


WHITE HMONG - ENGLISH DICTIONARY

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WHITE HMONG - ENGLISH DICTIONARY

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FOREWORD

The Southeast Asia Program takes considerable pleasure in being able to publish this White Hmong-English Dictionary in its Linguistic Series of data papers. Besides the value it has in its own right for students and scholars, it has an additional special value as a companion work to the Yao-English Dictionary of Lombard and Purnell. The two together will surely give impetus to Meo-Yao comparative studies. We are gratified to see our objectives in providing basic linguistic materials so soon being realized.

This dictionary, too, is the work of a missionary who is following a long and distinguished tradition of missionary scholarship. Mr. Heimbach has spent a number of years among the White Hmong of Northern Thailand and collected his data in the process of learning the language. The results were first compiled in a mimeographed version for use by a few friends, colleagues and other interested persons. With this publication the dictionary becomes available to a wider audience.

We are especially grateful to Dr. William A. Smalley for bringing this dictionary to our attention and his assistance in bringing it to publication. In particular we thank him for providing the Introduction. Those interested in a more detailed discussion of Hmong phonology are directed to his forthcoming Linguistic Diversity and National Unity in Thailand. We wish also to acknowledge our indebtedness to Mr. Don Rulison for proofreading our typescript in Mr. Heimbach's absence abroad.

Robert B. Jones, Jr.

Ithaca, New York
March 1969

FOREWORD TO THE REVISED EDITION

There was little demand for this dictionary in the years immediately following its first publication in 1969. The hundred-or-so copies remaining after libraries and linguists had obtained theirs seemed destined for the scrap-paper dealer when, quite suddenly in 1978, it began to sell rapidly.

The reason for the dictionary's sudden popularity was and is the presence of many thousands of Hmong refugees in Thailand and the United States who are finding it a useful aid.

In reprinting it at this time, we have made two important changes.

First, with the assent and encouragement of Mr. Heimbach, we have substituted "Hmong" for "Meo" in the title, the introductory sections, and the appendices. This has been done to conform to the wishes of Hmong, who object strongly to "Meo" as a derogatory term they themselves would never use.

Second, because the bulk of pages in the first printing made the book's binding extremely weak and subject to easy damage, we have printed the dictionary by photographically reducing two pages onto one. This makes the dictionary slightly more awkward to use, but we hope that it will prove more sturdy under regular use.

We are grateful to Mr. Heimbach for his support and encouragement in making the White Hmong-English Dictionary available again.

David K. Wyatt

Ithaca, New York
July 1979

PREFACE

The Hmong are a vigorous mountain people whose origins were in China and who now by migration extend over the ranges of northern Vietnam, Laos, Burma, and Thailand. In Thailand they probably number in the vicinity of 48,000. Historically they are animists although in China and in Laos large numbers of them have become Christians. In Thailand there are two branches of the tribe, the White Hmong /hmoob dawb/ (Hmong Daw) and the Blue Hmong or Green Hmong /hmoob ntsaub/ (Hmong Njua). There are distinctions in dialect and in dress, but the broad features of the culture and economy are much the same. They often live in close proximity and not infrequently intermarry.

The material in this volume was gathered over the period 1954-1963 in the course of missionary activity among the White Hmong in North Thailand. This included extended residence in Hmong villages, particularly in the provinces of Petchabun and Pitsanuloke. The Hmong in Laos were visited and the language differences compared both there and in other parts of Thailand. From these comparisons and from substantial written material received from Roman Catholic missionaries in Laos, it is evident that the White Hmong spoken in Thailand and in Laos is essentially the same. Divergencies consist mostly of different words adopted from surrounding languages. While the primary material in this volume was collected in North Thailand we feel convinced that it also represents the White Hmong language as spoken in other contiguous areas.

This dictionary is by no means exhaustive, but it does contain the greatest portion of words and phraseology used in everyday speech. Much study remains to be done, particularly in specialized aspects such as the poetic language used in song, the language used in religious rites, and that used in determining and administering justice.

While we have sincerely endeavored to check and recheck this material we readily admit that mistakes may have crept in. Many definitions could also well be clarified and expanded. Before questioning variations in spelling, the reader is advised to consult Appendix 1, which describes tone changes.

