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Abstract

Dixon (2010a,b, 2012) presents an excellent introduction to a framework for documenting a language’s grammar. One portion of this framework is the marking of Non-spatial Setting, that is, the grammatical coding of marking of time, aspect, and other material in the verbal system. The primary aim of this thesis is to apply this portion of Dixon’s framework to White Hmong (Hmong-Mien, Laos) by describing the system of Non-spatial Setting in this language. The thesis first looks at the Non-spatial Setting systems of typologically-similar languages from the region, continues by considering what it means for a word to be grammaticalized, and then provides a lengthy discussion on the Non-spatial Setting system of White Hmong itself. It is found that White Hmong possesses a robust system of Non-spatial Setting markers. These include several classes of Lexical Time Words as well as positive and negative Irrealis marking intertwined with a system of marking Modality, which itself includes a number of Modals and Semi-modals as well as one adverb. In addition, there is a set of Degree of Certainty markers made up of seven morphemes at two levels of certainty, high and moderate, and there is a group of Secondary verbs (following the terminology of Dixon 2006) that mark Phase of Activity. There are also five Completion morphemes—three of which mark distinct types of Perfect and two Imperfect—and two Completion-marking strategies, namely, an Attainment Serial Verb Construction (terminology following Jarkey 2004) for the Perfect and reduplication for the Imperfect. Finally, there is one Speed and Ease morpheme that marks slowness. Some implications that the system of White Hmong has for Non-spatial Setting in general are also briefly discussed.
Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to greatly thank my language consultant, Jay Yang, for the countless hours he selflessly gave for the project and continual willingness to help, without which this thesis would have been impossible.

Second, I thank my wife Helen for her support, advice, and devotion as we managed school, work, travel, hosting relatives, and having our first child, Stephen, during the process of research and writing of this thesis over the last nine months. I also thank Stephen for being such a calm, well-behaved son, making this process that much easier.

Third, I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Sean Allison, for his helpful advice, willingness to freely discuss the thesis at any time, and his dedication to see the project through even while in the field.

Finally, I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Kenneth Gregerson and Dr. Ken Manson, for agreeing to take part in this process with me, their helpful comments, and, in the case of Dr. Ken Manson, his great flexibility time-wise for the thesis defense.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1DU</td>
<td>first person dual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>first person plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>first person singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2DU</td>
<td>second person dual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>second person plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>second person singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3DU</td>
<td>third person dual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>third person plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>third person singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>final adverbs and particles position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>attainment marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLF</td>
<td>classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>complementizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ</td>
<td>conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>completion particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Currently Relevant State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVB</td>
<td>coverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPH</td>
<td>emphatic marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP</td>
<td>experiential marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>interrogative and exclamatory particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDF.PRON</td>
<td>indefinite pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>intensive particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPFV</td>
<td>imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPRF</td>
<td>imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRR</td>
<td>irrealis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>modal position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG.IRR</td>
<td>negative irrealis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGP</td>
<td>negative position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMLZ</td>
<td>nominalizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Potential complementizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>phase of activity—finishing position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFV</td>
<td>perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL.CLF</td>
<td>plural classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS.IRR</td>
<td>positive irrealis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSS</td>
<td>possessive particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PostV</td>
<td>post-main-verb position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPART</td>
<td>pause particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreMOD</td>
<td>pre-modal position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreS</td>
<td>pre-subject position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreV</td>
<td>pre-main-verb position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>question particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECP</td>
<td>reciprocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDUP</td>
<td>reduplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL</td>
<td>relative pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>topic marker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

In his three-part work on Basic Linguistic Theory, Dixon (2010a,b, 2012) presents an excellent introduction to a useful system for analyzing and documenting the grammar of a language. One part of this is Non-spatial Setting, that is, the grammatical coding of marking of time, aspect, and other material in the verbal system. The goal of this thesis is to apply Dixon’s framework to White Hmong (Hmong-Mien, Laos) by describing the system of Non-spatial Setting in this language. It is found that White Hmong has a robust system of marking various elements of Non-spatial Setting, which is made up of Lexical Time Words\(^1,2\) as Tense, Irrealis and, within it, Modality markers, Degree of Certainty markers, Phase of Activity markers, a relatively large set of Completion markers, and one Speed and Ease marker.

1.1 Source of Data

While a number of scholarly sources were relied on at times for examples throughout this work, a significant amount of data has been obtained from Tzerge (Jay) Yang, a native speaker of White Hmong originally from Xieng Khouang province, Laos who currently lives in Fresno, California. The data gathered includes three texts—a narrative that tells about Mr. Yang’s background, a procedural text that gives instructions on how to cook eggs, and a hortatory text in the form of a Christian religious speech\(^3\)—as well as a number of other examples, adapted either directly or indirectly from these texts.

---

\(^1\) Please see below for a brief description of this term from Dixon (2012:20).
\(^2\) Specific terms from Dixon (2012)’s framework for Non-spatial Setting are generally capitalized to indicate that these are being used in Dixon’s specialized sense.
\(^3\) Please see the appendices below for interlinear transcriptions of these.
1.2 Summary of Conclusions

White Hmong possesses a system of Non-spatial Setting that encompasses several of Dixon (2012)’s categories. Among these are Lexical Time Words, markers of positive and negative Irrealis intertwined with a system of Modality markers that includes a number of Modals and Semi-modals and one adverb. In addition to these, White Hmong has a system of Degree of Certainty marking that includes seven morphemes at two levels of certainty and a set of Secondary verbs (following the terminology of Dixon 2006) marking Phase of Activity. Furthermore, the language has a set of five Completion morphemes, three which mark distinct types of Perfect and two Imperfect, two Completion-marking strategies, namely, reduplication for the Imperfect and an Attainment Serial Verb Construction for the Perfect, and one Speed and Ease morpheme that marks slowness.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is made up of five sections. Section 1 is a brief introduction. Section 2 presents relevant background information, including a basic introduction to Non-spatial Setting, typological patterns in the grammar of nearby languages, and a brief presentation of the basics of White Hmong Grammar. Section 3 covers the individual words and constructions that constitute Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong. Section 4 summarizes the findings, suggests further directions of inquiry for Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong, and provides a brief discussion on the implications of the system found in White Hmong for the system as a whole, while Section 5 provides a brief conclusion.

---

4 Term following Jarkey (2006).
5 The scope for this thesis is to describe how Non-spatial Setting is indicated in White Hmong and what role these markers play at the verb/clause level, with brief reference to sentence level (e.g., in regard to perfective-imperfective relationships, see below), as is relevant. The role that the Non-spatial Setting markers found in this thesis play at the sentence and discourse level is thus generally left for further research.
2. Background

This section is divided into three subsections, dealing first with a presentation of the basics of Dixon (2012)’s Non-spatial Setting, then continuing with a discussion on what constitutes genuine morphological marking apart from normal lexical items. This is followed by a discussion of a cross-linguistic typology for Southeast Asian languages, which includes a discussion on the Non-spatial Setting systems of three languages from the region. The section then finishes with a brief introduction to White Hmong grammar.

2.1 Summary of Non-spatial Setting

Dixon (2012)’s Non-spatial Setting takes the form of a framework of eleven categories that organize marking of tense, aspect, and modality as they appear across languages (2012:3, 5-6). These categories are presented below in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>past, present, and possibly future, if functions as tense; also words referring to time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>realis and irrealis, which includes modality and possibly future time, if functions as irrealis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Certainty</td>
<td>level of probability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity</td>
<td>stage of an action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>perfect and imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundedness</td>
<td>telic and atelic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Extent</td>
<td>progressive, punctual, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>perfective and imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree or Frequency</td>
<td>number of times an event occurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed and Ease</td>
<td>rate of an activity and its degree of difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidentiality</td>
<td>source of evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Categories of Dixon (2012)’s Non-spatial Setting (based on Dixon 2012:5-9, 25).

The first category, Tense, is rather straightforward, marking the time at which an event happened in reference to the current time. Dixon’s category also includes time adverbials, or in his terminology, Lexical Time Words, belonging to one of five
categories: Duration, Frequency, Specific Time Spans, With Respect to Expectation, which includes notions such as ‘soon’ and ‘already’, and Temporal Shifters, which includes ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow’ (2012:20). Future time is a special case, since it can fall into either the Tense category or the Reality category, as Table 1 shows, depending entirely on whether forms that indicate future events function as a part of the tense paradigm or are themselves varieties of Modality (Dixon 2012:7-8).

Dixon’s Reality category contains an Irrealis subcategory that includes more typical notions of irrealis as well as Modality (following Dixon 2012:22). Modality itself can be one of several semantic types, of which the most prominent cross-linguistically are Prediction, Obligation, Necessity, Ability, and Imminent Action (Dixon 2012:26-27). Others are also possible, including Desire, Intention, Scheduled Activity, Achievement, and Inevitability (Dixon 2012:26-27). Cutting across these semantic categories are two morphosyntactic categories of Modality marking, namely, Modals and Semi-modals, where Modals have reduced morphosyntactic features such as a lack tense marking (that is, in languages that make tense distinctions) and a requirement that they precede all other verbs in a series, while Semi-modals generally function as regular verbs (2012:26). For example, Dixon’s modals for English include words such as will, should, and must (2012:26)—a class of words that must precede the verb they modify, as in will go, should go, must go, and have no marking for tense—that is, to indicate past time requires the use of another auxiliary such as have, as in must have gone. In contrast, Dixon’s Semi-modals for English include phrasal verbs such as be going to and get to (2012:26), which can have other verbal content preceding them, as in I would like to get to go, and inflect for tense, as in I got to leave early.
Categories of Desire and Intention can also be part of Dixon’s system of Modality, though only as long as other arguments are not allowed to appear (2012:27-28). For example, English allows sentence constructions such as *I want him to go*, where *want* takes *him* as an argument; in this case, *want* is not a Modality marker. On the other hand, in some languages the verb *want* can only be followed by a verb phrase or a complement clause, and an object argument is not allowed; in this case, the verb *want* would be a modality marker of Desire.

Dixon’s Degree of Certainty includes modal-like words and other morphological elements that “describe the chance of some action or state eventuating” (2012:29). Phase of Activity covers the morphological marking of the beginning, finishing, and continuation of activities. Completion is the category for perfect and imperfect. For this category, Dixon provides the general definition of the perfect as “‘an action which is completed before the present time’ to which is often added ‘and which has present relevance’” (2012:31). He defines imperfect as “refer[ring] to something which began before the present and is still continuing” (2012:31).

Dixon provides the Boundedness category for overt marking of telicity and phenomena associated with the inherent telicity of certain verbs (following Dixon 2012:33). Overt marking can include affixes, while phenomena can include a verb’s behavior in regard to whether it is telic semantically (Dixon 2012:33).

Temporal Extent focuses on the explicit grammatical indication of “punctual” and “durative” (Dixon 2012:34). Composition is the domain of the distinction between Perfective’ and Imperfective. Perfective functions such that “the event is regarded as a
whole, without respect for its temporal constituency,” while imperfective is concerned with “the temporal make-up of the event” (Dixon 2012:35).

The category of Frequency and Degree covers marking of senses such as ‘habitual’, ‘reiterative’, and ‘repeated’, as well as ‘a little bit’ and ‘a lot’ (Dixon 2012:36-376). The category of Speed and Ease includes the morphological marking of concepts exemplified by words such as ‘quickly’, ‘rapidly’, and ‘slowly’, as well as ‘with ease’ and ‘with difficulty’ (Dixon 2012:37-38). Evidentiality considers the ‘system’ of “obligatory specification of the source of information on which” a ‘statement’ “is based” (Dixon 2012:38).

While the Non-spatial Setting framework appears to categorize most forms of marking on verbs, Dixon notes that other elements such as physical setting, mood, and “clause linking” (marking of relationships between clauses) are explicitly excluded from the Non-spatial Setting portion of his framework (2012:1-3). In addition, this set of eleven categories may not include all of the possibilities found in any given language, which, as Dixon notes, may “include…a variety of other types of Non-spatial Setting” (2012:6). Thus, Dixon (2012) provides a near-comprehensive system for marking temporal, modal, and aspectual information on verbs which is left open for new possibilities in specific languages.

2.1.1 Dixon’s verb classification

One important aspect of Non-spatial Setting in Dixon (2012) is the use of “Secondary verbs” as a part of the grammar. Thus, a brief overview of Dixon’s system of classifying verbs is a necessary part of considering Non-spatial Setting, and is presented here.

---

6 Dixon (2012) cites a number of sources that describe the grammar systems of several languages that possess the categories listed here for Frequency and Degree as well as Speed and Ease. The reader is directed to Dixon (2012:36-38) for more information.
First, verbs are divided into two categories: Primary and Secondary. With Primary verbs, their “arguments can all be just [noun phrases],” while with Secondary verbs, their “arguments cannot all be just [noun phrases] or pronouns. That is, one argument must be a clause” (Dixon 2006:9). Primary verbs fall into Primary-A and Primary-B categories; the distinction is based on the fact that Primary-A verbs cannot have a complement as an argument while Primary-B verbs can (Dixon 2006:9). More important for Non-spatial Setting are Secondary verbs, which represent what Dixon (2006) calls “Secondary concepts,” which can be marked by full verbs, affixes, or some other strategy, depending on the language (Dixon 2006:9, 11). These Secondary verbs cannot occur on their own, but must be associated with an additional verb, which is found in a complement clause or as part of a “complementation strategy” (Dixon 2006:11, 12).

Secondary verbs fall into three categories, namely, Secondary-A, Secondary-B, and Secondary-C (Dixon 2006:12-13). Secondary-A verbs can be one of four types: 1) “Negators;” 2) “Modal-type” verbs, which includes modals; 3) “Beginning-type,” which includes verbs with semantic values associated with Phase of Activity; or 4) “Trying-type” (Dixon 2006:12-13). For a verb to be a Secondary-A verb, “the main and complement clauses must have the same subject” (Dixon 2006:13). Secondary-B verbs are verbs such as “want,” “intend,” or “hope,” which are characterized by the trait “that even when the subjects may differ, the expectation is that they are most likely to be the same, and the subject token in the complement clause is then generally omitted” (Dixon 2006:13). Secondary-C verbs are verbs with meanings like “let,” “make,” and “help,” where “main and complement clauses are likely to have different subjects” and with which “it is
unlikely that the subject token in the complement clause can be omitted” (Dixon 2006:13).

Important to Non-spatial Setting is category Secondary-A, which includes modals and potentially many other markers of Non-spatial Setting (Dixon 2012:26). At the same time, category Secondary-B is relevant to Non-spatial Setting in that if a verb could belong to Modality, such as “want,” but allows more than two arguments (one being the subject and the other a complement), it belongs to Secondary-B rather than Secondary-A, and is in such a case not a Modality-marking verb (Dixon 2012:27). Dixon’s system of verbal classification will be referenced below in the discussion on the Non-spatial Setting of White Hmong.

2.2 Grammaticalization and morphological marking

The process of grammaticalization is important to Non-spatial Setting as many of the grammatical elements in a language like White Hmong—i.e., an isolating, generally monosyllabic language that is completely lacking in any overt affixation—in revert to the nature of grammaticalization is necessary for arguing whether a certain morpheme is actually operating as part of the grammar. Here, grammaticalization will be defined and briefly discussed, and a set of processes

---

7 See below for the discussion on linguistic typology for the region.
8 Dixon generally recognizes a basic distinction between lexicon and grammar in his version of Basic Linguistic Theory, where grammar is comprised of systems of small, closed sets of morphemes (2010a:47 ff., 214 ff.). It should be noted, however, that Dixon explicitly describes an expectation in the grammar that “each [member of a system] may be exhaustively listed, each being fully defined by the exclusion of all others” (2010a:47). At the same time, examples from specific languages may present difficulties for this definition, such as the English prepositions on and upon—noting that Dixon explicitly recognizes on as part of the grammar (2010a:214).
associated with grammaticalization will be presented with the ultimate goal of showing below which morphemes in White Hmong are connected with the language’s grammar.

First, a definition of grammaticalization is needed. Hopper & Traugott provide a helpful definition:

Grammaticalization is the change whereby in certain linguistic contexts speakers use parts of a construction with a grammatical function. Over time the resulting grammatical item may become more grammatical by acquiring more grammatical functions and expanding its host-classes. (2003:99)

In addition to this, Brinton & Traugott make an important observation about semantic changes associated with grammaticalization:

There is no doubt that, over time, meanings tend to become weakened during the process of grammaticalization. Nevertheless, all the evidence for early stages is that initially there is a redistribution or shift, not a loss, of meaning. (2005:94)

As a result, it is clear that when a word is grammaticalized, it is affected both syntactically in terms of where it can appear, and semantically in terms of a change of meaning. It can be concluded from this that if a language such as White Hmong contains two homophonous words with slightly different semantic and syntactic properties from one another, and if one of these two words serves a more grammatical function than the other, then it can be suspected that the one is more likely a grammatical element.  

Second, there are several processes distinctly connected with grammaticalization presented by Brinton & Traugott, namely, decategorialization, bleaching, subjectification,

\footnote{In fact, Bisang (1996:533-534) points out that grammaticalized elements are generally those used to serve the role of marking tense, aspect, and/or mood, or in his terms, “mak[ing] a concept or an action/process more concrete” (1996:533), in Southeast Asian languages. Please see section 2.3 below for the larger discussion.}
productivity, frequency, and typological generality (2005:110). Each of these will be briefly introduced in turn.

Decategorialization is discussed by Brinton & Traugott as follows:

Hopper [1991:22] defines decategorialization as the process by which forms ‘lose or neutralize the morphological markers and syntactic privileges characteristic of the full categories Noun and Verb, and ... assume attributes characteristic of secondary categories such as Adjective, Participle, Preposition, etc.’

Decategorialization is the defining characteristic of grammaticalization since it is the mechanism by which lexical items become functional. (2005:107)

From this, it is clear that a grammaticalized element will have morphological and/or syntactic irregularities when compared to the “full categories,” which serve as the most prominent sign that a word has been grammaticalized—a trait that will be especially important for an isolating language such as White Hmong.

Bleaching is defined by Brinton & Traugott as “weakening of meaning through generalization, most especially loss of contentful meaning” and is associated with grammaticalization “at least in late stages” (2005:108).

Subjectification is defined as “the anchoring of meaning in the speaker's assessment of the situation,” where the word becomes increasingly connected with the expression of “the speaker’s perspective...or to get others to do things” (Brinton & Traugott 2005:108).

For Productivity, Brinton & Traugott state that “items that grammaticalize become more productive in the sense that the grammaticalizing element occurs with
increasingly large numbers of categories, i.e., with increasing type frequency. The shift is from a less to more productive pattern…” (2005:109).

In regard to Frequency, Brinton & Traugott comment that “items that grammaticalize are used ‘in more contexts and for a larger set of lexical items’; therefore grammaticalizing items always become more token frequent than their source” (2005:109).

Typological generality is connected with grammaticalization in that “grammaticalization patterns tend to be cross-linguistically replicated…and may affect whole semantic classes…” (Brinton & Traugott 2005:109).

Altogether, grammaticalization is seen as a process that affects a word both syntactically and semantically, and changes its function such that it increasingly serves a grammatical purpose. In addition, grammaticalization is distinctly associated with six processes, namely, decategorialization, bleaching, subjectification, productivity, frequency, and typological generality.

2.3 Regional Typology
Before considering Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong, we first turn to typological considerations from languages in the region as a helpful background.

The majority of languages in Southeast Asia share a number of typological features concerning their verbal systems. First, they exhibit a general absence of inflection, most notably in the areas of grammatical gender, number, marking or agreement for subject or object, or tense (Goddard 2005:3-5). Second, their primary word order is SVO, though the order is generally flexible (Goddard 2005:7-8).

Third, a number of languages in the region have particles that possess an emotional or affective value, termed ‘sentence-final particles’ (Goddard 2005:24).
Fourth, languages in the region typically have serial verb constructions (Goddard 2005:17). A number of these serial verb constructions have historically produced grammatical items that indicate causation, direction, grammatical case, and the result of the action of another verb, as well as tense, aspect, and mood, and even conjunctions (Bisang 1996:534, 563, 570). Verbs may also undergo ‘synchronic derivation’ to produce ‘locus prepositions’ and adverbs (Clark & Prasithrathsint 1985:34, 38), or, in other words, prepositions and adverbs that indicate the location of something can be derived from verbs.

Finally, these languages are characterized by what Bisang (1996) refers to as “indeterminateness.” While Bisang does not provide a clear definition of indeterminateness, it appears to refer to the degree of underspecification of grammatical notions that are often mandatory in other languages. In relation to the indeterminateness of verbs, Bisang states that “[a] verb in the languages to be described...merely posits an action or a state. One verb—which is often just one syllable—can show enough information in a given context...” (1996:532). He goes on to list areas of indeterminateness for verbs, including tense/aspect/mood marking, ‘role assignment’, ‘valency’ and ‘complex sentences’ (1996:532). Bisang also discusses how ‘discourse pragmatics’ may impact the general indeterminateness found in these languages, in that, in certain cases, increasing the degree of definiteness of a word by grammatical means may be required (1996:533). To fill this need, grammaticalized elements such as those marking causation, result, tense, aspect, and mood are used (1996:533-534).

As it will be apparent below, several of these typological traits of Southeast Asian languages will feature prominently in White Hmong. Before launching into the details of
White Hmong itself, three other Southeast Asian languages will be considered in terms of Dixon’s framework for Non-spatial Setting: Mandarin Chinese, Guizhou Dong, and Green Hmong.

2.3.1 Mandarin Chinese

Mandarin Chinese (Sino-Tibetan, China) is a language with strong typological similarities to Hmong and other languages in the region. Some scholars, e.g. Li (1991), argue that Chinese has historically influenced the verbal morphology of the Hmongic languages, and so Chinese is directly relevant to the Non-spatial Setting system of White Hmong. The grammar features that are especially relevant to Dixon’s framework are Mandarin’s auxiliary verbs, modal-like full verbs, and its system of marking aspect—or what Dixon (2012:5-6) calls “Completion” (Perfect vs. Imperfect), Composition (Perfective vs. Imperfective), and Degree. Each of these will be discussed below.

Mandarin auxiliary verbs are distinguished from normal verbs by their syntactic limitations and are rather abundant in number. Li and Thompson (1981:174-175) describe six limitations: 1) they must appear with a main verb (though a main verb may be implied by context); 2) they do not have their own aspectual marking; 3) they do not appear with adverbial “intensifiers”; 4) they are not available for nominalization processes; 5) they cannot be preposed in sentence-initial position; and 6) they do not appear with objects (1981:174-175). However, like verbs, they can undergo negation and ‘A-not-A’ type questions\(^{10}\) (1981:172-173).

The auxiliary verbs that fit the above definition have several interesting features. Li & Thompson (1981:182-183) provide a list of these auxiliary verbs, reproduced below.

