold

'valuable advice'

2.5.1.3 Closing comments

Word classes in Hmong are relatively weakly differentiated. As I have shown above, this is especially apparent in the low differentiation between AdjV and V, but is evident also between pronouns and classifiers, prepositional and nominal locatives, and temporal and spatial deictics. The tendency in the codification process to assign class labels to individual words, rather than to syntactic slots per se, may then be inappropriate for languages like Hmong, with a high degree
2. Yarns of flexibility as to which function is filled by which particular words. This gives rise to questions of methodology in some areas of standardisation work.

One consequence of the flexibility or underspecification of word class assignment is that the standard practice of including word classes in dictionary entries is problematic. Particularly in a bilingual dictionary, there is a need to avoid the risk of identifying the linguistic items in L1 with the word classes in the translation language—a problem by implication in McKibben (1992 [1994]) and the English–Hmong section of Thompson, Yang et al (1996 [1999]), because of the assignment in both these dictionaries to the English side of the entry but not to the Hmong (see §4.6.3). This implies that the Hmong gloss of an English entry is to be taken as an example of the same word class. For instance, in Thompson, Yang et al (1996 [1999]) can be found "out" (preposition), glossed in Hmong as 'tawm' (ɾjɔ)—a verb meaning 'come out'. Even aside from the potential problem of analysis by analogy with English, a given word in a language like Hmong can function in a wide range of classes according to context, so that assignment of word classes as a standard part of dictionary entries could be misleading in all but the most comprehensive dictionaries.

Research on other languages with typological characteristics comparable to those of Hmong such as Kalam is indicating that a more useful approach might be to assign the identification of word classes to syntactic analysis rather than the lexicon (see Pawley 1993 and elsewhere). In Pawley's approach, the emphasis is shifted to what categories of things must and can be said in a given utterance, rather than on which specific words are classifiable within each of those categories. The need to label words individually is sidestepped, allowing analysis to better reflect the flexible structure of the language. I discuss issues around identifying the word further in the section to follow.

2.5.2 Word formation

2.5.2.1 Introduction

Like other languages of the Southeast Asian region, Hmong exhibits typological characteristics including analytic syntax and morphology and a tendency to monosyllabicity (see Norman 1988).\footnote{An introduction to the typological context of Hmong is provided in Appendix B.}

Prior to the rapid acceleration in the Hmong community of discussion on and establishment of the written forms of Hmong, many speakers perceived their language as entirely monosyllabic:
[Have] compound words always existed in the Mong language but we just don't know them?...From the time I was born until I was a teenager, I had not heard of any compound words used in Mong. Maybe that's because it was all in spoken form.

'Tom' Hmong LG: mid 98

As this statement by 'Tom' shows, the consciousness of polysyllabic forms in part arises from the focus on their appropriate representation in the written language. The focus of many comments on this topic is not the morphology of the words as such but the written form:

I think it's a matter of CHOICE whether or not we use compound words or don't. For example when we speak, we don't say 'head' and then tell our listener that we mean the 'taubhau' which are spelled together.

Tom Hang, Hmong LG: March 1997

Furthermore, there is a suggestion that formal study plays a large part in determining the perception of language structure:

Kuv xaav has tas yog tim peb raug luas dlaag (brainwash) qhov kws has tas, "lug Moob yog MONOSYLLABIC", tes peb phee tsi kaam leeg has tas lug Moob muaj compound words xwb.

'I think that we have been brainwashed by teachers who say 'Mong is monosyllabic', who have never allowed us to simply say that Mong has compound words.'

Xeev Ntxawg ᱡ겁, Hmong LG: March 1996

It is for these reasons that word formation is a topic of interest in the context of standardisation in Hmong. Since, as for Mandarin, '[m]ost of the lexicon...consists of formatives produced by compounding' (Anderson 1985:43 on Mandarin), identification and categorisation of

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31 Other analyses are possible within isolating language typology. For instance, in some structures a nominal component becomes nonreferential, leading some to posit a noun incorporation formation. Compare:
2. Yarns

Polysyllabic forms is an issue of some interest even outside of the standardisation process. While public forums amongst the Hmong community have focussed largely on the question of suitable orthographic representation, the deeper issue of identification of compound and other polysyllabic types has also been raised here and there by people seeking a systematic method of determining representation.

In this section, I consider possible parameters for identification and categorisation of polysyllabic forms, drawing on Lyman (1974); Ratliff (1992) and (n.d.), and contributions to the mailing list Hmong LG. In §4.4.2, I return to this topic in the context of standardisation in process, surveying proposals for orthographic representation of polysyllables and guidelines for the location of word boundaries.

2.5.2.2 Published sources

**Lyman**

In the preface to his dictionary, Lyman (1974) (henceforth in this section 'Lyman') provides an extended discussion on polysyllabic types in Hmong, prefatory to his use of contrastive morpheme boundary symbols in dictionary entries. He categorises compounds and other polysyllables on two levels:

**A Loan types**

(i) Polysyllabic loanwords borrowed into the language as indivisible units

(ii) Compounds for which at least one component also occurs separately—either borrowed independently or occurring as a clipped form of the original

(iii) Compounds created by analogy, often from an originating loanword, eg 'black pepper/chilli pepper' ([opt hwj txobto inv kua txob].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>Kalam</th>
<th>Cantonese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>noj mov</td>
<td>tap ñ'g</td>
<td>sik faan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat rice</td>
<td>food consume</td>
<td>eat rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'eat' (intransitive)</td>
<td>'eat' (intransitive)</td>
<td>'eat' (intransitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>Kalam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hmong  | Kalam  | Cantonese
---|---|---
noj mov | tap ñ'g | sik faan
eat rice | food consume | eat rice
'eat' (intransitive) | 'eat' (intransitive) | 'eat' (intransitive)

*Kalam example: Pawley (1993):107; Cantonese: Stephen Matthews (p.c.)}*
B Morphological types

(i) Compounds comprised of separately occurring monosyllables (e.g. light + red) ‘traffic lights’

(ii) Compounds produced by ‘infixation’.

It is hard to know what this might refer to, unless it is the quadrisyllable structure of Ratliff's Category (v) (see below). This could perhaps be analysed as infixation within an existing compound. In Ex. 2.81, semantically similar classifiers are inserted between and following the morphemes of the reduplicative compound every 'everyone' to form a larger structure:

Ex. 2.81

\[
\text{txhua leej txhua tus}
\]

\text{every CL (person) REDUP CL (animate) 'everyone'}.

(iii) Compounds produced by reduplication.

Two types of reduplication can be identified in addition to the quadrisyllabic type above: morphological, or simple repetition of the word:

Ex. 2.82

a. qabqab
   sweet + REDUP
   'delicious'

b. nyobnyob
   live + REDUP
   'live/stay a long time'

and what I call semantic reduplication, or the combination of two morphemes with the same or similar meanings:

32 This includes compounds semantically divisible by consultants but not actually occurring separately in Lyman's corpus.

33 Anderson (1985) calls these coordinate compounds.
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.83

\[ \text{kwv tij} \]

younger.brother+older.brother

‘family’ (on the male side).

Ratliff

Ratliff (n.d.) (henceforth in this section ‘Ratliff’) distinguishes five types of polysyllabic words in Hmong:

(i) **Loanwords**: \[\text{sijhawm time, occasion} \] <Chinese (Lyman Category A (i))\(^{34}\)

(ii) **Semantic dependency**—one or more components do not occur independently: \[\text{nee/Jsa} \] ‘family: female line’

(iii) **Grammatical dependency**—one morpheme exhibits structural dependence.

Category (iii) covers (a) compounds involving affixing or cliticisation of a grammatical morpheme (Ratliff’s *incipient affixes*); and (b) compounds forming miniature syntactic structures.

Category (iiia) ‘incipient affixes’ are grammatically dependent at a level approaching the bound status of an affix. They can be attached to a wide range of words:

Ex. 2.84

\[-\text{tjw} (\text{INT})\]

\begin{align*}
\text{leej t} & \text{jw} & \text{thawj t} & \text{jw} & \text{tshej t} & \text{jw} \\
\text{CL (person)+INT} & \text{when+INT} & \text{car+INT} & \\
\text{‘who?’} & \text{‘when?’} & \text{‘which car?’} \\
\end{align*}

The commonly occurring internal structures of compounds of Category (iiib) include:\(^{35}\)

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\(^{34}\)Note that Lyman does not specify which Chinese language at any point in the dictionary.

\(^{35}\)The first two structure types are from Ratliff (n.d.); the third is from Ratliff (1992).
Ex. 2.85

a. [Verb+Direct Object]: Verb

£u fu
ntaus ntawv
beat+letters 'type'

b. [Modifier+Modified]: Noun

£u bu
zoo siab
good+liver 'happy'

c. [Classifying preword+Noun]: Noun

£ u
kab tsawb
bug+banana 'banana beetle'

£ u ha
kab nyuam dev
bug+little dog (kind of caterpillar)

This construction is proving useful in the coinage of new words and incorporation of loan words such as tshuab computer (machine+computer) (see §4.4.1.2).

To these forms observed by Ratliff I add also:

Ex. 2.86

a. [Locative+Noun] LocN

æ ur
nam hav
down+valley 'downhill'

36 So too is a subclass of deverbal nouns identified by Lee (1994), formed by the prefixing or cliticising of hi kev, which as an independent word means 'way' (see §2.5.1. Plenty of examples can be found in McKibben 1992 [1994]).
2. Yarns

b. [Quantifier+Noun] Adv
   niaj hnub every+day 'daily'

(iv) **Independent morphemes**—compounds formed of unbound morphemes, typically of the same part of speech: niaj tla peevxwm (niaj peev capital + tla xwm affairs) 'skill'. (Lyman Category B (i) and (iii).)\(^{37}\)

(v) **Miscellaneous**, including four-word expressives (niaj tla peevxwm 'skill'), onomatopoeia (nig nig gig-gog (the sound of tigers fighting)), and given names such as niaj niaj Txovtuam.

Ratliff's paper adds some useful insights in its further specification of Categories (iii), (iv) and (v). She does not explain, however, how the distinction is to be made in Category (iv) between compounds and non-compounded collocations. For the goal of standardising the written representation of words and word boundaries held by some Hmong, this is the question which is the most prominent. I return to this in 2.5.2.3.

2.5.2.3 Public discussion forum: Hmong LG

Identification and representation of polysyllabic words has been an ongoing concern in *Hmong LG* discussions over the period of its operation. The following summarises the suggestions for identification criteria which have appeared:

(i) **Polysyllabic morphemes** (David 'Choj' Mortenson) (mostly Ratliff Category (i), Lyman Category A (i)).

Mortenson\(^{39}\) attributes much of this category to Chinese loans: niaj tla tswvyim 'idea', nig nig sijhawm 'time, occasion', byaam 'same', and niaj niaj phooiywg 'friend'. He also assesses some as being of native origin, eg. niaj niaj laukaub 'cooking pot'.

\(^{37}\)Ratliff (1992) also notes that these words often either involve two morphemes of the same or similar meaning (see under Lyman Category B (iii)).

\(^{38}\)A wind instrument comprised of several bamboo pipes, the most important function of which is to play funeral music encoding the passage of the deceased to the underworld. See Terms and abbreviations.

\(^{39}\)A non-Hmong contributor and student of Chinese linguistics. Like Lyman (1974), Mortenson uses the general term 'Chinese' without specification in Hmong LG discussions.
2.5 Lexicon

(ii) **Bound morphemes** (Mai Na M. Lee, David ‘Cho’ Mortenson) (Ratliff Category (ii)).

Lee defines bound morphemes as not occurring alone: उँखा उके ‘together’, बुका मेन्युआम ‘child’ उँखा त्स्व्व्यिम ‘idea’ and विया ओयोट्सो ‘warn’. Although some other contributors quarrel with her examples on the grounds of non-compositionality (उँखा मेन्युआम little+little), loan status (उँखा त्स्व्व्यिम <Chinese) and tone modification (उँखा उके उा उा केव), this does not affect the usefulness of her suggestion in itself.

(iii) **Grammatical dependency** (Neejwm Lis ज़ुट तो, Pao Saykao, छाँड़ा रुप रुआ ला ला याम्सिग, David ‘Cho’ Mortenson) (Ratliff Category (iii)).

This category is implied by example rather than explicitly stated by Neejwm Lis ज़ुट तो, Pao Saykao, and छाँड़ा रुप रुआ ला ला याम्सिग, and is drawn out in linguistic terms by Mortenson. The kinds of dependent morphemes exemplified are: noun classifiers, post-verbal intensives, and the clitic ला ला.

Mortenson opens up the larger question (to date not taken up by the newsgroup) as to what parts of speech should be recognised as forming compounds when used in combination. The linguistic analysis he seeks in posing such a question would go a long way towards facilitating a standardised representation of polysyllables.

(iv) **Non-compositionality** (Txoo Tum तू माई, Pao Saykao, Kao Xiong, Xing Zer, Mai Na M. Lee) (included in Lyman Category B (i) and (iii); Ratliff Category (iv)).

In this category, Lee further qualifies identification criteria by comparison with compositional interpretation of the same surface form: sijhawm ‘time, occasion’ vs. sijhawm ‘repeatedly show respect’ or ibtxwm ‘originally’ vs. ib txwm ‘one verse’. In this case, the identification by Mortenson of ज़ुट तो sijhawm as a polysyllabic loan does not conflict with its function as an example of this category.

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40 Unclear which morpheme she means, since each occurs in other compounds or collocations with an identifiable meaning ‘small’, but neither appears to occur as a free-standing word.

41 In other words, उा केव does occur independently, but only in the form उा केव. This may be opaque to some speakers since the triggering word for the tone sandhi has been lost: उा उा उा उा उा केव (see §2.4.2.2). However, I would argue that the promoted sandhi in effect here indicates a degree of lexicalisation which supports the identification of this word as a compound.
2. Yarns

(v) **Translation rule (Xeev Ntxawg Nh Nh)**

The translation rule constitutes the proposal that if a concept such as 'same' or 'mistake' is expressed as a single word in a translation language (in particular, English), it can be considered to be a compound word in Hmong: Aaskiv 'English', Nh Nh n5i totaub 'understand', Nh Nh yoojyim 'easy', Nh Nh taubhau 'head'. Counterexamples provided include Nh Nh ua tsauyg 'thank you' and Nh Nh yuam kev 'wrong way', as distinct from yuamkev 'mistake'.

While this suggestion would generally be considered to rely on a misconstrual of the intertranslatability of languages, some of the examples Xeev Ntxawg Nh Nh provides are indicative of other principles at work. Aaskiv and Nh Nh yoojyim are polysyllabic loans; taubhau Nh Nh (gourd+?) and Nh Nh yuamkev (?+way) are examples of non-compositionality, while Nh Nh ua tsauyg (do+thanks) is entirely compositional. Possibly, then, this writer is noticing some principles of semantic structure which have potential to be refined in the discussion forum that Hmong LG provides.

A final general suggestion made by Saykao and several others is that identification should be made on the basis of 'ease of understanding'. While this also is difficult to translate directly into a systematic methodology, here again Saykao's examples indicate observation of more useable principles: Nh Nh phoojywg 'friend', Nh Nh tabsis 'but', and Nh Nh sawvdaws 'everyone' are polysyllabic loans; Nh Nh taubhau 'head' is non-compositional. Saykao's comment can be understood as referring to the opacity of a free-standing syllable of any of these words in the contexts referred to.

**Summary**

The categories of identification criteria explored above can be synthesised as:

1. **Polysyllabic morphemes**

   Unanalysable polysyllables, especially loanwords: Nh Nh Aaskiv 'English'.

2. **Bound morphemes**

   Collocations where at least one formative has no independent meaning (Nh Nh neejtsa (Nh Nh neej estate + Nh Nh tsau ??) 'family: female line').

3. **Grammatical dependency I**

   Involving a grammatical morpHEME as a clitic or affix (Nh Nh kuv h (1SG+'as') 'mine').
4. **Grammatical dependency II**

Compounds exhibiting commonly occurring structural relationships such as V-O (ᥫᵣ ᥫ_ntaus ntawv (beat+letters) 'type').

5. **Independent morphemes**

Comprised of components which also occur independently. They are most easily distinguished in the case of non-compositionality: ᥫᵣ ᥯_ibtxwm 'originally' (compare ib txwm 'one verse').

6. **Miscellaneous**, including Reduplication.

Words in Category (5) are in some cases theoretically indistinguishable from phrases (defined as collocations which are not conventionally established and hence do not exhibit non-compositional meaning).\(^{42}\) At this point, finer criteria of identification come into play.

2.5.2.4 Collocations, phrases and compounds

Anderson (1985) begins his discussion of Mandarin by identifying the following criteria to distinguish compounds from phrases:

(i) syntactic unity (substitutability)
(ii) non-compositionality
(iii) tone loss (equivalent in this context to tone sandhi in Hmong)
(iv) stress and stress centre (contrastive stress)
(v) location of pause (or, rather, potential location of pause).

However, he then goes on to explain that these criteria are not adequate to reliably establish the distinction:

we have seen that the structures [of compounds] are nearly identical to those of syntactic phrases, and furthermore, the interpretation of the compounds follows from independently necessary principles for the interpretation of the

\(^{42}\)Riddle (1994), discussing the general tendency of underspecification in languages like Hmong and Yoruba, notes also the ambiguity of distinction between words and phrases.
2. Yarns

Corresponding phrases. It is apparent that this is a relevant aspect of compounding processes in general: within a given language, we may find principles that join two (or more) stems into a larger unit both within the lexicon (as rules of compound formation) and within the syntax (as rules of phrase structure).

Anderson (1985:49)

Similarly, Anderson's identification criteria may be useful towards compound identification in Hmong, but it remains doubtful whether compounds and phrases are in the last analysis discrete categories. While Anderson maintains the aim of distinguishing compounds and phrases on a theoretical level, I would suggest that, for Hmong at least, there is a large area of the lexicon open to individual interpretation.

This of course poses problems for those who would like to see written Hmong thoroughly standardised. It raises questions also for headword status criteria in dictionary design. For both these purposes, a means of functionally analysing the status of the collocation or compound is sought.

Criterion (i) by itself is, as Anderson (1985) points out, definitional rather than of practical use in assessing the status of a particular formation, since phrases also demonstrate certain kinds of syntactic unity. Criterion (ii), as noted above, is one which has been discussed in the Hmong LG forum. Criterion (iii) is certainly relevant to Hmong, and has been investigated at great length in Ratliff (1992). (A summary is provided in §2.4.2.2.) Criteria (iv) and (v) are dependent on either further instrumental analysis or a greater degree of competence in the language than I have acquired. 43 These are, however, very possibly among the subconscious factors that lead to a preconceptualisation by speakers of which words would be appropriately classed as compounds, as demonstrated above.

The discussion of compound identification in this section is but the tip of the iceberg. A function of its typology as an isolating language is that Hmong is perceived by speakers as reliant for meaning at every point on the contextualising phrase. This I have observed in local discussions, in the teaching method of Yaj Ntxawg Lis êr íñ ñat at South East Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI), and in Hmong-LG debates over orthographic word boundaries. Recognisable meaning units are commonly not words but phrases, and if words are extracted from phrases as in conventional English dictionary style, speaker definition or translation...

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43Because of the focus on aspects of language directly feeding into the dictionary project, my work with consultants has not yet touched on areas such as these. Now that the dictionary is near completion, I anticipate that time will become available for a new range of areas of investigation.
strategy is frequently to re-insert it into a phrasal meaning unit. Objections such as 'it doesn't' make sense' or 'it depends on the phrase' are common. Words which draw these kinds of responses are not always clearly identifiable by the sets of criteria proposed above for identifying compounds. Commonly, they are homophonous words of various kinds as follows:

(i) Polysemes, disambiguated by classifier:

Ex. 2.87

a. $\text{ntawv}$ 'writing'

(\(\text{tsab}\)) $\text{ntawv}$ 'letter' (ie message)

(\(\text{phau}\)) $\text{ntawv}$ 'book'

(\(\text{cov}\)) $\text{ntawv}$ 'letters' (ie alphabet)

b. $\text{txiv}$ 'father'\(^{44}\)

$\text{txiv}$ (with zero classifier) 'father'

(\(\text{tus}\)) $\text{txiv}$ 'husband'

Assessment of the morphological status of this group of words is complicated by the fact that they often also occur as compound components:

Ex. 2.88

a. $\text{ntawv}$

$\text{ntawv}$

$\text{ntawv}$

$\text{ntawv}$

house study letters

'school'

b. $\text{txiv}$

$\text{ntoo}$

father/seed tree

'nut'

(ii) Polysemes, disambiguated by broader context:

---

\(^{44}\) At a deep semantic level, 'seed' would be a more accurate gloss (see Ex. 2.87), but in most contexts 'father' is more readily accessible.
2. Yarns

Ex. 2.89

a. แก้ว แก้ว
   tus poj+niam
CL woman
   'woman'

b. นิ้ว แก้ว แก้ว
   kuv tus poj+niam
   1sg CL woman
   'my wife'

(iii) Homonyms, disambiguated by broader context:

Ex. 2.90

a. แก้ว แก้ว แก้ว
   tus keem cog nplej
CL keem plant rice
   'A stick to plant rice'

b. แก้ว แก้ว มี
   lub keem rau nyiaj
   CL keem put money
   'A money jar'

However, this kind of evident perception of the meaning-unit as larger than the word is not by any means restricted to homophones.

While the type of multi-word meaning unit represented by 'polysems disambiguated by classifier' could readily be classed as noncompositional idioms or phrasal lexemes, the 'broader contexts' which are pertinent to, not only the majority of homophones but apparent speaker perception of the meaning unit altogether, bring up a much broader issue, particularly in regard to headword selection criteria for a dictionary. The question is how wide should be the scope of what is considered to be a meaning unit. Contexts such as exemplified in Ex. 2.89 could

\[\text{45 in this case, the classifier also assists in disambiguation.}\]
perhaps be classed as conventional collocations, since they occur in this exact form with high frequency. Contexts such as in Ex. 2.90 are not conventional in the same sense: they do not constitute frozen expressions or high frequency collocations. The tradition of what Pawley (1993) terms 'the parsimonious lexicon' (p 103) decrees that:

> Idioms aside, the grammar will not distinguish them [multi-word meaning units] from other possible strings with the same constituent structure. The only trouble with such a description is that it gives an absurdly impoverished account of the lexical resources of the language.

*Pawley (1993):109*

The solution to this descriptive problem proposed in Pawley (1993), and at much greater length in Pawley (1986), is an extended notion of the lexicon which breaks down the division between grammatical description and its productive rules, and the unpredictable elements of language that have traditionally been the domain of the lexicon. This approach has the potential to acknowledge a much larger range of meaning units than that commonly referred to by the word or lexeme.

In regard to standardisation, what is of immediate interest is the identification of meaning units for the purposes of (a) orthographic representation decisions, and (b) dictionary headword status criteria. To the criteria proposed in Anderson (1985) for distinguishing compounds from phrases, I propose the addition of the following, for distinguishing collocations from polysyllabic meaning units in Hmong:

>(vi) frequency of occurrence of the word/morpheme string: ǎu ưĩ ǧ̄ĩ ȋnɔ̀ neeg poob tebc̖aws (person+lose+country) 'refugee'. Words which are linked into a meaning unit by several people or on several occasions have a conventionalised status regardless of their compositionality.

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46Essentially, this refers to structuralist principles which give rise to a 'grammar-lexicon model of language' (Pawley 1993:104).

47Pawley (1986) proposes no less than twenty-seven criteria for determining lexical status, in this new broadened sense.

48That is, the lexicon has been characterised in structuralism as the repository of exceptions. It is thereby the 'area of language...less interesting to the descriptive linguist' (Desmet 1990), the focus of analysis being the grammar.
2. Yams

(vii) orthographic representation—orthographic evidence of perception as a polysyllabic unit by native speakers, such as the removal of space between elements: cuajcaum. (nine+tens) 'ninety'. In the current early stage of standardisation, it is likely that casual orthographic practice is an indicator of the status of particular forms as polysyllabic according to psychological reality.

In §4.4.2.2 I investigate the relevance of the categories and identification criteria introduced in this section to speaker perception and community standardisation procedures, and in §4.7.1 I discuss how the findings of this section contribute to policies formed in the structuring of dictionary entries in the local project.
3. SHUTTLES
DISCOURSE THEORY AND PRACTICE

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I situate my approach to standardisation processes in the theoretical framework of discourse theory. This discussion draws on concepts developed in the fields of social theory and literary criticism as well as more recent reworking and discipline-specific enhancement within the context of linguistics and applied linguistics; and grounds it in the specific discourses which will be seen to be central to the case study of this thesis.

In §3.2 I synthesise some of the foundational work of discourse theory, referring particularly to Foucault (especially Foucault 1969 [1972]), and some of the interpretations of his work and later developments which are associated with it. In particular, Macdonell (1986), from a firmly Marxist perspective, gives a thorough description of the field within French social theory, while Weedon (1987) considers the questions it raises concerning power structures and the possibility of change. In work oriented specifically to linguistics and applied linguistics, Fairclough (1992) explains important concepts and key work before moving on to a text-based modification of the approach, and Pennycook (1994) provides a succinct critical and comparative study of discourse theory as utilised within this discipline. In §3.2.1, I discuss features of the theory as pertinent to the present work, discussing contentious issues along the way, particularly how the theory deals with questions of power (§3.2.2). In §3.2.3 I examine the concept of intertextuality, or the connections between texts and between discourses, and its role in understanding the operation of discourses and power on the individual, or subject. Here discourse theory connects with and at times merges into notions associated also with postmodernist theory: multiple semiosis, authorship and authority. The work of Kristeva, especially the collection in Kristeva (1980), also becomes central at this point.

In §3.3 I introduce six major discourses which combine, conflict and overlap to shape the unfolding of events, areas of dissension, and ways of seeing in the case study. The discourses highlighted are first and foremost those which have come to the fore during the course of my work with a particular subcommunity and a particular standardization project. This is expanded by the context of the broader ex-refugee Hmong community and the many forms which standardization has been taking in the whole community.
3. Shuttles

3.2 Discourse theory

In Foucault's theory (see especially Foucault 1969 [1972]), the quintessence of discourse is that it creates conceptually unitary objects out of disparities. The systems of meaning which are discourses consist of connections formed between entities having no natural or universal connection. The practice of discourse at every point reflects, creates, and reconfigures the conceptual structure so formed.

As explained by Pennycook:

Discourses are about the creation and limitation of possibilities, they are systems of power/knowledge (pouvoir/savoir) within which we take up subject positions...meaning is produced not at the will of a unitary humanist subject, not as a quality of a linguistics system, and not as determined by socio-economic relations, but rather through a range of power/knowledge systems that organize texts, create the conditions of possibility for different language acts, and are embedded in social institutions. Thus we can speak of the discourses of democracy, law, capitalism, socialism, education, linguistics, applied linguistics, and so on. These discourses in effect 'map out' what can be said and thought about what they define as their respective domains.

_Pennycook (1994):128_

[Discourses] are ways of organizing meaning that are both reflected and produced in our uses of language and the formation of our subjectivities

_Pennycook 1994b:32_

This covers much of what is essential to the concept of discourse which underlies my approach to analysing standardisation processes:

- Discourses are systems of meaning.
- These systems of meaning create the possibility for a range of ideas, linguistic texts and actions to emerge and be comprehensible.
- At the same time, these systems of meaning set limits on the range of things that can be coherently thought about, discussed, or acted upon.
- Discourses are realised or instantiated in specific social and textual contexts.
3.2 Discourse theory

- Individuals understand and produce meaning from positions made available within the discourses.

- Discourses give form to the relationship between knowledge and power or authority.\(^1\)

In addition:

- In realising or reproducing these discourses, in activities, social structures, artefacts, dialogues etc, individuals, groups and institutions also reconfigure and redirect the systems of meaning.

These elements of discourse theory are explored in the sections to follow.

### 3.2.1 Features and functions

#### 3.2.1.1 Foucault...

The tendency within linguistics (see Hodge and Kress 1979 [1993]; Fairclough 1992; Halliday and Martin 1993; Fairclough 1995 and discussion in Pennycook 1994) is to view discourse primarily as linguistic, whereas discourses as defined by Pennycook (1994) are realized in, rather than identified with, language, and also other expressions/structures of meaning. For Foucault, although language is a central element of his exploration, it is but 'the terminal stage of discourse' (Foucault 1969 [1972]:75), and one of a range of discursive effects including: the criteria by which the speaker is authorised (legal, traditional, the scope of his/her authority), the institutional sites in which the discourse is contextualised (a research centre, a recognised body of information), and the range of available subject positions (questioner, listener, observer, teacher). Language is a major, but not the only, window into the discourses, a concrete realisation of the meanings framed and made possible in discourse.

Discourse is a count noun, variously shaping the possible fields of texts from the positions of different constructions of knowledge. Hence in §3.3 and §5.2 I describe several discourses in an ideally separated form: discourses of nationism, scientism, religion and others; each showing a different perspective on the same complex of ideas. This approach differs in a slight but significant respect from that implied by the summary quote from Pennycook (1994) above, which seems to equate the boundaries of a particular discourse with those of a predefined field such as 'linguistics', or of an ethos or ideology with which people identify, such as 'socialism'. In this work, however, I am more interested in a level of discourse which operates both more

\(^1\)See §3.2.3.3 for an explanation of some of the layered meaning of the term authority.
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broadly and more deeply, manifesting across both fields and ideologies. A discourse of
economics is evident as much as in capitalism as in Marxism. Predefined fields of knowledge
given existence by labels such as these are not necessarily coextensive with discourses in this
larger sense. It depends on:

whether they are not, in their accepted and quasi-institutional individuality,
ultimately the surface effect of more firmly grounded unities.

Foucault (1969 [1972]:26)

For instance, many aspects of the field 'linguistics' are based in a larger-scale discourse of
'scientism' (see §3.3.3), while the 'religious' discourse is realised in fields including 'education'.

Discourse is both productive and restrictive of systems of meaning. On the one hand it draws
the boundaries of what can be said or thought in a given context:

the principle according to which only the 'signifying' groups that were enunciated
could appear

Foucault (1969 [1972]:118)

or, in simpler language, 'how is that one particular statement appeared rather than another?'
(ibid:27). For instance, the scientist discourse in its present instantiation precludes a study of
alchemy (Jameson in Lyotard 1979 [1984]). On the other hand, discourse gives rise to new
categories (objects) of possible perception, such as a connection between criminal behaviour
and mental health status:

what enables [the object] to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects, to
sitiate itself in relation to them, to define its difference

Foucault (1969 [1972]:45)

Foucault defines discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they
speak' (Foucault 1969 [1972]:49). He then thoroughly expounds the four categories of these
practices:

Objects:
not pre-existent referents, but delimited fields of possible knowledge: fields structured as
entities, thereby 'making [them] manifest, nameable, and describable' (ibid, p41).

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3.2 Discourse theory

Foucault gives as an example the objects of discourse which have emerged in psychopathology from the nineteenth century onwards, which have included:

- motor disturbances, hallucinations, speech disorders...
- minor behavioural disorders, sexual aberrations and disturbances, the phenomena of suggestion and hypnosis, lesions of the central nervous system, deficiencies of intellectual or motor adaptation, criminality.

*Ibid, p40*

The point is that the concepts in this partial list were new ideas, either in themselves, as things which could be considered to exist at all, or in the context of psychopathology, as things which were relevant to assessment and treatment.

*Statements (or 'enunciative modalities')*: formulating representations of such knowledge including, but not restricted to, linguistic texts.

An orthography, for instance, can be a statement of the existence of a language, or the political validity of its speakers.

*Concepts*: the ways in which such representations are related to each other.

This includes relations between statements such as succession, dependence, combination; the ways that statements are adjusted as they are reproduced—approximation, transfer to another field, incorporation into systematised structures; the selection of some statements as forming a currently valid body of truth and transformation of others to a productive role in the history of ideas.

*Themes (or 'strategies' or 'theories')*: ideas made possible by the combination of concepts into larger structures.

Threads are drawn through "ideas of different origin, influences, discoveries, speculative climates, theoretical models" (Foucault 1969 [1972]:64), giving rise to themes such as 'a kinship between all the Indo-European languages or 'a circulation of wealth on the basis of agricultural production' (ibid).

Finally, all of the elements referred to by the above four categories are connected into *discursive formations*:
when one speaks of a system of formation, one does not only mean the juxtaposition, coexistence, or interaction of heterogenous elements (institutions, techniques, social groups, perceptual organizations, relations between various discourses), but also the relation that is established between them—and in a well-determined form—by discursive practice.

Like the mutually productive relation between discourses and practices, a discursive formation both constructs a set of relations by determining the kinds of connections that must be made or are not available to be made, and is itself constructed by the coexistence of certain statements and not others. For instance, the emergence of the computer as a major medium of communication requires a revision of the possible meanings of literacy, while the particular practice of literacy in the environment of its emergence shaped communications technology development according to a certain set of norms of language and script.

Streams of theoretical exploration have converged, diverged and overlapped so that terms and concepts in different schools of thought resemble and reflect each other. Some of the sources that I quote use terminology which varies from the usage in this thesis, while I in my turn also weave in strands of ideas from other approaches. Consequently, the points of connection and disjunction between some of these terms and my use of them in the present work warrant some clarification.

As a system of relations, discourse is connected to the concept of narrative, particularly grand narrative, a notion common in postmodernist writing (see for instance Lyotard 1979 [1984]; Bonnycastle 1996). Grand narrative denotes culturally established ideas of directed, usually hopeful, teleological progression underlying human existence. Similarly to discourse, grand narratives allow assumption of connections between disparities. They may presume, for instance, that Christian education leads to improved economic conditions, or that a democratic political structure leads to the equality of individuals. Structures, institutions and policies may be established on the basis of grand narratives such as these, with the expectation of the kinds of results which they set forth. As Bonnycastle (1996) notes, grand narratives have become objects of scepticism in the postmodern era.

At a more local level, narrative refers to strategies used to form a cohesive, often linear, whole:
Narratives, which appear in a variety of forms, constitute a linguistic, psychological, social and philosophical framework for our attempts to come to terms with the nature and conditions of our existence.

Bornstein (1994 [1995]:24 discusses the kinds of narratives we develop, and are required to be able to produce, to establish a continuous and coherent gender identity, including a personal history deemed appropriate, certain kinds of relationships, particular cultural and sub-cultural myths, a matching sexual orientation.

Lyotard (1979 [1984]), uses a slightly different conception of narrative to explore a division of knowledges into two types:

- scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge; it has always existed in addition to, and in competition and in conflict with, another kind of knowledge, which I will call narrative


Here, Lyotard distinguishes between an experiential perspective on knowledge and a 'scientistic' perspective. In an intellectual context in which demonstrable, physical and analytic reality is a privileged form of knowledge, articulating this division is useful towards understanding the kinds of knowledge to be gained through metaphoric, ritual and intuitive reality. The use of the term narrative here reflects the emphasis of experiential forms of knowledge on a 'narrative' (in the general sense) style of representation. Lyotard notes, however, that the accessible, participatory mode provided in this genre is commonly evoked by researchers within the scientist framework in, for instance, news magazines, in order to gain broad acceptance for their views and findings.

Discourse relates also to the concept of paradigm, as used in for instance Bonnycastle (1996) to refer to a model of knowledge about or understanding of the world. While the notion of paradigm commonly refers to a discipline-specific way of thinking such as, say, an approach of structuralism or functionalism within linguistics, the philosophical directions or way of thinking they facilitate often have ramifications for other domains. Models such as capitalism or socialism

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3Dennett 1995 expresses this same idea while introducing his own research in a book targeted to a general audience: 'You don't want to be swayed by a story? Well, I know you won't be swayed by a formal argument; you won't even listen to a formal argument for my conclusion, so I start where I have to start' (Dennett 1995:12).
3. Shuttles

serve to direct belief about appropriate action; while models of the solar system as centred on
our planet or on the sun have major implications not only for astronomy, but also for beliefs
about God and humanity.

Fairclough (1992 and elsewhere) uses the term ideology to refer to underlying societal beliefs
which direct thought and action, while he uses discourse explicitly for the ways in which
ideology is realised in text. In order to adequately portray the connection between the two
concepts, he also develops the composite term ideological discursive formation (IDF):^4 referring
to both social and linguistic ‘texts’ as expressive of ideology, and their production and
interpretation. Here, then, the composite term is the closer equivalent to what I am referring to as
discourse. Fairclough, however, focuses on particular ideological positions invested in a
discourse, whereas my approach stands back a little further, retaining the scope of a discourse
as containing many possible positions within itself. A discourse in this view is in itself apolitic—that
is outside of claims of truth or falsity, and inclusive of the available range of systems of
morality or belief. This is a point on which Foucault’s work has been criticised within both Critical
Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Marxist theory^5 as socially and politically problematic^6—a criticism
which I hold to be unnecessary, as I argue in §3.2.2.

In other writings, the term ideology can be found defined explicitly in opposition to reality (see
for instance Hodge and Kress 1979 [1993]). This view entails that reality is something
accessible other than through the ways of seeing that obscures that reality. This definition pair
derives in part from a Marxist view of the material as the real and ideology as ‘false
consciousness’,^7 and is on this point in direct contrast with the theoretical framework I apply to
the present work. In my approach, reality is of necessity experienced and viewed from a
particular position, which entails that all representations of reality are constructions.

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^4With reference also to Pêcheux (1982 [1975]).

^5Much of CDA is also framed within a Marxist approach.

^6Eg Fairclough (1995): ‘[i]n tying ideology to social relations of power, I am alluding to asymmetrical
relations of power, to domination. Foucault’s work in particular has popularized a different understanding
of power’ (p17).

^7See Marx and Engels (1976). The notion of false consciousness, together with an explanation of its
untenability, is fully addressed in Gee (1990).
3.2 Discourse theory

While all these terms relate to a Foucauldian concept of discourse, all of them also diverge from it in that they focus on particular realisations of discourse, rather than opening up for examination the broader concept of discourse as sets of relations and frames forming fields of possibility within which to think, refer and act. It is this concept which is of interest in the present thesis.

I am not about to claim that my usage is identical to that of Foucault. His work recognises detail in the structuring of meaning far beyond a level of analysis that it is possible to put into practice here. My working definition of discourse centres on:

the delineation of an entity as a possible object of thought or discussion, and the complex of relations which achieve this.

With this definition in view, I make use of the four categories of discursive practice outlined in §3.2.1.1, together with the supercategory discursive formations, which specifies the network of relations between discourses. In regard to Foucault’s fourth category, I use the term theme in preference to theory or strategy. Theme has a common language meaning which I retain in this thesis for such usages as discourse theory. I use the term strategy in reference to the means employed by persons and groups to achieve certain ends, such as the recognition of their dialect. Included in this definition are procedures, characterisations and actions which are not necessarily consciously designed for a particular goal (see §3.2.3.2 for further discussion). The term paradigm I use in reference to discipline-specific discursive structures, as well as with its common meaning in linguistics of a set of structurally interchangeable elements.

The term ideology is used to refer specifically to a given position within a discourse—such as a belief in natural medicine within a medical discourse. To clarify further: natural medicine is also classifiable as a discourse, when it is being discussed as a culturally accepted connection between disparate entities at different levels—herbal medicine, chiropractics, acupuncture, degrees of non-interventionist childbirth, kinds of qualifications that must be gained, legal requirements for setting up a practice and dispensing medicines, locations in which the practice is carried out, titles conferred on practitioners, etc. It is when what is being referred to is a position of belief in a concept of natural medicine, characterised in opposition to mainstream western medical practice, that the term ideology becomes appropriate.

I also make use of the term discourses in the more specifically instantiated sense of ‘democracy, law, capitalism, socialism, education, linguistics, applied linguistics, and so on’ (Pennycook 1994:128). This meaning is distinguished by use of the phrase discourse on rather than discourse of.
3. Shuttles

3.2.2 The structuring of power

A discourse is a system of relations. At the level of the discursive formation, it operates within a larger network of relations with other discourses. But these discourses are not equally available in all contexts. Like individuals in an constitutionally equal society, some are more powerful than others; and their distribution between mainstream and marginal(ised) contexts is not even, but is subject to particular norms or social laws. It is frequently assumed that a single discourse will be dominant in a given context. As Bonnycastle (1996) notes:

According to Thomas Kuhn, a field of inquiry does not become a mature science until a dominant paradigm emerges and everyone using other paradigms is seen as doing marginal or trivial work.

The idea of a single dominant discourse can only make sense at a very localised level. A single discourse (such as an economic discourse) is instantiated in a particular historical circumstance in a specific configuration (eg as western capitalism). In this sense, a single configuration may be dominant in a given field, and in a given social context. However, discourses in practice do not operate in isolation, but in a multiplicity of intertwining, shifting discursive formations:

we must not conceive or imagine a world of discourse divided between...the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.

Foucault (1976 [1981]):100

The idea of dominance of a discourse brings up the concept of an order of discourse: that is, 'a particular relatively stabilized configuration of discourse practices' (Fairclough 1995:2). In a historically particular configuration, discourses are instantiated in ways that establish certain practices, institutions and ideologies as the norm and others as marginal. Certain discourses are constituted as more powerful than others: note for instance the shifting roles of church and state, faith and science. This hierarchical patterning is the order of discourse—discourses as they are realised in a particular period and situation.

A particular instantiation of a discourse which is so ingrained in the community consciousness that it has the status of common sense is said to be naturalised. Discourses which have achieved this level of acceptance are characteristically difficult to observe in one's own

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9Eg Fairclough (1995): 'There is usually one IDF which is clearly dominant.' (p27).
3.2 Discourse theory

environment. They are the unchallenged assumptions on which the community operates—or rather, as Fairclough (1995) points out, ‘whatever challenges there are do not constitute any threat’ (p41). Consequently, these assumptions become:

...opaque, i.e. no longer visible as ideologies...merely skills or techniques which must be mastered in order for the status of competent institutional subjects to be achieved.

*Fairclough (1995):42*

One example is the western notion of the nuclear family. While people in western countries live in many types of ‘family’, the idealised ‘nuclear family’ remains the implicit norm of advertising, the basis of financial systems, the design of family houses, eligibility for adoptive or in vitro parenthood. ‘Competent institutional subjects’ are those who identify with this model. In Eira (1998) I note the parallel between naturalised discourse (here, in relation to script dominance) and the concept of *sacredness* in the religious context:

The attribution of a script or its functions to divine causes has the effect of rendering it untouchable, invulnerable to argument. A significant extension of this into other discourse arenas is the tendency for a script to accrue sacred status in the above sense even when no deity is called upon for its legitimation. To its proponents, such a script is axiomatically superior. In highly standardised languages, the status quo of the orthography, such as the spelling, may be regarded as *sacred*—i.e. as something in which change is perceivable only as degradation.

*p179–180*

The establishment of a discourse or set of interwoven discourses in a given context provides the necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for hegemony to develop. Hegemony is a status of dominance which is set up in such a way that both those who benefit from the status quo and those who are disadvantaged by it, or are perhaps opposed to it, contribute to its perpetuation. For instance, the practice of some companies in wealthy countries of manufacturing goods cheaply ‘off shore’ by paying substandard wages is supported by the employees who of necessity continue to accept this form of employment. Potential buyers of the goods who may have ethical objections to this have the choice of buying the product, which supports the company, or boycotting it, which may result in the loss of work for the low-wage

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10The main author to have established this notion in social/economic theory is Gramsci, following Lenin. See Gramsci (1971), or Fairclough (1995) for a brief introduction. I refer mostly to Pêcheux (1982 [1975]).
3. Shuttles

Hegemony is not restricted to undesirable discourses. In fact, in the broadest sense, hegemonic discourses cannot be undesirable discourses. A hegemonic structure is set deeply into the fabric of cultural practice so that it is the easiest, the most convenient, the default and natural(ised) way of operating. In this sense, as seen in the naturalisation of the nuclear family, the hegemonic formation is always 'appropriate', in the social situation in which it is hegemonic.

Conceptual categories of naturalisation and hegemony lead to questions prominent in some CDA work, as noted above, concerning how conflict can be characterised, and in particular, how social structure so represented can be vulnerable to the possibility of change.

In Foucault (1976 [1981]), discourses are characterised as necessarily embracing conflicting positions. For Foucault, discourse is by definition a relationship between disparities. Furthermore, power, like discourse, is primarily a complex of relations which produce and shape social structures and interactions. Resistance:

> can only exist in the strategic field of power relations...more often one is dealing
> with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society
> that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across
> individuals themselves.

_Foucault (1976 [1981]):96_

In this model, rather than a dualistic concept of the dominant versus the dominated, power relations are viewed as an ever-shifting kaleidoscope within a more abiding discursive structure. This relative permanence of essential relations of power is part of what has caused concern among some writers, who envisage resistance as a tactic against the structures of power. In Foucault's model, rather, resistance is an intrinsic part of how power relations function. It is not at all, however, a model that denies the possibility of change—change is an inherent characteristic of the model. What Foucault is describing is the continuity of power in itself, not in who or what constitutes the powerful at a given locus, nor in how that power is expressed or managed. The picture of discursive longevity is similar. The general pattern is for a discourse to remain in place, but the inventory of things that are brought into being as objects of discourse, and the kinds of relations which are formed between practices and structures, are subject to continual revision and restructuring, including also the possibility of occasional major paradigm shifts. This is the instantiation of the discourse. For instance, while the medical discourse has been perpetuated over centuries, (i) the idea of medication for the management of psychiatric conditions has only relatively recently emerged as an object of discourse, and the kinds of conditions to which that idea applies expands continually; and (ii) the division of labour in medical practice is now linked with interconnected systems of certification and insurance which restrict and facilitate certain persons to carry out certain functions, bear certain titles, authorise certain forms of treatment.
3.2 Discourse theory

For instance, in Australia, the public health insurance system only covers obstetrics costs for women who give birth in hospitals, which in turn requires that a midwife must work under the supervision of a doctor.\(^{11}\)

Foucault's treatment of power and discourse entails that they are in themselves outside of judgements of truth or morality. Rather, they are overarching principles of social and textual formation, encompassing all possible realisations of the meaning structures they comprise. It seems to some that removing the possibility of questioning the truth of a discourse gives rise to unacceptable consequences, licensing or at least failing to object to potentially any choices and actions in the world. After all, if a discourse is in itself apolemic, it is possible to take up both humanitarian and harmful positions within that discourse. For instance, as is often pointed out, the religious discourse has been used to produce both genocide and powerful nonviolent peace revolutions. For those who object to the concept of apolemic discourse, it seems that at its logical conclusion it not only accepts the possibility of both types of action, but also validates them, by disabling the functioning of a socially responsible philosophy.

I would argue that this objection misses an important effect of Foucault's approach. Discourse theory in the Foucauldian sense is necessarily a social philosophy:

\[
\text{an asset that...poses the question of power; an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle}
\]

\textit{Foucault (1969 [1972]):120}

because it is directed to uncovering the ways in which relations of power are constructed. This demystification of power structures and sources constitutes a 'sapping' of their power (Foucault 1969 [1972]:208). In rendering them visible it dissolves the illusion that they are natural or inevitable (denaturalisation), and makes it possible to question them, thereby opening up the potential for change. While the discourses themselves are situated outside of ethical judgements, the theory of discourse is not. A pre-existent socially oriented framework such as Marxism is not only unnecessary to address questions of ethics and morality,\(^{12}\) it can also obscure this process of uncovering. Being already directed towards a particular outcome, it risks re-concealing the structures under observation, perceiving and therefore shaping them through an a priori notion of what they should look like.

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\(^{11}\)The discourse as a system of relations between persons, certification, insurance etc in this area of the health industry is configured differently to this in Canada, and differently again in the UK.

\(^{12}\)As Pennycook (1994) hints in the opening quote of this section.
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A significant potential of denaturalising a dominant discourse, then, is to form part of a strategy for empowerment. I suggested in §1.2.3 that in situations of collaborative language work, the discourses of the dominant group tend to function as the default for what constitutes important research and valid knowledge. Deconstructing the assumed power/knowledge framework which is in place can facilitate improved potential for communication, understanding, and respect. Ultimately this may lead to language work which is more relevant, useable and long-lasting in the community.

Certainly a degree of caution is appropriate to ground this optimistic view. As discussed in Fairclough (1992), it must be kept in mind that power, here in the form of discursive bases which are accessible and acceptable to dominant institutions, is unequally distributed; and also that information, exposure or education is not itself enough to dissipate these relations of dominance and imbalance of power. I hope the above clarifies, however, that these are not problems inherent in the theory. In fact the opposite is the case: such problems arise from retaining an instantation of discourses unexamined, permitting us to ignore power imbalances in which we are implicated. Analysis of prevailing discourses aims to lay bare the bones of power/knowledge structures and hence can be used towards ‘remov[ing] our moral complicity’ (Gee 1990:24).

To further investigate the possible avenues for resistance and change, it will be necessary to gain some understanding of the place of the individual in discourse. En route to discussing the construction of the subject, I turn first to the concept of intertextuality.

3.2.3 Intertextuality

3.2.3.1 Text (re)production

In §1.2.1 I briefly introduced the work of Kristeva, following Bakhtin, on intertextuality: a theory which makes explicit the way that meaning is collaboratively produced, on the basis of meanings which are already established. There are two points I wish to address from this work. The first is that texts intersect with and constitute one another at three points: ‘writing subject, addressee

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13 This is a problematic oversight of some streams of Language Awareness (see discussion in Fairclough 1992b).

14 See also Pennycook (1998).
and exterior texts' (Kristeva 1969 [1980]:66).\(^{15}\) The second is that this occurs in two directions: in the surface ordering of actual texts ('horizontal'); and in the relations of texts to historical contexts ('vertical').\(^{16}\)

The writer/speaker uses words, or longer sections of texts, that have already been used with a particular meaning ('exterior texts'). In re-using them, s/he gives them a new meaning, which becomes layered on top of the meaning it already had:

Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them. Diachrony is transformed into synchrony, and in light of this transformation, linear history appears as an abstraction.

Kristeva (1969 [1980]):65

The addressee of the text in turn comprehends the meaning on the basis of the meanings s/he already has at hand for that text. In this way, the meanings of the sender and recipient intersect with each other, and with all other meanings available to them from the network of textual/cultural/historical context(s):

the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee...the word (the text) is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus

hence horizontal axis (subject--addressee) and vertical axis (text--context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word[s] (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read...any text is the absorption and transformation of another.

Kristeva (1969 [1980]):66

This is a conception of text: meaning relations which requires a move away from the concept of equivalence between a signified and a signifier, seeing instead a relationship between words and meanings that is 'by definition an infinity of pairings and combinations' (Kristeva 1969 [1980]:69):

\(^{15}\)Note that Kristeva's focus as regards language is particularly on literary, that is written texts; but the principles are equally applicable to other kinds of linguistic texts. Kristeva herself extends these principles to other kinds of texts, including painting (see for instance Kristeva 1972 [1980]).

\(^{16}\)I use Kristeva's terms: for Bakhtin these are dialogic and ambivalent respectively.
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post-Saussurian structural linguistics still encloses the signifier, even if nonmotivated, within patterns of a signification originally destined for faultless communication, either coinciding with the explicit signified or set off a short distance from it, but still fastened to the unalterable presence of meaning

Kristeva (1975 [1980]):129

The connection of this way of understanding texts with Foucault's conception of discourse is that texts are limited and produced by the contexts which are already available to construct them. As Lemke, explains, Foucault

tried to describe how we today construct our continuities and discontinuities with many pasts. The texts and artefacts of the past are objects in our present-day world...we construct their historical meaning in the present day, and for the present day, by construing relationship among these objects and ourselves


To view text production as contained inescapably within already constructed discourse again seems to problematise the possibility of change and agency:

The text (any given text) ceases to be a self-evident unity, but appears as a relatively accidental site that marks where a series of discursive processes have briefly collided. Producers (authors, speakers) likewise lose the semblance of unity, and become channels through which various authors and agencies speak and act.

Hodge and Kress (1979 [1993]):181–182

In fact, the theory of intertextuality entails that meaning is always new and always creative, because texts are always recombined or hybridised, in an infinite set of connections and layers (Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia).

Bakhtin distinguishes between centripetal and centrifugal forces (tendency to reproduce vs tendency to change). As explained in Fairclough (1995):

Text producers have nothing except given conventions of language and orders of discourse as resources for dealing with centrifugal pressures, but they are able to use these resources in new ways...Discursive events are, on the one hand, dependent on and shaped by them, but on the other hand cumulatively restructure them.

pp8–10
This brings us back, then, to the position and strategies of individual people operating within hegemonic discourse structures; to the question of agency of text producers, and for that matter text recipients.

3.2.3.2 Subjectivity

According to Althusser (1971), the way that power and discourses operate on an individual is in inclining her/him to recognise themselves (or 'misrecognise'—Weedon 1987:88) as someone referred to, described, named (Althusser interpellated) in the available texts; and further: as someone who thinks, says, writes the texts the discourse makes available. Possibly this occurs in part because it is hard to find paths along which to think that have not already been structured into words; because not only words but the ways of using them—their combinations, the context to which they are suited—are taught to us as we initially acquire and as we continue to acquire our language and culture:

Whatever I write is written from a viewpoint within the culture and subcultures to which I belong. I do not, no one can, write from an objective God's-eye view. No one sees the world as it is. We see the worlds our communities teach us how to see, and the worlds we make, always a bit uniquely, within and sometimes just a bit beyond what we've been taught.

Lemke (1995):3-4

Although initially the theory of intertextuality briefly introduced above can appear to imply that individuals are helpless, caught unknowingly in structures which determine who we are and what we can think, say or do, it is my position that understanding how our practising identity is constructed within discourse is part of the path to creative change. In the view of Weedon (1987), it is precisely the continued assumption of individual agency, central to humanism, that results in power imbalance; because it is used to guarantee and justify existing social relations. The rationale proceeds as:

if I as a rational sovereign subject choose my way of life, on the basis of my individual rational consciousness which gives me knowledge of the world, then I am not oppressed.

Weedon (1987):84

Weedon gives as an example police inability to curb a series of incidents in Britain of violent acts against Asian families. She views the continuation of the problem as a direct result of the official
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view that the acts were occurring on an individual, and therefore random, basis, rather than as arising from racial discourse.\(^{17}\)

If, conversely, the individual inculcates an awareness of the ways in which she is not free, the points at which gaps are apparent between the discourse and her own interests—in short, notices where she misrecognises herself as subject—this can give rise to a site of change, offering:

an explanation of where our experience comes from, why it is contradictory or incoherent and why and how it can change.

*Weedon (1987):41*

The contradictions and incoherences between the various subject positions that we occupy can trigger this awareness. As Fairclough (1992) points out, it is not at all unusual for people to operate simultaneously with incompatible discourses or subject positions: a commitment to democracy, for example, does not necessarily negate the possibility of someone functioning effectively as part of a hierarchical workplace. These are the kinds of incoherences which have potential to disclose underlying discourses:

possible discursive restructurings arise from contradictions in social practice which generate dilemmas for people, which they try to resolve through mixing available discourse conventions in new ways


In this way, the multiple interlaid structure of discourse formations is itself productive of alternative patterns of thought and action:

discourses, located as they are in social institutions and processes, are continually competing with each other for the allegiance of individual agents...Individuals are both the *site* and *subjects* of discursive struggle for their identity. Yet the interpellation of individuals as subjects within particular discourses in never final. It is always open to challenge. The individual is constantly subjected to discourse.

*Weedon (1987):97*

According to Pêcheux (1982 [1975]), the condition of dominance of a discourse in itself provides the framework within which conflict can occur. For Pêcheux, 'discourses are set up in

\(^{17}\)On the other hand, the recognition of connections between such events sparked the development of 'hate crimes' laws in the USA. Thanks to Wyrda for this observation.
what are ultimately antagonistic relations'.\textsuperscript{18} While there are certainly arguments to be made against a competitive model of interaction,\textsuperscript{19} some elements of Pêcheux's perspective are useful towards understanding how change is achieved.

For Pêcheux, there are three possible categories of response to subjectivity within a hegemonic order of discourse:

\textit{Identification}: collusion with the hegemonic discourse (the action of what Macdonell 1986 calls 'good subjects').

\textit{Counteridentification} (by 'bad' subjects): direct resistance, undertaken within the same discourse as the hegemonic position (see below). This is, nonetheless, only an option after the discourse has been deconstructed sufficiently to render it open to question.

\textit{Disidentification}: declining to take up any of the possible subject positions open within the discourse. This is an interesting strategy which subverts the power of the discourse. As an example: some feminist theorists, particularly French writers, have noted the impossibility of conceptualising woman of itself, since it is only definable in terms of a duality. In an expression of this, Wittig (1973 [1986]), employs a deconstructionist device of representing the first person pronoun as split (j/e): Wittig as a woman can have no existence of herself, but only as defined in opposition to man. But in her fictional writings she implements a strategy of disidentification by creating worlds peopled only by women.\textsuperscript{20} From a position within these worlds there is no need to take up any position in a dualistic system of gender.

Strategies of counter-identification with a dominant order of discourse are by definition only possible in opposition—in this case, to the dominant discourse of gendering. To resist is to acknowledge and thereby contribute to the status of the resisted as an object of discourse. Disidentification declines to accept this status, simply operating on a different basis of

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\textsuperscript{18} Quoted in Macdonell (1986):45.

\textsuperscript{19} One is the view of the ecology as an essentially interdependent rather than essentially competitive system: 'Functioning ecologies are nowadays characterised by predominantly mutually beneficial links and only to a small degree by competitive relationships' (Mühlhäusler (to appear)). In Taoism also, it is resistance which creates the possibility of a power clash. A principle of Tai Chi in its combative form is that the hand which does not resist cannot be overpowered. (Master Chin Min, p.c.)

\textsuperscript{20} Perhaps the best of these is Wittig (1971 [1985]). For the reader, located within the dualistic system, the lack of gendered opposition in this novel is starkly noticeable.
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knowledge. In §4.2.1.2 another example of disidentification is encountered, in the context of hegemonic dialect.

3.2.3.3 Levels of intertextuality

Fairclough (1992) spends considerable time developing subcategories of intertextuality on a specifically (linguistic) textual basis. These are subsumed under two basic types or levels: *manifest* (textual) and *constitutive* (structural) intertextuality.

In a genre such as a doctoral thesis, the constitution of one text by many others is in part overt. This is what Fairclough (1992) (after Authier-Révux 1982 and Maingueneau 1987) calls *manifest* intertextuality. In writing this thesis, I am required to demonstrate consciousness of the heritage of what I write: which traditions of thought my research is overtly connected with; what is the nature of its relation to other specific realisations of these traditions (oppositional, supportive, adaptive); what consequential threads of this discursive web are anticipated. Moreover, the expectation that I invoke the authority of this textual context forms a central part of the system whereby my writing in turn is ascribed authority—that is, how it is 'authored'.21

The use of the term *authored* in this sense is intended to evoke not only the relationship between authorship and authority, but also a revision of what it means to author—to produce text—in the first place. The principle of intertextuality means that, ultimately, the idea of an individual author creating a new text is nonsensical. Rather, a producer of text recombines, reshapes and rechannels text and ideas from other innumerable re-shapings linked outward in their turn. This relates directly to Foucault’s theory. The text is contained within the discourse, which makes a particular enunciation possible where and when it occurs, by the intersection of statement, practice, power and knowledge at that particular site. Authority is always indefinitely multiple. The ‘death of the author’ (Barthes) has ramifications for ownership and control of ideas and of text (in the broadest sense). If I cannot be said to be the originator of a text, what kind of rights can I claim in regard to its use, alteration and dissemination? The degree to which concepts and practices of authorial accreditation, originality, copyright, intellectual property and so on are founded primarily on convention begin to become visible. The concept of intertextuality at this point has a contribution to make to the issues I stated in §1.2.2 in regard to representation of an Other. To engage in such a representation is not thereby to create and therefore own knowledge of the Other, but only to recontextualise knowledge that is already available, in one of an indefinite number of possible such contextualisations. This then is a view

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21See also Lemke (1995):11.
3.2 Discourse theory

of knowledge that supports what I called the 'deferral of the right to determine what constitutes a valid or coherent position'.

Interdiscursivity does not only or even primarily denote the overt, easily visible form described above. A more abstract or structural level is referred to as constitutive intertextuality. Again, using the thesis as an example, I am required to conform to certain conventions of style, format, structure and so on: this marks it as a member of the genre I am emulating/reproducing/wish my work to be included in. I can reproduce the 'texts' in this sense that preceded the present text; I can also adapt them by interspersing them with markers of other types of texts. (In Botha 1992, linguistics theories are 'displayed' as if for sale, while the English language text Burridge and Mulder 1998 is introduced as a recipe book).

Finally, intertextuality operates as interdiscursivity: that is, as the multiple layered intersections of different discourses that come to bear on real-world activities, institutions, discussions, decision-making processes. Interdiscursivity is simply a broader-scope concept of intertextuality, in which the focus is on the discourse rather than the text as the site of continual reproduction and concomitant alteration of the text (the discourse) in every context in which it appears, is interpreted and acted upon. In some disciplines any such expression of meaning can be referred to as a text.\textsuperscript{22} Intertextuality in this sense includes all 'the institutional and discoursal practices within which texts are embedded' (Fairclough 1995:9).

3.2.4 Concluding remarks

For the greater part of this chapter so far I have been discussing a potentially unlimited array of discourses, discourse formations, subject positions, and phenomena. However, as I set out in §1.2.4, any text, discourse, strategy of change, object of discourse, institution, event, takes form only in a local or historically particular realisation. The immediately prevalent discourses, their current intersections, the objects of discourse which they produce in the particular situation: this is what constitutes a meaningful application of discourse theory to a specific phenomenon such as standardisation.

The next task of this chapter, then, is to survey some of the major discourses shaping standardization practices in my case study. This means to look briefly at the range of objects the discourses produce as possible to talk or think about, the repertory of statements which appear, the relations formed by discursive practice, the themes which are threaded through different discourses. At this stage this will remain a general account of the systems of meaning made

\textsuperscript{22} See for instance Bakhtin's use of history and society as texts in §3.2.3.1.
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available in the discourses I have selected as salient to standardisation; I leave it till Chapter Five to show directly how they are realised in the Hmong case study.
3.3 The discourses

3.3.1 Introduction

The discourses which emerge as frameworks of motivation, coherence and direction in Hmong standardisation are informed by conditions introduced in §2.2. These include:

- the recency of arrival of the Hmong in the west
- the prior conditions of this immigration—the refugee experience
- the dispersion involved in the relocation process
- the strong tradition of hope for Hmong lands and literacy
- the recency of development of the current script(s)
- the radical differences of culture between home country and country of immigration
- the surrounding linguistic environment in the countries of immigration
- the increased availability of advanced technology, in particular oriented to communications and publishing
- the more central position of formal education.

In the HLIA projects, which form the most localised aspect of the present study, further factors are implicated:

- the importance of the messianic tradition accepted by the community
- the status of the HLI community as a minority within a minority.

These and other conditions have seen the strong development of six discourses as frameworks of the standardisation process:

(i) Nationism
(ii) Scientism
(iii) Religion
(iv) Literacy
(v) Technology
(vi) Westernism
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I make use of these six major discourses as an overarching framework within which to explore the multiple interacting ideologies, statements and practices of the study. In the course of their explication, not surprisingly, others come to light that are interwoven with or subsumed within them. For instance, a discourse of pedagogy becomes apparent during investigation of the literacy discourse; a functionalist discourse is evident in aspects of technology and nationism. My primary aim in this section is to make a preliminary statement as to the objects of discourse brought into being by the six discourses listed above—that is, what are the ways in which it is possible to think, converse, and direct action because of the frameworks provided by these discourses. This will require a little deconstruction of the discourses to uncover the principles on which they are built, and how the relations between disparities are formed. In each section, I also relate these general observations directly to their specific interactions with standardization processes: How does each of these discourses effect attitudes and actions in standardization projects?

Following the description of the many aspects of the case study in Chapter Four, the work of the present section will then form the basis for the detailed, local analysis in Chapter Five of recent and current standardization processes in Hmong.

3.3.2 Nationist discourse

Nationist discourse is that which allows for discussion of issues in terms of the concept of nation, or by reference to core defining values of the nation. It makes it possible to promote a view on the basis of questions of cohesion, continuity, and strength of the nation. Histories of family and nation; values, law, and spiritual principles held by predecessors; specific skills of technologies, crafts and cooking; are all included in the body of knowledge seen as maintaining a continuous community/national identity.

3.3.2.1 The construction of nationhood

What defines a nation, or the idea of nation in the first place, forms the foundation of nationist discourse. The concept of nation, and related entities such as race and language, as pre-existent, unitary entities has been thoroughly deconstructed over the last fifteen years or so. Important works include: Gates (1985 [1986]), a significant early collection; Wodak et al (1998 [1999]), a detailed study of how Austrian identity is constructed in discourse; Mudrooroo (1995), on indigenous Australian nationhood; and Anderson (1983 [1991]), the source of the much-quoted 'imagined communities'. The term 'imagined communities' can tend to imply that

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I discuss other possible discourses further in §5.3.1.3.
these communities are not real. In Anderson's work, however, the term 'imagined' foregrounds the principle that the reality of communities lies in how they are imaged/imagined. In the conceptual framework of the present thesis also, reality and imaging/construction are not defined in opposition. Rather, it is the construction of nation/community by means of practices, statements, institutions etc. which constitutes its existence in reality.

Wodak et al (1998 [1999]) assesses theories of how both individual and national identity are constructed, taking particular note of Ricoeur, Anderson, Hall, Kolakowski and Bourdieu (see pp11–29). Space being inadequate here to encapsulate their synthesis, I content myself with a summary of the five 'thematic areas' the authors subsequently work with for their own analysis of the construction of Austrian identity:

1. the construction of a 'national body' by association with physical objects and markers (geographical proximity, political boundaries).