Mention must be made of those without whose help this work could not have been completed. A host of Hmong friends have been our patient informants. Rev. G. Linwood Barney

and Dr. William A. Smalley in consultation with Fr. M. Bertrais of the Catholic Mission in Laos were responsible for the working out of the phonemic analysis and the orthography. Fr. Bertrais also provided considerable textual material for comparison. Several missionaries of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship have helped in the gathering and filing of material, particularly Miss D. Jones, Miss D. Whitelock, and Mr. D. Rulison. To all we acknowledge our deep indebtedness.

Ernest E. Heimbach

March 1969

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INTRODUCTION

The Hmong Daw (White Hmong) of Thailand and Laos speak a dialect (or rather, a group of very similar dialects) which is mutually intelligible with those spoken by the Hmong Njua (Blue or Green Hmong). These are the principal groups of Hmong dialects spoken in these two countries, and are a part of the much larger group of languages and dialects known in South China as the Miao and in Thailand as the Meo. There are Hmong in North Vietnam as well.

The majority of the work on Hmong/Meo/Miao has been done on the dialects in China, and by Chinese scholars. Substantive descriptive and lexicographic work on any of the Hmong dialects spoken in Thailand or Laos is restricted to Downer (1967), Bertrais (1964), Barney (no date), Lyman (no date), Smalley (no date), which in turn is based on Barney and Smalley (1952 and 1953), Whitelock (1966-1968), plus less organized investigations by missionaries in North Thailand.

Hmong is almost universally agreed to be related to Yao in the Miao-Yao language family, but there is no agreement as to wider relationships. Haudricourt (1966) summarizes the theories and gives a bibliography, to which Downer (1963) should be added. Haudricourt (1966:56) himself comes to the conclusion that

The Miao-Yao languages seem to form a link between the Austroasiatic and the Tibeto-Burman families in the same way that the Karen languages do, and their phonological richness is useful in reconstruction.

Benedict, on the other hand, is now proposing a place for the Miao-Yao languages in his Austro-Thai family.

A brief comparison between the present dictionary and the mimeographed Dictionnaire Hmong-Français (Bertrais, 1964) may be helpful. They represent substantially the same dialect, Bertrais having worked in Laos and Heimbach in Thailand, and the orthographies are virtually the same, for reasons which will be mentioned below. There are, of course, some minor differences due to the normal processes of language change, borrowing, etc. Bertrais' dictionary is somewhat more extensive in its selection of entries and its examples, while the Heimbach dictionary is more analytical in its definitions. There is nothing in the Bertrais dictionary to match the Appendices of the present one.

In short, Heimbach's work is slightly more polished, that of Bertrais slightly more voluminous in examples. They are both important primary documents for White Hmong.

The orthography used in this volume (and in Bertrais, 1964) was developed in Barney and Smalley (1953) as a compromise with Bertrais so that both Roman Catholic and Protestant missions in Laos would use the same system of writing for teaching their constituents to read, for writing books, translating, etc. This fact of compromise accounts for a few details which will seem peculiar to some observers, such as <x> for /s/ and <s> for /s̃/.

Some other conventions in the orthography are due to an attempt to make it possible to write both Hmong Daw and Hmong Leng with the same system. Thus Hmong Daw /ã/ corresponds to Hmong Njua /ẽ/ and both are written <ee>.

Still other peculiarities resulted from practical considerations in seeking for an orthography which could be easily typed, printed, and taught. The use of consonant symbols in syllable final position to represent tones is not as unconventional in the area as it is outside the area, and works well with Hmong because of the syllable structure which has no phonemic final consonants. The extremely complex initial consonant system required considerable ingenuity in improvisation of an orthography easy for the Hmong reader to learn and use.

<ŋ- ww -on -d -x> were all added by Heimbach and/or Bertrais subsequent to Barney and Smalley (1953). They represent marginal phenomena for which varying interpretations are possible.

The orthography, then, is designed for popular use. It omits many features of stress, juncture, and intonation, which would be of value to linguistic description, but which would hardly appear in dictionary entries anyhow, although they might well be included in the examples and context citations.

We will summarize the general phonological features here, including only what is necessary for a clear understanding of the orthography used in this dictionary. A non-technical description for the non-linguist will be found following this Introduction.