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\(^{10}\) This type of question construction is a variety of polar question, and takes the form of ‘Subject Verb not Verb?’.
Several interesting observations are to be made here. First, gān ‘dare’ and kěn ‘be willing to’ are auxiliary verbs, which are interesting as these fit Dixon (2012)’s definition of Modal syntactically, though semantically they represent categories of Modality in addition to the set he presents in his work. Second, while Dixon (2012:26-27) provides a single category of Ability, Li & Thompson split the concept into three categories, glossed as ‘be able to’, ‘has permission to’, and ‘will, know how to’, which contain unique words not shared by the other two categories. While some auxiliary verbs such as néng, kěyi, and huì show overlap between these, nénggòu does not, and none appear in all three categories. This shows a clear ‘specialization of labor’ between these auxiliaries of ability. Lastly, two degrees of obligation are signaled by the categories of ‘ought to, should’ and ‘must, ought to’, with no overlap in terms of category membership.

Mandarin also has several verbs with meanings similar to the above auxiliary verbs, though unlike auxiliary verbs or Dixon’s modals, they allow events with additional arguments to appear as their objects (Li & Thompson 1981:175ff.). These include yào ‘want’, qíngyuàn ‘wish, prefer’, jìxù ‘continue’, xūyào ‘need’, xīwàng ‘hope’, xiǎng ‘think, miss’, and biǎoshì ‘express’ (1981: 175-177). While some of these are semantically similar to the examples of Modality markers that Dixon provides, they do not qualify as true Modality since they can have additional arguments (Dixon 2012:27-28).

| 勇敢, 勇当, 改 | ‘ought to, should’ |
| 能, 能够, 会, 会 | ‘be able to’ |
| 能, 能够, 会 | ‘has permission to’ |
| kěn | ‘dare’ |
| děi, 比于, 以便, 而 | ‘be willing to’ |
| huì | ‘will, know how to’ (Li & Thompson 1981:182-183) |
Other potential cases for auxiliaries or modals found in Li & Thompson (1981) include yào ‘be going to, in the immediate future’, kěnéng ‘possible, likely’, and several kinds of adverbs (1981:175-176, 181). First, the word yào ‘be going to, in the immediate future’ does not qualify as a true auxiliary since it cannot appear in negative or the ‘A-not-A’ question constructions (Li & Thompson 1981:175-176). However, this does not disqualify it from Modality status by Dixon’s definitions, since Modality can include syntactic particles (following Dixon 2012:27). Note that while this word is identical in form as yào ‘want’ above, the distribution of the ‘be going to’ meaning is comparatively more restricted; there is also some cases where ambiguity between the two is possible (Li & Thompson 1981:175-176). In regard to Dixon’s categories of Modality marking, while Li & Thompson provide no further information that would help elucidate the category membership of yào, the glosses they provide, namely, ‘immediately, in the immediate future, am going to’, suggest that yào belongs to the Imminent Activity category, and this interpretation is provisionally adopted here.

Second, the word kěnéng ‘possible, likely’ is similar to auxiliary verbs semantically and syntactically in some contexts, such as in sentences where it immediately precedes a verb, though it itself patterns as a verb, or specifically, an ‘adjectival verb’ (Li & Thompson 1981:179-180). This word seems to fall into Dixon’s category of Degree of Certainty, except that kěnéng is a full verb, while morphological markers for this category should be either modals or morphological affixes; thus, this verb would be a Semi-modal at best (following Dixon 2012:26, 29).

Third, several kinds of adverbs behave in ways similar to auxiliaries, such as dàgài ‘approximately’, yídìng ‘definitely’, and kuài(yào) ‘soon’. These adverbs fail the
‘A-not-A’ question test as well as a second test where auxiliaries appear as an acceptable response to a question, showing that they are not auxiliaries. The semantic domain of Modality in Mandarin is thus comprised of a complex system of auxiliaries, full verbs, and possibly adverbs.

Aspectual particles, or what Dixon considers Completion and Composition, also form an important portion of Mandarin grammar. These include the ‘Currently Relevant State’ marker le (‘CRS’), the ‘Perfective’ marker –le (‘PFV’), ‘Imperfective’ markers zài and –zhe ‘IPFV’, and the ‘Experiential’ marker –guo (‘EXP’) (Li & Thompson 1981:185, 240).

The ‘Currently Relevant State’ marker, le, is defined by Li & Thompson (1981:240) as denoting:

...that some state of affairs is current with respect to some particular situation.

When no other situation is mentioned, then it is always assumed that the statement signaled by the sentence with the le is relevant to now, that is, to the situation of the speech context in which the speaker and hearer are engaged.

Li & Thompson further provide five types of contexts where this kind of definition applies, namely, if it expresses a situation that “is a changed state,” “corrects a wrong assumption,” “reports progress so far,” “determines what will happen next,” and/or “is the speaker’s total contribution to the conversation at that point” (1981:244).

The general idea of having implications for the present makes this seem identical to Dixon (2012)’s perfect, for which he adopts the general definition that it refers to “‘an action which is completed before the present time,’ to which is often added, ‘and which has present relevance’” (2012:31). However, this particle does not necessarily mark
completed action on the verb with which it appears since *le* can refer to present relevance even with stative verbs to indicate a change in state (per Li & Thompson 1981:244), often in cases where the cause—that is, the completed action or event that brings about the change of state—is not mentioned.\(^{11}\) In addition, Dixon argues against the English *have...-en* construction’s status as a perfect when it refers to a continuing event (2012:32), suggesting that the ‘progress so far’ context of *le* is equally unacceptable as a perfect. Unfortunately, since Dixon does not provide a clear category for the English construction\(^{12}\), and since the particle *le* has no relevance to tense, it is unclear how *le* can be categorized in the Non-Spatial Setting framework. The solution here is to honor Li & Thompson’s descriptive term, ‘Currently Relevant State’.

Similar to *le* is the ‘Perfective’ particle –*le* ‘P\(F\)/V’. Li & Thompson define the usage of this affix as that “it indicates that an event is being viewed in its entirety or as a whole” (1981:185). This matches Dixon’s definition for Perfective within his Composition category perfectly (2012:35). Li & Thompson further develop this idea for –*le* by finding four types of possible boundedness, namely, “...being a quantified event,” “...being a definite or specific event,” “...bounded because of the meaning of the verb,” and “...being the first event in a sequence” (1981:185-186). Thus, the particle –*le* is characterized as a variety of perfective and is associated with an event that is somehow bounded. At the same time, Li & Thompson (1981:215) demonstrate that –*le* cannot indicate simple completion, as there are situations where it is used that have little to do with a completed action. Thus, -*le* should be placed within Composition as a Perfective.

\(^{11}\) Please see Li & Thompson (1981:245 ff.) for examples of this kind of construction, virtually all of which lack any mention of a completed action that brings about the change in state.

\(^{12}\) Apart from possibly treating one form of it as a “relative tense;” see Dixon (2012:32) for details.
The ‘Imperfective’ or ‘Durative’ (Li & Thompson 1981:185, 217) particles zài and –zhe are additional aspectual markers in Chinese, which “signal the ongoing, or durative, nature of an event,” much like English be -ing (Li & Thompson 1981:217). These two morphemes have specific distributions in the grammar, where zài appears only with verbs of ‘activity’ (Li & Thompson 1981:218), while –zhe only appears in the standard language with states, but not with adjective-type verbs (Li & Thompson 1981:219-222). In either case, while Dixon’s framework provides two potential matches for an ‘ongoing, durative’ marker, namely, Imperfect as part of Completion and Durative as part of Temporal Extent, the fact that Li & Thompson (1981) links these two forms with English be –ing suggests that zài and –zhe mark the Imperfect.

On the other hand, the behavior of zài and –zhe is such that it cannot co-occur with –le ‘PFV’, due to the fact that they disagree semantically, where the former indicate “unbounded” action and the latter indicates “bounded” action (Li & Thompson 1981:203). This suggests a paradigmatic relationship in Mandarin that involves Completion and Composition at the same time.

The affix –zhe also functions as a marker that “signal[s] that one event provides a durative background for another event” (Li & Thompson 1981:223). With this usage, –zhe can occur with activity verbs as well as state verbs (Li & Thompson 1981:224). This form of –zhe matches Dixon’s examples for ‘Imperfective’ rather well, since they also signal backgrounded events (2012:35). However, the forms used in Chinese for the other event, which would then be “regarded as a whole” (Dixon 2012:35), are not obligatorily
marked with the –le suffix. In general, though, this form is a good fit within Composition.

The last important aspectual element under discussion for Mandarin is the ‘Experiential’ –guo affix. Li & Thompson define the usage of this affix as follows:

The aspect suffix –guo means that an event has been experienced with respect to some reference time. When the reference time is left unspecified, then –guo signals that the event has been experienced at least once at some indefinite time, which is usually the indefinite past. (1981:226, emphasis original)

They further go on to contrast this affix with –le, stating that “the perfective –le signaling a bounded event typically conveys the message that the event took place, while –guo signals that an event has been experienced at least once” (1981:227). This form seems to fall into Dixon’s Completion category, since –guo effectively expresses “‘an action which is completed before the present time’...‘and which has present relevance’” (2012:31), because –guo indicates that an event has occurred and is relevant to some point in time. At the same time, -guo ‘EXP’ cannot co-occur with –le ‘PFV’, providing further evidence that Completion and Composition form a paradigmatic relationship with one another.

A final aspectual construction found in Mandarin is verbal reduplication, which indicates “doing an action ‘a little bit,’ or for a short period of time” with activity verbs (Li & Thompson 1981:232, 234). This construction can also optionally include the word yi ‘one’, which is placed in the middle of the construction, with the two parts of the reduplicated verb on either side (Li & Thompson 1981:232). The meaning ‘a little bit’

13 See Li & Thompson (1981:223-226) for examples where –le does and does not appear.
here fits perfectly within Dixon’s Degree category (following Dixon 2012:36), while the ‘short period of time’ meaning can probably be treated as an extension of ‘a little bit’.

Altogether, Mandarin has a number of morphological and syntactic forms that fit well into Dixon’s Non-Spatial Setting in the areas of Irrealis (Modality), Completion and Composition (as a single category), and Degree, as well as the distinctive category ‘Currently Relevant State’, summarized below in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modality as part of Irrealis</td>
<td>Obligation</td>
<td>yīnggāi, yīngdang, gāi ‘ought to, should’ dēi, bǐxū, bǐyào, bǐdēi ‘must, ought to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>nèng, nènggòu, huì, kěyì ‘be able to’ nèng, kěyì ‘has permission to’ huì ‘will, know how to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imminent Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>yào ‘in the immediate future, be going to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>gǎn ‘dare’ kěn ‘be willing to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion-Composition</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>-guo ‘EXP’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect</td>
<td>zài ‘be -ing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect-</td>
<td>-zhe ‘be –ing, IPFV’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>-le ‘PFV’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>reduplication: ‘a little bit, for a short period of time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Relevant State</td>
<td></td>
<td>le ‘CRS’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of Non-spatial Setting elements in Mandarin Chinese.\(^{14}\)

As it will be seen, the findings here for Mandarin will have parallels in White Hmong.

2.3.2 Guizhou Dong

Guizhou Dong\(^{15}\) (Tai-Kadai, China) is another language that is typologically similar to White Hmong. Historically, at least one language of the family of which Dong is a part

\(^{14}\) Undoubtedly, Mandarin Chinese has a number of other morphemes and processes relevant to Non-spatial Setting; however, what is displayed here is the forms discussed in Li & Thompson (1981).
has served as a ‘superstratum language’ in the Hmong homeland (Li 1991:43), suggesting the possibility of direct influence on the development of Hmong, and Guizhou Dong is currently spoken in areas in contact with various Hmong dialects. As a result, Dong provides useful parallels for the grammar of White Hmong. Grammatical points of interest available include modals, aspectual markers, and marginal reduplication, each of which is discussed below in reference to Dixon’s Non-spatial Setting.

Guizhou Dong has a number of “modals,” including wo³¹ ‘know’, ju⁵³ ‘want’, hay¹³ ‘agree’, non³³ ‘be willing’, ?am²²³ ‘dare to’, and li²²³ ‘have N to V’ (Long & Zheng 1998:120, 122). Long & Zheng’s modals typically appear before a verb, though some modals, such as wo³¹ ‘know’ and non³³ ‘be willing’, can be followed by a pronoun or noun instead (1998:122-123). This suggests that at least these last two do not belong to Dixon (2012)’s Modality, as they behave as Primary verbs in the verbal classification system of Dixon (2006). Likewise, the gloss for li²²³, ‘have N to V’, suggests the mandatory presence of a different subject for the second verb, which suggests that it is a Secondary-C verb (per Dixon 2006:13), and is thus not a marker of Modality (following Dixon 2012:26). Information on how the other ‘modals’ behave is unavailable, so their status is unknown. As for the specific semantic categories of Modality, such as Necessity or Obligation, ju⁵³ ‘want’ can be provisionally placed in the Desire category, while the semantics of hay¹³ ‘agree’ and ?am²²³ ‘dare to’ are such that they do not neatly fit into the canonical categories provided by Dixon (2012:26), and so can be provisionally placed in an “Other” category.

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15 The source for this language, Long & Zheng (1998), provides data from both ‘southern’ and ‘northern’ dialects; generally, the southern forms are the ones cited in the discussion unless indicated otherwise; this tendency is reflected in the discussion here.
Aspectual markers in Guizhou Dong include $to^{323}$ ‘action in progress’, $ta^{33}$ ‘completed action’, $ljeu^{31}$ ‘completion, change, or past event’, $khwən^{35}(ljeu^{31})$ ‘finished action’, and $łon^{212}ma^{35}$ ‘beginning/continuation of an action’ (Long & Zheng 1998:148).

The first of these, $to^{323}$, expresses ongoing action; it follows the verb (Long & Zheng 1998:148). Though there is relatively little data to determine the exact status of this form, Long & Zheng (1998:148) relate it to the Mandarin –$zhe$, suggesting that it would qualify as an imperfective under Dixon’s system.

The second aspectual marker, $ta^{33}$ ‘completed action’, is further defined as expressing previous experience, and is paralleled by the Mandarin –$guo$; it appears after the verb and sometimes after the object as well, depending on the dialect (Long & Zheng 1998:149). As an experiential following the pattern of –$guo$, it appears that this form would be a type of perfect, as discussed for Mandarin above.

The third and fourth markers, $ljeu^{31}$ ‘completion, change, or past event’ and $khwən^{35}(ljeu^{31})$ ‘finished action’, mark completion and follow the verb (Long & Zheng 1998:150). The marker $ljeu^{31}$ is suggested to parallel Mandarin $le^{16}$ (Long & Zheng 1998:150). As a result of its semantic value of completion, it appears that this form may be a perfect within Dixon’s system, because of the notion of being “completed before the present time” (Dixon 2012:31). The other marker here, $khwən^{35}(ljeu^{31})$, seems to fall into the same category for the same reason.

The fifth marker, $łon^{212}ma^{35}$ ‘begin –ing’, is used to signal the starting or ongoing status of an activity, and follows the verb (Long & Zheng 1998:150). As such, this falls

\[\text{Note, however, that it is unclear which version of } le \text{ is intended. It is assumed here that the perfective form is in fact the one under consideration.}\]
into Dixon’s Phase of Activity category, which includes notions of “beginning” and “continuing” (Dixon 2012:30).

In addition to these, one remaining marker is found in Long & Zheng (1998): $k\text{v}_n$ ‘finished action’\textsuperscript{17} (1998:150). It follows the verb, and when it appears with $l\text{ja}_3$ ‘completion’,\textsuperscript{18} an emphatic sense of ‘already’ is expressed (Long & Zheng 1998:150). Whether this would belong to Dixon’s Phase of Activity (as ‘finishing’) or Completion as a perfect is uncertain, due to the lack of sufficient data.

Reduplication in Guizhou Dong is only marginally attested and is likely the result of influence from Chinese; the attested examples are either: 1) reduplicated monosyllables that can signal ‘try out’ or ‘for a short time’, or 2) reduplicated bisyllabic words that indicate repetitive action (Long & Zheng:121-122). It seems that these uses would likely make reduplication fit into Dixon (2012)’s category of Frequency and Degree.

As a whole, Guizhou Dong has a system of Modality belonging to Dixon’s Irrealis, a system of aspect marking that seems to belong to his Phase of Activity, Completion, and Composition categories, and a marginal reduplication process; these are summarized in Table 3 below.

\textsuperscript{17} This is a northern dialect form. It is uncertain whether this is related to the southern $k\text{h}w\text{n}$ found above.

\textsuperscript{18} This form is the northern version of $l\text{jeu}$ (Long & Zheng 1998:150).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modality as part of Irrealis</td>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>ju³³ ‘want’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>haj¹⁵ ‘agree’, ʔam²²³ ‘dare to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>tæn⁴⁴ ma³³ ‘begin –ing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>ljeu¹¹ ‘completion’, khwən³⁵ (ljeu¹¹) ‘finished action’, ta³³ ‘EXP’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td>to³²⁵ ‘action in progress’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>reduplication: ‘try out, for a short time’, ‘REPETITIVE ACTION’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Table 3. Summary of Non-spatial Setting in Guizhou Dong. |

2.3.3 Green Hmong

Green Hmong (Hmong-Mien, China/Laos) represents a group of Hmongic dialects belonging to the Chuanqiandian cluster. Two of these dialects are considered here: one from Xiaodala village, Honghe prefecture, Yunnan province, China¹⁹ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:7), and the other from Laos.

2.3.3.1 Xiaodala Honghe dialect

The Xiaodala variety of Green Hmong has a number of aspectual particles, modal verbs, and Lexical Time Words. The particles include leuf²⁰ ‘complete situation’, lak ‘change in progress’, dangl ‘finish’, dluat ‘experienced action’, and zhenf ‘in the process of’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:54-56). The phrase zhit dout ‘has not, did not’ also appears (Xiang & Cohen 2005:56-57). Each of these is discussed below in turn.

The word leuf can either follow the verb or be sentence-final, and indicates that “the speaker is looking at the action of the verb as a total event or a complete situation, without attention to the internal structure of the event” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:54).

¹⁹ The dialect represented in Xiong & Cohen (2005) is specifically the variety spoken in Xiao Dala village within Honghe prefecture.

²⁰ In the orthography of the Honghe dialect, tones are represented with final consonants. For this dialect, <b> represents high falling tone, <ʌ> mid-high level tone, <l> low falling breathy tone, <d> mid rising tone, <x> mid falling tone, <k> mid level tone, <s> mid breathy tone, and <f> low falling creaky tone (Xiong & Cohen 2005:12).
definition fits Dixon’s definition of the perfective perfectly and so belongs to the category of Composition.

The word *lak* is sentence-final and “indicates that a change of state is currently in progress or that an action has begun to happen” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:55). As such, this seems to be some sort of progressive marker, which would place it in the category of Completion as an imperfect.

The particle *dangl* either follows the verb or is sentence final; it only accompanies an ‘action verb’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:55). It “shows that the action of the preceding verb has been finished;...a speaker uses [it] to show that a process has been completed or that a series of repeated events has come to an end” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:55). This particle seems to fit into both the perfect Completion (as marking a completed process) and Phase of Activity categories.

The word *dluat* marks ‘experiential aspect’ and follows the verb (Xiong & Cohen 2005:56). It “indicates that the action of the main verb took place at least once in the past or with respect to some reference time” and “implies that the person referred to in the subject of the sentence has had the experience of undergoing or accomplishing this type of action, and that the person’s past experience still has current relevance” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:56). The “current relevance” status makes this particle a perfect within Dixon’s Completion, and specifically one of marking past experience.

The word *zhenf* is a preverbal particle and marks ‘progressive aspect’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:56). Its possible translations include “in the process of” and “in the course of” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:56). From these traits, it appears that this particle fits Dixon’s category of Imperfect as a part of Completion. *Zhenf* can also be used in the construction
zhênf zhit, where it is combined with the negative zhit to indicate ‘not yet, still not’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:56-57), making it extend semantically into the domain of Dixon’s Lexical Time Words, specifically With Respect to Expectation (2006:20).

The phrase zhit dout ‘has not, did not’ provides an example of a marker that signals that “an expected action has not taken place or did not take place” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:56). It seems that this would likely fall into the category of Perfect as part of Completion in Non-spatial Setting.

Modal verbs in Honghe Green Hmong include yuad ‘will, want, need’, dout ‘be able’, dout ‘get the chance, have the opportunity to’, dout ‘must’, doul ‘be physically able’, sangd ‘want’, and nchait ‘probably’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:54-56, 81-82). The phrase zhit xaob ‘need not’ also appears (Xiong & Cohen 2005:81). Each of these is discussed in more detail below.

The word yuad is a preverbal modal marking ‘prospective aspect’ and indicates “that someone is intending to do some action, or is on the point of doing it” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:54). This is clearly a Modal in Dixon (2012)’s sense from a semantic standpoint; the few examples available suggest that it is a regular Modal. This would place it within Dixon’s Irrealis, as a marker of the Modality of Intent.

Yuad also serves a second purpose as a marker of Obligation or Necessity, where it is translated as ‘need’ or ‘want’; this use appears before the verb (Xiong & Cohen 2005:81). This usage would fall into the categories of the same names, Obligation and Necessity, in Dixon (2012).

In the negative, yuad as part of the phrase zhit yuad indicates the notion expressed by the phrases ‘need not, there’s no need to, don’t have to’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:81).
Xiong & Cohen (2005:81) explicitly note here that this serves as a “negation of necessity or obligation.” In the framework of Dixon (2012), this is straightforward: *zhit yuad* is the negative form for Obligation and Necessity as categories.

The modal *dout* ‘be able’ is postverbal and indicates “that the action of the verb is permitted or capable of being accomplished” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:55). While it is unclear whether this is operating as a full verb21, semantically, this is clearly Ability Modality within Dixon’s Irrealis.

The modal *dout* can also be used preverbally with the meaning ‘get the chance, have the opportunity to’ and signifies “that the person referred to in the subject of the sentence has received the opportunity or privilege of doing some desired action” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:55). While the nuance is different from *dout* ‘be able’ above, there is still a semantic trait of Ability present, and so appears to fit within Dixon’s Ability Modality.

A third use of *dout* is to indicate the notion of ‘must’, and precedes the verb (Xiong & Cohen 2005:81). Xiong & Cohen comment that *dout* here indicates obligation and necessity, placing it in the corresponding categories provided by Dixon (2012).

*Dout* can also appear in the phrase *yuad dout*, where the resulting combination can be translated ‘need to, should, have to’ and is placed before the verb (Xiong & Cohen 2005:81). Like *dout*, this serves as marking Obligation and Necessity (Xiong & Cohen 2005:81), and falls into the Modality categories in Dixon (2012) with the same names.

The word *doul* ‘be physically able’ is postverbal and accompanies ‘verb[s] of physical activity’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:55). It signals “that a person is physically

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21 The data from the parallel word in White Hmong, *tau* ‘can,’ suggest that it is a regular verb and thus a Semi-modal; see below for details.
capable of accomplishing the action” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:55). This appears to be another Modal belonging to Dixon’s Ability category.