2. the construction of the attributions/nature of a national/ethnic type (marked by language, hereditary descent, character traits seen as typical or mass behaviour tendencies)

3. the narration of a common political past (identification with historical events, knowledge and practices)

4. the construction of a common culture (norms of family, work, religion, identification with an artistic or philosophical heritage)

5. the construction of a common political present and future (acknowledged or enforced governmental authority, legal system, administrative systems of, for example, education and economics).

These five strategies that peoples use to construct a national identity can function as an initial working framework to studies outside of the Austrian nation.

There is no nation comprised entirely of individuals and organisations uniformly and consistently operating within a unitary model of any of the above. In the construction of the nation, varying sets of defining factors are selected or negotiated at different times and in different places or circumstances.

It is particularly interesting to investigate the operation and effect of such strategies where core values (Smolicz 1981), or elements of the construction of nation considered to be definitive, are absent. For instance, the self-identifying Hmong nation is one amongst many that retains land as a defining value, despite having in the present no lands by which to claim nationhood. In this situation, a strong and sometimes active collective hope of attaining or regaining lands identified
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with the nation may be seen. A representative of Karen dissidents who were at the time holding military posts along the Burma–Thai border is quoted as explaining:

We have a language, we have a government, we have a flag—the only thing we lack is a country.

Webb (1995): 112

Nations, like other 'imagined communities', are crucially defined in opposition. Mudrooroo explains how indigenous and colonising Australians became defined as two unitary groups, each in opposition to the other. The condition of multiplicity, of languages, social structures, family networks and so on, of people living in Australia in the centuries before colonisation, was then brought into being as a singularity, when it became viewed as such:

To effectively struggle we had to acquiesce in becoming the one mob of the colonisers, though we knew that before we had been many and are still many. Still, education made us become the Native, the Other, opposed to the colonisers, the Masters, who were themselves more than one mob. They themselves had inscribed and written down themselves as one mob. Against You Mob, we became Us Mob.


Here, it is in opposition to the identity of the viewers that the viewed becomes singular, being critically defined as 'not-viewer'. Identification with this unification construct on the part of the 'viewed' is a strategy directed to creating a position of communal strength, for the purposes of opposition. The same principle of duality functions also to create singularity in the viewer—in order to affirm themselves as 'not-viewed', they must self-define as a unit, or 'one mob'.

The discourse of nationism does not in itself prescribe positions or opinions held. Discourses simply delineate and bring into being possible fields of thought, discussion and action. For instance, on the means to maintain the nationhood of minorities, both progressivist and conservationist positions can be found. There are those who wish to maintain a concept of their ethnic group/nation in a certain condition. This may be traceable to a landmark of loss of crucial features of their sense of nation, such as happens in refugee immigration. It is quite common, for example, to find a more conservative form of a migrant language in the country of immigration than the related variety in its home location. Frequently however, this is an orientation found in the discourse of outgroup members of a dominant culture, which in defining the Other in

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24 As for instance in Australian Greek, or French in Quebec.
3.3 The discourses

terms of difference, images certain groups of people as premodern, if not primitive, while framing this imposition as a support to the perpetuation of an identity:

We describe the dress and artifacts of these tribal people as they are...before the onset of such modernization...to present as early as possible those elements of their material and spiritual culture that have made them distinctively Karen, Hmong...

Lewis and Lewis (1984):3

Principles such as this directing perception and representation constitute a denial of change which, especially within a dominant cultural context, has considerable potential to restrict and control the directions open to people. In the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en land trial in 1987–1990, one of the main themes of the Province’s case was that ‘if Native people use automobiles, electric lights, eat pizza...they are really just like Europeans, they have somehow given up their birthright’ (Monet and Skanu’u 1992:46):

Mr. Muldoe!
There is a small restaurant on Kispiox Reserve where you can buy hamburgers, isn’t there? And coleslaw and fries!

You can probably buy ice cream there too!


25 Pete Muldoe (G’itzudahl) is a chief of the Giskaast Clan, Gitksan/Wet’suwet’en people, Kispiox Village (on Native American Reserve territory).
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3.3.2.2 Nationist discourse and language standardization

In the context of language standardization, nationist discourse provides for:

- Relations between language and national identity.

For instance, speakers of Bunuba (Western Australia) have deliberately designed their new orthography to mark the differentiation of their language from that of their closely related Gooniyandi neighbours.\(^{26}\)

- Relations between language and the maintenance of culture:

  "The Polish community has been cited as one of the examples of communities where language is a 'core value'\(^{27}\) ... The church representative ... regards it as an integral part of the religion that he feels to be essential to Polish culture and 'spirit'."

  *Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels (1995): 142*

- Language, writing, and linguistic artefacts held specifically by the nation.

Forms of speech or writing valued as symbolic of the nation are opposed to those brought in by colonising/proselytising peoples, or borrowed from other language groups in the environment.\(^{28}\) Greater resistance to incursion is generally noticeable where the language and/or its speakers are perceived as a threat to the recognition or vitality of the language or language group (see §4.4.1). The valued forms may be in active, current usage or have historical/traditional status:

  "Ancestral languages are present in every community, even if only a few words are used. Even then, they continue to exist in a deep and abiding sense of loss."

  *Mudrooroo (1995): 65*

The assessment of similarity and distance between languages within nationist discourse may come into conflict with concepts of equivalence/contrast within the scientist discourse:

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\(^{26}\) Bill McGregor (p.c.).

\(^{27}\)See Smolicz (1981) for explanation of this concept.

\(^{28}\)See Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels (1995) for some examples of ethnic communities who appear not to prioritise language as a core value of their heritage.
3.3 The discourses

there are language varieties which are so close that I would call them dialectal varieties, but which for certain political and ideological reasons are declared to be different languages. We are in the realm where alleged scientific reality comes into conflict with actual social reality.

Ibid., p1

For both paradigms, the assessment will depend on what is selected for observation, or on the position which is selected as vantage point. In Chapter Four I show how the nationist assessment of Hmong dialects as equivalent or in contrast depends on whether the aim is to construct a single H/Mong nation or acknowledge different groups of H/Mong.

3.3.3 Scientist discourse

In the context of academic work, the scientist discourse is probably more difficult to deconstruct than any other. The scientist discourse has hegemonic status in academic disciplines; and as such is naturalised to a considerable degree (that is, it is invisible from within the boundaries drawn by the discourse), and locates the writer in a subject position that perpetuates its dominance. In other words, in doing this work I take on an identity or subject position that acquiesces to and works within the principles the discourse sets out. The alternative is, quite simply, not to be doing scientist work. Lyotard, using Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games' (Wittgenstein 1957 [1968]) to describe the workings of scientist discourse, explains this:

If there are no rules, there is no game, that even an infinitesimal modification of one rule alters the nature of the game, that a "move" or utterance that does not satisfy the rules does not belong to the game they define.

Lyotard (1979 [1984]):10

There is a distinction between what I am referring to as scientist and the more general term scientific. Scientific studies encompass a wide range of intellectual explorations of knowledge; scientist refers to the specific instantiation of a discourse in which rational is constructed in opposition to non-rational, and objective in opposition to subjective. Observable, repeatable, verifiable occurrences delineate the canon worthy of study; analysis and categorisation are among the more privileged activities. Research and documentation refer to and build on a dense web of manifest intertextuality (see §3.2.3.3) and an established system of authorisation. The present section sets out to explore these and other defining characteristics of the discourse.

Some assistance in the rather circuitous endeavour to deconstruct a discourse within which I am concurrently working is provided by:
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(i) prior work on the deconstruction of discourses of knowledge by and following such thinkers as Foucault and Lyotard; and

(ii) a methodology of considering several discourses in the one study, highlighting by contrast what is created as an object of discourse in one by its exclusion from another. The boundaries of the one discourse are brought into relief—or even brought into being—by the construction of the other.

These are the tools with which to attempt to render the opaque transparent—to identify the kinds of thought, action and relations supported and made possible within the scientist discourse.

3.3.3.1 Knowledge and legitimation

The scientist discourse privileges certain kinds of knowledge, and kinds of acquisition and distribution of knowledge. In this it is like any other discourse. However, as a hegemonic discourse in western culture, and moreover one which is overtly a discourse of knowledge, it thereby functions to legitimate knowledge as such, rather than simply within scientism:

In western thinking, the dominant intellectual and ideological paradigm, or discourse, is the 'scientific' and this paradigm concerns itself with what it claims are scientific 'facts'. Only scientific 'facts' have any validity, or at least more validity than social facts.

_Mudrooroo (1995):61_

Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999) explain the use of elements of scientist style as a persuasive device in presenting environmental arguments (see especially pp64ff). This is only possible because of the status of this discourse in the west as a source of authority. In this discursive context, knowledge and the practice of knowledge are valued because they are scientific. The authority of the scientist discourse is internal to the discourse. As explained in Eira (1998):

There is a tendency within this ideology to pass off any motivation other than the scientific as 'superstitious' or 'unenlightened'. For people educated in the western mode to assume rights of educational authority over an illiterate people,

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29 See Foucault (1971) for further explanation of the concept of exclusion.

30 See Foucault (1971) for a discussion of the development of this situation as a history of the will to truth.
3.3 The discourses

however, could also be called unenlightened, and to presume unquestioningly the superiority of a phonemic over a logographic script is no more rational a position than a superstition. In the last analysis, scientific methodology is deemed superior because it is scientific.

or, again using the game metaphor:

'Who decides the conditions of truth?' It is recognized that the conditions of truth, in other words, the rules of the game of science, are immanent in that game, that they can only be established within the bounds of a debate that is already scientific in nature.

Lyotard (1979 [1984]):29

What, then, counts as scientific knowledge? For one thing, it is defined in opposition to non-rational knowledges and their forms of expression. Scientism constructs a dichotomy of rational:non-rational, in which the many phenomena not explainable within the fundamental tenets of western science are grouped together. The commonality of this disparate collection—which is what I discuss in §3.3.4 as the 'religious' discourse—is constructed from what they are not.

Lyotard (1979 [1984]) (henceforth in this section 'Lyotard') further characterises scientific knowledge as that which can be verified or falsified. It is concerned with denotation, with empirically observable and repeatable phenomena, measurement. The process of verification/falsification is necessarily contextualised in a discursive environment of legitimation. The speaker/writer is required to have proof of what is stated, and also:

31 Significant shifts are developing in the science paradigm (as distinct from the scientist discourse), as physics in particular moves towards a focus of interest on the unpredictable, especially with the development of quantum theory. A famous example is Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which explains that 'you can't know where an atom, or electron, or whatever, is located and know how it is moving, at one and the same time...the very concept of an atom with a definite location and motion is meaningless...there is no answer to a question of the sort 'Where is it and how fast is it going?' Position and motion (strictly, momentum) form two mutually incompatible aspects of reality for the microscopic particle.' (Davies 1983:103.)
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...to be able to refute any opposing or contradictory statements concerning the same referent...

...it must be possible to decide whether or not a given statement pertains to the language judged relevant by the experts.

Ibid: pp19–23

This immediately brings up the second question: who are these 'experts'? For Lyotard, the judges of legitimacy are authorised in an ongoing process of consensus. Again, a certain circularity is involved: the experts are those accepted as competent by the community of experts:

The truth of the statement and the competence of its sender are thus subject to the collective approval of a group of persons who are competent on an equal basis.

Ibid: p24

As noted in §3.2.3.3, it is a requirement of academic writing that the community of experts be overtly acknowledged. Halliday and Martin (1993) analyses how Darwin, in *The origin of the species*, situates himself within this system of authority even as he overrides some of its valued tenets:

The first motive that emerges is very clearly one of authority, beginning with the Theme of the first clause ‘authors of the highest eminence’. This...becomes solidary with...an earlier chapter where, mentioning a number of authorities who have (contra Darwin) ‘maintained the immutability of a species’, he then goes on: ‘But I have reason to believe that one great authority, Sir Charles Lyell, from further reflexion entertains grave doubts on this subject’. The motif of authority is thus already given, constructed out of the morphological relationship of ‘authors’ = ‘authorities’.32

*Halliday and Martin (1993):95*

It should be noted that being refuted does not constitute nonacceptance in this community. The scientist discourse thrives on the productive accumulation of conflicts in ideas:

32 Halliday goes on to show how Darwin establishes his own argument in reference to a higher authority still: the Creator.
[disciplines] consist of errors as well as truths, errors that are in no way residuals, or foreign bodies, but having their own positive functions and their own valid history, such that their roles are often indissociable from that of the truths.

Foucault (1971):223

Furthermore, as pointed out in §3.2.3.2, to argue against is in itself to validate, and opposition is as intrinsic to the structure of power as is identification. The institutions of scientism are based on verification and falsification, and only those statements considered capable of falsification are addressed. Nonconformity with what is acceptable as a scientific contribution is a different animal—and the penalty is rather higher:

[A player] is silenced or consents, not because [s/]he has been refuted, but because his[her] ability to participate has been threatened (there are many ways to prevent someone from playing).

Lyotard (1979 [1984]):63

What is more impervious to change, then, is the definition of what constitutes valid research and knowledge—what the discourse ratifies as objects of study, processes and goals:

The intellectual biases built into an academic discipline are most clearly revealed by considering not what range of explanations it makes available for the phenomena falling within its domain but rather what questions pertaining to those phenomena cannot be raised within the theoretical framework it provides.

Harris (1990):153

Undoubtedly, instigators of major paradigm shifts in the sciences are counted among our 'great thinkers'—but not generally at the time.

There are restrictions and complexities to the general structure proposed by Lyotard however. In the first place, this community is, like the concept of nation described in Anderson (1983 [1991]), to an extent imagined or imaged. Firstly, the immense volume of statements, decisions and activities which continually emerge under the auspices of the scientist discourse are not each individually assessed by actual persons in an authoritative community. Rather, it is the parameters and boundaries of what falls within acceptability as scientific which are determined, guarded, and developed by people and, more abstractly, institutions, to which this authority is ascribed. Secondly, sources of authority are not restricted to those conventionally thought of as scientists or scientistic institutions. The scientist discourse being a discourse of significant currency in the general population, the function of legitimation is frequently referred to mass media and similar public discourse arenas, sometimes disseminating and sometimes countering the validity of findings and opinions of specialists in scientific fields. Thirdly, as in other
discursive structures, the discourse itself, in its local forms once these have emerged and become established, becomes the primary authority. As discussed in §3.2.3.2, individuals including those deemed authoritative have agency but not sovereignty in the directions the discourse takes. Ideas, procedures, objects which are legitimated within the discourse thereby have reality and influence beyond the opinions and actions of individuals.

A final, and perhaps the most contentious, point made by Lyotard concerns the relations within scientist discourse of knowledge, technology and economics. Because of the reliance of this discourse on verifiability, he argues, including the inherent logical and philosophical problems of what verifiability can mean; determining what constitutes (scientific) knowledge has shifted to a question of what technology is available to record and provide evidence. This in turn implicates the systems of how research endeavours are selected for funding:

No money, no proof—and that means no verification of statements and no truth. The games of scientific language become the games of the rich, in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right...

...since performativity increases the ability to produce proof, it also increases the ability to be right: the technical criterion, introduced on a massive scale into scientific knowledge, cannot fail to influence the truth criterion.

Lyotard (1979 [1984]):45–6

Lyotard is not simply pointing out that research is directed by available funding, he is claiming that funding produces the criteria for what constitutes science, knowledge and truth. The objects created as such within the discourse are not only portrayed as knowledge, they are knowledge, since knowledge can only be that which is perceivable as such.

Foucault describes how Mendel’s ground-breaking work in (the then unformed discourse of) genetics was incomprehensible to other scientists of his time:

Mendel spoke the truth, but he was not dans le vrai (within the true) of contemporary biological discourse: it was simply not along such lines that objects and biological concepts were formed.

Foucault (1971):224

In this way discourse predefines what is conceivable as knowledge, areas of research, modes of investigation. The kind of knowledge available to be considered depends on the discourse operative.

In summary, the scientist discourse
3.3 The discourses

(i) defines the kinds of questions legitimated within the discourse

- defines the boundaries of a discipline
- is concerned with verifiable and falsifiable phenomena
- opposes rational:non-rational

(ii) sets in place systems of authorisation of knowledges

- refers to an imaged community of authorised experts
- defines roles and types of participation

(iii) determines the accreditation of methodologies

- is directed by the available tools, in part determined by available funding

(iv) gives rise to statements, that is, formulated representations of knowledge, coherent within the discourse

- produces genres for the presentation of knowledge.

3.3.3.2 Scientism, linguistics and standardization

The process of standardisation interacts with the scientist discourse largely in that it is closely connected with the academic discipline of linguistics. While the scientist discourse is not the only discourse operative within linguistics, it is the dominant discourse. To this the lingering stigmatisation of areas of linguistics such as sociolinguistics, discourse theory, and even applied linguistics as marginal to 'scientific linguistics' is a testimony. So too, since resistance entails acceptance of the status quo of the resisted, is the active advocacy of those subdisciplines by researchers in those fields.

In response to the 'rules' of what is included in a language description in the Australian linguistics tradition, Andrew Pawley refers to Grace (1981):

A language should not be assumed to have just the characteristics of its linguistic description. [Grace] argued that 'grammar and lexicon are terms referring to parts of linguistic description, not to parts of languages', and that our view of the basic structure of language is partly a function of the traditional aesthetics of scientific discourse.

Pawley (1993):123
3. Shuttles

While what Pawley is arguing for here is that greater attention should be paid to idiomatic usage, the comment could be seen as relevant to a much larger possible picture of linguistic description:33

There is in reality no fixed or permanent meaning of an utterance but only impermanent value of the implied (spoken or written) parts and their textual, co-textual and co-contextual relations. There is no universally or context-free pre-defined correct use of a text independent of persons, logic, time and place, i.e. the deictical and topical cultural conjecture.

*Deer & Bang 1996:21, quoted in Muhlhäusler (to appear)*

Not only the definition of the research object, but procedures of research and research dissemination, the roles of researcher and consultant, the kinds of evidence considered valuable, are also included in the range of things for which the scientist discourse has developed systems of accreditation.

As noted in §1.2.3, some of these have begun to be denaturalised, and their position questioned and adjusted within the practice of linguistics. In the remainder of this section I would like to briefly point out some of the stakes in the discourse, aspects of which are called into question by the principles of the present research.

**Consultancy research conventions**

In 1.2.3 I began to consider the relationships between consultant and researcher. In the context of the scientist discourse, this is partly concerned with the attribution of authorship to linguistic research. Conventionally, the researcher's name is assigned to publications involving consultancy work.34 This practice reflects what is considered to constitute scientific work—in this case, the practitioner is the one who (interprets and) records language data, not the one who (interprets and) represents the language; the trained person is the one with formal expertise in the science of language analysis, not the one with internalised expertise in the understanding of the language.35 These definitions are a function of the scientist discourse.

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33See also Harris (1990) on the restriction on 'being political' within the scientist framework.

34Moreover, the default assumption of ethics assessment procedures in Australian universities is that the anonymity of the consultant should be preserved.

35Of course, it is also often the case that the designated author is the senior person recorded in such things as funding applications: this too is a function of the discourse formation.
The view of consultant and researcher roles has become a site of change. Terms appearing in linguistics publications are indicative: from being referentially absent from the project altogether, speaker-participants other than official researchers have been designated variously 'informant', 'consultant', 'teacher,' 'language worker' and 'language expert'. These terms imply different kinds of roles and relationships between speakers and outgroup workers. A language worker could designate ingroup or outgroup worker, while an informant is someone whose knowledge is brought into a centralised pool by authorised experts who analyse and assess it. However, as has been noted many times in the deconstruction of language exclusive of women, changes in reference terminology need not reflect an equivalent change in the operation of the discourse. The scientist discourse requires that consultant observations are intuitions where researcher observations are analyses; consultant perceptions are subjective where researcher perceptions are objective; direct elicitation risks interpretative distortion of material where empirical observation allows accurate data collection.

This highlights an interesting paradox within linguistics research practice. At the level of language use, the way the speech community uses their language is the worthy object of study, and community usage is the authority. At the same time, at the level of the language analysis, embarked upon for particular purposes and with particular symbologies, the speech community is not the authority. A 'folk etymology' analysis of a word, for instance, is deemed within the discourse to have less that is useful to say than a scientific approach to the same word. This can be seen in English, in the reaction to re-analyses of words such as manipulate, highlighting the present association of power with a tendency of male interactive style, rather than acknowledging the historical derivation of the word from manus 'hand'. This is a form of scientistic purism criticised by Thomas (1991):

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36 Compare the common use of this term in a police context.

37 The stigmatization of subjective research material is also changing, as some areas of research move to a focus on speaker perception (see for instance Pütz 1997; Wodak et al 1998 [1999]). Nonetheless, there is a distinction made between a) subjective comments by speakers and b) research which focuses on the subjective. Firstly, the comments are themselves the object of the research, as a means to understanding how certain concepts, such as identity, are constructed. In other words, the research itself is not presented as subjective, but only the material collected. In one recent review of a linguistics monograph, the investigation of 'traditional lore' is contrasted with 'current research findings'. Secondly, the research is designated as qualitative as opposed to quantitative. This use of paradigmatically interchangeable terms instates this mode of research status as a genre, and thereby position it within the bounds of the scientist discourse.
3. Shuttles

By favouring etymological over functional criteria in judging the desirability of linguistic items, purism may be a serious impediment to the spontaneous and planned growth of a language in accordance with its socio-communicative needs.

pp219-220

The point here is not which is valid according to the scientific criteria of correctness, but what is possible to learn from the different bases of analysis. Mythic histories of the origins of writing and language development, community designations of the boundaries between languages and dialects, and other conceptual or analytical aspects of language are not accredited within the linguistics discipline where they fall outside of what the scientist discourse accepts as valid. Spontaneous usage is the realm of the speech community; the analytical is the realm of scientist accreditation. In regard to the controversial status of the creole spoken in the Daly River area, Mudrooroo (1995) states clearly the implications of this situation:

The dominant, colonising culture accepts the scientific method as determining the truth or falseness of a proposition, but the subject group does not. If we seek to impose it on the group, it is to engage in that process of colonising which has been inflicted on the Indigenous peoples of Australia since the invasion.

p61

Scientist approaches to orthography

In orthographic development projects, the assumption is generally that ‘the ideal orthography is basically phonemic’ (Gudschinsky (1976)). This position arises most directly from the scientist discourse, privileging direct representation of patterns of discrete analytical components. Although most writers recognise the high loading of orthographies as political symbols and consequent volatility of community opinion in this area, this seems to have translated primarily into acknowledging the need for slow, careful consultation work with opinion leaders in the community, without shifting this fundamental scientist tenet.38

Opposing positions can be held within a discourse or changes made in the itemisation of specific statements held to be true. Here, it is possible to argue both for and against the superiority of a phonemic orthography and remain within the scientist discourse. Evidence could be drawn from success criteria of the practice of non-phonemic, and even non-alphabetic scripts. The implications of non-linear phonology could be discussed, as could problems of representing tone and perhaps other meaningful suprasegmentals. In this way, a discourse

38Two examples of this rather ubiquitous position are Smalley (1976c) and Hudson (1984).
3.3 The discourses

does not determine an ideological or polemical position but rather a set of ways in which it is possible to think, speak and act. The dominance of the scientist discourse as currently instantiated, however, functions as a high level of restriction on the legitimation of ways of thinking which in these cases means that alphabetic, phonemic systems are assumed as the basis for emergent orthographies. I discuss this further in the context of the roman script (see §3.3.7.2).

Accreditation and reproduction

Funding systems are targeted to individuals in particular circumstances. It might be acknowledged that some members of minority groups would prefer and have the right to work on their own projects rather than rely on outsiders. In the system we still work within, in which the most central member-types of the imaged mainstream community have the best access to education and resources, the practice of this ideal is still an uphill battle. Because these central member types are predominantly represented in roles and positions accredited by the scientist discourse, this means that it is their perspective which still characterises the range of possible knowledges within that frame, hence reproducing the current instantiation of the scientist discourse to a large extent. In the context of language planning and language standardisation work, this means that the shift, seen as vital by many, to community control over planning directions, is slowed by the circularity of how the scientist discourse legitimates knowledge and carriers of knowledge. In this way the status quo of hegemonic discourses is self-perpetuating.

Even when people accredited within the scientist discourse have an agenda of shifting the accepted types of knowledge and authorities outward from this restricted place, their location within the dominant discursive formation means that this does not in itself greatly extend the range of positions from which to view. As explained in §3.2.3, the range of what I am able to see is inevitably produced and restricted by my discursive identity—my position in systems of class, sex, ethnicity, education; the bank of experiences on which I can draw; the assumptions I have internalised. Since the discursive identities predominantly acting as recipients of grants and educational resources are central member-types of the mainstream discursive community; this therefore restricts the movement of the discourse as it is written and rewritten to within a small distance from where it is already situated. The process of change is necessarily slowed by the small range of discursive identities that are currently dominantly funded as researchers and (re)writers. Funding is not only the only kind of resource but is a fundamental one. Funding availability and specifications have significant impact on who is available to work on a project, and what printed resources, technology, publication opportunities, travel, and time are at their disposal and at the disposal of supporting workers—who are often among the people to whom the project is targeted.
3. Shuttles

Harre, Brockmeier and Mühlhäusler (1999) call repeatedly for diversity in approach as a basic prerequisite for coming to an adequately serviceable understanding of our environment:

We maintain...that the diversity of conceptual systems encountered in the world's languages offers a unique opportunity to learn from a diversity of perspectives.

In the light of the above, it is clear that the kind of diversity called for, here and elsewhere, must include diversity of discursive position. 39

3.3.3.3 Conclusions

The scientist discourse makes possible the framing of thought, discussion and action regarding language standardization in terms of verifiable data records, systems of proof, logical argumentation, reference to an established body of prior work and accountability to peer authority. Its scope extends well beyond the practices of researchers to general perceptions of the nature of knowledge. Scientific knowledge is here opposed to belief or tradition; which currently in the west are held to be inferior forms of knowledge, although this was not always the case. Since scientism is the dominant discourse in the genre and field of this thesis, the greater proportion of my work is conducted within its boundaries. To the extent that the appropriateness of aspects of this discourse have been brought into question however, this work will also be seen to contribute to pushing out these boundaries, and/or investigating the resources of other discourses for procedures and principles in an ever-increasing web of interdiscursivity.

3.3.4 Religious discourse

3.3.4.1 A construction of opposition

What I am referring to as the religious discourse is defined, not on some a priori notion of 'religiousness', nor on a connection with a god-figure or book of spiritual teachings, 40 but largely in opposition to the scientist discourse. From the perspective of western scientism, anything

39 See Carbaugh (1992) for an interesting account of two very different perspectives on a debate about economic development of a mountain, related to different spatial reference points of the interlocutors. Discussed in (Harre, Brockmeier and Mühlhäusler 1999.)

40 See Goody (1986) on the distinctions between 'book religions' and 'local religions' and their ramifications.
classed as not-scientist, or not-rationalist, tends to be seen as magical, spiritual, religious. In this view, then, the discourse connects together a wide range of disparate concepts and objects defined largely by what they are not. Practices including fire-walking, honoring of ancestors, psychic surgery, divination of various kinds, feng shui, are thus included. In the discourse formations of their practitioners, such practices are not necessarily considered to be religious, or necessarily located in a rational:non-rational opposition.

This oppositional construction is one which needs to be treated with care, having led in the past to such atrocities as the burning of totems in Canada, on the assumption that, being inexplicable within western rationalism, they must be religious manifestations, and thereby in conflict with the religious ideologies of the colonisers. With this in mind, however, it will be useful to maintain this opposition for the present context, and include all of the above phenomena as well as other manifestations, tenets and practices incompatible with the scientist discourse under a general designation ‘religious’.

The ways of seeing made possible through the religious discourse stand starkly outside of the kinds of knowledge accepted within the scientist discourse. To view the discourse from the perspective of scientism provides an excellent illustration of reality as a construction, since from within the scientist discourse, it is very transparent that the relations formed in religious discourse do not have universal truth value, but that rather, they are constructed and relevant within a restricted range of ways of seeing. The trap to avoid here is seeing this characteristic as specific to religious discourse, which would be to miss the point entirely. All discourses have a set of definitive founding assumptions or principles: for the scientist discourse it is the behaviour of objects in our universe according to natural laws (as the present configuration of the discourse understands them), whereas for the religious discourse it is the existence and activity of entities (beings, forces, principles) outside of those laws.

Objects of religious discourse include: higher beings and other non-earthly beings; communication between such beings and people on earth; the nature of life before birth and

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41 It is interesting in this light that narratives of marginal Others, such as life forms on other worlds, and marginal states of consciousness, such as psychosis, also make an appearance in this opposition. Phenomena such as trance states and hearing voices are depicted both as psychosis and as religious states. Opinions about the existence of alien beings are discussed in terms of belief; the idea of communication with them is received on much the same terms as the idea of communication with ancestors or higher beings; travel to their worlds is portrayed in literature and movies with metaphors of death and madness.
after death; the origins of material existence; mortality and immortality; spirit, soul, mind and body; paranormal states of consciousness; good and evil. Like the religious:scientist dichotomy, or perhaps as a reflection of it, the principle of construction at this level too, is one of oppositions. The discourse brings its objects into being by focussing attention on the other-than—not-human, not-alive, not-material, not-rational—and drawing all these other-thans into a whole which is constructed of relations between the disparities. The discourse includes also all the practices with which the above are maintained as objects of discourse: the relations between religion and economics, politics, education, the family unit, designation of authority figures and institutions. It extends to the relations constructed between these objects of discourse and ideologies of language, language planning, script development.

3.3.4.2 Religious discursive formations and standardization

Religious discourse creates an area within which it is possible to think about language issues in terms of:

- relations between a particular religion and the language/script in which it is practised.

Consider for instance the function of Latin in the Roman Catholic church. In Croatia and Serbia, the choice of script to demarcate national identity simultaneously demarcates religious identity.

Monet and Skanu'u (1992):123

- relations between language authority and religious authority.

The Farhangestân, the standardization body of Iran active in the thirties, was positioned in the struggle for power between church and state. Religious leaders opposed it as:
little more than a plot to sever the linguistic links between Iran and Islam...one more effort to sever the masses from their faith...a disguise for chauvinistic antagonism directed by the state against Islam


- otherworld involvement in human language practices.

The ascription of scripts to deities is perhaps surprisingly common (see Cooper 1991 amongst others). Brahmi is ascribed to Brahma; the Japanese kami no moji 'graphs of the gods', appearing in the late eighteenth century, were accepted by some Japanese as divinely inspired and pre-dating the emergence of Chinese writing (Jensen 1958 [1970]).

- religious goals of literacy

A major landmark of full membership in a Jewish synagogue is the demonstrated ability to read the Torah for the congregation. The ability to read other texts is not a requirement for this accreditation.

The relations between written language forms and religion have been a focus of interest among writers on orthography development, some of which I summarise in Eira (1998). Cooper (1991) surveys several of the many instances of scripts being understood as gifts from the otherworld; Goody (1986) investigates the connections between literacy and types of religions; Goody (1987) looks at the association of particular scripts with particular religious practices; while Wellisch (1978) discusses the link between missionary expeditions of particular book religions and current location of the associated scripts of literacy around the world.

Unexplained phenomena including paranormal experiences, received knowledge, concepts of orthodoxy in belief and practice, and the embedding of deep truths and future hopes in symbolic icons, are all implicated in aspects of Hmong standardization. The oppositional relation between the scientist and religious discourses makes it possible to think about a series of important dichotomous relations which are becoming apparent, firstly between certain groups of Hmong, and secondly between the views of the scientist tradition and the views of some of my consultants. This partially denaturalised opposition (scientist:religion) is part of the 'stake in the struggle' in standardization debates in Hmong—that is, parts of the debate are overtly about whether the scientist or religious discourse is the more important.

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42 See also a criticism of some of Goody's ideas in §3.3.5.1.
3. Shuttles

3.3.5 Literacy discourse

The literacy discourse is concerned with narratives of the goals, uses and effects of literacy, and the means to acquiring it or encouraging its acquisition. It gives rise to connections between literacy and progress, religion, modes of thought, access to power—and, conversely, assimilation into a dominant culture—and agendas for orthography development. A few examples will illustrate:

(i) The Vai (Liberia) use the Vai syllabary for secular functions, switching to Arabic script for religious works (Goody 1987).

(ii) In a handbook targeted to missionary-linguists, Gudschinsky (1965) defines literacy as 'the ability to read the Bible fluently and with understanding' (p1).

(iii) When European settlers were taking over Aotearoa (New Zealand), literacy was imaged as the essential difference between Maori and pakeha (non-Maori):

> The Pacific Islanders had long grasped the fact that the real difference between their culture and the European was that theirs was non-literate, the other literate. The key to the new world with all its evident power was the written word.

> Parsonson 1967, quoted in Mühlhäusler (1990):191

(iv) Orthography development for Hmong in Thailand in the seventies was geared ultimately to literacy in Thai:

> Needless to say, the class conventions follow Thai usage and have nothing to do with Hmong phonemic structure or phonemic history. They are simply applied to Hmong to bring the greatest transfer value to Thai usage.

> Smalley (1976b):118

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43 Whether this imaging was a projection of European perceptions of their own power or an interpretation of the Maori themselves is another question. According to Parr (1963) the image was for the Maori shortlived:

> It was considered by 'some of the Hokianga chiefs that the Europeans taught the Maoris to figure and write only to encourage them to go to England where they would be killed for their land'

> Parr (1963), quoted in Mühlhäusler (1990):193

44 See also Appendix C for discussion of political agendas for other Hmong orthographies.
3.3 The discourses

The practical outworking of the literacy discourse is the linking of script and orthography design with the goal of ease of learning and teaching, and/or ease of use for fluent users. This might be called a pedagogical (sub)discourse.

3.3.5.1 Definitions/ideologies of literacy

The term literacy warrants some closer examination, since its definition is in itself political, having the potential to effect inclusion and exclusion, and support restrictive stereotyping of people’s capacities on the basis of their form/s of literacy. In regard to language standardization, it is probably reasonable to restrict the definition to written/printed forms. Skill in production and decipherment of other kinds of linguistic record are also referred to as literacy—either in a revision of ideas about language communities elsewhere treated as ‘preliterate’ (see for instance Boone 1994), or in an extension of concepts of literacy to the ‘postliterate’ literacies involved in media and communications technology (see §3.3.6.2).

Even restricting the field to writing/print however, there are various possible levels of relevant definition. Gee (1990) (henceforth in this section ‘Gee’) explains at length that ‘the traditional conception of literacy as the ability to read and write is deeply problematic’ (p49), because it views literacy as an essentially individual and cognitive ability, rather than being embedded in essentially social and ideological conditions. Gee discusses the social/ideological content inherent in literacy in three views of successively increasing scope.

Firstly, to be literate implies not only to be able to read (or write) but to be able to read something—and that something is not at all separable from the social knowledges within which it is situated. A reader must not only have learned how to comprehend writing as linguistic forms; s/he must also be able to understand ‘how to do’ each reading, in the practice of a particular social group/institution that ‘also involve[s] ways of talking, interacting, thinking, valuing and believing’ (p44). This is the value of literacy that the kind of education referred to by Gudschinsky (1965) aims for (see above). Literacy education by religious-based groups invariably focuses on texts of the religion—either with the overt goal of facilitating access to the texts, or simply utilising them as a source for language lessons, translation, lexicography etc. In acquiring the cognitive skills of coding and decoding graphemic symbols, the student also learns the tenets of the religion, principles of interpretation of the content, his/her place in an order of human and other (higher) beings, how s/he is referred to in what s/he reads (subject position), disciplines and practices such as liturgical recitation, obedience, asceticism, prayer at particular times, etc:

people will not really have the bible until they can read it for themselves

Gudschinsky (1965):1
3. Shuttles

Secondly, Gee points out the difference between reading the meaning determined by the prevailing ideology or discourse, and being able to read meaning outside of the range delineated by the ideologies and discourses. He questions whether literacy in which meaning is controlled by 'an authoritative institution that delimits correct interpretations' is essentially any different to a situation of 'quantitatively more restricted literacy' (p37). In other words, assessing that a high proportion of people in a given group have a certain measurable degree of skill in decoding written strings of language (which is the more conventional object of statistical literacy evaluations) has little to say about whether this proportion have the capacity to critically comprehend the text that they read. Gee is suggesting that a level of literacy in which comprehension of a text is restricted to understanding only which orthodox meaning it conveys, does not facilitate the access to progress, power, freedom, or other kinds of advancement that the narrative of literacy anticipates:

The most striking continuity in the history of literacy is the way in which literacy has been used, in age after age, to solidify the social hierarchy, empower elites and ensure that people lower on the hierarchy accept the values, norms and beliefs of the elites, even when it is not in their self-interest (or 'class interest') to do so.

Gee (1990):40

Thirdly, Gee calls for great wariness with respect to prevalent ideas of the effects of acquiring the ability to read and write:

In contrast to the literacy myth, nothing follows from literacy or schooling. Much follows, however, from what comes with literacy and schooling...the attitudes, values, norms and beliefs

p42

In other words, in the first place, there is no natural cause and effect between the ability to read and write, and any kind of intellectual, social, cultural or political propensity; but, in the second place, the teaching/acquisition of literacy in this technical sense is necessarily simultaneously the teaching/acquisition of aspects of the culture, politics, socialisation, logic patterns etc of that literacy. However, it is the conceptualisation of both kinds of association which are of interest in this study.

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45 This term, from Graff (1987), refers to the many effects ascribed to the acquisition of reading and writing skills.
Literacy in the superficial sense of individual ability is a skill which has been loaded with attributions including:  

logical analytic, critical and rational thinking, general and abstract uses of language, a skeptical and questioning attitude, a distinction between myth and history, the recognition of the importance of time and space, complex and modern governments (with separation of church and state), political democracy and greater social equity, economic development, wealth and productivity, political stability, urbanisation, and contraception (a lower birth rate). It is also supposed to lead to people who are innovative, achievement oriented, productive, cosmopolitan, media and politically aware, more globally (nationally and internationally) and less locally oriented, with more liberal and humane social attitudes, less likely to commit a crime, and more likely to take education, and the rights and duties of citizenship, seriously.  

Gee (1990):32

As might be guessed from this quote, Gee has much to caution against the Havelock/Goody school, in which associations are strongly forged between literacy/orality and kinds of civilisations, kinds of religions, kinds of philosophy and science (see Goody 1968, 1986, 1987). The narrative of Goody and his school is a highly teleological one, and told firmly from the perspective of western societies (see §3.3.7). The limits of what can be known within this narrative become clearest in Ong (1982). In this work, Ong argues for a category of 'residual orality' to explain why some groups of people whose cultures incorporate the skills and habits of literacy (in which he includes, for instance, speakers of Arabic and Greek as well as young Afro-Americans) nonetheless do not exhibit modes of thought and expression observed in the constructed category of 'literate cultures':

many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambience, preserve much of the mind-set of primary orality

Ong (1982):11

It is fairly transparent that what Ong has in mind is simply the norm of dominant western cultures. The definition precedes and determines the findings. As Gee argues, this use of 'literacy' and

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46 The westernist orientation of this list is noticeable. See below.

47 For Plato, however, the practice of literacy was conducive to the deterioration of memory and a view of knowledge both facile and false (Gee 1990).
3. Shuttles

'orality' categories reflect ideologies of class and ethnicity more than anything which can be related to literacy in practical terms:

Scribner and Cole (1981) found that neither syllabic Vai literacy, nor Arabic alphabetic literacy is associated with what have been considered higher order intellectual skills as these are tested by our typical school-based tests. Neither of these types of literacy enhanced the use of taxonomic skills, nor did either contribute to a shift toward syllogistic reasoning. In contrast, literacy in English, the only form associated with formal schooling of the Western sort, was associated with some types of decontextualisation and abstract reasoning.

Gee (1990):38

That criticisms of 'the literacy myth' can be made at all demonstrates a shift in paradigm and reflects work done on denaturalising these kinds of narratives during the last two decades. In the discursive context in which ideas of the Havelock/Goody school arose, some interesting and useful patterns were brought to light. However, the current discursive environment requires that such narratives be treated cautiously, following twenty plus years of excavation and questioning of authorial objectivity, construction of the Other, differential evolutionary states of human groups, concepts of advancement and supremacy myths.

All of this is precisely what I am referring to by the term literacy discourse—the connections formed between disparities to create frames within which to think about literacy. Gee's list of connections given above derives primarily from mainstream western discourses of literacy. In the context of Hmong literacy development, further connections are evident, as I show in §5.2.4.

3.3.5.2 Literacy, pedagogy, standardization

Concepts within this discourse connecting ideas of literacy such as those discussed above with language standardization figure especially prominently where that language is considered endangered in some sense; where it is a minority language; where its standardization has a significant political agenda; and where it is a language of emerging literacy. The importance ascribed to literacy within language planning agendas in these contexts is explainable by the raised status of standardized languages, and in that standardization of written forms is commonly considered to be an indispensable part of, if not precursor to, investment in widespread literacy programs. The profile of standardization in such literacy programs is high, again indicating that literacy goes well beyond reading and writing per se—it involves training in predetermined modes of correctness in expression. Tools of standardization such as dictionaries and language primers are developed in part with literacy programs in mind. Development of these tools not only requires decisions about correct spelling, preferred style and agreed-on meanings; it also
3.3 The discourses

gives form to prevalent attitudes to dialect/variety, orthographic variant or even script, particular sets of loanwords etc. These attitudes are inextricably part of what is taught along with graphemic skills.

One effect of the emphasis within this discourse on literacy acquisition, is that orthography development agendas tend to be weighted towards pedagogical imperatives and the student of writing, rather than towards the needs of the fluent reader/writer. This is a source of dissension within the discourse: but the whole range of possible positions on this point become possible only by the connections made within the literacy discourse.

The script base of the dominant language, usually at regional level, ranks high as a choice for a new writing system for a minority language. This can be analysed as arising from a nationist discourse, in that vernacular literacy is supported as a tool of eventual assimilation. Alternatively, a pedagogical view of this practice is that, where the target group can be expected to already have some literacy in a particular script, it is a logical step to base the vernacular writing system on this script. The use of the roman script in new orthographies for Australian languages is in part designed to serve this function.

In this way discursive links are formed between literacy, standardization, and education; and at a more abstract level between these and concepts of progress and independence.

3.3.6 Technological discourse

The technological discourse delineates a region of possible thought and discussion based on means of production; tools of communication, science, commerce etc; practical knowledge and skills; development and implementation of equipment. For language standardization, relevant technologies are those focussed on communication, education and literacy/ies. Salient elements of this discourse include:

- how the written language is related to computer fonts
- character manipulation systems standardly programmed into computers
- access to internet communications networks
- configuration of resource materials for computer access (such as online dictionaries)
- ease of publishing, especially desktop or other community-controlled methods

3. Shuttles

- development of technological literacies
- availability of more specialist skills such as programming
- cost of equipment and resources
- links with technology-fluent institutions such as schools, etc.

On a wider level, the technological discourse is related to the discourse of scientism, in which technological development and implementation are valued as a reflection of advancement of knowledge and its application. As shown below, the technological discourse in its present configuration is intricately interwoven with the westernist discourse, forming a hegemonic structure particularly in the area of internet communications.

3.3.6.1 Standardization

One of the most strongly established discursive relationships in this field is that connecting computer use with choice of script. This is a relationship which is set up largely by the hegemony of the roman script in computer media in the west (and with significant impact in other areas). The model of the roman script—its grapheme set, the direction in which it is written, the single components of most of its grapheme units (notably, all of the graphemes in the English orthography), the conventional order of the alphabet—determines the requirements for default text manipulation. The use of non-roman scripts becomes steadily less compatible with standard computer configurations as the points of difference in regard to these requirements increase: keyboards with roman script lettering on them are the easiest to acquire; single-component graphemes (eg alphabetical) are easier to order than multi-component (eg logographs with radicals); left-to-right is the most convenient direction of writing; more than 26 basic graphemes introduces complications of typing, etc. Given this, the prevalence of computer use current in the west weighs heavily against the development of non-roman scripts, and has effects also on established non-roman scripts (see §3.3.7.2).

As Lyotard argued as long as twenty years ago (Lyotard 1979 [1984]), the use of computers in research has an effect on both form and content of what kinds of information are studied. An important perspective with which research objects are now delineated or brought into being is conditioning in the kinds of information most readily manipulatable with computer storage and retrieval systems. For instance, spectrograph analysis has become a much more finely tuned process since the genre of this kind of work shifted to computers, whereas gesture remains a marginalised aspect of linguistic research.
Computer-based data storage, manipulation and publication has of course become central to the practice of linguistics in perhaps no more than the last two decades. Its centrality has developed not only because it has become standard in academic practice generally, but also because minority language communities now commonly request or support the use of computers for work with their language. This arises because of the revolution it facilitates in home or community-based publication, the normality of computer use in schools and other areas of daily life, and its association with mainstream western culture and concepts of advancement (see §3.3.7.1).

3.3.6.2 Technological literacy

Although what might be called computer literacy is on the way to becoming basic in this country, it is not yet. Certainly almost everyone who has been engaged in formal education in the last fifteen–twenty years or so has gained some levels of computer literacy. What I am here referring to as literacy, however, is not simply a set of medium-specific skills but internalisation of the practices of the culture of that literacy.

When I visited the Saturn school in St Paul, which is the home of Thompson, Yang et al (1996 [1999]) and where the use of this dictionary is incorporated in daily learning (see §4.6.3), the norm was for students to spend some time working with the database in a semi-structured way. This is I think currently the norm for computer-based work, as distinct from the much more ad hoc practices of interpersonal exchange as a resource, or even reference to printed materials. The specific sessional approach to information access on computer is part of the literacy of computer use—part of the culture that is still being established. In a regular school setting, as is the context of the primary target group of the Saturn dictionary, computer literacy is a feasible base for productive dictionary use. But for most people, this is not a culture that has as yet fully permeated everyday patterns of behaviour and ways of learning and working. For many adults, using computers directly is a practice restricted specifically to a work context; and even then we are still heavily reliant on hard copy.

The relevance of these factors can be overlooked by academics in a technology-rich and technology-central culture, in which it is a given that data storage, analytical procedures, publications in progress, will all be computer based. Added to this is the significant pressure to be using and developing advanced procedures and products.

To us—to me—the patent advantage and potential of these procedures and products is immense. When projects such as design of new dictionaries for minorities are on the drawing board, I would suggest that the attitudes of those of us ‘holding the chalk’ at this point in proceedings sometimes presume a higher degree of literacy in this larger sense in the target
3. Shuttles

Machine readable dictionaries (MRDs) are a brilliant potential tool for minority language communities—and I maintain the hope that this potential will be realised in broad scope in the future.

It might be assumed that the increasing normalisation of internet-based communication has the potential to dissolve barriers of distance and further the concept of the global village. Because of the setting in which it has been developed and implemented however, it brings with it a new layer of problems that flow back into the broad relations of dominance and disadvantage from which it arose. Its emergence in the west has meant that the dominant western defaults of language and script base, have been left relatively unquestioned as the communications system was developed and extended into international and general use. Firstly, the establishment of the internet in a culture where English is considered the natural lingua franca, has meant that the most prominent language of communication on the net is English. Secondly, within an Anglocentric or, more broadly, Eurocentric climate, the roman script is assumed to be the most accessible for technology implementation. Language, script and computer literacy have come to form a circle of prerequisites for participation in international communications. The 'global village' begins to appear rather skeletal—it is indeed spread over most countries in the world, but the functioning network of businesses, individuals etc is in large part reducible to those who have these kinds of access and fluency, or at least close contact with others who do.

The question might be considered as to what directions the development of the internet might have taken had it originated in, say, India or Turkey. The more useful or at least answerable question might be why did it emerge where it did? What kinds of enterprise, skill and knowledge were being developed? what combinations of belief, ability and support were in operation? what modes of thought, materials and institutional structures were available so that it was developed where it was and nowhere else (to paraphrase Foucault)? It is possible that its rapid spread into so many areas of business, education, government and daily life was a reflection if not in some sense a product of certain conditions that were already present including the dominant position of the west and of the English language.

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49 As I show in Chapter Four, major sections of the Hmong community are in fact in the forefront of the computer culture. The access of members of the Hmong community to this culture is however unequal, which point I return to in §5.2.5.2.
3.3 The discourses

3.3.7 Westernist discourse

3.3.7.1 A supra-nationist discourse

The westernist discourse makes it possible to promote a view on the basis of its reflection of western ideals. In this way it is a form of supra-nationist discourse, because in parallel with concepts of nationhood, it constructs an ingroup–outgroup dichotomy on the basis of broad geographical origins, concepts of shared ideals and systems of large-scale administrative norms such as education and economics, cultural norms such as definitions of the family and work, and the official bracket of religious bases. It is a proselytising nationhood, to mix my metaphors—that is, it welcomes new members (individuals, countries, migrant groups) into its culture while maintaining their status as Other. For instance, self-consciously multicultural nations such as Australia have yet to elect a national leader from other than a mainstream anglo background. The English language is taught around the world with something akin to missionary zeal, but the Englishes that arise are excluded from dominant notions of standard or correct varieties. There might be such a thing as Standard Indian English or Standard Singapore English, but Standard British English and Standard American English remain the prestige varieties internationally.

Like any other form of nationism, westernism is a construction. There are no countries comprised entirely of individuals or organizations that hold the beliefs and carry out the practices which are considered to define western societies. Nor are these beliefs and practices exclusive to members of societies included under the designation western. The formation nevertheless takes on an identity as western, regardless of the origins or multiple realisations of its objects in various geographic and social locations. Cultural elements and financial controlling institutions included in the category 'western' are largely no longer specific to a particular nation or group of nations, so that the referential semantics of the terms become steadily more abstract.

Westernism weaves a single formation of a range of discourses, offering the disparities thus collected as a unit. Certain social values, technological developments, lifestyle practices,

50 The common use of the terms 'west' or 'western' locates England and western Europe at the centre of the map, in opposition to 'east'. While in the present context the focus of attention for cultural and certain other kinds of influence in this 'west' has shifted conceptually to the USA, from which countries such as Japan and Russia are more accurately described as 'west', the terms persist, and with them traces of the origin of this discursive complex.

Not everyone accepts this conventionalised use of 'west': in Myers (1995), amongst others, the term 'north' is preferred, referring to Europe as a more visible or direct source of cultural authority.
3. Shuttles

Commercial establishments, systems of government etc, are collected together into a single concept conventionally referred to as 'western culture'. Accepting some strands of the formation and not others is a position which first requires a degree of deconstruction of the discursive formation.

Westernist discourse allows for discussion of issues in terms of this composite construction, or by reference to key values and practices considered to be western. Possibly the most crucial characteristic of western discourses as they affect nonwestern minority groups is not so much the actual concepts, objects etc of which they are formed, but the various discursively-constructed obligations to identify with them—that is, their hegemony. Western values and practices enjoy a dominant status over a wide scope. This status has developed in such a way that its maintenance is supported by beneficiaries and disadvantaged parties alike; its dominance is in many forms and places unquestioned and unremarked; and resistance in general takes the form of counter-identification, which accepts the terms of the status quo as the starting-point for active objection, or the site of conflict.

The dominance of the westernist discourse can be seen in the established characterisation of western societies, styles of government, economic systems etc as advanced, in opposition to nations labelled developing or under-developed (or first world in opposition to third world). Discourses on national development refer to improved standards of living, educational status, levels of health etc.—qualities of life that may well be universally desired. However, the means which are promoted as the path to such goods have frequently reflected the ideals of western societies, rather than characteristics of the local situation and its discourses. Why is the ideal of democracy more enlightened than the ideal of communism? Why is the nuclear family preferable to a community-extended family or a polygamous norm? Why is a system of access based on education and/or money more equitable than one based on birth? Why is intensive use of natural resources a more advanced principle of economic management? The answers to such questions appear to relate more to characteristics of narratives and discourses in the west than to the humanitarian or economic arguments that are presented in their favour. Ultimately, it may be the western model per se that is broadly assumed to be advanced. If that is the case, then directions promoted for 'developing countries' may be subject to change as the western model of an ideal society changes.51

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51 Allowing, however, for the conservatism of the discourse itself, as distinct from practice in 'actual' western countries. The continued building of large dams in some Asian countries is a case in point. While in the USA there has been a shift towards removing them in the interests of longer-term environmental and economic sustainability, the idea of dams as progress still holds elsewhere.
3.3 The discourses

A second point to consider here is that western nations themselves instigate and control a great many of the programs and agendas aimed at development of these Other nations; at which point the perpetuation of this relation of dominance becomes clearer. Western nations can offer assistance, in forms such as money, education, expertise—and retain through these a significant degree of control over which projects are funded, what is the content and structure of the education, what kinds of expertise are valued. The aid-and-control scenario is one which recurs at many levels. For instance, a language maintenance programme for a minority language community in Australia or America—whether it requires production of reading materials, employment of writers, teachers or linguists, a building to run a community school or a radio station licence—is often reliant on external funding. This passes over to the funding body the power to decide what constitutes a valid or worthy claim. This authority is then supported by the fact that a trained person such as a community development worker or linguist, ingroup or not, who is assisting with the funding application, is likely to steer that application towards what they know are likely success lines in the framework of the dominant culture.

This demonstrates how a hegemony once established is self-perpetuating. To achieve desired effects within it, it is necessary to contribute to its continuation. Note that this assessment has nothing to do with judgements about whether occurrences such as those outlined above are appropriate, or positive, or useful. It is intended to stand simply as a statement about the structure and workings of a hegemony, and an illustration of the discourses of western society as hegemonic.

3.3.7.2 Westernism and standardization

*English language*

There has been enough discussion of the growth of the English language as a world lingua franca, and the effects of this on the use and maintenance of other languages, to make another survey here superfluous. The range of literature includes:

- General (Brumfit 1982; Widdowson 1982; Crystal 1997)
- Locally developing Englishes (Shopen and Williams 1980; Kachru 1983, 1992; Foley 1988)
- Imperialism and postcolonialism (Haugen 1985; Phillipson 1992; Mühlhäuser 1996; Pennycook 1998)
3. Shuttles

- Education, development and access issues (Kuo 1985; Spencer 1985; Zuengler 1985; Folds 1987).

The growth of English is not simply a neutral development supporting the global village, access to business networks, geographic mobility etc. It is a phenomenon whose origins lie in English language dominance in the colonialist era. The continuation of attitudes, power structures and social strata arising from that period (what is commonly called postcolonialism) become reinterpreted in accordance with (supra)nationist notions of advancement described above. For instance, a still prevalent popular conception is that the reason English is gaining ground as a dominant language is because of some innately superior qualities of its structure, written forms, or literature. In Catherine Lim’s account of her eventual shift to allegiance to Singaporean English, she says:

As a Chinese writer writing in English in post-colonial Singapore... I hated the language for its dominance, yet loved it for its opening up to me, like Aladdin’s cave, world upon world of unsuspected historical, cultural and mythological riches... Caught in this conflict, I was, for a long time, unable to use the wondrous language of Shakespeare and Milton and Jane Austen to write about my humble Chinese grocer and temple medium and opium addict uncle.

Lim (1995):52

As an institution within a discourse formation, the dominance of English is connected with standardization of other languages by the way in which it is implicated in systems of financial support; educational resources, goals and achievement criteria; restrictions in practice on eligibility for higher education; availability of literature, computing and publishing equipment. All of these factors impinge on the capacity for minority language groups, particularly those in English-dominant countries, to effectively and efficiently work on standardization and education in their language. Since standardization is so thoroughly tied to orthography development, a particularly influential area of impact is the dominance of the roman script.

Roman script

In parallel to the spread of English as a world language, the roman script has developed considerable status as a world script. A few indications of this are as follows:

(1) The general assumption for newly literate languages is that they will implement a roman script.

This is standard practice in, for instance, the development of new orthographies for Australian languages. Sometimes this assumption is extended to languages which already have a literacy
base but which are spoken by a minority group. For instance, Sjöberg (1966) discusses speaker resistance to replacing Inuit syllabics with the Roman alphabet in terms of a 'glorification' of their nation which presents an obstacle to practicality. The article admits, however, that a major argument for the retention of the syllabic script is a practical one, in that it works well in linguistic terms:

In the case of Eskimo [sic], the syllabic writing is so well suited to the language that even today linguists, missionaries, and some government officials are reluctant to replace it by the Roman alphabet.\(^{52}\)

This statement reveals, presumably unintentionally, that the replacement of scripts by the Roman alphabet is assumed as a natural direction of progress, rather than arising from the presenting arguments.

(2) Major languages of literacy with a non-Roman script—notably Chinese and Japanese—have often come under pressure to adopt a Roman system in its place.

Of course, such a system has now been developed for Chinese, although not fully implemented; while for Japanese the controversy continues (Gottlieb 1995).

(3) Much time and energy has been expended on the development and implementation of bibliographical transliteration—that is, automatic romanisation—systems for the purposes of keeping and accessing international records of published works.

Evidently transliteration is seen as the preferred solution for dealing with information in different scripts—including international scripts such as Cyrillic—and the tacit assumption is that a Roman transliteration will be adequate for general accessibility. (See Wellisch 1978 for details on this subject.)

(4) The Roman script is the dominant medium for internet communication.

Although use of other scripts appears to be restricted only by the availability of inter-readable fonts, the Roman script is the default, the best chance for universal readability, and in many places also the simplest to implement in the first place.

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\(^{52}\) The current official status of writing by the Inuit is a division into east, using syllabics, and west, using Roman script (see Native Languages of the NWT 1990).
3. Shuttles

Arguments for the use of the roman script are usually phrased in scientific or pedagogical terms, but fail to question the a priori dominance of the roman script.\footnote{See Eira (in press) or Eira (1998) for further discussion of such arguments.} For instance, the argument for the accessibility of literacy in English through romanised orthographies implies a priori acceptance of the dominance of English. Such access may well be a valid concern in some circumstances, but it is worth questioning the position of literacy in English as a goal of literacy per se.

3.3.8 Conclusions

In closing this chapter, I review the main points highlighted in the description of the six discourses in terms of their relevance to the case study.

(i) Nationism

- Standardisation processes participate in and in part arise from the construction of national identity.

- Aspects of this construction including a commonality of history, culture, administrative structures and future, are established in part through language planning functions.

- In the absence of crucial markers of national identity such as lands, other markers, such as language and language institutions, take on particular significance.

- Positions within the nationist discourse such as progressivism and conservatism, or goals of assimilation or separatism, give rise to the proposal of different solutions to language issues.

(ii) Scientism

- The scientist discourse has a central role in the legitimation of particular forms of research, knowledge and presentation of knowledge.

- The discourse interacts with funding systems to support the practice of these accredited forms of knowledge.

- Outgroup participants in language work are frequently representatives of the scientist discourse.
3.3 The discourses

- Roles of researcher and consultant are in part produced and contained by the scientist discourse.

- Tenets and procedures of the scientist discourse contribute to directions in language work such as orthography development.

(iii) Religion

- The religious discourse allows for the emergence of positions on and ideas about language which are strongly differentiated from positions made possible within the scientist discourse.

- The social value, meaning and function of a language and especially a script are often strongly grounded in this discourse.

- Systems of authority and markers of identity may be responsive to concepts formed within the discourse.

- Institutions of the religious discourse interact with the definition of literacy and with the means to its acquisition.

(iv) Literacy

- Standardisation is crucially connected with the establishment of literacy for a language.

- Definitions and associations of literacy shape aspects of orthography development and language and literacy education.

- The literacy discourse forms connections between literacy and nation, religion, recognition, progress and power.

- Modes of literacy and literacy education are embedded in ideological environments, firmly linking the content and context of writing with the processes of writing and reading themselves.

(v) Technology

- This discourse pertains to language standardisation in the areas of computer literacy, publication, software development and internet communications.

- Differentials in the access of different groups to technology highlights and increases the distance between groups.
3. Shuttles

- The technological discourse in its present configuration has significant ramifications for choice of script.

- The discourse produces the preferred medium for creation of standardisation tools, particularly dictionaries, and affects the directions of research and research methods.

- The discourse is woven into a larger discourse formation with westernism, literacy and scientism, colouring the outworking of each.

(vi) Westernism

- The discourse characterises western modes of communication and publication as progressive.

- The English language provides a model for a successful world language, while the roman script is highly placed as a world script.

- Western modes of education are reflected in approaches to language maintenance.

- Themes of the westernist discourse emerge in the context of all five of the above discourses.
PART II.
TAPESTRY

¹Colour plate on previous page: ໄຊ ແນ້້, Paj ntaub, by an anonymous Hmong woman in Portland, Oregon. Design includes spirals representing snails.
4. STORYCLOTH
STANDARDIZATION PROCESSES IN HMONG

4.1 Introduction

Having established both theoretical position and case study, I now move on to the localised study of Hmong standardisation projects and processes. Four broad areas are examined in turn: dialect, orthography, lexicon and tools of standardisation. All four are brought together in the final section which discusses the dictionary project of the HLIA that I have been involved with.

Like a storycloth—an embroidery that records a personal experience of historical events in images—this chapter records the work that has been achieved, the areas of controversy and the directions which are emerging, with an approach oriented to the statements and opinions of the Hmong people involved. It is necessarily an analytical record, written within a particular framework, and focuses on dictionaries, the prominence given to work in Australia and in Phaj hauj, and the perspectives I bring as an outsider and a linguist.

The very local perspective of this chapter allows a close study of the elements of decision-making, artefacts produced, discourses developed. The focus on a single (broad) speech community, narrowing down to a single subcommunity and ultimately one project, facilitates a building up of the discourses as they are formed in this case, as distinct from a more comparative style which would highlight larger-scale patterns but obscure the fine network of relations formed and meaning structures developed in the specific manifestation of discourse practice. For Foucault, it is the minutiae of existence which in the end are most revealing as to structures of all scales:

> It is in squeezing the individual event, in directing the resolving power of historical analysis into office price-lists (mercuriales), title deeds, parish registers, to harbour archives analysed year by ear and week by week, that we gradually perceive—beyond battles, decisions, dynasties and assemblies—the emergence of those massive phenomena of secular or multi-secular importance.
> 
> *Foucault (1971):230*

It is then the view from the ground that this chapter provides which then forms a basis for the analysis in Chapter Five of the discourse structures realised and renegotiated in the process of standardisation in Hmong.
4. Storycloth

4.2 Standard dialect

The process of standardisation emphasises the differentiation between dialects and their speakers, on linguistic and sociological levels together. The notion of a standard in the first place implies the selection of a single variety as the primary target of development and dissemination, which then becomes the variety of status, opposed in social practice to other varieties as sub-standard. Despite its origins as either simply a variety of one subgroup of speakers or an artificial construct based on one or several varieties, the standard is associated with correctness and therefore education, prestige, access. It is the preferred variety in publications; literary, administrative and informative. It becomes identified with the language per se, other varieties being 'dialects' in the general (and stigmatised) sense. For all of these reasons, the choice of standard is a primary and central component of debates on standardisation in the Hmong community.

In this section I describe the current status of the dialogue on standard dialect in Hmong. In §4.2.1 I review the current status of the minority dialect MNts in regard to HmD and the strategies employed by MNts speakers to increase the social and practical recognition of their dialect. In §4.2.2 I examine the kinds of arguments foregrounded in the debate, and in §4.2.3 I assess the range of positions on the issue of standard dialect and directions proposed. The discursive base of nationism begins to emerge, which I discuss in full in §5.2.1.

4.2.1 Sociolinguistic status of MNts and HmD

4.2.1.1 Hegemony of HmD

As is readily seen from the example of South Africa, there is no necessary equivalence of numerical advantage to dominance. In the case of Hmong dialects, however, it is the majority dialect which is often treated as the default. In the ex-refugee context, HmD is fast approaching a hegemonic status—that is, being perceived as the definitive or basic variety of Hmong. Below I explore three major ways this is manifested: in public written texts; in what could be called 'establishment' orthographic varieties; and in the markedness of MNts.

(i) Public written texts

HmD is favoured in publications—in Hmong community journals and newsletters, in translated letters from US government departments, educational materials including dictionaries and primers, and academic studies:
4.2 Standard dialect

At the present time, the RPA Hmong Daw version has been taught in high schools, and at the California State University, Fresno, but many parents and students complain that they want the Hmong Njua version also to be taught.


All the publications of newsletters and newspapers are written in White Hmong. I personally don't mind, but I think this is discriminating against Moob Ntsuab.

Long Nha Moua, Hmong LG: November 1996

Another contributor to Hmong-LG reports that at the first Annual Asian Language Institute on Literacy Conference (August 1996):

Through our discussion and information exchange, some Hmong teachers insisted that we should use White Hmong language and develop materials in this language.

'CaliForNiaDreAms Yang', Hmong LG: December 1996

That the present work is no exception, I usually explain as a function of the identity of my primary consultants. However, in the first place, it is statistically likely that Hmong people I encounter in Melbourne are HmD speakers. In the second place, my bias is influenced by the greater volume of published materials in or about HmD. These factors thereby lead in turn to yet another academic work privileging this dialect. The cumulative and self-perpetuating effect of hegemony can here be seen at an early stage.

(ii) Establishment orthographic varieties

Teaching and usage of both RPA and âšťâ for Phaj hauj in their most formal and institutionalised settings favours HmD. This arises in part from conditions of its original development. Smalley (1976b) explains the assessment of the developers of RPA that

the regularity of the correspondence [between HmD and MNts consonants]
means that this presents no great problem for a common orthographic system

Smalley (1976b):92

However, what this meant in practice was that HmD pronunciation was privileged.\(^2\)

\(^2\) Note that Smalley uses the abbreviation HN for Moob Ntsuab—the initial <H> reflects only HmD pronunciation of the word Hmoob. HD represents HmD.
/p/ was written <p> in both because it sounds the same in both, and HN /tl/ and HD
/tl/ were written <d> in both because all occurrences of HN /tl/ correspond with all
occurrences of HD /tl/...by writing HN /m/ = HD /hm/ words as <hm> in both
dialects...there need be no difference of spelling between the dialects.