The Hmong Daw syllable has three constituents: a consonant constituent, a vowel constituent and a tone constituent. Either consonant constituent or vowel con-

stituent may be composite. Phonologically there is no final consonant, but nasalization (occurring in one kind of composite vowel) is often realized as final [ŋ] and tone /m/ often has an accompanying non-distinctive final [ʔ].

The inventory of the consonants, vowels, and tones is presented in the following charts in such a way as to give a general idea of their pronunciation. Symbols used are those of the orthography, with additional clarification in [] immediately below when required.

CONSONANTS, SIMPLE AND COMPOSITE

Labial	Lateral release	Dental	Glottalized	Dental, affricated	Retroflexed	Palatal	Palatal, affricated	Velar	Back velar	Glottal
p	pl	t	d	tx	r	c	ts	k	q	
			[ʔd]	[ts]	[ɽ]		[tʃ̥]		[k̚]	[ʔ]
ph	plh	th	dh	txh	rh	ch	tsh	kh	qh	
	[pɸ]		[ʔth]	[tʃh]	[ɽh]		[tʃ̥h]		[k̚h]	
np	npl	nt		ntx	nr	nc	nts	nk	nq	
[mb]	[mbl]	[nd]		[ndz]	[ɳd]	[ɲj]	[ndʒ̥]	[ŋg]	[ŋq]	
nph	nplh	nth		ntxh	nrh	nch	ntsh	nkxh	nqh	
[mph]	[mpɸ]			[ntʃh]	[ɳɽh]	[ɲch]	[ntʃ̥h]	[ŋkxh]	[ŋq̚h]	
m	nl	n				ny		g		
	[ml]					[ɲ]		[ŋ]		
hm	hnl	hn				hny				
[M]	[Mml]	[N]				[ɲ]				
f	hl	x			s	xy				h
	[ɸ]	[s]			[ʃ̥]	[x̥]				
v	l				z	y				
					[ʒ̥]					

Initial glottal stop is not marked. Absence of such a glottal stop is indicated by <'>.

VOWELS, SIMPLE AND COMPOSITE

Front	Central		Back	
	non-nasal	nasal	non-nasal	nasal
i	w [ɨ]	ww [ɨŋ]	u	oo [õŋ]
e	a	ee [ãŋ]	o [ɔ]	on [õ]
ai [ay]	aw [əɨ]		au [ɔw]	
ia			ua [uə]	

/ww/ and /on/ are extra-systematic and rare.

TONES

b	j	v	s	g	m	/	d
[ɓ]	[ɟ]	[ɗ]	[ɬ]	[ɠ]	[ɱ]	[ʔ]	[ɗ]

Tone values are given as in isolation. Tone symbols are written in final position in the orthographic syllable. /g/ is characterized by breathiness, /m/ by glottal constriction as well as pitch. [m d] are probably the same phoneme, but the evidence is not clear; see Appendix 1. Two words in the dictionary are listed with an <x> 'tone,' but this is an intonational feature better handled in some other way.

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GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

The letters of the English alphabet have been used throughout, but in many cases symbolizing a sound different from that represented in English or other European languages. This must be carefully kept in mind.

There are also cases where one symbol may be used for sounds which are not exactly the same. These never confuse Hmong readers but must be carefully noted by those learning the language. For example, the 't' of 'tuaj' is unaspirated and voiceless similar to the 't' in the English word steak, whereas the 't' in 'ntawm' is voiced like the 'd' in English condemn because it is influenced by the 'n' which immediately precedes it.

The basic syllable pattern is CV, i.e., one consonant followed by one vowel. However, in place of the C there may be a cluster of one to three consonants pronounced as a unit. In place of the V there may also be a cluster of two vowels.

The only consonant sound which occurs at the close of a syllable is [ng]. Since this occurs only with nasalized vowels it is recognized as belonging to these nasalized vowels, which are written with a double letter. Thus 'ee' and 'oo' are always said with an [ng] ending.

Each syllable has a basic tone. This is symbolized by one of several consonant letters written at the close of the syllable. Since no syllable requires a consonant symbol to represent a spoken consonant in final position, this lends no confusion. See the tone chart below.