The word *sangd* ‘want’ is an auxiliary verb which precedes the matrix verb; it indicates “desire or intent” (Xiong & Cohen 2005:56). While the data here does not include tests for direct objects, it seems that this is a likely candidate for Dixon’s Desire category of Modality, due to its semantic value and status as an auxiliary verb.

The word *nchait* ‘probably’ is a probability marker that Xiong & Cohen consider a modal (2005:81-82). It precedes the verb and other auxiliaries such as *yuad* (following Xiong & Cohen 2005:82). If this is in fact a modal (and not an adverb), then it fits well within Dixon’s Degree of Certainty category.

The phrase *zhit xaoob* is used as a ‘negative command’ and signifies the idea of ‘need not, do not need to’ (Xiong & Cohen 2005:81). As such, it would be a sort of Modality marker indicating negative Necessity in the framework of Dixon (2012).

A few ‘lexical time words’ are also attested in Xiong & Cohen, including *uat nax* ‘usually’, *zeuf* ‘already’, and *let* ‘finally’ (2005:71).

As it has been seen, the Honghe dialect has morphology belonging to Dixon (2012)’s Tense (in the form of lexical time words), Irrealis, Degree of Certainty, Phase of Activity, and Completion categories. These are summarized in Table 4 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Time Words</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>uat nax</em> ‘usually’, <em>zeuf</em> ‘already’, <em>let</em> ‘finally’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality as part of Irrealis</td>
<td>Necessity-Obligation</td>
<td><em>yuad</em> ‘need’, <em>dout</em> ‘must’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative Necessity</td>
<td><em>zhit xaob</em> ‘need not, do not need to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td><em>dout</em> ‘be able’, <em>dout</em> ‘get the chance’, <em>doul</em> ‘be physically able’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desire</td>
<td><em>sangd</em> ‘want’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intent</td>
<td><em>yuad</em> ‘will, want’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity</td>
<td>Finishing</td>
<td><em>dangl</em> ‘finish’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td><em>dangl</em> ‘finish’, <em>dluat</em> ‘experienced action’, <em>zhit dout</em> ‘has not, did not’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imperfect</td>
<td><em>lak</em> ‘change in progress’, <em>zhenf</em> ‘in the process of’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td><em>leuf</em> ‘complete situation’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.** Summary of Non-spatial Setting in the Honghe dialect.

### 2.3.3.2 Laotian Green Hmong

The Laotian dialect of Green Hmong shows striking similarities to the Honghe dialect above, especially in the area of grammatical markers. Li provides information on *yuav*\(^\text{22}\) ‘Future tense’, *tau* ‘get to’, *tau* ‘potential mode’, *tau* ‘Attainment aspect marker’;\(^\text{23}\) *lawm* ‘Completion aspect marker’, and *taabtom* ‘Progressive aspect marker’ (1991:32, 35, 37, 52).\(^\text{24}\) Each of these is considered in turn.

The word *yuav* ‘Future tense’ is considered by Li to be an optional future tense marker (1991:52). It has a phonologically identical counterpart *yuav* ‘buy’ with which it cannot co-occur (Li 1991:52-53). It is likely to be left out if a time adverb signaling the

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\(^{22}\) In the orthography of the Laotian dialects of Hmong, including Green and White Hmong, tones are represented with final consonants, like in the Honghe dialect discussed above. For these dialects, `<b>` represents high level tone, `<Ø>` mid level tone, `<s>` low-mid level tone, `<v>` mid rising tone, `<j>` high falling tone, `<g>` low falling breathy tone, and `<m>` short low tone (Mottin 1978:15).

\(^{23}\) These three instances of *tau* are treated as differing uses of the same word by Li (1991).

\(^{24}\) Other relevant Laotian Green Hmong forms mentioned by Li include *yuavtsum* ‘must, should,’ *pheej* ‘reiterative,’ *taag* ‘finish,’ and *xaav* ‘want’ (1991:39, 52, 54). Coverage of these in the article, however, is rather limited.
future is present, and, according to Li, *yuav* is mandatory in the apodosis of conditional statements if no such adverbs are present (1991:53). Li’s description of *yuav* suggests that it belongs to Dixon’s Tense category, although this assessment contrasts with that of *yuad* ‘prospective aspect’ in the Honghe dialect above, where it is found to be a modal. As a result, it is not completely clear here whether *yuav* should be considered Tense or Irrealis in Dixon’s model, or if the two categories should be treated as one concept in this dialect.25

The word *tau* ‘get to’ appears immediately before the verb, and Li appears to consider it a regular verb (following Li 1991:32, 34). This form may occur with the future *yuav* in the form *yuav tau* with the meaning ‘will get to’ (Li 1991:31). Li does not provide significant information for this form apart from his analysis of the ‘Attainment’ meaning of *tau*, so the exact status of this form is somewhat unclear. However, since Li treats it as a verb—with no further indication otherwise—it should be treated as falling outside the realm of Non-spatial Setting for the purposes of the discussion here.

The word *tau* with the function of ‘potential mode’ can appear in one of two places: 1) immediately after the verb, or 2) after the direct object following the verb (Li 1991:35). While Li does not appear to provide a significant amount of additional information about this use of *tau*, his treatment of it as marking ‘potential mode’ strongly suggests that it serves as an Ability-type Modal or Semi-modal, an analysis adopted here.

The particle *tau* ‘Attainment aspect marker’ precedes the verb and the sentence in which it appears must have some sort of phrase or marker that “bounds” the action, such as a direct object, a time phrase, a “direction/location phrase,” or the “Completion aspect

---

25 It will be found below that the synonymous form *yuav* in White Hmong is a Modal, rather than tense marking.
marker” (Li 1991:29, 34). The particle signals “the attainment of the event signaled by the sentence,” where the event could “be a hypothetical or future event,” (Li 1991:29). Li argues strongly against a common analysis of tau as past tense, and gives a conclusive example where tau appears in a hypothetical protasis of a conditional statement (1991:26-29). As a result, it is clear that tau is not a tense marker, and likely falls into the category of Perfect as a part of Completion, as is found for its White Hmong counterpart below.

The particle lawm ‘Completion aspect marker’ appears at the end of the clause and marks “the completion of an event” (Li 1991:37, 39). In terms of its distribution, its appearance with the future yuav is allowed if the negative marker tsi is also present, since “an overtly specified future event in Hmong cannot be seen as completed” (Li 1991:40-41). At the same time, Li asserts that lawm can occur in an “irrealis” context, and provides an example where lawm appears in a ‘when’ time clause marking a yet-to-be-completed action (1991:39, 41). In either case, lawm clearly follows Dixon (2012)’s definition of Perfect, and so belongs to his category of Completion.

The word taabtom ‘Progressive aspect marker’ appears after the subject noun and only accompanies ‘activity verbs’ (Li 1991:46). It can appear with yuav ‘Future aspect marker’; the resulting construction means ‘be about to’ and is allowed to appear preceding ‘stative verbs’ (Li 1991:46-48). The word taabtom is never accompanied by lawm ‘Completion aspect marker’ or tau ‘Attainment aspect marker’ (Li 1991:47). While it cannot appear with adverbs of past time in isolation, it can appear in a context giving information on a background activity in relation to another event (Li 1991:49-50). The restriction against taabtom appearing with perfect markers such as tau or lawm and
especially its use with past time adverbials to signal a background activity show that
taabtom is an imperfective marker belonging to Dixon’s Composition category.

The Laotian dialect of Green Hmong thus has markers belonging to Irrealis,
Completion, and Composition, and, if Li (1991) is correct, Tense. A summary of these
elements is shown below in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>yuav ‘Future tense’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality as part of Irrealis</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>tau ‘potential mode’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>tau ‘Attainment aspect marker’, lawm ‘Completion aspect marker’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td>taabtom ‘Progressive aspect marker’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Summary of Non-spatial Setting in Laotian Green Hmong.

The findings for Non-spatial Setting within the grammar of the three languages,
Mandarin Chinese, Guizhou Dong, and the two dialects of Green Hmong, are shown
below in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mandarin Chinese</th>
<th>Guizhou Dong</th>
<th>Honghe Green Hmong</th>
<th>Laotian Green Hmong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tense: Future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yuav ‘Future tense’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense: Lexical Time Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>uat nax ‘usually’, zeuf ‘already’, let ‘finally’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality: Necessity/Obligation</td>
<td>yìnggāi, yìngdang, gāi ‘ought to, should’ dēi, bixū, biyào, bidēi ‘must, ought to’</td>
<td>yuad ‘need’, dout ‘must’,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality: Negative Obligation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>zhit xaob ‘need not, do not need to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Mandarin Chinese</td>
<td>Guizhou Dong</td>
<td>Honghe Green Hmong</td>
<td>Laotian Green Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality: Ability</td>
<td>néng, nénggòu, hui, kěyi ‘be able to’ néng, kěyi ‘has permission to’ huì ‘will, know how to’</td>
<td>dout ‘be able’, dout ‘get the chance’, doul ‘be physically able’</td>
<td>tau ‘potential mode’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality: Imminent Activity</td>
<td>yào ‘in the immediate future, be going to’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality: Desire</td>
<td>ju ‘want’</td>
<td>sangd ‘want’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality: Intent</td>
<td></td>
<td>yuad ‘will, want’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality: Other</td>
<td>găn ‘dare’ kěn ‘be willing to’</td>
<td>hañ ‘agree’, ñam ‘dare to’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity: Beginning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ton ‘begin –ing’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity: Finishing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dangl ‘finish’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion: Imperfect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lak ‘change in progress’, zhenf ‘in the process of’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition: Perfective</td>
<td>-le ‘PFV’</td>
<td></td>
<td>leuf ‘complete situation’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition: Imperfective</td>
<td>-zhe ‘IPFV’</td>
<td>to ‘action in progress’</td>
<td>taabtom ‘Progressive aspect marker’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6. Non-spatial Setting in Mandarin Chinese, Guizhou Dong, and Green Hmong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mandarin Chinese</th>
<th>Guizhou Dong</th>
<th>Honghe Green Hmong</th>
<th>Laotian Green Hmong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>reduplication: ‘a little bit, for a short period of time’</td>
<td>reduplication: ‘try out, for a short time’, ‘REPETITIVE ACTION’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Relevant State</td>
<td><em>le ‘CRS’</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the above findings as a background, we will now briefly touch on the basic grammar of White Hmong before considering its Non-spatial Setting in detail.

#### 2.4 Basic grammar

White Hmong is an isolating language similar to other Southeast Asian languages, with a basic word order of SVO (following Fuller 1988:25). An example of the basic word order appears in (1).

\[
(1) \quad Tsov^{26} \quad tom \quad twm \quad (Fuller \ 1988:18) \\
\text{tiger} \quad \text{bite} \quad \text{water.buffalo} \\
\quad \text{‘Tigers bite water buffalo.’}
\]

Here, the subject *tsov ‘tiger(s)’* appears first, followed by the verb *tom ‘bite’*, which is then followed by the object noun *twm ‘water buffalo’*.

Grammatical marking is done through the use of additional words, such as particles or adverbs, rather than verbal affixes or inflection.\(^{27}\) This is shown in (2) below.

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\(^{26}\) Throughout this thesis, White Hmong is written using the native orthography. For a description of this orthography, please see Fuller (1988), Heimbach (1969), or Jarkey (1991).

\(^{27}\) As mentioned as a general trait for Southeast Asian languages in section 2.3 above.
In (2), lawv ‘3PL’ serves the role of sentence subject and ntshai ‘afraid’ as predicate, and the notion of perfect is conveyed by the separate word tau ‘ATT’.

Noun phrases typically consist of either a single noun, a construction with a noun and an adjective, a construction including a noun classifier, or a possessive construction. When adjectives are used, the word order is generally Noun Adjective (Fuller 1988:13; Jarkey 1991:33), as in (3) below.

(3) lub tsev loj (Mottin 1978:48)  
   CLF30 house big  
   ‘the big house’

Here, the head noun tsev ‘house’ is followed by the adjective loj ‘big’. A small set of adjectives do not follow the Noun Adjective pattern, but immediately precede the noun, such as niaj ‘great’, nyuam ‘little’, and qub ‘old’ (following Fuller 1988:13; Jarkey 1991:33).

Noun classifiers are ubiquitous in White Hmong, and classifiers are generally assigned to nouns based on some semantic component of the noun. For example, if the noun is animate, the classifier tus ‘animate CLF’ will be the one used. Some common classifiers appear in Table 7 below.

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28 Elements of Non-spatial Setting are glossed throughout based on findings presented in section 3 below. In some cases, these may rely in part on outside sources; the reader is directed to the relevant parts of section 3 below for citations of these sources.

29 Glosses for content from outside sources are sometimes altered from the original to be consistent with other examples throughout, especially as different sources tend to gloss Non-spatial Setting markers in different ways.

30 See Table 7 below for the citation for glosses referring to classifiers.
Table 7. Some common classifiers in White Hmong. (quoting Jarkey 1991:35-37)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cov</td>
<td>plurals of an unspecified number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lub</td>
<td>round, bulky, hollow objects; abstract nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rab</td>
<td>tools and weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tus</td>
<td>animate beings; long, slender, cylindrical objects; abstract nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>txoj</td>
<td>objects that come in lengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yam</td>
<td>kinds, classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noun classifiers generally appear when numerals, demonstratives, or some possessives are used (see Fuller 1988:19). With numerals, the word order is Numeral Classifier Noun (Fuller 1988:13; Jarkey 1991:32). With demonstratives, the order is Classifier Noun Demonstrative (see Jarkey 1991:32). Examples of classifiers with a numeral and a demonstrative appear in (4) and (5), respectively.

(4)  
ib lub teb chaws  
one CLF country  
‘one country’

Here, the numeral ib ‘one’ is followed by the classifier lub ‘round objects/abstract CLF’, which in turn is followed by the noun teb chaws ‘country’ to produce the meaning ‘one country’.

(5) lub ntiaj teb no  
CLF world this  
‘this world’

In (5), the classifier lub ‘round objects/abstract CLF’ appears first, followed by the noun ntiaj teb ‘world’, followed by the demonstrative no ‘this’.

There are three varieties of possessive constructions: 1) construction with a classifier; 2) a comparatively rare construction made up of possessor noun followed by possessed; 3) construction with the li possessive marker. The construction with a
classifier takes the form of ‘Possessor Classifier Possessed’ (see Fuller 1988:19), as shown in (6) below.

(6)  peb  lub  hom phiaj
     1PL  CLF  purpose
     ‘our purpose’

In (6), the possessor peb ‘1PL’ appears first, followed by the relevant classifier for the possessed noun, in this case lub ‘round objects/abstract CLF’, followed by the possessed noun hom phiaj ‘purpose’.

A construction made up of the possessor noun followed by the possessed noun is occasionally seen, though this is restricted to specific possessed nouns (Mottin 1978:30). One example is kuv txiv ‘my father’, where kuv is ‘1SG’ and txiv is ‘father’; adding the relevant classifier, tus ‘animate CLF’, results in the meaning changing to ‘my husband’ (Fuller 1988:19; Mottin 1978:30). Another rare construction is one which uses the particle li in the pattern ‘Possessor li’ and tends to be used with the copula in a predicative sense (Heimbach 1979:111; Mottin 1978:46), as shown in (7).

(7)  tej no\(^{31}\)  yog  kuv  li
     these  CLF  1SG  POSS\(^{32}\)
     ‘These are mine.’\(^{33}\)

Here, the phrase kuv li ‘mine’ is made up of kuv ‘1SG’ and the particle li, and appears after the copula yog, serving a predicative purpose.

Relative clauses are one of three types: 1) a clause headed by uas ‘that’ after the head noun; 2) a clause headed by the pronoun/classifier qhov ‘thing’;\(^{34}\) and 3) a verbal phrase headed by a classifier. The first type is a clause comprised of a head noun, the

\(^{31}\) Word grouping and gloss based on Heimbach (1979:313).
\(^{32}\) Gloss following Heimbach (1979:111).
\(^{33}\) Translation modified from Jay Yang’s original to make grammatical in English; follows Heimbach (1969:111)’s treatment of kuv li as ‘mine.’
\(^{34}\) Gloss following Mottin (1978:35).
subordinating conjunction *uas*, and the phrase that is relativized. This is shown in (8) below.

(8) lub hom phiaj uas peb los nyob rau hauv ntiaj teb no
    CLF purpose REL 1PL come live to in world this
    ‘...the purpose that we live in this world...’

In (8), the head noun is *hom phiaj* ‘purpose’, which is followed by the relative clause *uas peb los nyob rau hauv ntiaj teb no* ‘that we live in this world’.

The second type of relative clause is comprised of a classifier such as *qhov* ‘thing’ or *tus* ‘animate CLF’ followed by the clause, and functions as a nominalized entity (following Mottin 1978:25). An example appears in (9).

(9) Tiam sis qhov kuv coj tuaj qhuab qhia peb hmo no...
    but CLF 1SG take come preach 1PL night this
    ‘But what I bring to preach to us tonight...’

In this case, the relative clause is formed from the classifier *qhov* ‘thing’ combined with the clause *kuv coj tuaj qhuab qhia peb hmo no...* ‘I bring to preach to us tonight’, where *qhov* fills the slot of the otherwise missing argument.

Pronouns in White Hmong are split into singular, dual, and plural varieties, with one additional ‘impersonal pronoun’ (Mottin 1978:44), as shown in Table 8 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td><em>kuv</em> ‘1SG’</td>
<td><em>wb</em> ‘1DU’</td>
<td><em>peb</em> ‘1PL’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td><em>koj</em> ‘2SG’</td>
<td><em>neb</em> ‘2DU’</td>
<td><em>nej</em> ‘2PL’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td><em>nws</em> ‘3SG’</td>
<td><em>nkawd</em> ‘3DU’</td>
<td><em>lawv</em> ‘3PL’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td><em>yus</em> ‘one’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8. Pronouns in White Hmong. (Adapted from Mottin 1978:44)**

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35 It should be noted that the word *nyob* ‘live, stay’ also has a grammaticalized use as a coverb meaning ‘in’; both uses appear extensively below.

36 A more idiomatic English translation would be ‘the purpose for which we live in this world,’ though the translation provided above, while somewhat awkward in English, accurately represents the structure of the phrase in White Hmong.

Verb phrases in White Hmong represent one of the most complex aspects of the language. This includes word order and morphological phenomena. First, the basic word order is the following:

(Adverb) (Modal) (Negative) Verb(s) (Adverb) lawm

where lawm is a marker signaling one variety of perfect. Verb phrases also exhibit a number of important phenomena, including grammaticalized markers of aspect, modals, serial verb constructions, the use of adverbs, and complementation constructions. Grammaticalized markers of aspect and modals will be dealt with in detail in the discussion on Non-spatial Setting, as they are an integral part of the system. The others will be briefly discussed in turn below.

Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) are extremely common in White Hmong. These can take any one of a large number of forms. Important construction types include “Cotemporal,” “Causative,” “Accomplishment,” and “Disposal” serial verb constructions (Jarkey 1991). Accomplishment SVCs are important to Non-spatial Setting, and will be discussed in detail below. For specific information on the other SVCs, the reader is directed to Jarkey (1991).

Adverbs and adverbial phrases generally occur in one of three places: 1) at the beginning of the clause; 2) at the very beginning of the verb phrase, after the subject; or 3) near or at the end of the clause, immediately before the final perfect marker lawm if it is

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38 See the discussion on Non-spatial Setting below for arguments and examples that show this.
39 Abbreviation in line with the usage found in Jarkey (1991).
40 Also known as “Attainment” in Jarkey (2004).
Examples of each of these sentence patterns are shown in (10), (11), and (12), respectively.

(10) *Hnub no kuv coj Vaj Tswv txoj lus tuaj...*
day this 1SG take God word come
‘Today I will preach God’s word…’

Here, the adverbial phrase *hnub no* ‘today’ precedes the subject pronoun *kuv* ‘1SG’, demonstrating the use of an adverbial at the beginning of the sentence.

(11) *Tej zaum peb twb muaj coob tug sim tas lawm.*
maybe 1PL already have many CLF try finish CP
‘Maybe we have many people who have tried it already.’

In (11), the adverb *twb* ‘already’ appears between the subject pronoun *peb* ‘1PL’ and the verb *muaj* ‘have’, showing that this kind of adverb can occur between the subject and the rest of the verb phrase of which the adverb is a part.

(12) *Peb twb nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj nag hmo lawm.*
1PL already search ATT 1PL CLF purpose yesterday CP
‘We already found our purpose yesterday.’

In this case, the adverb *nag hmo* ‘yesterday’ appears after the object *peb lub hom phiaj* ‘our purpose’ but before *lawm* ‘CP’, showing the possibility of adverbs in this position.

Though adverbials can occur in each of these positions, there are restrictions on the positioning of certain adverbs and adverbial phrases. While such consideration is generally beyond the scope of this thesis, one restriction is important to Non-spatial Setting: the position immediately after the subject is the location where grammaticalized adverbials regularly appear, such as the Imperfect *tab tom* ‘currently’, or the Modality

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41 One example that appears in the data from Jay Yang suggests that there may be a fourth option, where the adverbial phrases appear after the verb but before content indicating the direct object, all inside a larger nominalized verb phrase. More research is necessary to determine why this one example stands out from the others and whether it is indeed indicative of a fourth possibility for adverbial placement.

42 See below for the discussions on adverbs and *lawm*. 
marker *mam li* ‘will’. Please see section 3.2 below for the discussion on such adverbials in the post-subject, pre-modal position.

Complementation is widely attested in White Hmong, of which there are several different types. These are: 1) a “Serial-like complementation strategy,” where the complement content immediately follows the head verb without an explicit marker but does not function as a full complement syntactically; 2) a “Potential” complement that begins with the conjunction *kom* ‘PC’; 3) a “Fact” complement beginning with *(hais) tias* ‘that’; 4) “Topic” complement beginning with *txog (hais) tias* ‘about’; 5) “Indirect Will” beginning with *tias kom* ‘that’; and 6) “Activity,” which lacks an explicit marker and functions as an argument of the head verb (Jarkey 2006:123, 124, 126, 127, 132-133).