Citing the principles of 'writing the dialect of greatest diversity' and 'reading ease above spelling
ease', Smalley appears to justify these decisions entirely on linguistic grounds. However, the
characterisation of HmD as the 'dialect of greatest diversity'—an image taken up also in popular
community discussions—should be treated carefully. For instance, as explained in §2.4.3.3, it is
MNts which preserves the distinction of lateral release throughout the complete consonantal
series. The a priori preeminence of HmD is made clear in Smalley's explanation of this very point:

...by our principle we should write <nd> for /ntl/ = /nt/ in both dialects...but by
abandoning it at this point we can spell all words directly as they are in Hmong Daw

Smalley indicates throughout this paper his awareness that the cost of these choices is borne
by MNts speakers, particularly in literacy acquisition, and proposes that teaching materials at the
elementary stages be designed specifically with these deficiencies in mind.

Somewhat surprising given all of the above is Smalley' statement that HmD may ultimately
become

the standard for writing Hmong, but if that comes about it should come about
through usage and not through the forcing of an artificial style on Hmong Njua
writing, even if it were possible to do so.

This statement appears to entirely miss the role that RPA in its original version would be likely to
play in establishing HmD as the standard, and also the 'artificiality' for MNts reader/writers of
interpreting this HmD-based orthography for a MNts pronunciation.

To summarise the practical problems of an HmD-based orthography for MNts: although by far the
majority of phonemes have the same surface realisation in both dialects; in the first place the
alternations are not fully predictable, as is sometimes claimed (see §2.4.3), and in the second
place the occurrence in a single word of more than one phoneme with different realisations can
result in little relation between an HmD-based written form and a MNts pronunciation. Ex. 4.1
shows one word as written in RPA for HmD, with the corresponding phonemes as pronounced
in each dialect:
The great respect accorded the designers of the RPA in the Hmong-speaking community at large requires that a popular explanation for the converged orthography be found:

...they thought we the Hmong could resolve the difference. I also think that they didn't spend enough time to research about the Hmong and depended upon those primers...[which] didn't concern much about the two different dialects.

_Txoovtuam_ ฮั้ว สั้น, _Hmong LG_: August 1997

...thaum xubthawj cov tsajntawv RPA nuav yog tsim siv has ua lug Moob Diawb xwb. Tub yog tomqaab nuav lawm es--vim tsi xaav kem Moob Ntsuab tawm--puab lemaam tsim diua ob tug tsajntawv tshab kws yog “aa” hab “di” rua Moob Ntsuab tau siv.³

'...when the RPA alphabet started, it was made only for HmD. Later, because they didn't want to exclude MNts, they added two more letters, “aa” and “di”, so that MNts could use it.'

_Anon, _Hmong LG_: mid 1998⁴

These kinds of explanations show that from the MNts perspective the converged orthography is considered inadequate but also is assumed to have been a preliminary and temporary strategy.

The ṭwią Phaj hauj is, in theory, fully usable for both HmD and MNts. Because the script is in principle phonemic, one view is that a text can be read in ṭwią Phaj hauj phonemically, pronouncing it in either HmD or MNts. In practice, however, the issue is of greater complexity linguistically as well as politically (see §2.4.3).

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³Because of the high proportion of MNts words and texts in this section, most will not be transliterated into ṭwią Phaj hauj.

⁴Because some quotes from Hmong LG have been taken from ongoing dialogues, with parts of various contributions copied in, some names and also some dates have been lost.
4. Storycloth

The level of recognition of dialect differences in official ŝ̝̀ā Phaj hauj implementation is rather tokenistic. The major current teaching organisation, the HLI, teach and publish only in HmD. Although the American branches include two graphemes <ē ē> which specifically represent the phonemes /Nt1 Nt2/1/, which appear to have no HmD equivalent, no teaching materials are extant which give MNts pronunciations of shared phonemes. Members of the Australian branch have eliminated even these two graphemes, representing this not as discounting the dialect, but as reflecting a proposal by ŝ̝̀ā Kūb Yaj to merge the two dialects, devising compromise words and sounds where differences exist. How this is to be achieved either in linguistic terms or in community receptivity terms is unclear at this stage. The removal of the graphemes in question however, suggests that the project is, despite intentions to the contrary, fairly strongly influenced by the dominant status of HmD.5

(iii) Markedness of MNts

The confidence of HmD speakers in the status of their dialect is evident in that they discount the significance of distinctions between the two dialects. Conversely, MNts speakers are prominently represented in itemisation and analysis of differences, as part of argumentation for separate recognition and writing of MNts. On both counts, HmD is functioning as the unmarked dialect—the one which needs no justification. The tendency for HmD speakers is, as seen above in regard to RPA development, to speak in terms of solidarity, unification, and commonalities across all Hmong groups. In practice what this means is the subsumption of MNts within HmD. In Hmong-LG, some HmD speakers have specifically directed MNts writers:

...txhob sau Hmoob/Moob (Ntawv Hmoob) los Hmong/Mong (Ntawv Askiv) no ntshai yuav nkag siab yooj yim dua thiab yam li feem coob sau Hmoob los Hmong

'...please do not write Hmoob/Moob (in Hmong) or Hmong/Mong (in English) as it is easier to understand when you write Hmoob or Hmong like the majority.'

Anon, Hmong LG: 19986

5See discussion of Jay Kue's version of the ŝ̝̀ā Phaj hauj, which better accommodates MNts, in §4.3.1.3.

6This is not the expressed opinion of all HmD writers. One (HmD) Hmong LG contributor attempts to present an alternative view:
4.2 Standard dialect

An appeal to the practice of a 'majority' and to historical usage (such as during the initial development of RPA described above) is a common theme of such messages in Hmong-LG. The point here is that it is not treated as necessary to justify the normalisation of HmD, for instance by linguistic argumentation, but only to maintain it. The onus is clearly on MNts proponents to challenge the assumed status quo.

Some of my primary consultants say that it 'doesn't matter' which dialect you speak, since everyone speaks both. However, their orthographic practices in ák rār Phaj hauj are a strong statement of HmD dominance, and the only pronunciations approved for the dictionary project are HmD. In the broader community, identification with MNts has even become stigmatised to a degree:

it is often the but[t] of a joke because of how it sounds to white Hmong

'Pakuda Ly', Hmong LG: March 1997

One of my kids...speculated that Moob Leeg must be less in number or might be classified as a "second class" citizens in Laos—that's why there was no Moob Leeg primer in print.

Tswv Xyooj Xei, ibid: August 1997

Sometimes, however, it is HmD speakers who are stigmatised as to their 'inability' to learn MNts. MNts speakers appear to view their dialect as the more difficult,7 possibly as a matter of pride, but comments can be found exhorting HmD speakers to make the effort:

... Hmoob Ntsuab hu Hmoob Dawb ua Moob Dlawb. Leej twg los yeaj nkag siab tias Moob Dlawb ces yog Hmoob Dawb, tsis twv dab ti li.

'Hmoob Ntsuab call Hmoob Dawb Moob Dlawb. Everyone understands that Moob Dlawb is Hmoob Dawb, it's no different.'

Anon, Hmong LG: 1998

7Expressions of this view sometimes intimate that it is the sounds of MNts which are thought to be more difficult. The perception of difficulty may be a function of the dialect being less commonly spoken than HmD.
4. Storycloth

...if you think Blue Mong is too hard to learn, you are putting yourself down. If it is so, how come all the White Hmong women married to Blue Mong can all speak Blue Mong?...Most Blue Hmong learn and that's why they can speak, read, and write White Hmong—since 'childhood'.

Tom Hang, ibid: November 1996

Blue Hmong is much harder to learn but only a few words and if you are willing to learn you can, but it just seems like the White Hmong don't want to.

Nyej Looj Muas, ibid: October 1996

4.2.1.2 MNts counter positions

In taking up the challenging position, MNts speaker/writers utilise three main collective strategies. The first is direct public argumentation on the standard dialect issue. In the Hmong-LG network, many of the dominant participants are MNts writers. Of the fifteen contributions on the topic of standard dialect in the three years to January 1999 which were written in H/Mong (and thereby clearly identifiable as to dialect of writer), fourteen are in MNts and only one in HmD (the fifteenth is by a non-Hmong and purposely interchanges the two). The purpose of twelve of the MNts contributions is to argue for recognition of MNts.

As explained in §3.2.2, this kind of argumentation, which is counteridentification, is situated within acquiescence to the dominant status of HmD. Its overt aims of pointing out, objecting to and ultimately overturning a status quo entail an a priori acceptance of the starting point prescribed by the hegemonic position.

The debate around what to name the dialects and ethnic subgroups is more subtly subversive. These discussions do not subscribe to the same extent to the acceptance of HmD dominance, because they start from the assumption that MNts and its speakers warrant a separate name. The question is simply which is the preferred name. Two main themes are in evidence: use of Moob Ntsuab or Moob Leeg, and appropriate English designations. For instance:

\[\text{Layers of complexity are intimated in this statement. While it is to be expected that members of the minority dialect might have had more motivation to acquire both dialects, this comment (and others) also suggests that women are expected to learn the dialect of their husband. This is connected with the fact that children are assigned to both the clan and the ethnic subgroup of their father. However, I know of at least one man whose family is MNts, but who speaks only HmD, the dialect of his ŪK neej tsa (wife's family). In this case, separation from his family of origin due to war and relocation are implicated.}\]
White Hmong always call Moob Leeg as Moob Lees. This is totally wrong and insulting to Moob Leeg...don't ever call Moob Leeg as Blue/Green Mong or Moob Ntsuab again. The correct term is Moob Leeg. Calling them Blue/Green Mong or Moob Ntsuab is an insult to Moob Leeg just like the White men use the term Nig[g]er for African-American. "CaliForNiaDreAms Yang", Hmong LG: December 1996

They think the term Moob Ntsuab should be Green Hmong since we have a word for Blue, which is xav or xiav...Like Nha Long said, when a Hmong says 'green' he [sic] literally means 'blue'. For example: ntuj ntsuab = blue sky, not green sky...Secondly, the terminologies White, Blue, Stripe, etc. came out of the women's costume. In that case, Moob Ntsuab's dress is Blue, not Green. Xing Her, ibid

HmD again holds a lower profile in these discussions. This is not surprising, since it is the dialect at risk of assimilation whose boundaries require defending: for HmD speakers there is less at stake.

The least marked strategy—that is, the strategy which declines to accept the status of MNts as the marked dialect—is the use of orthography. Despite the careful planning of the designers of the RPA for a single orthography, a pervasive version of RPA has grown up which is immediately recognisable as MNts. It is ubiquitous in MNts internet communications, and also found in MNts publications such as HCACA (n.d.).

The most obvious markers are complex grapheme units which do not occur in HmD usage, reflecting articulations specific to MNts. Also specifically notated are MNts sounds which are shared with HmD, but are realisations of different phonemes in each dialect (see §2.4.3):
Table 4.1 Orthographic differentiation of MNts

The unremarked use of this MNts-specific orthography is arguably the strongest resistance to hegemony of HmD. It is a case of disidentification, treating a marginalised choice as given, without need for justification, with the same unselfconscious confidence with which HmD speakers treat their dialect and its written form.

4.2.2 Bases of argumentation

The main linguistic issues which are addressed in discussion of the selection or development of a standard dialect for H/Mong are phonology and orthography. Four primary bases of argumentation are evident in the debate on standard dialect:

(i) Language maintenance

As noted in §2.2.2.2, it is becoming evident that, unlike the parent and older generations, young people growing up in the west are no longer attaining full competence in both dialects:

Most of our kids today don't really know what certain words mean in our language any more let alone worry about whether they want green or white as the standard Hmong language.

'Pakuda Ly', Hmong LG: December 1996

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For prenasalised stops in this series—which may be theoretical rather than actually in use (see 2.4.4) I have also seen <nkl, nkdh> (Kue 1998).
4.2 Standard dialect

There is a risk, then, that the dominance of HmD in teaching of the script could lead to increased difficulty in literacy acquisition for MNts speakers. Standardisation of dialect is often seen as a solution to this. The hope is that if children are formally taught a single or unified variety, regardless of what they speak in casual settings, the possibility of communication between all immigrant Hmong will be maintained. An alternative proposal is to formally teach all children both dialects. This proposal aims to compensate for the different first language acquisition conditions of Hmong children in the west—counteracting the reduced exposure they have to learning both dialects through everyday informal interactions.

(ii) Ease of teaching, learning, reading and writing

In the post-refugee period, the formal teaching of Hmong spoken and written language is rapidly becoming established. In this context, the ease or perceived ease of teaching one or another dialect, or both, is a significant consideration in choice of standard dialect. The decisions of those who control pedagogical infrastructures such as curriculum development and text production may have ramifications for the ongoing maintenance of dialects.

On this point, some Hmong stress the need to serve speakers of both dialects:

...it is a must that those people who want to become public school teachers learn both dialects in order to provide sufficient services to our Mong children and community

'CaliForNiaDreAmsYang', Hmong LG: March 1999

Others, in an attempt to circumvent the privileging of HmD while still aiming for a single standard form—in particular a standard written form—have turned to older varieties of Hmong as a source of the underlying phonemes of the two dialects.

(iii) Historical reconstruction

In general, writers following this line of thought present their findings as evidence of the correctness of the current pronunciation in one or another dialect. This may occur because historical reconstruction is employed as a resource for arguing for a particular point of view. However, this interpretative bias, generally unacceptable within academic linguistics, in no way
4. Storycloth

negates the interesting and useful observations of the process of dialectal development from a single proto language which the writers within this framework present in lay terms:¹⁰

My interest was, are they (pev and piv) both originally Hmong words for the same meaning? or one is original and the other is just a mispronunciation of the original one?...I believe that we have only one word and one spelling.

Txoovtuam φνν φνν, Hmong LG: February 1998

ña Txawj Lis Xab 'Tzexa Cherta Lee' has followed this same idea of addressing orthographic standardisation issues on the basis of reconstruction, without the concept of correctness as a presenting framework. The purpose of Lee's analysis is to consider using this reconstructed form as a basis for an orthographic representation to serve for HmD, MNts and also other Hmong dialects. The principle is that a reasonable representation of the proto form be selected on the basis of existing Hmong writing systems, which would then be realised as appropriate to the dialect of the speaker. In Lee T.C. (1995), which discusses only HmD and MNts, Lee is exploring the potential of RPA, ḃnǐ ḃnī Phaj hauj, and ᴱ Tsaw Paj Ntaub for use as the base script:

\[\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{IPA} & \text{RPA} & \text{Phaj hauj} & \text{Pajn taub} \\
\hline
\text{HmD} & ḋ & ṭ & ḋ & ṭ & Q & ḋ & ṭ & Q & ḋ & ṭ & Q \\
\hline
\text{MNts} & ḍ & ṭ & ḋ & ṭ & Q & ḋ & ṭ & Q & ḋ & ṭ & Q \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

An attempt to use a roman script–based system like the RPA for this purpose as some propose (eg Ying Vang, Hmong LG: May 1998) would encounter a similar problem to that of an HmD-based writing system for both HmD and MNts. Reader/writers of roman script literacies have a strong sense of the range of possible pronunciations assigned to each grapheme. While \(<s>\) is in some locations accepted as \([z]\), and \(<j>\) represents significantly different sounds in, say,

¹⁰Note also the telescoping of time characteristic of this form of argumentation. This strategy is investigated in the field of language and the environment in Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäusler (1999), for instance pp64–65. (Thanks to Tonya Stebbins for this observation.)
Spanish and English, it is much less feasible to expect people to accept <dl> as [ʔ d], or <a> as [a]. Reflexes in dialects other than HmD and MNTs are in some cases still more distinct. Just as in Ex. 4.1: when a number of surface alternations are present in a single word, the sounds implied by its written form due to the established use of the script for prominent languages such as English or French, can come to bear little resemblance to the desired pronunciation.

For this reason Lee prefers a different script base such as the ᶝ ᶝ ᵃ Phaj hauf; hoping that the graphemes of such a script will have less established associations with a particular sound realisation and so be more feasible for use as a deep-level representation to be read as multiple surface realisations. This would not render a given text fully readable across dialects, due to lexical and syntactic differences across the more disparate dialects; it would, however, provide a single writing system applicable to any dialect, analogous to the common writing system in China. Although Lee’s idea is both thoroughly researched and potentially a useful solution to the tension between dialect groups, to my knowledge, his ideas have not been seriously taken up to date. In the wider ᶝ ᶝ ᵃ Phaj hauf-using community, this is because he is seen as violating the principles of orthodoxy and community decision-making. Since the RPA-using community on the whole is unlikely to embrace a shift away from a roman base (see §4.3.3), there is little chance in the immediate future of practical application of Lee’s proposal.11

(iv) Ethnic identity

Not surprisingly, this is an aspect of the debate which gives rise to expressions of strong emotional force:

You probably think that all Hmong Daw, Mong Leng and other Hmong/Mong are Hmong. However, that’s not the case. When someone is Hmong or Mong by birth, you cannot deny his/her right to his/her basic human rights.

Anon, Hmong LG: n.d.

In this statement, the writer promotes the dialect as the primary level of ethnic identification, over the language group. Whatever is demonstrable by linguistic, pedagogical or pragmatic lines of argumentation is evidently not going to simply neutralise the significance of community identification markers. Pao Lor expresses the social problem of dialect standardization with sensitivity:

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11 Some degree of interest has been expressed in Hmong LG however; for instance by Ying Vang, Hmong LG: May 1998.
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The language or dialect that we use is close and dear to our heart. Through centuries of oppression, suppression, suffrage and bloodshed, we manage to maintain it whether it is Hmoob Dawb or Hmoob Ntsuab. It is extremely difficult for others to tell us that our dialect is not as important as another. There will always be hard feelings as to why your dialect should be standardized and not mine.

I agree that we must have a standardized Hmong Language/dialect. Whether it ends up to be Hmoob Dawb or Hmoob Ntsuab, I hope the process of standardization is slow, so that it minimizes any hostile feelings...that may exist between individuals of the two dialects.

Hmong LG: November 1996

Arising as it does directly from the construction of nation, I defer a detailed discussion of this basis of argumentation to §5.2.1.

4.2.3 Positions and directions

The community discussion surveyed above demonstrates that there is strong feeling both for the recognition and maintenance of two separate dialects and dialect groups, and for a broader concept of a common language base. While some stress the urgency of language maintenance work, others refuse to prioritise this at the cost of retention of dialect distinctions. Some focus on maintaining ease of communication between all Hmong, while others are more concerned for ease of literacy acquisition and implementation for speakers of each dialect. Inseparable from a useful consideration of the issues is the status of HmD as the dialect approaching hegemonic standing, together with the strength of affiliation of MNts speakers with their dialect.

Broadly, community positions on the preferred or expected outcome can be summarised as:

- **Assimilation:**
  of MNts into HmD; at least at the level of standard orthography, and perhaps also standard spoken language.

- **Separation:**
  distinct maintenance of both; in terms of orthography, lexicon, and language education materials development. This includes the possibility of eventual loss of interdialect communication as a consequence of the changed language acquisition environment of the new generations.
4.2 Standard dialect

- **Coalition:**

  (i) teaching both dialects to all students, incorporating both dialects in resources such as language reference tools (see discussion of Saturn dictionary in §4.6.3), and developing an orthography better suited to both.

  (ii) creating an artificial standard language. This idea has been touched on in Hmong-LG:

    To be fair as a Hmong nation (we all carry the same name as Hmong)...we should consider not to favor only one language but we must consider mixed both Blue and White Hmong language as a whole

    *Nyaj Looj Muas ên ën lirr, Hmong LG: December 1996*

The proposition both here and in the HLIA to create a merged standard dialect seems unlikely to eventuate or be acceptable. If it was embarked on as a project of Hmong Daw speakers, this would very probably be read as simply another manifestation of the assimilation agenda. If it were developed within a minority community of Hmong speakers such as the HLIA, the scope of its use would in all probability be highly restricted. Possibly such an endeavour would fall into the category of linguistic artefacts which, as some see the 'Stage One', are put aside until the time is right.12 No concrete plans or suggestions for creation of an artificial standard language have as yet been publicised in either the HLJ or the wider Hmong community.

12 Also the Ntawv Puaj Txwm or 'Sayaboury script' (see Smalley et al 1990). This script is included in Appendix C.
4.3 Orthographic development in Hmong

In Chapter Two, I described the two major writing systems in use by Hmong in the west. In this chapter, I discuss developments in the orthographies, both current and proposed, and diversification of usage among the relevant communities. For the RPA, this means explaining the directions in which standardisation has moved since the refugee period as Hmong writer-readers have taken on the task of orthographic development; while for the ᵇʳ rŋ Phaj hauj it means taking up several positions aside from the point of view taken up in Chapter Two: back to an account of earlier usage in America; outwards to view concurrent orthography projects and changes, both associated and relatively unconnected; and forward to splits developing within the HLI. Distinctions between usages have significance in both practical and symbolic terms.

4.3.1 The ᵇʳ rŋ Phaj hauj kaleidoscope

In §2.3.1 I explained the structure and basic implementation of the ᵇʳ rŋ Phaj hauj as per the HLI in Melbourne. Levels and concepts of orthodox implementation of the script effect subdivisions within the organised groups of ᵇʳ rŋ Phaj hauj reader-writers. My primary consultants, in the HLIA, refer to their preferred orthography as ᵇᵛ tseem 'pure, unmixed' (used also of pure metals), describing other forms as ᵇᵛ cuav 'impure/mixed' (used also of alloys). This indicates the clear demarcation developing between subgroups.

In this section I first describe the interpretation and usage of the script as taught and practised in other major groups as compared to that of the HLIA. I then move on to the independent script variants being developed for MNts and possibly other dialects. The section closes with a survey of the significant variants in grapheme shape as used by different groups.

4.3.1.1 The HLI in America

The small but significant differences between the Melbourne and American varieties fall into four types: number of consonant graphemes, tone representation, and grapheme shape.¹³

In the American variety, one additional set of consonant graphemes is available:

<⁵ ᶜ ⁶>

¹³This last is dealt with in §4.3.1.4.
Of these, <r> and <c> are needed for the MNts phonemes /Nt/ and /Nt h/, which do not occur in HmD (see §4.3.1.3). <o> represents the zero syllable onset which is associated with seev intonation, described in §2.4.2.3. In American usage, both the zero consonant and the intonation style are notated:

Ex. 4.2

Melbourne usage:  השנה นาน
American usage:  Hannity แนะ
/kill tuaN o-l:-/

'Hello' (lit. 'I'm here!')

In §2.4.2.2 I explained the problems concerning identification of the number of tonemes in Hmong. Because many Hmong perceive it as not having full tonemic status, the representation of tone [i] has been unstable. While in HLIA usage, seven tones are represented, the American branches represent eight tones. To represent tone [i], the American variety makes use of an extra diacritic < ' >, called  lai  cim taw. As in the HLIA, the tone selects the irregular vowel grapheme set used for tone [i]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone group I</th>
<th>Irregular</th>
<th>Tone group II</th>
<th>Irregular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vowel/tone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>ษ ษ ษ ษ ษ ฮ ฮ ฮ</td>
<td>ฮ ฮ ฮ ฮ ฮ ฮ</td>
<td>ฮ ฮ ฮ ฮ ฮ ฮ</td>
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</table>

Table 4.2 Tone 'i' (American variety)

14 In this example I avoid transliteration into RPA as notation in that script is variable (see §4.3.2.).
4. Storycloth

This effects a compromise between the strict implementation of Stage Two adhered to by the HLIA and the move towards discrete representation of vowel and tone components in Phaj hauj Ntsiab Dua Peb (Stage Three) (see §4.3.1.2).¹⁵

It is possible that the separate representation of tone /i/ in the American variety improves ease of reading and comprehension, since in HLIA usage it is necessary to assess the function of the word in the phrase before assigning its tone. However, this is little different to the need for readers of English to decide between, say, the verb and noun senses distinguished by stress in words like *project*, or even *desert*.

**Ex. 4.3**

a. ḑā ṡdi dhug ntsi jëm ntsi jëm ntsi ntsi

*Kuv qhia ntawd tod tau 3 xyoos los lawm*

1SG teach there there ASP three year come AUX

'I taught there 3 years ago'

b. ʤ₂ ʤ₂ ʤ₂ ʤ₂ ʤ₂ ʤ₂ ʤ₂ ʤ₂

*thaum peb thaus cov menyam tawm ntau*

when three clock CL child come.out letters

'At 3:00 the children finish school.'

The standard ordering of the 8 kab 'rows' in the HLI is as follows (compare HLIA ordering in Tables 2.4 and 2.7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>.defaultValue</th>
<th>.defaultValue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yub qauv nkaws 'vowel'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᶣ/ḣ</td>
<td>ᵃ/ᵇ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ᵃ/ᵰ</td>
<td>ᶣ/ᵰ</td>
</tr>
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<td>ᶤ/ᵰ</td>
<td>ᶤ/ᵰ</td>
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<td>ᶧ/ᵰ</td>
<td>ᶧ/ᵰ</td>
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<td>ᶪ/ᵰ</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁵Smalley et al (1990) include separate representation of tone /i/ in their description of Stage Two, with the qualification that it was 'as something extra', not to be included in the table of vowels. In their interpretation, ᵃ/ᵰ *cin saw cooccurs with the vowel grapheme selected for tone /ᵰ/.
4.3 Orthographies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>udiantes de consonantes</th>
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<td>ซอ</td>
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Table 4.3 Order of the 𝒆 𝑘𝒂𝒃 'rows' in the HLI

4.3.1.2 Stage Three: _sort by _Vaj_Txiaj_Kuam_

According to the story held by_sort by _Vaj_Txiaj_Kuam Vang Chia Koua, by the time of_sort by _Yaj_Soob_Lwj's death in 1971 the script had evolved through four stages, as set out in §2.3.1.

The version preferred by_sort by _Vaj_Txiaj_Kuam is_sort by _Phaj_hauj_Mtsiab_Dua_Peb 'Stage Three'.

The HLI recognises Stage One as an orthodox stage of_sort by _Phaj_hauj (although they do not implement it), but considers developments subsequent to Stage Two to reflect work undertaken by Vang rather than directly representing the revelations and teaching of_sort by _Soob_Lwj, and so these developments are no longer acceptable within a framework of orthodoxy. On this and various other points there is disagreement between the first-hand disciples of_sort by _Soob_Lwj in the different communities—such as between_sort by _Vaj_Txiaj_Kuam, and_sort by _Yaj_Tsvv_Hawj of the HLIA—and corresponding disagreement on the credence given by community members to one or another disciple as authority source.

Even regarding just the first two Stages, the stories held by the HLI and by_sort by _Vaj_Txiaj_Kuam are different._sort by _Vaj_Txiaj_Kuam holds the first Stage as sacred, the source version from

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16 The same ordering is used by Vang, as represented in Smalley et al (1990).

17 See Smalley et al (1990) for a full description of all four, as well as a full version of_sort by _Vaj_Txiaj_Kuam's story.
4. Storycloth

which all forms of the writing arose,\(^{18}\) which is being retained as a potential special script for future use in religious and other traditional contexts. According to the HLIA, however, this version was intended merely as a trial to assess whether the time was ripe for the (re)introduction of the script into the Hmong community.

Stories about the choice of Stage Two also vary. In Œ-cn ñîr Vaj Txiay Kuam’s story, Stage Two was declared the orthodox version by a spiritual leader by the name of Sao Yang in Ban Vinai refugee camp, after which many including ñîr Txiay Kuam began to use and teach it. The ultimate choice of Stage Three is explained in Smalley et al (1990) as a matter of practicality: a typewriter designed on the basis of Stage Three finally became available in 1986.\(^{19}\) Interestingly, proponents of both Stage Two and Stage Three assert that ñîr Txis Lis Chai Lee, a major ñîr Phaj hauj teacher in Thailand prior to the relocation period, uses their preferred version.

ñîr Phaj hauj Ntsiab Dua Peb (Stage Three) is the preferred version of ñîr Txiay Kuam and his working community the Motthem Family (no longer in operation), and is used in several early publications arising from this association as well as some more general and academic publications such as Smalley et al (1990). Consonant representation is the same as in Stage Two, but the vowel+tone unit shows a progression towards regularisation and independent representation of tone which is fully realised only in the fourth version.\(^{20}\) The development of the vowel+tone unit through the four versions again demonstrates the greater significance attributed to this unit in the ñîr Phaj hauj orthographies (see §2.3.1.2).

Compare the Stage Three vowel-tone paradigm in Table 4.4 with the paradigm for Stage Two (reproduced below):

\(^{18}\) ñîr Phaj hauj Paj means, literally, ‘Flower Pahawh’. The flower is the source of the fruit.

\(^{19}\) As far as I can see, there is nothing to choose between Stages Two and Three in the production of a typewriter. It appears that there was some other reason behind this choice which is not identified in Smalley et al (1990).

\(^{20}\) In ñîr Phaj hauj Txha, tone groups are eliminated altogether and the number of diacritics increased to eight. A single vowel phoneme is always represented by the same basic grapheme, and a single toneme is always represented by the same diacritic.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vowel/tone</th>
<th>ไ่</th>
<th>ไ�</th>
<th>ไ�</th>
<th>ไ�</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e:</td>
<td>ฉ ช แช ฌ ฉี ชี แชี ฌี</td>
<td>อ ฮ อี อฮี ออฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ม มี มี มิ มีมิ มีมิมิ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>ก กี กี กึ กีกึ กือกึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>บ บี บี บึ บีบึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>ฉ ช แช ฌ ฉี ชี แชี ฌี</td>
<td>อ ฮ อี อฮี ออฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>น นี นี นึ นีนึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>ก กี กี กึ กีกึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia</td>
<td>บ บี บี บึ บีบึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ต ตี ตี ตึ ตีตึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Vowel+tone grapheme units Stage Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vowel/tone</th>
<th>ไ่</th>
<th>ไ�</th>
<th>ไ�</th>
<th>ไ�</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e:</td>
<td>ฉ ช แช ฌ ฉี ชี แชี ฌี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ม มี มี มิ มีมิ มีมิมิ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>ก กี กี กึ กีกึ กือกึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>บ บี บี บึ บีบึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>ฉ ช แช ฌ ฉี ชี แชี ฌี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>น นี นี นึ นีนึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>ก กี กี กึ กีกึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia</td>
<td>บ บี บี บึ บีบึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ต ตี ตี ตึ ตีตึ</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
<td>อ อฮ ออฮี อฮอฮี</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 (=2.2) Vowel+tone grapheme units (Stage Two)
4. Storycloth

Important features of Stage Three as compared to Stage Two are:

- Within each grapheme set, the diacritics are used consistently to represent the same tone.
- Five diacritics (including zero) are used in this Stage, as in the American variety (see §4.3.1.1).
- The same grapheme set is assigned consistently to a tone, thereby eliminating the 'overlapping' set of Stage Two. This means that tone /\#/ and tone /\#/ are each represented by a uniform grapheme set.
- All eight tones have full independent status. Tone /\#/ is not represented as being derived from any other tone.

These differences between Stages Two and Three are significant enough to inhibit ease of reading considerably. Not only are all the tone markers for one Stage effectively indecipherable by someone who only knows the other, but also different graphemes are selected by the two Stages for tone /\#. (Note in the following example the respective representations of (in RPA) haiv, nov, heev, and thov):

**Ex. 4.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage Two:</th>
<th>Stage Three:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nws</td>
<td>haiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tau</td>
<td>neeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tshuam</td>
<td>nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zeem</td>
<td>twm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rau</td>
<td>xeeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaj</td>
<td>heev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leej</td>
<td>thov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Txi</td>
<td>Vaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tias</td>
<td>Leej</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S2 ติมา หิ้ว โอม ตั้ม เสีย ที่้ะ จำ้ หิ้ว หิ้ว ตั้ม จิ้น ตั้ม

S3 ติมา หิ้ว โอม ตั้ม เสีย ที่้ะ จำ้ หิ้ว หิ้ว ตั้ม จิ้น ตั้ม

ob haiv neeg nov twm xeeb heev thov Vaj Leej

S2 จิ้น หิ้ว โอม ตั้ม หิ้ว หิ้ว ตั้ม...

S3 จิ้น หิ้ว โอม ตั้ม หิ้ว หิ้ว ตั้ม...

Txi muab Phaj Hauj rau nws...

‘He asked Vaj Leej Txi to give him the Phaj hauj to be taught to these two groups [the Hmong and Khmu]...’

_Vang (éc) et al (1990):14_

Representation of tone /\#/ then is different for all three versions found in the west:
Ex. 4.5

Stage Two (HLIA): น้ำ
Stage Two (HLI): น้ำ
Stage Three: น้ำ
/ɲɛ ɲɛ/
'that place up there'

4.3.1.3 Independent development

Dialectal variation

As discussed in §4.2.1.1, all work on 耈น  النار Phaj hauj implementation, development and dissemination through these major organisations has focussed on HmD. Although the official position from the HLI is that the script can be used for either dialect, the lack of an adequate description of its usage for MNts leaves certain questions in the air. Is MNts to be written according to sound, or according to underlying (ie historical) phoneme? The former puts limits on the principle of text readability in either dialect, since the spelling of a given word will be different in either dialect, as per the RPA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HmD</th>
<th>MNts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ɲɯ</td>
<td>ɲɯ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nws</td>
<td>nwg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɲɬ]</td>
<td>[ɲɬ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ㅂɤ</td>
<td>ƅɤ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thiab</td>
<td>hab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[tʰiab]</td>
<td>[hə]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'and'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɲɬɪ</td>
<td>ɲɬɪ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsov</td>
<td>tsuv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[tʃʊ]</td>
<td>[ʃʊ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'tiger'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 MNts in 耈น  النار Phaj hauj
(according to pronunciation)
4. Storycloth

The latter principle may presume some knowledge of the proto phonemes giving rise to the phonemes of the modern dialects (see discussion of \( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) in Smalley et al. (1990) work in §4.2.2). What seems more likely, given that only HmD is used in teaching materials, is that MNts reader-writers are expected to transfer MNts pronunciations to the HmD representation. For instance, [mo:] 'Mong' will be written not <urr> but <\( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) > 'Hmong'. With this system, a MNts writer will only know whether <\( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) > or <\( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) > is appropriate by reference to the HmD pronunciation, thus reinforcing the hegemony of this dialect.

Given that at least the rising generation do not seem to be attaining fluency in both dialects, the lack of adequate representation of MNts in \( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) Phaj hauj has implications for the possible scope of the script, and for the possibility of full participation of MNts speakers in the HLI in the future.

There is some interest in this idea outside of the HLI—notably by Jay Kue of Hmong Script Software. On Kue's website at <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Pines/5884/> a font is available to view and order which includes three new graphemes and also an extra diacritic to accommodate MNts sounds which do not occur in HmD:

(a) vowel/tone units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( a )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( N_t )</th>
<th>( N_t )</th>
<th>( N_t )</th>
<th>( N_t )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
<td>( \ddot{a} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 Extension of \( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) Phaj hauj by Hmong Script Software

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21 There is no discussion either in Smalley et al. (1990) or amongst the HLI of possible use of the \( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) Phaj hauj for dialects other than HmD and MNts. To my knowledge, Lee is the only person working on this idea.

22 Even though some of the major figures in the Motthem Family were MNts speakers, meetings were held entirely in HmD (Smalley et al 1990:129). The situation in Thailand may be somewhat different given that MNts is the dominant dialect in Thailand—however, some of the major teachers, such as Txais Lis \( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \), speak HmD.

23 Tone /\( \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \) is not represented.
All text on Jay Kue's site is, again, in HmD, so that specific implementation of his version of the ēkīr Phaj hauj for MNts is not stated. Since the new graphemes are introduced on the basis of sounds rather than phonemes however, the implication is that, where words are realised differently but include only sounds common to both dialects, the spelling is different (see Table 4.6).

Further possibilities

As the response to the work of Lee and Vang has shown, the sociolinguistic context of ēkīr Phaj hauj teaching and usage significantly restricts the potential for development of the script outside of what is considered to be the original or orthodox version. Many Hmong have noted possible useful directions for development however. These include:

(i) Reversal of the grapheme sequence so that written order reflects pronunciation order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>current</th>
<th>suggested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>u ū i</td>
<td>ē u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i t̡</td>
<td>i u</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \text{/mo:/} \) 'Hmong'

Table 4.8 Reversal of grapheme sequence

The reason given by the HLIA for retaining the \( \text{VIC} \) ordering refers to the meaning of the word and grapheme unit \( \text{<v>} \). The word \( \text{v keeb} \) means:

1. basis, basic, the root of things, the heart
2. the beginning of the world, beginning of time
3. starter, yeast: raising/fermenting agent.

\( \text{HLIA and Eira (to appear)} \)

The basic grapheme \( \text{<v>} \) is thought to iconically represent a beating heart, or a metaphor for the source of life.\(^{25}\) The grapheme unit \( \text{<v>} \), being first in the \( \text{ō kab} \) 'rows', provides the precedent for the placing of all vowels first in written words.

\(^{24}\) However, the expressed opinion of major leader ēkīr Kub Yaj, is that anyone unconnected to the HLII promoting or making adaptations to the ēkīr Phaj hauj poses no problem so long as they can demonstrate that they understand accurately the principles of the script. (ēkīr ēkīr Yaj Lis, p.c.)

\(^{25}\) ēkīr Lis Yaj (p.c.).
(ii) Regularisation of consonant grapheme units

There is significant potential in the structure of the script to reflect the way the consonants fall into natural classes, distinguished by regular features of prenasalisation, aspiration, lateral release, and combinations of those three. Given that the history of the evolution of the script through all four versions displays a progression towards increasingly regular representation of vowels along the same lines as discussed above, it is interesting to speculate whether Yaj Soob Lwj himself might not have also regularised the consonant system further had he lived longer. According to Yaj Nom Lis Yang Nao Lee (p.c.), the present complexity of correlation between sounds and their representation serves as a protection of the Hmong, a kind of code against possibly harmfully-intentioned outsiders. While this may have some practical meaning in view of the recent past of the Hmong people, for the most part it is an instance of the symbolic function of the script (see further discussion below).

Ultimately, within the current framework of orthodoxy which prevails among the HLI, it is not feasible to instate changes not demonstrably authorised by the script's originator. Suggestions for development potential then, while of interest within the scientist discourse, are unlikely to have any widespread practical application.

4.3.1.4 A new grapheme style

Changes by the HLIA

It is of more than technical interest to clarify the different forms of graphemes which can be found. In the first place the correspondence between graphemes in different sets is not always immediately obvious, and in the second place the differences initiated by the HLIA, from early 1999, are significant to the people concerned for extralinguistic reasons. The changes they are

---

26 Given my involvement in the HLIA and their orthodox position on such matters, I am not at liberty myself to surmise how such a regularised system could look.

27 This concept of deliberate obfuscation of language is a recurring theme in Hmong. In the auspicious funeral rites music played on the qeej, the tone sequence of the ritual words are embedded in the melody music, but disguised by such means as overlaying it with other interwoven melodies (counterpoint), and even deliberate introduction of 'the wrong' notes. The aim in this case is to code the rites against comprehension by malevolent spirits (Falk 1991).

28 In this light, it is also interesting that no one displays any interest in Version Four, in which the regularisation of vowel-tone representation has achieved completion.
4.3 Orthographies

instigating emphasise simplicity and clarity, and a squareness of shape. Their radical nativist view
of the script requires that they pare its forms back to essential lines, and keep them free of the
variations and flourishes that are prevalent in other grapheme sets. Because of the loading of
the ŝ̩ ŝ̩ Phaj hauj with the symbolism of a new start for Hmong people, complexity in the forms
of the graphs is seen as a bad omen, clouding and complicating the future progress of the
Hmong. To date, the strict forms used by the HLIA are used to date only by the HLIA,29
although members of this group anticipate that this style will come to be used by other Hmong
responding to the influence of the new teacher ŝ̩ ŝ̩ Kurb Yaj.

In the illustrations to follow I use the HLI fonts naadaa and kalayt, a preliminary version of the
HLIA font ǹŁv ǹtawv keeb, and Lee’s font Atxivsoob.30 These between them include all the
distinctions between extant variations which are significant in terms of symbolism and/or inter-
readability.

Graphemes with visually very distinct forms fall on the whole into two styles: one used by Lee
and Yang; the other by the HL in California and Melbourne, and by Jay Kue. Table 4.9 (overleaf)
gives the pairs of graphemes which are different enough so that their correlation may not be
immediately obvious. I have only included vowels, consonants, numbers and those symbols in
common use by the HLI.

As this table shows, there may be up to nine or more graphemes that could inhibit inter-
readability of versions. This number is effectively increased, however, when possible
correspondences between versions are also taken into account: Atxivsoob <ř> /a/, for
instance, resembles naadaa <ř> /au/ more than <ď> /a/, and naadaa <ř> /ň/ and <ňř> /m/ are
both likely to be taken for Atxivsoob <řř> /ň/. This kind of visual confusion is common in other
world scripts however—fluent readers of English have no trouble with either the difference
between <g:g> or <E:E>, nor, in context, the similarity between <š>, <š> and <š>.

29 For instance, they are used in the HLIA dictionary.

30 The font naadaa was created by Vang Peng Yang; the font ǹŁv ǹtawv keeb was created by ǹŁv ǹŁv Yaj
Xyooj and myself to specifications of the HLIA committee. Thanks also to ǹŁv ǹŁv ǹŁv Tjawj Lis Xab ‘Tzexa
Cherta Lee’ for the generous provision of his font Atxivsoob. ǹŁv ǹŁv ǹŁv Yaj Nyiaj Yig’s font is not
available to me; but the grapheme forms in Lee’s font are very close to those of ǹŁv ǹŁv ǹŁv Yaj Nyiaj Yig,
and will be adequate to illustrate the variation between this early font and the HLI fonts.
4. Storycloth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atxivsoob</th>
<th>Naadaa</th>
<th>/a1/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ເ</td>
<td>ຄ</td>
<td>/e/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ແ</td>
<td>ໃ</td>
<td>/a/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ໂ</td>
<td>ຍ</td>
<td>/m/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ໃ</td>
<td>ຕ</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ໄ</td>
<td>ຎ</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>໅</td>
<td>ລ</td>
<td>/h/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.9 Variant forms**

Table 4.10 gives examples of the criteria on which some features of fonts are now unacceptable to the Melbourne group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>point of issue</th>
<th>Naadaa</th>
<th>Cwjmem</th>
<th>Atxivsoob</th>
<th>᷍ ṙ Ntawv</th>
<th>keeb (HLIA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>open circles are a bad omen:</td>
<td>ᵃ ᴁ</td>
<td>ᵃ ᴁ</td>
<td>᳆ ᷍</td>
<td>᳆ ᷍</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) basic graphemes</td>
<td>ᵃ ᴁ</td>
<td>ᵃ ᴁ</td>
<td>᷍ ᷍</td>
<td>᷍ ᷍</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) diacritics etc</td>
<td>ᵃ ᴁ</td>
<td>ᵃ ᴁ</td>
<td>᷍ ᷍</td>
<td>᷍ ᷍</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decoration is undesirable</td>
<td>ᴁ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᴁ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graphs should be as straight as possible</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balance of graph should be centred</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>component sizes should match</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graphs should appear in their original forms [^{31}]</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᵃ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td>ᶲ ᶲ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^31]: I have used the term 'original' here as it is the English word the Hmong use to explain the problem. However, this should not be taken to mean that the accepted forms are the first version of the grapheme; they belong to a set deemed correct and therefore 'original' in a larger sense—the discovered true essence of the grapheme. Note that people who learned the ᵃ ᶲ Phaj hauj at an early stage, usually in Thailand, sometimes use old forms of the graphemes in handwriting.
4.3 Orthographies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naadas</th>
<th>Cwjemem</th>
<th>Atxivsoob</th>
<th>Ntawv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṇīv .MM</td>
<td>ṇīv .MM</td>
<td>ṇīv .MM</td>
<td>ṇīv .MM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

proportions should be centred:

(i) circle height

(ii) verticals

(iii) horizontals

Table 4.10 Variant styles

Keyboarding

An obvious problem inherent in disagreements over orthography and script is the risk of further reduction of the communication potential between groups, especially when these are geographically separated. Within the ṇīv .MM Phaj hauj-using community, because of community disagreements described in this section, only the various branches of the HLI currently communicate about language planning concerns. The development of a separate Melbourne variety of the script therefore has significant ramifications for an already small subgroup.

As noted above, the grapheme style specific to the Melbourne branch is completely readable by the American branches and vice versa, so that this in itself does not pose any problem for communication between groups. The biggest potential communication problem to be faced is the new keyboarding currently being proposed in the Melbourne community. If, as proposed, graphemes are assigned to a new table of keystrokes in the Melbourne font, then the process needed to send electronic text, whether by disk or via the internet, risks being more complicated than most people feel confident to deal with. The new keyboard layout reflects the structure of the ṇīv .MM ḫab 'rows' in which the grapheme units are conventionally, and symbolically, laid out. Compare the HLI layout in Fig 4.1 with the new HLIA layout (see Colour plate overleaf):
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* Colour plate: Keyboard layout for the new HLIA font, with symbolic decorations. The inscription beneath the picture (of แฮา haft Yaj Soob Lwj) is the proposed name of the reformed HLIA: แฮา haft Yaj Soob Lwj keeb Yaj Soob Lwj zim bxwv bxuj cag Hmoob moj kuab bxwv cag Hmoob keeb bxuj 'Yang Shong Lue Foundation Academy for the Hmong Written Language'. Other symbols include key orthographic elements such as ຄົ ກ ກ Lן and the first consonant ຄົ ກ ກ Lן vau nrau fau.
Several solutions to this potential communication problem are being discussed:

- The Melbourne Hmong may use the proposed font, together with its new keyboarding, on a local basis only, retaining the layout of the HLIA fonts already in use for external communications.

- The next version of the Melbourne font may need to be designed so that it can be typed according to the new keyboarding plan, but still using the same internal keyboarding system. This would make it possible for a text in the HLIA font to be read using one of the American fonts, and vice versa. On a Macintosh, this feature could be realised simply by incorporating a keyboard interface choice which the user accesses via a function key; for a PC it would require more comprehensive redesign of the font keyboard.

- The proposed keyboarding may supersede the current layout in the broader HLIA, as part of a wave of changes that may occur if the new Thailand teacher succeeds in gathering more disciples from the American group.

- A series of steps for converting one font to the other may need to be developed and taught, perhaps analogously to the presently available programme for converting RPA to Phaj hauj.33

---

33 A simple transliteration program for Hmong (RPA Phaj hauj only) has been made locally, by Nick Nicholas, to the requirements of the HLIA. This means that it is possible for any electronic text in the roman script to be read, edited or printed in the non-roman within seconds (but not vice versa).
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- The Melbourne Hmong may forgo relative ease of electronic communication with the American Hmong, relying as at present on either electronic communication through the medium of the RPA or mailing of texts in hard copy.

It should be noted that the font designed and released on the internet by Jay Kue of Hmong Script Software, is also quite different from the HLI fonts in this respect. Consequently, this is already a problem in the wider Hmong-speaking community, to the extent that Kue's fonts are in use, regardless of the development of the Melbourne font.\(^34\)

4.3.2 Roman Popular Alphabet (RPA)

Up to this point I have been using a version of the RPA I refer to as Basic RPA. However, some fairly major revisions are in the process of being developed, trial versions of which are already being implemented to an extent. The changes emerging, both spontaneous and deliberate, result in large part from the structure of the RPA, suggesting that its original design represents a more analytical level of phonetic structure than is ultimately useful to speaker/reader/writers.

Consonant reduction

A common criticism of the RPA heard from RPA— and êñ ñù Phaj hauj users alike is that the number of letters taken to spell perceptually single sounds is unwieldy. Furthermore, although the system originally worked out is phonetically adequate as a broad featural representation, there are points at which coarticulation and phonetic assimilation in the complex consonants result in a conflict between featural representation and speaker perception of the sound produced.\(^35\) Prenasalisation of consonants in particular comes into this category. It is perceived by many speakers not as prenasalisation but as a voicing contrast. This is especially evident in transliteration of English loanwords. Notice in the following example how the voiced bilabial in the English loan is transliterated as <np>, while the voiceless but unaspirated bilabial in the

\(^34\)The Unicode êñ ñù Phaj hauj proposal is working with both HLI and Hmong Script Software layouts at present.

\(^35\)This has been expressed in Hmong LG, and is also evident from my teachers' attempts to improve my pronunciation of these phones, eg: 'That's the same as "G"' (said of /Nk/).

\(^36\)Whether this perception is influenced by transfer from English, related to the opposition in English of [b] and [p k], I have not yet determined—such a question may require investigation of speaker perceptions in Laos and/or assessment as to whether the phonology of Hmong is shifting amongst speakers in the west.
Mandarin loan is transliterated as <p>. On the other hand, the initial of the Hmong name *Npis* is conventionally transliterated into English as <b>:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RPA</th>
<th>transcription</th>
<th>common perception of sounds</th>
<th>gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Npis</em></td>
<td>/mp'i/</td>
<td><em>bi</em></td>
<td>Bee (personal name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nkaub</em></td>
<td>/0'kau/</td>
<td><em>gau</em></td>
<td>egg yolk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ala-npa-mas</em></td>
<td>/at la1 mpa1 ma1/</td>
<td><em>at la1 ba1 ma1</em></td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compare:

| *Pejceeb* | /peV ce1/ | *peV ce1* | Beijing |

Table 4.11 Perception and notation of prenasalised consonants

The changes suggested to resolve these various incongruities are as follows:

Ex. 4.637

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nk} & \rightarrow \text{g} & \text{g} & \rightarrow \text{ng}\text{38} \\
\text{np} & \rightarrow \text{b} \\
\text{npIh} & \rightarrow \text{blh} \\
\text{nts} & \rightarrow \text{j} \\
\text{ntsh} & \rightarrow \text{jh} \\
\text{ntxh} & \rightarrow \text{jxh}
\end{align*}
\]

**Internal ordering**

Basic RPA ordering of consonant clusters could be seen as inconsistent, in that the placement of <h> varies between first and last position:

---

37 Yaj Ntxawg Lis 𞔘𞔕 (p.c.), of conventions emerging in his home state in Wisconsin. See also Hmong LG (1996–).

38 In Heimbach (1969 [1979]), <g> is used to represent [t] in some onomatopoeic interjections.
Some Hmong propose regularising all these clusters to a <h>-final order:

Ex. 4.8

Basic RPA       Hmoob       hlau       hnyav
proposed        Mhoob       lhau       nyhav

'Hmong'        'metal'        'heavy'

The distinction may be useful to retain, however, since it is intended to represent a difference in what the <h> represents. The implication in Basic RPA notation is that the nasals are preaspirated and/or voiceless (see §2.4.2.3), while the stops and affricates are postaspirated. The question is which is more important—simplicity and regularisation, facilitating predictability and ease of teaching/learning; or accurate reflection of phonetic distinctions, facilitating better pronunciation in language learners and understanding of phonetic structure? As so many questions of orthography development, it comes down to a question of who is the writing system for: advanced reader-writers or those in the process of acquiring literacy? L1 users or language learners? Obviously the Basic RPA system is more satisfying to a linguist, but whoever else it is for, the orthography is not primarily targeted to linguists.

As systematically varying order of stop/affricate clusters occurs as well. This is not surprising, given that the orthographic clusters of RPA represent perceptually single phonemes—however, the variations I have found all centre on the placement of <h>, and may reflect an uncertainty as to which articulation the aspiration is associated with:

Ex. 4.9

plh → phi
nplh → nplh

(Similar variants are theoretically possible.)

---

38 Notably, of the grapheme units which appear to be irregular, all but <hl> occur only in HmD, not in MNts.
For readability, this kind of variation is not overly significant, but it has ramifications for tools such as spell checkers and dictionaries and other ordered references, as well as for literacy teaching. If order of spelling is variable, it is difficult for dictionary makers to ensure that each word can be readily found. If they second-guess writers, and include many alternative spellings, perhaps with cross-references to the main entry, this will dramatically increase the size of the dictionary.

Listing alternative cluster orderings in a prefatory note puts expectations on the dictionary user that may not be fulfilled. Heimbach (1969 [1979]) provides section headings for both <n|hnl> and <m|hml> (see §2.3.2.1), referring the reader to the <n> variant heading. This is a workable policy if the variants are restrained in number. Of course, the same problems could be said to inhere in the fact of idiosyncratic spelling variations in highly standardised languages: the difference is that here there is as yet no final decision as to which is the standard. A selection of one of a set of variants for such purposes as dictionary entries automatically contributes to the establishment of that form as standard, thereby also contributing to the demise of ongoing community dialogue.

The desire to eliminate these kinds of functional problems in coping with both random variation and intentional revision forms part of the practical motivation for standardisation. In Chapter Five I discuss a much broader range of possible motivations for standardisation.

**Alphabetic ordering**

Certain ordering principles for RPA are in the process of becoming standard. Points of general convergence are:

- Each consonant grapheme set, and each vowel grapheme set, is treated as a single unit.

- Secondary word ordering is carried out according to each grapheme set in turn—first the initial consonant unit, then the vowel unit, then the tone unit. This results in some unexpected ordering for people literate in other roman script languages, eg

  ntug...ntuag...ntha.

- Within this, basic ordering principles of other roman systems are followed.

- Each grapheme unit occurring word-initially constitutes a separate section, so that for instance <t>, <th>, <ts>, <tsh>, <tx> and <txh> each head a section.

Variant orderings can also be found, particularly in different dictionaries; these are discussed in §4.6.
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4.3.3 Proponents of different scripts: Conjunctions and disjunctions

Various proponents of แจก ผ้ายา(hour Phaj hauj explain their preference in terms of:

- Religious imperative—the แจก ผ้ายา(hour Phaj hauj is accredited as a genuine candidate for identity as the traditional long-awaited script, since a) it is a received script, and b) it eventuated through a Hmong person.

- National origins—the แจก ผ้ายา(hour Phaj hauj 'is Hmong This is considered conducive to maintenance of a sense of community identity, particularly for those growing up outside of their country of origin.

- Superior phonological representation—meaning that the single grapheme units used to represent consonant and vowel-tone complex are seen as more closely reflecting the (C)V\textsuperscript{1} structure of Hmong.

Various proponents of RPA speak of their preference in terms of:

- Fulfilment of the historic long-held hope for the establishment of a writing system for Hmong.

- The status quo of the RPA as a major recognised writing system for Hmong—an investigation of other possible systems at this stage is seen as losing valuable time needed to move forward in the process of standardisation and establishment of Hmong as a literary language.

- Concern about accessibility of communications technology—a roman-based orthography is effectively already installed on any computer in the west.\textsuperscript{41}

- Accessibility to people already familiar with/literate in other roman-based literacies, in particular English.

Some of the concerns of users of both scripts arise from very similar bases. Both assume a longstanding need for a script in Hmong, whether this need is associated with a traditional or religious basis or simply seen as a necessity for linguistic/cultural survival. Both are concerned for the maintenance of a specifically Hmong identity, but differ in their judgement of what are the

\textsuperscript{40}A comment I have heard frequently from แจก ผ้ายา(hour Phaj hauj proponents and RPA-users alike.

\textsuperscript{41}This and the previous comment from Pao Saykao (p.c.).
essential markers of this identity. Both are concerned for practical application, RPA proponents prioritising technological convenience while âèn ñâr Phaj hauj proponents focus more on intuitive representation of linguistic features. However, it should be noted that technological application is also very important to âèn ñâr Phaj hauj proponents, who have for instance gone to great lengths to establish readily-available fonts for their chosen script; while intuitive representation of the phonology of the language is also very important to RPA proponents, many of whom are engaged in revising spelling conventions as part of the standardisation drive.

Most people literate in Hmong have at least a working knowledge of RPA. However, âèn ñâr Phaj hauj proponents are motivated enough about establishing âèn ñâr Phaj hauj in their communities to refuse to make any use of materials written in RPA for language education work. Many RPA-using Hmong, on the other hand, express interest in âèn ñâr Phaj hauj because its uniqueness and the fact of its origination from within the Hmong ethnic group mean that it symbolically embodies Hmong identity. There is also a degree of interest for reasons of phonological representation. Consequently it is acknowledged here and there within primarily RPA spheres of literacy. For instance, a sample appears in Blatout et al (1988).42 The most open proposal I have seen comes from Txooovtuam âèn ñâkí, who says:

Let it be as now that we have [as] many writing system as we want but we can CONVERT one system to another (ie. RPA to Caubfab (ǹv ëè), Caubfab to RPA, RPA to Pin Yin, Pin Yin to RPA, RPA to Hmong Thai, Laos, Vietnam, ... and vice versa) without learning all of them, just only one system you need to know. With detail[ed] information about these systems I think we could do it using any Programming Language to write a CONVERTER program from one system to other systems...

Hmong LÇ: May 1998

The primary focus of the majority of Hmong, however, is Hmong literacy per se, and so the accessibility of RPA is generally accepted as more important in the end. Moreover, the âèn ñâr Phaj hauj is sometimes associated with the ǹv ëè Caub Fab sect, who were guerilla fighters during the war in Laos (see §2.2.3.2). Although there is disagreement about the relevance of this, and some âèn ñâr Phaj hauj proponents reject the label entirely, it is certainly still the case that the teaching of the script is linked with a particular quasi-religious orientation which derives from that time. This sociopolitical loading of the script thus rules it out as a viable alternative for many Hmong, while at the same time ensuring its ongoing significance amongst others. On the other side of the fence, the RPA is associated for some Hmong with the image of modernity and
progress, as against the image of the ǎk ñr Phaj hauj as a more conservative or nativistic movement (see §5.2.1.1 and §5.2.6.1).

The choice of one or the other script, then, reflects a deeper division in the community. Assessments of viability of the writing systems from points of view available within linguistics, or arising from concerns of technological access or literacy acquisition, are not in themselves adequate to determine a preferred or likely direction for a literacy base for Hmong.
4.4 Lexicon

In this section I survey the directions that have eventuated in the Hmong community in regard to strategies for lexical elaboration, and representation of polysyllabic forms.

4.4.1 Lexical elaboration

As an immediately salient element of language which tends to be loaded with political implications, the items in the lexicon typically attract attention as a primary focal point of a standardization effort. This may take the form of:

- **Elaboration**: that is, deliberately expanding the lexicon to include terms for concepts which are new, in the sense of either modern, or perceived as foreign. Code elaboration usually reflects the objective of ensuring ongoing useability of the language in all fields, as compared to the objective of ensuring the maintenance of traditional heritage knowledge and practices via the language.

- **Purification**: attempts to rid the language of outgroup, usually foreign elements. Generally the focus is particularly on minimising or rejecting the influence of languages/language groups seen as a threat. As Thomas (1991) notes, 'purism may be a feature of the dominated, but rarely if ever of the dominant language.' (p124) Both moves to eliminate the use or sanction of words already in use, and active monitoring of the sources of incoming words, can be forms of purification.

The two aims of elaboration and purification are not in conflict but commonly operate in tandem: a language planning team may seek new words from within the resources of the language being standardised, to replace noticeable loanwords or provide alternatives to code-switching. Official guiding principles of the immense task of code elaboration undertaken by the Council of the Hebrew Language (CHL) from the early part of last century included that:

> the Council will create words according to the rules of grammar and analogy in the language as far as possible from Hebrew roots in the Bible and in the Talmudic literature

*Academy of the Hebrew Language (AHL) 1963, quoted in Fainberg (1983): 15*

In Hmong, on the one hand, an accelerated phase of lexical elaboration is in process, partly as an effect of living in an environment where different concepts are foregrounded to those salient in the former language environment, and partly as an overt language planning effort. This in part arises from the goal of establishing the status of Hmong amongst world languages:
4. Storycloth

we must open our mind and door to adapt whatever best suitable to our culture and language to catch up on other nations.

_Vang Thao, Hmong LG: late 1996_

At the same time, many people are concerned for the purification of the Hmong lexicon. While this concern arises most obviously from circumstances of relocation and dispersion, highlighting the desire for recognisable markers of cohesion and continuance as a people, for many an important target of purification besides English is Lao.

4.4.1.1 Multiple directions

As observed in §2.2.1.4, it is evident that lexical strategies for dealing with such newly foregrounded concepts as western reckoning of the calendar, different forms of transport, the language of technology, western medical practices and so on, are being developed independently by people living in different areas. Much of this discussion is carried out over the internet, so that people do at least have access to what is happening elsewhere to the degree that they have access to the net. Lexical elaboration is a topic which is guaranteed to attract a large number of responses on the email networks whenever it is brought up. Judging by this enthusiasm, there are many who concur with the view expressed by Tomas Muas in his call for suggestions:

First, we are Mong and we should have our own words. Second, I know that many of you are teachers or teachers to be, and you may want to teach them to your students. Third, having these terms mean life will be easier for those who have to translate from English to Mong, especially for school/government. Finally, even after knowing that most literate people will use English, I still feel that there will be time when Mong terms are more appropriate or even necessary.

_Hmong LG:1998_

Recent new terminology discussions in Hmong LG have included expressions for 'calculator', 'garbage' 'ice', greetings at Easter time, and various governmental offices.

---

43 The Hmong in Lao are also informally engaged in lexical elaboration, in such fields as governmental functions (Nick Enfield, p.c.).

44 I am unable to transliterate this name as it is unclear whether it is To Mas or Tom As—or possibly even an English name.
The new wave of dictionaries being developed and published for and often by Hmong in the west, as distinct from those previously produced largely by and for missionary work in Asia, frequently include many newly coined, calqued, and borrowed terms which also demonstrate a wide divergence of varying strategies according to the language consultants involved (see §4.6.3).

**Sample: Days of the week**

The degree of variation occurring between different groups is not simply that of a natural richness of synonyms and closely related terms; it includes basic terms for which there would normally only be one term in common use within a variety. For example, Table 4.12 lists the paradigms for days of the week which have been suggested or reported (overleaf).45

Of these, at least sets #1, 3, 5, 6, 10 and 11 are in use in some section/s of the Hmong community. The parallel usage of so many totally distinct paradigms for a basic concept such as this indicates how the need for lexical elaboration is beginning to result in a slight or emerging divergence of variety based on area or regular contact environment. In regard to this and other lexical fields, I find that my Hmong teachers reject a sizeable proportion of terms I come across in sources such as Hmong dictionaries, sometimes preferring a different term and sometimes not understanding them at all.

45 Prior to the refugee period, people used Lao words if specific names of days were needed, but it was more common to use the paradigm which included the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nang hmo</td>
<td>นีดิ้น</td>
<td>yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hrub hrub</td>
<td>นีนาเก้</td>
<td>day before yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hrub hmos</td>
<td>นีเก้</td>
<td>evening before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puag hrub</td>
<td>นีเก้</td>
<td>yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hrub hrub</td>
<td>นีเก้</td>
<td>two days before</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neeg kis</td>
<td>นีเก้</td>
<td>day after tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puag nraus</td>
<td>นีเก้</td>
<td>two days after tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puag nraus ub</td>
<td>นีเก้</td>
<td>three days after tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>นีเก้</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Storycloth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thur</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. HLIA</td>
<td>Ὕῳὐ Ὕῳὐ</td>
<td>Ὕ网站地图</td>
<td>Ὕ网站地图</td>
<td>Ὕ网站地图</td>
<td>Ὕ网站地图</td>
<td>Ὕ网站地图</td>
<td>Ὕ网站地图</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zwj gtk</td>
<td>zwj qug</td>
<td>zwj feej</td>
<td>zwj tteb</td>
<td>zwj kukb</td>
<td>zwj cag</td>
<td>zwj hnb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nam</td>
<td>Zwjhi</td>
<td>Zwjrog</td>
<td>Zwjmoo</td>
<td>Zwjtxb</td>
<td>Zwjzoo</td>
<td>Zwjqoob</td>
<td>Zwjhnub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntawv⁴⁷</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Mn</td>
<td>Hnubchiv</td>
<td>Hnubtxoog</td>
<td>Hnubvees</td>
<td>Hnubtheej</td>
<td>Hnubfim</td>
<td>Hnubsua</td>
<td>Hnubxeeb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools⁴⁸</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.⁴⁹</td>
<td>Zwjchiv</td>
<td>Zwjtxoog</td>
<td>Zwjvees</td>
<td>Zwjttheej</td>
<td>Zwjlim</td>
<td>Zwjsua</td>
<td>Zwjxeeb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moob</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lajlee⁵⁰</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Vaas</td>
<td>Vaas Aas</td>
<td>Vaas Phuv</td>
<td>Vaas Phab</td>
<td>Vaas Xuv</td>
<td>Vaas Xaum</td>
<td>Vaas Thiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>loanwords</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>ncaas</td>
<td>na qaas</td>
<td>nphuv</td>
<td>npha ham</td>
<td>ntxhuv</td>
<td>ntxhaus</td>
<td>nthiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKibben (1994)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴⁶ Most of these sets were also collected by Tom Hang, and redistributed through Hmong LG, pending release on his website. Most can be found in several sources. Nos. #2, 4–, and 9–12 were distributed through Hmong LG (1997 and 1999); often by more than one individual, some of whom provided slightly varying sets. I have listed the primary source from which each was obtained, and retained from these: (i) Dialect. Most sets appear in different dialects in different sources. (ii) Orthographic conventions. Word boundary, capitalisation, some details of spelling (eg for Lao loans) etc vary between sources. Other kinds of variations have been footnoted.

⁴⁷ Nam ntawv (‘Mother of writing’) is one of the names of ῦῦῦῦῦῦῦῦ Yaj Soob Lwj. Set #1 is the one traced to ῦῦῦῦῦῦῦῦ Soob Lwj by the HLIA. This set is sometimes attributed to the ῦῦῦῦῦῦῦῦ Caub Fab.

⁴⁸ Provided by Kia Yang.

⁴⁹ Set #4 uses zwj Ὕ网站地图 ‘day’ as preferred in the ῦῦῦῦῦῦῦῦ Caub Fab/Niam ntawv sets, instead of ῦῦῦῦῦῦῦῦ hnb ‘sun’.