Whereas the Hmong language is for the most part isolating in structure, (i.e. each syllable usually carries meaning on its own), in actual speech some syllables are said in closer connection than others. We have therefore joined these together into words.

We include here an approximate description of the sounds used in Hmong speech in terms of the nearest similar sound in English. It is impossible to be altogether exact, but this section is meant for the benefit of those who would find it difficult to understand technical description.

Note that 'n' is used to represent nasalization and 'h' to represent aspiration (a puff of air).

CONSONANTS

<u>Hmong Symbol</u>	<u>English Equivalent or Description</u>
p	unaspirated 'p' (without a puff of air) as in English <u>speak</u> . Cf. the 'p' in French, Thai, etc.
ph	'p' with a puff of air, as in <u>part</u>
np	English 'm' blending into a 'b'
nph	English 'm' blending into Hmong 'ph'
pl	like the 'pl' in <u>explode</u>
plh	like the 'pl' in <u>play</u>
npl	English 'm' blending into the English 'bl'
nplh	English 'm' blending into English initial 'pl'
t	unaspirated 't' (without a puff of air) as in <u>steak</u> . Cf. the 't' in French, Thai, etc.
th	't' with a puff of air, as in <u>talk</u>
nt	English 'n' blending into English initial 'd'
nth	English 'n' blending into English initial 't'
tx	like the 'ds' in <u>adds</u> but without the vocal cords vibrating
txh	like the 'ts' in <u>cats</u>
ntx	English 'n' blending into the Hmong 'tx'
ntxh	English 'n' blending into the Hmong 'txh'
d	like the 'd' in <u>dream</u> but with a glottal stop before it. That is, complete stop of the air flow in the throat before beginning the sound.
dh	the Hmong sound 'd' said with a puff of air after it
r	similar to the Hmong 't' but made with the tip of the tongue curved back until it hits the top of the mouth

7. huab
huablab (T) A westerner, a European (tus).
1. huaj Of an exhausted animal.
Tus nees huaj lawm. The horse is exhausted and cannot go on.
2. huaj
huajvam To flourish, to increase (cf. 'huam').
1. huam To increase, to spread, to prosper (cf. 'huajvam').
huam loj loj mus To increase, prosper, spread.
lo lus tuam huam Proud boastful words, 'spreading' words.
2. huam A craving, to crave.
tus huam The craving.
huam yeeb To crave opium.
3. huam Suddenly, quickly, spasm, spasmodic.
huam tshom To jump in surprise or in being startled.
(cf. 'ceeb nkaus').
(a) ib sij huam Quickly, suddenly.
(b) ib sij ib huam Quickly, suddenly.
mob huam leej huam ceem Sudden sickness.
huam ib tshaj ib tshaj To have spasms, a fit, sudden convulsions.
huam cheej The last spasm before death.
4. huam
chivkeeb huam yuaj In the very beginning (idiom).
5. huam
kwvhuam Olden times, old tales.
6. huam
hoj huam (tus) A kind of jungle fowl with long flowing tail.
7. huam
kob huam Poor, poverty stricken.
neeg kob huam A poverty stricken person.
- huas To go around and ahead of.
(a) huas ntej To go around and ahead of a person.
(b) huas ntej ntiag To go around and ahead of a person.
(c) huas tau ntej To go around and ahead of a person.
(All three expressions imply forcing one's way past another person going in the same direction.)
huas tau lawv ntej To go ahead of them, to go around them on the path.
1. huav Very dry and hard.
huav huav li lawm Very dry and hard (of wood).