Each of these six complementation patterns is shown below in turn.  

\[(13) \quad (a) \quad Yog li \quad ces \quad peb \quad thiaj li \quad txiav \quad txim \quad siab \quad xam \quad phaj \quad tuaj \quad rau \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>so</th>
<th>then</th>
<th>1PL</th>
<th>consequently [45,46]</th>
<th>decide</th>
<th>interview</th>
<th>come to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

“So then we made the decision to interview to come here to…”

---

\[43\] Gloss based on Jarkey (2006:124). In line with Jaisser (1984), Jarkey (2006:124) points out three distinct uses of the word *kom* as a distinct entity. In addition to its use as a “Potential complementizer,” it can be used as a conjunction meaning ‘so that, in order that’ as well as a verb meaning ‘order’ (or ‘tell’ in Jaisser 1984). *Kom* is also glossed by Heimbach (1979:85) as ‘cause’, suggesting a fourth option. Throughout this thesis, identification of *kom* as a Potential complementizer, as opposed to these other uses, is generally based on Jarkey (2006:132-133).

\[44\] The classification of verbs found in Jarkey (2006:132-133) is relied upon in part for the examples found below.

\[45\] The language consultant, Jay Yang, at times consulted outside sources in the course of glossing certain words, especially function words. These have generally been replaced with glosses and/or accompanied by citations from appropriate academic works when they appear in this thesis. The citations will be provided where the word in question first appears. At the same time, some of these glosses from outside sources ultimately influenced a number of his free translations; most of these free translations have been left as is, along with the understanding that the language consultant formulated the ultimate translation based on his intuition, and incorporated any glosses that he found agreeable as a native speaker idiomatically into the translation. The outside sources included a Green Hmong dictionary named *English-Mong-English Dictionary*, written by Lang Xiong, William J Xiong & Nao Leng Xiong, Bing Translator, and several Hmong community websites.

\[46\] *Thiaj* and *thiaj li* function generally in the same manner and can be translated as ‘so,’ ‘consequently,’ ‘thereby,’ or ‘then’ (Heimbach 1969:340). Heimbach’s glosses are used throughout for these two words.
Here, the verbal phrase *txiav txim siab* ‘make a decision to’ is accompanied by the phrase *xam phaj tuaj rau teb chaws A mi kas no* ‘to interview to come here to America’, without an explicit marker serving as introduction.\(^{47}\)

\[(14)\]  
\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{...ces nws thiaj tau hais kom lawv los coj kuv then 3SG consequently ATT say PC 3PL come take 1SG}
\text{‘...then he told them to take me...’}
\end{array}\]

\[(b)\]  
\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{thiab kuv tus muam wb mus rau Thaib Teb.}
\text{and 1SG CLF sister 2DU go to Thailand}
\text{‘...and my sister—us—(and) go to Thailand.’}
\end{array}\]

In this case, the Potential, or ‘Intention/Will’ complement (Jarkey 2006:124) *kom lawv los coj kuv thiab kuv tus muam wb mus rau Thaib Teb* ‘to take me and my sister—us—(and) go to Thailand’ accompanies the verb *hais* ‘say’ and begins with the word *kom* ‘PC’.

\[(15)\]  
\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{...los sis tsis paub hais tias Vaj Tswv tsim ib puas tsav yam...}
\text{or NEG know that God create everything}
\text{‘...or do not know that God created all things...’}
\end{array}\]

Here, the head verb *paub* ‘know’ is followed by the complementizer *hais tias* ‘that’ and the rest of the complement clause *Vaj Tswv tsim ib puas tsav yam* ‘God created all things’, which signifies the “asserting” of “a fact” (Jarkey 2006:120).

\[(16)\]  
\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{Yog peb xav paub txog hais tias yog vim li cas peb ho}
\text{if 1PL want know about COP because what 1PL so}
\text{‘If we want to know why we...’}
\end{array}\]

\(^{47}\) Following Jarkey (2006:133), the verb *txiav txim* ‘decide’ takes a “serial-like strategy” when the subject is the same for both main and complement verbs.

\(^{48}\) *Ho* is a “connective particle indicating sequence and carrying forward the action of the verb” and can be translated as ‘and,’ ‘but,’ ‘and then,’ ‘again,’ or ‘so’ (Heimbach 1969:53). Heimbach’s glosses are used throughout.
los nyob rau hauv lub ntiaj teb no...
come live to in CLF world this
‘...came to live in this world...’

In this case, the verb paub ‘know’ is followed by the complementizer txog hais tias
‘about’ and the rest of the complement phrase yog vim li cas peb ho los nyob rau hauv
lub ntiaj teb no ‘why we came to live in this world’, which indicates the Topic connected
with the verb paub.

(17) Yog li kuv txiv hlob thiaj li tau hais tias kom peb
ten 1SG uncle consequently ATT say that 1PL
‘Then my uncle said that...’

cov uas peb hos me los sis cov laus uas mus
PL.CLF REL 1PL and.then little or PL.CLF old REL go
‘...those who are little and the old people who...’

tsis tau ces rov qab los mus thawj nyab laj nyob
NEG can then return come go surrender Vietnamese in
‘...cannot walk should go back and surrender to the Vietnamese...’

rau tom zos.
to at town
‘...in town.’

In the example above, the long complement clause tias kom peb...rau tom zos ‘that
we...in town’ is introduced by tias kom ‘that’ serves as a complement to the verb hais
‘say’ and expresses the Indirect Will of kuv txiv hlob ‘my uncle’.

(18) ...peb lub hwj chim uas peb niaj hnuub ua npauv suav xav
1PL CLF glory REL 1PL every49 day do dream think
‘...our glory that we dream of...’

yuav xav tau nyob rau yav pem ntej
want think get in to in.the.future
‘...having in our lives in the future.’

Here, the Activity complement xav yuav xav tay nyob rau yav pem ntej ‘of having in our
lives in the future’ immediately follows the predicate ua npauv suav ‘dream’ without the

49 Gloss confirmed by Heimbuch (1979:140).

One important discourse-related entity is the topic-comment construction in White Hmong. This takes the form:

\[
\text{Topic (mas) Comment}
\]

where \textit{mas} is a topic marker (Fuller 1988:65 ff.). An example appears below in (19).

\begin{verbatim}
(19) Lub teb chaws Sam-Neua mas peb cia kaj saib xyuas
    CLF country Sam-Neua TOP 1PL let 2SG look visit
    ‘The Sam-Neua area, we let you rule over...’

    cov Hmoob (Fuller 1988:37)
    PL.CLF Hmong
    ‘...the Hmong.’
\end{verbatim}

Here, the topic, \textit{lub teb chaws Sam-Neua} ‘the Sam-Neua area’ is followed by the topic marker \textit{mas}. This is then followed by the comment \textit{peb cia kaj saib xyuas cov Hmoob} ‘we let you rule over the Hmong’, which refers to a situation involving the location mentioned in the topic.

There are also a large number of markers associated with exclamations and other similar effects on the sentence. The reader is directed to Mottin (1978) for examples of these.
3. Grammatical elements marking Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong

White Hmong has a large number of words and phrases that belong to Non-spatial Setting.

These grammatical markers are shown in their proper category in Table 9 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tense: Lexical Time Words</td>
<td>Specific Time Words: <em>nyuam khuav</em> ‘moment’, <em>hnub</em> ‘day’, <em>vas nthiv</em> ‘week’, <em>hli</em> ‘month’, <em>xyoo</em> ‘year’, <em>sauv ntxov</em> ‘morning’, <em>hnub tseg</em> ‘noon-time’, <em>hnub qaij</em> ‘afternoon’, <em>tsaus ntuj</em> ‘night’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Respect to Expectation: <em>twb</em> ‘already’, <em>yeej</em> ‘already’, <em>tseem</em> ‘still’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporal Shifters: <em>tag kis</em> ‘tomorrow’, <em>neeg kis</em> ‘the day after tomorrow’, <em>puag nraus</em> ‘three days from now’, <em>puag nag nraus</em> ‘four days from now’, <em>nag hmo</em> ‘yesterday’, <em>hnub hmo</em> ‘the day before yesterday’, <em>hnoob hnub</em> ‘three days ago’, <em>puag hnoob hnub</em> ‘four days ago’, <em>ntua</em> ‘just’, <em>nyuam khuav</em> ‘just, a moment ago’, <em>maj mam</em> ‘after a while’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrealis: Positive</td>
<td><em>yuav</em> ‘POS.IRR., intend’, <em>mam (li)</em> ‘will’ (adverbial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrealis: Negative</td>
<td><em>txhob</em> ‘NEG.IRR., should not’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrealis: Modality</td>
<td><em>yuav</em> ‘will, intend’, <em>txhob</em> ‘should not’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>yuav tsum</em> ‘should, have to, must’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>yuav tau</em> ‘must, have to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>tsum</em> ‘can, have to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>tau</em> ‘can’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>taus</em> ‘be physically/materially able to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>txawj</em> ‘know how to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(tsis) yeej</em> ‘can(not)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Certainty: Absolute</td>
<td>*kiag (li)*50 ‘really’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>tiag</em> ‘really’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>twb</em> ‘indeed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>yeej</em> ‘certainly, definitely’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>xwb</em> ‘indeed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Certainty: Moderate</td>
<td><em>ntshai</em> ‘maybe’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>tej zaum</em> ‘maybe’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity: Beginning</td>
<td><em>pib</em> ‘begin to’, <em>tab tom</em> ‘begin to’, <em>chiv</em> ‘begin to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity: Continuing</td>
<td><em>pheej/pej</em> ‘continue to V, keep Ving’, <em>nyim</em> ‘keep Ving’, <em>rau siab ntso</em> ‘keep Ving, commit oneself to V’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase of Activity: Finishing</td>
<td><em>tas</em> ‘finish Ving, be done Ving’, <em>tiav</em> ‘finish Ving’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50 In some ways, *kiag* behaves like a particle, and in others like an adverb, as discussed above.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion: Perfect</td>
<td><em>tau</em> ‘have Ved (ATT)’, <em>lawm</em> ‘have Ved (CP)’, <em>tau</em>...<em>dua</em>, <em>dua</em>...<em>lawm</em> ‘have Ved (EXP)’, Attainment Serial Verb Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion: Imperfect</td>
<td><em>tab</em> <em>tom</em> ‘IMPERFECT’, <em>sij</em> ‘continually, repeatedly’, Reduplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed and Ease: Slowness</td>
<td><em>maj</em> <em>mam</em> ‘slowly, progressively, gradually’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9.** Grammatical markers of Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong.

These markers fit into the basic clause structure as follows:

\[
{\text{PreS NP PreMOD MOD NEG}}^{52} {\text{PreV Verb PostV NP PF ADP lawm xwb}}^{53}
\]

Each of the markers of Non-spatial Setting below is presented in order based on the earliest possible slot in which they appear in a typical clause.\(^54\) This presentation is followed by a section on those forms that are treated as grammatical markers in other sources but for various reasons do not fulfill Dixon (2012)’s criteria for the relevant category of Non-spatial Setting.

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\(^{51}\) Each of these forms, while marking the Perfect as part of Non-spatial Setting, represents a distinct category of Perfect—at least some of which are able to co-occur both semantically and in actual sentences. As a result, these should not be regarded as forming a natural paradigm, but as constituting unique categories of Perfect. At the same time, it should be noted that *tau* ‘ATT’ can take part in the Attainment Serial Verb Construction, as mentioned in section 3.5.1 below.

\(^{52}\) Note that this is the location for sentence-level negation; negation of individual verbs, subordinate clauses, and some elements of Non-spatial Setting such as *tau* ‘be able’ is done through the use of negation markers immediately before the verb or grammatical marker.

\(^{53}\) The ordering presented here is the most general for purposes of clause-level marking of Non-spatial Setting. It should be noted, however, that at least some of the markers can appear in other positions, usually later in the clause, due likely to emphasis, local scope, or clausal subordination. Considerations of this nature, however, are generally outside the scope of this thesis.

\(^{54}\) Note also that a small subset of Non-spatial Setting markers, namely *tau* ‘ATT,’ *tas* ‘finish,’ and *lawm* ‘CP,’ can also combine with Lexical Time Words and a grammaticalized version of the verb *los* at the beginning or end of a sentence in unusual configurations to indicate time since (following Mottin 1978:106). Please see section 3.1.1 where this is discussed. Nevertheless, for purposes of this thesis, the various morphemes are generally considered in relation to how they mark Non-spatial Setting on verbs directly.
3.1 Pre-Subject Position

Grammatical items in this position include Lexical Time Words of the “Temporal shifter” variety and the markers of moderate Degree of Certainty, *ntshai* ‘maybe’ and *tej zaum* ‘maybe’.

3.1.1 Temporal shifters and other time markers

White Hmong has a class of adverbs that do the work of Dixon (2012:20)’s “Temporal shifters.” As stated above, Temporal shifters are a category of Lexical Time Words in the larger category of Tense in Non-spatial Setting. These adverbs include *nag hmo* ‘yesterday’, *hnub hmo* ‘the day before yesterday’, *tag kis* ‘tomorrow’, *neeg kis* ‘the day after tomorrow’, and *puag nraus* ‘three days from now’. Mottin (1978:104) provides a list of these that also includes *hnoob hnub* ‘three days ago’, *puag hnoob hnub* ‘four days ago’, and *puag nag nraus* ‘in four days’. More specific periods of a day can be added after these, such as *sauv ntxov* ‘morning’, *hnub tseg* ‘noontime’, *hnub qaij* ‘afternoon’, and *tsaus ntuj* ‘night’. These adverbs generally appear in one of two specific places: at the very beginning of a clause, or in the “final adverbs and particles” position. First, they can appear at the very beginning of a sentence, as in (20).

(20) **Tag kis peb yeej nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj.**

*tomorrow IPL certainly search can IPL CLF*57 *purpose*

‘Tomorrow we will be able to search for our purpose.’

Here, *tag kis* ‘tomorrow’ appears at the very beginning of the sentence.

---

55 Note that two special Temporal shifters, namely, *nyuam qhuav* ‘just, a moment ago’ and *ntua* ‘just, immediately,’ canonically appear in positions other than the pre-subject position, and they are addressed at length in sections 3.2.3 and 3.5.3, respectively.

56 Several of the terms that Mottin (1978:104) provides differ from the forms given by my language consultant, Jay Yang. These are *hnub hmos* ‘the day before yesterday,’ *nag kis* ‘the day after tomorrow,’ and *nag nraus* ‘three days from now.’

57 Please see Mottin (1978) or Jarkey (1991) for a discussion on classifiers in White Hmong. The gloss CLF found throughout this thesis is in alignment with their work.
Second, time adverbs can appear in the “final adverbs and particles” position. Typically, this will be at the end of the clause unless the perfect marker lawm also appears in the sentence, which will then follow the time adverb. Examples include (21) and (22) below.

(21) Peb yeej yuav nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj tag kis.
    1PL certainly POS.IRR search can/ATT 1PL CLF purpose tomorrow
    ‘We will be able to find our purpose tomorrow.’

In this case, tag kis appears at the end of the sentence, without any clear difference in terms of time or scope when compared with (20).

(22) Peb nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj nag hmo lawm.
    1PL search ATT 1PL CLF purpose yesterday CP
    ‘We have found our purpose yesterday.’

Here, nag hmo ‘yesterday’ appears, followed by the perfect marker lawm.

These time adverbs behave similarly to full adverbial phrases indicating other periods of time in terms of their sentence position. This is shown by (23) and (24) below.

(23) Tam sim no peb nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj.
    right.now 1PL search can 1PL CLF purpose
    ‘Right now we can look for our purpose.’

In (23), the phrase tam sim no ‘right now’ appears sentence-initially like tag kis does in (20).

(24) Koj noj tau hmo tam sim no lawm.
    2SG eat can dinner now CP
    ‘You can eat dinner now.’

Here, tam sim no appears near the end of the sentence and immediately before lawm, paralleling nag hmo in (22) above. Thus, time adverbs and their phrasal counterparts behave in the same manner, appearing in the same positions in the sentence.
Adverbial phrases of time also present an interesting feature: they often take the same markers as verbs. These include *tau* ‘ATTAINMENT’ and *lawm* ‘COMPLETIVE PARTICLE’ (following Mottin 1978:106). Verbs such as *tas* ‘finish’ or *los* ‘come’ may also appear (following Mottin 1978:106). Some examples appear below.

(25) **Kuv nyob Thaib Teb tau peb xyooos** (Mottin 1978:106)

1SG live Thailand ATT three year

‘I lived in Thailand for three years.’

Here, the perfect marker *tau* appears with the phrase *peb xyooos* ‘three years’ to indicate elapsed time.

(26) **Kuv twb yuav ua kws kho mob tsib xyoo tas los lawm.**

1SG almost POS.IRR do doctor five year finish come CP

‘I almost became a doctor five years ago.’

In this case, the time phrase *tsib xyoo* ‘five years’ is followed by the phrase *tas los lawm*, made up of the verb *tas* ‘finish’, the verb *los* ‘come’, and the perfect marker *lawm*, representing the meaning of the English ‘ago’. This combination can also be found in the sentence topic, as in (27) below.

(27) (a) **Tau peb**\(^{59}\) *xyooos tas los lawm kuv nyob*  
ATT three year finish come CP 1SG in

‘Three years ago\(^{60}\), I was in…’

(b) **Thaib Teb** (Mottin 1978:106)  
Thailand

‘…Thailand.’

Here, *tau* ‘ATT’, *tas* ‘finish’, and *lawm* ‘CP’ appear with the time phrase *3 xyooos* ‘three years’ in the topic to place the comment at a point in time. Thus, the markers *tau* and

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\(^{58}\) Mottin (1978) gives the French equivalent for the English ‘for’ with a time phrase in his treatment of this use of *tau*. For purposes of this thesis, this use of *tau* is also treated as ‘ATTAINMENT’, to show the connected relationship in meaning between attainment of an event and attainment of time.

\(^{59}\) This was the numeral “3” in Mottin (1978)’s original example. It has been replaced here with the actual Hmong word for “three” written out.

\(^{60}\) Mottin (1978)’s work is written in French, and I at times have relied on outside sources to assist in translating the French. Here, the translation for *il y a* in reference to years is drawn from Kellogg (2014).
lawm as well as the verbs tas ‘finish’ and los ‘come’ may appear with phrases to place an event in time in both sentence topic and comment.

As part of a full system of Lexical Time Words, Temporal shifters can combine with some words belonging to the Specific time span category, as in (28) below.

(28) nag hmo  hnub qaij
     yesterday  afternoon
     ‘yesterday afternoon’

Here, the Temporal shifter nag hmo ‘yesterday’ is combined with the Specific time span word hnub qaij ‘afternoon’ to produce the time phrase ‘yesterday afternoon’. Temporal shifters can also co-occur with With Respect to Expectation adverbs, as in (29) below.

(29) Peb twb nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj tas nag hmo lawm.
     1PL  already  search ATT  1PL  CLF  purpose  finish yesterday  CP
     ‘We have already found our purpose yesterday.’

In this case, the With Respect to Expectation morpheme twb ‘already’ appears in the same sentence as the Temporal shifter nag hmo ‘yesterday’. As a result, it is clear that the different classes of adverbs in the Lexical Time Words category can co-occur.

3.1.2 ntshai ‘maybe’

The morpheme ntshai ‘maybe’ expresses a moderate level of certainty (following Mottin 1978:115) as part of Degree of Certainty. It is identical in form to the verb ntshai ‘be afraid’, and is placed at the beginning of its clause, before the subject. An example appears in (30).

(30) Ntshai nws yuav tuaj xyuas kuv  (Mottin 1978:115)
     maybe 3SG  POS.IRR  come  visit  1SG
     ‘Maybe he will come to visit me.’

Here, ntshai ‘maybe’ appears at the beginning of the clause, before the subject nws ‘3SG’.

---

61 Gloss following Mottin (1978:115).
This form of ntshai is a grammaticalized item since its meaning has undergone semantic bleaching to become a Degree of Certainty marker. To be sure, examples such as (30) above could be interpreted as ‘(I) fear he will come to visit me’, though Mottin (1978:115) points out that this form can be used “with or without [the] idea of fear.”

Since the ‘fear’ meaning has been lost in sentences such as (30) above, and the ‘maybe’ sense is the result, it is clear that semantic bleaching has occurred. On the basis of this and the resulting semantics, it is certain that ntshai ‘maybe’ marks Degree of Certainty.

As for the larger system of which ntshai ‘maybe’ is a part, Mottin (1978:115) demonstrates that words at this level of certainty can often be used with others, such as tej zaum ‘maybe’. As a result of this, it is clear that at least some markers of Degree of Certainty can co-occur and are thus not part of a paradigm that requires the use of only one marker at a time.

3.1.3 tej zaum ‘maybe’

Tej zaum ‘maybe’ is a Degree of Certainty marker that indicates a moderate level of certainty (following Mottin 1978:115). It appears in clause-initial position. An example appears in (31) below.

(31) Tej zaum nws yuav tuaj (Mottin 1978:115)
    maybe 3SG POS.IRR come
    ‘Maybe he is going to come.’

Here, tej zaum ‘maybe’ appears before the subject pronoun nws ‘3SG’, demonstrating its meaning and its placement at the beginning of the clause before the subject pronoun.

Tej zaum is clearly a grammatical marker because its semantics have undergone a shift from its literal part-by-part meaning, showing signs of semantic bleaching. This is

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64 Gloss following Mottin (1978:115).
evidenced by the fact that its individual parts are ‘some’ and ‘time’, which does not have an immediate relation to ‘maybe’, showing a change in meaning towards one with a more grammatical function. Altogether, since *tej zaum* indicates a medium level of certainty with the meaning ‘maybe’ and is known to be a grammaticalized element, it belongs to Non-spatial Setting as a marker of Degree of Certainty.

In terms of the larger system of Degree of Certainty, Mottin (1978:115) mentions that certain multiple forms of Degree of Certainty can be used together. This may also be true even with greater Degrees of Certainty, such as *yeej* ‘certainly’.

3.2 Pre-modal position

Grammatical items in this position include a wide range of adverb-like morphemes, namely, the With Respect to Expectation adverbs *tseem* ‘still’ and *twb* ‘already’, the Temporal Shifter *nyuam qhuav* ‘just, a moment ago’, the Irrealis adverb *mam* (*li*), the Continuing action marker *sij* ‘continue to’, the Degree of Certainty markers *kiag* (*li*) ‘really’, *tiag* ‘really’, and *yeej* ‘certainly’, the Imperfect marker *tab tom* ‘IMPERFECT’, and the Speed and Ease marker *maj mam* ‘slowly, progressively, gradually’.

3.2.1 *tseem* ‘still’

The word *tseem* is glossed as ‘still’ by Jarkey (1991:75) and is often regarded by scholars to be a type of grammatical marker, indicating “imperfective aspect” (Jarkey 1991:75), a “temporal/aspectual distinction” (Fuller 1988:20), or “action still in progress” (Heimbach

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65 This is the gloss that Jay Yang generally provided, and is corroborated by Mottin (1978:54). It is notable, however, that Mottin gives the relevant construction as *tej CLF (NOUN)*, while *zaum* ‘time’ appears without a classifier in *tej zaum*. However, the texts obtained from Jay Yang have several examples where the construction is *tej + noun.*


67 *Tej zaum* can also mean ‘sometimes’ (Mottin 1978:115), which suggests that it has undergone mild grammaticalization (in this case decategorialization from a noun phrase to an adverbial phrase) in other directions as well.