⁵⁰ Nos. 2, 5–9 and 11–13 are in MNts and therefore are not transliterated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Txoov Tuam (ën jëm)</th>
<th>Hlinub</th>
<th>Rognub</th>
<th>Moonub</th>
<th>Xunub</th>
<th>Zoonub</th>
<th>Qoobnub</th>
<th>Ntujnub</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Anon</td>
<td>Hlintuj</td>
<td>Rogntuj</td>
<td>Moontuj</td>
<td>Xubntuj</td>
<td>Zoontuj</td>
<td>Qoobntuj</td>
<td>Nubntuj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Anon</td>
<td>Ntujhli</td>
<td>Ntujrog</td>
<td>Ntujmooc</td>
<td>Ntujxub</td>
<td>Ntujzoo</td>
<td>Ntujqoob</td>
<td>Ntujnub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Christian Education Dept</td>
<td>nubhli</td>
<td>nubci</td>
<td>nubtswv</td>
<td>nubntuj</td>
<td>nubhluob</td>
<td>nubtso</td>
<td>nubkaaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Txoov Tuam (ën jëm)</td>
<td>nubpib</td>
<td>nubtsim</td>
<td>nubtxhim</td>
<td>nubkhu</td>
<td>nubzoo</td>
<td>nubnyob</td>
<td>nubsu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12 Days of the week: proposed terms and terms in use

51 Also tebnub.
52 Set #8 uses en jëm ntuj 'sky' instead of en jëm hnuob 'sun'.
53 Set #10 is also found with 'Sunday' as 'day one' rather than the order given here, which is the more common.
54 Sunday schools publication Txaq kev tshaav ntuj. Provided by Nyaj LoojQA him. Also found as nubzaaj, nubhli instead of nubhli, nubci (although it seems to be generally agreed that the set in the table is the correct version).
55 Also found (i) with nubzoo and nubnyob reversed; and (ii) with nubsu, nubtxoog for 'Saturday, Sunday'.
56 Alternatives: nubkawg, nubkaaj
4. Storycloth

Table 4.13 gives a gloss and/or explanation for the above sets, where these form part of the justification for their proposal or use. These explanations reveal a range of positions indicative of those which emerge in similar discussions of other lexical fields.57

Several different strategies are in evidence in this table:

- borrowing from Lao (#5, 6)
- calquing from English morphology, sometimes reinforced by analogy with other languages (#2, 7, 8, 11)
- use of terms identifiable as Hmong (eg #1)
- constructing of a metaphoric meaning sequence (#3, 4, 12, 13)
- reference to ordinal sequence of the days (#10)

Discussion around most of these points focuses not on practical strategies, but on the linked questions of (a) the need for new words to reflect and/or perpetuate Hmong identity, and (b) what is considered to constitute 'H/Mong' terms. I discuss the proposals above in this light in §5.2.1.1. Set #3 appears to have met with widespread interest and approval, showing up in various places beyond the borders of Minnesota.58 It is a system which combines two principles, (i) constructing a meaning sequence that reflects the cycles of life; and (ii) distinguishing the seven day names by means of the seven primary tonemes of Hmong. Finally, the ordinal proposal, which is also in wide use, is recommended by some for its simplicity,59 with the proviso

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57 Notes to Table 4.13:

(i) Note that the translations for what are evidently the same words/morphemes vary as appropriate to the aims of the proponent of the particular set of terms.

(iii) The meanings of Set #3 have also been explained to me in terms of the growth of plants (Yaj Ntxawg Lis ẍn锗ி, p.c.).

58 Ntxawg Lis ẍn锗ி (p.c.)

59 For others, however, its very simplicity of meaning makes it unsatisfying and 'meaningless' (Ntxawg Lis ẍn锗ி, p.c.). To these people, a set of words with metaphoric implications is preferable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref.</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thur</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Zwjhl</td>
<td>Zwjrog</td>
<td>Zwjmoo</td>
<td>Zwjxub</td>
<td>Zwjzoo</td>
<td>Zwjqoob</td>
<td>Zwjnub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day of the moon</td>
<td>day of war</td>
<td>Mercury's day</td>
<td>day of the god of thunder</td>
<td>day of health &amp; happiness</td>
<td>day of agriculture</td>
<td>day of the sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Hnubchiv</td>
<td>Hnubtxoog</td>
<td>Hnubvees</td>
<td>Hnubtheej</td>
<td>Hnubtim</td>
<td>Hnubsua</td>
<td>Hnubxeeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'v'-tone:</td>
<td>'g'-tone:</td>
<td>'s'-tone:</td>
<td>'j'-tone:</td>
<td>'m'-tone:</td>
<td>'g'-tone:</td>
<td>'b'-tone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>xeex tau lawm yuav</td>
<td>huanvam lawm</td>
<td>huanvam tau</td>
<td>hwxwm lawm</td>
<td>hmuab yam tshib</td>
<td>vammeej lawm yuav</td>
<td>txhua yam yuav</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'after conception'</td>
<td>development needs</td>
<td>middle day keeps</td>
<td>'establishment of balance for both ends'</td>
<td>'one form joins another form to produce synergy'</td>
<td>'to be created all things first had to be conceived'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Zwjchiv</td>
<td>Zwjtxoog</td>
<td>Zwjvees</td>
<td>Zwjtheej</td>
<td>Zwjtim</td>
<td>Zwjsua</td>
<td>Zwjxeeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'v'-tone:</td>
<td>'g'-tone:</td>
<td>'s'-tone:</td>
<td>'j'-tone:</td>
<td>'m'-tone:</td>
<td>'g'-tone:</td>
<td>'b'-tone:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rognub</td>
<td>Moonub</td>
<td>Xubnub</td>
<td>Zoonub</td>
<td>Qoobnub</td>
<td>Ntujnub</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day of the moon</td>
<td>day of (the god of) war</td>
<td>day of the god of thunder</td>
<td>day of (the god of beauty)</td>
<td>day of (the god of agriculture)</td>
<td>day of the sun (lit. sky)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Hlintuj</td>
<td>Rogntuj</td>
<td>Moontuj</td>
<td>Xubntuj</td>
<td>Zoontuj</td>
<td>Qoobntuj</td>
<td>Nubntuj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>continued...</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Wed</td>
<td>Thur</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Sun</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><em>hnub ib</em></td>
<td><em>hnub ob</em></td>
<td><em>hnub peb</em></td>
<td><em>hnub plaub</em></td>
<td><em>hnub tsib</em></td>
<td><em>hnub rau</em></td>
<td><em>hnub xya</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day one</td>
<td>day two</td>
<td>day three</td>
<td>day four</td>
<td>day five</td>
<td>day six</td>
<td>day seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td><em>nubhli</em></td>
<td><em>nubci</em></td>
<td><em>nubtsim</em></td>
<td><em>nubntuj</em></td>
<td><em>nubhlub</em></td>
<td><em>nubtsom</em></td>
<td><em>nubkaaj</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day of the moon</td>
<td>day of light</td>
<td>day of the master</td>
<td>day of the sky</td>
<td>day of love</td>
<td>day of rest</td>
<td>day of hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td><em>nubpib</em></td>
<td><em>nubtsim</em></td>
<td><em>nubtxhim</em></td>
<td><em>nubkhu</em></td>
<td><em>nubzoo</em></td>
<td><em>nubnyob</em></td>
<td><em>nubsu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day of beginning</td>
<td>day of creation</td>
<td>day of</td>
<td>day of change</td>
<td>day of wellbeing</td>
<td>day of staying</td>
<td>day of rest</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>advancement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td><em>Nub Chiv</em></td>
<td><em>Nub Xeev</em></td>
<td><em>Nub Kaaj</em></td>
<td><em>Nub Hub</em></td>
<td><em>Nub Zoo</em></td>
<td><em>Nub Su</em></td>
<td><em>Nub Hawm</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day of renewal</td>
<td>day of hope and</td>
<td>day of hope and</td>
<td>day of health and</td>
<td>day of love,</td>
<td>day of rest and play</td>
<td>day of worship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>remembrance &amp; prosperity</td>
<td>good habits</td>
<td></td>
<td>happiness &amp; appreciation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13 Days of the week: glosses and explanations
that it needs to be kept carefully distinguished from counting of months. If by this proviso Muaj Loɔm ɓā means reference to specific months, this seems an unnecessary concern, since the term for months, ɓu ɓi hli ntuj, clarifies reference:

**Ex. 4.10**

a. ɓu ɓi
   hnu h tim
day LOC

‘1st of January’

b. ɓu ɓi ɓi hli ntuj
   one one month

‘one month’

The counting of dates, however, is a valid point, as the usual method of doing this uses hnu tim plus number (as distinct from hnu, still the most common word for ‘day’):

**Ex. 4.11**

a. ɓu ɓi
   hnu ib
day one

‘Monday’

b. ɓu ɓi, ɓu ɓi ɓi hli ntuj, ɓu ɓi ɓi hli ntuj
   hnu ob, hnu h tim ob, ob hli ntuj
day two day LOC two two two month

‘Tuesday, 2nd of February’

A second point of potential confusion is the choice of Monday for hnu ib ‘day one’ by most, while a minority think of ɓu ɓi hnu ib as Sunday.

**Hmoob Las Tees**

While the diversity developing in the days of the week paradigm discussed above is largely a spontaneous occurrence, effected mostly by the limits on interaction between people of different regions, a more carefully constructed divergence results from the division between proponents of the ɓu ḏin Phaj hauj and others. Within the HL1, a large range of lexical items from
days and months to word class labels are all required to be specific to the Phaj hauj community and the teaching of Yaj Soob Lwj. This precludes the establishment in the HLI of new terms which have been developed and disseminated in broad community discussions. Such terms are dismissed by the HLIA as Hmong Latin—ie RPA. This shows the degree to which a large assortment of approaches to language is brought together under one concept, and an entire subcommunity delineated, according to this one factor of which writing system they use. For the HLIA, Hmoob Las Tees is an object of purification.

In the case of phonetic and orthographic elements—which might be expected targets for a group focused by definition on writing—the division has practical as well as political functions. Depending on the script they use, speakers think and talk quite differently about writing, and to some extent about the structure of the language as a whole, as reflected in the way it is written and taught. In the Table 4.14 (overleaf) I give some examples of linguistics terms which are specific to either RPA reader/writers or the HLI or Phaj hauj reader/writers.

When Hmoob Las Tees speak of 'consonants' and 'vowels', they may be referring to either a phoneme /ts/ or an individual grapheme <n>, <t> or <s>—but not the composite grapheme string <nts>. Conversely, when Phaj hauj people refer to a 'vowel' or a 'consonant', they are indicating simultaneously the phoneme and the whole grapheme unit representing it. Basic grapheme units are never considered in isolation from their complementary diacritics: a vowel is always referred to together with its suprasegmental tone. Tone is not represented as separable in the version of the script used in the HLI; and no referring terms are available for tonemes, but only for the diacritics used both for specifying tone and differentiating consonants. RPA users, on the other hand, employ a range of sets of terms for the individual tones. In the HLI, an entire set of vowel-tone units—that is, a single vowel phoneme in each of its seven (or eight) realisations, or a set of three consonants—is referred to as a 'row' or a kab: no equivalent term

60 The word class labels currently in use are those of Lee (1994). These have been implemented in the HLI dictionary, but due to problems from both community and academic perspectives, these are expected to be superseded in the HLIA community. Hence no word class labels have been included in the local dictionary.

61 There are Phaj hauj users outside of the HLI. For these people, the entire package of lexical restrictions does not apply, but terms specific to the orthography and some views of the language which arise from this are held in common.

272
that it needs to be kept carefully distinguished from counting of months. If by this proviso Muaj Loorr m means reference to specific months, this seems an unnecessary concern, since the term for months, \textit{hli ntuj}, clarifies reference:

\textbf{Ex. 4.10}

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. \textit{hnub tim ib}
\textit{day LOC one}

'1st of January'

\item b. \textit{ib ib hli ntuj}
\textit{one one month}

'one month'
\end{enumerate}

The counting of dates, however, is a valid point, as the usual method of doing this uses \textit{hnub tim} plus number (as distinct from \textit{hnub}, still the most common word for 'day'):

\textbf{Ex. 4.11}

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. \textit{hnub ib}
\textit{day one}

'Monday'

\item b. \textit{hnub ob, hnub tim ob, ob hli ntuj}
\textit{day two day LOC two two month}

'Tuesday, 2nd of February'
\end{enumerate}

A second point of potential confusion is the choice of Monday for \textit{hnub ib 'day one'} by most, while a minority think of \textit{hnub ib} as Sunday.

While the diversity developing in the days of the week paradigm discussed above is largely a spontaneous occurrence, effected mostly by the limits on interaction between people of different regions, a more carefully constructed divergence results from the division between proponents of the \textit{Phaj hauj} and others. Within the HLI, a large range of lexical items from
days and months to word class labels are all required to be specific to the Phaj hauj community and the teaching of Yaj Soob Lwj. This precludes the establishment in the HLI of new terms which have been developed and disseminated in broad community discussions. Such terms are dismissed by the HLIA as 'Hmong Latin'—ie RPA. This shows the degree to which a large assortment of approaches to language is brought together under one concept, and an entire subcommunity delineated, according to this one factor of which writing system they use. For the HLIA, Hmoob Las Tees is an object of purification.

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59 The word class labels currently in use are those of Lee (1994). These have been implemented in the HLI dictionary, but due to problems from both community and academic perspectives, these are expected to be superseded in the HLIA community. Hence no word class labels have been included in the local dictionary.

60 There are Phaj hauj users outside of the HLI. For these people, the entire package of lexical restrictions does not apply, but terms specific to the orthography and some views of the language which arise from this are held in common.
Table 4.14 RPA and ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ Phaj hauj: phonetics and orthography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>graphemes</th>
<th>Hmoob Las Tees</th>
<th>ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ Phaj hauj</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>ntawv niəm</td>
<td>ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yub qauv nkaws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vowel-tone set</td>
<td></td>
<td>ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consonant</td>
<td>ntawv bliv</td>
<td>ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>las qauv nkaws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tones</th>
<th>proposed names</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chiv(ʔiv) or 'v'</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>troog(ʔəo) or 'g'</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vees(əɛ) or 's'</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>theej(ʔɛj) or 'j'</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fim(ɨm) or 'm'</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sua or ??</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>xeeb(ʔəb) or 'b'</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ᥴ�</td>
<td>—</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(diacritic names)</th>
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<th>❇️</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cim tub</td>
<td>❇️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cim taum</td>
<td>❇️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cim kes</td>
<td>❇️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cim hom</td>
<td>❇️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cim taw</td>
<td>❇️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14 RPA and ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ Phaj hauj: phonetics and orthography

pertains to RPA usage. The ꆏ kab 'rows' define the standard layout for ordering and rote teaching purposes. Whereas RPA reader/writers explaining a consonant or trying to read an unfamiliar word will sound out the features in a standard sequence: 'no-to-so... no-tso... ntso', as if they were each separable, ordered segments of a consonant cluster; ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ ꆏ Phaj hauj reader/writers will recite the set of three consonants: ꆏ-č-č (vau-nrau-fau), as if they formed a

---

61 I have not heard of any name assigned to this tone.

62 Not used in Melbourne
4. Storycloth

natural class. Notice also that the names of the phonemes are different—and that RPA users differentiate between the names of the sounds, as above, and individual letters, for which they use English names.\(^{63}\) Names of punctuation also vary, RPA again using English names; and features such as morphemic reduplication which are highlighted only in ūk ṅār Phaj hauj, are currently named only in ūk ṅār Phaj hauj also.

Two sets of terms outside of the above category will be useful to demonstrate the lexical divergence between the two script groups on other than practical motivations. The days of the week paradigm preferred by the HLI (Table 4.12#1) is presented as a given: whatever else other groups are using or HLI community members might even be using casually, there is no official doubt that this is the correct set. Similarly with the set of labels for word classes: in the broader community this is another subject of free dialogue; but for the HLI it is a matter of deciding on a correct set of terms. This is not an area which has been dealt with in depth because of its technical complexity; but at present the classes and labels set out in Lee (1994) have current status.\(^{64}\)

It will be apparent that for many of these terms there is a reciprocal exclusion of ūk ṅār Phaj hauj-specific terms by RPA reader/writers. I do not classify this as an example of 'purification' however, because the social circumstances of its occurrence are not the same. In the case of the ūk ṅār Phaj hauj community, there is a need to draw the boundaries of the subgroup and its beliefs and practices very clearly in a range of different parameters including, but not limited by, lexical representation of orthographic and phonetic elements. The terms considered in this section are rejected by the HLI because they are yī ūn ūk Hmoob Las Tees'. For some items, as explained above, this is justified also by the lack of fit between phonetic perception as reflected by the structure of the script; for others such as word classes and days of the week there is no such supporting justification: the HLI choices are distinguished from the ūn ūn ūk Hmoob Las Tees terms simply because these are the ones acceptable within the tradition of ūn ūn ūk Yaj Soob Lwjja teaching. Moreover, since the discursive arena of ūk ṅār Phaj hauj users is not coextensive with that of RPA users, suggestions circulated in the latter subgroup often do not filter through to the former. So both these factors contribute to the RPA community being seen as increasingly Other to the ūk ṅār Phaj hauj community. What is happening is more than the development of lexical items needed for talking about orthography: two linguistically distinct

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\(^{63}\) Vowel names in ūk ṅār Phaj hauj take the form \(h\|v\|t\) (v—keeb).

\(^{64}\) At least in the USA branches.
speech communities are forming from the starting point of an ideologically motivated divergence in script choice.

In the case of RPA reader/writers, the criteria of lack of fit precludes the usefulness of some of the ฮื้นครห พห้ควบ phonetic/orthographic terms, but other terms are considered on an equal footing with any other suggestion that is put forward on the topic. Many of the terms sanctioned within the HLI are not entirely new but were available to some groups of Hmong prior to the refugee period. For example, the nam ntawv paradigm for days of the week (Table 4.1.2) was not suggested by the HLI, was not linked with any associated doctrines about politics or script, and was included in Tom Hang’s collection on the same basis as any other suggestion. So there does not appear to be the same social mandate among RPA users to veto use of ฮื้นครห พห้ควบ preferred terms. This is predictable on the grounds that the RPA users are the dominant group—their identity is not under threat by the existence of a small subgroup. Although it would not be surprising if the association of the HLI with the ฮื้นครห Caub Fab guerilla fighters might give some Hmong cause to overtly dissociate from activities of the HLI by means of purification of this sort, a more general respect for ฮื้นครห ติ่นย์ Yaj Soob Lwj and some of the concepts derived from his teaching of what it is to be Hmong appears to be the more significant factor in acceptance of some aspects of the HLI’s work. Proposals such as the days of the week paradigm are usually couched in terms of being Hmong, or earlier parts of the language at risk of being lost, and are often credited to ฮื้นครห ติ่นย์ Yaj Soob Lwj.

4.4.1.2 To borrow or not to borrow?

**English, Lao and others**

The profile of loans from Lao and English exhibit some significant differences. In the first place, Lao words and phrases appearing in Hmong are all well-established, whereas English is the source for new loans, for people living in countries where English is the national language.

English loans are for the most part seen as code-switching. This general perception is probably because of (i) the recency of appearance of English words in Hmong speech, and (ii) concomitant effects of a lack of assimilation into Hmong and uncertainty as to how they should be written. They are suggested less frequently than Lao loans in response to translation.

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65 Nam ntawv ‘mother of writing’ refers to ฮื้นครห ติ่นย์ Yaj Soob Lwj.

66 Presumably French has this role in French-speaking countries—except that many internationalisms are sourced more from English.
4. Storycloth

requests; they are often pronounced more or less according to English phonology; their appearance is commonly explained as the lack of a Hmong word, or that the speaker doesn't know the Hmong word; up to a whole phrase of English may be used rather than just single words (Tabsis, kuv tug kheej prefer to use the word 'nyeem' "But for me, I prefer to use the word "nyeem" ("read"). It is often also reasonable to see them as loans, however, as they can be incorporated to the extent of having a nominal classifier assigned (ゅub fridge, viǎ đaim voting ballot), and they are sometimes transliterated into Hmong (뉴 뵼 뵼 Auvtasias 'Australia'), necessitating some adaptation to Hmong phonology, including tone assignment. However, as shown in the discussion of 'computer' below, unassimilated loans can also be viewed as valid Hmong words by speakers, so that the linguistic assessment of the distinction does not always equate to the sociolinguistic.

Lao loans are commonly included in responses to direct translation requests. They are always transliterated in written Hmong (reflecting also adaptation to Hmong phonology), and completely incorporated into Hmong morphosyntax:

Ex. 4.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paj Yeeb tus naikhus lub npe hu ua Jean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paj Yeeb CL teacher CL name call be Jean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Paj Yeeb's teacher's name is Jean'

Their origins are still transparent to speakers however, and generally noted in lexical elaboration discussions in the HLIA or in Hmong LG. Sometimes their appearance is explained in the same way as the English words; but sometimes Hmong equivalents co-exist (see Ex. 4.13 below).

The response to Lao and English loans differs between the RPA and ên ñìr Phaj hauj communities. Lao words occur in casual usage throughout the Hmong community in the west. But it is only in the RPA networks that they are treated as acceptable responses to direct translation requests. In the RPA community Lao words are treated as more acceptable than English; in ên ñìr Phaj hauj community the reverse is the case. For instance, in RPA dictionaries,

67 Nyaj Loojŋà Hmong LG:Feb 1998: รงี่ .mvp, รงี่ กิ่น ดัง prefer to use the word "ดัง".
Lao words sometimes appear even where Hmong equivalents are known. In McKibben (1992 [1994]), both Lao and Hmong words appear for the same (English headword) entry:

Ex. 4.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tshav nyoob hoom</td>
<td>tshav dav hlau</td>
<td>air field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phuj loos</td>
<td>pab cuam</td>
<td>assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luv/fais</td>
<td>tsheb</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>npas</td>
<td>pob</td>
<td>ball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, English loans only appear in dictionaries where no Hmong equivalent is known. These are always transliterated, but strongly marked as being English loans:

Ex. 4.14

apple n. avpaum (bdv)

There is no Hmong word for apple, so most Hmong will simply say 'apple' the best they can.

Compare the unmarked treatment of a Lao loan:

advertise v. khu xana (L)  

McKibben (1992 [1994])

Among Phaj hauj users Lao loans have far lower acceptability. Neither Lao nor English words are acceptable in the dictionaries, with the occasional exception of English place names. If no one knows a Hmong word for a given concept, where in the RPA community discussion would ensue as to an appropriate coinage or calque or loan, in the HLIA that concept is omitted.

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68 It should be noted that although the primary author/editor of this dictionary is a non-Hmong, he compiled the dictionary a) with a great deal of assistance from Hmong speakers, whose names are given in the introductory material; and b) largely on the basis of available texts. It is reasonable to suppose that the final product is a reliable record of Hmong language in use in America, or at least Utah, in the nineties.

69 avpaum (bdv) น้า อัพ แนะ; khu xana (น้า อุ๋น อุ๋น)
4. Storycloth

from the dictionary-in-progress, and put on the list for referring to ü åt Kub Yaj in Thailand.
During discussion of translations, if no one knows a Hmong term, someone may explain that
they just use the Lao/English word, which is not the same thing as actively suggesting it as a
possible translation. However, Lao words which occur during conversations in formal
consultancy sessions are corrected, which English words are not. Possibly the English words
are perceived as clearly not Hmong (ie as code switching), and so not a threat to the language.
For this group, recent history may have highlighted Lao, rather than English, as the salient threat
to the Hmong people, way of life and language. The discomfort with inclusion of English loans
in the dictionary seems to be more about language maintenance concerns than purification as
such.

The official position, as reflected in the dictionary, screens out any transparent loans:

Ex. 4.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General use</th>
<th>HLIA choice</th>
<th>gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>limpiam (&lt;Lao)</td>
<td>ū ū</td>
<td>week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xim (&lt;Lao)</td>
<td>ꜰ</td>
<td>colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naiskhus (&lt;Lao) /leeskais</td>
<td>ꜰ ꜰ</td>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be kept in mind that what I am focussing on here is the prescriptive, overt language
planning status of lexical elaboration. The official face of standardization is not about strategies
people employ in real time, it is about the directions in which policy in whatever subgroup is
pushing the prestigious form of the language. The discussion above is about sanction of new
words, recognisable by such markers as inclusion in dictionaries. In Thompson, Yang et al (1996
[1999]), fresh coinages by individual members of the dictionary working group are sometimes
included; in McKibben (1992 [1994]), Lao words proliferate; in the HLIA dictionary neither is
acceptable.

——

70Tapp (1989) suggests that the positive reception to foreign missionaries in Laos was in part a reflection
of the sense of oppression by Laotian rule. French and American outsiders were the 'other' Other, the
power they represented was welcomed in opposition to local powers.
Loans from Chinese languages also abound in Hmong, but here the loan process appears to be complete. Their foreign origins are generally opaque to speakers without specialist knowledge, they are incorporated both syntactically and phonologically, and in many cases have become associated with particular meanings. So Chinese loanwords are not simply alternative words for the same concept or substitutes for a Hmong word, but rather affect the semantic system as a whole. For instance, the Chinese loan meaning 'heart' is used in a highly abstract sense, whereas the senses relating to (i) emotional state and (ii) physical location are generally assigned to the Hmong lexemes. The Chinese loan meaning 'man' is used for large-scale, generic meanings, whereas the Hmong words for 'people' are found in terms relating to individual people and their families:

### Chinese loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xeeb</td>
<td>xeeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'heart'</td>
<td>'man'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cim xeeb</td>
<td>tsoom zeej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'memory'</td>
<td>all people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thooj xeeb</td>
<td>twvz zeej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'of one heart, in unity'</td>
<td>ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xov xeeb</td>
<td>thoob zeej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'be grateful'</td>
<td>the whole earth, humanity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>siab</td>
<td>neeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'liver/emotional centre of the body'</td>
<td>'person'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu siab</td>
<td>txivneej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'be offended'</td>
<td>man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zoo siab</td>
<td>neejtsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'happy'</td>
<td>family (on the female side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siab rtevd</td>
<td>dab neeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'patient'</td>
<td>history, traditional story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plawv</td>
<td>leej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'heart/physical centre of the body'</td>
<td>CL (people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lub plawv</td>
<td>ib leej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'heart'</td>
<td>alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plawv zooj</td>
<td>leej twg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'in the heart of the jungle'</td>
<td>anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plab</td>
<td>plab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'wise and intelligent'</td>
<td>plaw loj</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.15 Division of morphosemantic space

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71 Sources discussing loanwords or other influences in Hmong, such as Lyman (1974) or Downer (1967) do not specify which Chinese language the loans derive from.

72 The ṭxivneej, ṭa bō leeg, and ṭa plab plaw72 loj are tone sandhi variants.
4. Storycloth

The scale of incorporation and acceptability as part of Hmong is predictable on the basis of time depth. Chinese loans appear to be a fait accompli; the question about Lao loans is whether they should be eliminated; whereas the question about English loans is whether they should be accepted (and more introduced). Lao and English loans tend to be borrowed unanalysed—that is, as a single unanalysable morpheme regardless of number of syllables/morphemes. Chinese compound loans are more likely to be analysed into their component parts and further compounds formed by analogy (see §4.4.1.2). 73

Sample: Technology terms

In Hmong lexical elaboration processes it is evident that some semantic fields are more prone to the influx of loans than others. In particular, the field of technology tends to be heavily loaded with English terms. 74 For various languages undergoing intensive code elaboration, this field tends to highlight the tension between the desire for an autonomous language and the desire to incorporate and/or keep pace with or incorporate post-industrial western technologies. 75

Thomas (1991) encapsulates the problem of internationalisms:

> By preferring nativisation of the lexicon, purism may be seriously detrimental to the drive for modernisation: language planners might legitimately consider that a language cannot afford to stagnate while adequate native equivalents are sought for items of terminology widely distributed in the languages of the world.

pp219-220

Although many of the terms in this field in general use are not derived directly from English, English is nonetheless the source language of such internationalisms for the Hmong in America and Australia. 76 One contributor to Hmong LG used the phrase 'the scientific word' to refer to

73 Loans from other languages also occur, particularly from French and Thai. For loan sources of individual words in a dictionary format, see Lyman (1974).

74 Another such field is western politics. The USA presidential election of 2001 drew dozens of messages from contributors to Hmong LG, most of which were predominantly in English.


76 See Thomas (1991) on the characteristics of and response to internationalisms.
English words in this domain, showing the degree to which this form of knowledge is associated with a particular language.

A topic series in Hmong LG during 1999, debating what to call a 'computer', brought out a more general discussion of the issue of borrowing from English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points for borrowing/code switching</th>
<th>Points for coinage/calquing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newly coined words in Hmong are opaque (Muaj Lojìt ᬀjì)</td>
<td>English words are inaccessible to Hmong in Asia (Tswv Xyooj ᮡ ᬆjì)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English words are accessible to Hmong where their surrounding environment is English-speaking (Lopao Vang)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing is a normal process of language development (Lopao Vang)</td>
<td>Coinage is a normal process of language development (Hyrum Weibling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPA is suitable for incorporating English words without respelling (Lopao Vang)</td>
<td>English words are difficult to read in English when only RPA is understood (Tom Hang)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proliferation of coinages causes confusion (Lopao Vang)</td>
<td>There are too many English words in the field of technology to borrow practically (Tswv Xyooj ᮡ ᬆjì)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent use of newly coined words causes confusion (Lopao Vang)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.16 Borrowing vs coinage/calquing

Tom Hang proposes a general strategy for expressing technological concepts in Hmong (Hmong LG: September 1999). It is a useful strategy because it does not preclude any of the possible methods of dealing with the problems but rather arranges them in a preferred order according to a general principle of maintaining Hmong linguistic identity:
1. Find other words already in use in Mong and make the best of it.

This could mean:

a. semantic extension of an existing word: ヴム ツァア ツァア tshuab ntauw ntauw 'typewriter'

b. calquing

Some see this as a solution to the problem of comprehensibility, on the assumption that morphology and/or semantics of a given term in (usually) English are accessible to Hmong. This assumption which is not necessarily well founded on a wide-scope definition of the Hmong-speaking community.

c. compositional descriptive strings: ヴム ツァア ツァア tshuab hlwb hlau
   (machine+brain+metal).

2. Add a Mong word before or after the word—eg ヴム tshuab computer—to help identify it.

Hang proposes that the preword ヴム tshuab precede any choice of words for 'computer', including ヴム tshuab computer, by analogy with tshuab xaws khaub dluag 'sewing machine', ヴム ツァア ツァア tshuab luam ntauw 'copier, printer' and others. The principle is that provision of the general semantic category, a common word formation procedure in Hmong as well as in other isolating languages such as Mandarin, will give a big enough clue to ensure decipherability of a potentially unfamiliar word.

3. Rewrite the word in Mong as closely as possible to the original word.

This may involve some degree of adaptation to Mong phonology, and also requires consideration of tone assignment.

4. Use it as is

The strongest stance for the validity of unassimilated loans being acceptable in Hmong is the statement by Pao Saykao that 'Computer...is "computer" in Hmong!' (Hmong LG: September 1999).

Whatever strategies are chosen, effective dissemination of new words is also at issue for their comprehensibility, if not their assimilation into general use.

77Suggested by Tolo Thuathaa ツァア.
Although Hang only suggests this ordered strategy in the context of technological terms, it is worth considering whether there is an essential difference between various semantic fields such that the language of technology, for instance, is more appropriately treated as a set of loanwords whereas words for time reckoning can more readily be created from within, or partly from within, the Hmong language. Table 4.17 lists some words I have found which are not specific to the field of technology, which exemplify each of these categories. Some, such as úọ ọ lub kaus, (see #1a) exemplify more than one strategy at once (in this case the classifier assists in the semantic extension process).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b</th>
<th>1c</th>
<th>2a</th>
<th>2b</th>
<th>3a</th>
<th>3b</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>semantic extension</td>
<td>calquing</td>
<td>compositional string</td>
<td>addition of a Hmong modifier</td>
<td>assignment of a classifier</td>
<td>transliteration</td>
<td>adaptation to Hmong phonology</td>
<td>unassimilated loan/code switching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lub kaus kip (from tus kaus kip a young shoot of a plant/ bird's beak) 'umbrella'</td>
<td>txoj moo zo</td>
<td>ntaev pov-tshawj</td>
<td>Auv taslas teb</td>
<td>daim kab xev</td>
<td>ev paum sA</td>
<td>Ye lemees</td>
<td>'computer'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phuam kip (from square cloth used to make a turban/ any square cloth) 'hand towel'</td>
<td>nubhli</td>
<td>kev phais hnyu-tw</td>
<td>tshaw luam</td>
<td>cov font</td>
<td>xees sA</td>
<td>'German'</td>
<td>'make sense'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tshuaj ntsuab (from medicine) 'chemical'</td>
<td>tshuaj ntsuab</td>
<td>tsev loj muag</td>
<td>tseb</td>
<td>kas tes sA</td>
<td>Mev sA</td>
<td>'Mexican'</td>
<td>'busy'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.17 Strategies for lexical elaboration**

Evidently the strategies suggested by Hang are equally available for terms in fields other than science and technology. It seems, however, that the prolific rapidity of advances in this field in general, and exacerbated for the Hmong in particular, in the shift from an essentially agrarian to a thoroughly technological society, creates a situation of special concern. The sheer number of either loans or coinages which must be incorporated poses problems for broad and ongoing comprehensibility in this field.

4.4.1.3 Conclusions

There is a strong core of active Hmong speakers who are motivated to ensure that the Hmong language keeps up with the demands of a new social and technological environment. There is no suggestion, for instance, that a Hmong lexical paradigm of days of the week might not be necessary—which would be a tenable position on the grounds that Hmong in Laos function perfectly adequately with the use of relative reference terms (see §4.4.1.1), and loanwords when a specific day-name is desired.

It is of concern to some that new words be accessible to not only speakers of both major dialects but also Hmong speakers in all parts of the world. This implies a need for involvement at some level of representatives from all the broadly defined groups thus included. The current situation seems to preclude the active participation of Hmong in Asia, but certainly speakers of both major dialects are well represented in the west and in public discussion forums.

At present, the tendency is for the geographic spread of Hmong people to effect a proliferation of terms across areas and subgroups rather than emphasising the choice and propagation of one or a few standard forms to all. Again, communication and dissemination are at issue here. Some discussion participants express a concern with this state of affairs, and strategies for dealing with it are on the agenda for consideration (see §4.5.2).

4.4.2 Polysyllabic forms

The main focus within the Hmong-speaking community in analysing the status and categories of polysyllabic forms is to determine the appropriate ways in which to write them. In this section I outline the proposals which have been made, and to various degrees implemented, for orthographic representation of polysyllables. I then set out to investigate what general principles are determining the status of polysyllabic forms as single units in speaker perception, on the basis of criteria set out in 2.5.2. Using a dataset comprised of words found written
spontaneously as polysyllabic by speakers, I investigate the morphosyntactic and semantic patterns which they fall into.

4.4.2.1 Representation proposals

RPA as originally taught, and used in some major sources such as Johnson (1985), was written entirely in monosyllables. However, in more recent usage in RPA, both published and informal writing has been tending towards inclusion of orthographically polysyllabic word units. On this topic, contributors to Hmong LG discussions have proposed the following:

(i) Monosyllabic representation of all words

(ii) Conjoined representation of polysyllabic forms

(iii) Hyphenation

(a) of compound forms

(b) of words of more than two syllables, or a combination of hyphens and conjoining.

(i) Monosyllabic representation is problematic because of potential ambiguities; eg, tub+rog (son+war) is a soldier, whereas tubrog (son+fat) would mean 'fat boy' (Kao Xiong, Hmong LG: Feb 1997). Some argue, however, that such ambiguities are of no consequence to comprehension in context, and stress the principle of maintaining pre-eminence of the spoken over the written word. In an ongoing discussion of the example taub hau, Tom Hang says:

when we speak, we don't say "head" and then tell our listener that we mean the "taubhau" which are spelled together.

Hmong LG: early 1997

Monosyllabic representation can be difficult to read in the case of polysyllabic, monomorphemic loanwords such as As mes liv kas 'America', or in cases where one or more components of the compounded form have no independent meaning. It is likely that where the individual syllables

---

78 In this Phaj hauj usage, this is still the case, so this section deals only with RPA usage. For this reason, since what I am dealing with is representation, in this section I suspend my policy of writing all Hmong words in the two scripts.

79 Taub + hau could mean pumpkin + boil, but the single word taubhau means 'head'.
also occur as independent morphemes, the distorted correlation between visual appearance and morphological structure incurred by a monosyllabic representation could slow reading comprehension.

(ii) Conjoined representation of polysyllabic forms can also be problematic in cases where the word is more than two syllables long (eg kakhau 'stick insect'), thereby becoming cumbersome to read. This practice gives rise to objections particularly when there are many such words in a short length of text. Complex word-medial clusters of tone marker+consonant (as in khawbngaa support, praise) are also visually confusing (Pao Saykao, Hmong LG: April 1998)—especially where the tone marker is one which doubles as a consonant symbol. At present this applies to <d, g, m, s, or v>; but as Saykao points out, in the context of the developing reduced spelling system, all tone markers double as consonant symbols: uablag: uab+ lag 'crow'? ua+ blag (<nplag)7.

(iii) Hyphenating compound words is impractical and hard on the eye as a primary strategy, since there are a great many compound forms in an average Hmong text. However, as a secondary strategy for disambiguating visually complex forms as illustrated above, and particularly for words of more than two syllables, it can be both practical and linguistically logical (Saykao, ibid.). For instance, for tsev kawm ntawv (house + study + paper) 'school', either tsevkawmntawv or tsev- kawm-ntawv are possible, but tsev-kawmntawv is visually simpler and reflects both the compound status of the tri-syllable and the hierarchy of its internal morphological structure.

There appears to be general agreement amongst at least the more vocal segment of the RPA-using community that orthographic representation of compounds and other polysyllables is desirable in some form. It has also become commonplace in published sources including Heimbach (1969 [1979]); McKibben (1992 [1994])—works to which some Hmong refer as precedence for polysyllable representation. Discussion is also in progress about how to select which words are to be represented as single units in one or another form. Some including Pao Saykao and Mai Na M Lee (Hmong LG: mid 1998) propose a case-by-case decision which prioritises clarity: either for disambiguation or for ease of reading flow. Some, including Tom Hang (ibid: March 1997), propose that standardisation is unnecessary, and the question could remain a matter of individual preference. As Sao Xiong (p.c.) points out, 'most Hmong readers will almost definitely recognize the meaning of the word from the context of the sentence, whether or not the word is compounded'. Others recommend a more thorough morphological analysis of Hmong as a basis for selecting consistent categories of compounds for polysyllabic representation. Ratliff (n.d.) also touches on this idea, suggesting as an example that polysyllabic borrowings, high-usage compounds and compounds with at least one dependent component could be selected for standard representation as polysyllabic.
4. Storycloth

4.4.2.2 Current practice

Data

The primary data for the following analysis comprises all words written as polysyllables occurring in contributions or sections of contributions to Hmong LG: #10-22, where these are written by Hmong people. Both HmD and MNts dialects are represented. I have assumed that all contributors with Hmong names are native speakers of Hmong, on the basis that adult Hmong in the west were born in Laos or Thailand, and their children have been brought up in households where Hmong is the first language. The corpus comprises around 5,000 words, although this includes some code-switching with English. Longer sections of English-only have been excluded from the count.

I have chosen this data because (i) email is a relatively unedited written form, so that orthographically polysyllabic forms are likely to reflect writer intuition rather than an attempt to write correctly; and (ii) being freely available to any interested parties, a range of writers are represented—limited to those who utilise the net. I have also included incidences of orthographically polysyllabic forms which occur during discussion on this very topic (these are marked as such). As these discussions reveal, contributors are accustomed to writing and in many cases perceiving Hmong as comprising only monosyllabic words (see §2.5.2.1), so while the occurrence of orthographically polysyllabic forms is likely to be of use in exposing patterns of perception of compounds, the converse is not necessarily the case: occurrences of monosyllabic representation of the same forms or of forms in the same categories does not necessarily constitute a counter-example.

All contributions to the mailing list written in Hmong use RPA, in varying versions which I preserve in the examples below.

In the contributions selected, there were 178 occurrences of orthographic polysyllables, comprising 102 different words, 31 of which are repeated one or more times. HmD and MNts equivalents and other variants are counted separately. 17 occurrences constitute part of overt discussions as to appropriate orthographic representation: these are marked. I have excluded

---

80 Some non-Hmong also use Hmong names on occasion, as I do myself—these contributors generally identify themselves by the way they present their names, eg 'David "Choj" Mortenson'.

81 Effects of this choice may include a relatively high proportion of students, and subscribers to Hmong LG in particular are mostly people who are consciously focussed on language and language development.
the form yoglub 'be + CL' from the count, which I judge to have been written as a single unit by
mistake, since the classifier is a constituent of the ensuing noun phrase.

The following table (pp288–292) lists all words in the dataset, together with the number of
occurrences of each. Possible typographical errors or unusual spellings are indicated, although I
maintain the spelling/s found in the dataset throughout discussion. Spellings which are specific
to one dialect are also indicated, where this is apparent to me. Since a high percentage of
words are shared in identical form between the two dialects, for the most part this means that
spellings specific to MNts are marked. The listing is ordered as per Basic RPA order: treating
each consonant cluster and each vowel sequence as a single unit.

Key:  
MNts exclusively MNts spelling
HmD exclusively HmD spelling
V variant: unusual spelling, or error as compared with published sources
H Heimbach, 1969 [1979]
SX Sao Xiong (p.c.)
D occurrence in discussion of compounds
1D 1 occurrence in discussion of compounds
* personal name, many occurrences, counted as one

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>cwjpwm (SX)</td>
<td>personality</td>
</tr>
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<td>cuajcaum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>ninety</td>
</tr>
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<td>dlaabtsi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MNts</td>
<td>what?</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>hwjchim (H)</td>
<td>authority</td>
</tr>
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<td>hauvcaug</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hauvtoj</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>?underground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humxeeb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>haumxeeb (SX, H)</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaabtsheeb</td>
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<td>MNts</td>
<td>wedding ritual</td>
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<tr>
<td>kevkug</td>
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<td></td>
<td>?clear path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwvnpawg</td>
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<td></td>
<td>younger cousin (female line)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

82 Since the dialect of my consultants is HmD, it is possible that some MNts spellings have been marked
as 'variants'.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
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<td>boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leejtwg</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>who?/anyone</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>like this</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>noisy and crowded</td>
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<td>molyam</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&amp;83</td>
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<td>muajntsiv</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>a bit (modifies a modifier)</td>
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<td>family (female line)</td>
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<td>be well</td>
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<td>on the date...</td>
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<td>debt</td>
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<td>MNts</td>
<td>that place/those people</td>
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<td>qaumpeg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(general demonstrative)</td>
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<td>nram-hav</td>
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<td>MNts</td>
<td>downhill</td>
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<td>ntsejmuag</td>
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<td>how many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peeuvxwm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>skill</td>
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</table>

83 Not in Heimbach and not known to Sao Xiong. May be a misspelling.
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<th>Gloss</th>
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<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>MNts</td>
<td>woman who easily becomes pregnant</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>tuabyaam</td>
<td>MNts</td>
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<td>seventy</td>
<td>MNts</td>
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### Table 4.18 Orthographic polysyllables in semi-casual writing

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<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
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<td>yamnrbxmvw</td>
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<td>example</td>
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<td>eighty</td>
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<td>yoolyim</td>
<td>4 (1D)</td>
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<td>easy</td>
</tr>
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<td>yuamkev</td>
<td>3 (1D)</td>
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<td>mistake</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>must</td>
</tr>
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<td>yuavtsom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>have to</td>
</tr>
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<td>zeejtsoom</td>
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<td>tsoomzееj (H)</td>
<td>all people</td>
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<td>zoosab</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>MNts</td>
<td>happy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Established categories**

In §2.5.2.3, the following categories of polysyllabic types were presented:

1. **Polysyllabic morphemes**, especially loanwords
2. **Bound morphemes**
3. **Grammatical dependency I**, involving a grammatical morpheme as a clitic or affix
4. **Grammatical dependency II**, exhibiting commonly occurring structural relationships such as V–O
5. **Independent morphemes**
6. **Miscellaneous**, including Reduplication

I consider the dataset in terms of Categories (1)–(4) and (6) first, and then return to words in Category (5).

Sixteen Category (1) polysyllables appear, accounting for thirty-three occurrences:
While generally speaking polysyllabic loans tend to be borrowed as unanalysable single units, it will be noted that three of these incorporate the separable morpheme xeeb, from 'heart' in Chinese (Lyman 1974 'compounds created by analogy': see §2.5.2.2). Other Chinese morphemes which recur in Hmong compounds include ntxwv (a nominaliser) and zeej 'man'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loan source</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Loan source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>what?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>noisy and crowded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(nyuab—T)</td>
<td>confused</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>time, occasion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>of one heart and mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>wisdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>be born</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vaam—C; meej—meem—T)</td>
<td>ten thousand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>troubled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L)</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>easy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>all people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.19 Loanwords


Key: C=Chinese (unspecified in sources), L=Lao, T=Thai.

vaj ntxwv 'King'

King+NOM 'King'

tsoom zeej 'all people'

portion+man 'all people'

cim xeeb 'memory'

remember+heart 'memory'

xeeb ntxwv 'grandchild'

born+NOM 'grandchild'

thoob zeej teb 'the whole'

whole+man+earth+ man 'the whole'

kee xeeb 'closed, pig-headed'

solid+heart 'closed, pig-headed'

kee xeeb 'closed, pig-headed'

earth 'closed, pig-headed'
At least six words (fifteen occurrences) demonstrate, in Ratliff's words, semantic dependency (Category (2), Ratliff n.d.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Source: Heimbach (1969 [1979])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nwjchim</td>
<td>?+be.angry</td>
<td>authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neegkaum</td>
<td>?+ten</td>
<td>twenty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neejtsa</td>
<td>person+?</td>
<td>family (female line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sawvdaws</td>
<td>?+to.name</td>
<td>everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suavdawg</td>
<td>?+to.name</td>
<td>everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsimtxom</td>
<td>create+?</td>
<td>persecute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.21 Bound morphemes**

In Category (3), two words (six occurrences) are found:

**Ex. 4.16**

- *leejtwg* CL (person)+INT ('who?')
- *xwsle* same + 'like' ('as, like')

Like other morphemes in this category, both *twg* and *l* (=lo) are found attached to a range of words including *thaumtwg* ‘when?’, *tebchawstwg* ‘what country?’, *zooli* ‘looks like’ and *ibyamli* ‘the same as’.

Category (4) compounds in the dataset exemplify recurring forms of structural dependency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Source: Heimbach (1969 [1979])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tubntse</td>
<td>son+clever</td>
<td>N+Mod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaiqaum</td>
<td>chicken+round</td>
<td>N+Mod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84 Not a separable morpheme in Hmong.
Two subtypes of Category (6) appears in the data: there are two personal names, and two examples of four-word expressives.

Finally, twenty-nine words (fifty-three occurrences) verifiably constitute compounds formed of independent morphemes: Category (5). Below I discuss features of these which suggest their status as phrasal lexemes rather than free collocations.

### Compounds of independent morphemes

In §2.5.2.4, I suggested that at the present stage of analysis, seven criteria would be useful to identify compounds of independent morphemes, as distinct from collocations. In summary, these are:

1. Substitutability
2. Non-compositionality
3. Tone sandhi
(iv) Stress centre

(v) Location or potential location of pause

(vi) Frequency of occurrence

(vii) Orthographic representation.

The following investigates the correlation of some of these criteria with the words appearing in the dataset. Criterion (i) is useful only when the syntactic context is included in the study. The use of the written medium as data source precludes use of Criteria (iv) and (v). Criterion (vii) has been utilised as the initial means of identifying the dataset. One further pattern also emerges in the dataset, which I discuss below.

Table 4.23 gives all compounds of independent morphemes which I am able to positively identify from the dataset.\(^{85}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morpheme gloss</th>
<th>Parts of speech</th>
<th>Word gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caijnoog</td>
<td>season+age</td>
<td>N+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cuajcaum</td>
<td>nine + ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hauvcaug</td>
<td>inside+knees</td>
<td>LOC+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humxeeb</td>
<td>suitable+heart</td>
<td>Mod+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwvnpawg</td>
<td>younger.brother+cousin</td>
<td>N+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwvtij</td>
<td>younger.brother+older.brother</td>
<td>N+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nojqab</td>
<td>eat+sweet</td>
<td>V+Pred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntsejmuag</td>
<td>face/ear+face/eye</td>
<td>N+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyobzoo</td>
<td>live+good</td>
<td>V+Pred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pebcaug</td>
<td>three+ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peevxwm</td>
<td>capital+affairs</td>
<td>N+N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{85}\) Identified as comprising morphemes which occur independently or have a separable independent meaning according to my primary consultants and/or Heimbach 1979.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>morpheme</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>type</th>
<th>example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plaubcaug</td>
<td>four+ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
<td>forty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puliyawm</td>
<td>grandmother+grandfather</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaigaum</td>
<td>chicken+round</td>
<td>N+Mod</td>
<td>chicken egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raucaug</td>
<td>six+ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
<td>sixty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raucaum</td>
<td>six+ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
<td>sixty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simneej</td>
<td>lifetime+estate</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taubhau</td>
<td>gourd+head</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tebchaws</td>
<td>land+place</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tomqaab</td>
<td>there+behind</td>
<td>LOC+LOC</td>
<td>behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tubntxawg</td>
<td>son+youngest.son</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>youngest son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsajntawv</td>
<td>manila+paper</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>manila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsibcaug</td>
<td>five+ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
<td>fifty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>txhawbnqaa</td>
<td>support+carry</td>
<td>V+V</td>
<td>support, praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaajtsv</td>
<td>ruler+lord</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xyaccaum</td>
<td>seven+ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
<td>seventy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yimcaum</td>
<td>eight+ten</td>
<td>NUM+NUM</td>
<td>eighty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuavtau</td>
<td>will+ASP</td>
<td>Aux+Aux</td>
<td>must</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yuavtsum</td>
<td>will+IMP</td>
<td>Aux+Aux</td>
<td>have.to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.23 Compounds of independent morphemes

Firstly, it is noticeable that, as predicted in Ratliff (n.d.), almost all compounded morphemes are of the same part of speech (X=X). The instances of V+Pred can be considered to be of this form X=X, if Pred is taken to be a subset of V (see §2.5.1.2).

There are a high proportion of compounds of the semantic form X=X, i.e. exhibiting semantic reduplication:

- calinyoog: season+time — period of time
- kwvtij: younger.brother+older.brother — family (male line)
- ntsejmuag: face/ear+face/eye — face
4.4 Lexicon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pujyawm</th>
<th>grandmother+grandfather</th>
<th>grandparents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tebchaws</td>
<td>land+place</td>
<td>country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>txhawnqaa</td>
<td>support+carry</td>
<td>support, praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaajtswv</td>
<td>ruler+lord</td>
<td>ruler</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.24 Semantic reduplication**

A related category of compounds comprises two closely related morphemes, one of which more narrowly specifies the meaning contributed by the other, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kwvnpawg</th>
<th>younger.brother+cousin</th>
<th>younger cousin (female line)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>taubhau</td>
<td>gourd+head</td>
<td>head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tubntxawg</td>
<td>son+youngest.son</td>
<td>youngest son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.25 Semantic narrowing**

Compounds which are clearly non-compositional, i.e. their meaning is neither predictable from the sum of their parts nor a variant of the meaning of one component, include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nojqab</th>
<th>eat+sweet</th>
<th>V+Pred</th>
<th>(greeting)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nyobzoo</td>
<td>live+good</td>
<td>V+Pred</td>
<td>(greeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peevxwm</td>
<td>capital+affairs</td>
<td>N+N</td>
<td>'skill'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.26 Non-compositional compounds**

and also *pebcavg* (three+ten) with the special meaning 'New Year'.

Listed below are those compounds which involve tone sandhi, accounting for twenty-six occurrences. Generally this tone sandhi follows the expected patterns (see §2.4.2.2), the single exception in this dataset being the composite loanword *vaammeej* (which not only has no triggering high tone in the first syllable, but also changes against the usual pattern to high-falling tone <-j>). Since tone sandhi is not an automatic phonological procedure but rather is triggered by a combination of phonological environment and morpho-syntactic dependence, the

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56 It should be explained that in the Hmong kin system, all related males in the same generation are considered in some sense to be brothers. *Apawg* then specifies that it is the more distant 'brothers' who are being referred to.

57 Referring to the practice of celebrating the new year on the 30th of the final lunar month of the year.
occurance of a morphophonemic process such as this in a predominantly monosyllabic language is a strong indicator of lexicalisation status:

- pebcaug caug<caum<kaum thirty
- pobntseg ntseg<ntsej ear
- plaubcaug caug<caum<kaum forty
- taagnrhol taag/taas (word pair) completely
- tebchaws chaws<chaw country
- tejza(u)g zaug<zaus sometimes
- tuabneeg neecj/nee/(word pair) woman who easily becomes pregnant
- tsibcaug caug<caum<kaum fifty
- uacaag caag<caas why?how?
- uake ke<kev together
- (full collocation uaibke)
- vaammeej meej:meem ten thousand

Table 4.27 Compound formation and tone sandhi

Finally, such words as najnub 'every day', tejzag 'sometimes' and nram-hav 'downhill' are of interest, since they are entirely compositional and do not involve any morphophonemic processes. Their appearance as orthographically polysyllabic is evidently conditioned by their high usage in common everyday language.

In summary, it appears that the categories of polysyllabic types discussed in §2.5.2 do correlate strongly with the dataset, suggesting that speaker perception of polysyllabic status is conditioned by morphosemantic structure. In particular, loanwords, words incorporating tone modification, and compounds exhibiting internal dependency relations, each represent approximately 15 percent of occurrences in the data; while compounds of independent morphemes of the same parts of speech represent nearly 30 percent. Words which also have a semantic formula of 'X=X' or *X is specified by X* account for around a third of these.

This close correlation of morphosemantic structure with speaker perception indicates that systematic identification of compound forms and consequent representation conventions is a realistic project within the scope of current standardization efforts. To complete this section, I highlight one further type of commonality in the dataset which is not touched on by any of the
above contributions but also seems to indicate patterns of compound or polysyllabic word perception; namely, the salience of certain lexical or semantic fields.

**Lexical fields of compound forms**

It is noticeable that certain lexical and semantic fields recur frequently in the dataset. The table below (pp 300-302) gives all words of the dataset which fall into a readily identifiable recurring lexical/semantic field. These words account for nearly half the dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic/lexical field</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cajnyoog</td>
<td>period of time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>najnub</td>
<td>every day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nubtim</td>
<td>on the date...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sijhawm</td>
<td>occasion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tejzag</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwvnpawg</td>
<td>younger cousin (female line)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwvtij</td>
<td>family (male line)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neejtsa</td>
<td>family (female line)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tubntxawg</td>
<td>youngest son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leejtub</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phoojywg</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puicyawm</td>
<td>grandparents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuabneeg</td>
<td>woman who easily becomes pregnant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaajtswv</td>
<td>ruler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xwbtwvb</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pronouns</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leejtwg</td>
<td>who?/anyone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pubahnyuaas</td>
<td>they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sawvdaws</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

89 Three or more different words in the same lexical field has been categorised as 'recurring'.

90 See also Ratliff's (1992) analysis of the correlation between lexical fields and tone sandhi forms.
Table 4.28 Lexical/semantic fields

The words in this list not only fall into recurring lexical or semantic fields, but are also for the most part high usage words. Moreover, the fields into which they fall can be categorised as highly salient; covering in particular a person’s immediate physical and social environment, and basic phatic communication terms. It seems then that salient and/or high-usage sets of words are more easily perceived as single units, losing the mental analysis as structures built of
4.4 Lexicon

component parts more readily in the minds of speakers. It is also interesting that over 60 percent of the words involving tone sandhi modification are represented in these fields—in other words, a set of words which are marked very strongly as having the status of single lexical units.

In her investigation of compounds formed by tone sandhi modification, Ratliff (1992) includes a comprehensive list of words which participate in such compounds with high frequency. Ratliff finds a prevalence of the categories nature, man-made artefacts, body parts, animals and verbs. While body parts is the only category common to both Ratliff's list and my (much smaller) dataset, the finding in both cases that there is a correlation between lexical field and participation in compounding.

4.4.2.3 Closing comments

It is clear that patterns are observable in speaker perception which are likely to contribute to community decisions about orthographic representation. Certain sets of words are emerging as more readily identified by speakers as polysyllabic:

- polysyllabic loanwords
- words with at least one component which has no independent meaning in the present language
- compounds involving structural dependence, especially constructions of one morpheme with high semantic loading and one function morpheme
- non-compositional compounds
- compounds involving tone sandhi
- reduplicative constructions, including semantic reduplication
- semantic fields of immediate salience in the everyday language.

It is my contention that the more useful and useable principles of standardisation will be those which most closely reflect speaker perceptions of their language. As the patterns of speaker perception of compounds and other polysyllabic words become clearer, this can provide the starting point for the deeper linguistic analysis being called for by some Hmong. An analysis of what are the motivating factors apparent in speaker perception could feed back into the establishment of a more regular system of identifying and then representing words as polysyllabic. For instance, if reduplicative compounds tend to be written as single units, or as
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hyphenated strings, this could be introduced as a standard practice, and then individual words assessed as to whether they fall into this category.

The overwhelming choice in the dataset is to write words as a single unit rather than employing hyphens. In fact, the only hyphenated compounds are nram-hav and pem-toj—interestingly enough, both of the type LOC+N. The dataset does not include many examples of three+syllable words, however, which may well be the area in which various combinations of hyphenation and conjoining prove to be useful. Two four word expressives appear each as two orthographic polysyllabics, while a three-morpheme word is written as a single unit. A comparison of the present study with speaker/writer practice at a later date could be revealing as to the directions in both perception and representation conventions developing in community usage.
4.5 Communication and dissemination

4.5 Tools of standardization I: Communication and dissemination

The term tools of standardization refers to any entities created for the purposes of developing, establishing or disseminating standard usage of the language. This includes publications, computer software, and bodies of administration, education and community dialogue. In this section, I describe the means set up in the Hmong communities to discuss, collaboratively develop and disseminate language standards. Because the major project I have most recently been involved with in the HLIA is the production of a dictionary, my main focus in this area is dictionaries and dictionary projects: these are discussed in detail in the ensuing two sections.

4.5.1 Media of standardisation

4.5.1.1 The internet

Community dialogue

As noted at several points already, a vital characteristic of standardisation in Hmong in the west is that it is a task which speakers themselves have taken on. The need to maintain communication amongst families, clans and other groups now separated by long distances means that written media have become far more important than they were before the refugee period. The internet in particular has proved to be a boon. A great deal of intergroup communication is carried out by way of chat rooms and purpose-specific newsgroups such as Hmong LG: organisation of conferences and celebrations; advertisement of Hmong businesses and employment opportunities in the community; requests for input on cultural knowledge questions and so on. The interlinking of Hmong culture and language sites is impressive to say the least—most Hmong-identified sites can be accessed by following links from most others. In particular, a key site at the URL <http://www.stolaf.edu/people/cdr/hmong/> provides thematised links to hundreds of Hmong-produced and Hmong-focussed web sites. Word-of-mouth communication amongst local communities appears to be adequate for dissemination of information transmitted on the web; many thousands of Hmong do turn up at New Year festivities organised largely via the internet, despite what one might assume is a limited proportion of actual numbers of people regularly accessing online facilities. In the context of my present topic, a very important aspect

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91 Such as the list soc.culture.hmong at hosted by <http://www.talkway.com>.

92 Another such event was a Hmong RPA Founders Recognition Banquet held on June 28, 1997 in Wisconsin to honour Smalley, Barney and Bertrais, the original developers of the RPA.
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of the Hmong web communication network is its function as a vehicle for discussion on language planning and standardisation issues.

The most prevalent forum for community dialogue on language is the email network Hmong LG <http://www.geocities.com/rokyo/4908/>. Standardization topics covered over the period of its operation (from early 1997 to the present) have included:

- choice of standard dialect
- phoneme representation in the RPA and directions for development
- identification and representation of compound forms
- lexical elaboration, in fields prominent in the new culture, including computer technology, medicine, levels of government, and the divisions of time and seasons
- establishment of a language authority.

The most significant attribute of these discussions for the present purposes is that they do not simply stop at the level of stimulating conversation, but also function as a workhorse for achieving steps in the standardization process. For instance, the concern of inadequacies in RPA representation of consonants is not only raised, but changes agreed on and trialled. The maintainers of the network act as resources for the many people with language queries, referring them to sites and publications dealing with their question, which thereby works towards standard implementation of language decisions already enacted in the speech community.

As standardisation and language planning ideas develop in the community, reference and dissemination tools are also gradually made available. Because of the highly active internet communications network amongst the Hmong, these tools are frequently published on the web, then trialled and publicly discussed more or less as they appear. For example, Txoovtuam Muas has set up a downloadable preliminary RPA spellcheck, at <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/4908/spell.html>. A Hmong software company has made available a demo version of a talking dictionary, at <http://www.lomation.com>, again for general trial and comment. Some grammatical or other more technical analyses-in-progress are also made available on websites or through the email network (for instance Lee T.C. 1996; McKibben 1996; Lee Y. 1998).

This has been received with ambivalence by the Hmong because at present it is designed to check text, not against a database of actual words in Hmong, but rather against a set of rules for creating possible words within the phonotactics of Hmong and the orthographic rules of RPA. Consequently, a great many non-existent words are accepted by the program. Development in this area is still ongoing.
4.5 Communication and dissemination

The dë̂k för Phaj hauj on the net

Because the dë̂k för Phaj hauj is based in an original script, there are technological problems for its users not present for reader-writers of RPA. The principle of technological access is of high priority to the HLI, as it is in the immigrant Hmong community generally. In the HLIA, a dë̂k för Phaj hauj font was seen as so important that other forms of language planning work were postponed until this initial necessity was obtained or developed.

For maximum usefulness, the development of a font requires that access to it be made generally available: firstly to facilitate writing and internet communications in the script; and secondly towards the maintenance of similar implementation of the script across groups of users.

Early in 1997, in close collaboration with the California and Minnesota branches of the HLI, the Melbourne branch developed material for a web site, comprising a symbol of the community in Melbourne, a statement of intent, a chart of dë̂k för Phaj hauj graphemes and contacts for further information; which I set up at the URL <http://www.linguistics.unimelb.edu.au/research/hmong/> , together with the font naadaa, downloadable for either Macintosh or PC platform, and later a keyboard diagram and a picture of dë̂k för Yaj Soob Lwj.94

A second, slower but more comprehensive dissemination project is the Unicode Pahawh proposal Everson (November 2000). Everson is working with a combination of Smalley et al (1990) graphemes, the naadaa font from the HLIA web site, and the extended font by Jay Kue available from Hmong Script Software at <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Pines/5884> (see §4.3.1.3).

4.5.1.2 Formal education

Given that Hmong is so recently established as a written language, at this stage all formal education programs in the Hmong language serve to contribute to the process of standardisation as well as its dissemination. This is because they entail a significant level of materials development, which necessarily involves decisions about implementation of written conventions. Aside from the Saturn school in St Paul, which provides the most significant effort towards bilingual education and assistance to children of Hmong refugees that I know of, official support is given to Hmong language programmes via some of the mainstream institutions in

94 The same font is also available from the Yamada Language Center, University of Oregon, at <http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/fonts/hmong.html>.
4. Storycloth

America. Summer schools in Hmong language are regularly advertised to Hmong as well as non-Hmong speakers, particularly at colleges in Minnesota, and the annual SEASSI (South East Asian Summer School Institute) program, which rotates among a group of host universities across America. Community-run schools also abound, in Australia as well as America, although with the marked exception of the HLI schools, the focus of these is often more on Hmong cultural education such as the complex ritual performance of the qeej, and/or relieving the potential disadvantage faced by NESB students in the regular classrooms. For instance, a school in Fitzroy, Melbourne, holds a class in numeracy for school-age children, in Hmong.

Each of the three major HLI centres—in Australia (Melbourne), and America (Fresno and St Paul)—run a school for Hmong literacy education in Phaj hauj. The Melbourne HLI runs two classes attended by around fifty students every Sunday during the school term; one class for primary and one for secondary school age children. It operates on very limited funding which only covers hall rental, and consequently runs on the bare minimum of resources, which do not allow for distribution of books or use of computers. Part of the problem here is that the HLIA are reluctant to apply for funding in competition with other Hmong groups.

When I visited HLI centres in the USA in 1998, the St Paul school had been temporarily closed due to lack of resources; this situation has been recovering steadily since. During the same period, conditions in Fresno, Ca, were a significant improvement on the setup in Melbourne. The California branch has a permanent office with computers and basic publishing facilities, with an attached hall to use for school purposes and meetings. The school there is linked with a more generally targeted Hmong cultural education organisation, which teaches, amongst other things, traditional music and ceremonial texts.

4.5.1.3 Meetings and publications

An important public forum for working on language planning issues is provided by semi-regular conferences, public meetings and extended gatherings held by and/or for Hmong people and interested Mab Suav 'non-Hmong' in America. Some of these result in published books.
Communication and dissemination

(eg Downing and Olney 1982); sometimes programs and synopses of key sessions are broadcast via the web; while some sessions are held in a workshop format for getting decisions made rather than the handing down of information by designated experts.

The facility for producing other publications by and for Hmong has also been strongly developed in America. The range of literature available in RPA now includes:

**Linguistic**

- dictionaries and primers
- translation manuals within the health sciences
- accessible texts on descriptive linguistics topics.

**Historic**

- histories and anthologies including writings on the war
- cultural texts, notably the funeral rites and the *dab neeg* ṭĭă bū
- collections of personal stories, some mostly by young people, about life in transition; and some about life and practices in Laos, sourced from elders.

**Community**

- newspapers and journals.