2. huav Restricted p.v.int. with 'hawv' (cf. Appendix 8).
1. hwb
taub hwb (lub) A gourd.
2. hwb
plhaub hwb (tus) An owl.
3. hwb
txhem hwb txhib To separate from one another and forbid to marry.
1. hwj Bottle, kettle (lub) (C).
ib lub hwj One bottle.
lub hwj kais Teakettle (kettle with a spout).
hwj tsib faib A type of small bottle.
2. hwj To support someone or something with the arms or hands.
hwj taubhau To hold the head in the hands.
hwj nws mus To support someone in walking (as in helping a lame or sick person).
hwj tsis tau Cannot help him (cf. 'pab,' 'tab').
tus hwj sawv The one who assists the shaman in his spirit ceremonies, the shaman's supporter.
3. hwj
hwjtxob Black pepper.
4. hwj
hwjtxwv Beard, the beard (C).
tshais hwjtxwv To shave, shave the beard.
5. hwj
hwjplhob (tsob) water lily.
6. hwj
hwjchim (lub) Authority, air of authority, show or act of authority, splendor, power.
hwjchim loj tsim txiaj Show of great power and authority, "miracle."
7. hwj
hwjxwm To prepare, get ready for, care for (cf. 'tsomkwm').
8. hwj
(a) hwj huam yees ntxwv (C) Magic, magic display.
(b) hwj huam yees siv (C) Magic, magic display.
9. hwj
phimhwj To honor, do deference to, respect (C)
(cf. 'hwm').

2. thoj
txiv cuab thoj The guava, fruit of the guava tree.
1. thom To fit logs together one on top of another as in making the corner of a log fence.
2. thom
thomkhwm Socks (clf. 'nkawm' for pairs).
- thos To peck, to strike at sharply (e.g. a chicken pecking or a snake striking) (cf. 'ncaws').
1. thov To beg or to ask for, to request something without payment (cf. 'taij').
Thov pub mentsis txhuv rau kuv. (Please) give me a little rice.
(a) thov qees To keep asking.
(b) thov qos qees To keep asking.
tus thov khawv A beggar, of one who begs or asks alms and especially one who won't work.
2. thov
thov txhaum To go the wrong way in life, to do evil.
3. thov
tus thov ntuj Of one who loves to move a lot (cf. 'tus tsiv taus').
4. thov
thov xeem (cf. 'xeem').
1. thooB A bucket (clf. 'lub').
thooB teg (lub) A hand pail or bucket.
thooB ntsug (lub) A water bucket, tall wooden bucket.
2. thooB A bucketful, (clf. for buckets of water or other things).
ib thooB dej A bucket of water.
3. thooB
thooB puab (lub) A cloth bag slung from the shoulder to transport small articles.
4. thooB Whole, all, complete or completely.
thooB zos The whole village.
thooB plaws Completely, to the end.
thooB theeb plaws Completely, all over the world.
thooB zeej teb The whole earth, all people.
thooB huvsi All of, the whole.
hais thooB moos timfab To preach or tell everywhere.
kev thooB txog... The road is through to...
noob qe thooB tshaj Inguinal hernia.

1. thooj The same, equal or similar.
zoo tsis thooj Not the same, not as good.
thooj nkaus The same exactly.
thooj peb cov The same as we are.
(a) thooj siab Of one heart and mind.
(b) thooj xeeb Of one heart and mind.
(c) thooj siab hum hauv Of one heart and mind.
thooj siav thooj ngaij Of one flesh and blood.
thooj niam koom txiv, thooj pog koom yawg Of the same parentage.
2. thooj
yeeb thooj (lub) A smoking pipe (either for smoking opium or tobacco).
3. thooj (clf. for sections of a log).
4. thooj (clf. for sets of headbands) (cf. 'siv ceeb').
- thoov
(a) khawb pas dej To dig out a pool of water.
(b) thoov pas dej To dig out a pool of water.
1. thum To break off a habit.
thum yeeb To break off taking opium.
2. thum
tshwj thum Wasteful, extravagant (cf. 'phum lam').
neeg tshwj thum A wasteful person, one who uses money and goods lavishly.
1. thuv Pine, the pine tree (tus).
2. thuv To walk around (cf. 'ncig').
Yuav thuv lub ntuj pas dej no. Keep walking around the edge of this lake.
1. thuum To erase, to eliminate, to cross out, to reject (cf. 'phiv').
(a) thuum tseg To reject and get rid of.
(b) thuum kiag pov tseg To reject and get rid of.
Lawv thuum thuum nws. They opposed him (refused to follow him, spoke against him).
2. thuum
thuum yeem To mark something, to make a mark.
(a) thuum yeem tes To make a fingerprint.
(b) ntaus taub teg To make a fingerprint.
3. thuum
pejthuum (tus) A tower or pagoda.
4. thuum
luaj thuum Careless (cf. 'liam sim').
neeg luaj thuum A person careless with belongings.