68 Please see example (70) in section 3.2.8 below for a case where *tej zaum* co-occurs with *yeej* ‘certainly.’
The semantics of *tseem* as ‘still’ suggest that this morpheme is a Lexical Time Word of the With Respect to Expectation variety.

Examples of *tseem* in use appear in (32) and (33) below.

(32)  

\[ \text{Kuv tseem khiav.} \]  
\[ \text{(Fuller 1988:20)} \]  
\[ 1\text{SG still run} \]  
\[ ‘I still run.’ \]

In (32), *tseem* appears with *khiav* to indicate the ongoing situation translated as ‘still run’.

(33)  

\[ \text{Lawv haj tseem noj mov.} \]  
\[ \text{(Heimbach 1969:350)} \]  
\[ 3\text{PL still eat rice} \]  
\[ ‘They are still eating.’ \]

Here, *tseem* appears with *noj mov* ‘eat rice’ to produce ‘still eating’, that is, the ongoing situation where the agents *lawv* ‘3PL’ continue to eat. Note here the additional element *haj*, which, Heimbach (1969:350) suggests can optionally appear with *tseem*, without a noticeable change in meaning.

*Tseem* is often used in negative contexts in conjunction with *tau* ‘ATTAINMENT’ to express unrealized situations. Mottin (1978:102) even asserts that whenever *tsis tau* ‘have not’ is used, *tseem* also appears. This usage is shown below in (34) and (35).

(34)  

(a)  

\[ \ldots \text{rau qhov tshuav peb cov nplej nyob rau tom teb} \]  
\[ \text{because have 1PL CLF rice in to there farm} \]  
\[ ‘...because we still had unhulled rice in the farm that...’} \]

(b)  

\[ \text{tseem ua tsis tau tiav} \]  
\[ \text{still do NEG ATT finish} \]  
\[ ‘...still needed to be done.’} \]

Here, the phrase *ua tsis tau tiav* ‘is not done’ is accompanied by *tseem* ‘still’ to indicate an ongoing lack of realization, in this case, of the completed action of threshing rice.
(35) Nws tseem tsis tau mus. (Heimbach 1969:350)
3SG still NEG ATT go
‘He still has not gone.’

In this example, tseem appears with tsis tau and the verb mus ‘go’ to express the meaning ‘still has not gone’—that is, the ongoing lack of realization of the agent’s going.

Grammatically, tseem behaves similarly to tab tom ‘Imperfect’ and twb ‘already’ as a morpheme that is placed between the sentence subject and the negative (following Jarkey 1991:75) or a Modal.69 This is demonstrated by the four examples below.

(36) Peb tseem tab tom nrhiav peb lub tsheb.
1PL still IPRF search 1PL CLF car
‘We are still looking for our car.’

In (36), tseem is placed after the subject peb ‘1PL.’ and before tab tom ‘IMPERFECT’ and the verb nrhiav ‘search, look for’, producing a well-formed sentence.

(37) *Tseem peb tab tom nrhiav peb lub tsheb.
still 1PL IPRF search 1PL CLF car
‘Still we are looking for our car.’

In (37), tseem has been placed at the beginning of the sentence, where other classes of adverbs can appear. However, this results in an ungrammatical sentence.

(38) *Peb tab tom nrhiav peb lub tsheb tseem.
1PL IPRF search 1PL CLF car still
‘We are looking for our car still.’

Here, tseem appears at the end of the sentence—a possible place for other varieties of adverbs—but this renders the sentence ungrammatical. Thus, tseem must be placed between the subject and the verb.

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69 Note that one instance of tab tom following yuav was elicited, though this ordering is not preferred by Jay Yang.
(39) \textit{Nws tseem tsis tau mus.} (Heimbach 1969:350)
\begin{tabular}{l}
3SG still NEG ATT go \\
\end{tabular}
\textquote{He still has not gone.}

In this case, \textit{tseem} appears before \textit{tsis tau mus} ‘has not gone’, showing that \textit{tseem} is placed before the negative.

(40) \textit{Peb tseem yuav mus peb txoj kev.}
\begin{tabular}{l}
1PL still POS.IRR go 1PL CLF way \\
\end{tabular}
\textquote{We will go our own way (but we haven’t left yet).}

In (40), \textit{tseem} appears before the Modal-type word \textit{yuav} ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’. As it has been seen, \textit{tseem} must be placed between the subject and either the first verb, the negative marker \textit{tsis}, or a Modal-type word such as \textit{yuav}, whichever occurs first. This suggests that \textit{tseem} is in the same class of words syntactically as \textit{tab tom} ‘IMPERFECT’ and \textit{twb} ‘already’. However, since \textit{tseem} can co-occur with \textit{tab tom}, the two do not form part of a single grammatical paradigm. In addition, while \textit{tab tom} fills the role of Imperfect, \textit{tseem} fits naturally into the With Respect to Expectation subcategory of adverbs in Dixon (2012)’s Tense category, along with \textit{twb}, with which it shares at least some of its grammatical tendencies.\footnote{It is notable here that there is a syntactic unity in White Hmong between markers of Imperfect as part of Completion and Lexical Time Words of the With Respect to Expectation variety, such that the distinction is blurred, at least syntactically.}

\subsection*{3.2.2 \textit{twb} ‘already, indeed’}

The morpheme \textit{twb} is an adverb meaning ‘already’, though it serves several other functions, with possible meanings such as ‘indeed, even, really’ (Heimbach 1969:330). With the meaning ‘already’, \textit{twb} is a Lexical Time Word, of the With Respect to Expectation variety. In its extended meaning as ‘indeed’, it is a Degree of Certainty marker indicating strong certainty.

An example of \textit{twb} in use with the meaning ‘already’ appears in (41) below.
(41) *Tej zaum peb twb muaj coob tug sim tas lawm.*
maybe 1PL already have many CLF try finish CP
‘Maybe we have many people who have tried it already.’

Here, *twb* appears before the verb *muaj* ‘have’ and after the subject pronoun *peb* ‘1PL’, producing ‘we have...already’.

My language consultant, Jay Yang, suggested that *twb* has two meanings: one being ‘already’, and the other providing a nuance with a range that includes ‘already’ but could mean ‘indeed’ as well. An example of each of these uses is found below in (42) and (43), respectively.

(42) *Peb twb tab tom nrhiav peb lub tsheb.*
1PL already IPRF search 1PL CLF car
‘We are currently looking for our car already.’

In (42), *twb* appears after the subject pronoun *peb* ‘1PL’ and before *tab tom* ‘Imperfect’ and the verb *nrhiav* ‘search’, forming the phrase ‘we are currently looking...already’.

(43) *Peb tab tom twb nrhiav peb lub tsheb.*
1PL IPRF indeed search 1PL CLF car
‘We are currently looking for our car.’ or ‘We have been looking for our car.’

In (43), *twb* appears in a different position—after the Imperfect marker *tab tom* and immediately before the verb *nrhiav* ‘search’, and the ongoing process of the search is reflected in ‘we are currently looking’ or ‘we have been looking’, whereas the notion of ‘already’ is not represented in the language consultant’s translation.71 In addition, Jay Yang’s initial intuition is that *twb* does not mean ‘already’ in this case, though he confirmed that ‘already’ could be a component; he confirmed that it could mean ‘indeed’, and suggested that this example is referring to the confirmation that the action is *already* happening as a confirmation to the hearer. In the literature, Heimbach (1969:330) defines

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71 The language consultant later said that *twb* here gives the nuance ‘already’ in that the event expressed by the sentence is *already* in progress, rather than that it has already happened.
twb as a “preverbal particle drawing attention to the state of affairs at the time,” while Jarkey (1991:68) calls it a “status morpheme” that “is used when the speaker wishes to indicate certainty concerning the truth of the proposition.” This confirms the secondary reading for twb as ‘indeed’, showing that it functions in an extended use to indicate a high Degree of Certainty. It is clear, then, that twb’s semantics, while canonically centered around ‘already’, can also serve to indicate a sort of emphatic confirmation that an event is actively occurring.

Syntactically, twb can only appear in pre-modal position, using the ordering scheme presented above. Attempting to place it in pre-subject position or “final adverbs and particles” position results in an ungrammatical sentence. This is shown in (44) and (45) below.

(44) *Twb peb nrhiav peb lub tsheb.
    already 1PL search 1PL CLF car
    ‘Already we are searching for our car.’

Here, twb has been placed in clause-initial position, before the first subject, resulting in an ungrammatical sentence.

(45) *Peb nrhiav peb lub tsheb twb.
    1PL search 1PL CLF car already
    ‘We are searching for our car already.’

In this case, twb has been placed at the end of the clause, again resulting in an ungrammatical utterance. Thus, twb needs to be placed in the attested position, that is, between the subject noun and the verb.

The semantics of twb suggest that it is a Lexical Time Word belonging to the category With Respect to Expectation, per Dixon (2012:20). As such, with the meaning ‘already’, it indicates that an event has taken place at a time other than what is expected. From this, the notion of an emphatic ‘indeed’ is a secondary extension. Its syntactic
distribution, however, is similar to that of *tab tom* ‘IPRF’ or *tseem* ‘still’ in that it only appears after the subject and before the first verb. Drawing on its semantics and its status as an adverb, *twb* should be treated as 1) a Lexical Time Word within the Tense category of Dixon (2012) meaning ‘already’ and 2) a Degree of Certainty marker indicating strong certainty with the meaning ‘indeed’, while noting that *twb* generally forms a natural class syntactically with *tab tom* ‘IMPERFECT’ and *tseem* ‘still’.

### 3.2.3 *nyuam qhuav* ‘just, a moment ago’

The phrase *nyuam qhuav*\(^{72}\) generally means ‘moment, short time’ (Heimbach 1969:222). As a grammaticalized element\(^{73}\), it appears before the verb and means ‘just’ or ‘a moment ago’ (gloss following Heimbach 1969:222), and is considered a marker of “immediate past” by Mottin (1978:84). As such, *nyuam qhuav* is a Lexical Time Word of the Temporal shifters type as part of Dixon (2012)’s category of Tense.

Examples of the grammaticalized form of *nyuam qhuav* appear below.

\[(46)\]  
\[Nws \; \text{nyuam qhuav} \; \text{tuaj} \; \text{txog}.\]  
\[3SG \; \text{just} \; \text{come} \; \text{arrive}\]  
‘He just arrived.’

In (46), *nyuam qhuav* appears after the subject pronoun *nws* ‘3SG’ and before the verb complex *tuaj txog* ‘arrive’, providing here the meaning ‘just’.

\[(47)\]  
\[\text{nyuam qhuav} \; \text{mus} \]  
\[\text{just/a.moment.ago} \; \text{go}\]  
‘Just went, went just a moment ago.’

In (47), *nyuam qhuav* is placed before the verb *mus* to give the meaning ‘just went’. In both cases, *nyuam qhuav* marks a recent event.

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\(^{72}\) *Nyuam* can appear in a number of time phrases, such as *ob peb nyuag hnuab* ‘a few days’ or *ib nyuag qhov* ‘a little bit, a little place’ (Heimbach 1969:222), where *nyuam* is undergoing a standard White Hmong tone sandhi change. Its usage with numerals here and with *no* ‘this’ in example (48) suggest that it sometimes serves as some sort of time classifier. Such considerations, however, are outside the scope of this paper.

\(^{73}\) Note that this analysis as a grammaticalized element is based on the available limited data. It was not attested in the data elicited from my language consultant, Jay Yang.
Nyuaq qhuav is grammaticalized, because 1) it does not appear in its normal location as a noun phrase (decategorialization), and 2) its meaning has been weakened to that of a grammatical entity (semantic bleaching). First, nyuaq qhuav does not appear in its usual location. A full noun phrase with non-grammaticalized nyuaq qhuav ‘moment’ (following Heimbach 1969:222) can appear sentence initially as a sort of topic, as in (48) below.

(48) Nyuaq qhuav no, nws tuaj txog. (Mottin 1978:84)
moment this 3SG come arrive
‘He just arrived.’

Here, nyuaq qhuav appears with the demonstrative no ‘this’, and the whole phrase has been placed as a topic for the sentence nws tuaj txog ‘he arrived’. With the natural English translation providing the meaning ‘just’, it would appear that nyuaq qhuav no ‘this moment’ is being used adverbially in this context as well, though it is otherwise behaving as a normal noun phrase in a normal location. On the other hand, the more grammaticalized equivalent in (46) and (47) is placed in an unusual location for a normal noun phrase, that is, between the subject and the verb. Thus, nyuaq qhuav’s unusual syntactic behavior in cases like (46) and (47) above suggests that it has been grammaticalized.

Second, the meaning of nyuaq qhuav in this grammatical usage has been weakened from its literal meaning. In a typical noun phrase, nyuaq qhuav means ‘moment’ or ‘short time’, as shown in (49) below.

74 Here, note that while the noun phrase nyuaq qhuav no appears in a normal position for noun phrases, showing no signs of decategorialization, the English gloss suggests that the phrase has still undergone semantic bleaching even in this position.
Here, *nyuam qhuav* is used with the numeral *ib* ‘one’, to produce the meaning ‘a moment’ or ‘a short time’, presenting itself as a noun phrase. However, in the examples above, each was rendered into English with the words ‘just’ or ‘a moment ago’, suggesting a shift and possibly weakening in meaning, and so it is clear that semantic bleaching has occurred. As a result, there is clear evidence that this phrase has undergone grammaticalization, where it is a noun phrase operating as an adverbial with a slightly weakened meaning. In sum, *nyuam qhuav*, when it appears alone, is a slightly grammaticalized adverbial that ultimately functions as a Lexical Time Word for purposes of Non-spatial Setting.

### 3.2.4 *mam* (li) ‘will’

The morpheme *mam*\(^{75}\) or its phrasal equivalent *mam li* is an adverb that can denote a range of modalities. These modalities include future actions,\(^{76,77}\) Necessity, and Permission in Dixon (2012)’s system of Modality. Examples of each of these three uses are given below.

(50) *Kuv mam (li) mus.*  
1SG will go  
‘I will go’

In (50), *mam* appears with the verb *mus* ‘go’, together meaning ‘will go’. This clearly indicates future action (or possibly intent).

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\(^{75}\) The existing scholarly literature only treats *mam* as a form meaning ‘then,’ which is attested in the data I collected but is beyond the scope of this paper. Please see Mottin (1978) and Heimbach (1969) for this use of *mam.*

\(^{76}\) My language consultant, Jay Yang, used Bing Translator in order to gloss *mam*, which provided the translation ‘will’; it does not appear, however, that his free translations necessarily took this gloss into account, since he provides his own translations of several varieties.

\(^{77}\) I double-checked this with two online Hmong-authored dictionaries, Xiong (2012) and Xiong (2014).
(51) (a) Ces koj mam (li) muab do rau kom
then 2SG need take_hoL.of stir to so.that
‘Then, you need to stir until…’

(b) zoo zoo tib si tas.
really.good together complete
‘…it is mixed really well.’

In (51), mam li appears with muab do ‘stir’ to make ‘will need to stir’. This use of ‘need’ shows that mam li here expresses Necessity.

(52) ...ces koj mam (li) noj mas zoo nkaus li qab kawg li
then 2SG may eat IP good look like tasty very
‘...and you may eat, it looks really good.’

In (52), mam li combines with noj ‘eat’ and the resulting form is translated ‘may eat’—a form of permission. Thus, mam and mam li can express a range of Modal meanings.

Though mam (li) has some range of meaning, the canonical meaning of the morpheme is that of marking general future action. This is evidenced by the intuitions and translations provided\(^8\) by my language consultant, Jay Yang, as well as online Hmong dictionaries made by members of the Hmong community\(^9\), which, more often than not, translate mam (li) as ‘will’.\(^8\)

Syntactically, mam (li) is an adverb, rather than a Modal or Semi-modal. Modals, like yuav, typically appear before the first verb or the negative marker tsis, though they can never be followed by an adverb. Semi-modals, such as tau, behave to some extent like regular verbs (following Dixon 2012:26), in that they appear after the negative marker tsis and cannot under normal circumstances be followed by an adverb. Mam,

\(^78\) Gloss from Heimbach (1969:132).
\(^79\) Gloss following Fuller (1988).
\(^80\) Gloss following Mottin (1978:110).
\(^81\) Note that Jay Yang relied on outside sources for this, but chose ‘will’ as his gloss of choice.
\(^82\) These include Xiong (2012) and Xiong (2014), both of which define mam as ‘will.’
\(^83\) It should be noted here that Jay Yang also gave data for mam (li) that gave it the nuance ‘you are the one to V.’ While this usage does not appear to belong to Non-spatial Setting, but rather marking exclusivity, it is worth mentioning in reference to this morpheme.
however, must be placed in pre-modal position, in a pattern identical to a number of other morphemes that belong to Non-spatial Setting such as yeej ‘certainly’, tab tom ‘Imperfect’, and tseeem ‘still’. This is shown in (53) and (54) below.

(53) Kuv mam yuav tso koj tseg.  
1SG will POS.IRR permit 2SG leave84
‘I will be letting you go.’

Here, mam ‘will’ appears before the Modal-type word yuav ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS’ and follows the subject pronoun kuv ‘1SG’. This shows that mam is placed after the subject and before yuav, like the other adverbs mentioned above.

(54) *Koj yuav mam muab ob lub qe tsoo tso rau hauv.  
2SG POS.IRR will get two CLF egg break put to in
‘You will get two eggs and break them and put them in there.’

In this case, mam ‘will’ is placed after yuav ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS’, rendering the sentence ungrammatical. Thus, mam must precede yuav, similar to adverbs such as tseeem ‘still’ and twb ‘already’.85

Furthermore, mam can both precede and follow other adverbs, much like the adverbs tseeem and twb. This is shown in (55) and (56) below.

(55) Kuv niaj hnub mam li86 muab koj tso tseg.  
1SG everyday will CVB87 2SG permit leave
‘I will let you go everyday.’

In (55), niaj hnub ‘everyday’ precedes mam li, showing that mam li can follow another adverb.

84 Glosses for tso and tseg are from Heimbach (1979:354). Also in (55) and (56).
85 Note that the Imperfect marker tab tom also belongs to this class of words, though grammatically it signals the Imperfect; please see below for the larger discussion.
86 Note that in this context, mam li is preferred to mam by the language consultant Jay Yang. In contrast, in (50), either can occur. On the other hand, when it appears with the adverb yeej, mam can appear both before and after yeej without any issue grammatically. The reason for these co-occurrence restrictions is unknown, but since such nuances involve aspects of the language other than Non-spatial Setting, this is beyond the scope of this thesis.
87 Gloss following Jarkey (1991). Also found in following examples. Note that muab can be either a coverb, as in this example, or a full verb meaning ‘get,’ as in the previous example above.
In (56), *mam (li)* precedes *niaj hnub*, demonstrating that *mam (li)* can also precede another adverb. Thus, *mam li* can appear both before and after other pre-verbal elements, like *tseem* and *twb* can. As a result, the word order also suggests that *mam*, like *tseem* and *twb*, is an adverb.

In terms of distribution, *mam* does not act like a Modal. Jaisser (1984) provides an excellent set of seven tests to determine whether a certain word belongs to the class of verbs. In general, true verbs can co-occur with each of seven grammatical items—one in each test—while words belonging to other classes will either fail some of these tests or a different meaning may emerge when the tests are applied (following Jaisser 1984:50). These tests can be extended to compare words of similar classes, such as adverbs and Modals. The basic idea here is that if two words are the same kind of adverb, for example, then they should have more or less the same results with these seven tests. The seven tests are the following: 1) the negative *tsis*; 2) the question particle *puas*; 3) the “past tense marker” *tau*; 4) the “future tense marker” *yuav*; 5) the negative imperative with *txhob*; 6) the post-verbal ‘can, be able to’ “modality” *tau*; and 7) the question construction with *los tsis V* at the end, where *V* is a repetition of the word under consideration (Jaisser 1984:48-50).

Applying the tests from Jaisser (1984), *mam* fails the tests in ways that are distinct from the Modal-type word *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend.’ The test results for *mam* in comparison with *yuav* are shown in Table 10 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>mam</th>
<th>yuav</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative tsis</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question particle puas</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“past tense” tau</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“future tense” yuav</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no (illogical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative imperative txhob</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>questionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-verbal ability tau</td>
<td>questionable</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question construction with los tsis V</td>
<td>questionable</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10.** Comparison of verbal test results with *mam* and *yuav*.

In test 1, *mam* and *yuav* clearly behave differently, where *mam* is allowed after the negative *tsis* while *yuav* is not. In addition, in test 7, *mam* produces a questionable result, while *yuav* produces a grammatical sentence. Thus, on the basis of the verbal tests, *mam* behaves in some ways that are different from *yuav*. This shows that, on the basis of restrictions on distribution, *mam* is not a modal, nor is it a regular verb, since it would otherwise pass all seven tests, as Jaisser (1984:48-50) explains. Altogether, from these two strands of evidence, the syntactic and the distributional, it can be concluded that *mam* is an adverb.

The fact that *mam* is an adverb presents interesting implications for Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong, in that while *mam* is semantically a type of Modality, grammatically it is not a verb or Modal in Dixon (2006, 2012)’s frameworks as would be expected. This suggests that, for purposes of analyzing the system of Modality in White Hmong, grammatical elements other than verbs should be considered. As it will be seen below, the inclusion of non-Modal, non-verbal elements in the analysis of Modality in Non-spatial Setting will prove fruitful. In either case, the analysis that *mam* is an adverb that marks semantic Modality is explicitly adopted here.

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88 Asterisks mark cases where more explanation is needed to fully reflect the effects of the test. This explanation is provided in prose immediately following the table in each case. This method of marking such instances is found throughout this thesis.
As part of the larger system of Modality in White Hmong, *mam (li)* ‘will’ performs an interesting role: it can mark Modality or Irrealis by itself, as in (50) above, where it qualifies the word *mus* ‘go’ to indicate a future event, or it can co-occur with the Modal-type word *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’, as in (53), where the two together indicate a future event. As a result, it is clear that *mam (li)* does not have a paradigmatic opposition to the other morphemes that serve a Modality-marking role, but in fact reinforces the other morphemes’ Modality- or Irrealis-marking function.

### 3.2.5 *sij* ‘continually, repeatedly’

The morpheme *sij* means ‘continually, repeatedly’ (Heimbach 1969:293) and marks a variety of Imperfect as part of Completion. An example of *sij* appears in (57).

(57)  
\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{*sij} & \text{ua} \\
\text{continually/repeatedly} & \text{do} \\
\text{‘To do continually or to do repeatedly.’}
\end{array}
\]

In (57), *sij* appears before the verb *ua* ‘do’, resulting in the meaning ‘to do continually’ or ‘do repeatedly’, showing the two possibilities for the meaning of *sij*.

The morpheme *sij* is an adverb, as shown in (58).