**Miscellaneous**

- pulp fiction
- children's story books
- videos.98

The main texts being produced in ṭă ḏīr Phaj hauj at this early stage (initially by the Motthem Family, and now by the HLI) are:

**Linguistic**

- dictionaries, primers and early grammars
- texts on the symbolism in the ṭă ḏīr Phaj hauj.

98 A video is also available teaching the ḏīă ṭă bū Ntawv Paj Ntaub.
4. Storycloth

**Historic**

- ฮั่ง ฮั่ง dab neeg
- a biography of ฮั่ง ฮั่ง โต้ Yaj Soob Lwj.

**Community**

- semi-regular newsletter.

**Miscellaneous**

- arithmetic text.

All the above are available mostly from specialist bookstores.

**4.5.2 Standards administration**

In the preceding parts of this section I have been surveying developments toward standards of dialect, writing, lexicon and lexico-grammatical analysis. In this section I turn to the question of how these standards can be implemented across the wider Hmong community. I have heard or read comments from Hmong many times to the effect that the dispersed community needs a way of maintaining or developing similarity of spoken varieties and especially of written practice:

The question is simply that since Hmong is scattered globally...how are you going to teach them the new way so that everyone is in the same direction? Just imagine that if you adopt this new way of Hmong language, your cousins in Thailand and Laos are probably thinking that you are speaking Greek to them.....is that good or bad?

Tswv Xyooj ฮั่ง, Hmong LG: mid 1998

For some, concern extends also to standardization of cultural practices such as wedding or funeral ceremonies:

I’ve notice[d] that every funeral I go to, the Hmong drum comes in many size[s] and different height[s]. I’ve notice[d] that the ‘qeej’ (ธเร) comes in 3+ different length[s]. I’ve noticed that every hmong wedding differs...isn’t it time the hmong...

---

99 The most important of these is the Hmong ABC Bookshop and Crafts in St Paul, Mn. This shop has a mailorder catalogue on line at the URL <http://www.imation.com/hmongabc/>.
scholars: young and old along with hmong elders come together and standardize
their customs.

'DragonZ Lair', ibid: April 1999

The reasons given for the desire to foster standard usage, whether linguistic or cultural, are not
only about maintaining communications in the current period of dispersion, but also about
ensuring mutual comprehensibility in the future, when Hmong people may be able to reunite
geo-graphically. The problem is how to go about facilitating the spread of standard forms.

4.5.2.1 Freezing development

In regard to the written language, some propose that the status quo of development of the
respective writing systems be accepted as they stand, rather than continuing to improve or
adapt them. There is a sense amongst both RPA and áêí Phaj hauj writer-readers that further
adaptation of the writing systems diminishes appreciation of the work of their original
developers. In the case of the RPA community, this is often expressed in terms of linguistic
appropriateness, combined with a deferral to the decisions of the system's designers:

I think there must be very good reasons why Dr. Smalley selected 'np', 'nk', and
'nts' back in 1952 when he and his co-founders first created the Hmong RPA in
Luang Prabang, Laos.

Tswv Xyooj tâk Eši, Hmong LG: May 1998

Fr. Bertrais, Dr. Smalley, and Dr. Barney have vowed not to make any change to
the Hmong RPA. There must be a reason then.

Tshiaj Wjy Yaj ŝi ñɔ̌ ñt, ibid: May 1998

One problem with freezing development as a means to maintaining comprehensibility is that,
since at the same time some Hmong are actively engaged in script development, maintaining
the current or former state of development assists in perpetuating the proliferation of variants.
The co-existence of the conservative and progressive approaches to script implementation
serves to assist in the realisation of the situation the conservative position is designed to avoid;
some subsections of the community maintain usage of the older form of the script while other
subsections move on to new versions.

There are also two associated positions in circulation that avoid this problem. One, simply a
milder version of the above, suggests that the halting of work on the script take place at an
agreed on point in time in the foreseeable future. Another, more complex position is that in
order for progress in establishing Hmong literacy to 'move on', the Hmong must eschew starting
at the drawing board again with ideas that are too new, unestablished, or different from those in
common use. Development is welcomed, but in a continuous path that takes up where a previous idea left off, rather than in the continual production of new ideas that require groundwork to be undertaken over again. This idea, from Pao Saykao (p.c.), himself one of the proponents of a revised RPA spelling system, balances the need for continued development with a considered use of Ockham's razor. Development itself is not frozen; but its directions are to be trimmed and focussed. In principle a clear-sighted approach, the point at which Saykao's proposal becomes problematic is that one limb he would like pruned off is the use of êk fêr Phaj hauj. At this point, it becomes obvious that there is more at stake here than a simple question of facilitating progress.

For the HLIA, the sacredness of the script is the prominent motivation for a conservative approach. A few years ago the position of the HLIA was that no further modifications should be made to the êk fêr Phaj hauj because of the threat to the future posed by too great or too many variations. This has changed now because of the higher priority of the symbolic function of the script, giving rise to what is seen as a return to earlier and hence more orthodox forms. Both positions are essentially conservative; the one focusing on maintenance of a status quo in script implementation while the other focuses on a deeper level maintenance of the true êk fêr Phaj hauj.

4.5.2.2 Language academies

While the proposal of freezing development is potentially a brake on the seemingly endless waves of new ideas and ever-smaller groups of people implementing them, it still does not address the question of how a standard, at whatever point in time it is deemed to be ready, should be put into effect across the various groups.

One frequently recurring suggestion is the establishment of a standards institute. The precedence of the French Academy is referred to, as well as other examples. The environment of Hmong standardisation has some distinct parallels with that of the Francophone movement, in that the community is international and characterised by subgroups with significantly different agendas, but nonetheless having an interest in construction of and solidarity with the whole (see Weinstein 1989). A prominent figure Tswv Xyooj yêk 100 looks to standards organisations and international consortiums for possible models for the Hmong community:

The nature of our problem is somewhat similar to their problems in that they don't need a country to enforce the usage of a particular language and/or standard...
4.5 Communication and dissemination

wonder if we can use the same techniques, as these professional societies have
done, to set standards and to encourage the adherence to those standards by
ways of examples, published materials, books, etc., and to continue to work
together as a team with the general population...

If we keep waiting for the right moment, I'm wondering if there will ever be a
forthcoming right moment. The question I'd like to ask everyone on this forum is:
Should we wait and see or should we be proactive now—while the amount of
distinct usage is still small?

_Hmong LG: early 1998_

According to 'CaliForNiaDreAmsYang', at the Annual Asian Language Institute on Literacy
Conference at the University of California, Santa Clara, in 1996, an Academy was in fact initiated:

Many Hmong teachers and educators throughout the State of California came and
I was there. We spent 5 days to discuss on the issue of using L1 to support a
Hmong student to learn English and how we are going to develop Hmong
materials for Hmong teachers to use in the classroom. For the first time, we
established the HMONG LANGUAGE ACADEMY.

_Ibid: August 1996_

It appears from this that the context for the initiation was English learning rather than Hmong
standardization as such. Yang gives no specific information about who was involved, and I at
least have not heard any mention of this Academy since. Possibly it remains specific to California
and/or second language learning.

The obvious problem in the potential effectiveness of a Hmong standards organisation is that,
since the Hmong nation as a global concept is not bound to institutionalised regulation in the
same way as nations of Iən úta Jĩi ṭepi ḕɔi lüb tebc’haws, an Academy will be useful only to the
extent that individuals or groups of Hmong agree to be guided by it.

While the RPA-using community, with its very wide scope of subgroups all over the west and
retaining connections within Asia, is still working towards a formalised means of implementing
standardization policy, ər Phaj hauj users have had an institutional umbrella for over ten
years—although, as seen in §4.3.1, this certainly has not eradicated the emergence of
subgroups within the script's adherents.

The HLI currently functions to run literacy education classes, publish educational materials and
other language standardization dissemination works, and make consultative decisions on
language and also cultural practice policy, always with an especial focus on orthography
4. Storycloth development. Usually, broad-scale consultation is carried out by mail, but occasional international meetings are also organised: the last of these was held late in 1998 in St Paul.

In Eira (1998) written much earlier in the project, I depicted HLIA representatives as highly responsive to lines of authority through the HLI in California, and through other contexts such as the Hmong Australia Society and authority figures arising from the refugee camp in Thailand, Ban Vinai.

Several changes have taken place over the last two or three years. In the first place, the HLIA committee has dwindled to four, for reasons of practicality and dissension in the group. Secondly, an important Ban Vinai teacher and author of several linguistic and other texts, Lee Chai, was superseded as an authority figure to HLIA members by üi ᄍ_about Kub Yaj üi ᄍ_about Kub Yaj is considered by followers to be a teacher of an entirely different order to Txais Lis ፨JoinColumn—for that matter üe ᄨJoinColumn Vaj Txiaj Kuan—his knowledge is inspired rather than learned.

It is since the appearance of üi ᄍ_about Kub Yaj that the HLIA have moved towards independence from the American branches. In the earliest stage of establishment of the HLIA, approval by the California (and to a lesser extent Minnesota) branch was valued very highly, culminating in the formal association of the group and taking on the name Hmong Language Institute (Australia). During the first years a strong requirement to negotiate, collaborate, obtain permission and reach agreements with the American branches was evident in the functioning of the HLIA, despite a growing number of differences of opinion on the direction of language policies. Since late in 1998, when a deputation of HLI members including two from the Australian branch visited üi ᄍ_about Kub Yaj in Thailand, this authority ranking or collaborative principle has been reducing down to a desire not to offend or inconvenience other groups. The overt operating principle currently is that HLIA policies and projects proceed independently of the American branches, deferring to üi ᄍ_about Kub Yaj as the conduit for inspired knowledge. The group expects to formally effect this new authority structure early in 2001. This will involve a change of name of their organisation, release of the new font both for local use and on the internet, and embarking on a new phase of autonomous and more publicly visible activity. HLIA members express the hope that other branches will also shift their allegiance to the teaching of the new leader; but it is clear that decisions for the Melbourne group are no longer in any way guided by what is happening in America.

These recent developments demonstrate the limits of effectiveness of such institutions as pointed out above. Subgroups that develop their own agendas which become incompatible with those of the majority beyond a workable degree can and do still move apart. The concept of 'standard' then has variable scope. Although a commonly-held ideal is that it subsume all usages—or, more realistically, that it be implemented at least across a wide range of subgroups.
of Hmong—in practice people are forming their own groups within which to develop a standard usage which in some instances is quite locally restricted. The authority structure of the HLIA has gradually shifted from global to considerably more local allegiance. Even during factional splits however, many both within and aside from the HLIA retain the hope of ultimate unification of the Hmong and of their language both written and spoken. Amongst the HLIA; this hope is closely associated with the spiritual aspect of their script. The true script, it is hoped, will come to fruition when the time is right, and requires guardians to maintain it on however small a scale until then.
4. Storycloth

4.6 Tools of standardization II: Dictionaries

In this section I survey the range of major dictionaries produced for Hmong language: by missions, by Hmong people, in RPA and in ñè Phaj hauj; in both paper and electronic media.

Dictionaries are a tool of both codification and dissemination. A new lexical item, spelling decision, alphabetic ordering system, use of particular variety, or even a translation into a second language, once published in a dictionary, acquires status as correct or preferred. A dictionary both authors and authorises the elements it contains, showing another facet of the link between these concepts as interpreted in §3.2.3.1: it lends authority to the element; but it also contributes to bringing it into being in the first place. Even a dictionary developed by descriptive methods, or one intended only as a preliminary contribution, then becomes a tool of prescription. As a reference work, it then fulfils a dissemination function: speakers refer to its authority to ratify aspects of language use including written conventions, meanings and the status of terminology.

Consequently, the dictionaries produced in Hmong hold considerable significance for the development of a standard language: in particular the implementation of the writing system, and lexical elaboration as well as purification.

I divide Hmong dictionaries into two categories: (i) early dictionaries, produced in the sixties and seventies by French or American linguists, frequently in a mission context, and (ii) dictionaries of the post-refugee period, produced in the west, largely by Hmong people. Section §4.7 is devoted entirely to the HLIA dictionary project, as the core of my case study.

4.6.1 Assessment parameters

For comparative purposes, I assess all dictionaries studied by the same set of parameters, as identified below.

(i) Target group and purpose

It is reasonable to view the target group and purpose of the dictionary as fundamental to choices made about all aspects of the dictionary. Each dictionary is assessed in terms of the group and purpose it is designed to serve.

(ii) Dialect

The choice of dialect is a political as well as a practical one, given the authorising function of a dictionary. A dialect selected without comment in an area or group where more than one is
spoken, implies the standard or dominant status of that dialect. Where this is counter to the status commonly acknowledged for that dialect, its selection constitutes a statement positioned against the dominant discourse.

(iii) **Size**

Number of entries are noted, for both L1 and L2, where applicable. These are variable according to a) target group and purpose, and b) differences in morphological structure of the two languages concerned.

(iv) **Standard entry elements**

This refers to the elements included under each headword in the dictionary.

(v) **Extra (non-entry) information**

Guides to dictionary usage, pronunciation, orthography etc, are assessed, as well as the kinds of encyclopaedic information provided. The kinds of orthography and pronunciation guides needed are particularly responsive to the characteristics of the target group; eg whether literacy or oral fluency can be assumed in L1 and/or L2. On the same basis, different levels of linguistic detail and technical language are appropriate to different publications.

(vi) **Orthography and ordering principles**

Hmong being primarily based on oral transmission until relatively recently, the order of graphs and spelling conventions has yet to be firmly established. The specific implementation of the writing systems in this and other respects reflects the status of work in progress at the times of publication of these dictionaries.

(vii) **Tone sandhi**

I assess whether the different forms of casually encountered terms with variable tone are locatable in the dictionary, and whether it is clear which variants are appropriate in which environment.

(viii) **Compounds**

Similarly, given the current instability of identification and representation of polysyllabic forms, it is important to ascertain how encountered forms are to be located. Representation of word boundaries and contribution towards identification and classification of types are also considered.
4. Storycloth

(ix) Polysemes & homonyms

The treatment of phonetically identical words which are semantically more or less distant is considered. Relationships between words should be reflected in the organisation of entries for the sake of clarity of comprehension and locatability.

4.6.2 The early period

Up until the early stages of the refugee period, tools of language education and reference material such as dictionaries, and grammars and primers were overwhelmingly the domain of foreign missionary-linguists and educators. Noteworthy among these were Yves Bertrais, Doris Whitelock, (eg Whitelock 1982) and Ernest Heimbach—all of whose work is still utilized in the current context. Because of the backgrounds and positions of these people, all of this work is marked by an orientation towards foreign learners of Hmong and/or education of Hmong people in the tenets and literature of Christianity.

Below I examine in some detail features of two major Hmong dictionaries already available in the west at the start of the refugee period, by way of background to further lexicographic and related work and an understanding of the sociolinguistic themes salient to development of dictionary work to date.101 These are:


This is considered authoritative as the major Hmong Daw-English dictionary currently available. It is the primary dictionary cited in academic work such as Ratliff (1992); McKibben (1996).


Lyman's dictionary is a technical reference which explores linguistic questions including loanword status and morphological structure of words.

101 A third dictionary published in the early period is Bertrais-Charrier (1964 [1979]), developed in the context of missionary work by foreigners in Laos. I have not included this dictionary as its availability is very limited, and hence I have not heard it referred to in the Hmong community that I am in any form of contact with. (However, it may be more generally available and in use in French-speaking countries). The earliest dictionary work that I am aware of is Savina (1916), arising from early Catholic mission work. Similarly, to my knowledge this work is not in use.

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Table 4.29 gives a comparative summary of these two dictionaries according to the parameters outlined above. The discussion below highlights points of particular interest under a few of these parameters.

Extra (non-entry) information

In the encyclopaedic appendices provided in Heimbach\(^{102}\) can be found both explanations of Hmong language/culture items and the means to translate English language/culture items. In regard to Hmong language/culture, particularly useful is Appendix 10 Kinship terms, in which six charts represent the Hmong kinship system. The system requires in the first place different terms depending on the sex of Ego, and then separate representation of the two concurrent systems นี่ กวตี้ 'patriline' and นี่ เนเจ 'matriline'. In regard to English language/culture, the section 'Religious and moral' (Appendix 9 Classified vocabulary) provides only terms useful within the Christian religion, bypassing those reflecting traditional religious practice.\(^{103}\) From the perspective of anthropology (outgroup position) or language/culture maintenance (ingroup position), this appears as a deficit.\(^{104}\) It does however appropriately address the needs of the original target group (Christian mission). The usefulness of the sections of Appendix 9 which deal with Hmong language/culture elements is limited from either perspective, since such semantic fields as 'clothing and sewing', 'building', 'household and furnishings' and 'utensils, tools and implements' are necessarily restricted to items which can be easily represented by English terminology. This could be alleviated by the inclusion of illustrations.

The appendices featured in Lyman are evidently motivated by anthropological concerns as well as linguistic. In the post-refugee period, they also gain potential usefulness as a resource for maintenance of heritage cultural knowledge. The dictionary is stated to be intended as a

\(^{102}\)Throughout this section I refer to the dictionaries being surveyed by the name of their authors.\\

\(^{103}\)Some of this latter type of information is included in main entries, eg (partial extract only):\\

\textit{tuag} To die, pertaining to death\\

(\textsc{hub})

\textit{hais zaj qhub ke} (t.o.) (ขยียน คุ้ม สี)
The song sung at death to open the way for the deceased to travel on his way (sung before the playing of the pipes).\\

\(^{104}\)Particularly since this dictionary became the main one available for some time, which was possibly a circumstance not foreseen by the compiler.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helmbach</th>
<th>Lyman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Target</td>
<td>Mission context—not stated explicitly, but implicit in a) its frequent references to Christian terminology and beliefs, and b) its orientation towards explaining the Hmong language and cultural structures (i.e. targeted to foreigners)</td>
<td>English speaking linguists. An earlier version (1971) targeted to lay missionaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Dialect</td>
<td>HmD, as spoken in northern Thailand</td>
<td>MNts of northern Thailand (Naan Province)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Size</td>
<td>c. 5,000 Hmong entry words</td>
<td>c. 2,500 Mong entry words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Standard entry elements</td>
<td>Classifier (for N), crossreferences &amp; tone sandhi, loanword origins, compounds, phrases, sample sentences</td>
<td>Variant forms, classifier (for N) or restricted modifier (for V), range of classifications including loan origin &amp; some semantic fields, compounds &amp; sample sentences, some relational information e.g. synonyms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Extra (non-entry) Information</td>
<td>Order of entries, abbreviations, bibliography, history of RPA. Appendices of cultural and linguistic information. Pr</td>
<td>Extensive appendices including semantic fields lists, bibliography; also some linguistic discussion including morphologically conditioned tone sandhi and inter-dialectal borrowing, notes on flora and fauna, language/cultural subgroup information. Sets out methodologies e.g. for polysemy/homonymy distinction. Lists the phonetic symbols used with quasi-English comparative explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronunciation guide both as technical pronunciation chart and by quasi-English comparative explanation with brief phonotactic description</td>
<td>continued...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2. Including clan names, ethnic names and kinship terms, opium processing artefacts, times and seasons, types of hill rice and types of jungle vegetation; also paradigms including pronouns and numerals.

3. Categorised into 'Miao' language, ethnology and history; 'Other Asiatic' language, Ethnology and history; Zoological & botanical; and General.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(vi) Orthography &amp; ordering principles</th>
<th>Heimbach</th>
<th>Lyman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPA is the obvious choice for Heimbach, who worked closely with its creators Smalley, Barney &amp; Bertrais. Notes innovative addition of &lt;ww&gt;, -on, -d, -x&gt;. Ordering system based on norms for roman alphabets with adaptations: (i) all vowel headings first, by short vowel only, and incorporating both glottal-initial and vowel-initial words, (ii) consonants/clusters each as a separate heading (iii) in headword entries short and long vowels and monophthongs ordered separately, eg all /tu-/ words precede all /tua-/ words (iv) tone unit ordering separately as final criterion.</td>
<td>'A compromise between phonetic &amp; phonemic transcription' using a form of IPA for Mong as well as at least two different romanisation systems, for Thai and Mandarin loanwords. Diacritics represent tone. Table of correspondences between IPA and RPA. Ordering system as per Heimbach except that all words pronounced as vowel-initial are listed as glottal-initial.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| (vii) Tone sandhi | Words that either result from or may be subject to tone change, including morphotonemic, indicated in entries by 't.c.' Explanatory essay in appendix. | No indication |

| (viii) Compounds | Usually listed under each component as headword. Some represented as single units, some as separate monosyllables. | Written as continuous word for: (i) words which 'cannot be analysed by the native speaker into further meaningful parts', and (ii) loan compounds. Theoretically divisible 'bound forms' indicated by [-] or [-]. Some words written as monosyllabic with compounded gloss (no overt explanation). continued... |

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4<ww> and <on> are discussed in §2.4.2.1; <x> in §2.4.2.3. <jj> is proposed to represent word-initial /j/ (used in some onomatopoeia); while <d> has
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heimbach</th>
<th>Lyman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polysemes &amp;</td>
<td>Not distinguished. Listed as separately numbered definitions,</td>
<td>Theoretical differentiation between homonyms, or 'different meanings in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homonyms</td>
<td>ordered without apparent consideration of polyseme/homonym status. Some</td>
<td>translation', and polysemes 'etymologically derived from the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cross-referenced.</td>
<td>morpheme'; not reflected in entry layout. Policy of separate numbered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>entries for all except where: (i) different apparent senses are judged to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>be a function of translation and (ii) different senses differ primarily by part of speech. Detailed discussion of ordering principles according to word class/semantic group. In practice, all this is a little ad hoc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.29 Dictionaries of the early period

come into common use as a tone marker.
Orthography and ordering principles

The motivation in Heimbach for ordering all the vowel sections first is not clear. Possibly it is intended to acknowledge that the majority of these words are in fact glottal-initial, but this point is not discussed, and any actual vowel-initial words are simply included in the respective vowel sections, marked with the zero consonant symbol <'>.  

The ordering of vowel units in letter/cluster headings as compared to headword entries creates an inconsistency: Words starting with a diphthong or long vowel are included under the heading of the initial vowel symbol (eg <ia> is included under <i>), while in headword ordering each vowel unit is treated as a single entity:

Ex. 4.17

Ordering in section headings  e   (ee)   i   (ia)
Ordering in headwords     te  ti  tee  tia

A more consistent policy would be to treat vowel units the same way as consonants, in case of which both simple and complex units are treated as individual units.

In Lyman, glottal-initial words are specifically marked as such, but no vowel-initial words are listed. In languages where the glottal-initial is the unmarked form, it is generally represented as vowel-initial—but in this case, vowel-initial items do also occur. This choice is questionable, then—it seems that the occurrence of vowel-initial words needs to be noted, if only to make sense of the overt marking of the glottal-initials.

The transcription systems in Lyman are rather confusing as to source and from sheer number. Besides the systems mentioned in Table 4.29, Lyman discusses available romanisation systems for other Asian languages cited in the dictionary, but it remains unclear which if any of these are used in the dictionary. The statement in the discussion of Mandarin romanisation that 'every phonetician has a right to his own transcription' is something of a warning—it may be a valid

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105 To my knowledge, neither has been published to date.

106 See §2.4.2.3. Note that focussing on the onset of these words in the first place conflicts with speaker perception of the prosodic characteristics as the more salient.
4. Storycloth

point, but for the transcription to be of use to readers an explanation of symbols or the systems used needs to be provided. The stated aims of Lyman's choice of transcription for Mong are to maximise cross-reference with other extant work, and to render the result accessible to the lay reader as well as the linguist. Given the proliferation of transcription systems used and the lack of a comprehensive table of equivalences, one wonders at his success.

Tone sandhi

Forms which have undergone tone sandhi are not readily associated with their citation form in either Heimbach or Lyman. Lyman states that his consultants view this feature as 'low' or 'sloppy' speech style and hence does not include altered forms. While Lyman may have been guided here by the need to respect consultants' statements, the total omission of this factor is potentially problematic for recognition of an alternative form encountered in casual speech. The treatment in dictionary entries of tone sandhi which is involved in compound formation is not mentioned. This is less problematic since the altered form is also the citation form in these cases (see §2.4.2.2).

The policy in Heimbach of marking as 't.c.' those headwords which either have been or may be subject to tone sandhi does not allow identification of the citation form in the case of either phonological or morphological conditioning. The appended notes on tone sandhi serve primarily as a preliminary research report on the subject for interest or further study. Perhaps most useful is the presence of a seven-page list of illustrations of and exceptions to general tone sandhi rules.

Compounds

The inclusion in Heimbach of compounds under more than one headword is a useful solution to a potential problem of locatability. There is no differentiation, however, between lexicalised compounds, collocations and phrases. For the fluent Hmong speaker, this possibly does not matter, and as discussed in §2.5.2.4 is in any case a matter of degree rather than clear-cut categories; but for a target group of non-speakers it would be useful to know which inclusions function as indivisible units.

107 That is, as distinct from looser collocations such as êíä n³n³ ib tug (1l tuJ<tu-J) (one+CL) 'one person'.

108 This tag is also attached to free variants.
Polysemes and homonyms

The effective lack of identification of homographs as homonymous or polysemous in both dictionaries is problematic. Although again the distinctions are not straightforward, the lack of any apparent methodology in the dictionary entries results in orderings which leap randomly from one sense area to another. Furthermore, Lyman's theoretical definition of homonyms as having 'different meanings in translation' is somewhat unsatisfying in its reliance on a translation language.

At worst, the lack of system occasionally results in two relatively close senses being separated by another sense or senses having no immediately perceivable connection with either:

Ex. 4.18

1. kaus\textsuperscript{109} fang, tusk, beak
2. kaus classifier for bites or bitefuls
3. kaus sprout or young shoot
4. kaus umbrella, parachute
5. kaus to gouge out, scrape with a gouging motion

*Heimbach (1969 [1979])*

Here, definitions 1 and 2 are clearly related, and 5 could easily be understood as relating to the kind of movement made by an animal with a kaus 1. Definition 3 is harder to see as related, although Heimbach suggests a possible metaphor of shape. A further extension of the same idea could account for definition 4; but neither #3 nor #4 directly relate to #5.

Ex. 4.19

nér] a 1. pain-causing object hidden in the body 2. a pricking or piercing pain
b a type of tree
c supernatural force; occultism, religion, magic; religious ceremony, sacred rite
d to draw out pain due to contact with a healing force
e a masculine given name

*Lyman (1974)*
4. Storycloth

In this case it would seem that, whichever is the primary sense, d comes between a and c in the line of semantic derivation. Sense e and, with only Lyman's definition to go on, b, are quite separable from the other subentries, having no apparent common etymology. A strategy which treated proximity of sense or common semantic field as an ordering criterion would be preferable.

Conclusions

The dictionary work achieved in the early period leaves plenty of scope for new contributions to the field both in linguistic terms and in view of the changing needs of the Hmong in the post-refugee period. Opportunity for further work at this point includes:

- Dictionaries targeted to L1 speakers of Hmong.

Three directions are possible here:

(i) Maintenance of heritage knowledge would require attention to culture-specific terms, objects and practices

(ii) Maintenance of Hmong as a viable L1 in the context of the receiving culture might focus on new terms. The production of a dictionary for Hmong people in the first place also represents a move towards the assumption of literacy in Hmong. A monolingual Hmong dictionary would represent the Hmong language as an autonomous living language rather than focussing on the context of a surrounding dominant language or on Hmong as an object of study.

(iii) Targeting dictionaries to assisting the acquisition of L2 (English or French).

- Inclusion of recent developments in orthography and written conventions such as multiple consonant grapheme reduction and new ways to write compounds

- A standard alphabetical order

- A dictionary in ionic Phaj hauj

- Incorporation of recent work on tone sandhi such as Ratliff (1992); McKibben (1996).

As it happens the W neeb tree bears painful stinging bark, and so quite possibly does have a common etymology; but this cannot be classified as assumed knowledge for the target group.
This could include (i) improving the accuracy with which compounds involving tone sandhi are represented; and (ii) ensuring that newly-encountered terms can be located, and their originating form identified, at least in the case of relatively loosely connected sandhi collocations. Free sociolinguistic variation in tone is also in need of better cross-referencing.

- Incorporation of newer work on compound types.

This could clarify such considerations as the degree of lexicalisation of compounds, which components are separable, and which compounding processes are productive.

- Consistent treatment of polysemes and homonyms, to improve comprehensibility of entries to the language learner.

4.6.3 The post-refugee period

Since the relocation of Hmong people to western countries, two critical developments in dictionary projects have taken place. Firstly, Hmong people have largely taken on the production of such tools themselves, and secondly, the focus of this kind of work has shifted to that of language maintenance, elaboration and standard reference works targeted to Hmong people. As a marker of social change, Desmet (1990) discusses the surge of new dictionaries which accompanied the French Revolution, with such titles as Nouveau dictionnaire des termes de la Révolution (A. Buée, 1792). Like these dictionaries, the Hmong dictionaries of the post-refugee period are 'both a reflection of changes in the society and the expression of a changing view on language' (Desmet 1990:165). They differ significantly from their predecessors on a number of points. In this section I survey six such dictionaries, focussing on the ways they accommodate the needs of ex-refugee Hmong, and the contributions they make to standardisation. All six are general-use dictionaries, and between them provide a picture of the developing community approach to tools of standardisation such as these.

Major dictionaries published since the start of the refugee period are:

111 For the sake of completeness, several fairly substantial publications which would be more accurately categorised as wordlists or phrasebooks are also available, as follows:

(i) McKibben (n.d.) Concordances in Hmong missionary discussions
   <http://www.citynet.net/personal/brianm/hmdict/list.htm>

4. Storycloth


This first dictionary to be published by a Hmong person is the achievement of Yang Dao, who is also the first Hmong person to gain a doctoral degree. Yang is a prominent figure throughout the Hmong community in the west.


Xiong et al was the first Hmong dictionary published in America. It remains to date the only comprehensive dictionary in MNts targeted to speakers, and as such is still prominent in the H/Mong community.


This is the first English–Hmong dictionary targeted to learners of Hmong, and the only English–Hmong dictionary in Hmong Daw. Although the primary compiler is not Hmong, the working group comprises strong Hmong representation. It is as far as possible a text-based dictionary, with carefully acknowledged sources from linguistic publications, Hmong newspapers, religious texts, semi-formal conversations and elsewhere.

\[^{112}\]Although this dictionary is in French, it is known in English-speaking as well as French-speaking countries, because of the prominence in the community of its author.
4.6 Dictionaries

4. Thompson, Yang et al (1996 [1999]) Saturn Hmong talking dictionary
<http://ww2.saturn.stpaul.k12.mn.us/hmong/sathmong.html>.\(^{113}\)

This dictionary represents the rise of an entirely different genre in lexicography. A hypertext dictionary has a range of potential quite distinct from that of printed dictionaries, including:

- ease of updating and modification
- the use of soundfiles
- links between entries, links to appendices and to other publications
- links to user contributions such as stories.

The Saturn dictionary is part of the bilingual program operating at Saturn Riverfront School. This is a primary school in St Paul, Minnesota, which caters especially to Hmong and other NESB children. More recently, after substantial revision and expansion in 1999, the dictionary was made available for distribution on disk to other schools, at the cost of shipping only. Part of this revision process involved opening up the resource base to the input of volunteers from the wider community.


This is both the first monolingual dictionary in Hmong and one of the first that uses ṭā̀ Phaj hauj.\(^{114}\) It is currently at the stage of final proofreading.


This is a second hypertext dictionary, also featuring soundfiles, and the first produced entirely by Hmong people. The dictionary is searchable by either Hmong entryword or initial letter.

In Table 4.30 (pp332–335) I provide a comparative summary of each of these dictionaries according to the assessment parameters identified above, and then go on to highlight points of interest as before.

\(^{113}\) Thanks to Mark Thompson for provision of paper and disk copies of this dictionary at various stages.

\(^{114}\) Two projects are underway in parallel; the other is the Melbourne project, discussed in §4.7.
4. Storycloth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Target group &amp; purpose</th>
<th>(ii) Dialect</th>
<th>(iii) Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yang (Fr-HmD)</td>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>c. 4,000 French entrywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(HmD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong Daw ex-refugees in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France and French Guyana,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to assist acquisition of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiong, Xiong &amp; Xiong (Eng-MNts-Eng)</td>
<td>MNts</td>
<td>Eng-Mong c. 20,000 entries; Mong-Eng c. 2,000 entries.^{115}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mong Njua in America, 'to give a daily communication skill to a Mong who is working on his/her English to overcome the English barrier' (p. iv)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKibben (Eng-HmD)</td>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>c. 3,500 English entrywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English speakers working with Hmong in America, to aid in learning functional Hmong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson/Yang et al (HmD-Eng-HmD)</td>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>c. 4,000 entries in each of L1&gt;L2 and L1&lt;L2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong-American children, esp. attending the Saturn School, St Paul. Intended as one component of a broader program to improve English and literacy in Hmong.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLI (HmD)</td>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>c. 6,000 Hmong entrywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'ǟk̤ ñă Phaj hauj' literate members of the HLI community, to provide a substantial reference work in support of of 'ǟk̤ ñă Phaj hauj literacy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomation, Inc. (HmD-Eng)</td>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>1,500+ Hmong entrywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong or others wishing to 'learn or brush up on' Hmong language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^{115} These surprising numbers are misleading; see comments in text under Orthography and ordering principles.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(iv) Standard entry elements</th>
<th>(v) Extra (non-entry) information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yang</td>
<td>Pronunciation (Fr), part of speech (Fr), example</td>
<td>Introduction in Hmong on French grammar. Statement of motivations and French transcription notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiong et al</td>
<td>Eng-Mong: part of speech &amp; explanatory translation. Mong: part of speech, classifier, compounds &amp; sample sentences.</td>
<td>Abbreviations list (in English). Mong &amp; minimal English grammar appendices. No pronunciation guide—recommends 'practising orally'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKibben</td>
<td>Part of speech (Eng), example, source.</td>
<td>Bibliography, names of countries &amp; American states, brief compounds list. Semi-technical pronunciation guide balanced with accessible English comparisons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson et al</td>
<td>Clickable sound file, headword, part of speech, classifier (for Hmong N)/past tense (for English V), synonyms</td>
<td>Links to student showcase, talking stories, more phrases, progressively ordered vocabulary themed lists, other Hmong web links, email response. Soundfile for each entry and separate sound file documents for vowels, consonants, tones pronunciation, comprising grapheme unit and sample word with gloss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLI</td>
<td>Part of speech, descriptive/comparative definitions, examples.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomation</td>
<td>Part of speech, compound forms &amp; phrasal lexemes, clickable sound file, clickable cross references, some usage notes.</td>
<td>Explanation of compound representation, guide to dictionary usage. Four more educational software titles to be added including 'Learn to read, write and speak Hmong'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(vi) Orthography &amp; ordering principles</td>
<td>(vii) Tone sandhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang</td>
<td>RPA. French also transliterated into RPA.</td>
<td>Included without comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiong et al</td>
<td>RPA. Ordering adaptations: (i) Vowel headings are by short vowel only, (ii) Includes headings for letters 'only used for tone marker'.</td>
<td>No discussion. Included under both variants, or under modified citation form for lexicalised forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKibben</td>
<td>RPA</td>
<td>Included without comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson et al</td>
<td>RPA. Ordering adaptations: (i) One consonant unit per document, between 1–24k. Some larger sections split into two documents. (ii) Vowel headings by short vowel only.</td>
<td>No discussion. Some forms appear in more than one surface form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLI</td>
<td>ëPhaj haul Hmoob. Ordered by initial vowel+tone complex, then consonant grapheme units, in the order given in Smalley et al (1990).</td>
<td>Appear under citation forms without comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomation</td>
<td>Ordered by initial letter only.</td>
<td>All forms appear as individual entries. Variants including lexicalised forms referred to citation form.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.30 Dictionaries of the post-refugee period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yang</th>
<th>Compounds and collocations used as headword translations. Written as monosyllabic.</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xiong et al</td>
<td>Almost entirely written as monosyllabic. Entered as new line under headword.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKibben</td>
<td>Compounds and collocations used as headword translations. Some informal morphemic glosses given. Some lexicalised compounds marked by single-word notation: list of these as an appendix.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson et al</td>
<td>Not distinguished from collocations/phrases. Many everyday phrases included as separate entries. The Hm–Eng section includes 20 entries under the occupation tag kws ʈ, while the Eng–Hm section has 15 'what' question entries. Sample sentences and idioms can be found under their initial word, eg Tsis pub haus luam yeeb (รก פרס อิ่ม อิ่ม) 'No smoking'.</td>
<td>Each in a separate entry without comment: some apparently on the basis of English equivalents eg several entries for one Hmong pronoun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLI</td>
<td>Listed under the initial morpheme. Orthographically monosyllabic.</td>
<td>All under the same entry. First division is by part of speech, then related senses grouped together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomation</td>
<td>Listed under one or more morphemes. Only single morphemes appear as headwords. Phrasal lexemes included in the same way. Orthographically monosyllabic—expected to change in later editions.</td>
<td>All under the same entry, arranged according to commonality of sense.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Storycloth

**Target group and purpose**

A distinct shift away from the earlier publications is noticeable in that all but one of these dictionaries is targeted to Hmong speakers.\(^{116}\) Acquisition of French or English is prominent as a stated aim. Thompson/Yang, with an initial target group of 10–12 year old speakers, specifies literacy in Hmong as a parallel goal. Some of the children targeted by this dictionary were born in the USA, and some in Thailand or other parts of South Asia. Consequently a broad range of language and literacy skills are represented in Hmong and in English. The HLI project foregrounds maintenance of heritage cultural knowledge.

McKibben, targeted to English-speaking learners, also marks a shift from earlier dictionaries in that it aims to capture the actual current language use of Hmong speakers in America—that is, including coinages and new loans from English, as well as Lao words commonly used in American Hmong. It is, then, a useful record of the current status of lexical elaboration, both formally and informally developed, and of language in use in the community, rather than an idealised pure form.

The use of Mong in prefatory material (Xiong et al and Yang) acknowledges speakers as the target group(s). Dictionary entries in all six publications tend towards a simple and non-technical style, in line with the general goal of maximal accessibility to the everyday person.\(^{117}\)

The aim of assisting in L2 acquisition is catered to by inclusions such as L2 grammar and punctuation guides (Xiong et al and Yang), and explanations of foreign language/culture concepts:

**Ex. 4.20**

Miss *ntbhai* *uas tsis tau muaj* *txiv*\(^{118}\) **‘girl who isn’t married’**

*Thompson/Yang*

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\(^{116}\) However, although Lomatjon (2000) appears to be targeted more to Hmong speakers, the associated educational material in progress is stated to be targeted to both speakers and non-speakers.

\(^{117}\) Note also that many Hmong who were refugees, especially women, had little educational background due to either interruptions to normal life by the war, or lack of opportunity prior to that period.

\(^{118}\) *ntbhai* *uas tsis tau muaj* *txiv* *wā* *Aw* *si lūn* *Āy*. 
4.6 Dictionaries

The Mong grammar appendix included in Xiong et al is also appropriate to the target group, given that H/Moob people have in general had access to formal education only in languages other than H/Moob. For the stated purposes of L2 acquisition however, the appendices might usefully include English semantic fields such as kin terms, numbers and calendar terms, along with tables of grammatical classes such as pronouns.

The aim of elaborating the Hmong lexicon is addressed by the inclusion of newly coined terms, such as *hnyuv ntwm* in 'hot dogs', or *Chaw tsheb ntiav koj* in 'bus station', and also of colloquial phrases from both languages, such as *Kuv zoo siab tau pom koj* in 'I'm happy to see you' (Thompson/Yang).

In McKibben, a problem latent in the English-Hmong only direction of entries, together with a target group of non-specialist English speaking learners, is that there is a strong tendency towards giving Hmong terms as ways of expressing English structures and semantic frameworks.\(^{119}\) This is particularly noticeable in the representation of word classes. For example, (i) Hmong classifiers, having no direct English equivalent, are hard to find except as they occur in example sentences; (ii) words are often squeezed into English part-of-speech categories for translation purposes (eg the modal auxiliary *txawjiw* 'be able' appears under 'ability' (N), and 'able' (Adj), as well as under 'can' (V)); and (iii) separate entries can be found for items such as *a* and *an*, although it is arguable whether article is a grammatical class of Hmong at all. It is hard to see how these kinds of effects could be avoided, however, without cost to accessibility to the target group; and the problem is balanced to a degree by some very useful grammar and usage notes in several entries:

Ex. 4.21

a. *can* v. tau, taus, laib (L)...

When these words are used for this meaning, they must be placed after the verb they modify; do not confuse them with the same words placed before the verb.

---

\(^{119}\)This is also true to an extent of Thompson/Yang, targeted to Hmong speakers. For instance, the pronoun *nws* (3U—3SG) constitutes five separate entries, glossed as 'her', 'him', 'she', 'he' and 'it' respectively.
4. Storycloth

b. **must**  adv. yuav tsum, yuav tau, yuav

The hierarchy of "must's":

kind of have to  yuav
to need  yuav tau
must  yuav tsum

The dictionary displays perhaps a disproportionately large number of terms specific to Bible translation work, such as transliterated entries for each of the names of books of the bible.

**Dialect**

The choice of dialect passes without comment in Yang, Xiong et al, Lomation Inc. and the HLT dictionary. McKibben notes that an English-MNts dictionary was already available but was targeted more to MNts speakers than English (I assume this refers to Xiong, Xiong and Xiong 1984 [1983]). Presumably each dictionary is simply based on the dialect of its compilers or, in the case of McKibben, consultants/assistants. It is notable however that only one of these dictionaries is in MNts—and perhaps even more notable that this one dictionary has very wide currency. According to the information exchange about language materials on Hmong LG, dictionaries are sought specifically by dialect, so that the existence of Xiong, Xiong and Xiong (1984 [1983]) is of significant value to the status of MNts in the interests of equal recognition.

When the wider community was invited to participate in the revision of Thompson/Yang in 1999, via Hmong LG, the issue of dialect attracted some comment. Some Hmong felt that a Hmong Daw oriented dictionary was an inadequate response to the composition of the Hmong-speaking community, as well as politically problematic. Some felt, too, that the potential contribution of MNts speaker Yee Yang was being trivialised. Others argued that one project should not be expected to do all the work needed for H/Mong people and expressed the hope rather that awareness of the gap would motivate more people to initiate new developments in the area of lexicography and web development. Thompson’s response was to explain that at the time of embarking on the project, most of the children in the target group were HmD speakers, which together with his own training in that dialect led to the choice of HmD for the dictionary. He also expressed interest also in a combined HmD/MNts dictionary as a future project—a very interesting suggestion which no one has followed up to date (see §4.2.3).

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120 tau, taut, labté, _nsec, _sec; yuav tsum, yuav tau, yuav_té, bué, téwó, téwó.
Standard entry elements

The tendency of the dictionaries to prioritise simplicity has its downside. In Xiong et al, the lack of cross-referencing means that crucial connections between grammatical classes such as pronouns, or irregular plurals and declensions, are lost. For instance, separate English headwords can be found for she and her, while the entry for went refers to go, but not vice versa. The connections between these words are obvious to someone already competent in English, but not to someone who needs to look them up in order to understand them.\footnote{Some connections are captured in the Mong-English section, such as the possessive function of pronouns such as her, but not the accusative.}

In Thompson/Yang, that there is at present no system of identification of the various linguistic elements included in an entry at times creates difficulties for a user unfamiliar with the entry in either language. Some students have taken the entire English entry to be the translation for the Hmong word.\footnote{Mark Thompson (p.c.).} Inconsistency of ordering or even inclusion of elements contributes to the potential confusion:

Ex. 4.22

\begin{align*}
\text{caij nplooj ntoo hlav (lub)} & \quad \text{spring (season) (noun)} \\
\text{caij ntuj no (lub)} & \quad \text{winter (noun)}\footnote{caij nplooj ntoo hlav (lub): คำหล่อ หน้า แฉ (แปล); caij ntuj no (lub): คำตุ่น หน้า (แปล).}
\end{align*}

A beginning user or someone with a relatively low level of bilingualisms is likely to expect some correlation between the bracketed elements in Hmong and English. Is lub ใบ perhaps the translation of 'noun' or even 'season'? In fact it is the nominal classifier for seasons, and so does not represent a gloss for any part of the English entry. Classifiers have a range of functions including definiteness, semantic specification and pronominal usage (see §2.5.1.2), none of which are reflected in the English translations. The target group being Hmong speakers however, it is possible that this carries less potential for confusion than inconsistency in the English parts of the entry.

These sorts of problems are not specific to this dictionary but simply exemplify some of the difficulties which beset a translation dictionary—especially given the decontextualisation of language usually characteristic of dictionaries. In this case, however, it is not intended that the
dictionary be used separately from its context of more comprehensive lesson plans and teaching materials. Access to these features of the Saturn language program is provided even outside of Saturn school, through the website. A further point to keep in mind is that the potential of an online work for continual updating and improvement means that the requirement for consistency and comprehensiveness can be balanced with the requirement for speedy publication.

Extra (non-entry) information

The scarcity of supporting appendices etc in most of the dictionaries ultimately leaves gaps in their accessibility to their stated target groups. Yang lacks an abbreviations list, and any mention of French word-formation, including irregular processes such as the declension of être. This is at odds with a stated goal of assisting the acquisition of French. Declensions are included in the main entry under a basic citation form, without assigning a separate entry or cross-reference entry to words such as suis, so it is doubtful whether all encountered words can be readily located in the dictionary.

Xiong et al has no pronunciation guide, a serious omission for a target group without advanced English. The recommendation to ‘practise orally’ is only feasible if regular and useful contact with fluent English speakers, such as a class, is available, which restricts the potential application of this dictionary considerably. Even where literacy in Mong can be assumed, it must be recognised that although the same script (ie set of graphs) is used for both English and Mong, two different writing systems (ie sound:graph correspondences) are in operation. For instance, the final unit of the word represents a tone value in Mong, not a consonant value. It is questionable, or at least was in 1983 when this dictionary was published, to assume that speakers are cognisant with such differences as these.

Given the anglocentric orientation of entries, McKibben would benefit from some extended non-entry notes to explain, for instance, kinship systems, classifiers or compounding processes in an isolating language. McKibben acknowledges this in a Forward, suggesting that such a section may be possible in a later edition.

Thompson/Yang and Lomation Inc. make good use of the inherent potential of a web site for linking many kinds of additional resources. The linking of soundfiles in particular is the ultimate pronunciation guide, where adequate computer access is available. Thompson/Yang also provides links to complementary sites which deal with Hmong language, often at a more advanced, technical or adult level. This has potential to be particularly useful to the wider range of non-local users beginning to access the site. It could profitably be extended to provide users with more direct means to investigate questions as they arise, such as tone or dialectal
difference. The site also provides for a high level of student participation. The possibility of putting their own work and personal items online amplifies the interest and therefore learning potential of local student users. It is possible that for a displaced and minority people particularly, the sense of ownership and belonging in the education process and in the use of language has added significance. The way this medium is implemented again helps to reduce the decontextualisation inherent in language reference works, embedding dictionary use in the wider language and social environment of the student.

Lomation Inc., on the other hand, makes greater use of the potential for internal links to navigate and browse. Standard links provided include:

- citation forms of tone sandhi modified forms
- synonyms
- alternative entries for component morphemes of compounds.

Further possibilities for either dictionary might usefully include:

- corresponding entries in an L2 (or L1) section
- classified vocabulary lists of, for instance, family or clothing
- texts illustrating entries.

A serious omission in the HLI dictionary is a reading guide. This restricts its potential use to competent readers of the êń Phaj hauj, who are few in number to date. It is difficult to know what form such a guide could take however, since it is not appropriate to use RPA and a system such as the IPA, would require a greater range of literacy than it may be reasonable to assume for this target group. The HLI produces teaching tapes of Hmong vowels and consonants together with sample words and sentences and an accompanying book; perhaps the best solution would be to make this generally available along with the dictionary for those who need assistance. Like Thompson/Yang, however, this dictionary has been designed with a view to using it within a community where additional support is available. It is not reasonable to criticise a dictionary on the basis that it does not cater to non-members of the target group. In the same way, if only the immediate target group is considered, the lack of reference to the variations in writing conventions which exist between groups of êń Phaj hauj users also poses no problem.

Orthography and ordering principles

The choice of script for H/Mong is unremarked in all dictionaries. In the case of the RPA dictionaries, minor variants of Basic RPA are used in all cases. With the commitment of McKibben to representing current practice it is likely that had it been published later it would
have included at least a discussion of revisions being trialled in RPA. In 1994, the basic version may well have been the only one in common use. Lomation (2000) occasionally includes separate entries for spelling or pronunciation variants, such as Asmesliskas/Asmeskas 'American'. The HLI dictionary uses ùǹ Phaj hauj Stage Two, with conventions of tone representation, ordering and seev representation as per the version current in America. The implementation of this specific version in this dictionary contributes to establishing it as standard.

The solution in Yang to the need to represent French pronunciation is quite innovative in its attempt to utilise the familiar, but in practice is rather problematic. Rather than require dictionary users to grapple with IPA, it was decided to use a respelling system in RPA with minimal diacritic additions for some French sounds where no comparable Hmong sound exists (and therefore no graph was available). For instance, /z/ is written <x>, and /R/ as <r>.

Tone markers are included in the transcriptions, presumably based on intonation. Overwhelmingly, tone /I/ is assigned, as it is in general practice for English loanwords.

The respelling system needs reworking in that:

- There is no adequate explanation of the differences between RPA for Hmong and RPA respelling for French. Since in several ways the graph to sound correlation is not equivalent for Hmong and French, despite the (presumed) familiarity of the RPA a table of graph:sound correspondences and/or explanation of the sounds of French remains necessary.

- In particular, a discussion of word-final graphemes is entirely lacking, so that word-/syllable-final graphs sometimes represent 'tones' and sometimes consonants, without distinction:

Ex. 4.23

a. CHANSON (saas xoos)\(^{124}\)
   (Intonation only)

b. CIEL (xis yel)
   (First syllable indicates intonation; last indicates consonant only)

c. SAC (xak)
   (Consonant final; intonation not indicated)

\(^{124}\)Notice that Yang includes MNts <aa> in this HmD dictionary, in order to represent nasalisation in the French word.
A positive aspect of the respelling system is that the representation of vowel nasalisation transfers well between the two languages; both involving a nasal final as well as a nasalised vowel (see example above).

Yang's transcriptions seem to be targeted more to a Hmong pronunciation of the French words than a French. This is particularly evident in the avoidance of certain consonant clusters:

Ex. 4.24

RISQUE (rib xawj kawm)
Two syllable word represented as three syllables, separating /s/ and /k/.

Tone sandhi

The most comprehensible treatment of tone sandhi modification is that of Lomation (2000). Both variants of a given word or morpheme have entry status. Modified forms are marked 't.c.' (probably following Heimbach 1969 [1979]), and linked to citation forms. In the following, teb chaws is a lexicalised form, deg is a regular sandhi form, and lub hlis alternates with lub hli in free variation:

Ex. 4.25

Also see: chaw
b. Deg t.c. (Dej)
Also see: dej
d. Hli 1. n. The moon. Lub hli
2. n. Month. Lub hli125

In Xiong et al, the policy of prioritising graphemic/phonetic criteria over semantic/etymological interacts oddly with Hmong tone sandhi:

125 chaws, chaw, teb chaws'jii; dej, dej; deg, dej; hlis, hli, lub hli; chaw, chaw, etc.
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Ex. 4.26

a. **chaw**, n. (lub) place, space...
   - chaw nyob, address, habitation.
   - chaw nraim cev, refuge.

b. **chaws**, v. to pass through an opening.
   - teb chaws, country, state.\(^{126}\)

Here, tebchaws \(\text{J}3\) \(\text{3}3\) appears as a compound of chaws \(\text{J}3\) 'to pass through an opening', because the morpheme chawm \(\text{J}3\) has altered to chaws \(\text{J}3\). On an etymological principle, it would be placed under chaww 'place', with lexicalised tone sandhi noted.

**Compounds**

Lomation (2000) features an interesting treatment of compounds. The English gloss refers not to the entry word, but to the compound, phrasal lexeme or longer example:

Ex. 4.27

a. **Cuaj**
   1. n. The number nine, one more than eight.
   2. n. A rocket Cuaj luaj.

b. **Dev**
   1. n. Dog, a canine. Tus dev.
   2. n. Fleas. Dev mub.\(^{127}\)

Only cuaj luaj\(\text{33}\) \(\text{3}3\) can mean 'rocket', since cuaj alone would mean 'nine'. In the entry dev \(\text{J}3\) \(\text{3}3\) 'dog', the first sense includes the (optional) classifier, while the second is a conventional modification collocation.

**Polysems and homonyms**

The vast discrepancy in number of entries recorded for Xiong et al between English–Mong and Mong–English sections (see Table 4.30) is largely a result of the different factors involved in headword status as applied to the two languages. Firstly, each graphically or phonetically distinguished item constitutes a headword, eg dwell, dweller, dwelling. Secondly, homographs

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\(^{126}\text{chaw}, \text{chaw nyob, chaw nraim cev}\. \text{Fev} \text{\{\{3}3} \text{33} \text{\{\{3}} \text{33} \text{\textbackslash{\}}} \text{chaws, teb chaws}\. \text{J}3 \text{\{\{3}3} \text{33}\).

\(^{127}\text{cuaj, cuaj luaj}\text{\{\{3}3} \text{33} \text{\textbackslash{\}}} \text{\textbackslash{\}}} \text{dev, tus dev, dev mub}\. \text{Fev} \text{\{\{3}3} \text{33} \text{\textbackslash{\}}}.
which are also homophones are compiled within a single entry, e.g. the various meanings of draw are simply listed one after another. The inclusion of sample sentences would be of considerable assistance here. For Mong headwords, despite the derivational process of compounding, only monosyllables are treated as headwords, compounds and common collocations being listed within the entry. This means that the effective differential between numbers of words in each section is much lower than it at first appears.

4.6.4 Conclusions

The description of all eight major dictionaries readily available in the west shows that a range of needs are being addressed and also that a number of gaps remain. The following provides a summary of the features of dictionaries already available, as well as the potential for further work which is evident.

Target group and purpose

The dictionaries assessed above provide a range of language materials targeted to English/French L2 learning, language maintenance for the rising generation, code elaboration in the interests of maintaining viability of the language in its new environments, and specialist reference needs for linguistics and anthropology. There is little provision for fluent speakers requiring a monolingual reference.

Dialect

HmD–English and MNts–English dictionaries are available as both L1>L2 and L2>L1, and a two-way publication in Mong–English. L1>L2 dictionaries are available for Hmong Daw–French, leaving room for development of dictionaries in MNts and French, and of a French–HmD dictionary.

Size

Dictionary sizes range between 2,000–5,000 Hmong/Mong entries. This is reasonable but a more comprehensive dictionary would be useful at some stage. As the numbers of entrywords in English and in Mong in Xiong et al demonstrates, the scope of a dictionary is not necessarily directly calculable sheery by the number of entries.

Standard entries

Areas frequently addressed in standard entries are: compounds and sample sentences, noun classifiers and loanword origins. In some of these areas further work remains necessary however (see for example discussion of word classes in §2.5.1.2).
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Extra (non-entry) information

Semantic fields lists and pronunciation are reasonably well covered outside of standard entries. Non-entry information covers some useful areas of cultural education and some grammatical aids. These are focussed primarily on Hmong culture and language, and so are primarily useful for language/culture maintenance purposes or non-Hmong. Assuming that some of the barriers confronting such speakers derive from encountering not only a new language but also a new country and culture, it would seem that some items would most easily be identified by means of illustration rather than by terms in L1 which are in many cases coined. This could also be useful for heritage culture entries, towards greater accessibility to young people and subsequent generations. Possibly financial and/or time considerations have worked against implementation of this solution.

Pronunciation guides for Hmong range from absent to excellent; for Hmong speakers using a dictionary for L2 comprehension or learning purposes little assistance in this area is available.

Orthography and ordering principles

The RPA is used as taught from the fifties in Laos. Later developments such as multiple consonant grapheme reduction or new ways to write compounds are as yet untouched. Phaj hauj Stage Two is implemented but without a reading guide.

Alphabetic order is yet to be fully standardised. Division of the word for ordering purposes into complex consonant–complex vowel–tone is common, but there is variation in the treatment of vowel-initial entries. The HLI dictionary uses an ordering system for Phaj hauj which matches that used by the Motthem Family, but conflicts with the ordering used in the Melbourne project (see §4.7).

Tone sandhi

The treatment of tone sandhi has not progressed significantly beyond the early dictionaries (see comments in §4.6.2).

Compounds

Similarly, the status of compounds and other polysyllabic forms are not yet thoroughly analysed, although Heimbach at least ensures the locatability of compounds. A dictionary which, while

\[\text{128} \text{ A work which more directly caters for the needs of adult immigrant Hmong is Thao (1981).}\]
remaining accessible to the lay person, incorporates work such as Lyman (1974) and Ratliff (1992) on identifying compound types (see §2.5.2.2), and also implements recent developments in their representation, would be useful.

**Polysemes and homonyms**

Polysemes and homonyms are erratically treated. Lyman (1974) provides a careful analysis of this question, but does not follow his theoretical principles through in the dictionary itself. Adequate treatment of polysemes and homonyms would make a dictionary more accessible to the non-speaker and more useful to the linguist or anthropologist (speaker or otherwise).

This corpus of dictionaries leaves plenty of scope for new contributions to the field to make available the results of standardisation work carried out since the refugee period, and to target more effectively the particular needs of ex-refugee Hmong and their families growing up in western countries. Some of these possibilities in part motivate and inform the HLIA dictionary project, which is the topic of the following section.
Despite the surge of development of new dictionaries described in §4.6.3, there remain gaps in the range; and in particular gaps specific to the needs of the HLIA and the wider Hmong Language Institute community. The most readily apparent gap is that there is no bilingual dictionary in šà Phaj hauj. In view of this, in 1996, the HLIA instigated their own dictionary project, enlisting my assistance with the backing of the University of Melbourne.

In this section, for comparative purposes, essentially the same parameters as in §4.6 will be used; but here I discuss the development of policy regarding these parameters in greater detail; exploring reasons for directions taken, alternative options decided against, and problems with decisions finally made. In addition to the parameters already established, a section on loans and coinages complements the discussion of lexical elaboration in §4.4.1. The aim of this whole section is to give a picture of the gradual building up of policy, of procedures and of standard language, which form and are formed by the course of the dictionary project. The focus is particularly on points of standardisation policy which stand in contrast to policy in other branches of the HLI.

The dictionary is currently in the final stages of completion, and a first edition (Hmong–English only) is due to be published early in 2001. A comprehensive English–Hmong supplement is planned for later in the same year.

Several draft sub-dictionaries have been produced:

- a hypertext glossary of the šà Phaj hauj jëaaj máj nsi xíng xieng, xíng xíng, nser, nser, hlu ne hru (Ntuj tsim teb raug: neeg, noob qoob, nqaij, hnub thiab hlu 'The creation of the world: people, food, the sun and moon') (Johnson 1985:3–13), linked to encyclopaedic information and extended lexical fields lists. This was intended as a trial for the publication of several texts along the same lines (see under Extra (non-entry) information below).
- a guide to Hmong and English kin terms, with diagrammatic representations of the Hmong system
- a bilingual picture dictionary adapted from the monolingual version published by the HLI California (Hmong Language Institute 1994).

The latter two of these are expected to be completed and published in the near future.
4.7 Local project

4.7.1 Assessment parameters

| (i) Target group & purpose | (i) bilingual school-age students of ວ້າ Phaj hauj, and (ii) adult learners of English and ວ້າ Phaj hauj. To provide a bilingual reference work/works conforming to the standard language policies of the HLIA and in parallel to the HLI monolingual dictionary project. |
| (ii) Dialect | HmD |
| (iii) Size | 3500 Hmong entry words |
| (iv) Standard entry elements | Usage notes with brief explanations, examples, classifiers (for N), cross referencing |
| (v) Extra (non-entry) information | Grammatical paradigms, semantic fields, orthography guide |
| (vi) Orthography & ordering principles | ວ້າ Phaj hauj Hmoob. Ordered by initial vowel+tone complex, then consonant grapheme units, in the new order as given by ວ້າ Yai Kub |
| (vii) Tone sandhi | Tone sandhi is cross-referenced; compounds involving tone sandhi modification are not. |
| (viii) Compounds | Clearly identifiable compounds and conventional phrasal lexemes constitute headwords. All words are orthographically monosyllabic. |
| (ix) Polysemes & homonyms | Distinguished by broad synchronically transparent semantic relations |
| (x) Loans and coinages | Transparently Lao-derived terms are excluded from the dictionary, as are most English loans and newer non-HLIA coinages. |

Table 4.31 HLIA dictionary

Target group and purpose

The initial target group was agreed to be the students of the weekend community language school. This was connected with the aims of:

- Collaboration with the California project. Since the HLI California was already working on an advanced monolingual dictionary, for the sake of maintaining good relations and also
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increasing the range of language resources available, it was decided that in Melbourne the project would be geared towards providing a simple bilingual dictionary targeted to the young Hmong in the school. The Melbourne project would refer to the monolingual dictionary as a resource for word selection and part of speech classifications, and provide English glossing for use by both branches. Although the patterns of influence and authority between the two Melbourne and Fresno branches have since altered, a simple bilingual dictionary is still the objective for the first main publication.

• Language maintenance. The rising generation, a significant proportion of whom attend the community school, are the focus of language maintenance concerns, which the dictionary project is geared to address in part.

At a secondary level, the dictionary is also targeted to adult Hmong in Melbourne. At this stage, there is no formal literacy program for HLIA adults. However, those who can already read/write ꨉ Phaj hauj also expect to be using the dictionary. Further literacy acquisition programs have not been discussed to a great extent, but I anticipate that this will be moving up on the agenda once the stage of accruing materials such as dictionaries is taking up less time and energy.

Among the goals which developed were that the dictionary should:

• support literacy in ꨉ ꨉ ꨉ ꨉ ꨉ Phaj hauj Hmoob
• develop a bilingual dictionary that links directly with the monolingual dictionary project being undertaken by the HLIA California
• provide adequate reading and pronunciation guides for both Hmong and English and the respective scripts
• be of medium to large size
• emphasise conservation of elements of the heritage culture
• include new terms arising from the different focuses of life in the country of immigration
• investigate possible forms of lexical organization eg thesaurus, semantic fields groupings, illustrative etc for the purpose of maximal usefulness to the target group
• be extendable for the use of adults for reference and literacy acquisition purposes
• be set up so as to facilitate publication of multiple dictionary types from a single database, including possibly a hypertext edition
• be accessible to the Hmong community in terms of ease of use, cost and availability
• recognise the occurrence of MNts forms and identification of these in dictionary entries
• discuss the status of spelling and other orthography standardisation issues, ensuring that alternatives are locatable in the dictionary
4.7 Local project

- recognise the effects of tone sandhi and lexicalised tone change, and ensure the locatability of affected forms
- elucidate the status of compounds and ensure their locatability
- clarify the connections between polysemes, distinguishing them from homonyms.

**Dialect**

As noted in §4.2.1.1, HLI policy has been increasingly to eliminate separate representation of MNts. While in the early stages this policy took the form of assimilation, an ultimate goal of dialect merging, or artificial standard creation, has more recently come to light. In the meantime, while MNts pronunciations are certainly heard in casual speech, none of these are authorised for printing in the HLIA dictionary.

This puts paid to one of my goals in the project: that of acknowledging both dialects, and especially the mixing that occurs in language use. It seems to me that the possibility of finding any words commonly encountered is a useful goal of a dictionary, even if dispreferred headwords simply refer the user to the approved term. At this point however, the function of the dictionary as a tool of prescription rather than description is shown to be primary for the speech community. Linguistically, a clean separation of two dialects is a theoretical construct. Socially, that there is a conceptual divide is clear. Although there is sometimes dispute over the dialect of a particular lexical item, the possibility of assigning it evidently matters to everyone.

**Extra (non-entry) information**

An obvious question for the dictionary project is how to ensure readability by users not already familiar with or fluent in ëk ñë Phaj hauj. Since the target group for the dictionary largely comprises learners of ëk ñë Phaj hauj, an interface of some sort for rendering the script accessible is necessary. On a purely logical, practical rationale, given that Australian Hmong are all familiar with the roman script, if not actually literate in it, a roman-based respelling system would be a perfectly reasonable suggestion. This, however, would totally ignore the fact that the raison d'être of the dictionary is the promulgation of the script. The roman script has been developed into what is now the dominant writing system for the Hmong in the west. Consequently, use of a roman-script–based respelling system—whether IPA, English-derived or RPA itself—is ideologically unacceptable in the HLI community. Moreover, use of a different script as interface is highly likely to slow the acquisition of reader fluency in ëk ñë Phaj hauj.
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since the tendency is to rely on the familiar. On both counts, using a roman script as interface would actively detract from the aim of establishingPhones in place of RPA for the HLI community.

From my perspective, this problem has not been resolved adequately to date. The dictionary includes a prefatory section which simply sets out the ä kab 'rows' of the äPhones. Otherwise, the lack of a reading interface restricts the use of the dictionary to contexts in which assistance is available, such as the community school, or to people already literate in Phones.

The comments above pertain to a printed format publication. A different kind of solution that arises with the use of a machine-readable dictionary (MRD) is the use of soundfiles, as amply demonstrated by the success of Thompson, Yang et al (1996 [1999]) and Lomation (2000) (see §4.6.3). As noted above, I did in fact make a draft subdictionary in hypertext format, using some of the soundfiles from the Saturn dictionary generously released for our use by Mark Thompson. From my perspective, this is a potential of MRDs that almost magically solves the problems of readability and usable pronunciation guides that haunt dictionary development and use in many contexts. However, there are two major factors which seriously inhibit the realisation of this potential. The first and most obvious is that most minority language communities simply do not have the funds or resources to make use of dictionaries that rely exclusively on electronic media. The second is related to the existence of different literacies. The profile of computer literacy among Hmong in Melbourne is not very different from the general picture: many young people have very substantial competence, and many adults also have at least an adequate command of basic skills. But as discussed in §3.3.6.2, this does not mean that availability of materials in computer format guarantees their usefulness or even their use. While a dictionary targeted to young people may well have more potential in this genre than one for adults, it is an

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129 An off-centre example of this is that I have from the outset included an RPA field in the main dictionary database. A partial justification for this is the idea of using the database for RPA-using reader-writers at some later stage, but initially its main function was to enable me to read quickly in the early stages of the work while I was still acquiring fluency in reading Phones.

130 Note that on the Hmong Script Software site, which is a non-HLI source of the Phones script including the offer of a font, RPA is used as interface. For the site designer, Jay Kue, the Phones functions more as an exciting option than a comprehensive view of Hmong identity and hopes for the future. Here it is not critical to avoid any inclusion of the RPA.
effect of these sorts of restrictions that has resulted in the HTML text-based dictionary project, trialled for Johnson (1985):3–13, being put aside.  

Orthography and ordering principles

Separate policies

The rzą ńra Phaj hauj is the primary focus of all HLIA projects. Being the primary site of semiotic loading for the cultural position of its proponents, it becomes also the element of language and standardisation policies in which differentiation between groups, and shifts in belief and/or authority structures are most strongly made visible—sometimes at cost to practical benefits or availability of a standard orthography at a wider level of the speech community, both desirable from the perspective of other discourses. In §4.3.1 I have described in detail the points at which the local version of the ڑįra Phaj hauj developed by the HLIA is distinct from versions used elsewhere. The HLIA version is the one being implemented in the dictionary.

The issue of standard ordering has significant ramifications for inter-community use of the dictionary, as well as for more general applications of alphabet ordering such as a community telephone directory. As discussed in §4.6, RPA ordering is also not fully standardised as yet. In that case, however, the differences are relatively minor, extending at the maximum point of differentiation to the ordering of all vowels before all consonants, compared with interspersing consonants and vowels as in other roman orthographies. Between HLI dictionaries, the differences are radical, only the internal order of each 3 kāb being maintained.

While a prefatory guide to the ordering convention implemented theoretically alleviates the problem of inter-community use to a large extent, the importance in the HLI of symbolism cannot be overestimated. Since the change in policy of the HLIA arises from concerns of orthodoxy, it is likely that they will actively disseminate only those publications which conform to orthodox conventions, as defined in the local community. The growing distinctions between Australian and American usage also reflect the extent to which the collaborative dictionary project is at risk. A specific condition negotiated during the setting up of the collaboration was that the HLIA dictionary should follow the same orthographic conventions as the HLI—not least the ordering.

\[^{131}\text{It is my intention, however, to install a user-friendly version of the dictionary database on two computers made available to the HLIA by the Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Department, in the hope that some people may use them casually. The official use of such a medium appears not to be a high priority of the committee at this stage.}\]
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If this is no longer the policy of the HLI A, the permission to use entries from the HLI dictionary will need to be renegotiated, and may be lost altogether.

Ordering and technological concerns

The orientation of readily available computer and software configurations to particular forms of writing based on standard alphabetic script usage, poses some problems for their use with šň ňř Phaj hauj. The lack of fit most noticeable in the present project is in the alphabetic ordering or sorting function, as follows:

1. The default ordering function treats the lower/upper case distinction accessed by the shift key as the same letter. In šň ňř Phaj hauj, <Shift+ > is used to access a different 'letter' altogether.

   In some applications this problem can be eliminated by selecting a case sensitive option, or setting the language to ASCII.

2. The relevant unit in šň ňř Phaj hauj is two characters long: basic grapheme followed by overstrike diacritic. The second character (～～) is not ordered independently, but varies depending on the basic grapheme:

   ꜖ ꜖ ꜖ ꜖ ꜖ ꜖ ꜖ ꜖ ꜖

   In a roman alphabet, this would be the equivalent of having different ordering systems for a set of words depending on the initial letter:

   bate bead bow bull | low lead late lull | mead mow mull mate

   Some applications have the capacity for a custom language to be specified, which may extend to allowing for a two-stroke grapheme.

3. šň ňř Phaj hauj has a default [k] on the vowel grapheme, realised where no consonant is explicitly written, and an optional [au] on the consonant grapheme. It also has a reduplication symbol <꜖ >, which for ordering purposes is identical to re-writing the previous syllable.

Most of these differences in ordering requirements between šň ňř Phaj hauj and roman alphabets are manageable within some linguist software such as SIL Shoebox. However, I

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With the exception, as far as I have been able to work out to date, of the reduplication symbol.
have decided after trialling Shoebox for the primary database not to use it for reasons including versatility of formatting and import/export functions, user-friendliness in the general community, and the difficulties of using it to analyse isolating languages. While our dictionary project continues, new versions of Shoebox continue to advance; but at the time when a decision had to be made, the problems of Shoebox outweighed its advantages—and the advantages of FileMakerPro in the above terms outweighed its lack of specific tailoring to linguists’ needs.

Using FileMakerPro, (1) above could be disposed of relatively simply by using an ASCII base for ordering purposes. Given that I also have to manage (2) and (3), I have developed a system which requires manually typing an quasi-numerical equivalent for every entryword in a separate field in each record. Although FileMakerPro (Version 4.0) has a function which allows the specification of a custom language, it is not flexible enough to allow for recognition of dual grapheme units. It might be possible to configure it to produce the quasi-numerical field automatically as a calculation, but a presenting problem with this idea is that this field will only order correctly if it is formatted as text, not as number. I believe I am not alone in finding that a less efficient system which works is in many cases ‘chosen’ over a more efficient system which may or may not turn out to be realisable after many hours of work.

It will be apparent from this that I have not yet solved the problem of automatic ordering for more general use. Regardless of the efficiency of the software chosen for the primary database, the ordering difficulties listed above would still have to be addressed for purposes such as word processing.

**Tone change**

The general policy of the HLJA regarding tone sandhi variants in the dictionary is that each constitutes a separate cross-referenced entry. At present no distinction is made between citation and derived forms, since the distinction appears to be of low priority to speakers. In the case of morphotonemic alternations—that is, giving rise to semantically distinguished forms of the same underlying lexeme differing phonetically only by tone—forms are cross-referenced in the dictionary. Cases of tone sandhi contributing to compound formation are not cross-referenced.

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133 This last essentially boils down to the fact that Shoebox copes well with analysing a word into its component morphemes, but not with connecting separate morphemes into a single ‘word’. 
4. Storycloth

The effect of orthographically subsuming tone //I// under tone //I// (see §2.3.1.2) is that the special function of tone //I// to demarcate the differentiation and relationship between locatives and locative nouns is difficult to point out:

Ex. 4.28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>b.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pem</td>
<td>ped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *j m up, 'up' north, up in the hills*
- *Kuv nyob sab hnub tuaj pem toj.*
- *I live in the east up on the hill.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pem</th>
<th>ped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- *pem*  
- *Kuv mus pem kiab khw.*
- *I'm going over/up to the shop.*

While it is perfectly possible, as this example shows, to refer a dictionary user to the related entries, the consistent occurrence of tone //A// in this particular lexical set and almost nowhere else, and therefore also its particular relationship with tone //I//, is neither apparent, nor possible to explain without the use of an interface such as IPA.

Compounds

In §2.5.2 I developed a set of polysyllable types for the purposes of compound identification. In regard to the dictionary project, what is primarily needed is a means of

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134 The need to deal adequately with isolating morphology does not apply, since FileMakerPro does not operate by interlinearising text.

135 See also

136 RPA transliterations absent from original.
deciding what constitutes a word for the purposes of headword selection. The choices made should a) be maximally intuitive from the point of view of a reader/writer searching for a word, and b) reflect morphological structure.

Identification of polysyllable types has functioned as a resource for working principles in the process of structuring dictionary entries. The working criteria for headword selection in the dictionary project are:

(i) A monosyllable which can occur independently constitutes a headword.

To test this, we check if there is a possible Hmong sentence in which the word in question has self-contained semantics. In Ex. 4.29 (a), \( \text{lín vb} \) 'father' is semantically bound to the following syllable \( \text{bî nèeb} \) 'spirit'; example (b) demonstrates that it also occurs as an independent morpheme, hence fulfilling the criteria for headword status:

Ex. 4.29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>ṭüs tûiv nèeb tso dáb nèeb mûs dhia+daj+dhia+luag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>father spirit release spirit spirit go ??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'The \( \text{lín vb} \) releases the spirits over new year'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b.</th>
<th>qhîa kôj tûiv mûs xôv+tooj rau kûv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tell 2sg father go telephone get 1sg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Tell your father to ring me back'.

(ii) A polysyllabic word with one or more syllables which do not occur independently in the above sense constitutes a headword.

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137 The synthesised categories of polysyllable types arrived at in §2.5.2.3 were, in summary:

1. **Polysyllabic morphemes**, especially loanwords
2. **Bound morphemes**
3. **Grammatical dependency I**, involving a grammatical morpheme as a clitic or affix
4. **Grammatical dependency II**, exhibiting commonly occurring structural relationships such as \( \text{V-O} \)
5. **Independent morphemes**
6. **Miscellaneous**, including Reduplication.
4. Storycloth

This includes indivisible loanwords such as Ḣ Askiv 'English'; words with at least one semantically dependent morpheme such as Ḩ ṡ sawdvaws (?+ to.name: 'everyone'); words with grammatically dependent morphemes such as Ḥ Ṣ thaumtwg (when+ QU: 'When?'); and some miscellaneous subtypes, particularly personal names and onomatopoeia.

(iii) A sequence of independent morphemes which together are interpreted non-compositionally constitutes a headword.

This includes words from several of the categories identified in §4.4.2, such as Ḣ Ṣ gaum (seed+sour: 'citron'), Ḥ Ṣ cua daq cua dub (wind+ yellow+ wind+ black: 'cyclone'), and reduplicative compounds.

(iv) A sequence of independent morphemes involving lexicalised tone change constitutes a headword.

This includes compounds such as Ḣ Ṣ tebchaws (from Ḣ Ṣ teb+ Ṣ chaw: land+ place) 'country', but not more loosely connected tone sandhi forms such as Ḣ Ṣ ib tug (from Ḣ Ṣ ib 'one' + Ṣ tus CL: 'one...'), which do not form a new meaning unit.

*Polysemes & homonyms*

During consultancy sessions, HLIA participants have not distinguished strongly between polysemes and homonyms. In discussion of a homophous form, the general rule is that all meanings which occur to those present will be suggested whether or not some of words are very obviously separate etymons. Homonyms treated thus include:

Ex. 4.30

.mongoose

luv

weigh, weight

Similarly, or conversely, even quite closely related polysemic forms are often carefully distinguished; which, given the highly contextual nature of Hmong semantic interpretation, is not surprising:

Ex. 4.31

.word

lus

language
4.7 Local project

In the HLIA dictionary, a compromise is being trialled as a salve to my own preference for clarifying semantic connections (or lack of them) between words. I assign a new entry to each homonym, with subscript, and compile words whose semantic connection is apparent to me within the same entry. This has the obvious drawback of relying on my full comprehension of any cultural links giving rise to one or another meaning, and also assumes that my assessment of these words correlates to the way that a speaker is likely to look for them in the dictionary. In the hope of alleviating these problems, the main proofreader, Lee Yang, is crosschecking the decisions I have made.

Loans and coinages

The significant features of policy of the HLIA official approach to lexical elaboration can be summarised as (see §4.4.1.2):

- rejection of Lao loanwords
- requirement of ratification of all new words from the current highest authority source
- general nonacceptance of new loanwords (from English)
- cautious approach to coinages and semantic extension; those previously known are accepted, while unfamiliar terms or meanings are not, with the exception of those instigated by ŋ'î Yaj Kôb.

This is a policy which has been developing gradually over the duration of the project. A case in point is the changing policy on names of months. HLIA policy is to institute a uniquely Hmong set of names for this recently salient field; and one which is ratified by the line of authority recognised as traceable most directly to ŋ'î Yaj Soob Lwji. To this end, when I first met the group in 1995, no terms were official, since they were awaiting authorisation of a set through members of the HLIA California. In due course the set of terms was received in the mail, the group leaders started using and disseminating them, and I entered them into the dictionary database. When this set of terms later came up as part of a dictionary proofing set, I was advised that another set of terms was in process of being established in Thailand, so the current set would not be needed in the main dictionary. However, rather than reverting to 'having no words' to refer to months, the HLIA are now sanctioning the use of numerical terms: IA AM Gut ib 138 retain all terms superseded in this way in the database itself, along with other terms not required for the HLIA dictionary such as dialectal variants.
4. Storycloth

*hli ntuj* (one+moon+sky), *hli tho* (two+moon+sky), etc. When the new set of official terms is in place, it will be the fourth set actively promulgated in the HLIA community.

4.7.2 Conclusions

The above account of the HLIA dictionary project shows the interweaving of various influences on its direction: practicality, symbolic function, academic approaches, the dialect of Hmong participants and tensions between different possible levels of analysis. For some parameters—such as choice of orthography, ordering principles, dialect, lexical elaboration—the relationship with language standardization is obvious. For others—such as identification of compounds or phrasal lexemes, and of polysemes and homonyms—the issues appear at first glance to be more relevant to linguistic analysis per se, and the reflection of this analysis in dictionary structuring. The important point is, however, that since the dictionary is a tool of standardization, a tool of prescription, the manner of representation of lexemes etc in the dictionary becomes part and parcel of the identity of those lexemes for purposes of education and consequently learned speaker perceptions of their language. To name is to bring into being—and to publish, even more so. The compound or phrasal lexeme status attributed to headwords of more than one morpheme, for instance, are likely to become canonically established in at least the local community—and subsuming tone /I/ orthographically under tone /H/ may well contribute to the eventual phonetic merge of these two tones in the rising generation in Melbourne.

In §4.7.11 I listed the goals that have been discussed for the dictionary project. Table 4.32 summarises the status of these goals, as indicated by the discussion throughout this section:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to support literacy in <em>ēk</em> for <em>vē</em> Phaŋ hauj Hmoob</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to develop a bilingual dictionary linking directly with the California monolingual dictionary project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to provide adequate reading and pronunciation guides for both Hmong and English and the respective scripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

360

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139 This is the system current in the broader Hmong community.
to be of medium to large size

to emphasise conservation of culture-specific elements

to include new terms arising from the different focuses of life in the country of immigration

to investigate possible forms of lexical organization

to be extendable for the use of adults for reference and literacy acquisition purposes

to be set up so as to facilitate publication of multiple dictionary types from a single database

to be accessible to the Hmong community in terms of ease of use, cost and availability.

to recognise the occurrence of MNtS forms and identification of these in dictionary entries

to discuss the status of spelling and other orthography standardisation issues, ensuring that alternatives are locatable in the dictionary

to recognise the effects of tone sandhi and lexicalised tone change, and ensure the locatability of affected forms

The dictionary is of medium size.

This is currently limited to brief explanatory notes within dictionary entries, and an appendix of semantic field lists. Further cultural information is anticipated to be provided by way of later subdictionaries on particular themes (e.g., kin terms).

The emphasis of the primary Hmong participants is on inclusion of terms relating to cultural heritage. New terms are sporadic in the dictionary.

Draft sub-dictionaries have made initial ventures into the possibilities of HTML design, illustrative presentation, concentration on a single lexical field and selection of a set of entries tailored to a story.

Choice of FileMakerPro for the database was largely determined by its flexibility in formatting and subset selection. Different layouts have been set up within the main database to suit different publications.

Financial support for publication is currently being sought through University avenues.

Accessibility was an important consideration in assessing the potential of electronic format.

HLIA policy is to include HmD forms only. A crossdialectal project remains an interest of my own which I may follow up in the future.

Only the HLIA version of the 9K or Phaj hauj is used. Discussion of alternatives is not included.

Tone sandhi is cross-referenced where it does not form a new (compound) word.
4. Storycloth

to elucidate the status of compounds and ensure their locatability
to clarify the connections between polysemes, distinguishing them from homonyms

| Compound status is treated systematically to an extent, incorporating recent analysis. | Achieved only to a minimal extent. |

Table 4.32 Goals of the HLIA dictionary project
5. THE BACK OF THE WORK
DISCOURSES OF HMONG
STANDARDIZATION

5.1 Introduction: Localisation

In this chapter I interleave theoretical and descriptive. I show how the discourses introduced in
Chapter Three are productive and restrictive of the positions, actions, and institutions described
in Chapter Four; and conversely are reproduced and renegotiated by those same processes.

If I frame the task of this chapter from a position that starts with standardization practices, this
means that I now go back through the sites of focus, dissension and change that have been
presented—dialect, script, lexicon, dissemination—and show how they can be understood in
terms of the major discourses previously identified. Alternatively, viewing this chapter from a
position that starts instead with the discourses—nationism, scientism, religion, literacy,
technology and westernism—I now show how they are manifested, supported, and at times
resisted, in the processes which I have observed and participated in.

This is a historically specific analysis, seeing that all aspects of discourse—texts, knowledges,
relations—emerge out of abstraction only in the minutiae of local practices. It is an analysis of
intertextuality, especially at the level of interdiscursivity; acknowledging the bringing together of
many strands of narrative, ideology and discourse.

Ideally I would like to structure this chapter from the perspective of the two themes
simultaneously; weaving discourses perhaps from east to west, and processes from north to
south. If I were to follow the thread of each process separately, the discourses would appear as
interwoven, at times to the point of an indistinguishable mesh at the back of the work. From the
point of view of the discourses, it is the processes that interweave to this level of complex
density.

The present mode of communication restricting such an iconic representation, I have decided to
frame the following starting from each major discourse in turn. It is important, however, that
neither discourse formation nor standardization process is taken to have precedence: the
generative relationship is reciprocal.

The first task is to revise Foucault's four ordered categories of discursive practice in the context
of the local study (see §3.2.1):
5. The back of the work

**Objects** delimited fields of possible knowledge, which are given form as possible topics for discussion or research, issues on which to take positions and make decisions, goals and principles, projects to carry out.

**Statements** formulated representations of such knowledge: texts and practices, organisations and policies, artefacts developed such as dictionaries or fonts.

**Concepts** the ways in which the statements are related to each other: how different activities, articles and institutions are conceived of as the singular connected entity *standardisation*, and how this collection of disparities is related to other goals and principles, such as technological fluency or desire for nation.

**Themes** the combination of the concepts into larger structures: standardisation, national language, symbolic script.

This then is my framework for this chapter: what objects of discourse are formed; through what statements and practices; what connections are made between disparities; what multi-level themes are developed? The whole of this multiple question can be expressed as:

What is the discursive formation constructed in and relevant to Hmong standardisation?

In §5.2, I first consider in turn each discourse as outlined in §3.3: nationist, scientist, religious, literacy, technology and westernist, as they are manifested in the processes described in Chapter Four. In §5.3.1 I build a structure of the relations formed between these discourses, and briefly consider other possible discourses which could be analysed within my topic. §5.3.2 enquires into the locations of authority in the most local level of the study, as one means of investigating the order of discourse in operation.
5.2 The discourses

5.2.1 Nationist discourse

The nationist discourse is strongly manifested in the process of Hmong standardization. The drive to standardize the language is in many aspects and from many quarters fuelled by a desire for acknowledgment and continuation of the Hmong as a nation in this new period of collective history as ex-refugees.

In much of the discussion reported in Chapter Four, it is apparent that nation is assumed as an a priori base from which to argue for language standardization. Recall the simple injunction of one contributor (in regard to lexical elaboration):

[W]e are Mong and we should have our own words.

_Hmong LG: early 1998_

In these sorts of arguments, 'being H/Mong' is presented as irreducible. It is a 'bottom line' argument.

So the question is, how is this concept of nation established? What part does the construction of nation have to play in the standardisation of language? How does standardization in the Hmong community maintain and construct concepts of nationhood?

In §3.3.2.2, I suggested some aspects of the nationist discourse which are used to support language standardization. Specifically, the discourse allows for:

- relations between language and national identity
- relations between language and the maintenance of culture
- language, writing and linguistic artefacts held specifically by the nation.

In this section I demonstrate how these relations are realised in the present study, using the five categories of nation construction that I introduced in §3.3.2.1, after Wodak et al (1998 [1999]). The five categories can be summarised as below:

1. the construction of a 'national body' by association with physical objects and markers
2. the attributions/nature of a national/ethnic type

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1Either Tom Hang or Tomas Muas.
5. The back of the work

(3) the narration of a common political past
(4) the construction of a common culture
(5) the construction of a common political present and future.

To reiterate, the discourse of nationism is not the construction of Hmong nationhood as such, but that which allows for discussion of issues in terms of the concept of nation. The focus for the present topic, then, is the ways that standardisation processes are connected to ideas of nation. A final point to note is that the construction of Hmong national identity is effected by not only Hmong people but also non-Hmong—this is of course something in which I am participating as I write.

5.2.1.1 The construction of nation

*National body*

The Hmong do not presently have overt markers of a national body in terms of geographical proximity or political boundaries. Nonetheless, their nation is one amongst many that retains land as a defining value. The eventual attainment of لعع قي "ی "ی ه "ی Hmong LG: early 1998

This is an element of national identification seen in other dispersed or fragmented groups including the Jewish and even Scottish people.
5.2 The discourses

In the absence of lands by which to assert nationhood, the clan system has particular significance as a means of conceptualising the connections between people. In terms of standardisation processes, this is seen in that lexical fields covered in all the general dictionaries show an emphasis on Hmong kinship structures. Clan names are listed as dictionary entries, as are many terms denoting Hmong relationship types:

Ex. 5.1

a. ᵇ fragmentManager ntxhais 1. daughter
   2. daughter of any of the brothers in a family
b. ᵇFragmentManager u pog koob paternal great-grandmother
   (le the mother of a man’s father’s father)

Kin terms are frequent topics of discussion in Hmong LG, as the rising generation of Hmong in particular seek to understand these terms and systems in the development of their national identity. There appears to be little difference of opinion in the community on the importance of maintaining these lexical fields and, by implication, the view of family they refer to—disputes mainly concern the standard usage of each term.

Dialect being such a salient potential threat to the unity of the nation, considerable effort is exerted on overtly minimising this source of difference. In §4.2.3 I identified three positions taken on the issue of standard dialect: assimilation, separation and coalition. In his coalition proposal, Nyaj Looj Muas 睏ぞ  профессиональн.hashmap.key  профессиональн.hashmap.value appeals to the common national name as evidence of 'one-nationhood'. For this purpose he is obliged to ignore the fact that this name is both pronounced and often spelled differently in the two dialects:

To be fair as a Hmong nation (we all carry the same name as Hmong)...we should consider not to favor only one language but we must consider mixed both Blue and White Hmong language as a whole

Hmong LG: Oct 1996

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3 Since these terms are part of the .poll_kmv tʃ bi-brothers (patriline), the people referred to are also ᵇFragmentManager ntxhais or fragmentManager u pog koob respectively to any of the women who marry into the appropriate generation.

4 For instance, some say that ヽ� nheeb ヽ� ntxwv is a grandchild, while others say it is a great-grandchild, or both (Hmong LG: mid 1997).
5. The back of the work

The position of assimilation is also utilised in the endeavour to minimise dialect difference, for instance in the frequently encountered statements (mostly by HmD speakers) that one or another orthography is suitable for either dialect. Because of the centrality of the minority dialect to many of its speakers' political identity, this approach necessarily ends up discounting the importance of MNts rather than genuinely addressing the imbalance of power and access between speakers. Despite this, because it is so frequently discussed, along with assertions that there is little difference between the dialects as spoken, it is evident that there is an obligation to hold and express a position on why dialect does not threaten one-nationhood.

Both these examples show that imaging dialect as unthreatening to national unity requires some overt revision of current status. Linguistic differences must be reinterpreted as insignificant and the basis for political allegiance must be realigned. A different kind of minimising strategy produces proposals such as parallel dictionaries: this constitutes a (coalition) attempt to maintain the pre-refugee configuration of dialect difference, in which there was greater fluidity of usage between speakers, keeping dialect less prominent as a point of division.

I return to alternative positions on dialect and nation in §5.2.1.2.

National/ethnic type

Because of the upheaval associated with relocation to new countries and new cultures, a dichotomy has emerged of progressivism versus conservatism. A practice of nation that incorporates concepts salient in the cultures of immigration allow a continual re-creating of Hmong identity, while a practice that emphasises knowledges and customs of the Laotian period focuses on maintaining an earlier identity. Arguments for various approaches to standardization topics can be seen as arising from this dichotomy. While the ideal of continuing to build an identity as Hmong is near-universal in the community, differences of opinion focus largely on what is and is not definable as 'Hmong'. Three broad positions can be identified:

(i) At the progressivist end of the scale, approaches imply the adaptation of Hmong towards other language/cultures

(ii) A compromise position advocates incorporating external resources from within an essentially Hmong base

(iii) At the conservatist end of the scale, approaches emphasise uniquely Hmong language/culture.

Below I investigate each of these positions in regard to recent developments in the areas of script, lexical elaboration, and dictionaries.
5.2 The discourses

(i) Adaptation

It is important to many that Hmong should have its own unique writing system, but for some, accepting the Roman script base of the (new) dominant culture is unproblematic. This position views Hmong identity as unthreatened by adaptation to another, even a dominant, culture.

Progressivist proposals for lexical elaboration view borrowing as a useful means to the goal of maintaining the Hmong language in all semantic arenas. Under what conditions can a word from another language be considered to be Hmong? In Hmong LG discussions of days of the week, some list the Lao loanwords, since they are representative of Hmong language in use. A range of approaches to English loans were discussed in §4.4.1.2, from Pao Saykao's statement 'Computer...is "computer" in Hmong!' through transliteration to affixing of a Hmong preword.

Most of the dictionaries discussed in §4.6.3 are designed to support full participation of the Hmong in the cultures of immigration. Some are overtly designed to assist Hmong people in interactions with English speakers. It is interesting that the only specialist dictionary to appear to date is an anatomical one—detailed and providing many diagrammatic illustrations. The authority of the Western medical model in America and Australia has been of major concern to many ex-refugee Hmong and a prominent topic of publications (see for instance Fadiman 1997; Lee G.Y. 1984 [1986]), especially with the advent of Sudden Adult Death Syndrome (see §2.2.1.3). The publication of this dictionary symbolically bridges the gap between Hmong and Western approaches to health care. Again, it facilitates a shift of Hmong self concept to incorporate participation in a prominent Western discourse.

(ii) Incorporation

For some, whichever script they commonly use, the ᵃⁿ ṡᵃʳ Phaj hauj has an edge over the RPA in that it 'is Hmong'. From this moderate stance, what is primarily meant by this is that the ᵃⁿ ṡᵃʳ Phaj hauj has a unique script base and originated with a Hmong person. This position promotes a stronger delineation between Hmong and Other than full acceptance of a foreign script, based on patrilineal descent. However, within this position it is still feasible to develop the script towards norms of Western literacy, such as revising the V4C syllable ordering convention.

An approach of welcoming change and renegotiation of identity carries the concomitant risk of assimilation. It is on these grounds that resistance is in evidence to excessive intrusion of loanwords from English. For some, it is important to ensure that the Hmong language, and by

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5 See also the phrase book Thao (1981).
5. The back of the work

e xtension the people, do not become lost in a dominant, non-Hmong world. This latter is a
conservative position, not in the sense of wishing to preserve former ways of being, but again,
in the sense of conserving an identifiable boundary between Hmong and Other.

To this end, however, some see no conflict between having 'identifiably Hmong' words and
utilising the resources of other languages/cultures. Txoovtuam\textsuperscript{a} offers introduces his calqued
proposal:

\begin{quote}
Let's stick with westerner ideas of naming days of week and see if we can come up
with ours.
\end{quote}

\textit{Hmong LG: mid 1997}

Other proposals made by Txoovtuam\textsuperscript{a} could be seen as cultural calques:

\begin{quote}
I selected those terms base[d] on the Bible, God create[d] the universe in 7 days. He
began the first day and finished on the fifth day then rested on the weekend. Another
idea is the average human daily life pretty much follow[s] those terms.
\end{quote}

\textit{Txoovtuam\textsuperscript{a}, ibid}

Both these ideas were subject to criticism in Hmong LG. Some objected to the use of an
introduced religious base:

\begin{quote}
I think it's not a good idea to use the Bible in making up words for "days of the week" to
the Hmong language.
\end{quote}

\textit{Yeob Vaj\textsuperscript{a}, ibid}

Some were ambivalent about the implied universality of a foreign work pattern:

\begin{quote}
This idea is interesting and may work well for most of us in the western world. The down
side to this is that people in the old country may or may not adhere to this life style yet; to
them, no rest until work is completed.
\end{quote}

\textit{Tomas Muas, ibid}

The development of bilingual dictionaries supports the perpetuation of the Hmong language in
the west at the same time as facilitating transfer between Hmong and English (or French). Since
children educated in America or Australia spend many of their waking hours in an English-
speaking environment, one possible use of a bilingual dictionary is as a translation reference to
enable the maintenance of a full range of expression in the heritage language, particularly since
the first generation growing up here are acquiring many terms and concepts not readily
accessible to their parents. This is not to suggest that a dictionary has the potential to stem the
tide of language shift, but only to note that its availability allows such bilingual young people to find Hmong forms of expression for the English terms they encounter.

(iii) Uniquely Hmong

The shift away from 😁 Mab Suav ‘non-Hmong’ being the main language workers reproduces the national character as independent, motivated, self-sufficient—a reputation long developed in Hmong tradition, as evidenced by proverbs such as that prefaced to this thesis:

ไหว่ ข่ม นิ่ม

Hmoob tshuaj, Hmoob rhaub

(It’s Hmong medicine—let Hmong prepare it)

This reputation had been developing also in the west as a result of American experience with Hmong as fighters in Laos (but see Lee M.N.M. 1998 for an argument against this image).

For the HLI, it is crucial that Hmong writing reflect not only Hmong lineage, but also the religious tradition from which the 😁 Phaj hauj is sourced. This position requires a definition of Hmong that relies on the maintenance of common cultural history in a form perceived as original. It is an orthodox position, that does not allow for adaptation of the script outside of its originating framework of inspired knowledge.

The use of the 😁 Phaj hauj is viewed in general as a reflection of cultural heritage—that is, as a conservative tool. For some, this is the model of Hmong culture needed by young Hmong in the west, to maintain their sense of community identity. Others feel that the script constitutes too blatant a push for the knowledges and practices of the older ways and is likely to alienate the young people: it is better that Hmong identity become, for example, Hmong American or Hmong Australian identity.

Several contributors to the Hmong LG forum on days of the week exhibit a more thoroughgoing desire for a set of terms identifiable as Hmong. Some expressed a preference for the word zwj 😁 rather than (h)nubú as the classifying preword for days of the week, on the grounds that this is the authentic Hmong term for ‘day’. This is also the choice of the HLI. In contrast to the

6Literally ‘Hmong medicine, Hmong boil’, referring to the process of preparing opium as a remedy. The implication is that Hmong prefer to keep their business internal to the community.

7Its proposal in Hmong LG is accredited to the 😁 Caub Fab (see §4.4.1.1)
5. The back of the work

proposal of *Txoovtuan* for calques mentioned above, Tom Hang asserts the uniqueness of the Hmong language in the introduction to his newly-coined set:

What I do is I try to stay away from the original [ie English morphology] meaning for the days of the week because they just don't make much sense in our language.

_Hmong LG: mid 1998_

Loanwords transparent to the HLIA committee are not accepted as Hmong in HLIA work, Lao words in particular being targeted for purification. According to my primary consultants, Lao terms are only used because ‘people don’t know the Hmong words.’ In the case of younger people, the substitutions are not Lao but English, but this is evidently seen within the HLIA as code-switching rather than borrowing, since there is no suggestion in this group that these English terms might function as Hmong. While above I suggested that the cautious treatment of English loans reflected resistance to assimilation, the official rejection of Lao words has different symbolism. In Australia, there is no threat of assimilation into Lao language and culture. Rather, this form of purification reflects a pre-refugee sense of oppression or restriction on the free expression of Hmong nationhood. The dictionary being produced, free from words recognisable as Lao, symbolises the possibility of this free expression.

A monolingual dictionary such as that of the HLI (California) images the Hmong language as independently valid, as well as holding greater potential for advanced L1 language study.

Now that the Melbourne HLI agenda is beginning to diverge independently of that of the other branches, the core members are coming to see their work primarily as preserving elements of Hmong culture and spirituality for a not-too-distant future return to the teachings of leaders authorised in the tradition of *taw Yaj Soob Lwj, sēm* by *Paj Cal* and others before them. In this way, current language work is very directly targeted to perpetuation of earlier conceptualised Hmong beliefs and practices.

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8 _Nom Suav* (p.c.)

9 Sometimes this kind of conservatism is referred to by the term *nativistor nativistic*. While these are potentially useful terms, encapsulating a range of things already established as an object of discourse, I find that *native* and its derivatives are too firmly associated with images of primitive, areligious, preliterate, savage people to be able to fully reclaim in reference to any real cultures.
5.2 The discourses

Common political past

Hmong standardisation constructs the Hmong as a people extending through not only space but also through time. The most prevalent form of this is a frequent appeal to parent varieties of the language for decision about the standard form of a word or phoneme. Sometimes a crosslinguistic comparative principle is employed:

One has to be the original word, the other is mispronounced. If we could find out we could standardise the writing and let the pronunciation be what the group want. Here is my opinion about the yaj and yaaj. I think the original word is yaaj, if you compare with Chinese word Yang or Korean Young...

Txoovtuam mví, Hmong LG: November 1996

The point of the reference to these possible cognates is that the MNts reflex yaaj is nasalised, with a word-final velar nasal, as in the cross-linguistic examples.

Sometimes argumentation is made on the basis of reconstructive methods. The aim of Lee's work on developing a standard orthography on the basis of a common past (see §4.2.2) is to defuse the tension between dialect groups, each with a stake in which set of sounds will be directly represented in the standard writing.

Whether correctness or a political solution is the aim, recourse to historical argumentation implies that descent and common origins are part of what it is to be Hmong. Difference in the present is not a problem for membership in the imaged nation as long as it can be traced back through a common history to a point of concurrence.

Reference to a common Hmong historical literary tradition in the form of the 蹁 舶 dab neeg (see §2.2.3.1) is enlisted to support standardization agendas, as I have touched on. The expectation of lands is strongly tied to this tradition; while proponents of both RPA and ëm ñîr Phaj hauj represent their respective scripts as a realisation of the promise of Hmong writing held in this history (see §4.3.3).

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10 Notice that Txoovtuam mví, Hmong is clearly concerned with standardization of writing on the basis of historical reconstruction supported by the parallel development of other reflexes; he is not advocating a return to a reconstructed pronunciation of Hmong.
Language standardization is linked through language maintenance with culture maintenance. This is because the standardization process includes the production of tools such as dictionaries, phrase lists, even primers. Elements of the language seen as passing on elements defining or otherwise important to Hmong culture are recorded in such publications, which thereby take on a role as tools of culture maintenance. For instance, terms connected with marriage conventions can be found in the dictionaries, such as the roles of various relatives of the marrying couple, and naming terms for children which indicate their age bracket and family position.

Establishing an orthographic variety and a set of ratified lexical forms in the first place is often seen as a necessary precursor to the production of printed materials. In this way, processes of lexical and orthographic development also become in themselves tools of culture maintenance.

Linguistic artefacts particularly endowed with a role of culture maintenance include not only historical texts, as mentioned above, but also more recent histories, of the war triggering the refugee period for instance; biographies of important figures; ritual texts such as for funerals. All these types of text have begun to appear in published form in America and Australia in the post-refugee period. This corpus development is an important means of establishing Hmong as a written language. It extends also to genres which serve to maintain Hmong culture in the sense of a present and continuing social connection and information exchange: newspapers, journals, and collaborative editions of original writings.

People working in lexical development are concerned that choices recognise the older Hmong culture and religious practices:
5.2 The discourses

*Cov hnuv hauy limplam yuav tsum tsis cais peb Hmoob cov coj kevcai qub thiab cov kevcai tshiab.*

*We do not want to offend anyone who seem coj kevcai qub thiab 'ho coj kevcai ntuj lawm (still practices the traditions of the ancients and of the sky').

There is no separation between the Hmong who practice either animism or Christianity.

*Kia Moua Yang, Hmong LG: mid 1997*

Although many Hmong have become established in Christianity, this comment is representative of a widespread acknowledgment of the traditional Hmong way and respect for its continued practice in the west. In the interests of inclusivity, lexicon and other matters are frequently assessed for their potential rejection by practitioners. It is noteworthy, however, that adherents of other religions are not subject to this kind of concern. This attitude then foregrounds traditional religion as part of the general conception of Hmong identity.

**Common political present and future**

The concern to develop academies, institutions or committees for authorised and executive decision-making constructs Hmong nationhood through common administrative structures. Similarly to the need to compensate for the absence of lands in construction of a national body,

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11 *Animism* is the usual English term used. The set of practices referred to, however, does not emphasise an inhabitation of spirits in elements of the natural world. It includes acknowledgment of otherworld spirits, ancestors and gods who are active in human life and open to persuasion and communication through various kinds of human channels including prophets and *txiv neeb*. It encompasses explanations of origins of the world, specific natural features, and human life cycles found in the *9IQ BU dab neeg* representing in mythic form rules of survival, health and procreation.

12 This sentence is Yang's free translation of the first.

13 However, according to Lee G.Y. (1996), Hmong Christians are finding that, not feeling fully accepted into mainstream Christian churches, they need to form specifically Hmong Christian organisations. The conversion to Christianity, then, is not effecting a dissolution of Hmong communal identity (but see §5.2.3.1).
The back of the work

the absence of political nationhood makes the institutions proposed just as important as the functions they are intended to carry out. These structures are sometimes found promoted as contributing to the goal of equality with other nations (see quote below). Citing the precedence of institutions in other nations and international groups, such as the Academie Français and the ASCII consortium, is at once an acceptance of, a move to be included in, and a perpetuation of prominent recognised systems of formal legitimation on a world community level. So nationhood is assessable on both internal and external criteria. This implies not only an interest in pre-existent models of what identifies a nation, but also some degree of investment in the evaluation of the Hmong as a nation by outsiders. It is not enough for the Hmong to see themselves as a nation; their nationhood must be recognised by others. The HLIA working group, for example, has long been seeking official recognition in Australia of their language and script—although the prevailing multicultural policy means that not only is such recognition unnecessary, for the licensing of activities such as language education classes, but a system for attaining it does not even exist, beyond a certificate of accreditation for translators and interpreters.

Again, the drive for these community structures constructs a pan-Hmong nationhood, aiming to represent and serve Hmong across boundaries of country, dialect, education, financial status etc. Wide participation is sought: on standardization committees, at international conferences, in internet discussion networks. Strong advocacy is encountered for equal recognition of MNts—even, in some cases, with the threat of boycotting planning and standardization efforts if this need is not acknowledged—but at the present time at least, the work on standard dialect selection/development is undertaken by speakers of both dialects. The limits to this principle of a pan-Hmong political body are reached at the point of inclusion of Asian resident Hmong, whose access to international mobility and internet participation are greatly restricted. (It will be noticed, however, that some attempts are nonetheless made to represent the interests of those in Asia.)

In 4.5.5.2 I referred to an open letter by Tswv Xyooj JIK Da which argues for a Hmong language standards institute. In this letter, Xyooj Jó addresses directly the role of such an organisation in creating nation. Below I quote the letter at length:

...we may not have to have Ib lub teb chaws (Ij., "one country") in order to make it happen. Many professional organizations throughout the world all went through the same exact obstacles that we are going to go through. For instance, many professional societies such as the "C" and "C++" programming language users forums, the IEEE organizations, the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII), etc., all were able to form consortium groups... I agree that the Hmong language is not like a programming language and it is not
The discourses

5.2 The discourses

like a standard but there are some similarities in terms of human beings coming together from all corners of the world to work on a problem.

The nature of our problem is somewhat similar to their problems in that they don't need a country to enforce the usage of a particular language and/or standard. All they did was to justify a change or a new idea in front of everyone else in such a way that the idea can benefit the MAJORITY of the intended users. With the same analogy, I wonder if we can use the same techniques, as these professional societies have done, to set standards and to encourage the adherence to those standards by ways of examples, published materials, books, etc., and to continue to work together as a team with the general population...

If we keep waiting for the right moment, I'm wondering if there will ever be a forthcoming right moment. The question I'd to ask everyone on this forum is: Should we wait and see or should we be proactive now—while the amount of distinct usage is still small?

Hmong LG: early 1998

Bõi Xyooj's letter brings up several possible features of a global Hmong standards organization:

(i) It is based on the commonality of people's needs rather than a commonality of geography
(ii) It relies on a concept of the Hmong nation that is available in the present
(iii) It is based on principles of consultation and public forum
(iv) It targets a majority, rather than needing to validate the directions of each subgroup that arises
(v) It aims to address the increasing differentiation between usages
(vi) It has the capacity to facilitate production of published tools of standardization
(vii) A model is available
(viii) The model demonstrates that the principles have been workable in other settings.

Points (iv) and (v) show, I think, where the weak point lies in a plan for an Academy. While such an institution might aim to forestall increasing differentiation between usages, the reality is that targeting a majority is all that reasonably lies within its power. This leads to the question: who constitutes this 'majority', and how is this determined? Might it in the end turn out to mean majority in the sense of dominant group? Note the opinion of some HmD speakers that MNts speakers should write 'like the majority' (anon, Hmong LG: 1998—see §4.2.1.1). This is potentially a development of Hmong nationhood that is in itself standardized. For Bõi Xyooj, this
5. The back of the work

means acknowledging the increasing differentiation between usages, and at the same time the practical impossibility of adequately representing the interests of every subgroup that arises. To propose addressing these things by targeting standards development to a centrally defined group is a statement of the very nature of standardisation. Standardisation is a process which creates and/or reinforces distinctions between central and marginal. Those who fall outside of the central image of members of the nation can make the necessary efforts to conform to the standard, or can gradually allow their variety to diverge. Either way, the tendency is for marginal persons and groups to become stigmatised and less adequately resourced.

Bāi Xyooj’s letter affirms current political unity in its imperative to live in the present, rather than waiting for some future ideal situation in which to live as Hmong, and thereby risking loss of Hmong cohesion, community and identity in the waiting.

On a rather different level, a common political future is affirmed in the symbolism of a single and clear path to the future which forms part of the design of HLIA graphemes (see §4.3.1.4).

5.2.1.2 Alternative positions

The arguments presented for the use of English or international terminology in the area of technology (see Table 4.28) show that for some it is more important that these terms be comprehensible to the Hmong in the west, than that remote Hmong communities in Southeast Asia continue to be included in change processes in the lexicon.

Most of the above describes a relation of reciprocal support, reproduction and development between standardisation and nationism in this local context. Development of a standard spoken and written language are held up as a means to the future cohesion and recognition of the nation; while at the same time the historical heritage of the nation functions as a resource for the standardisation movement. It remains to see what aspects of the standardisation process are counterposed to this narrative; and conversely, what aspects of nationism engender counter-identification with standardisation. The clearest occurrences of this are to be found in the discourses on dialect and the formation of subgroups centred on script choice.

One of the implications of standardisation, as the discussion of Tswv Xyooj’s (Bāi Xyooj) letter shows, is that minority categories emerge within the Hmong minority. Difference within the community is of course not a new phenomenon, but the current unprecedented level of overt standardisation highlights difference and increases its significance as a value of identification. The course of language work in the ex-refugee period to date suggests that ‘minorities’, defined in terms such as dialect and script, may increasingly separate out from the newly-defined mainstream language community.
Recall the resentment expressed by some MNts speakers at the unthinking dominance practised by some HmD speakers:

You probably think that all Hmong Daw, Mong Leng and other Hmong/Mong are Hmong. However, that's not the case. When someone is Hmong or Mong by birth, you cannot deny his/her right to his/her basic human rights.

—*Anon, Hmong LG: n.d.*

Most of the comments by MNts speakers quoted in §4.2 are focused on insisting on inclusion in a standardisation process. But default use of HmD as the standard language variety, orthographic development which does not adequately represent MNts speakers, and careless employment of naming terms (including the spelling of H/Mong) for H/Mong people all risk triggering a major defection of sections of the immigrant Hmong populace. Although it is not uncommon for Hmong to agree to go their separate ways, sometimes on a fairly large scale, in this case it would be a direct effect of the standardisation process.

There is in Hmong a flexible concept of ethnic identity called *ví* *háu*. According to my primary consultants, the *ví* *háu* can refer to any level of identification. They give as an example some possible meanings of *ví* *háu* in relation to an aboriginal person of Victoria, Australia: it could be their language group, their ‘skin’ or section, all Kooris, all aboriginals, or even all Australians.

For the Hmong, then, identification with a *ví* *háu* at the level of dialect group is an alternative construction of nation that runs counter to the commonly espoused ideal of one-nation.

The formal division of the Hmong-speaking community along the lines of script choice also runs counter to the image of one-nation. Standardization organisations based in RPA or in *ék* *ť* *Phaj háu*j for the most part work without inter-consultation. Unlike the threat of a dialect-based split, this two-path co-existence does not appear to have even begun with an attempt to work together. Although a commonly practised community value of tolerance for individual choice theoretically allows for a person to work with whatever and whomever they choose, in practice it seems that, with a few notable exceptions (for instance Jay Kue—see §4.3.1.3), people take on

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14 The term *Koori* denotes aboriginal people from the south east region of Australia.

15 It is possible that this was a phase passed through in Asia in the earlier stages of establishment of both scripts; but given the strong association in that time of the *ék* *ť* *Phaj háu*j with a particular faction of guerilla fighters, followed by a prominent and focussed temple and school subculture at Ban Vinai refugee camp, it seems to me unlikely that conditions would have allowed for much time for such a phase.
5. The back of the work

a complete package of script and working group in the standardisation effort. This means that the restrictions on communicative and literary exchange, the differences developing in areas such as lexical development, and the consequent likelihood of gradual divergence in language usage between users of the two different scripts, are effectively ignored in language planning discussions and policy formation.

At the same time, noone is actually barred from participation in the processes of either subgroup. The division is comprised of practice rather than ruling. Recently a young man by the name of Xiong Chang visited the HLIA community who in some senses might be considered quite outgroup: he is from a different state, of a different generation to the core members of the group, his dialect of identification (though not of greater competency) is MNts, and he can read and write only in RPA. But by dint of his familial relationship to core members and the fact that he was interested in participating, he joined in freely with some five or six sessions of dictionary proofing. The inclusion of Chang did not, however, extend the working group's agenda to ideas outside of their mandate. For instance, his occasional inclusion of Lao loans in proposed sample sentences were summarily rejected at each occurrence.

In view of the fact that the HLI are the minority in relation to RPA reader/writers, the naming of the major Hmoob Phajhauj organisation as simply the Hmoob Las tees 'Hmong Language Institute' indicates a disidentification strategy. In other words, the minority group is neither being swept along with majority practices, nor arguing for their own position to be recognised, but simply going about their business as if there were no dominant practice threatening the scope of their own. The connotation of this choice of title for the organisation is that HLI language work is identified with Hmong language work per se. This strategy is carried through in other terms which characterise ingroup and outgroup. Hmoob Phajhauj 'Hmong Pahawh' is opposed to Hmoob Las tees 'Hmong Latin' (RPA), referring to the respective scripts and, by extension, their users. This sets firm boundaries between the HLI and other Hmong groups, and prioritises script of allegiance over national identity in the area of language and literacy. Sometimes the HLIA community is referred to as simply 'our families', designating everyone outside this group as Other. The Hmong as a nation is referred to (as Hmoob koomhaum txha moj kuab txuici).

16 The occasional active expression of interest in Hmoob Phajhauj by non-HLI (see for instance Hmong Tribune 1998-) does not affect the directions of the HLI, and hence the central usage and dissemination of this script, although it does constitute a contribution to information dissemination.

17 Hmoob koomhaum txha moj kuab txuici.
5.2 The discourses

Similarly, the use of unmarked terms meaning ‘writing’ or ‘language’ (מֵעֲרִית הַמַּעֲרִית הַמַּעֲרִית הַמַּעֲרִית הַמַּעֲרִית הַמַּעֲרִית הַמַּעֲרִית הַמַּעֲרִית Hmoob, והַמַּעֲרִית Hmoob) to refer exclusively to מֵעֲרִית Hmoob implies that these are the only, or the default forms of writing for Hmong; and that HLI work is authoritative for Hmong language issues in general. Although the same assumptions are made by RPA users, it is a very different thing for a marginalised group to simply position themselves as central or standard in this way.

5.2.1.3 Conclusions

The framework established in Wodak et al (1998 [1999]) is useful insofar as it offers a coherent way of relating a multiplicity of statements, attitudes and activities. Its limits lie in that it views national identity construction only on an internal basis. It has been demonstrated above, however, that this construction also relies on the construction of opposition with non-nation, the מֵעֲרִית מֵעֲרִית מֵעֲרִית מֵעֲרִית מֵעֲרִית מֵעֲרִית מֵעֲרִית MabSaav 'non-Hmong', the Other; hence, for instance, the caution regarding excessive loanword acquisition from English, and attempts to eradicate the loanwords from Lao. Furthermore, Hmong nationhood at many points views itself from the outside, assessing its status in comparison with the features and status of other nations—script, books of religion, lands—and at times requiring recognition by outsiders, for instance, in the repeated public rejections of the term Miao for the Hmong people (see Lee M.N.M. 1998).

In this section I have explored the connections formed between the construction of nationhood and aspects of standardisation. The theme or theory (in Foucault’s sense) of national language and script is centrally located. The nationist discourse produces dialect and script differences as a site of struggle, giving rise to the requirement that an individual or group must decide whether script or dialect, or nation is to direct procedures. The discourse maintains focus on the dispersed living situation of the Hmong people as a motivation for developing a standard, and highlights the differences between Laotian and western Hmong cultural surroundings and practices as considerations in production of dictionaries and other publications, lexical development and the establishment of institutions such as standards organisations.

5.2.2 Scientist discourse

I move on now to the scientist discourse, in search of further means of addressing the same questions: How are the forms of knowledge, the systems and the practices legitimatated in the scientist discourse directing the standardisation processes of the Hmong people? How are these processes supporting, extending and renegotiating the prevailing form of the discourse?
5. The back of the work

In §3.3.3.1 I discussed several features of the scientist discourse, as it has emerged and developed in the general community as well as in the community of practitioners, drawing on Lyotard (1979 [1984]). To review, the scientist discourse:

(i) defines the kinds of questions legitimated within the discourse

(ii) sets in place systems of authorisation of knowledges

(iii) determines the accreditation of methodologies

(iv) gives rise to statements, that is, formulated representations of knowledge, coherent within the discourse.

5.2.2.1 Effects of the scientist discourse in Hmong standardisation

Questions legitimated

The importance of script as a legitimation symbol within the nationist discourse has been discussed. Within the scientist discourse features such as the phonemic orientation of both RPA and á không Phaj hauj—the preferred basis for orthography development in scientist terms—come to the fore. Part of the argumentation around choice of script and development of orthography among HLI members and RPA users alike focuses on just this: preference for a more direct representation of the phoneme unit. Again, a variety of positions can be argued for within the same discourse; and the range of positions that emerge contribute to shaping the particular configuration in which the discourse is reproduced:

(i) The accuracy of the RPA in scientist terms relates to its essentially featural base (see §4.3.2). Among its proponents, further development is championed by some: in particular, a reduction of the number of graphemes required by the featural system to represent phonemes. In this case, a system which is already legitimated in scientist terms may still be developed within the discourse: retaining emphasis on distinctiveness while moving away from featural representation, in the interests of improved representation of the phoneme as a unit (see also §5.2.4.2).

(ii) The á không Phaj hauj, as a system which is not central to the trend for new orthographies because of its unique script base, provides an alternative way of thinking about ideal representation in a popular orthography. It focuses attention, not on component sounds or
articulations, but on equating a single phoneme with a single grapheme unit. Reflection of phonemic structure is a point which Phaj hauj proponents use to promote their chosen script in terms of the scientist discourse.

(iii) Some of the objections raised to the Phaj hauj system as currently used are situated within the scientist discourse. These objections include the limited regularisation of the diacritic system and the discrepancy between spoken and written order of articulation. For this script too, responses have included that the system can be developed in accordance with these scientist requirements. The response of the HLI however, has been to privilege the requirements of the religious discourse over those of the scientist: the script as received through leaders authorised within this discourse is thereby constituted as the optimal form (see §5.2.3).

Discussion of lexical issues in the RPA standardisation forums makes frequent reference to the forms of knowledge legitimated in science. Linguistic analysis offers the possibility of developing a systematic method of categorising polysyllabic forms and compounds, prior to forming standardisation policy as to word boundaries. The identification of some unanalysable polysyllabics as loanwords borrowed intact is offered as a solution to those puzzling over the possible meaning of words like sjijawm ('repeatedly + pay.respect') 'time, occasion' (borrowed intact from Chinese). Word classes or parts of speech have not received a great deal of attention in the general Hmong community. That this question does appear from time to time is possible because of its prior existence as an object of discourse within scientism. Analysing the word classes of a language is one of the landmark procedures required for the grammar of a language to have been covered to an adequate level. It is also an element standardly included in dictionary entries. The relatively low profile of this aspect of grammar may be related to its level of abstraction and therefore low salience to nonspecialist participants in discussion; preemptive statements of apology by contributors indicate that it is considered too technical or 'too hard' to deal with, either at the present stage in the standardisation process, or by the general community at all.

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18 That is, any one phoneme is notated by a single unit (basic grapheme plus diacritic). I do not mean to imply that there is any principle of biuniqueness—every element of the script is re-used several times.

5. The back of the work

Authorisation of knowledges

The comment on word classes above intimates that certain areas of language research are considered the domain of those accredited within the scientist discourse. Hedges such as 'I'm no linguist...' appear not infrequently in Hmong LG discussions. However, in the first place, such hedges often precede extensive discussion of a particular linguistic point, and in the second place the response to research which is accredited within the discourse, such as Lee's historical reconstructions (see 4.2.2), is not always one of deference. This shows that such hedges do not reflect uncertainty about the validity of the contribution, but rather an awareness that the contributor is required within this discourse to demonstrate their authority to make it.

The most prominent of Hmong individuals ascribed authority in the terms of the scientist discourse is Yang Dao (see §4.6.3), as the first Hmong person to gain a doctoral degree. Together with General Vang Pao, Yang is a figurehead of authority for ex-refugee Hmong; and often at least nominally referred to in broad-scale community decisions. Consequently, his public behaviour is under constant scrutiny within the Hmong community. The discovery of an occasional ill-advised or unpopular public statement gives rise to heated discussions as to his continued suitability as a model and spokesperson for Hmong people. What this shows as much as anything is how important Yang is as a figurehead and community representative. His high position in America and also Australia arises entirely from his standing as a Hmong person legitimated in the scientist discourse.

Other Hmong accredited as scholars are also becoming known and respected among the Hmong. In Australia, these include Pao Saykao, medical doctor, and anthropologist Gary Yia Lee. Such people not only receive due recognition in the context of their fields; they also attain prominence in the general Hmong community. Pao Saykao is a well-known leader in several community organisations, while Lee's work is widely read by a lay audience. This tendency is widespread outside of the Hmong community as well: it is only particularly noticeable here because of the relative recency of Hmong access to western higher education, and the early stage of establishment of Hmong sources of authority within parameters recognised in central western discourses. In the context of standardisation, what this means is that these are among

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21General Vang Pao has a similar status as the leader of the Hmong guerilla army during the war in Laos. Most of the following comments apply equally to both.
the people whose comments and published sources are prominent in directing policies and decisions.

An academy such as proposed by Tswv Xyooj-ñi Bíi (see §5.2.1.1), in establishing an agreed-on community of experts as administrators of acceptability in the language, constitutes a gate of entry to recognition of Hmong language planning in the terms of the scientist discourse. The activities of such an institution would then provide a point of validation for specific language planning efforts—a spelling system, a list of new words, a literacy education manual. This too is the kind of validation recognised within this discourse—acceptance or rejection of language artefacts on the basis of formalised criteria of accreditation. Both these levels of legitimisation are vital both within the community and for the purposes of external recognition, precisely because of the pervasiveness of the scientist discourse and its requirements of authorisation.

Language standardisation as an object of the scientist discourse is situated firmly within a procedural framework of research, consultancy, publications, and planning of outcomes. This has implications for many aspects of the work: who is selected to work, on what projects; what kinds of roles are available for participants; whose authority is recognised; what activities are supported, over what time frame; what resources are made available; what kinds of evidence of progress are required; what legitimisation criteria are applied to decisions made.

As the HLIA committee have found out, it is much easier to get funding for a graduate student to travel overseas and visit associated groups of Hmong than to finance a Hmong spiritual leader in Thailand with authority to direct language planning efforts to visit working groups in Australia. Around three years ago, a Hmong scholar from Thailand, unconnected with the HLIA, was sponsored by the university to visit my department for six months. This was a visit which fitted easily in the system whereby institutions such as universities are understood to require interaction, consultancy and the benefits of collaborative research with other people approved within the same system. It is less clear how a villager with low formal education and no English, authorised within a discourse other than the scientist, could be catered for within this system.

This anecdote shows how it is not only an appreciation of scientific or scientist forms of knowledge that is at issue, but the way in which that appreciation is connected with systems of support and is thereby empowered to limit certain avenues of progress and (re)produce others. Here the societal structures of western education and institutional funding support their own definitions of research and researchers, and thereby actualise western scientist ideas of what is useful to a project.

In §5.3.2 I discuss in detail the authority systems pertaining to the local dictionary project, including but by no means restricted to those of the scientist discourse.
5. The back of the work

Methodologies

In the intermittently occurring questions raised by points of different pronunciation or spelling of the two main dialects of Hmong, the scientist discourse provides the resource of historical reconstruction. Again, recourse to the authority of historical development or comparative reconstruction is only possible because of its prior existence as a method within the scientist discourse. A considered historical assessment of the prior form of a word has status as an accredited rational, researched contribution to debates over standard forms. Within this discourse, these qualities validate such contributions, in opposition to, for example, emotive responses based on individual experience of identity, which draw typically on forms of the nationist discourse. In this way the scientist discourse accredits some modes of thought, while disregarding others.

The scientist discourse interacts with the technological in that computers are currently the approved medium within the scientist discourse for data storage, publication and research activities. These kinds of legitimation are often emphasised by non-Hmong assistants like myself, in the projects and methods we accept within this discourse. The trialled hypertext dictionary mentioned in §4.7.1 is a case in point. In the university context the dictionary seemed an obvious and exciting idea. In the community at present it has little use, since the school has no computers and fluent readers of ñê Phaj hauj are also low users of computers (see §3.3.6.2 for general discussion of this issue).

ñê Yaj Lis of the HLIA has long ago handwritten several books full of Hmong words—one per line, ready to use as dictionary entries. We are now copying those words gradually into a dictionary database. The mountains of linguistic information which also go into that database are mostly written up on a whiteboard (by Hmong speakers) and discussed, before being copied in longhand, and later entered on computer (by myself). Why are we working in this way? Evidently not for reasons of speed, or convenience, or egalitarian ideals. The final photocopied edition could be produced from handwritten originals just as well as from laser printer originals. But a dictionary produced from handwritten pages would not be accepted as professional, from either Hmong community or academic perspectives. Nor would it be convincing as thoroughly worked and checked, even though all checking is done via whiteboard and paper. It is essential to print the dictionary from an electronic medium for its maximal accreditation within the scientist discourse, according to the tools and methods it authorises.
5.2 The discourses

Statements

Formulations of knowledge accredited within the scientist discourse include publications, reference tools such as dictionaries, research legitimated by certification or association with a recognised institute of scientism, scientistic organisations such as an academy.

Concrete entities of legitimation have been noted to be of symbolic importance to minority language groups, in particular where the language is endangered or minimally used—although I would suggest that, like the recognition of indigenous scholars as noted above, this stands in relief in these communities only because of the relative recency and sparseness of such symbols. Speakers of dominant languages also make frequent reference to a body of literature as evidence that their language is of high worth; to written conventions as carriers of a historical legacy; to a dictionary as an object of authority in the household.

The high priority accorded in the HLIA to developing a dictionary arises in part from the scientist discourse. A dictionary has a role in discourses of nationism and literacy, as a tool of language preservation and maintenance; but to select as a representation of these discourses such an established icon of linguistic authority surely arises from legitimation concerns more closely bound to scientism. Moreover, a conventional dictionary is what is required by the discourse: even as a representative of a western accredited institution of scientism, my intermittent excursions into alternative ideas—such as organisation by semantic field, HTML publication, diagrammatic representations etc—have been received positively but not as central to the dictionary project. To function fully as an icon of legitimation, the dictionary must be a typical example of its genre.

Similarly, the monolingual dictionary being developed in the California branch is conventionally organised and formatted. In the California dictionary, however, the approach to definitions is different to that of central linguistics tradition. Many are based on comparative or encyclopedic description rather than synonymous equivalences; and numbered divisions of an entry do not always indicate different senses, but simply additional units of information:
5. The back of the work

**Ex 5.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chữ</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ック (ntseeb)</td>
<td>Wasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ック (ntseeb dag)</td>
<td>(smaller than a bee; striped)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ック ใ๋</td>
<td>Yellow wasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ック ใ๋ (ntseeb dag)</td>
<td>(large with no stripes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wasp

1. A kind of insect that has wings and can fly and makes a nest under a leaf. It has a sting.
2. A kind of insect with many varieties, like the fin. フィア, フィア, フィア nkwj, slav, daiv and mos seej.
3. There are many kinds of wasp, such as the 'Black Wasp', 'Yellow Wasp', ック ใ๋ (ntseeb qau nees).

_Hmong Language Institute (in press)²⁴_

That definitions in the HLIA dictionary are treated in a manner more central to the scientist tradition probably reflects the more overt representation of the scientist discourse in the form of my involvement. That is, once the conventional genre of the dictionary project was established, it is up to me to establish the style of the entries, in accordance with standard lexicography practices with which I am familiar, such as separating terms with different referents into different entries or subentries, and reserving numbering for different senses of the same entry:

**Ex 5.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chữ</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ック</td>
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<td>ック (ntseeb)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ック ใ๋</td>
<td>Yellow wasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ック ใ๋ (ntseeb dag)</td>
<td>(large with no stripes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_HLIA and Eira (to appear)_

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²² Misprint in draft dictionary reads フィア ntxawj.

²³ Ntseeb (feem) 1. ヨン ib yam kab muaj tis bawj ya, ua nas dai tej qab nplooj, muaj ple plev. 2. ib yam kab muaj moj yam zoo xws niawj, slav, daiv, mos, seej. 3. Ntseeb muaj ntau yam xws li: ntseeb dub, deeb daj, ntseeb qau nees.

²⁴ English not included in original.
5.2 Concluding comments: the scope of linguistics

As discussed in §3.3.3.2, there is a tension within the discipline of linguistics pulling on the one hand towards full support of the scientist discourse, and on the other hand towards activities and principles which require renegotiation of the questions and methods currently accredited by the discourse. Investigating the qualitative, incorporating research questions from outside of the discrete boundaries of the discipline, questioning the status of analytical knowledge over experiential knowledge, revising the kind and level of authority assigned to researcher and consultant, all extend the discipline to the very margins of what is legitimated as scientific. Viewing Hmong standardisation processes from within the scientist discourse allows examination of the objects and statements which emerge in that context. It focuses attention on the discrete elements of language and writing, analytical methods, tools and products of research, the means of verifying a statement or legitimating a practice. The broadest view of linguistics, as a study of language, also encompasses questions and explorations arising from positions beyond and even directly counterposed to this view. In the context of our local project this may mean that symbols of maintaining values of historical importance, of a means of directing the future, of identifying as a nation, or of spiritual teaching, are understood as offering a broader understanding of the nature and function of language, when respected on a par with goals of scientific analysis of semantics, historical development or phonemic representation.

5.2 Religious discourse

Standardisation is situated within the religious discourse through concepts including those identified in §3.3.4.2:

- relations between a particular religion and the language/script in which it is practised
- relations between language authority and religious authority
- otherworld involvement in human language practices
- religious goals of literacy.

In the present case study, this discourse has a prominent role in characterising group membership identification, due to the strength of overt alignment with this discourse by members of the HLI. Other manifestations of the discourse are also evident, so that oppositions both between discourses and internal to the religious discourse are displayed.

5.2.1 The HLI

To be able to glimpse the HLI motivations for much of their standardisation work, it is necessary to stand in a position outside of the skeptical framework central to the scientist discourse, as does Smalley in his personal statement in Smalley et al (1990). A scientist approach could
5. The back of the work

perhaps set out to assess some of the claims on which HLI decisions are based; by setting up
controlled observation, reconsidering the placement of the limits of physical laws—or even, at its
least rigorous, investigating the status of accreditation in the scientist discourse of claimants or
taking statistical evidence into account. Stepping outside of the scientist discourse is necessary
to obtain a clearer view of what is producing the directions which arise within the HLI. It is a move
which can permit understanding of those decisions which override the requirements of
scientism.

All HLI work is produced essentially from within the religious discourse, since the base
motivation even for the group’s existence is the inspired knowledge of a series of spiritual
leaders accredited within this discourse. Communication with deceased or higher beings,
scripts imparted by supernatural means, spiritual lineage between leaders—are all ideas which
already have existence within this discourse. To look to ancient histories/stories for prophetic
interpretation of current events is a normal part of religious practice, as is to continue to
disseminate the teaching of a historical figure long after their death. This is not to say that all of
the history of आय सोब लवज and the adherence to his legacy would be acceptable from
all positions within the religious discourse, any more than a struggle for independence by a
minority nation is applauded from all positions within the nationist. The ethos and practices of
missionary organisations of various allegiances are founded primarily on the internal oppositions
of the religious discourse. Some of these kinds of opposition are effective in other areas of
Hmong standardisation work, as discussed below. But regardless of dissension over specific
manifestations of these conceptual objects, it is within the religious discourse that the objects in
themselves are legitimated.