(58)  
\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{Kuv} & \text{sij} & \text{yuav} & \text{vamkhom.} \\
\text{1SG} & \text{continue.to} & \text{POS.IRR} & \text{trust} \\
\text{‘I will continue to trust.’}
\end{array}
\]

In (58), *sij* appears after the subject pronoun *kuv* ‘1SG’ and before the Modal-type word *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’—in the pre-modal slot. Note also here that *sij* provides the meaning ‘continue to’, suggesting some potential connection with Phase of Activity.

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89 In parallel to this, Jarkey (1991:75) states that *sij* marks “imperfective aspect,” though her imperfective at times seems to cover both Imperfect and Imperfective in Dixon (2012)’s framework.

90 Consistent with this is the suggestion by Heimbach (1969:293) that *sij* is comparable to *pheej* ‘continue to,’ and the grouping together of *pheej* and *sij* by Jarkey (1991) as part of her set of “imperfective aspect” morphemes.
Additional corroborating evidence that *sij* is an adverb is found in Jarkey (1991:75), where she considers that “imperfective aspect” is marked\(^\text{91}\) with adverbs\(^\text{92}\) in White Hmong, of which *sij* is one, and she considers that these markers appear in one location: “after the subject but before the negative.”

In terms of Non-spatial Setting, *sij* should be treated as an adverb of the same class as *tab tom* ‘IMPERFECT’—in line with Jarkey (1991:75)—for two reasons: 1) it appears syntactically in the same position as *tab tom*, and 2) it possesses the same semantic property of unfinished, ongoing action as *tab tom*. In regard to the category of Non-spatial Setting, while *sij* does have aspects of the notion of ongoing action as other adverbs of its class, its semantics also spread into Phase of Activity with the meaning ‘continue to’ and Frequency and Degree with the meaning ‘repeatedly’. However, since this semantic spread is similar to that of reduplication, another form of the imperfect, as well as the fact that it forms a natural class, semantically and syntactically, with *tab tom* ‘IMPERFECT’, its canonical meaning and use is that of an Imperfect marker as part of Completion. As part of the larger system, however, no examples from the data are known that provide any examples where *sij* and *tab tom* co-occur, suggesting a potential paradigmatic relationship; however, further research is necessary to determine this with certainty.

### 3.2.6 *kiag* ‘really’

The word *kiag*, and its variant form *kiag li* (Heimbach 1969:84), is an adverb supplying the notion ‘really’ or ‘completely’ (glosses following Heimbach 1969:84, Mottin

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\(^{91}\) A number of the morphemes Jarkey (1991) lists as “imperfective aspect,” such as *tab tom* ‘currently,’ tend to primarily perform the function of the Imperfect in the data I obtained from Tzerge Yang.

\(^{92}\) *Tab tom, tseem, pheej*, and *yeej* are also treated as members of this class of adverbial “imperfective” markers (Jarkey 1991:75). As seen above, at least *tab tom, pheej*, and *yeej* do not function like other adverbs. However, it is notable that in Jarkey (2006), *pheej* is treated as a verb; see above for the discussion.
1978:114). It belongs to Degree of Certainty in Dixon (2012)’s Non-spatial Setting, and can occur in one of several places in the clause, namely, pre-modal, post-verbal, and “final adverbs and particles” positions, as well as between verbs.

An example of *kiag* (*li*) in context is (59) below.

(59) Tsis tau kev mus qhov twg *kiag* li. (Mottin 1978:114)

NEG can road go where really

‘I couldn’t really go anywhere.’

In (59), *kiag li* follows the phrase *tsis tau kev mus qhov twg* ‘couldn’t go anywhere’, and supplies the meaning ‘really’.

*Kiag*, like *tiag* (*tiag*), has been treated in the literature as a grammatical element of sorts that can express a level of certainty. Heimbach (1969:84) calls *kiag* a “post verbal intensive indicating decisiveness and completeness,” while Mottin (1978:109,114) regards it as an adverb that “expresses certainty.” Mottin’s assessment seems to be correct at first, since *kiag* generally behaves like an adverb syntactically: when it is used with the meaning “really,” it appears in the “final adverbs and particles” position, just before *lawm*. An example of this appears in (60) below.

(60) ...kom cov raj ntawd kub *kiag* lawm.

so.that CLF oil there hot really CP

‘...until the oil is hot.’

In (60), *kiag* appears at the end of the sentence immediately before *lawm*, like other adverbs.

Two unusual syntactic traits that distinguish *kiag* from normal adverbs do appear, however: 1) *kiag* can be placed immediately after the copula verb in a sentence

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93 *Kiag* also serves a second purpose as a marker that apparently expresses emphasis, which came up a small number of times in the secondary data obtained from Jay Yang. This second meaning may be more salient in the examples given below.
containing a nominalized verb phrase, and 2) *kiag* can occur between verbs. This is shown in (61) and (62) below, respectively.

(61) \[ \text{Qhov nov yog kiag qhov kuv xav tau.} \]

\[ \text{CLF this COP the.one NMLZ 1SG want get} \]

‘This is the one that I want.’

In this case, *kiag* is placed immediately after the copula *yog* and before the noun phrase complement *qhov kuv xav tau* ‘the one that I want’. Thus, unlike other adverbs, it can occur in post-verbal position, before the object.

(62) \[ \text{nqos kiag mus} \]

\[ \text{swallow whole/right.down go} \]

‘To swallow whole’ or ‘To swallow right down.’

Here, *kiag* appears after the verb *nqos* ‘swallow’ and before the verb *mus* ‘go’. Thus, *kiag* can occur between two verbs. From these two examples, it is clear that *kiag* has a wider distribution than that of normal adverbs—showing that it has undergone an even greater level of grammaticalization than its adverbial counterparts.

Since *kiag* behaves as something other than a typical adverb, and since its meaning in a number of contexts contributes a high level of certainty to what is being said, the morpheme belongs to the Degree of Certainty category in Dixon (2012)’s framework. As part of the system of Degree of Certainty in White Hmong, the data shows that *kiag* generally does not co-occur with other members of the set, and seems to be functionally very similar to *tiag* ‘really’. However, further research may prove beneficial.
3.2.7 *tiag* ‘really’

The word *tiag* and its reduplicated version *tiag tiag* means ‘really’\(^{94}\) and is an adverb that is placed either before the verb or at the end of a sentence. *Tiag* belongs to Degree of Certainty, as expressing a high level of certainty.

Examples appear in (63) and (64) below.

\[(63) \text{Peb lub hom phiaj yog dab tsi tiag tiag?} \]
\[1\text{PL CLF purpose COP what really} \]
‘What is really our purpose?’

Here, *tiag tiag* occurs at the end of the sentence, adding the meaning ‘really’.

\[(64) \text{Peb lub hom phiaj tiag tiag yog dab tsi?} \]
\[1\text{PL CLF purpose really COP what} \]
‘What, really, is our purpose?’

In this case, *tiag tiag* ‘really’ appears after the subject phrase *peb lub hom phiaj* ‘our purpose’ and before the copula verb *yog* ‘be’, with the same resulting meaning. Thus, *tiag tiag* can occur in two different positions, both of which are typical for adverbs. It should be noted however that *tiag tiag* most often appears at the end of the sentence; in every case of *tiag tiag* in the three texts I collected, *tiag tiag* always occurred near the end of the sentence.

*Tiag tiag* is relevant to the discussion of Non-spatial setting since some authors, have treated it as a particle of emphasis meaning ‘really, truly’ (Heimbach 1969:319), or of certainty (Mottin 1978:114). Heimbach (1969)’s treatment is especially notable, since in this usage he regards it as a “final emphatic particle,” suggesting a grammaticalized status. However, since examples such as (64) are possible, it is clear that *tiag tiag* has the

\[^{94}\text{It should be noted here that in the Hmong-community dictionary “Hmong Dictionary Online” (Xiong 2014), this is glossed as the adjective ‘real.’ Whether this operates as an adjective as well as an adverb is unknown, since all academic sources consulted treat *tiag* as a grammatical entity of some sort.}\]
syntactic distribution properties of an adverb.\textsuperscript{95} At the same time, the fact that \textit{tiag} is similar in function—as well as to a significant extent, distribution—to \textit{kiag} (\textit{li}), combined with the fact that \textit{tiag} can be reduplicated as \textit{tiag tiag} with no change in meaning (suggesting semantic bleaching to some extent), suggests that \textit{tiag} is a function word, though admittedly with the syntactic distribution of an adverb.

As part of the larger system of Degree of Certainty, \textit{tiag} generally does not co-occur with its very similar counterpart \textit{kiag} (\textit{li}) ‘really’, suggesting a paradigmatic relationship of sorts. However, since these two words have basically the same function and generally occur at similar places in the sentence, it could be that their phonetic similarity, rather than the existence of a contrastive paradigmatic relationship, prevents them from co-occurring. However, considerations of how similarity in form and meaning could affect the grammar of White Hmong are outside of the scope of this thesis, and are left for further research.

\textbf{3.2.8 yeej ‘already, certainly, can’}

The word \textit{yeej} is a morpheme that is likely derived from the verb \textit{yeej} ‘to win in an encounter, have success’\textsuperscript{96} and appears in grammaticalized form as either an adverb or a Semi-modal verb with limited distribution. The adverb will be dealt with first, while the Semi-modal will be discussed further below.

The adverb has functions associated with two meanings: 1) ‘already’ (Fuller 1988) or ‘originally’ (Heimbach 1969; Jarkey 1991), and 2) ‘certainly’ (following Mottin 1978:114) or ‘definitely’ (Jarkey 2006). With the second function, \textit{yeej} denotes a high Degree of Certainty. Each of the two possibilities is shown in (65) and (66) below.

\textsuperscript{95} The one unique thing about \textit{tiag} (and \textit{kiag}) is that it is one of a very small number of adverbs that can appear both at the beginning of the verb phrase and at the end of the sentence.

\textsuperscript{96} Gloss per Heimbach (1969:424).
In (65), the word *yeej* supplies the meaning of ‘already’ and appears between the subject *nws* ‘he, she’ and the verb *tuaj* ‘come’.

(66) (a) *(tias-)kom* Lis mus mas, kuv *yeej* tau yuam

(that-)PC Li go TOP 1SG definitely ATT force

‘To have Lee go, I definitely forced them.’

(b) *lawv* mas (Jarkey 2006:127)

3PL IP

‘...them.’

In (66), *yeej* supplies the meaning of ‘definitely’ (per Jarkey 2006:127), and appears after the subject pronoun *kuv* ‘1SG’ and before the rest of the verb phrase *tau yuam* ‘forced’.

As a marker of certainty, *yeej* patterns in two ways depending on the point in time relative to the present: if in past situations, it is commonly used for certainty regarding one’s own actions (following Jarkey 2006:127), while in non-past situations, it can express certainty in relation to existence, ability, or outcome. An example of certainty in the past is found above in (66). There, *yeej* appears with *tau yuav* ‘forced’ to express the speaker’s absolute certainty over his/her past action, in effect assuring the listener that this was in fact the case.

When used as an indicator of high certainty for non-past events, *yeej* is often used in one of three contexts: certainty of existence, certainty of ability, and certainty of outcome. Examples of each of these three are shown below.

(67) *Nws* *yeej* muaj lub hom.phiaj zoo rau koj thiab kuv...

3SG certainly have CLF purpose good for 2SG and 1SG

‘He has a good purpose for you and me...’

In (67) above, *yeej* is used with *muaj* ‘exist, have’ to express certainty over the existence of the *hom.phiaj* ‘purpose’.
(68) *Peb yeej yuav nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj tag kis.*
1PL certainly POS.IRR search can 1PL CLF purpose tomorrow
‘We will be able to find our purpose tomorrow.’

In (68), *yeej* appears with the sequence *yuav nrhiav tau* ‘will be able to find’, expressing certainty over the ability.

(69) (a) *...ces peb yuav tsum rau siab ntso mus khwv tiag tiag...*
then 1PL must commit.to go work really
‘...then we must commit ourselves to working really hard...’

(b) *...ces peb yeej yuav tsum muaj nyiaj xwb*\(^97\)
then 1PL certainly must have money indeed
‘...then we will have money.’

In (69), *yeej* appears with *yuav tsum muaj nyiaj* ‘will have money’ to express the certain outcome of the action expressed in the previous clause by *yuav tsum rau siab ntso mus khwv* ‘must commit ourselves to work’. Thus, in non-past contexts, there are three main uses for the degree of certainty variety of *yeej*.

A final interesting trait about *yeej* when marking expectation of outcome is that it occasionally can be used with lesser degrees of certainty, with the notion of outcome left intact. This is exemplified in (70) below.

(70) (a) *...tej zaum nws yeej pab tau yus kom yus*
maybe 3SG certainly help can INDF.PRON so.that INDF.PRON
‘...maybe it will be able to help you...’

(b) *ua tau lub neej vas meej yog hais tias yus*
do get CLF life successful if that INDF.PRON
‘...to become successful if you’re....’

\(^97\) Gloss following Strecker & Vang (1986:5); please see section 3.9 below for the discussion on this morpheme.
In (70), yeej occurs with tej zaum ‘maybe’, creating the idea of ‘maybe it will...’, perhaps as a form of concession about the likelihood of a potential result, that is, while the speaker expects that the outcome is guaranteed, it is not the action or goal for which he is arguing. While this example seems at first glance to produce a contradiction of certainty, where ‘maybe’ contradicts the ‘definitely’ (as glossed above) of yeej, the notion of certain outcome of a process still holds with yeej here.

In terms of Non-spatial Setting, the first meaning, ‘already’, falls into the Lexical Time Words of Dixon (2012:20), while the second meaning, that marking a high level of certainty, belongs naturally in the category of Degree of Certainty. As a part of the larger system of Degree of Certainty, yeej ‘certainly’ can co-occur at least with tej zaum ‘maybe’, as in (70) above, as well as with xwb ‘indeed’. This suggests that yeej does not form a paradigmatic opposition to other markers of Degree of Certainty, and the exact relationships between yeej and the others is unknown, and left to further research.

The word yeej as a Semi-modal marks the Modality of Ability when it appears with the negative, in a manner very similar to tau ‘can’ above (following Heimbach 1969:424). An example appears below in (71).

(71) Kuv yuav tsis yeej. (Heimbach 1969:424)
    ISG obtain NEG can
    ‘I cannot obtain it (because of some hindrance).’

In (71), yeej follows the verb yuav ‘obtain’, producing the meaning ‘cannot obtain’, showing the Modality of Ability in a negative sense.

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98 That is, based on the context from where this example sentence comes. Please see Appendix C for the full text.
99 Please see section 3.9 below for examples of the co-occurrence with xwb.
However, in the positive, *yeej* often simply means ‘win’ or, as Heimbach (1979:424) defines it, ‘to win in an encounter’, as in (72) below.

(72)  *ntaus*  *yeej*  
  fight  win  
  ‘To win a fight.’

Here, the verb *ntaus* ‘hit’ is followed by *yeej*, resulting in the meaning ‘win a fight’. Thus, it would appear that *yeej* can serve as a full verb meaning ‘win’.

However, there are three reasons why *yeej* should be treated as a grammaticalized element when used as in example (71) above: 1) it follows another verb when it signals Ability, and 2) the Ability meaning surfaces clearly only when the sentence is negated, and 3) the notion of Ability expressed when *yeej* is used can refer to an unrealized situation.

First, *yeej* always follows another verb in the data when it indicates Ability.\(^{100}\) While this pattern is seen in example (71) above, Heimbach (1969) provides three other examples where *yeej* indicates ability, in all of which *yeej* follows another verb. Thus, in the available data, *yeej* always follows another verb when it indicates Ability.

Second, the Ability meaning appears with *yeej* only when the sentence is negated. As shown in (72) above, where *yeej* follows *ntaus* ‘hit’ to produce ‘win in a fist fight’, the meaning ‘win’ is prevalent when the sentence is not negated; this is also true of the other positive example Heimbach (1969) provides. However, all four of the negative examples Heimbach provides indicate a lack of ability. Thus, there is a correlation between negation and the Ability meaning with *yeej*.

\(^{100}\) Note, however, that while all attested instances of *yeej* signaling ability are when it appears after a verb, not all instances of post-verbal *yeej* signal Ability, as in example (72) above.
Third, the idea of Ability with yeej can refer to a hypothetical situation. This is shown in (71) above, where the presence of some ‘hindrance’ prevents the action represented by yuav ‘obtain’ from being realized—in fact, there is no indication that it is even attempted. This contrasts with the usage of yeej as a normal verb, in that the ‘Accomplishment Serial Verb Construction’ (following Jarkey 1991), which would be made up of the normal verb yeej preceded by another verb, would be expected to refer to an attempted action that did not succeed. Since this is not what is found with tsis yeej, which indicates general inability rather than a lack of success, it appears that its usage with the negative tsis produces a somewhat different nuance, in line with what is observed with tau when it marks Ability. Altogether, it is seen that while yeej when it indicates Ability appears to be identical to yeej with the full verbal meaning of ‘win, have success’, the two usages differ slightly on syntactic and semantic grounds. As a grammatical marker, this places yeej ‘can(not)’ in the system of Modality as being associated with negative Ability. In terms of a paradigm, however, there is no clear evidence that yeej can co-occur with other Modality markers, but since co-occurrences are possible elsewhere in the system, this cannot be ruled out, and this possibility is left to further research.

3.2.9 tab tom ‘begin to, IMPERFECT’

The word tab tom ‘begin to’\(^1\), IMPERFECT’ has two significant functions relevant to Non-Spatial Setting: it can 1) express beginning of an action, and 2) it can express a current or ongoing action. The first use of tab tom belongs to Phase of Activity as Beginning action, while the second use marks Imperfect as part of Completion.

Examples of the two uses appear in examples (73) and (74) below.

\(^1\) Gloss based on Heimbach (1979:303).
(a) Kuv tab tom hais lus nws txawm
1SG begin.to say word 3SG thereupon\(^{102}\)
‘I had no sooner begun to speak than he...’

(b) khiav lawm (Heimbach 1969:303)
runt CP
‘...ran off.’

In (73), *tab tom* expresses that the action *hais* ‘speak’ had recently begun.

(74) *lub sij hawm uas nyab laj tab tom nrhiav cov neeg...*
CLF time that Vietnam IPRF search PL.CLF people
‘...the time that the Vietnamese were searching for those...’

In (74), *tab tom* is used with *nrhiav* ‘search’ in a way equivalent to the English progressive ‘were searching’.

An example where both uses of *tab tom* are possible appears in (75) below.

(75) Peb tab tom nrhiav peb lub hom phiaj
1PL begin.to/IPRF search 1PL CLF purpose
‘We begin to search for our purpose.’
or ‘We currently are looking for our purpose.’

In this case, *tab tom* is ambiguous—it can either signal the beginning of the action of *nrhiav* ‘search’, producing ‘begin to search’, or it can signal that *nrhiav* refers to a current, ongoing affair, resulting in the meaning ‘currently are looking’. Thus, both meanings can be possible in at least some circumstances.

In addition to activities, *tab tom* can be used with current states, as in (76) below.

(76) Tab tom muaj ntau phau ntawv...
IPRF have many book
‘Currently, there are many books...’

Here, *tab tom* is expressed in English as ‘currently’,\(^{103}\) and combines with *muaj* to express a current state.

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\(^{102}\) Gloss from Heimbach (1979:375).

\(^{103}\) My language consultant, Jay Yang, only sometimes used this gloss to bring out the nuance of *tab tom*. 
Tab tom can also serve a role that extends from its use as an Imperfect marker to indicate a nuance of Imperfective with a state (following Jarkey 1991:75), in Dixon (2012)’s system. An example of this appears in (77) below.

(77) (a) Nws tab tom mob thaum nws kwv tij tuaj...
3SG IPFV be.sick time 3SG relative come
‘He was sick when his relatives came...’

(b) ...xyuas nws (Jarkey 1991:75)
visit 3SG
‘...to visit him.’

In this case, tab tom ‘IMPV’ appears with mob ‘be sick’ to indicate the ongoing state at the time when the other event, nws kwv tij tuaj xyuas nws ‘his relatives came to visit him’, occurred, showing that at least with the state mob ‘be sick’, tab tom can be used with an extended meaning to indicate an ongoing state as a backdrop to a second event. For purposes of Non-spatial Setting, however, this usage, when compared with the rest of the data, forms a sort of ‘secondary’ usage for this form, where the primary use is the Imperfect sense of an ongoing event or action, and the secondary use is the mere juxtaposition of a single event with the Imperfect form to create an Imperfective sense. Thus, this Imperfective form should be considered a subtype of the Imperfect use of tab tom.

As it has been shown, tab tom can serve one of two uses, of which the first is marking the beginning of an action and the second signaling that an action is currently in progress. As such, as a part of Non-spatial Setting, the first belongs to Phase of Activity as a marker of Beginning, and the second belongs to Completion as an Imperfect marker. As part of the larger system of Phase of Activity, there is no known evidence in the data showing that tab tom could co-occur with other markers of Phase of Activity, suggesting a paradigmatic relationship with other members such as pheej ‘continue to’ or tiav
‘finish’. Likewise, as part of Completion, there are no known examples from the data where *tab tom* can co-occur with other Completion markers such as *lawn* ‘COMPLETIVE PARTICLE’, though this possibility should not be ruled out.

### 3.2.10 *maj mam* ‘slowly’

The word *maj mam* is an adverb that conveys one of several meanings, including ‘progressively’, ‘slowly’ (Mottin 1978:119), and ‘gradually’ (Heimbach 1969:124).

Examples appear in (78) and (79) below.

(78)  
*Maj mam*  
ua 
progressively  
do  
‘Do progressively.’

Here, *maj mam* conveys the idea of ‘progressively’, qualifying the verb *ua* ‘do’.

(79)  
*Maj mam*  
mus. 
slowly  
go 
‘Go slowly.’

In this case, *maj mam* contributes the idea of ‘slowly’ to the verb *mus* ‘go’.

*Maj mam* also can serve as a Temporal Shifter (Dixon 2012:5-6) meaning ‘after a while’ (Heimbach 1969:124). An example appears in (80) below.

(80)  
*Maj mam*  
104  
kuv  
yuav  
mus  
*thiab.* 
after.a.while  
1SG POS.IRR  
go  
too  
‘After a while I’ll go too.’

In (80), *maj mam* expresses the notion ‘after a while’. Altogether, *maj mam* can serve two purposes: expressing ‘progressively, gradually, slowly’, and operating as a Temporal shifter with the meaning ‘after a while’.

Syntactically, though the available evidence from scholarly sources is scant, *maj mam* seems to appear in different locations when it provides a different function: it

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104 It should be noted that *maj mam* here could be appearing in either a topic slot or the pre-subject slot. As other Temporal shifters often appear in the topic slot, this is assumed here as well.
appears between the subject noun and the verb when it expresses ‘progressively, gradually’ and before the subject noun when it appears as ‘after a while’. The positioning with the meaning ‘progressively, gradually’ is demonstrated by (81) below.

(81) Nws maj mam tuaj ze me ntsis. (Heimbach 1969:124)
    3SG gradually come close a.little.bit
    ‘He gradually came closer.’