As in many religiously based social structures involving a major leader, god-figure, or teacher of
some sort, the HLI lean to a hierarchical ordering. Hierarchy is a tendency of such structures as a
strategy to ensure that the principles forming the core belief are transmitted and developed in a
way true to its source. In formal religions with a literary base such as the Koran, Bible, Talmud
etc., the writings function as a central reference point from which to assess orthodoxy. Then,
elaborate systems of accrediting persons to legitimate ideas and practices, as well as
interpretations of the writings, are put in place.

For the HLI, there is no such body of writings. The legitimation system relies instead on
assessment of direct continuity of teaching from the master. This is accredited in two forms:
either by spiritual lineage or by a direct line of discipleship. In the former category are people
who can claim paranormal communication with आय सोब लवज or the same source of
wisdom that guided him, or who are in a spiritual sense descended from him and/or his
5.2 The discourses

In the latter category are those people who studied under ǣ tī tī tī Yaj Soob Lwj and, potentially, their subsequent students. The two forms of accreditation carry different levels of authority. Either form must also be legitimated by the community of adherents. For instance, ǣōī tī Vaj Txiaj Kuam, a prominent direct disciple of ǣōī tī Yaj Soob Lwj (ie second category accreditation) is now considered by the organised ǣōī Phaj hauj community to be teaching from his own wisdom rather than simply disseminating that of the master, and is therefore no longer followed. Innovations introduced by ēū Kūb Yaj however, whose accreditation is of the first category, are followed unquestioningly, by those who have committed to accepting his accreditation at all (which includes core members of the Melbourne branch). This is the distinction between the two orders.

For my purposes, what is interesting about the authority systems of the religious discourse is how they overlap with those of language planning in this case. The two are connected because of the narrative connecting literacy and religion. The primary symbol of the new order introduced with ēū Yaj Soob Lwj is the script. The script both symbolises a new era for the Hmong of itself, and contains within it symbols of specific elements or strategies towards the new era. The bringer of the script and the bringer of spiritual knowledge are one and the same person; and the ongoing guardians/teachers of this newly (re)emerged tradition are responsible at once for language planning and for cultural knowledge and values.

A very far-reaching split in Hmong standardisation work—encompassing the whole range of standardisation choices from script and lexical items, through dissemination media, to word class labels and dialect—is fundamentally produced by the location of the HLI in regard to the religious discourse. Individuals can align themselves with the HLI, accepting the authority sources effecting directions of their branch, which are centrally located within a particular outworking of this discourse. Or they can associate with the majority, working for the most part with RPA. For the HLI, maintaining this boundary requires constant guard, by such means as declining to make use of the wealth of resources provided in RPA, and creating markers of identity such as flags and banners. Since the HLI is the minority group, they must consciously delineate this boundary in order to be distinguishable from the 'mainstream' (if such a term can be applied to a minority group). For people who are located in the mainstream, it is possible to have no opinion about or be unaware of alternatives, and strong identification with the RPA is unnecessary. As observed for speakers of the minority dialect (see §4.2.1.1), the onus is on proponents of the minority script to challenge the status quo. Working in standardisation in RPA

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25 This descent is not genetic, nor really reincarnation, but a reemergence of the same source of wisdom/knowledge in a physical being.
5. The back of the work
does not require any particular overt or conscious stance in relation to the religious discourse—but it is the religious discourse which effects the split between the HLI and the majority.26

Splits are also developing within the HLI—again on grounds aligned with the religious discourse. The proposed name of the Melbourne group—ヤオソブリャエンバーがファンフゥコンバントレーニョンホンモブモズ ウッドン マイケル Hmong Written Language Academy for the Hmong Written Language—focuses strongly on the source of the script. This is readable as a desire to overtly recognise the authority ofヤオソブリャエンバーがファンフゥコンバントレーニョンホンモブモズ ウッドン マイケル by this very orthodox, conservalist group. It also reflects the creation of this splinter group as being grounded in the religious discourse. Just as the split between the HLI and the wider Hmong speech community is primarily a product of differences in relation to the religious discourse, this split internal to the HLI is produced primarily by differences within the religious discourse: namely, levels of orthodoxy, and current authority recognition.

Not surprisingly then, some of the aspects of orthography development which arise from the religious discourse are specific to the HLIA also, forming discursive statements which include:

(i) Notions of origin, essence, source are symbolised and honoured:28

The grapheme <ɔ> is symbolically the first unit, from which all others emerge—just as all of existence emerges from a single point of origin. This is reflected in practical terms in the position of its a kab, its position at the top left of the new HLIA keyboard layout (see Fig. 4.2), and the position of the vowel first in the written word. These recurring positionings of the grapheme unit

26 There are exceptions to this however. Lee G.Y. (1996) notes that the fervour of some streams of Hmong Christianity has ‘driven a large wedge into Hmong society in America’, adherents dissociating from the some other Hmong and their ‘pagan practices’. Since the ファンフゥコンバントレーニョンホンモブモズ Phaj hauj organisations are strongly associated with the practices referred to, they are undoubtedly one of the groups ostracized by this fundamentalist stream.

27 This complex phrase is not readily translatable: an approximate gloss is:

ヤオソブリャエンバーがファンフゥコンバントレーニョンホンモブモズ ウッドン マイケル Hmong Written Language Academy for the Hmong Written Language.

28 This discursive statement and orthography convention holds also for the HLI elsewhere. The use of ファンフゥコンバントレーニョンホンモブモズ Phaj hauj lawj ob ‘Stage Two’ is also standard amongst the HLI. Other statements/conventions are found only within the HLIA.
in the textual world serve to reinforce the importance of acknowledging the source of all things in the internalised conceptual world.\(^{29}\)

(ii) Earlier and thereby more orthodox forms are conserved:

- implementing ‘Stage Two, rather than Stage Three as per Vaj Txiaj Kuar, or even Stage Four
- maintaining representation of seven tones rather than eight, as initiated in the HLI in America (see \(\S\) 4.3.1.1)
- returning to earlier versions of some grapheme forms (see \(\S\) 4.3.1.4).

(iii) Graphemic revisions symbolise clarity, focussed direction, balance, strength—and thereby assist in bringing these values into being for the progress of the Hmong people (see \(\S\) 4.3.1.4):

- eliminating complexities in the grapheme designs
- ensuring symmetry in the grapheme designs.

The publishing emphasis of the HLI also strongly reflects the religious discourse (see \(\S\) 4.5.1.3). The only guides to the Phaj hauj are focussed not on linguistic content, as would be expected within a scientist discourse, or even practical reading assistance, as would be fitting within a literacy discourse, but on the symbolism of the graphemes. Within the HLIA, a new wave of publication currently being planned comprises a body of teaching by the new spiritual leader, \(\ddot{u}\) \(\ddot{a}\)\(\ddot{a}\)\(\ddot{a}\) Kub Yaj.

5.2.3.2 Other formations of the religious discourse

Although the work of the HLIA forms the core of my case study, and the HLI represents the arm of Hmong language standardisation in which the religious discourse is undoubtedly the strongest, the discourse also features in the statements and activities of other working groups, and less formally organised sections of the community, in the form of Christianity. The different realisations of the discourse in the speech community show how discourse is at once realised, reproduced and renegotiated—its form and scope are continually reshaped at each point of its instatement.

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\(^{29}\)In the \(\ddot{a}\)\(\ddot{a}\)\(\ddot{a}\)\(\ddot{a}\) dab neeg, this is represented in one instance by a single gourd from which all the people of the world emerge, and in another instance by a woman who gives birth to the first miraculous generation of children, including the maker of the sky.
5. The back of the work

Christianity as a resource for corpus planning is clearly visible in the suggestion for a days of the week paradigm by Txoovtuamw* RIOT:

I selected those terms base[d] on the Bible, God create[d] the universe in 7 days. He began the first day and finished on the fifth day then rested on the weekend.

_Hmong LG: mid 1997_

These kinds of suggestions also highlight for the community the tension within the discourse:

_Sunday:_ *Nub Hawm*—a day to worship (regardless of religion)

_Tom Hang, Hmong LG: mid 1998_

*Cov hnuv hauv limplam yuav tsum tsis cais peb Hmoob cov coj kevcai qub thiab cov kevcai tshiab._

(duck nam tinh ma nhia tinh logam, Hmoob tinh thiab cov kevcai tshiab.)

We do not want to offend anyone who tseem coj kevcai qub thiab ho coj kevcai ntuj lawm (duck nam thiab tlaaj, kev hauv thiab thiab ho maa nkhau thiab thiab thiab tlaaj, ’still practices the traditions of the ancients and of the sky’).

_There is no separation between the Hmong who practice either animism or Christianity._

_Kia Moua Yang, Hmong LG: mid 1997_

Again, in a way which reflects the urgency of demonstrating that dialect must not break up nationhood (see §5.2.1.1), the fact that overt statements promoting religious inclusivity are considered necessary shows that it is not automatic. That it is conceivable that a set of words could offend people on religious grounds shows the connection which has been forged between language planning and religious belief.

_The initial impetus for the development of the RPA came from a (non-Hmong) Christian missionary affiliation. Like the *Pa Phaj hauv* then, the RPA has its origins in the religious discourse. Certainly missionary and other Christian organisations are not always motivated exclusively by evangelistic goals._30 But the humanitarianism of projects such as literacy establishment and education, expressing the goal of improving the standard of living as well as

30 For instance, William Smalley, as mentioned above, demonstrates a strong and supportive acceptance of Hmong traditional beliefs, including their realisation in the story of *Pa Yaj Soob Lwj._
the spiritual state of fellow humans, ultimately arises from the notion of the essential worth of humanity to the creator-god, and the good will of that being to the creation. Consequently humanitarian work is viewed as being the work of that god. In this sense any missionary work is produced by the religious discourse, and hence in terms of discursive formation, is very similar to the position of the HLI. The point I wish to underline here is that a discourse can and does appear in various ideological forms connected by relations of opposition, complementarity, adaptation, etc.

5.2.3.3 Closing comments

The religious discourse in HLI standardisation processes allows for consideration of language issues in terms of otherworld involvement in human practices; mediated through an interpretation of narrative, and systems of authority arising from this.

Outside of the HLI, the religious discourse is employed to foreground literacy in the context of an introduced religion. It also has contributions to make as a source of ideas for lexical development.

One of the proposals of the Melbourne branch of the HLI, once they have completed their process to independent operation, is to have constructed a computer keyboard which incorporates a raised headpiece with images of 8Bf tM fm Yaj Soob Lw\i, important elements of the 8K nir Phaj hauj, and other symbols (see Colour plate in §4.3.1.4 for an illustration). This would mean that every time someone sat down to type, they would do so under an icon of the origins and focus of the group. It would be hard to conceive of a strategy which more overtly foregrounds the religious discourse, in the context of both literacy and technology.

5.2.4 Literacy discourse

As discussed in §3.3.5, this discourse is concerned with on the one hand narratives of the goals, uses and effects of literacy, and on the other hand explorations of the best means to acquiring it or encouraging its acquisition.

In circumstances of mass relocation and a subsequent transition period, literacy becomes a tool of language maintenance and communication maintenance. This brings literacy into focus in itself, rather than simply as an outworking of religious discourse, or a means to the goals of a nationist discourse. In describing the local realisation of each of these three discourses, I have attempted to stand in a position where the importance of each is evident—that is, seeing the discourse, its statements, practices and local ideologies on their own terms. In doing this, the thematic narrative explained in §2.2.3. can be seen as essentially founded in a religious, a nationist, or a literacy discourse in turn. As a narrative of nationist discourse, it is about the
5. The back of the work

means for the Hmong to attain world recognition as a nation. Within religious discourse, it
concerns the fulfillment of a prophetic narrative about setting directions for the Hmong coming
into their own spiritually, educationally and politically. From the perspective of the literacy
discourse, it provides the justification and motivation needed to energize Hmong people into
realising the literacy they need for language and communication maintenance as above, and
claim as a self-identified people.31

This section investigates the ways that the Hmong standardisation processes enlist the literacy
discourse in each of its streams, as a source of legitimation and as a means of directing activities.

5.2.4.1 A cultural narrative

The objects of the literacy discourse are those ideas which are brought into being through
connections formed with or by literacy. From the perspective of the literacy discourse, the
cultural narrative described in §2.2.3 makes the connection from literacy, in the sense of a
written form of a language, to nationhood. It is thus a motivating factor for establishing literacy in
the first place. The linking path mapped out by the narrative was schematised in §2.2.3
(reproduced below):

![Diagram of Literacy, Religion, Nation](reproduced from Eira 1998)

Other discursive connections evidenced in this structure are discussed in §5.3.1.3. In regard to
this discourse this narrative forms concepts of literacy as:

(i) a source of internal unification and common identification

(ii) a means to external recognition or acknowledgment, due to their demonstrable
equivalent status as a nation.

The former concept is manifested in specific literacy practices such as:

for further consolidation of what this might mean.
5.2 The discourses

- writing genres directed to maintaining communication between scattered groups of Hmong
- orthography development designed to remain inclusive of Hmong divided by not only geography but also dialect and beliefs
- research into orthography design aimed at minimising or sidestepping differences of dialect and variety
- the desire for a standardised language, or at least writing
- the ǹk ŋir Phaj hauj as realisation of the true Hmong script and hence the means to bring the literacy narrative into being.

The latter concept gives rise to practices including:

- development of icons of literacy comparable to those seen in other literate languages—dictionaries, arithmetic capacity (in the ǹk ŋir Phaj hauj), scriptures and historical texts
- script choice based on access in a dominant language/literacy
- western norms of written language culture—types of publication, purposes and styles of writing, preferred script base
- the preeminence of technological literacy.

Noticeable in this second list are a number of practices which adapt those of western literacy. Norms of western literacy stand as a strong model for what constitutes literacy of an established nation. This is discussed further in §5.2.6.

As discussed in §3.3.5.1, after Gee (1990), literacy is not only the ability to read, but the ability to read something. Hmong literacy, then, is characterised by the kinds of texts which are being made available to read in Hmong (see §4.5.1.3). Preservation and dissemination of historical texts and stories is being brought into the culture of Hmong literacy by their prominence in Hmong publication projects—in collections by and for high school students, academic studies, articles and original work in magazines and illustrated stories for children. This emphasises the building of the Hmong nation and perpetuation of its heritage for the rising and future generations.

Within the HLI, there is a distinct emphasis at this stage on preserving and perpetuating core ideological items. The fact that such texts at the moment constitute the bulk of what there is available to read, firmly associates the ǹk ŋir Phaj hauj with its motivating discourse. This has a
5. The back of the work

very similar effect to the practice of relying on biblical texts for translation material (see §3.3.5.1): in both cases the 'something' made available to read is designed to inculcate in the reader the tenets of the respective ideologies. The practice of reading ideological texts in ᵒᵉʳ Phaj hauj also reproduces and reinforces the link between this ideology and this script. Script and ideology are a 'package deal'.

5.2.4.2 Literacy and pedagogy

The literacy discourse has been effective in both RPA and ᵒᵉʳ Phaj hauj orthography development projects. For RPA, as preempted in §5.2.2.1, the move to streamline the orthography, reducing the number of graphemes required for a single phoneme, is designed to improve readability and ease of spelling as much as visual representation of unitary phonemes. For ᵒᵉʳ Phaj hauj, according to the Melbourne group, the practice in California of distinguishing eight tones developed from the need to introduce the marginal tone to learners of the writing system.

The objection encountered from some Hmong speakers, including some staunch members of the HLI, and sometimes from linguists to the ᵒᵉʳ Phaj hauj convention of writing the vowel before the consonant also arise primarily from the pedagogical subdiscourse. It has been suggested, for instance, that such a system requires greater eye-tracking time to take in the text. It is possible that the syllables are absorbed as a syllabic unit by fluent readers, since when I write a word wrong, my teachers do not begin to pronounce the word and then hesitate, as someone reading English might do, but balk at the whole word. Either the eye-tracking suggestion or that of my anecdotal observation would need to be borne out by actual tests. My aim here is not to ascertain the psychological reality of syllables or the physiological aspects of reading processes but to consider from what are the underlying principles from which objections or theories such as these arise.

The discourse which focuses on pedagogical optimality is not the only possible discourse. The position that is presented to support this ordering is the symbolic importance of the vowel symbol <ё> keeb, as explained in §4.3.1.3. So at this point the literacy discourse is in conflict with the religious. The arguments for one or the other ordering are so far removed from each other that it is quite easy to see that they arise from fundamentally different discourses. The question is not at all what the ordering should be, but whether practical reading considerations (and writing, although to my knowledge this has not come up) should take priority over symbolic iconism, or vice versa.

32 John Hajek (p.c.)
5.2 The discourses

Important symbolic principles are threaded through the whole of the orthography as well as the methods by which it is taught. For instance, when writing out graphemes for practice or presentation, each one is written three times. This symbolically represents the unity of the Hmong, since \( \text{J} \) in the common phrase \( \text{J} \text{ peb} \) in the phrase \( \text{J} \text{ peb Hmoob we Hmong} \) is polysemous between 'three' and 3PL.\(^{33}\) The consonant \( \text{a kab} \) (also organised in sets of three: \( \langle \text{r r r} \rangle \)) represent the initial sounds of thematically related sets of words.\(^{34}\) Whether this is another instance of the embedding of spiritual teaching in the \( \text{Phaj hauj} \) or whether it began as a more practical system of mnemonics I am not in a position to know. Either way, it has evidently by now become an intrinsic part of the script's ethos, part of the framework by which it is settling firmly into the forms it now has.

5.2.5 Technological discourse

The statements and practices of the technological discourse in the local study form relations between publication and language maintenance, computer use and orthographic development, maintenance of human networks and the medium of the internet, participation in communications technology and the status of a nation as advanced.\(^ {35}\) The discourse has become a significant factor in directing decisions about standardization, and the medium of the internet in particular has a prominent role in determining membership of the discursive community on issues of standardization.

As pointed out in preceding chapters, technological tools have become invaluable to Hmong communities in a period of geographic dispersion and of intensive language standardisation. They have become central to facilitating publication, long-distance communication, and language/culture resources and research. However, the maintenance of connections between people living far apart, language classes, passing on of news and histories, and linguistic analysis, are all practices which are, demonstrably, entirely possible without the use of computers. The connection between these activities and this set of technologies is not an intrinsic, natural or necessary one, but a formation particular to a discursive environment. It is an active formation, continually producing new statements and configurations of statements, new

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\(^{33}\) \( \text{Lis Yaj (p.c.)} \)

\(^{34}\) \( \text{Nom Suav (p.c.)} \)

\(^{35}\) Essentially what is pertinent as practices of this discourse in the present study are connected with computer technology. Other methods of publication etc are of course still available, but these are not what has been in focus in Hmong communities since the refugee period.
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tools and practices. For instance, a project currently under development is a Hmong spellchecker. This is a tool which would not be necessary or even possible outside of computational practices that already exist. It is a second-generation development, that arises not from the need to produce written materials as such, but from a practice which has developed of producing and manipulating text on computers. The downloadable fonts set up by myself and the HLIA and by Hmong Script Software are further examples of second-generation developments.

The strong identification of Hmong communities with the technological discourse is not only a practical but also an ideological strategy. Participation in internet communications and desktop publication is relatively accessible and inexpensive, and has the advantages of convenience which go hand-in-hand with conforming to norms of mainstream western modes of operation. However, it is also a bid for inclusion of the Hmong in an ingroup of technologically literate equals, and for the status of the Hmong language as a competitor in a context of other languages and literacies of the technological west.

5.2.5.1 Technological literacy

In §5.2.4.1 I commented on competency in computer-based communications as a form of literacy. In this way the technological discourse is instantiating a new manifestation of the literacy discourse. The requirement (of the literacy discourse) to establish Hmong as a literate language now includes the requirement (of the technological discourse) that the emerging writing system is well adapted to computer-based communications. In some aspects of Hmong standardisation, technological literacy is a prerequisite of participation: for instance, to use some of the newly-released dictionaries. In the Melbourne dictionary project, while the end-product planned is a hard-copy publication, technological literacy is required to work directly with its contents, in database form. Hence the connections formed by the literacy discourse between literacy and communication, and between literacy and language work, frequently assume the genres made available by the technological discourse. The fact that it is possible to refer to something called a 'technological literacy' shows the level at which these discourses are becoming enmeshed.

Script choice

As discussed in §3.3.6.1, the connection between the need for computer access and script choice is strongly formed within this discourse. In its current formation for Hmong, this is realised

as a privileged status of the roman script, hence casting a vote firmly for the RPA over the ők ņir Phaj hauj (see Eira in press for a detailed exposition of this).

Fluency in computer literacy, and especially internet literacy, is increasingly important to membership of 'the global village', not to mention access to computer facilities in the first place. This exerts particular pressures on emerging literacies to conform to the present configuration of technological literacy. If the writing system is based on a roman script, then access to information and interaction is available on the same conditions of literacy, computer access and so on as it is to speakers of English or a western European language. If an original script such as the ők ņir Phaj hauj is preferred, access to such resources is more complicated, requiring a higher available level of technological fluency to configure font selection, transliteration, compatible encoding of independently designed fonts, etc. Within the technological discourse, it is the current norms of internet use which function as the authority. For instance, someone recently said to me that the ők ņir Phaj hauj writing system is 'by nature' ill-suited to email. Here it is clear that the 'nature' of email has prior status. To the degree that internet exchange is important, either practically or symbolically, to the language community, the relative complexity of its implementation counts against a non-roman script being established. In a country where high technology is a daily norm, the needs of an urban rising generation will be of especial concern.

The kinds of problems faced by ők ņir Phaj hauj users in connection with computer technology are not inherent in the ők ņir Phaj hauj, but in the way in which the technology, and in particular the internet, is set up. There is nothing inherent in computing possibilities that makes the roman

37 While people with languages of established literacy in a script other than the roman—for instance Greek or Japanese—obviously also have a high rate of internet use, the impact of roman script dominance on the net affects even these users. Sometimes additional software is required, sometimes higher skills in configuring software—and often the user simply writes in a roman transliteration instead (see for instance the Greek email network at <http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~iandrout/greekmail/greekmail.htm>).

38 The international organisation Unicode is engaged in a long-term project of rectifying this latter situation by developing a standard encoding for every world script (with the possible exception of Chinese!) towards eventually making them all available, perhaps as a standard package with computer sales. The existence of this project does not change the fact that the initial rush of development and release on world markets was carried out on the basis of the roman script—privileging, in fact, the subset of roman script graphemes needed for English.
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script easier to use. If script diversity were a priority for technology development, capabilities such as automatic transliteration would be a focus. That mainstream computer technology is targeted to Anglo-European languages and use of the roman script is a matter not of practicality so much as of the configuration of the discourse.

To look to computer technology to direct script choice is not a necessary or natural connection. Both RPA and ⃗ሴ ⃗芗 Phaj hauj were taught in Laos and Thailand, and books were appearing, before computers were available to the Hmong, and before they were even as pervasive in the west as they are now. It is a connection that has become inevitable precisely because of the shift in discursive context. In the present and local context, a technological literacy is part and parcel of the meaning of literacy. For a people whose goal is not only to establish writing but also to facilitate ease of international communications, develop a corpus of published literature and, not least, acquire equivalent status amongst other literate nations—a literacy which stops short of computer access is not a viable option.

Nor does the need to demonstrate technological viability inevitably select the RPA. Both RPA proponents and ⃗ሴ ⃗芗 Phaj hauj proponents give a prominent place to technological requirements. The RPA has the advantage of being ready to use on any computer in the west (Pao Saykao, p.c.). For Saykao, and many others, this one factor carries more weight than any desire for a unique script for Hmong. Any writing base other than the RPA would by this stage constitute an unacceptable loss of the headway already made towards establishing Hmong as a language of literacy.39

For proponents of the ⃗芗 ⃗芗 Phaj hauj however, the need to identify with this discourse has meant giving the highest priority to work on technologising the script—first and foremost, on making a font, and subsequently disseminating it. Subsidiary projects such as commissioning a transliteration program, participating in the Unicode project, and the continual redevelopment of fonts and the website for downloading them, are also intermittently brought into focus.

This means that, since the HLI California fonts were released on the internet in 1996, it has been possible to use RPA and ⃗芗 ⃗芗 Phaj hauj in the same range of written genres. For anyone as technologically fluent as RPA users active in internet communications obviously are—by the number of independent Hmong websites online and the level of participation in chatrooms, newsgroups etc.—it is not that difficult to download a font and configure software to display it on

39 This sense of time running out is itself an element of a discourse there is not the space to extrapolate in this work. Harré, Brockmeier and Mühläusler (1999), in the context of environmental discourses, spend considerable ‘time’ investigating the use of time metaphors and their political motivating function.
screen. At this point more than practicalities are needed to explain the association between the RPA and computer use.

The RPA is imaged as already technologically oriented, while the work of ǣk றADF Phaj hauj organisations on technologising the script achieves practical solutions but not, to date, accreditation in this discourse. For RPA proponents like Saykao, the technological discourse is primary, leading to arguments such as:

because we need internet access therefore we will stick with the RPA.

From the point of view of ǣk ካADF Phaj hauj proponents, the discourse is situated at a lower level in the hierarchy, leading instead to arguments such as:

because we need internet access therefore we will adapt existing technologies to encompass our script.

In this way it becomes apparent that different approaches to the requirements of a given discourse correlates with the position of the discourse in its local realisation. I come back to the hierarchy, or order, of discourses in §5.3.

Implementation of the ǣk ߊADF Phaj hauj

The requirement to identify with the technological discourse introduces considerations of computational convenience and screen appearance into details of orthographic design and other written language conventions.

Although the ǣk ߙADF Phaj hauj was for many years written primarily by hand, a cursive writing style has not been deliberately developed as yet. In fact, the clear, straight, printed handwritten style being prescribed in the HLIA follows the font design rather than the other way round. Here technological literacy seems to be functioning not only as a critical component of literacy, but as the model for writing. The choice of the HLIA to delay any kind of formal language maintenance or literacy education work until a font had been made available also demonstrates a considerable focus on technological literacy. Here as in the copywork mentioned in §5.2.2.1, the importance of computer use appears to actually slow down procedures, counter to one of the common images of technology. 40 This emphasis is quite striking when it is taken into account that all of

40A further example of this is a long-term plan to new fonts from a large set of beautiful calligraphy work by ǣk ܢADF Yaj Kub for speed of reproduction. Reproduction will only be speedy if and when someone with the skill to undertake the work is found and puts in the many hours it would take to do justice to Yang's work.
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the teachers of êk ñær Phaj hauj learned it themselves without access to any kind of typing facilities, none of the êk ñær Phaj hauj literacy schools have classroom computers, and most of the teachers and other parent generation êk ñær Phaj hauj-literate people use computers only very sparingly.

These kinds of incoherences demonstrate that practicality is not the only or even necessarily the primary motivation for privileging technological considerations. To adapt a point made in §3.2.3.2, these points of incoherence between the practical course of action and what is actually carried out provide a glimpse of the operation of a discourse. Here, the motivating factor appears to be not practical concerns so much as the symbology of technological landmarks.

Finally, the idea of writing êk ñær Phaj hauj entirely in monosyllables because of the difficulty of locating the diacritic placement on screen makes use of the technological discourse as a source of authority. As pointed out in §2.3.1.2, this decision, presented as a fait accompli, avoids the complex discussions on the issue of word boundaries which have been necessitated in the RPA community. It is a decision which is coherent only because of the naturalisation of this discourse, which, like the axioms of Orwell's 1984 citizens, gives it the status of an authority, a last-word argument. Interestingly enough, in the RPA-based discussions, some have argued for exactly the opposite solution in the terms of the same discourse. The argument is based on the problems of developing a spellcheck for Hmong, given that so many combinations of grapheme units are theoretically possible:

Writing compound words together like 'taubhau' would facilitate a more useful spell-check system.

Cory Jasperson, Hmong LG: early 1997

5.2.5.2 Delineation of communities

An effect of the current requirements of the technological discourse in regard to script choice is to inhibit communications between subgroups of Hmong speakers working in standardisation. The people who engage in active and productive discussion of standardisation policy and projects on the internet use RPA. The standardisation issues they discuss, apart from choice of script per se, are discussed only in terms of the RPA. Standardisation topics not specific to orthography development such as proposals for new terms or questions about pronunciation in different dialects could in theory be of interest and benefit to users of both scripts. Furthermore, it appears that most Hmong and certainly official spokespeople share the goal of maintaining inclusiveness and mutual communication between all Hmong. That this is not what occurs in the area of language work is partly due to a conceptual division between RPA projects and êk ñær Phaj hauj projects, since the HLI prefer to devise their own policies on all standardisation issues.
However, the functional separation between groups is also a function of access to internet communications effected by script choice.

Although there is no longer any practical barrier to the Phaj hauj-based communication on the net, to my knowledge only RPA is actually used to date. Certainly the major email, noticeboard and chat networks operate entirely in RPA (and English). So those who choose to use Phaj hauj exclusively are at present unable to participate in the broader community discussions on Hmong language planning, social conditions and general news exchange which are available on the internet. Note that dialect or even language does not function as a barrier in this way. Internet discussions are carried on freely in a mix of HmD, MNts and also English, so that even when people have trouble with one dialect, or English, or in some cases with their heritage language, they can still follow the general trend of a discussion and the details of parts of it. Although various means of determining the appearance of text—including fonts selected by the writer and text included as graphics—are commonplace on the web, there is no suggestion of expanding these networks to include Phaj hauj users. So again it is apparent that the relations formed in the technological discourse are not natural or necessary, but rely on what is and is not accredited within the discourse.

Pao Saykao (p.c.) notes that this access is particularly important in considering young people, because of their higher usage of computers and the internet. Either they will be disadvantaged in participation in the wider community interaction, or they may decide to use RPA in this context, thereby lowering the impetus to maintain viability of the Phaj hauj in all spheres.

Participating in internet communications is not simply a matter of making the necessary moves to acquire skills and equipment. It is a gateway to the global village that is available to some more equally than others. Even apart from the prerequisite of time, money, utilities and other resources before skills and access to equipment can be acquired, language and script of literacy are criteria by which access to participation is dispensed. These conditions are implicated in an imbalance of power and access among the Hmong in that they:

- contribute to the division of the Hmong community along the lines of script, since those who use Phaj hauj are restricted in their participation in international debate
- add to the coloration of Phaj hauj and its proponents as belonging to older traditions, as against the imaging of RPA as current and compatible with the cultures of immigration
- limit the rate of acceptance of the Phaj hauj among a wide audience, because little material in or about the script is available on the web, and because more effort and a higher level of technological literacy is required of interested parties
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- increase the period and degree of dependence of HLI language planners on outgroup workers, for skills and resources which we have had more time and opportunity to establish.

5.2.5.3 Closing comments

The pervasive orientation to computer technology in the Hmong standardisation process is a product of a prevailing discourse. It is a discourse comprised of the practice of computer and internet use in publication, communication, research and education. The kinds of relations which are being forged between these activities and available technologies arise from both practical and ideological motivations.

I have queried the assumption that technological methods always necessarily have advantages of practicality or speed. The common availability of computers and internet access is another often-cited explanation for their prevalent use. This point, while suffering from obvious circularity, nonetheless has some validity. A certain volume of use in the community (of whatever scope) does indeed trigger a snowball effect of requiring higher volumes of use as individuals and groups strive to maintain membership of the active communication networks. But simple availability does not sufficiently explain the degree to which these connections have come to the forefront as procedures which are assumed necessary for moving forward with projects.

The high level of participation in internet communications interacts with Hmong sense of common identity, relationships of clan and family, common experience of dislocation, and the commonality of language—that is, essentially a nationist discourse. Because of geographic distance, a medium such as the internet is an ideal means of maintaining communications, of maintaining this sense of commonality and identity.

Participation in a global network of interaction is a form of legitimation accessed through the institutions of the technological discourse. It carries associations of contemporaneity, of full membership in an age of technology and information. Legitimation of this kind, together with other kinds of legitimation arising from the nationist and other discourses, offers the Hmong recognition from both outgroup and ingroup of the worth and validity of their language, their nation and the cultural values and other items with which it is demarcated.

The prominent position of the technological discourse is established despite the lack of fit between some of the needs of the community and the particular configuration of the discourse in the present context. The responses from the Hmong community to the technological discourse have taken two fundamentally different forms, but no position has emerged that questions its relevance. The compulsion to identify with the discourse, together with the lack of questioning of its status, marks and instates it as hegemonic.
5.2.6 Westernist discourse

In §3.3.6.2 I discussed in general terms some of the outworkings of the westernist discourse in standardisation in minority languages: particularly in terms of language, script and communications technology. Because the westernist discourse constitutes an environment within which the whole of Hmong standardisation processes in the west is situated, the discourse is realised in forms closely connected with objects and statements of other discourses I have been discussing. It produces a perspective on these objects and statements which assesses their accreditation as western. This includes their perceived compatibility with an age of information and technology, with the standards of education and literacy targeted in western countries, with rationalist orientations to knowledge at the same time as western approaches to religion, and with the financial systems structured into western societies. The position taken up in regard to the westernist discourse has consequences as regards the level of access to 'goods',\(^{41}\) because of the advantages of aligning one's discourses with those of the dominant group.

Two overarching factors contribute to the westernist discourse being in focus in the present work. One is the context of Hmong ex-refugees—by countries of immigration and hence present environment of language planning work. The other is the context of myself as writer—by upbringing, education, environment and present conditions of research and presentation. These factors are so basic that they need pointing out. By this I mean that the environment of western culture is largely taken for granted in the west. It can require some deconstruction work to make the structures we are accustomed to transparent, as neither natural, inevitable nor universal, but a product of this formation. Other discursive environments produce alternative structures.

5.2.6.1 Relations with other discourses

Westernism and religion

One of the discourses incorporated into this formation is that of western Christianity. Obviously Christian beliefs and practices are not exclusive to the west, nor did they originate in western culture. The westernist discourse, however, forges a connection between the religion and a particular cultural identity—note for instance the default depiction of the Christ as an Anglo-European. For Hmong who came in contact with Christianity in Laos, or Thailand, Christianity was

\(^{41}\) The term 'goods' in early Marxist discourse referred primarily to material gain; however, it has come to include less tangible sorts of gain such as status, or education.
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presented mostly by American and French missionaries, and in the context of formal education and access to western medicine. In the post-refugee period, these connections already encountered were developed within a general association of western culture with progress, of a particular kind. For many Hmong now living in the west, traditional Hmong spiritual practices remain associated with an earlier time, of lower standards of health and education. So Christianity and traditional Hmong spiritual practices are now opposed not only within the religious discourse, but within the westernist discourse—as symbols of different agendas for national self-image, progressivism versus conservatism, modernity versus maintenance of traditional values. The choice is not simply between forms of religion; but rather, these forms have become associated with images of two expressions of culture. Although this division is supported by advocates of both sides, it is an opposition which was itself produced by the emergence of an alternative position in the introduction of western Christianity.

These connections and oppositions are evident in development of both lexicon and script. The dictionary McKibben (1992 [1994]) emphasises not only terms for translating the Bible, but also new coinages connected with other western cultural practices; while the two HLI dictionaries emphasise not only terms which maintain knowledge of traditional Hmong spiritual practices but also other aspects of Lao Hmong culture. oubles Phaj hauj proponents are further divided from many RPA users at once by their conservative image in regard to technology and by the focus of their communities on 'pagan practices'.

The emergence of Cher Vang Kong's script, the ní ñá Ntáav Paj Ntaub, demonstrates an ingenious adaptive strategy (see §2.3.3). Here a complete transplant has occurred: the requirements that the revolutionary Hmong script be (i) traceable to supernatural sources, (ii) connected with spiritual teaching, and (iii) received through a Hmong national are fulfilled—but the religious aspects are reframed within the context of western Christianity. This development satisfies the need for Hmong ex-refugees to blend into the western context while at the same time retaining central principles of their heritage culture.

**Literacy**

The aim of establishing Hmong as a literate language has long been associated in Hmong discourses with attaining equivalent status to other nations (see §2.2.3.2). This perspective on literacy as a kind of nationalist benchmark predisposes Hmong communities to absorb the particular literacies made available in western mainstream culture—the most salient model of a culture with high status in the world. Prominent aspects of these literacies include their educational setting; their spheres, media and genres of use; their functions of communication, social strata identification and information exchange. Comments are frequently encountered regarding the need to mould Hmong forms of literacy (eg script base) after the western model.
because this is considered acceptable to the rising generation of Hmong. Aids to literacy or literacy acquisition (such as language education materials, reference texts etc) are almost invariably developed after the western models. Again, it seems likely that the early Hmong language materials, produced by the missions, may have had some influence in developing standard literacy genres, since mission work in Hmong homelands preceded work by Hmong people, in either script.

Exceptions to the western models of literacy acquisition do occur. For instance, the standard orthography teaching method employed in the HLIA emphasises the system of rote recitation of the obox 'rows' which was practised in Laos and Thailand: each vowel is recited in each of its seven recognised tones in the prescribed order shown in Table 2.4. At the same time, suggestions for materials development offered by university representatives lean towards teaching norms in Australian schools, such as picture-story books and encouragement of students to be involved in their production. Children in the HLIA community school are exposed to both kinds of teaching methods. An investigation of student response to HLIA methods could be revealing as to how possible it is for children growing up in a western educational environment to simultaneously assimilate an alternative style of learning. Such a study would reveal, not how useful the HLIA methods are per se, but the degree to which they are effective for students accustomed to very different methods in their wider educational environment—methods which carry the image of being western.

The HLIA rote method, and its associated orientation to prescriptive rather than experiential learning, resembles an older model of our own system which has been superseded. The shift to interactive teaching styles exemplifies a broader scale cultural shift from individual to group focus, discussed in Foucault (1975 [1979]) for various kinds of monitoring systems including schools. The interactive teaching style is targeted to the individual in that each child is encouraged to contribute at the level they are able. On another level it is targeted to the group, in that the end-product is collaboratively produced, and the value of individual work is assessed in terms of cooperation with the overall production. (Interestingly, individual achievement remains the primary focus of higher education.) The HLIA teaching style remains targeted to the individual in that the end-product (copied writing, answered questions, completed sentences etc) is the work of one person.

From a westernist perspective, current mainstream norms of interactive and creative learning are necessarily an advance on the more passive and prescriptive style in the HLIA school. However, 

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42 Thanks to Wyrda for pointing out this connection.
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some children thrive and gain more confidence from a sense that they know what to aim for than
from a learning method that on the surface denies that some efforts are closer to an
(undisclosed) goal than others. Again, some children learn better when they are entirely in
control of what they produce without the added difficulties of negotiating peer relationships. I
am not attempting here to argue for a particular approach but only to point out that concepts of
what literacy is and how it should be taught are located within prevailing discourses, rather than
being amenable to objective ranking as more or less advanced.

The HLIA teaching method is located within a very different discursive agenda. Studying the 8 kab 'rows' in order by rote instils in the learner principles symbolically embodied by the script, as
is overtly taught at higher levels: that there is an order in the universe, that source and origin are
important, that all things emerge from the same kernel, that progress is achieved through
simplicity and clarity. These are very different principles to those learned via creative and
interactive literacy acquisition methods.

5.2.6.2 Language and script

Effects of the model of English on Hmong language planning can be seen in, for instance, the
occurrence of English-based categories in proposals for Hmong word classes (see §2.5.1.2).
Adjective frequently appears, although by their syntactic behaviour the words so categorised
are best classed as a subset of the verb class; and article in reference to classifiers, where these
are listed at all. Translation dictionaries abound with entries based on English morphosyntactic
forms and concepts (see §4.6.3). An ever-present concern in consultancy sessions, when
translating a sample sentence for the dictionary, is the tendency to adjust the Hmong sentence
to better reflect the words and structure of the English translation. Some of the English-style
Hmong becoming apparent in standardisation tools such as dictionaries is a reflection of
transfer. The Hmong collocation ǹā gā nyob zoo, lit. 'live well' is becoming common as a
greeting formula, by analogy with 'How are you?'; in competition with traditional forms such as ǹ
ǹn tā gā Koj mus ua dabtsi (lit. 'What are you on your way to do?').

I have discussed the feasibility of the ǹā Phaj hauj script in terms of the major discourses of
this study throughout. It fulfils requirements for Hmong self-identity as a nation; it realises an
important cultural narrative according to the interpretation of some groups; it constitutes an
adequate linguistic representation of Hmong phonology; it has certain advantages for readers in
its phonotactic representation; it is well developed for use in computer applications. However,
the ǹā Phaj hauj is not assessed on its own terms but against the status quo of the roman

43 The more traditional usage of ǹā gā nyob zoo is for other social interaction locations such as farewell.
script—which is the preferred script of internet communication, the default script of emergent literacies, the primary script of transliteration and of readily available typing and printing equipment. In short, the roman script is the script of access. Arguments to this effect are commonly presented both to the HLI and to outgroup academics such as myself, against a goal of comprehensive implementation of the āk ńır Phaj hauj. From the perspective of the westernist discourse, they are valid arguments. Implementation of the āk ńır Phaj hauj does risk wide-scale separation of the HLI subgroup from others. It is more difficult to set up for computer use than the RPA. It may be harder to learn, for children schooled in English. It is less attractive to young Australian or American Hmong. But each of these problems arises, not from some inherent quality of a new script base, but from the dominance of the roman script within this discourse. To be sustainable as a discourse community, the HLI are required to actively counter the systems in place that privilege a roman script: by developing the technology to deal with their script, and perhaps their script in relation to the roman-based RPA; by producing a body of literature that can compete with that of literature in RPA; by justifying their script and its motivating discourse in the context of governmental recognition and support.

5.2.6.3 Closing comments

From within the westernist discourse, ways of being alternative to the ways of the mainstream west are viewed in terms of their construction as Other. For instance:

- it is Hmong word classes and word formation strategies which are unlike those of English which are in focus for research and analysis

- the āk ńır Phaj hauj in the west cannot be assessed on its own terms, but only in opposition to the roman script

- the non-science aspects of the leadership of ūff tio Soob Lwj Yaj make the story a curiosity—although miracles, predictions and inspired teaching are basic to the Christian tradition.

Since Hmong language standardisation work is embedded within the environment of the westernist discourse, its requirements influence the definition of questions to be addressed even where communities prioritise the concepts of other discourses. Because the community is not closed, not separate from the mainstream; it is not independent of some of the 'goods' accessed through the hegemonic discourse, such as access to communications technology. There is a point at which the terms of a hegemonic discourse must be accepted—even if primarily as a starting-point for resistance.
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5.3 Orders of discourse

In §5.2 I looked at the objects, statements and practices of each discourse individually in turn, in so far as that is possible. But the limits of that possibility has been evident throughout, in the interweaving of discourses, and the mutual delineation of each by what is and is not admitted by another. So now I take yet a third pass through the same territory; this time from the back of the work as it were, tracing threads as they are woven through the discourses.

Firstly, in §5.3.1, I pick up the hints of connections between discourses already made to draw a more explicit picture of the relations between them. This section will focus on the six major discourses that I have been working with: nationist, scientist, religious, literacy, technological and westemist. It will also be useful at this point to acknowledge the interweaving of further discourses with these six.

Secondly, in §5.3.2, I look more closely at a single instantiation of this major discourse formation in order to specify the structure of a single order of discourse. To do this I investigate the identity of authority figures in the local dictionary project. This investigation is based on the premise that there is a discursive authority which precedes and underlies each of these manifest authority sources. Investigating the formal or practical locations of authority can be revealing as to the discourses which are functioning as authority—that is, the source of last-word statements, baseline assumptions, powers seconded or appealed to as conclusive support.

5.3.1 Relations between discourses

5.3.1.1 Literacy, religion, nation

The cultural narrative outlined in §2.2.3.1 is an important expression of the connections formed between discourses—especially the literacy discourse, the religious and the nationist (see Fig. 5.1).

Religious or mythic tradition foregrounds literacy as part of the Hmong path to political independence. The HLI interpretation of the prophetic histories as realised in ūn ūl ūl Yaj Soob Lwj and his provision of the ūk ūl ūl Phaj hauj Hmoob is both source and embodiment of
much of what is important in their drive for literacy. Theirs is a highly conservative, traditionalist interpretation. Its teleological focus of attaining nationhood is viewed from within a firmly religious discourse framework; hence in this form the religious and nationist discourses are mutually reliant.

A range of possible discursive routes to nationhood are accepted in the broader ex-refugee Hmong community however. Themes which recur across the spectrum of the speech community—broad goals of distinctive and common language, and distinctive and common writing—are framed more centrally as nationist for many groups of Hmong. From this perspective, the goal of nationhood retains roots in the religious discourse only in that it is articulated as a traditional and ancient expectation in mythic form, including its expression in the šā ŋu dab neeg. That this articulation and expression foreground the role of writing, however, may partly explain why the desire still frequently reemerges amongst RPA users for, not only a distinctive writing system, but a unique indigenous script.

So language planning, and particularly orthography standardisation, are situated in both religious and nationist discourses; the religious discourse being dominant for some, and the nationist for others. For some the religious discourse serves as guiding map as well as source; for others it fades to a position as background narrative.

A similar shift of reliance from essentially religious principles to essentially nationist can also be seen in western cultures. It has occurred, for instance, when Anglo-European organisations have taken the injunction to spread Christianity as not only implying a responsibility in spiritual matters but extending to justify the spread of particular cultural moralities and societal systems. During the colonial era and beyond, the religious imperative gradually shifted to the margins as political and commercial interests came to the fore as bringers (and imposers) of Anglo-European culture. In this shift of discursive context, the mandate of religious caretaking has become minimised; but the justification of this form of nationism is largely traceable to an earlier setting within the religious discourse.

As pointed out in §3.3.5, a focus on literacy education by a dominant outgroup may be sourced from a nationist discourse in that vernacular literacy may be supported as a step to literacy in the dominant language. While the latter is a language of access, it is also potentially a language of

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44 Tapp (1989) discusses the enormous response by the Hmong to the missionary Samuel Pollard and his orthography development, in the late nineteen hundreds, due to his apparent identity as a manifestation of this tradition.
assimilation. Smalley (1976b) cites this as the reason for development of a Thai-based orthography for Hmong; the Pathet Lao orthography was developed and to some degree implemented on the same basis.\textsuperscript{45} Here the nationist and literacy discourses are aligned: the goal of assimilation supports education and orthography development projects for minority language groups; while the goal of literacy supports the acquisition of linguistic and also cultural norms of the dominant group. In contrast, a less common option for a new writing system is that taken by the HLI—a distinct script, ideally of indigenous origins, which stands out as a symbol of Hmong nationhood. This choice prioritises nationist ideals over possible advantages of access and readily transferable literacy, thus placing the literacy discourse in opposition to that of nationism.

5.3.1.2 Scientist discourse: oppositions and complementarities

I have explained in §3.3.4.1 and elsewhere, how the discourse of scientism sets up a relation of opposition with that of religion, which in turn has close connections in this case study with that of nationism. Since both scientist and religious discourses are demonstrably significant in motivating and shaping Hmong standardisation projects, this entails some tensions between approaches.

For example, in representation of tone in HLIA orthography development, my primary consultants are focussed on orthodox representation that best reflects their understanding of the original system intended by èt' wè ë Tà Yaj Soob Lwż; while I am interested in accurate analysis of the tonemic status of the eight phonetic tones, representation of the relationship between certain semantic pairs of lexemes marked by tone alternation (see §2.4.2.2), and locatability of the respective forms in the dictionary. These principles are directly produced by my perspective as a representative of the scientist discourse. Because this is the dominant discourse in which I have taken up subject position I necessarily view these principles as the more important. Within the discourse in its current configuration they are more important. And that is the point.

The ideas that these principles are coming into conflict with are not based on the scientist discourse. They are directed by a lineage of spiritual descent; and carrying symbols of a set of orthodox beliefs, historical references and future hopes. From this perspective it is not only comprehensible but essential to maintain these and other markers of the inspired origins of the script. The conflict is not within the scientist discourse, deciding what is analytically sound, denotatively accurate or demonstrably practical; it is between the scientist and religious discourses.

\textsuperscript{45} See Appendix C.
This site of conflict between discourses is both productive and restrictive. On the one hand it inhibits the full realisation of possibilities offered by the discourses of either party; while on the other hand it produces novel combinations in content and format of the end products, and allows participants to access new ways of thinking that are made visible in part by the relation of opposition.

In describing the space in which the religious and scientist discourses are mutually defined I have foregrounded the discourse formations which are realised by particular interpretations of a cultural narrative. The opposition of these two discourses is not necessary or universal, however, but constructed in the local configuration of the discourses. The discursive structure which shapes and is reproduced by the work of a missionary-linguist organisation such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) does not oppose the scientist and religious discourses, but rather enlists the scientist in the cause of the religious. This relation allows for the existence of such a concept as a missionary-linguist in the first place; then the correlation between languages being described and people among whom there are missions; religious content of dictionaries; the practice of establishing cultural equivalents for key doctrinal metaphors, etc. Similarly, the work of some of the most highly acclaimed philosophers (ie accredited within the scientist discourse) is devoted to supporting mainstays of Christian theology within a rationalist framework.46

The scientist discourse is located in opposition to the nationist discourse directly in the controversy raised by Lee (amongst others) in his historical approach to Hmong standardisation. While many express interest in a reconstruction of earlier forms, discussion becomes heated when this methodology threatens to instate one or another dialect as the prior variety and therefore, in popular conception, correct. It remains to be seen whether the scientist approach on this point can outweigh the strength of allegiance to one or another dialect.

On the other hand, proposals for a standards administration body situate the scientist discourse firmly within a nationist framework, in that they seek legitimation for the Hmong nation being constructed, in terms of the scientist discourse. Again, just as the connections formed within a discourse are not an immutable characteristic of the discourses themselves, but always rely on a particular local realisation; so the relations between discourses are also fluid. In one instantiation, a given discourse can be used to counter the validity of goals framed within another; while in a second instantiation, the same two discourses can be configured in a relation of mutual support.

46Eg C.S. Lewis or Søren Kierkegaard.
5. The back of the work

5.3.1.3 Further complementarities

I have chosen in this thesis to concentrate on six discourses which have emerged as strongly relevant to the processes of standardisation I have been observing over a few years. In the preceding chapters, the effects of various other discourses have been mentioned in passing, which have seemed to me either less central to the processes observed than the six I have focussed on, or more ideological (relying on a specific position) than discursive (constructed of sets of relations which are in themselves neutral, delimiting fields of possibility within which to think, refer and act) (see §3.2.1.2).

In the remainder of this section I indicate the operation of some further discourses in relation to the six primary discourses under investigation.

Economic discourse

An economic discourse is strongly foregrounded in standard works on language standardisation and language planning such as Eastman (1983). This is a discourse that connects the monetary value of commercial relations with the availability of courses in the languages of potential business partners; it relates the number of taxpaying speakers of a given language to the funding allocated for community language education in government schools; it assesses language maintenance and diversity concerns in terms of the contribution that the language makes to the economic progress of the community.47

An economic discourse is evident also in Hmong standardisation. It is a discourse which impinges on Hmong-run projects mostly from the outside: questions of the value of work or economic viability are not particularly at issue in community discussions and activities. Mostly I have discussed the economic discourse from within the perspective of the scientist: noting the relation between funding sources and the kinds of research that are promoted. What I have not touched on is the economic value attached to work in Hmong per se—in the areas of language maintenance, teaching Hmong as a foreign or second language, Hmong literacy education for children of immigrants, etc. This valuation is a base-line condition that affects community

47 See Mühlhäusler (to appear) for further discussion of the discourses which emerge as the source of arguments for language diversity. Mühlhäusler proposes four discourses in this paper: economic, moral, aesthetic and scientific. The scientific discourse differs from my category scientist discourse in that the former is concerned not so much with the system of scientific legitimation, as with premium conditions for the advancement of science in a broader sense. Thanks to Peter Mühlhäusler for providing me with a draft copy.
5.3 Orders of discourse

standardisation projects and linguistic research as much as the more 'applied' kinds of work just mentioned. It is fairly self-evident that in the terms of an economic discourse Hmong would rate low in value in Australia, where the community is small and no trade opportunities with Asian communities are foreseeable. The availability of both introductory and advanced Hmong language education is slowly on the rise in the USA, however, where the community is much larger and outside interest in the language awakening—both of which factors begin to make provision of such courses more economically viable.

Purism

Purism is generally aligned with the nationist discourse, but forms strong connections also within the religious. Purism is defined by Thomas (1991) as:

the manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable (including those originating in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language). It may be directed at all linguistic levels but primarily the lexicon. Above all, purism is an aspect of the codification, cultivation and planning of standard languages.

This careful definition indicates a wide range of the concepts and practices of purism. It includes the occurrence of different approaches to purism in the 'same' speech community (defined in the broadest sense—see §1.3.2), as is evident between RPA and ên ën Phaj hauj-using groups. It acknowledges the different possible targets of purism—which as evidenced in the present case study can comprise established loan sources or newly-introduced sources, as well as minority dialects or even terms and practices of groups with a different political or religious orientation. And it points out the close association of purism with standardisation.

Three of the metaphors of purism explored in Thomas (1991) are particularly pertinent to the forms of purism evident in the HLIA, and elsewhere in the case study:

The miller

The first language academy founded in Europe, the Accademia della Crusca (Florence, 1572) was so named\(^{48}\) on the analogy of separating off what was considered the useless and undesirable elements from the wheat. The emphasis of the Academy was on retaining the pure

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\(^{48}\)Crusca meaning 'bran, husk'.
5. The back of the work

or superior in language. In the same way, the HLIA use the termREWANG cov ntsiab 'kernels' to refer to the currently approved version of the SK or Phaj hauj, opposed to Rewang cov npluag 'chaff', by which they mean superseded versions. The chaff is discarded to access the kernel.

The metallurgist

This metaphor, associated with the process of recovering metals from their ore before refining them, refers to the idea of freeing language from impurities in order to use it in its raw, natural state. It relies on the concept of a true nature of a language, accessible by removing extraneous elements. Similarly, the HLIA use Hmong metallurgical terminology to differentiate their version of the script (Rewang cov tseeb 'the pure') from versions developed outside of the orthodox tradition (Rewang cov cuav 'the impure', that is, alloyed) (see §4.3.1).

The genealogist/geneticist

By analogy with the interest of the genealogist in bloodlines and pedigree to determine the legitimacy of an element, this approach to purism relies on the concept of a pure line of descent of a language, and hence focuses on the identification and eradication of foreign elements. This is the approach followed by those who look to earlier pronunciations of Hmong to determine the standard pronunciation, or even dialect, for the present.

Thomas (1991) discusses purism from a primarily theoretical approach in great detail which it is not possible to do justice to here. See also Jemudd and Shapiro (1989) for an excellent collection of studies based for the most part on case studies.

Progressivism, conservatism

Progressivism and conservatism are constructed ideologies pertinent to several discourses, and are defined largely in mutual opposition. They have been noticed threaded through technological and literacy discourses, and particularly the nationist. They appear in support of strategies for lexical elaboration, position in regard to communications technology, interpretation of cultural narrative traditions, development of standardization tools such as dictionaries, and orthographic development. In each case, opposed positions arise from these two ideological positions. For instance, a progressivist approach to lexical elaboration incorporates loanwords from English and coined or calqued Hmong words in new Hmong dictionaries, while a conservatist approach treats new loans as code-switching and sets a slow rate of official acceptance of innovations from within Hmong lexical resources. While the immediate implications of strategies on various issues might be for, say, literacy or technology, the impetus for identification with either progressivist or conservatist stream is traceable to a preferred image of nationhood. That they are constructions rather than labels for inherent...
characteristics is evident in that practices categorised as one or the other can at times be based on entirely different principles. For instance, occurrences currently categorised as progress include on the one hand the movement towards a global community, and on the other hand the movement to claim nationhood at smaller and smaller levels of ethnic grouping and associated geographic boundary. In the case of the Hmong, what eventuates on the whole is that a conservatist imaging is aligned with Hmong traditions as practiced in Laos—spiritual and healing practices, more direct or literal interpretations of the narratives, focus on elements of the Laotian Hmong culture as dictionary entries rather than on elements of the cultures of immigration. Conversely, progressivism is aligned on the whole with adapting Hmong cultural identity to incorporate western models and elements of culture. The concept of progress implies that the one culture, set of concepts or discursive environment is newer than the other. It is true that the Laotian Hmong culture has existed for longer, and that for ex-refugee Hmong, the western environment is more recently encountered. However, the coexistence of the two cultures in the same time frame means that the construction of Laotian Hmong and other older cultures as superseded or belonging to the past is at odds with empirical evidence and a product of the westernist discourse.

5.3.1.4 A tapestry

The fact that I have been referring to the processes of standardisation in Hmong, patently multiple, under this unitary title, is a marker of their status as an identified object of discourse. At the same time, that I have been doing so contributes to bringing them into being as an identifiable object of discourse. But it has become apparent in this section not only that individual discourses are woven into larger constructions or discourse formations, but also that these larger formations have variable structure according to their realisation in a particular organisation, project or ideology.

It was my initial intention to schematise the order of discourses at this point, to show in a single diagram the mutual relations of support, opposition and adaptation. The structure of the relationships has emerged as too complex for a two-dimensional representation. A more useful medium for this purpose might be a tapestry or weaving. In this genre I could represent the composition of a single whole by many separate strands: how those strands are bound into groups, each of which function as a single yarn; the way that those composite yarns in some places combine with others to form single areas of shading, in some places are strongly contrasted to form hard lines of delineation, and in other places wind around other yarns to highlight their colour and emphasise their contrast with still other yarns. I could represent layers of successively reducing visibility; the interacting roles of warp and weft; the different structures apparent from the front of the work, where we usually look, and the back. A tapestry is an appropriate metaphor for the order of discourse in Hmong standardisation.
5. The back of the work

Hmong standardisation as a whole discourse formation is multifaceted. Each practice and statement—each version of a writing system, each instantiation of a standards organisation, each lexical elaboration policy in operation—has its own discursive structure. This high level of complexity was predicted in §1.2.4, in the characterisation of a discursive practice as always determined in the time and space that defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area.


Examining the discourses of a given localised enunciation does not result in a model that is immediately applicable to another, even a superficially similar, phenomenon. Rather, discursive structures must be assessed from the inside out, investigating what practices and statements are foregrounded in the particular local scenario, what are the discourses within which they are made possible, which others are called on for support, and against which others they are defined in opposition. Perhaps, then, like speech communities or speech varieties (see §1.2.2), the more useful way to view discourse formations is as a complex of relations in flux at all levels. In this view, there is no requirement on boundaries and characterisations to have either permanence or applicability to a wide range of instantiations, in order to be useful and meaningful as conceptual entities.

5.3.2 The location of authority

In this section, pursuing my goal of clarification of a single order of discourse, I return to the microscopic level of study: specifying in detail a single instantiation of the wider discourse formation I have been calling standardisation in Hmong, as it stands at one point in time, in a single project of a single working group.

In doing this I focus on what persons are treated as authority sources in the decisions and directions of the HLIA dictionary project. This question, in addressing the concrete, presenting face of discursive authority, is intended to provide windows through which to see from yet another vantage point the discourses in service as underlying, conceptual authority.

Discourse functions as authority in directing processes of standardisation: in the form of conceptual and physical artefacts, individuals and organisations. I have shown in §5.3.1 how the order of discourses shifts depending on the issue in focus, and by which individual or group, or from what position, it is being considered. This entails that the location of authority also shifts—whether this be at the level of a person, institution or artefact, at a primarily conceptual level, or, ultimately, at discourse level.
As discussed in §3.2.3.2, individuals and even, on a larger-scale, organisations, have agency but not sovereignty in their statements and actions, which continuously reproduce, reconfigure and reinterpret the possible frames of thought established in discourse. Because persons and institutions operate within current discursive realities in this way, it is possible in asking who or what is treated as an authority, to be at the same time querying which discourses are in authoritative position. The complete question, then, is: What is revealed about the underlying location of authority by the identity of the persons chosen as practical authorities?

Because the HLIA dictionary project is work in which I am directly involved, this will enable a fairly detailed account of the structures of its operation. However, it should be noted that my understanding is still a view mediated through my very particular position in the group. The points at which I do not have access to understanding of the projects and processes may not always be apparent to me. What follows, then, is one view of the structuring of discursive authority in these projects—that is, the view which can be seen from where I stand.

5.3.2.1 Subjectivity/Discursive identity

What is important to understand here is that I am referring not to individual identities conceptualised in and for themselves, but to their discursive identity. For instance, āŋ wî Yaj Soob Lwj was and is acknowledged, not on his own terms, but on the terms of the narrative tradition which set up the basis for his recognition. The teaching and actions associated with āŋ wî Yaj Soob Lwj were recognised as realising the texts of the narrative tradition—reconstituting the religious discourse in its local formation. Here is a clear example of the ongoing reconfiguration of previously existing texts and the way that events, persons and knowledge are interpreted in the context of discourses. To paraphrase Kristeva (see §3.2.3.1), the narrative tradition is recontextualised in the local, historical event, which is then seen as a text to be read, and is rewritten by the act of receiving it.49 This exemplifies the Kristevan (Bakhtinian) vertical (ambivalent) relationship between previously existing texts and their contexts in present history:

The texts and artefacts of the past are objects in our present-day world...we construct their historical meaning in the present day, and for the present day, by construing relationships among these objects and ourselves.


49...the text [is situated] within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them.' (Kristeva (1969 [1980]):65).
5. The back of the work

In this way discursive, not personal, identity is the basis of authority. For instance, whether or not the Liar specifically ordained certain directions for progress of the Hmong people is irrelevant to the fact that those directions are now intrinsically part of the doctrine of which his image is the functional figurehead. To focus on assessing the truth value of the orthodox history of the master would be to miss the point of his function as discursive identity. For this reason, in what follows I identify participants in the project in terms of the authority locations they hold, to mark the fact that what is important for the operation of the project is these people’s discursive identities.

The reinterpretation process begins right at the point of occurrence of the previous text/event being referred to: the actual actions and sayings of such teachers are of necessity selectively recorded and transmitted. As explained for my own case, engaged in writing about a case study outside of my ingroup(s)—what I record is what I notice, what I apprehend, what I consider important. These things are a function of who it is that is recording—or, of the subject position they take up within the discourse.

5.3.2.2 Authority locations

The profiles of participants in the dictionary project can be found in §1.3.1, being subsets of the speech communities identified in that section. Fig. 5.2 below summarises the working relations between participants who exercise a form of authority in the project.51

50 The same observation is made of Christian doctrine in Kazantzakis’ The last temptation, in which St Paul explains to the returned Christ that he is in person now irrelevant to the perpetuation of the tradition which has developed around the story of his life and teaching (Kazantzakis 1959 [1979]).

51 Readers who wish to compare this account with that in Eira (1998) will note changes in this structure in the four years’ gap between the two analyses. The history of these changes is sketched below.
Although he cannot be strictly called a participant, the legacy of Yaj Soob Lwj is the foundational motivating authority for the HLIA and all its activities. He is the provider of the script, together with explication of its symbolisms, and he initiated the particular ideology of Hmong identity and associated language attitudes that the HLIA now promote at all levels including specifics of the dictionary project. All artefacts produced by the group honour him in some overt symbolic form, such as inclusion of his name or a photograph in prominent position.

Ul aur Kub Yaj, who lives in Thailand, is the current spiritual descendant of Yaj Soob Lwj recognised by the HLIA as continuing the same line of teaching by progressive revelation. He is responsible only to the tradition of that revelation, characterised by the maintenance of Yaj Soob Lwj, as figurehead and source of inspiration. Consequently, he is the key authority on present interpretation of inspired knowledge, which has ramifications at ideological and practical levels. For instance, it is Ul aur Kub Yaj who has redesigned the grapheme style and
ordering system of the orthography as it is to appear in the dictionary. He is also the most influential contributor to lexical elaboration; providing new terms in some cases and ratifying preferred terms in others. Policy on all projects is referred to him.

I identify Kvb Yaj and Yov Yaj Soob Lwj as source locations.

The main HLIA representatives active in the dictionary working group currently are Kvb Yaj, Nom Suav, and Lis Loob. These three authorise and direct the course of the project, they are the main contributors of language materials, and they proofread all entries. They are at once immediately responsive to the authority of the source locations, and themselves function as authorities in regard to project activities, by such means as making policy decisions and authorising new projects. I refer to members of this group as core locations.

Yaj Lis is a particularly active member in this group, which I take to be due to his being more bicultural and bilingual than any of the rest of us, having lived in Laos and survived the refugee period on the one hand, and on the other hand having acquired sufficient English language proficiency as well as Australian cultural competence to have gained tertiary qualifications from two universities since he was relocated to Australia. The bulk of proofing, particularly where translations into English are concerned, is done by Yang Lee, and he generally "holds the chalk"—or in this case the whiteboard marker—at dictionary work sessions.

I have included Xyooj in this figure even though he has no apparent authority over any other persons; as he has an important role in making fonts, under design instruction from his father Lee Yang. Since the new font must be completed before the dictionary can be printed, the project is reliant on his skills and time. He has, then, some power in the project if not authority as such.

Other family members, in particular Poj Sua Muas and the mother of Yaj Lis, are called upon as authorities on particular lexical fields, such as ua neeb 'spirit ritual', kin terms, marriage and childbirth, and cooking. Contributing roles from within the Hmong-speaking community but outside the core decision-making group I call community locations.

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52 Stebbins (in press). The role implies being in control of the recorded result of discussions.