Here, maj mam appears after the subject pronoun nws ‘3SG’ and before the verb tuaj ‘come’, and expresses the notion of ‘gradually’. The positioning of maj mam at the beginning of the sentence with the meaning ‘after a while’ appears in (80) above, where maj mam precedes the subject noun kuv ‘1SG’. Thus, the use of maj mam with the meaning ‘progressively, gradually’ is associated with the position in between the subject noun and the verb, similarly to morphemes such as tab tom ‘imperfect’ and tseem ‘still’, while the use as ‘after a while’ is associated with sentence-initial position, much like many other adverbs.

In terms of Non-spatial Setting, maj mam, when it indicates ‘progressively, gradually’, appears to belong to the class of adverbs represented by tab tom ‘IMPERFECT’ and tseem ‘still’. At the same time, it is not a Lexical Time Word, nor a clear indicator of the Imperfect, since some of the actions, such as in examples (78) and (81) above, are not good examples of ongoing action. However, in all of the examples, there is an element of slow or gradual continuing action toward a goal, which is corroborated by Mottin (1978:119)’s treatment of this morpheme as indicating “progression,” along with another

107 Please see the discussion below concerning these two words.
adverb indicating slowness.\textsuperscript{108} As such, this first use of \textit{maj mam} properly belongs to the category of Speed and Ease as a marker of slow action. The second use of \textit{maj mam} with the meaning ‘after a while’ is clearly a Lexical Time Word, fitting specifically into the category of Temporal shifters provided by Dixon (2012:20).

3.3 Modal position

The modal position is the location where the positive irrealis marker and true modals in Dixon (2012)’s Modality framework are found. The three markers in this position are \textit{yuav} ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’, \textit{yuav tau} ‘must, have to’, and \textit{yuav tsum} ‘must, have to’.

3.3.1 \textit{yuav} ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’

As a grammaticalized morpheme, the word \textit{yuav} ‘will, intend\textsuperscript{109} is a positive Irrealis marker with an extended function as a Modal signifying Intent, with a strong preference for referring to future action. An example appears in (82) below.

\begin{verbatim}
(82) ...\textit{wb yuav sib tham me ntsis txog kev ua noj}
\text{2DU, POS.IRR RECP talk a.little.bit about cooking}
\text{‘...we will talk a little bit about cooking.’}
\end{verbatim}

Here, \textit{yuav} precedes the phrase \textit{sib tham me ntsis} ‘talk a little bit’, indicating a future action and translated by the English ‘will’.

Though at first glance the word \textit{yuav} seems to simply mark future time, in line with the position taken by a number of authors, including Jaisser (1984) and Fuller (1988), the word \textit{yuav} actually expresses Modality as well as broader Irrealis. This is

\textsuperscript{108} The other adverb in question is \textit{qeeb qeeb} ‘slowly’ (Mottin 1978:119), which does not appear to be the product of grammaticalization, but rather a grammatically productive form in the language based on \textit{qeeb} ‘slow, slowly’ (Heimbach 1979:262).
\textsuperscript{109} Gloss based on Jarkey (2006:130).
\textsuperscript{110} Gloss following Mottin (1978:44).
\textsuperscript{111} The glossing and treatment here of the phrase \textit{sib tham} relies on Jarkey (1991:351) and Jarkey (2006:129).
known from two pieces of evidence: the fact that *yuav* can refer to situations that do not necessarily refer to future time, and that *yuav* can refer to Irrealis situations in the past.\(^\text{112}\)

First, *yuav* can be used to refer to situations that do not require a future time interpretation. This can be found in (83) below.

\begin{equation}
(83) \quad \text{*Yus muaj ib tug tub, yuav muab nyab* (Jarkey 1991:70)} \\
\text{INDEF.PRON have one CLF boy intend take son’s.wife} \\
\text{‘(Suppose) one has a son, (who) intends to take a wife.’}
\end{equation}

Here, the idea expressed is one of present intent—marked by the word ‘intends’—with no indication that the sentence refers strictly to future time.

Second, *yuav* can be used to refer to Irrealis situations in the past, as in (84) below.

\begin{equation}
(84) \quad \text{*Kuv twb yuav ua kws kho mob tsib xyoo tas los lawm*} \\
\text{1SG almost POS.IRR do doctor five year finish come CP} \\
\text{‘I almost became a doctor five years ago.’}
\end{equation}

In (84), *yuav* is used to express an unrealized, but possibly intended event, a context where a notion of irrealis is prevalent.

Though the above evidence shows that *yuav* is not a future tense marker (following Clark 1982, Jarkey 1991, etc.), many authors have treated it as such (including Jaisser 1984 and Fuller 1988, for example). However, Li (1991) suggests this kind of misanalysis is due to data-gathering methodologies that focus on translating English phrases, line by line, that have resulted in *yuav* being used as an approximation for the English word *will* in reference to the future.\(^\text{113}\)

Since the word *yuav* is not a tense marker, it must be something else. Dixon (2012) provides two possibilities for future time: Tense marking and Modality. *Yuav* is a Modal, since it conveys the “Secondary” concept of Intent (following Jarkey 1991:71, Jarkey

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\(^{112}\) The argument presented here generally follows Jarkey (1991:69-71).

\(^{113}\) It is notable here, however, that while Li (1991) argues against this kind of methodology, he still concludes that *yuav* is a future tense marker, probably due to a relative lack of evidence to the contrary.

An example of this “Intent” status appears in (83) above, repeated as (85) below.

(85) Yus muaj ib tug tub, yuav muab nyab (Jarkey 1991:70)
    INDF.PRON have one CLF boy intend take son’s.wife
    ‘(Suppose) one has a son, (who) intends to take a wife’

Here, the notion of Intent is clearly expressed in the translation of yuav as ‘intends’.

Another example of yuav expressing Intent is found in (86).

(86) Kuv yuav ua kws kho mob tiam sis tsis muaj nyiaj
    1SG POS.IRR do doctor but NEG have money
    ‘I would become a doctor, but I don’t have money.’

In (86), yuav refers to a stated intent, though current circumstances (‘but I don’t have money’) may prevent this intent from being realized. The consultant, Jay Yang, suggested that (86) expresses a situation where if there is no money, then the idea expressed by ‘become a doctor’ will not be possible in the future. Thus, yuav expresses a speaker’s intent for the future.

Dixon provides two morphosyntactic categories for Modality: Modals and Semi-modals, where the former is required to be VP-initial and is limited morphologically, while the latter can behave as a typical verb (2012:26). The word yuav is a Modal, rather than a Semi-modal, since: 1) it must occur in initial position in a verbal phrase; 2) it must appear in an unusual position—before the negative marker tsis ‘not’; and 3) it does not function as a regular verb.114 First, when it affects the main verb of a clause, it can appear only in initial position of a verb phrase115, as shown by (87), (88), and (89) below.

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114 In line with the expectations for a Modal in Dixon (2012:26).
115 Counterexamples are possible, such as Koj ua yuav tas ‘You’re almost done’; cases such as this are likely the result of yuav operating directly on tas ‘finish,’ and yuav tas is perhaps subordinated in some sort of complement construction to ua.
We will become a doctor.

However, in (88) and (89), the sentence is ungrammatical when *yuav* appears in a position other than at the beginning of the verbal phrase. Thus, *yuav* must occur in first position, consistent with Dixon’s modal category.

Second, *yuav* must appear in an unusual position compared to regular verbs: it must always come before the negative marker *tsis* ‘not’. This is shown in (90) and (91) below.

Here, *yuav* precedes the negative marker *tsis*, resulting in a grammatical sentence.

In this case, the sentence is ungrammatical due to the fact that *tsis* precedes *yuav*; the language consultant, Jay Yang, suggested the ordering *yuav tsis* to fix the sentence. This shows that *yuav* must precede *tsis*, unlike regular verbs, which allow *tsis* to precede them.

Third, *yuav* does not function as a regular verb. When the seven tests for verbhood proposed by Jaisser (1984) are applied to *yuav* (expanding on the discussion on the placement of *tsis* above), this word fails on several points, as shown in Table 11.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>yuav</th>
<th>typical verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative <em>tsis</em></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question particle <em>puas</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“past tense” <em>tau</em></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“future tense” <em>yuav</em></td>
<td>no (illogical)</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative imperative <em>txhob</em></td>
<td>questionable</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-verbal ability <em>tau</em></td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question construction with <em>los tsis V</em></td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Test results for verbhood of *yuav*.

As seen in Table 11, tests 1, 3, and 4, i.e., preverbal negation, *tau* perfect (or “past tense” in Jaisser 1984), and *yuav* Positive Irrealis/Modality (or “future tense” in Jaisser 1984) all fail, while for 5, the language consultant, Jay Yang, suggests that it could be used, though he never would. Test 6 works, though whether the ability marker *tau* is being applied to *yuav* or what follows is not completely certain, and test 7 is allowable though not preferred. As a result, since only test 2 passes without further issue, it is clear that *yuav* is not a normal verb since it is subject to a number of restrictions. Thus, since *yuav* must occur first in a series of verbs and it does not behave as a normal verb, it is a Modal in Dixon (2012)’s sense of the term.

*Yuav* can also be used in an irrealis sense, where “the speaker seems to be asserting his/her belief in the likelihood of the truth of the proposition” (Jarkey 1991:70), in an unrealized context, as in (92) below.

(92) (a)  *Ib yam li qhov peb hais tias “nws de tau*
one kind as thing 1PL say COMP 3SG pick get
‘For example, if we say “he picked...”’

(b)  *ib lub taub” yuav tsis meej npaum li qhov*
one CLF pumpkin POS.IRR NEG clear equal as thing
‘...a pumpkin” it would not be as clear as...’
Here, *yuav* is placed in front of the phrase *tsis meej npaum li* ‘not be as clear as’ and supplies the meaning ‘would’, in a sentence signaling a hypothetical situation. Thus, it takes on a general irrealis notion, marking the fact that the sentence does not refer to a realized situation.

In sum, *yuav* is a positive Irrealis marker that has an associated function as a Modal expressing Intent. As part of the fuller system of Modality in White Hmong, *yuav* can co-occur freely with other forms such as *tau* ‘can’ in its positive-irrealis-as-future sense,\(^{116}\) which allows it to appear with such markers of Modality.

### 3.3.2 *yuav tau* ‘must, have to’

The Modality marker *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’ and the Perfect marker *tau* ‘ATT’\(^{117}\) can combine into a single unit to signal Obligation, for at least some speakers (Clark 1982:130).\(^{118}\) Examples of this usage appear in (93) and (94) below.

(93)  
\[
\text{Koj } \text{yuav tau } \text{ua.} \quad (\text{Heimbach 1969:431})
\]

\[
2\text{SG must do}
\]

‘You must do (it).’

In (93), *yuav tau* appears after the subject *koj* ‘2SG’ and before the verb *ua* ‘do’ to form the phrase ‘you must do’, signaling obligation for the hearer.

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\(^{116}\) Please see section 3.33 below for further details.

\(^{117}\) It should be noted here that Clark (1982:130) treats this morpheme in her work as an auxiliary version of the verb *tau* ‘get,’ rather than referring to this grammaticalized form as an Attainment marker.

\(^{118}\) Clark (1982:130) states it thus: “Some dialects or individuals allow *yuav-tau* as a compound auxiliary verb to denote obligation.”
(94) *Kuv* *yuav tau* *kawm* *lus* *no.* (Clark 1982:130)

1SG have to study word this

‘I have to study these words.’

In (94), *yuav tau* follows the subject *kuv* ‘1SG’ and precedes the verb *kawm* ‘study’ to express the meaning ‘I have to study’, here marking obligation for the speaker. Thus, as a unit, *yuav tau* signals Obligation.

However, the series *yuav tau* can also function as the sum of its parts, namely that *yuav* signals its normal Modal function of ‘will, intend’ and *tau* as either the Semi-modal meaning ‘get to’, or the regular verb ‘get’. Examples for each of these appear in (95) and (96) below, respectively.

(95) *...peb yeej yuav tau los ua xwb.*

1PL certainly POS.IRR can/ATT come do indeed

‘...we will become one.’ or ‘...we will be able to become one.’

In (95), *yuav tau* appears with the verb series *los ua* ‘become’ to form the phrase meaning ‘will become’ or ‘able to become’. In the former interpretation, *tau* is serving in its role as a Perfect marker, while in the latter case, *tau* marks the Modality notion of Ability.

*Yuav* refers to a future event.

(96) *Nyab laj luag yuav tau txhom txhua leej...* (Fuller 1988:20)

Vietnamese others POS.IRR get capture all people

‘The Vietnamese will capture all the people...’

In (96), *yuav* and *tau* appear together before the verb *txhom* ‘capture’. Here, *yuav* and *tau* are distinct elements: *yuav* is a Modal indicating the future here, while *tau* is likely the general verb ‘get’ that is associated with the verb *txhom*, where *tau txhom* indicates an idea of ‘getting’ and ‘capturing’. Thus, *yuav* and *tau* can also appear together while maintaining their own distinct meanings. As a whole, *yuav tau* can either operate as a single unit signaling Obligation or appear together with their distinct meanings and functions intact. As a Modality morpheme indicating Obligation, *yuav tau* generally does
not co-occur with other Modality markers nor with either the general irrealis or the more specific Modality nuance of *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’. This suggests a paradigmatic distinction on the part of morphemes indicating Modality, and a prohibition against like forms co-occurring in the case of *yuav*, roughly similar to the restriction against *yuav* ‘will’ co-occurring with *yuav* ‘buy’ in Laotian Green Hmong (Li 1991:52).

### 3.3.3 *yuav tsum* ‘must, have to’

The morpheme *yuav tsum* is a Modal of Necessity and Obligation meaning ‘must, have to’. An example appears below in (97).

(97)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>..peb</th>
<th><em>yuav tsum</em></th>
<th>los</th>
<th>pib</th>
<th>nhriav</th>
<th>peb</th>
<th>tus</th>
<th>kheej</th>
<th>nyob...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>must</td>
<td>come</td>
<td>start</td>
<td>search</td>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>CLF</td>
<td>self</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘...we must start searching for ourselves...’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>...rau</th>
<th><em>ntawm</em> Vaj Tswv.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to</td>
<td>there119 God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘...in God.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, *yuav tsum* ‘must’ appears with the phrase beginning with *los pib nhriav*... ‘come start looking...’ to indicate Necessity.

*Yuav tsum* is a Modal on the basis of its position before the negative marker *tsis*, and as such, before other verbs—a required trait of Modals (Dixon 2012:26). An example of the placement of *yuav tsum* appears in (98).

(98)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(98)</th>
<th>...yam</th>
<th>uas</th>
<th>peb</th>
<th><em>yuav tsum</em></th>
<th><em>tsis</em></th>
<th>txhob</th>
<th>ua...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>type120</td>
<td>REL</td>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>must</td>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>IRR.NEG</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘...the one that we must not do...’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, *yuav tsum* ‘must’ precedes the phrase *tsis txhob ua* ‘not do’, showing that *yuav tsum* must appear before the negative marker and other verbs, and is thus a Modal.

---

119 Gloss based on “there-nearby” found in Jarkey (1991:42). Note that this word is technically a “spatial deictic,” a variety of word in White Hmong that plays the role of a demonstrative while sometimes serving a function of spatial indication similar to some prepositions (Jarkey 1991:42-43).

120 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:419).
As part of the greater system of Modality marking, yuav tsum generally does not co-occur with other markers of Modality in the data nor with the irrealis marker yuav ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS’, likely for the same reasons as with yuav tau ‘must, have to’ in section 3.3.2 above. This suggests a paradigmatic relationship with the other Modality categories. In comparison with other markers of Obligation and Necessity such as yuav tau ‘must, have to’ or tsum ‘can, have to’, there is no evidence that yuav tsum belongs to a distinct category, suggesting that it is another option with more or less the same function as the other markers of its category.

3.4 Pre-main-verb position

The “Pre-main-verb position” is the location where many Secondary-A verbs in Dixon (2006)’s verbal classification scheme are found. These include the Irrealis and Modality markers tau ‘can, be able to’, tsum ‘can, have to’, txawj ‘know how to’, and txhob ‘should not, NEGATIVE IRREALIS’, as well as the Phase of Activity markers chiv ‘begin to’, pib ‘begin to’, nyim ‘continue to’, pheej ‘keep, continue to’, and rau siab ntso ‘continue to, commit oneself to’.

3.4.1 tau ‘ATTAINMENT, can’

The word tau ‘ATTAINMENT, can’ as a grammatical morpheme indicates one of two things:

1) Attainment as a type of Perfect, belonging to the category of Completion, and 2) Ability as an indicator of Modality.\footnote{It should also be noted here that tau is also a full verb meaning ‘get’ (Clark 1982:133).}

However, tau has been typically considered in the scholarly literature to serve four different functions: 1) before a verb, as a marker of the perfect (following Jarkey 1991:76, 2006:116-117\footnote{Specifically as ‘perfective aspect,’ which corresponds more or less to the ‘perfect’ of Dixon (2012).}); 2) before a main verb, as a modal expressing ‘get to, manage
to’ (Jarkey 1991:74); 3) after a verb, as a marker of ‘Attainment’ in a serial verb construction (Jarkey 1991:73); and 4) after a verb, expressing ability or “potential (mood)” (Heimbach 1979:307; Jarkey 1991:72). Each of these roles considered in the literature will be presented in turn, followed by a more cohesive analysis of tau.

First, tau appears pre-verbally to indicate the perfect. This assessment is based on Jarkey (1991:76), who calls this “perfective aspect.” However, Jarkey’s defines this variety of ‘perfective aspect’ by stating that “tau indicates that the event or state described by the verb is completed or realised, or will be completed or realised, at the time referred to” (1991:76). Thus, this “perfective” is the Perfect of Dixon, which is defined as expressing “an action which is completed before the present time” (2012:31). Thus, tau is treated as a Perfect marker here. Examples of the use of tau in this pre-verbal role are given below in (99), (100), and (101).

(99) Ces nws kuj tau hais rau kuv txiv...
then 3SG consequently\textsuperscript{124} ATT say to 1SG father
‘Then he said to my dad...’

In (99), tau is applied to hais ‘say, tell’, producing the translation ‘told’.

(100) Vaj Tswv tau qhia tseeb tseeb txog tsib yam hom phiaj...
God ATT teach the truth\textsuperscript{125} about five type purpose
‘God has taught us the truth about five types of purpose...’

In (100), tau appears with qhia ‘teach’, resulting in the translation ‘has taught’.

(101) (a) Vaj Tswv yeej tsis tau tso peb nyob tsaus ntuj nti
God certainly NEG ATT let.go 1PL live darkness
‘God does not/won’t let us stay in the dark...’

(b) paub dab tsi hlo li...
know what at.all

\textsuperscript{123} It is notable here that Jarkey (1991:228-229) considers that both uses of post-verbal tau stem from the same notion of achievement.

\textsuperscript{124} Gloss from Heimbach (1969:88).

\textsuperscript{125} Gloss corroborated by Heimbach (1969:350), who gives “spoken truth.”
‘...knowing nothing at all.’

In (101), *tau* appears in a negative clause with *tso* ‘let go’, leading to the translation of *tsis tau tso* as ‘does not let us’ or ‘won’t let us’. This variability in translation is found in multiple sources, suggesting that either *tau* can mean multiple things, or it has no direct equivalent in English.

Jarkey (1991)’s definition above can shed light on the situation: the completion of the event is in focus in regard to *some* time. In addition, unlike with other perfect forms in White Hmong, such as *lawm*, the optional ‘present relevance’ portion of the notion of the perfect may be absent. As a result, this construction with *tau* can freely be placed in any time period as seen in the above examples, as long as the action is completed before a certain, even implied, time. This is manifested in the past tense translation in (99), with a probable reference time in the present, the present perfect in (100), again with a probable reference time in the present, and the negated present/future form in (101), with a probable reference time either in the present or at some point in the future. Thus, this usage of *tau* can be treated as a Perfect marker of Completion, in connection with some other moment in time.

A large number of authors, most notably Mottin (1978), Heimbach (1969), Jaisser (1984) and Fuller (1988), treat this usage of *tau* as a past tense marker. However, as shown in example (101) above, *tau* can be used in reference to events in non-past time. Thus, while *tau* in this role more often than not appears with events that took place in the past, it does not actually mark the past tense, but rather the Perfect.

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126 Note that for Comrie (1976:56), this “continuing relevance” idea is central to the notion of the perfect.
127 See Li (1991:26) for a more complete list of authors taking this position.
Second, *tau* can appear before a main verb as a type of modality expressing ‘get to, manage to’ (Jarkey 1991:74). An example of this is (102) below.

(102) Yog li ntawd sawv daws kuj tau rov qab mus tsev
so there everyone also get.to going.back go home
‘And also we got to go back home.’

Here, *tau* appears with the phrase *rov qab mus tsev* ‘go back home’ to express ‘got to go back home, where *tau* means ‘got to’.

Third, when it appears after a verb, *tau* serves as a marker of ‘Attainment’ in a serial verb construction (Jarkey 1991:73). Jarkey (1991:229) describes this usage as follows: “a verb such as *tau* ‘get’ in the V2 slot in this construction indicates that some goal is achieved, but is extremely imprecise regarding exactly what kind of goal that is. The only possible interpretation is that this “goal” is the performance of the activity itself.” An example of this usage of *tau* as accomplishing a goal is shown in (103) below.

(103) ...peb thiaj li nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj.
1PL consequently search ATT 1PL CLF purpose
‘...in order for us to find our purpose.’

Here, *tau* follows the verb *nrhiav* ‘search’ to produce the meaning ‘find’. In this case, the combined use of *nrhiav tau* marks the successful completion of the action associated with *nrhiav* (following Jarkey 1991, 2004).  

Fourth, *tau* can appear after a verb to express ability. This is shown in (104) and (105).

---

128 It is notable here that it is exactly this verb, *nrhiav* ‘search,’ that Jarkey (1991, 2004) uses to support her points for this use of *tau*. As a result, the point made with this example is basically the same as what is found in her works.
(104) Tus nai hais tias koj noj tau hmo tam sim no.
    CLF boss say that 2SG eat can dinner now
    ‘The boss said that you can eat dinner now.’

In (104), tau appears after the verb noj ‘eat’ to express ‘can eat’, in the context of a boss giving permission.\(^{129}\)

(105) Tej lus pab no tej zaum nws yeej pab tau yus...
    these word help this maybe it certainly help can INDF.PRON
    ‘All these teachings, maybe it will be able to help you...’

In (105), tau follows the verb pab ‘help’ to produce ‘be able to help’, where the phrase expresses the speaker’s expectation about the ability of the ‘teachings’ to be of benefit.

Thus, tau can serve to mark ability in post-verbal position.