53 As explained in §1.3.1, it is more appropriate to refer to this person through her son than by name.

54 This designation implies that non-HLIA are acceptable sources of such knowledge. At present I have not ascertained the extent to which that is the case in practice. The visitor I mentioned in §5.2.1.2 was
5.3 Orders of discourse

I compile the dictionary by consultation with committee representatives together with topical input from Aura Yaj Lis' mother and Poj Sua. These additional contributions, together with those from all my other sources such as written texts, Hmong LG and existing dictionaries, must be approved through the core locations. As the diagram shows, I am the only participant to work directly on the dictionary database itself. This is my form of authority: actual data entry and management, synthesising language material and discussions and converting them into dictionary entries, turning policies into practice as they form, design of entry layout and choice of entry fields is my job. Like Eoi Xyooj, I do not have authority over the actions of any other participant; the power I have is linked to my knowledge or abilities and time input. I also assist with the final versions of Eoi Xyooj's fonts by consultation with Aura Lis Yaj, Nom Suav, and Lis Loob.

In reference to locations which directly produce artefacts, I use the designation terminal node locations.

In her role as academic supervisor, Jean Mulder is involved in forms of authority which are, again, related to her knowledge and experience, which influence the dictionary through me. Secondly, the requirements of the University which maintain me in my position and provide me with resources are mediated through her. It is interesting that a fairly crucial structural role for the continuation of the project as it is set up is in some respects invisible from the core impetus of the project. Similarly, Uri Kub Yaj is effectively invisible to all participants bar the core locations, who are the only people that communicate with him.

In our roles as non-Hmong invited participants, I refer to Jean Mulder and myself as outsource locations.

The locations thus identified refer not to persons but to roles. Consequently, like the roles of different discourses depending on the question at hand, individuals take up different locations depending on the role they are identifying with at the time. I have already identified myself as operating at both terminal node and outsource locations; Eoi Xyooj operates at both terminal node and community locations. Even Uri Lis Loob, prominent at a core location, shifts on occasion to a community location role when he is referred to as a source of traditional knowledge, since this is not the kind of knowledge crucially required of him in his core location role, as shown below.

Outgroup to the HLIA if support of the script and its tradition are membership criteria. However, he is ingroup if familial relations are more crucial. The specific membership of the HLIA is quite underspecified.

At a still wider scope, perhaps it includes myself as an active non-Hmong participant.
Fig. 5.3 shows the locations I have identified for each of the participants in the project:

![Diagram]

Some of these people are the acknowledged representatives of particular authority sources at the level of an institution or less formally constituted organisation. Fig. 5.4 re-presents the persons identified in the figure above in terms of the group or structural authority they stand for.
Fig. 5.4 Structural authority

The function of the committee is to authorise the dictionary as a whole, as well other projects
(whether directly linguistic, artistic or social) and significant policy adjustments. The HLIA here
refers to HLIA households—which, as I have noted earlier, is both underspecified and variable
as to its specific membership. This is the set of households that constitute the target group for
any projects. The university is currently the only location regularly outsourced, although at other
times various community facilities such as the local Community Health Centre have also been
involved.55

55The main outsource representative early on was Suzy Pinchen, Community Arts Coordinator at the
Meadow Heights CHC.
5. The back of the work

The establishment of the HLIA as an institution represents legitimation, as demonstrated by the experiences of its members at various stages during progression of the group towards independent organisation status. Initially, the nomination of the group as a branch of the HLI was an important milestone which was effective as both licence and motivation for accelerating projects of script dissemination, lexicography and opening a school. During the second stage, in which the HLIA has been moving towards autonomy, the question of whether to apply for legal recognition in the form of incorporation has emerged repeatedly. It is the legitimation function that makes this a contentious issue. On the one hand, incorporation is a prerequisite for most community-external sources of funding. On the other hand, some feel that incorporation could further strain the fragile relations between the HLIA and other Hmong groups, in particular the Hmong Australia Society, a pan-Hmong organisation which was formed to provide a solidarity base for Australian Hmong. Since other Hmong groups are also running language education programs and applying for funding and other forms of recognition, HLI members are concerned that incorporation could undermine the legitimation of the Hmong as a unit in the eyes of the Australian government, forcing funding bodies to choose which Hmong group is running the projects that deserve support. This could risk further fragmentation of the Hmong in Australia.

Finally, at the present stage of imminent independence from the American groups, with the shift to the primary recognition of Yaj KUB's authority, the Melbourne HLJ are again waiting for the launch of a new group identity, with all the distinguishing attributes of name, letterhead, flag and their own building, before the next set of projects—a new font, a set of publications, a new website—are released for further development and then dissemination. These projects at several points represent policies of the Melbourne group that are not shared by the American groups. The instatement of the Yaj Soob Lwj zim bwv buj buj cag Hmoob moj kuab bwv cag Hmoob keeb buj 'Yang Shong Lue Foundation Academy for the Hmong Written Language' is a necessary step before such active differentiation can be realised. This is its function of validating specific language planning efforts. Again, careful consideration of strategies to avoid alienation of existing groups are being discussed, such as the possibility of continuing to maintain the collaborative website as well as establishing a new one at a different site.

At all three stages, it is evident that a formal institution of standardisation carries considerable weight as an icon of authority, both internal and external to the community/ies. It validates specific standardisation or language planning decisions and activities; it consolidates boundaries between working groups; and it fulfills conditions for eligibility as a recipient of funding.
Fig. 5.5 shows the kind or content of the knowledge or resource which each of the authority locations represents.

The term administrative in this figure refers to practical functions such as organising finances, meeting spaces and work-time resources. Functions internal to the HLIA are managed by the core location, while I have the role of information resource in regard to external administrative systems (such as government grant sources or copyright laws) which may affect the projects in the community. I have distinguished linguistic and language knowledge in this figure; the former referring to training in language analysis, and the latter to L1 speaker knowledge, together with...
5. The back of the work

the ability to talk about language in semantic or cultural terms, and particularly proficiency in ếň ūr Phaj hauj.56

This figure shows the kinds of resource valued as being quite distinct for the different locations within the structure. Inspired knowledge is requisite at source locations. Language knowledge is central to core locations, while linguistic knowledge is referred to outsource locations. Technical knowledge is necessary only at terminal node locations. Special knowledge in certain semantic fields is a function of community locations. Strongly represented in the kinds of traditional knowledges required of this location are those commonly attributed to women cross-culturally. Sometimes what is required is the level of knowledge expected of an older person, or the specialist knowledge of a Ịv ūr txiv neeb (or, in the case of ịn ēr Lis Yaf mother, ūr ūr niäm neeb, the term specific to a female practitioner). Administrative resources are shared between core and outsource locations—but as just explained, the specific outworking of this is different in each case.

In some language communities, for instance amongst some aboriginal communities of Australia and America, traditional knowledges are located at the core of the authority structure, and carriers of this core authority are defined largely by their relation to this knowledge.57 In the present case, the only form of traditional knowledge centrally located is the interpretation of the cultural narrative in focus in this study. Carriers of other forms are not strongly identified with core locations. Rather, their knowledges are included more as tributaries, referred to during discussions as a topic arises. Evidently in this case oral or mythic history is of a different category to other forms of traditional knowledge. So again, such categories must be established on the basis of the localised situation—structures which are appropriate to one situation are not automatically transferable to another.

5.3.2.3 Authority and discourse

What is revealed about the underlying location of authority by the identity of the persons chosen as practical authorities?

56I use the coverall term language for this set of knowledges as this is the English term the HLI representatives use to describe ếň ūr Phaj hauj.

57Differently again, in Coast Tsimshian language projects (British Columbia), age or 'elderhood' is valued over language fluency (Tonya Stebbins, p.c.).
5.3 Orders of discourse

The final figure presents the locations in terms of underlying discourses which they represent. This figure is intended to represent the discourses located at group rather than individual level.

![Diagram of discourse authority]

**Fig. 5.6 Discourse authority**

The discursive identity of the source locations of the authority structure shows that the religious discourse is foremost in the HLIA projects. As they are the source authority figures, the kind of knowledge for which आए तेज सोब लवज and यश कर्क्षा are valued is the *raison d'être* of the HLIA projects. Policy decisions in the projects are based on an appreciation of the crucial role of this knowledge: the core locations realise the inspired knowledge of the source locations in the administration of the local organisation. That the emergence of the second leader is only a recent phenomenon, shows that it is ultimately the discourse, not the individuals, which are the authority. Before the recognition in Melbourne of यश कर्क्षा's spiritual lineage, HLIA leaders were content to continue work on the basis of traditions handed down through disciples of आए तेज सोब लवज living in the local and American communities. The appearance of यश कर्क्षा
5. The back of the work

Yaj did not change the motivating principles of the work. It changed who was the accepted carrier of authority.

The authority of H~Si Soob Lw'y is recognised in the context of narrative tradition, including the áń ãr dab naeg. These prophetic histories then constitute an instance of artefact as location of authority. Here as in many cases, supernatural inspiration, and especially the appearance of a messiah figure, are intrinsically bound up with a nationist discourse. The tradition of H~Si Soob Lw'y's teaching is devoted not only to spiritual advancement but to the advancement of the Hmong as a people, up to and including the acquisition of their own sovereign lands. Much of the respect for the áń ãr Phaj hauj, from non-HLI as well as HLI, arises from its symbology as a uniquely Hmong script. So the discursive identity of the source locations also indicates nationist authority bases.

The core location and the wider HLI also support a nationist discourse in that (i) they are based on a sense of being Hmong; (ii) they constitute a formal structure which both reflects the imaged Hmong nation and brings it into being; and (iii) their goal is to realise and maintain in practice a concept of Hmong language, writing and commonality. The traditional knowledges of the community locations refer to a common history and culture of the Hmong people.

The literacy discourse figures very prominently in this structure. The language knowledge of the core locations crucially includes knowledge of áń ãr Phaj hauj. The means by which the dictionary project is carried out reflects this: consultancy sessions centre on the writing up of language items by someone accredited with this kind of authority. In dictionary workshops, much discussion of a phrase or word may occur, but official sanction of a linguistic item is indicated when it is written on the board (usually by Lee Yang).

The authority configuration in this project seems to suggest that, while the HLI see it as crucial to gain accreditation in the scientist discourse, it is not a central motivating discourse of the same order as the religious/nationist. Scientist functions, including not only linguistic analysis but also resources of funding and time, are most strongly associated with the outsource locations. As discussed in §3.3.3 and elsewhere, the availability of resources in part produces the criteria of what constitutes science, knowledge and truth. For the HLI to access these resources through the University then, itself an icon of the scientist discourse, ascribes significant power to this discourse. This is a choice which is not inevitable or universally implemented by people engaged in their own language planning work.

58 Consider for instance the conditions under which the Christ appeared.
5.3 Orders of discourse

The technological discourse is in evidence at the terminal nodes of project implementation; but it is not indicated in the core locations. This indicates that technological mandates also are not centrally determining the projects. On the working principle that the identity of authority figures indicates the deeper-lying discursive authority structure, the technological discourse also ranks fairly low in the structure. This might at first be surprising given the very high interest demonstrated in establishing theimals as technologically viable but, as noted in §5.2.5.1, it is entirely consistent with the priorities demonstrated in the choice of script. The effort and time lag which was considered acceptable in order to develop and release a font for Phaj hauj contrasts markedly with statements by various RPA proponents, regardless of their shared desire for a unique writing system for Hmong, that any system but a roman-based is not a real option given the advantages a roman script offers in terms of technological access. Conversely, the orientation of the HLIA is first and foremost to the script, technology being primarily a means to an end rather than a primary determining force.

The kind of administrative knowledge specific to the university location is situated within the westernist discourse, in that a significant motivation for inviting the participation of university representatives was to access knowledge of western principles and practices.

Some conceptual tension is visible in where I am located in this structure in that I am authorised to a terminal node location—a fairly significant position—but the discourses which I am invited to represent are outside of those central to the core and source locations. This, together with my outsider status in terms of cultural and language knowledge, has the effect of bringing in different concepts of the shape of the project to those held by the instigators, directors and ultimate beneficiaries.

One example of this can be seen in the issue of prescriptivism in the HLIA dictionary project. A dictionary is necessarily a tool of prescription. Even a dictionary developed by principles of description—recording unselfconscious lexical selection, loanwords and coinages commonly encountered, pronunciation in context etc—then stands as a statement of how the language is used. For the HLIA committee, prescriptivism of a much higher order is an overt goal: the dictionary is directed towards representing a HmD lexicon which is devoid of loanwords and MNts pronunciations, and promotes terminology officially approved within the authority system of the group. It will support the teaching of correct citation pronunciation, higher-status lexical variants and sample sentences in written style.

At the same time, while I appreciate the nationist principles involved in this form of prescriptivism, they are not principles that I share. My background, including my linguistics training, leads me to discredit the idea of a pure language: I assume that a language at any given moment incorporates a compote of influences and multi-layered traces of contacts; I am suspicious of
privileging written and formal registers; and I am apprehensive of the effects on language maintenance of insisting on a particular subset of the lexicon—that is, a subset limited by purist exclusion of elements deemed to belong to other dialects or languages, and new elements formed from within the linguistic resources of Hmong but targeted to incorporation of concepts from another culture. So there is a direct clash of priority here—the kind of dictionary which would be authorised for community use must be based on principles of nationist and religious discourses, while the practical outworkings of these principles come into conflict with concepts of linguistic description, as well as language maintenance ideals, which are held at the primary terminal node location.

The selection of outgroup people for these kinds of tasks, whether by deliberate choice or more oblique processes, highlights a site of tension within orders of discourse. The most immediate effect in this case is that aspects of policy development are worked out sometimes among the Hmong participants, from the perspective of HLIA nationist-religious foundations, and sometimes among the Mab Suav (non-Hmong) participants, from the perspective of academic linguistic foundations. The HLIA actively seeks out the kind of authorisation offered in the scientist discourse, and also works within some of its principles in their approach to the script. The ongoing positivity of the HLIA towards any publications, papers etc that I have since wanted to produce in the academic context is indicative—the dissemination of such papers legitimates the work of the HLIA in an external context that matters to group representatives; but only the internal authority of the messianic tradition can legitimate decisions made for the work of the group. Where a tension must be resolved one way or another, the authority structure I have indicated in the above figures wins out. For my part, as I have stated, the scientist discourse is certainly not my only or even necessarily my primary operative discourse. Nor is it the only discourse operative in linguistics research. It is, however, the most prominent discursive context in which my participation is invited (by the HLIA) and approved (by the university), which thereby places me under requirements to represent scientist tenets, methods and products in the development of the dictionary. So here again the discourse is providing the subject positions—people take on roles as representatives of discourses in certain contexts.

The administrative aspect of the project seems to suggest also a functionalist discourse, which has not been a focus of the present study. Finances must be obtained, meeting places provided, communication networks maintained, decisions carried out. The financial component of this refers also to an economic discourse, which in this thesis I have most frequently discussed in terms of scientist legitimation criteria.

Finally, a gendered discourse is evident generally, in the kinds of authority locations assigned to women and men: although the representatives of the outsource location are both women, all core and source authority figures are men, as are all members of the HLIA committee. I noted
above that semantic fields associated with women are strongly represented at the community location: the relatively low position of traditional knowledges in the structure described here could be connected with this factor. Effects of this can be seen in that, for instance, the kin terms in the HLIA dictionary remain low in terms used by a female ego and terms referring to the female line, the ṭvū ṭk neej tsa, as distinct from the ṭk kwv tjl 'patriline', which is well represented.59

5.3.2.4 Conclusions: Moving outwards

I have shown in this section that it is not the identity of the particular people selected for positions in the project that critically demarcates their authority, but rather their discursive identity which instates and characterises them in particular locations in the structure. The discursive identities which appear at authority locations is revealing as to the order of discourse operative in a particular localisation. This is not the only potentially useful method of investigation of a discursive structure. Other methods would reveal different facets of the formation. Its advantage lies in that it approaches the analysis of a structure from observation of a tangible aspect. It also has the advantage of offering a method which could potentially be applied to other situations.60

By restricting the scope of investigation to this level of localisation it has been possible to depict in concrete terms an actual structure of operation. However, as suggested in §5.3.1.4, there is no single optimal scope within the limits of which a particular order of discourse is relevant. I have chosen the HLIA dictionary as a single realisation of discourse to analyse because it is an object of manageable dimensions and degree of boundedness. In theory I could also have chosen a more microscopic view, such as the order pertinent to the choice of ṭk Xyooj as the key producer of the new font; or a wider angle view, such as the discourses which together produce lexical elaboration directions in the Hmong community. Each shift of focus would reveal a corresponding shift in the kaleidoscope of discourse structuring, as discourses are actualised in a specific, local, practice.

In this thesis I have taken up a position that is wary of generalisation, arguing that discursive structures are not automatically transferable between localisations; and promoting appreciation of the small, the local, on its own terms. This does not at all imply, however, that the structure of

59 The same is true of other dictionaries; even Heimbach (1969 [1979]), who focuses on kin terms.

60 Note that this is a very different thing to attempting to apply a model of results to other situations, as pointed out above.
5. The back of the work

the small is independent of broader conditions and structures. A study of the outworking of local conditions has a distinct contribution to make towards understanding the larger discursive structures of standardisation. Just as the speech community can be delineated at varying degrees of scope, so a phenomenon such as standardisation can be viewed at different levels of discourse formation. What there is to be learned from the HLIA processes may or may not be a useful tool for observing those of an entirely separate group such as the Hmong language developers working with Minneapolis Public Schools (see §4.4.1.1). However, what there is to be learned from the HLIA processes is part of what is true of the wider concentric circles described in §1.3.1, which are its various superordinate sets. Fig. 5.7 indicates just two possible such sets:

![Diagram showing the levels of speech community: superordinate sets of the HLIA]

Fig 5.7 Levels of speech community: superordinate sets of the HLIA

The experiences of HLIA members are by definition one part of the experiences of all of these groups. In this way, a localised, microscopic view is useful towards an understanding of the whole without falling into generalisation. Rather, as pointed out in §1.2.4, 'accumulation of many such local-level studies builds up a picture of the whole through the perspective of (any number of) its parts'.
6. TYING OFF THREADS

This chapter summarises and assesses the main findings of this thesis, which range over the fields of descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics and critical applied linguistics.

6.1 Status and directions: Standardization

First, I draw together the many directions in which standardisation in Hmong has been developing. While the kaleidoscopic formation of the whole shows no signs of reducing to a streamlined selection of two or three major options, it seems that the range of directions promoted by different groups within each area of standardisation has for the most already emerged. Similar issues are now brought up each time a topic comes to the fore, whether in Hmong LG discussions, in HLIA meetings, in publications and in personal communications. The following gives a broad overview of the status of each type of standardisation work discussed in this thesis, and considers the questions remaining and likely directions in the foreseeable future.

Orthography

The ê̂̂̂ nam Phaj hauj is in use by a minority few in number but strong in support of the script. There have been cases amongst other peoples where a minority group has successfully maintained a form of knowledge, such as the case of some Hopi prophetic narratives now emerging into the public domain. A prime example in the domain of orthographies is Han'gul, which after its suppression by the mandarins on the death of its originator, King Sejong, was maintained for over 400 years by the ladies of the court, until its reemergence as a major Korean script around 1940 (Yule 1995). It is hard to guess at this stage the effect that expanding publication, raised awareness of the script amongst non-HLl, ongoing formal education in the script, and increasing participation in communications technology, could have given the importance to many Hmong of not only Hmong literacy but a uniquely Hmong literacy base, and the simultaneous world tendency towards smaller national polities at the same time as globalisation of commercial, financial and communicational systems. I am not suggesting that the status quo of the RPA is likely to shift, but only that there is no reason why the ê̂̂̂ nam Phaj hauj should not also continue to hold a significant place in the ecology of the language.

Interest in the script is growing slowly outside of the HLl, which although still strongly responsive to elements of Hmong cultural narrative such as the uniqueness of the script and its origins within Hmong ethnic group, allows expansion outside of the very particular and all-
6. Tying off threads

encompassing interpretation adhered to by the HLI. If this external interest continues to grow, the lack of orthodox restrictions on developers of the script could result in the emergence of further new implementations, with greater or lesser interchangeability with HLI versions.

It seems likely that at least two versions of the ȳnh ȳnh Phaj hauj will continue to be taught and disseminated, differentiated as follows:

- **The HLIA version** is used, taught and implemented in publications in Australia.
  - It represents seven tones, orthographically conflating tone ȳM with tone M.
  - Only HmD is overtly represented.
  - The grapheme style is plain and symmetrical.

- **The American version** is used, taught and implemented in publications in California, Minnesota and possibly elsewhere.
  - It represents eight tones, assigning the diacritic < ' > to tone M.
  - Two additional graphemes are available for the MNts consonants [t1] and [t1h1].
  - Grapheme styles are not restricted.
  - Order of grapheme units and keyboard configuration is different in the two versions.

Interchangeability between printed or written versions is fairly high, but the differences between electronic versions have yet to be resolved in practical terms. While differences of interpretation are resulting in divergent usages, the groups are also maintaining working relations, including for instance exchange of publications and continued support of the collaborative website. The significance of different ordering systems, particularly for the two dictionaries, is not yet known. Extension of the script in consideration of dialectal variation seems unlikely in the main organisations at this point.

The RPA is well established as the dominant script for Hmong in the west. Two distinct streams are fairly well developed, one for HmD and one for MNts. In addition, two sets of revisions are underway, which are applicable equally to both:

(i) Revision of consonant representation aiming to

- reduce the number of components of a consonant grapheme unit
- align consonant representation more closely with phonotactic structure
6.1 Status and directions: Standardization

- unify the representation of aspiration/devoicing
- represent prenasalised consonants as voiced.

(ii) Revision of word boundary analysis implicit in orthographic implementation, aiming to

- incorporate recent awareness and analysis of polysyllabic words
- facilitate greater ease of reading and comprehension
- achieve greater differentiation between words for such purposes as implementing spellcheck programs.

While the latter set of revisions seems to be heading towards general acceptance in the community and formalisation in media such as dictionaries, the former set remains controversial and implemented by only a few, though prominent, writers and leaders.

Dialect

While tensions continue between advocates of MNts and those identifying with the dominance of HmD, distinct standards are well established in terms of the orthography and tools of standardisation such as dictionaries. Complete assimilation of MNts seems unlikely given the strength of resistance of many speakers and the lack of large-scale power of majority speakers. Coalition is frequently discussed, for such purposes as standards academies, parallel publications and inclusive teaching programs.

The respective RPA orthographies for the two dialects seem adequate for reader/writers of either, although the correspondences between representations of equivalent phonemes could be established in greater detail to ensure the inter-readability that seems to be assumed on both sides. Scripts with less well established grapheme-sound correlations (that is, the ê̑̑ ê̑̑ Phaj hauj and the ê̑̑ ê̑̑ ê̑̑ Ntawv Pajntaub) require further clarification of whether a different grapheme is to be used in each dialect where the sounds are different, or only where no equivalent phoneme exists in the 'other' dialect.

Lexicon

The continued incorporation of loanwords from English is probably inevitable, but may be contained on an official level, affecting their inclusion in prescriptive teaching and reference tools. Lao loans are unlikely to increase in the west, although outside of the HLI, no movement to purify these loans is in evidence. In the HLI, the status of Lao loans is similar to that of English:
6. Tying off threads

although they occur in casual language use they are not officially sanctioned as part of the Hmong language.

Lexical elaboration on the basis of resources internal to Hmong is also ongoing. Where these make use of established productive strategies such as the use of prewords, or simple semantic parataxis such as ใ ແ ຫ ວ hūb ib 'day one' (Monday), their rate of acceptance and dissemination is fairly rapid. The formation of calques from well-known international or English words or sometimes concepts is a popular strategy. The rate of official acceptance of new words in the HLI is slower because of the authorisation process, which would seem to predispose language usage in HLI communities towards a higher rate of loanwords, despite official policy against this strategy. Geographic separation gives rise to differences in lexical sets circulated in schools, newspapers etc.

Categories of compounds, phrasal lexemes and other polysyllabic forms have been partially analysed. Further understanding of these categories, their members, and their perception could be utilised towards the development of standard representation desired by some. Some of this analysis interacts with establishment of loanword identification and sources.

Word classes are not well established to date. While a significant body of research is developing on specific classes, in particular the behaviour of classifiers and verbs, the identification and characteristics of other classes is weakly understood at present. The preliminary word class labels included in some dictionaries may need to be substantially revised at some point.

Communication and dissemination

The internet is well established as a vital medium of communication between dispersed groups, although at this stage the choice of ᥤ岬 Ṣaab Phaj hauj remains a barrier to an extent. This is partly alleviated by the availability of a limited number of fonts on the web (the limit is an advantage in this case, as it makes it inter-readability more likely). Jay Kue’s site provides software specifically designed for reading ᥤ岬 Ṣaab Phaj hauj on the web. However, major internet forums and discussion groups, as well as most Hmong websites, use RPA and English. Working relations between groups are divided primarily by script choice, dialect and distance being lesser factors in this regard. An academy of standardisation is still under discussion in the RPA community. Usually this is discussed in terms of coalitions between as many voices as possible, although people are starting to question the ultimate tenability of this ideal.

The production of formal dissemination tools including dictionaries, spellcheckers, language teaching materials, as well as the development of a body of literature of many kinds, is increasing. Modes include newspapers, journals and magazines, internet publications, published books and videos. The talking dictionary is a focus of activity, two comprehensive
6.1 Status and directions: Standardization

examples being already available, one in its second major revision. Two major ãëñî Phaj hauj
dictionaries are on the verge of being launched, including the first monolingual Hmong
dictionary. A parallel dictionary in both dialects has been suggested; a parallel dictionary in both
scripts may or may not be useful at some stage.¹

Closing comments

The above can be seen both as a summary of activities and projects in Hmong language work
and as a survey of the practical outworkings of discourses. Throughout this thesis I have
explored both discourses and linguistic or sociolinguistic manifestations of discourses in
parallel, in an attempt to demonstrate their interdependence. Developments in standardisation
become comprehensible when contextualised within the discourses that produce them, while
discourses are shifting and formless realms of possibility until they are created in the reality of a
given historical set of circumstances. In the following section I move back to a focus on the
discourses, considering their instantiation in the present context and the conditions under
which that instantiation is occurring.

¹Note that a parallel biography of Ñëñî Ñî Ñî Yaj Soob Lwj has already been published by the Motthem
Family, in Ñî Phaj hauj, RPA and English (Vang Ñëñî et al (1990)).
6. Discourses of standardization

6.2.1 Legitimation

The analysis of discourse in this thesis has focussed primarily on the composition and construction of the discourses which characterise Hmong standardisation, and the legitimation of standardisation by means of the discourses currently in focus in the Hmong community. The types of legitimation called upon fall essentially into five groups:

**Hmong unity**

- Development of standard written and spoken forms is promoted as a means to support ongoing potential for communication across a pan-geographical Hmong community.
- Choice or creation of a standard dialect is targeted to minimising the threat that dialect might pose to the unity of the nation.
- Literacy is viewed as a source of internal unification and common identification.
- A standardised orthography aims to maintain communication between scattered groups, and minimise or sidestep differences of dialect, area of residence, and ideologies or beliefs.
- A standard orthography and font simplifies long-distance communication via the internet.
- Academies of standardisation construct a pan-Hmong nationhood.

**The construction of Hmong identity**

- Historical solutions to differences in pronunciation implies that descent and common origins are part of what it is to be Hmong.
- The establishment of academies of language instates common administrative structures that stand in for the political organisation of a nation state.
- Standard forms of writing, lexical selection etc, reflect and support the preferred image, authority sources, values and direction of the Hmong people.
- The establishment of Hmong as a language of literacy is a step to realising a prophetic narrative linking literacy, through religion, with the attainment of nationhood.
6.2 Discourses of standardisation

• Dissemination of an identifiably Hmong writing system maintains Hmong narrative tradition as a significant aspect of Hmong community identity.

Language/culture maintenance

• Tools of standardization pass on elements defining or otherwise important to Hmong culture, such as Hmong kinship cultures. This thereby links standardisation through language maintenance with culture maintenance.

• The development of bilingual dictionaries supports the perpetuation of the Hmong language in the west by potentially making available a range of terms which allow the expression of concepts newly salient in the environment of immigration.

• Publication is targeted to language maintenance.

• The development of technological resources imbues the Hmong language with the sense of westernism/ modernism seen as necessary to retain attractiveness to young people.

• Establishing an orthographic variety and a set of ratified lexical forms is seen as a precursor to the production of formal written materials, including linguistic artefacts of culture maintenance such as histories and biographies.

• Lexical elaboration is targeted to facilitating the use of Hmong in all fields.

Status of language and speakers

• The development of monolingual dictionaries supports the status of Hmong as a language in its own right.

• Technological literacy and adaptation of Hmong writing to technological application includes the Hmong in the 'global village' symbolised by the internet, and demonstrates the capability and world standing of the Hmong people.

• Tools of standardisation and dissemination image the Hmong community as a nation recognisable among other nations.

• Dictionaries and the development of a body of published literature provide concrete artefacts of legitimation.

• Reproduction of conventional forms in these linguistic artefacts establishes the Hmong language as equal with other languages of literacy.
6. Tying off threads

Scientist accreditation

• Orthography development aims to bring current writing practices closer to speaker perception of phonotactics and phonology.

• Language academies and linguistic publications establish the Hmong language with scientific authority.

The legitimisation of standardisation in discourse seems to beg the question from a different angle: Why is standardisation a response to the conditions prevailing at the time it began to emerge? What does the story of Hmong standardisation as I have told it show about the reasons for its appearance?

Discursive shift

The standardisation drive of Hmong communities began in the context of both need and opportunity which emerged in a period of change. This period encompassed a complete relocation into a new environment—with unfamiliar culture, language, governmental systems, housing and systems of access to basic needs. It entailed a major concomitant shift in Hmong people's positions as subjects—who they were within the larger societal structure; their roles within their own family and community; the kinds of work, education and leisure activities they were engaged in.

The mission period in Laos and Thailand can be seen as the initiating phase of Hmong standardisation in the west, since it is work from this period that initiated the codification of Hmong in terms of writing, dictionaries, and early grammars and literary texts in the modern period, outside of China. At this early stage it was undertaken primarily by Christian missionaries from the west, starting with Samuel Pollard in the twenties, and escalating during the sixties with Protestant and Catholic missions in both Laos and Thailand. This period also is marked by a clearly definable change to the discursive framework of Hmong people. Here the change is characterised by the introduction of an unfamiliar religion, together with unfamiliar medical practices, educational settings, etc. The focus on orthography development as well as lexical elaboration (in the fields required for translation of scriptures and other introduced texts) is directly related to, on the one hand, the need (of missionaries) to facilitate Hmong access to the message of the missions; and on the other the opportunity (for both Hmong and missionaries)

2Although, as stated in §2.2.1.1, the majority of the world's Hmong live in China, the Hmong in the west have little to no recent connection with this historical circumstance.
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to establish literacy in Hmong. From the Hmong point of view, this was made easier by the quasi-neutral context of the missions than it had been without any interface between Hmong people and Lao or Thai governments, with their varying levels of tolerance to minority language development. From the mission perspective, literacy establishment is one of the baseline procedures for supporting community development, for broadly humanitarian purposes as well as directly evangelistic ones.

In the post-refugee period, with the radical change of context that ensued from relocation, the most highly foregrounded need evident over the broad-scope community has been to maintain/recreate Hmong identity. Consensus on and implementation of standard forms in both speech and writing are sought primarily as a means to retaining communication across the Hmong community—viewed variously as all Hmong people, all Hmong ex-refugees, or all speakers of the two dialects of immigration. Lexical elaboration is a major focus of community discussion and publications, as Hmong linguistic identity is extended to incorporate aspects of the cultures of immigration. Semantic fields relating to traditions of life in Laos are also the subject of much enquiry and debate, with the goal of maintaining these defining elements of culture in the knowledge and language base of the Hmong in the west. A significant aspect of the need to maintain identity is the concern for language maintenance in the rising and ensuing generations; language being a strong marker of national identity in itself, as well as containing within it a means to access the knowledges and practices of the older culture. The proliferation of community language schools operating in Melbourne for second- and later-generation descendants of immigrants from many countries is testimony to the importance of language/culture maintenance.

At the same time, opportunity to carry out language development work has opened up with migration to the west. Publications and communications technology are more readily available to the everyday person, governmental policies are more tolerant of minority language work, and a higher level of formal education and literacy is the norm. For a people with a long tradition of expectation of a written mode for their language, the circumstances of relocation produce opportunity as well as need.

The mandate of the HLI to establish the êk ñî Phaj hauj and use this as a basis for their standardisation projects is based more overtly on a religious than on a nationist discourse. It is certainly interesting, however, that the appearance of messiah figures such as êk ñî Yaj Soob Lwj is almost invariably connected with a time of political struggle. Such conditions predispose people to accept or even expect a manifestation of divine aid, especially when a
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candidate for this role is seen as a suitable interpretation of mythic histories of the people. For those who accepted as a manifestation, this also manifested a change in the prevailing discourse formation. The prophetic narrative reached an important milestone at this point, requiring a revision of position within both religious and nationist discourses. Instead of a subject position of an oppressed, waiting people, contemporary Hmong took on a new position as activists of change, actualising the promises of the narrative. Again we see conditions of change giving rise to the twin conditions of need and opportunity, utilised amongst other things as an impetus for language development.

The western model

The discursive environment of the west promotes standardisation. For the Hmong in the west, the highly standardised languages of English and to an extent French, are the most salient models of successful world languages. Their literate tradition is long standing and broadly established. Their standards are comprehensively worked out and thoroughly established. Their speakers are strongly represented in world affairs and power structures. They are national languages in the countries to which Hmong have immigrated and, as colonial languages and/or languages of foreign aid, armed forces etc, prominent in the countries of origin. They are languages of the powerful. The model of these languages is one that Hmong immigrants engaged in language work actively draw on. It is a model that epitomises what constitutes a developed language—what is worthy of respect in a language, especially in written form. Developed languages are imaged as having a standard dialect, and a standard orthography. They have official institutions that make and disseminate decisions about preferred linguistic forms. They have reference works such as dictionaries and spellcheckers which prescribe correct usage. This is the context in which Hmong standardisation projects—and those of many other minority language groups—are launched, and which strongly informs their shape and direction.

Standardisation and authority

Standardisation responds to the systems of authority in place: at personal, institutional, and discursive levels. The response of the HLIA and wider HLI to the advent of as a manifestation of and his script is not only to teach reading and writing. It is also to aim for a controlled consistency of usage that honours the hierarchy of authority represented in the script. The script is not an independent artefact to be developed according to the shifting needs and

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3 This is a recent interpretation of the progress of Jeanne Pucelle, as represented in the 1999 movie production Joan of Arc. Consider also the conditions of the appearance of the Christ.
6.2 Discourses of standardisation

circumstances of its users—to be adapted to existing technologies, other models of orthography familiar to a new set of learners, or innovative ideas of pan-dialectal application. Its implementation must conform to an orthodox model that is maintained both over time and across groups of users.

The secondary effects of the authorisation of standard forms is that, once established, they begin to take on authority of themselves. That is, particular forms chosen originally because they express spiritual symbology, allegiance to a nation, or advocacy of a political position, become markers of education, class, modernity. They become requirements in the system which distributes access to desirable positions, a hearing, credibility. This is the point at which the cycle of hegemony emerges. The standard is selected by dint of its relation to the power structures already in place. It is the usage of a majority—that is, a dominant group, whether or not they are more numerous. Establishment of the standard realises, identifies, and separates groups of more and less central members of the language community. Those whose usage is closer to the selected forms are privileged both in terms of the standard appearing normal or natural to them, and in terms of the 'goods' for which they qualify because of their control of the standard:

A standard language is a code in which the separating, solidarity and prestige functions of language are optimally operative

*Thomas (1991): 115–116*

Especially in a dominant society, these 'central members' will be the people who most readily rise to positions of power and accreditation, thereby perpetuating the dominant position of the standard and its speaker/writers. In this way, because the standard is not neutrally selected or implemented, standardisation is positioned counter to diversity. People disadvantaged by the choice of standard may object to the stigmatisation of their variety or usage, or they may accept the structure that locates their variety as 'sub' standard. In either case, their language is marked as marginal, and the only clearly apparent route to avoid stigmatisation in regard to the central community as less knowledgeable, less capable etc, is to acquire the standard forms. In this way, standards are self-perpetuating; generally being overturned only by a major and deliberate linguistic revolution such as a purism movement. At this second-generation level, standardisation is itself the motivation for implementation of standardisation.

6.2.2 Counterpositions

In spite of all this, some counterpositions to standardisation have been observed in the course of this thesis. In the Hmong case study, counterpositioning has mostly been a matter of scope of standardisation. In §1.3.2 I identified three major criteria for identification of subgroups in the
6. Tying off threads

Hmong community: area of residence, dialect, script. These are criteria delimiting the scope of standardisation.

In the case of area of residence, while no one is advocating intentionally separate development on this basis, divisions are emerging by default due to levels of contact between people of different countries, states, and community network bases such as schools. While this is in large part a concern which motivates standardisation work, it also forms limits of scope in that the jurisdiction of a given working group is restricted to, for instance, the schools in which their work is utilised, or the self-identified members of the community they are responsible to.

In the case of dialect, both default and intentional limits of scope are apparent. Firstly, people speak the dialect of their family. Since in the context of a minority language the kind of social benefits associated with conforming to a standard are less vital to survival than in a dominant language, this is likely to continue as the norm. Secondly, separate writing systems have been developing in part as a logical response to the featural structure of the RPA—speakers note those features which have surface realisation in their dialect—and partly as a conscious development of the orthography motivated by dialect allegiance. What is not clear yet is whether some sections of the MNts-speaking community will dissociate from the standardisation work of the majority group altogether, as a response to ongoing neglect of their dialect. This would result in at least two separate groups as defined in regard to the scope of standardisation.

Script forms a distinct border between standardisation working groups. Within the HLf, even an active interest in the ăń ăñ Phaj hauj is not enough. To be fully included in the group, proponents must work within the tradition of ăń ăñ Yaj Soob Lwj and group interpretations of an orthodox course of action. As I have noted, splits are certainly possible even within this framework; but individual interpretations and scientist-based research in isolation from the religious discursive context are not incorporated into the work of the groups.

There are some Hmong also who question the idea that standardisation is necessary at any level, as suggested for instance by Tom Hang's comment on the orthographic representation of word boundaries:

I think it's a matter of CHOICE whether or not we use compound words or don't.

Hmong LG: March 1997

---

4Overwhelmingly, that of their father.
6.2 Discourses of standardisation

Mühlhäuser (to appear) argues against the need, assumed in conventional language planning procedures and principles, for

clear hierarchical differences in status and power for different languages, the development of (alphabetic) writing systems and the compatibility of languages with modern mass media as well as the requirement of intertranslatability.

He cites the case of:

my own language Alemannic (or if you prefer Alamanisch, Alemanisch, Alemannisch), which in spite of its adverse history survives—unbounded, unregulated and unofficial.

That standardisation is not necessarily a condition of ongoing vitality is supported by the continued existence of such languages regardless of their immediate linguistic environment of powerful, standardised languages such as German.

Similarly, Lemke (1995) questions 'the ideology of standard languages that their standardisation is necessary for widespread communication, for specialised activities, and even for logical thinking' (ibid:143). Referring also to Milroy and Milroy (1985), Lemke cites as an extreme example of this ideology the 'hyper-standardized' variety created in Standardized Written English, whose 'canons of correctness are drastically more limiting of diversity...than is necessary for clear or even for minimally ambiguous communication' (Lemke 1995:143).

Lemke proposes instead a concept of the community as 'organized heterogeneity, not the sharing of practices but the systematic articulation of differences' (ibid:151):

If community does not depend on shared practices, than a community does not require a single uniform policy on all matters. It does not require institutions to determine and enforce that policy over wider and wider scales of social organisation. What it requires instead are institutions to work out how to integrate, or at least interarticulate, divergent policies and practices at various scales of social organisation.

Certainly this definition of the community appears to have relevance for understanding the Hmong situation. The diversity of the community is evident in functional terms of area, dialect and script, as summarised above; and in discursive terms of core values of national identity, the
6. Tying off threads

importance of spiritual and symbolic elements in language, and ideological positions in regard to
technology and westernisation. Different needs are salient in different sections of the
community, depending on factors including all of the above as well as numbers of Hmong,
availability of financial and other kinds of resources, levels of literacy and technological skills,
numbers of aged and young people. Perhaps then the more useful and longlasting forms of
large-scale language planning will be those which acknowledge the diversity which is taking
place on the small scale, and aim to ‘interarticulate’ the many streams of development under way
in different groups, rather than focussing on the dissemination of forms chosen as central.
Intertransliteration programs such as proposed by Txoovtuam mē sān (Hmong LG: May 1998), or
formalised exposure to both major dialects in language teaching and/or reference materials, are
examples of this kind of approach. A goal of incorporation rather than deciding what constitutes
the ‘majority’ would require the ‘involvement of as many stakeholders as possible in the
management process’ (Mühlhäusler to appear).

6.2.3 Discursive formations of Hmong standardisation

The following summarises the structure of standardisation processes in Hmong:

- Hmong discourses of nation, religion and literacy are interwoven in a strong cultural
  narrative of varying interpretation.

- Hmong imaging of themselves as a nation is central to the standardisation drive and its
directions.

- Working principles based on religious orthodoxy constitute a significant expression of this
  imaging.

- Goals of literacy are located within goals of nationhood. The realisation of literacy is a
  means to the realisation/perpetuation of nation.

- Standardisation activity based centrally on the religious discourse is situated in opposition
to the scientist discourse. The westernist position within the religious discourse co-opts
the scientist discourse.

- Choices motivated in the Hmong community by the religious discourse also locate this
discourse as marginal to the technological discourse.

- Prevailing conditions of technological and scientist legitimation criteria direct and channel
Hmong language development; through financial and other forms of assistance, and
through available tools of communication and publishing.
6.2 Discourses of standardisation

- The position of standardisation processes in relation to ideologies and conditions produced by the westernist discourse affects the ease of access to resources.

- The westernist discourse emphasises a progressivist approach, embedded in a nationist perspective. This informs views of science, religion, literacy and technology.

- Hmong standardisation makes use of and is subject to the model of powerful western languages and literacies, for definitions of a developed language, and methods and genres of achieving this status.

- The literacy discourse is manifested in part by the technological, as a highly salient literacy.

These are principles and structures which produce and restrict the practice of standardisation of Hmong in the west. They are realised in the detailed picture of practices and statements that I have drawn in Chapter Four; and in the complex of discourse configurations described in Chapter Five.
6. Tying off threads

6.3 Status and directions: Research

In this closing section I consider some possible uses of the research findings of this thesis, questions posed and possible directions for future enquiry.

**Cultural history**

Cultural narrative has been shown to be an important theme affecting Hmong approaches to language and identity issues. While concepts such as core values and social identity theory have been fairly thoroughly absorbed into approaches to language work, further investigation of the narratives that are represented in the core literature (oral or otherwise) of a given group of people could prove useful towards understanding the pressures and directions of language planning.

Some aspects of the formation of standardisation observed in the case study are particularly linked to the ex-refugee status of the Hmong people. Although there are similarities between conditions of language development for other kinds of minority groups, such as indigenous people and immigrant populations, a set of circumstances can together be seen as characteristic of an ex-refugee population. These include:

- large numbers of people immigrate from the same ethnic-geographic group
- relocation of this large group is relatively rapid
- people are dispersed across wide distances and even between countries
- separation from the homeland is likely to be long term or permanent
- there is a significant shift in the cultural and linguistic environment in a single generation
- basic features of work, finances, home and sometimes family must be reestablished from the beginning.

I have shown that these factors affect:

- the urgency of language/culture maintenance
- the interest in publication in the first language and education in both first language and the dominant language of immigration
- speakers' conception of their national identity
6.3 Status and directions: Research

- approach to the culture(s) of the country of immigration
- rapidity of lexical elaboration
- attitudes to established and incoming loanwords
- the need for external support of various kinds
- the importance of long-distance communication.

A large proportion of linguistics research focused on language maintenance and shift has been oriented to indigenous and immigrant minority needs. The effects on language needs of refugee and post-refugee circumstances warrants further investigation.

**Orthography development**

The analysis of use and development of the Hmong scripts current in the west shows that there is a gap between the solutions of linguists and of speakers. This gap relates sometimes to the gradation between deep and shallow orthographies, and sometimes to considerations of extra-linguistic symbolism embedded in writing systems. On both counts, it seems that outgroup linguists working on new orthographies or revisions of existing ones are more likely to produce work of long lasting usefulness to the community by not only consulting closely with speakers, but prioritising speaker perception of the phonology and of political or other symbolic investments in the writing system. While this appears to be the aim of many field linguists, results suggest that orthographies are often too shallow (e.g., diacritics are lost) or that extra-linguistic considerations are dealt with too fast (communities resist the revised orthography).

Sometimes it appears that the linguist's traditional focus on segmental phonology misses potentially important features of the sound structure. The \( \text{\textit{seev}} \) feature of Hmong (see §2.4.2.3) was originally represented in the RPA in terms of its onset, but speaker perception of salient features appears to focus on its prosodic qualities. Consequently its representation in RPA has been lost. Sometimes segmental phonology presents theoretical obstacles which considerations of non-linear phonology could dissolve (such as the question of aspiration versus devoicing in Hmong sonorants).

Where the speech community's goals are at odds with the status quo (e.g., a community script is difficult to manage with existing technology, or an orthography which differs from that of a closely related neighbouring language or dialect is preferred), solutions may be available
6. Tying off threads

outside of the central approaches (eg the script remains handwritten, fonts and transliteration programs are developed). 5

Discourse theory

I have extended the theoretical approach developed from the work of Foucault and others to apply more directly to descriptive linguistics. This is an avenue which could be fruitfully explored further, towards

- an expanded theoretical position which is better equipped for application to work with language communities

  —addressing sociological, political and ideological conditions, factors of purism, conservatism and progressivism, prescriptive and descriptive goals, and the changing roles of researcher and consultant, or of ingroup and outgroup worker.

  —incorporating these factors with those of language status and environment, linguistic parameters, conventions and theories of linguistic analysis, and the status of technological and other resources

- making greater use of theoretical and philosophical understandings gained in other disciplines

- improved understanding of current theoretical and procedural assumptions and their limitations

- greater flexibility of movement within the web of intertextual and interdiscursive resources

- improved understanding in crosscultural communications

- more effective ways of working in regard to the structures of power and authority, both those internal to the speech community and productive in the broader environment

The specific application of this extended theory to Hmong standardisation has allowed for the study of a localised set of discursive practices specific to, first one, then a series of connected speech communities. The study has shown:

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5 For instance, Bill McGregor (p.c.) suggests that speakers of some Western Australian languages may be being sold short when they are given a limited range of options, regardless of the fact that the possible options may be limitless.
6.3 Status and directions: Research

- how the image of the nation is developed
- how this shapes the goals and activities of standardisation
- the role of a scientistic framework in producing and legitimating certain priorities, focuses and methodologies in language work
- the construction of opposition between rational and extra-rational, scientist and religious motivations and directions
- the interactions between religious authority and language authority
- the emergence of technological fluency as a prestigious form of literacy
- the effects of a broad discursive formation such as the westernist to influence the conceptual objects formed within other discourses
- the potential for significantly different realisations of the same discourse, giving rise to very different ideological positions and hence goals and procedures
- the relationship between authorities in personal or institutional form, authority as a concept, and discourses as structures of legitimation
- how differences in the order of discourse operative (the particular configuration of discourses for a given group) serve to functionally separate community subgroups, as well as identifying points of conflict between ingroup and outgroup members.

This localised study can be used towards piecing together a jigsaw of the discursive conditions relevant to any groups for which the Hmong communities researched are definable as component parts. It can aid in understanding the circumstances of ex-refugee communities, of minority language planning work, of Hmong people, of reader/writers of non-roman scripts, of languages of emergent literacy. It can also be used solely to feed back into the small communities and specific projects on which the study is based: to take stock of the discursive structure producing standardisation processes to date, and assess what strategies of identification, counteridentification or disidentification are available, what is useful or desirable about the current formation and the directions it is facilitating, what alternative structures might be possible, what new or suppressed paths might be preferable to some ends or groups.
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1Title in â¢ Phaj hauj Stage Three as per original.


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APPENDICES
A. Reading guides to orthographies

Appendix A. Reading guides to orthographies

A.1 ᐄᐲ ᖨᒨ ᖊᐧ (ᐵᐴ ᖯᐧ) ᐅᐸ ᖯᒻᓂ (Llawj ob-'Stage Two')

The ᐄᐲ ᖨᒨ ᐅᐸ ᖯᒻᓂ has two types of grapheme unit: a consonant unit and a combined vowel+tone unit.

Vowels and tones

The following chart shows the representation of the vowel phonemes. Note that this is an abstraction, as (i) vowels are always written as a unit of basic grapheme+diacritic; (ii) unqualified vowels have an inherent consonant /k/-; and (iii) a vowel is not considered separable from its tone value:

![Vowel phonemes chart]

Fig. A.1 Vowel phonemes in IPA and ᐄᐲ ᖨᒨ ᐅᐸ ᖯᒻᓂ

Tone is represented by the choice of basic vowel grapheme plus a diacritic. The two basic graphemes available for each vowel phoneme make it possible to reuse diacritics in the same vowel+tone set. A given tone is not consistently represented by the same diacritic, although six
of the tones consistently select the same set of vowel graphemes. The simplest way to show tone representation, then, is by means of the rows or ő kab used in the HLI:

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<tr>
<th>vowel/tone</th>
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Table A.1 (=2.4) Vowel+tone grapheme units

Note that tones /1/ and /4/ can only be distinguished by syntactic and/or semantic context.

Consonants

Consonant units also take the form <basic grapheme + diacritic>, allowing for re-use of the basic grapheme for three different consonants. No phonological principle governs the choice of consonants forming a given set. The diacritic has simply a distinguishing function, and does not represent any feature of articulation. Consequently, the simplest way to show the consonants is in the ő kab conventional in the HLI. Again, some abstraction from actual usage is involved in this table, since an unqualified consonant is always followed by -/au/, usually with tone /4/.
### Table A.2 (=2.7) Consonant grapheme units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grapheme</th>
<th>Other Graphemes</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
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<td>N_tsh</td>
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</table>

**Other graphemes**

The main logographic and other graphemes in current use by the HLIA at the time of writing are set out in Table A.3:
Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phaj hauj</th>
<th>Gloss/ equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ใ</td>
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<td>໓</td>
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</table>

| punctuation etc | ๑  | ?  |
|                | ๒  | !  |
|                | ๓  | seev  |
|                | ๔  | reduplication  |

| other logographs | ๐  | &  |
|                 | ๑  | year  |

Table A.3 Other graphemes

<> placed at the end of a word indicates the free rising tone associated with a specific class of phrase-final interjectives. Citation tone of these particles is not well established.

Writing order

Grapheme units in Phaj hauj are written in the order V>C, but pronounced in the order C>V:

Ex. A.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phaj hauj</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ةึ</td>
<td>/ŋɔː/</td>
<td>'Hmong'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.2 Roman Popular Alphabet

The RPA is essentially a featural writing system, representing complex consonant phonemes as clusters of articulation features, and notating diphthongs by their start and end points.
Fig. A.2 gives the vowels as written in RPA, while Table A.4 (overleaf) gives the consonants.

Monophthongs

Diphthongs

Tone is written syllable-finally:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>RPA</th>
<th>Sample word</th>
<th>RPA</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>pol</td>
<td>pob+</td>
<td>round thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>pol</td>
<td>pom</td>
<td>see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>pol</td>
<td>pol+</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>pol</td>
<td>pov</td>
<td>throw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(o)</td>
<td>pol</td>
<td>po</td>
<td>pancreas1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>pol</td>
<td>pos</td>
<td>thorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>pol</td>
<td>pog</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>ped</td>
<td>ped</td>
<td>that up there</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.5 Tone representation in RPA

1 Or possibly 'spleen' (Heimbach 1969 [1979]).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>labial</th>
<th>dental</th>
<th>post-alveolar</th>
<th>alveo-palatal</th>
<th>palatal</th>
<th>velar</th>
<th>uvular</th>
<th>glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[+lat. release]</td>
<td>[+voice]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stop</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>pl</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d dl</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ph</td>
<td>plh</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>dh dlh</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>kh</td>
<td>qh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>np</td>
<td>npl</td>
<td>nt</td>
<td>ndl</td>
<td>nt</td>
<td>nc</td>
<td>nk</td>
<td>nq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nph</td>
<td>nppl</td>
<td>ntl</td>
<td>ndlh</td>
<td>ntl</td>
<td>nch</td>
<td>nkhl</td>
<td>nqhl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tx</td>
<td>txh</td>
<td>ts</td>
<td>tsh</td>
<td>ts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ntx</td>
<td>ntxh</td>
<td>nts</td>
<td>nts</td>
<td>nts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ml</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>ny</td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hm</td>
<td>hml</td>
<td>hn</td>
<td></td>
<td>hny</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fricative</td>
<td>f v</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>sz</td>
<td>xy</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approximant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A.4 Consonants in RPA and IPA
A.3 Comparative tables

On the basis that the patterning of the Ɪ�性 Ɪ Phaj hauj is best appreciated by the conventional arrangement into 5 kab 'rows', and on the assumption that for most readers the Ɪ属性 Ɪ Phaj hauj is the script whose transliteration will be most needed, the following charts are arranged according to Ɪ属性 Ɪ Phaj hauj order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel/Tone</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>-b</th>
<th>-m</th>
<th>-n</th>
<th>-r</th>
<th>-s</th>
<th>-q</th>
<th>-d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ee</td>
<td>ee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>au</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>ai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oo</td>
<td>oo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aw</td>
<td>aw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ua</td>
<td>ua</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia</td>
<td>ia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.6 Vowels and tones

Note: MNts /a:/ is not represented in HLIA usage of the Ɡ属性 Ɡ Phaj hauj
### Table A.7 Consonants

Note: The MNts lateral-release dental stop series is not represented in HLIA usage of the ɖ ŋ ṇr

Phaj hauj

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>RPA</th>
<th>IPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phaj haul</td>
<td>ɾ</td>
<td>ɾ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nk</td>
<td>Nk</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntsh</td>
<td>N_{tsh}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>th</td>
<td>N_{th}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>N_{p}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ty</td>
<td>N_{ty}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jh</td>
<td>N_{Jh}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nh</td>
<td>N_{nh}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch</td>
<td>N_{Ch}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>N_{Th}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl</td>
<td>N_{Pl}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mh</td>
<td>N_{Mh}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nh</td>
<td>N_{Nh}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph</td>
<td>N_{Ph}</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phaj hauj**
Appendix B. Introduction to Hmong typology

Hmong exemplifies a number of linguistic features commonly found in language families of Southeast Asia. Enfield (2000) compares key features of the language families of the region, including:²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Austro-Asiatic</th>
<th>Hmong-Mien</th>
<th>Sinitic</th>
<th>Tai-Kadai³</th>
<th>Tibeto-Burman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>classifiers</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serial verbs</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lexical tone</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepositions</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head precedes modifier</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>±</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.8 Features of Southeast Asian language families

Norman (1988) compares Modern and Classical Chinese with a number of languages including Hmong:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>Mod Ch</th>
<th>Class Ch</th>
<th>Thai</th>
<th>Li</th>
<th>Viet</th>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>Mien⁴</th>
<th>Yi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>monosyllabic tendency</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analytic</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syntax &amp; morphology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lexical tone</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classifier</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obligatory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with numeral</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.9 Features of Southeast Asian languages

²Because some features are mentioned in more than one source, only a selection of the features referred to in each source is included.

³A hypothesised language family including the major branch Tai (Enfield 2000).
Appendices

Further characteristics observed of the region by Migliazza (1996) are also featured in Hmong, including:

- sentence final particles
- a verb meaning 'to exceed' or 'to pass' as a comparative
- tag questions
- compound nouns and verbs
- glottalised consonants
- four-syllable elaborate expressions.

Finally Bisang (in prep)\(^4\) (see also Bisang 1996) discusses the tendency towards indeterminacy in languages including Hmong, Vietnamese, Khmer and Thai. Indeterminacy or lack of obligatory marking is characteristic of categories such as valency, reference, case, causativity and number.

These and other features introduced above are not entirely restricted to a geographical area. Riddle and Stahlke (1992), referring also to Yoruba, describe Hmong as an extreme-end representative of languages which underspecify dependency relations in the surface structure—in particular the incomplete differentiation of adjectives and prepositions from verbs (cf discussion of Hmong in §2.5.1). According to Riddle and Stahlke (1992), Yoruba also exhibits typological characteristics such as those noted above for languages of Southeast Asia; including verb serialisation, monosyllabic, compounding as the primary word formation strategy, parataxis and tonal phonology. Pawley (1993) discusses similar underspecification characteristics in the Papua New Guinea language Kalam: use of verbs in a semi-grammaticised function to indicate, for instance, aspect and location; and an extensive use of collocations as phrasal lexemes, all of which are also characteristics of Hmong (see §2.5.1 and §2.5.2). Further comparable characteristics of Kalam discussed by Pawley include analytic structure, verb serialisation, and monosyllabic morphemes.

\(^4\) 'Yao' in the original. This term is now dispreferred as it has pejorative connotations.

\(^5\) Thanks to Walter Bisang for an early draft of this work, as prepared for the Australian Linguistics Institute 2000. See also Bisang (1996).
Appendix C. Other scripts

Over the last two centuries, at least thirteen writing systems for Hmong have been proposed or implemented to some degree. These are summarised in Table A.10 (overleaf). As several linguistic surveys of these scripts are available, I concentrate here on the sociopolitical functions of a major selection of proposals. Although the issues are not entirely separable, I group the writing systems according to their primary function as foreign political or religious (that is, Christian), or indigenous authorship.

Political motivations

At least five alphabets have been proposed under pressure by political powers for the Hmong to assimilate or denote allegiance (Table A.10 #1-5). They are characterised by a lack of emphasis on consultation, derivation on the whole from the script used for the political/national group in question—and a lack of significant headway amongst the Hmong themselves. This is partly attributable to the lack of consistent teaching of the writing systems, but also to ongoing Hmong resistance to assimilation.

A Chinese romanised system was developed along with several other Pinyin-based orthographies for Chinese minority languages around the fifties. With a long history of marginalisation or outright suppression and persecution of Hmong in China, the official status of such a system, being based on the dominant language and its new script, and imposed without consultation, suggests a compromise assimilationist position rather than a serious concession towards Hmong autonomy. Despite its official status, it has never been consistently taught or promoted amongst the Hmong themselves, so that it remains largely a somewhat obscure academic tool. Given this situation, it would seem that the development of the script functions primarily to satisfy a bureaucratic need to seen to be facilitating a linguistically unified China.

In Vietnam, a Vietnamese-based writing system developed by North Vietnamese linguists in the late fifties remains virtually unutilised. This neglect may be due to the traditional animosity between Hmong and Vietnamese, which was intensified by historic events from the early French colonial period (Hamilton-Merritt 1993).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Script</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Derivation</th>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Author(s)/origin</th>
<th>Current usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chinese roman</td>
<td>late 50s</td>
<td>Pinyin</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Official in PRC</td>
<td>PRC academic; low Hmong usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pathet Lao</td>
<td>late 60s</td>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Pathet Lao</td>
<td>some publications; no current usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vietnamese</td>
<td>late 50s</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>North Vietnamese</td>
<td>some publications; no current usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Whitelock Thai</td>
<td>late 60s</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Whitelock (Protestant mission)</td>
<td>as at 1990, low Thailand usage of revised version³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Homer-Dixon</td>
<td>late 30s</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>related to MNts</td>
<td>Homer-Dixon (Christian mission)</td>
<td>some publications; no current usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Pollard</td>
<td>late C19</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>A-Hmao</td>
<td>Pollard (China Inland Mission)</td>
<td>?some use in China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Savina</td>
<td>pre-20s</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Savina (Catholic mission)</td>
<td>some publications; no current usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Trung</td>
<td>pre/early 30s</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>MNts</td>
<td>Trung (Vietnamese Christian mission)</td>
<td>Biblical translations; no current usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. ႐႔ ႐႔ ႓ ႔ Ntawv Puaj Txwm</td>
<td>ancient</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>HmD</td>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>possibly some use in sacred contexts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.10 Other Hmong scripts

¹ Thanks to Nick Enfield for a sample of this script.


³ Ibid.
In Laos, adaptation of the Lao script for other languages has been an unofficially acceptable response to ongoing government resistance to, or prohibition of, the use, and therefore the writing, of any language other than Lao. In the early seventies, a Lao-based alphabet for Hmong was developed by missionary Doris Whitelock, for the purpose of replacement of the Romanised Popular Alphabet after its abandonment by the Protestant mission in Laos under official pressure. The Lao-based system was an extension of Whitelock's previous work on a Thai-based Hmong alphabet.

The Thai government's position in the sixties and seventies was also that all groups living in Thailand should learn to speak and write in Thai; but education in other languages en route was in principle an acceptable methodology. Education was seen as a method of assimilation. Whitelock's Thai-based alphabet was developed in the hope that writing in Hmong would ease the process of literacy acquisition per se, with the ultimate aim of acquiring literacy in Thai as the language of access.

While the Lao and Thai governments' positions are or at least were overtly assimilationist, in their response to these policies, the missions succeeded in implementing a compromise approach of acknowledging the status quo of language in the Hmong community, and facilitating literacy and dominant language acquisition from this vantage point. It is quite ironic that the policies of both Thai and Lao governments have in the end had the reverse effect: the further proliferation of Hmong writing systems. It is interesting also that it is in Laos, where the harsher resistance to minority languages has been displayed, that the Hmong have shown greater interest in the use of a Hmong script (Smalley 1976b).

Religious motivations

Besides the RPA, and the efforts of Doris Whitelock and the Protestant missions outlined above, which arise from political circumstances, a further four writing systems for Hmong have been proposed by Christian missionaries (Table A.10 #6-9).

Discussion of this script, and minority education policies in Thailand generally, apply to Thai Hmong, but not to residents of the refugee camps.
At the end of last century, Samuel Pollard designed a demisyllabic\(^8\) script for A-Hmao, which according to Smalley et al (1990) is still in use.\(^9\) Some sections of the New Testament were published in this script by the China Inland Mission from 1922.\(^10\)

While it is standard practice in missionary work to establish local literacy for the purposes of general education and in particular religious education, the messianic tradition of the Hmong meant that the introduction of writing held a significance the foreign missionaries could not have anticipated. Pollard’s script tapped straight into a waiting framework facilitating ready acceptance of both script and Christianity. Tapp (1989) points out features of the appearance of Pollard and his Hmong orthography which triggered a messianic movement response for the Hmong. These include the teaching of a new moral code, a reputation for the ability to impart supernatural powers (through baptism), demonstration of healing powers (through Western medicine and especially the smallpox vaccine), and the introduction of one of the first specifically Hmong scripts.

Two Vietnamese-based roman systems produced by missionaries around the same time were, however, more or less ignored, as was a Thai-based script developed for MNts by a Vietnamese missionary. A traditional Hmong distrust of the Vietnamese may account for the neglect of these, together with a general perception of Asian missionaries as unsympathetic to them as a people, in contrast to the white missionaries. Thai missionaries, for example, did not bother to learn the Hmong language Tapp (1989). Tapp suggests that Asian missionaries were irrevocably associated with the dominant political power and therefore the repression of the Hmong, whereas white Christian missionaries could be seen as offering something removed from local authority, or even operating on a higher plane—and therefore a way out of the current political predicament of the Hmong.

In contrast to the politically-motivated proposals, the mission proposals generally present as more inclusive of the needs of the Hmong people. Hmong consultants are acknowledged, literacy in Hmong is encouraged despite local government counter-policies, efforts often go hand-in-hand with humanitarian projects of land rights and medical and other aid. However, despite such inclusive attitudes, despite the linguistic accuracy with which the missionary-

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\(^8\) That is, conceptualising, in this case the consonant, as the nucleus of the syllable, which is modified by the vowel and tone.

\(^9\) This script is sometimes called *Hmooj laus* ‘old Hmong’ (Lee T.C. 1996).
linguists represent the relevant Hmong dialects in their devised writing systems, despite the advantages of writing systems based on the scripts of access in their countries of origin—these introduced scripts in the last analysis perpetuate the suppression of Hmong autonomy in that they are designed by foreign ‘authorities’—this time linguistic or education authorities—who then necessarily maintain a position as teachers, persons with superior knowledge and—in the context of traditional beliefs—invoking at some level the authority of the gods.

Hmong indigenous scripts

All three of the documented scripts developed by Hmong people are attributed to divine inspiration. It appears from the strength of the Hmong messianic tradition that, if an indigenous orthography is to be established, it will necessarily be one which can be located within the discourse of divine guidance.\(^\text{11}\)

Besides the \(\text{ēn} \ \text{īn} \ \text{Pha} \ \text{jhauj}\) and the \(\text{īm} \ \text{ām} \ \text{nā} \ \text{Ntawv Pajntaub}\), a reportedly ancient script, \(\text{nā} \ \text{nā} \ \text{Tyaj} \ \text{Ntawv Puaj Txwm}\) or ‘Sayaboury’ script (Table A.10 #10), was passed on by Ga Va Her from the Sayaboury province in Laos to Nina Wimuttikosol, UN official, in 1983. According to \(\text{ēn} \ \text{ūc} \ \text{īr} \ \text{Ntawv Puaj Txwm}\) or ‘Sayaboury’ script, this script is not intended to be used until its full revelation when the time of autonomous government of the Hmong should arise (see Wimuttikosol and Smalley 1998).

\(^{10}\)For a chart and sample of this script, see Daniels and Bright (1996):580–2.

\(^{11}\)Repeated appearances of messiahs and scripts may well be inevitable until a workable indigenous script is actually established. A shortlived messiah figure emerged also at Ban Vinai in the late seventies, but failed to bring his script to completion, satisfying himself instead with asserting the orthodoxy of Version 2 of the \(\text{ēn} \ \text{Pha} \ \text{jhauj}\), rather than Version 3, as was being taught at the time by \(\text{Tuaj Kuam Vaj} \ \text{Chia Koua Vang}\). Other Hmong have worked on script development without messianic authority, but have gained little support.
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