Jarkey (1991) takes the third and fourth usage above and appears to combine them, where the ‘attainment’ definition above is the basic meaning for post-verbal tau, with “permission” and “ability” as “follow[ing]” from it (Jarkey 1991:73). In this case, achievement is in focus, with ability implied (Jarkey 1991:228). At the same time, alternations showing both a distinction and an overlap are found in the data, shown in (106), (107), and (108) below.

(106) Nws hais tias tag kis peb mam li\(^{30}\) nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj
    3SG say that tomorrow 1PL will search can 1PL CLF purpose
    ‘He said that tomorrow we can search for our purpose.’

In (106), the combination nrhiav tau appears, with the resulting meaning ‘can search for’.

(107) ...peb thiaj li nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj.
    1PL consequently search ATT 1PL CLF purpose
    ‘...in order for us to find our purpose.’

Here, the same phrase appears with the meaning ‘find’.

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\(^{129}\) Jarkey (1991:73) notes the possible use of pre-verbal tau as indicating permission.

\(^{30}\) See section 3.2.4 above for the meaning and use of mam li. It does not appear to affect the meaning here, as other examples, such as Tag kis peb yeej nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj ‘Tomorrow we will be able to search for our purpose,’ without mam li, were found.
In (108), *nrhiav tau* appears again, but with the meaning ‘can find’. This can be treated as ability with ‘search for’ in (106), Jarkey (1991)’s ‘attainment’ with ‘search for’ in (107), and ability *and* ‘attainment’ with ‘search for’ in (108). As a result, *tau* post-verbally can express ability and attainment, either one or the other or both. This suggests a complicated relationship, one that fits somewhat within Jarkey (1991)’s explanation described above, though at the same time, one that presents an enigma when it comes to discerning when ability is actually implied.\(^{131}\)

This possibility of alternation can even be found in the same environment, as shown in (109) below.

(109)  
*Nws haiyas tias peb nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj lawm*  
3SG say that 1PL search can/ATT 1PL CLF purpose CP  
‘He said that we can search for our purpose.’  
or ‘He said that we have found our purpose.’

In this case, both ability and attainment interpretations are possible with *nrhiav tau*, where the phrase can mean ‘can search for’ or ‘have found’, apparently depending on whether the search took place in past time or if it is yet to be realized. As a result, an interpretation where two distinct forms are being considered is preferable for post-verbal *tau*, though with the concession that both meanings could be intended at the same time or even that the attainment meaning implies ability in at least some cases.

Altogether, past scholarly works have typically suggested four different uses for *tau*. However, one significant aspect of *tau* not previously considered in the literature is a

\(^{131}\) It should be noted here that Li (1991:32-34) presents several instances for Laotian Green Hmong where *tau* in preverbal position can only mean ‘get to’ and other examples where it can mean both ‘get to’ and “Attainment aspect,” with the defining difference being the presence of additional content in the sentence that “serve[s] to bound the event.”
profound one: the position of tau in the sentence is not actually related to its basic meaning. This can be concluded from two factors: 1) pre-verbal and post-verbal tau function as signaling ‘Attainment’, as described in the literature by different sources, and 2) pre-verbal and post-verbal tau can both signal Ability. Each of these factors is discussed below.

First, tau can function as signaling ‘Attainment’ either before or after a verb. This is demonstrated in the scholarly literature, where Li (1991) treats pre-verbal tau as “Attainment,” while Jarkey (1991) treats post-verbal tau as the same. Since both appear to make valid points in regard to the use of tau, it seems that a unified treatment is merited. Consider (110) and (111) below.

(110) Kuv tau kawm los ua kws kho mob.
    1SG ATT learn come do doctor
    ‘I have/had learned to become a doctor.’

Here, tau precedes the verb kawm ‘study, learn’ to signal the completion of the action and the attainment of the goal of becoming a doctor.

(111) Nag hmo peb nrhiav tau peb lub hom phiaj lawm.
    yesterday 1PL search ATT 1SG CLF purpose CP
    ‘We found our purpose yesterday.’

In this case, the verb nrhiav ‘search, look for’ is followed by tau, where tau provides a notion of completion and ‘attainment’, that is, the action has achieved the desired goal (following Jarkey 2004). Thus, tau in the ‘Attainment’ sense provides the same meaning both before and after the main verb, while there is a perceived distinction in nuance that may be related to either the relationship of tau to the main verb or the construction used.

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132 It is notable that Li (1991) calls pre-verbal tau ‘Attainment’ in reference to Green Hmong, though the demonstrated function of tau in his work is identical to that of White Hmong as described above.
Second, \textit{tau} can signal Ability both before and after a verb. This is shown in (112) and 113) below.

(112) \textit{Yog køj tuaj no peb tau noj hmo ua ke}.
if 2SG come this 1PL can eat dinner together
‘If you come, we will be able to eat dinner together.’

Here, \textit{tau} precedes the verb \textit{noj} ‘eat’ and contributes the idea of ‘will be able to’, showing that \textit{tau} can signal ability before the main verb.

(113) \textit{Txhua txoj kev... puav leej pab tsis tau peb}...
every CLF road all\textsuperscript{133} help NEG can 1PL
‘All the roads...won’t be able to help us...’

In this case, \textit{tau} follows \textit{pab} ‘help’ and the negative \textit{tsis} to signal a lack of ability. Thus, it is clear that \textit{tau} can appear on either side of the main verb to indicate a notion of ability.

It is significant here that the language consultant, Jay Yang, pointed out that the difference in translation into English between ‘can/be able to’ and ‘get/manage to’—typical translations in the literature for postverbal and preverbal \textit{tau}, respectively—is one of personal preference.

In addition to the above data, Mottin clearly defines one sense of both preverbal and postverbal \textit{tau} as being one of signaling ‘possibility’ (1978:102). At the same time, Mottin suggests that preverbal \textit{tau} also signals ‘have the opportunity’ and postverbal \textit{tau} signals ‘have permission’ or ‘have the right to’. Thus, while both preverbal and postverbal \textit{tau} share a common meaning, that of indicating possibility, different nuances are possible depending on where \textit{tau} appears. In either case, it is clear that \textit{tau} can signal Ability both before and after a verb.

\textsuperscript{133} Gloss and parsing of \textit{puav leej} from rest of sentence here deviates slightly from the original obtained from Jay Yang, and is confirmed by Heimbach (1969:238).
Thus, it is seen that the inherent meaning of \textit{tau}, whether it is used in the sense of Ability or Attainment/Completion is not affected by whether it precedes or follows a given verb, though a distinction in nuance can be detected. Considering that \textit{tau} in post-verbal position takes part in an Accomplishment Serial Verb Construction, regardless of the meaning realized (per Jarkey 1991:73), the semantics of this type of construction may be a major contributing factor that affects the nuance of \textit{tau} in this position. In contrast to this, constructions that involve pre-verbal \textit{tau} can be taken to be a different type of construction altogether.\footnote{It is possible that this may be a distinct Serial Verb Construction of its own, or a special class of an Accomplishment Serial Verb Construction. However, it is notable that Jarkey (1991) found four types of Serial Verb Constructions in White Hmong, and it is questionable whether a fifth type exists specifically for pre-verbal \textit{tau}, and so treating this as a special type of Accomplishment Serial Verb Construction would be the preferable option, where \textit{tau} is the initial verb marking Attainment, and the second verb indicates the outcome of that attainment, namely, the action itself.} Thus, the distinction made by many scholars between pre-verbal and post-verbal \textit{tau} is likely due to the semantics provided by the relationship established by a certain class of Serial Verb Construction rather than a genuine morphological distinction between the two syntactic varieties of \textit{tau}. Altogether, it is concluded here that, regardless of where it appears in relation to the main verb, \textit{tau} serves two functions: marking 1) Attainment and 2) Ability.\footnote{It should be reiterated here that Jarkey (1991) considers the postverbal usage of \textit{tau} to be one of achievement, and ability as a form of that achievement; this interpretation could potentially hold preverbally as well. Nevertheless, for purposes of Non-spatial Setting, the two nuances of \textit{tau} are separated out here for simplicity, while it is explicitly noted that the two functions of \textit{tau} are indeed related.} The first of these serves as a Perfect as part of Completion, while the second is a Semi-modal marking Ability; the Semi-modal status here is drawn from the fact that \textit{tau} effectively acts like a verb in Serial Verb Constructions, following Dixon (2012:26). As part of the larger system of Perfect markers in White Hmong, \textit{tau} can co-occur with other types of Perfect marking, suggesting that these belong to slightly different categories but are related by both meaning and usage, as discussed in reference to \textit{lawm} ‘CP’ in section 3.8 below.
3.4.2 *tsum* ‘can, have to’

The morpheme *tsum*, when used alone, is a Semi-modal that often appears with the negative *tsis*. It can be used for Ability or Necessity (following Heimbach 1969:357, Clark 1982:130), as in (114) and (115), respectively.

(114) *Muab tsis tsum.* (Heimbach 1969:357)

get NEG can

‘(I) cannot get (reach) it.’

In (114), *tsum* appears after the verb *muab* ‘get’ and the negative *tsis*, producing ‘cannot get’—denoting inability.

(115) ...*tsis tsum nrhiav lev pua chaw.* (Clark 1982:130)

NEG have.to search mat spread place

‘...don’t have to search for a mat to spread out.’

In (115), *tsum* again appears after *tsis*, but before the verb *nrhiav* ‘search’, resulting in the meaning ‘don’t have to search’ and marking the lack of obligation or necessity. In either case, *tsum* clearly marks Modality of some sort.

Syntactically, *tsum* is a Semi-modal, as opposed to a Modal, because of two factors: 1) it can be directly preceded by the negative, and 2) it is not always the first verb in the series. First, the negative can appear before it, unlike with true Modals such as *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’. Both examples (114) and (115) above show that the negative *tsis* consistently appears before it. In addition, sentences containing both *yuav* and the negation marker *tsis* consistently display the ordering *yuav tsis*, as shown above in section 3.3.1. This shows a contrast between the Modal-type word *yuav* and other words such as *tsum*, suggesting that these belong to different classes.

---

136 For Necessity, Clark (1982:130) notes that this usage is attested in a variety of White Hmong spoken in Thailand, and that in Xieng Khouang, Laos, the compound form *yuav tsum* is more widely attested.
Second, *tsum* is not always the first verb in the series. In (114) above, the verb *muab* ‘get’ precedes the negative *tsis* and *tsum*, showing that *tsum* is not always the first verb in the series. Since Dixon’s categories for Modal and Semi-modal are distinguished in part by whether the verb always comes first (2012:26), as is the case for modals, *tsum* is a Semi-modal. Thus, since *tsum* regularly appears in syntactic positions unsuitable for modals, it must be a Semi-modal in Dixon (2012)’s framework.

In terms of the relationship of *tsum* ‘can, have to’ to other Modality morphemes, the available data suggests that it does not co-occur with other Modality morphemes, except when combined with *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’ to make the compound Modal *yuav tsum* meaning ‘must, have to’. In terms of the meaning of *tsum*, it appears to overlap somewhat with other Modality items such as *yuav tsum* ‘must, have to’, and *tau* ‘can’. However, the rarity of the data for *tsum* limits what can be known about its relationship to these other forms, and further research is necessary.137

3.4.3 *txawj* ‘know how to’

The morpheme *txawj* is a Modal that denotes ability that results from past learning, translated as ‘know how to’ (Heimbach 1969:375, Jarkey 1991:74). It fits into Dixon (2012)’s framework as a Semi-modal marking Ability. Examples appear in (116) and (117) below.

(116) Koj puas txawj hais lus Hmoob? (Jarkey 1991:74)
2SG Q know.how.to speak word Hmong ‘Do you know how to speak Hmong?’

In (116), *txawj* precedes the verb *hais* ‘speak’ to produce ‘know how to speak’, expressing ability based on knowledge.

---

137 My language consultant, Jay Yang, never used *tsum* ‘can, have to’ as a morpheme distinct from *yuav tsum* ‘must, have to’ in any of the data obtained.
(117) (a) \[ \text{Kuv} \quad \text{yuav} \quad \text{tsum} \quad \text{saib} \quad \text{seb} \quad \text{kuv} \]
\[ \text{1SG} \quad \text{must} \quad \text{look.at} \quad \text{whatever} \quad \text{1SG} \]
‘I need to see…’

(b) \[ \text{txawj} \quad \text{ua} \quad \text{yam} \quad \text{twg.} \]
\[ \text{1SG} \quad \text{know.how.to} \quad \text{do} \quad \text{kind} \quad \text{which}\]
‘…what I know how to do.’

In (117), \text{txawj} appears with \text{ua} ‘do’, and in this case \text{txawj} was rendered as the English ‘skill, talent’, again expressing ability from knowledge. Thus, \text{txawj} marks Ability Modality, of especially the knowledge variety.

\text{Txawj} patterns with regular verbs in some ways and with modals in others.

\text{Txawj} is similar to regular verbs in that it is placed after the negative marker \text{tsis}, like regular verbs, as shown in (118).

(118) \[ \text{Kuv} \quad \text{tsis} \quad \text{txawj} \quad \text{kho} \quad \text{mob.} \]
\[ \text{1SG} \quad \text{NEG} \quad \text{know.how.to} \quad \text{heal} \quad \text{patient} \]
‘I don’t know how to heal patients.’

Here, \text{txawj} follows the negative particle \text{tsis}, like regular verbs, rather than before it, as with the Modal-type word \text{yuav}. However, \text{txawj} does not pattern like verbs in other ways.

First, it is helpful to compare \text{txawj} with the semantically similar verb \text{paub}, ‘know (how to)’. \text{Paub} generally serves the same purpose as \text{txawj} in that it expresses ability deriving from knowledge. An example of this verb being used this way appears below.

(119) \[ \text{Kuv} \quad \text{tsis} \quad \text{paub} \quad \text{kho} \quad \text{mob.} \]
\[ \text{1SG} \quad \text{TSIS} \quad \text{know} \quad \text{heal} \quad \text{patient} \]
‘I don’t know how to heal patients.’

In this case, \text{paub} serves the same role as \text{txawj} in (118), and the resulting translation is also the same in both examples. This shows that, at least in this context, \text{txawj} and \text{paub} mean effectively the same thing.

\[^{138}\text{Gloss from Heimbach (1969:330).}\]
However, the two semantically differ in several significant ways. The results of the seven tests from Jaisser (1984) with *txawj* ‘know how to’ and *paub* ‘know (how to)’ appear in Table 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th><em>txawj</em></th>
<th><em>paub</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative <em>tsis</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question particle <em>puas</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“past tense” <em>tau</em></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“future tense” <em>yuav</em></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative imperative <em>txhob</em></td>
<td>no*</td>
<td>yes, but strange*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-verbal ability <em>tau</em></td>
<td>yes, but strange</td>
<td>yes, but strange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question construction with <em>los tsis V</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 12.** Results of grammatical tests for *txawj* and *paub*.

Tests 1, 2, 6, and 7 produced identical results—that is, 1, 2, and 7 resulted in perfectly grammatical sentences while 6 resulted in an acceptable sentence that sounded somewhat strange to the consultant. 3 and 4 were not acceptable with *txawj*, but acceptable though somewhat strange with *paub*; with slight modifications, such as the addition of *los lawm* with 3 and *yeej* with 4, the sentences were perfectly fine with *paub*. With 5, *txawj* could not co-occur with *txhob* alone, whereas with *paub*, it could, though it sounded strange. If the sentence is changed to the negative imperative with *tsis txhob*, both *txawj* and *paub* could be used. As a result, in at least some cases, while *paub* can be used even if the result sounded strange, *txawj* cannot be used. Thus *txawj* does not behave consistently as a regular verb, and thus must be some variety of Modal.

Since *txawj* cannot be a regular verb, it must be something else. However, it does not behave exactly like a true Modal-type word such as *yuav* ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’, either. Jaisser (1984)’s tests for verbhood for *txawj* and *yuav* demonstrate small differences, and these are shown together in Table 13 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>txawj</th>
<th>yuav</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative tsis</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question particle puas</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“past tense” tau</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“future tense” yuav</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no (illogical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative imperative txhob</td>
<td>no*</td>
<td>questionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-verbal ability tau</td>
<td>yes, but strange</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question construction with los tsis V</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 13.** Tests for verbhood for txawj and yuav.

In this case, test 1 has a different result, likely due to the order of the negative: yuav must precede the negative, while txawj follows it. Also, while txawj cannot be preceded by txhob alone, it can be preceded by tsis txhob, while yuav produces questionable results in either case. Finally, txawj can be used comfortably in the case of test 7, while yuav is not the preferable form. Thus, while the results are similar for txawj and yuav, they are not exactly the same syntactically. As a result, txawj can be treated as a special variety of Modal, distinct from yuav. In sum, txawj is a special Modal marking Ability.

As part of the system of Ability Modality, txawj marks acquired ability or skill, as opposed to tau, which marks general ability, and taus, which marks physical or material ability, tsum, which marks some form of physical ability (based on the scant evidence available), and yeej ‘can(not)’, which is associated with negative ability. As such, txawj generally does not co-occur with these other types of Ability, but rather forms a distinct category to specifically distinguish acquired ability from other types.

### 3.4.4 txhob ‘NEGATIVE IRREALIS, should not’

The morpheme txhob ‘do not, should not’ marks negative irrealis (following Jarkey 2006:125), placing it as a type of irrealis marker in the Reality category of Dixon (2012)’s framework. As such, it serves as a negation particle that often occurs in irrealis

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139 See the discussion on yuav above for the special situations associated with tests 6 and 7 here.
contexts, such as the imperative, expressing a purpose or desire (following Jaisser 1984:60-61), negating the subordinate clause of a modal, or marking negation in the protasis of counterfactual statements. It can also sometimes mark negative modality. Examples of each of these five uses appears in (120), (121), (122), (123), and (124), respectively.

(120) Txhob txawj (Jaisser 1984:59)
   NEG.IRR worry
   ‘Don’t worry.’

In (120), the negation of the imperative txawj ‘worry’ is achieved with the presence of txhob, producing the meaning ‘don’t worry’.

(121) Nws pab kom tus tsov txhob tom kuv (Jaisser 1984:59)
   3SG help so.that CLF tiger NEG.IRR bite 1SG
   ‘He helped me so that the tiger wouldn’t bite me.’

In (121), the potential event tus tsov txhob tom kuv ‘the tiger wouldn’t bite me’ is marked by txhob to show the actor’s goal of the event not happening.

(122) ...yam uas peb yuav tsum tsis txhob ua...
   type REL 1PL must NEG NEG.IRR do
   ‘...the one that we must not do...’

In (122), txhob, with the regular negative marker tsis, negates the verb ua ‘do’, and the whole phrase, tsis txhob ua, is subordinate to the Modal yuav tsum ‘must’.

(123) (a) Yog kuv (tsis)141 txhob lem, peb twb
   if 1SG (NEG) NEG.IRR turn 1PL sure
   ‘If I hadn’t turned, we...’

---

140 Note that the translation provided here by Jaisser (1984) includes ‘me’ twice, while kuv ‘1SG’ appears explicitly in the Hmong sentence only once.
141 Parentheses here and following in an example indicate that the word can be optionally included with no effect on the grammaticality of the sentence.
In (123), \textit{txhob} marks the negation the counterfactual if-then statement’s protasis \textit{yog kuv lem} ‘if I had turned’ to express an idea of what could have been.

(124) \textit{Nws txhob ua kws kho mob.}  
\text{3SG NEG.IRR do doctor}  
‘He shouldn’t be(come) a doctor.’

In (124), \textit{txhob} is placed before \textit{ua kws kho mob} ‘be(come) a doctor’ to signal a negative modality translated as ‘shouldn’t’.

One important semantic context where \textit{txhob} is often used where the regular negative marker \textit{tsis} sometimes cannot appear alone is in purpose complements introduced by \textit{kom} (Jaisser 1984). An example of this is (125) below.

(125) \textit{Kuv kho lub rutsev kom nag (tsis) txhob xau} (Jaisser 1984:60)  
\text{1SG fix CLF roof so.that rain NEG NEG.IRR leak}  
‘I fix the roof so that the water doesn’t come in.’

In this case, the presence of \textit{txhob} in the \textit{kom} clause—with or without the negative marker \textit{tsis}—ensures that the sentence is grammatical. Compare this with (126) below.

(126) *\textit{Kuv kho lub rutsev kom nag tsis xau} (Jaisser 1984:60)  
\text{1SG fix CLF roof so.that rain NEG leak}

In this case, the presence of \textit{tsis} alone in the \textit{kom} clause renders the sentence ungrammatical. Thus, in at least some contexts, \textit{txhob} often must appear as the negative marker in purpose clauses, further suggesting that it marks negative irrealis.

\textit{Txhob} can also be accompanied by the normal negative marker \textit{tsis} without affecting the meaning (Jarkey 1991:68). Compare example (120) above with (127):
In (127), the same sentence appears as in (120) above, though with the addition of the negative *tsis* ‘not’, without any change in meaning. This optional usage of *tsis* is also manifested in (123) above, where *tsis* is placed in parentheses to show that it is optional, again without any clear effect on the meaning. This same possibility exists for many of the other examples above, such as the optional *tsis* in (125) above, and (124) as in (128) below.

(128) *Nws tsis txhob ua kws kho mob.*

3SG NEG NEG.IRR do doctor

‘He should not become a doctor.’

Here, *tsis* can appear before *txhob*, again with no change in meaning. Altogether, in many cases, *tsis* can optionally accompany *txhob* without impacting the semantics of the sentence, suggesting that *txhob* has an additional role outside of simply marking the negative, that of irrealis.

While the above treatment as an Irrealis marker with a possible modal use satisfactorily characterizes the use of *txhob*, Jarkey (1991:68), on the other hand, argues that this particle marks a level of certainty in which “the falsity of the proposition is not certain.” She further suggests that it could be a “subject of speculation” or a matter of ‘hope’ (Jarkey 1991:68). However, her example expressing this “speculation” is the counterfactual if-then example in (123) above, and her example representing ‘hope’ is a negative imperative. Both of these uses are irrealis in nature, and neither necessarily expresses an inherent lack of certainty: in the case of (123), certainty does not appear to be a salient aspect of the meaning of the counterfactual, and in the case of the negative
imperative, certainty over the event’s happening is not relevant. Thus, txhob should be treated as a negative irrealis marker.

Syntactically, txhob shares features with regular verbs such as following the negative marker tsis, as in example (128), and appearing in first position of a verbal sequence, as in all of the examples above. However, when considering the seven tests for verbal status in White Hmong proposed by Jaisser (1984), some differences emerge.

Table 14 shows the results of the seven tests with txhob.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>txhob</th>
<th>kom ‘tell’ (Jaisser 1984)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative tsis</td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question particle puas</td>
<td>questionable</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“past tense” tau</td>
<td>yes, but strange</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“future tense” yuav</td>
<td>questionable</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative imperative txhob</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-verbal ability tau</td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question construction with los tsis V</td>
<td>yes, but strange</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. A comparison of verbal status test results for txhob and the regular verb kom.

The tests with txhob generally showed different results compared to normal verbs such as kom ‘tell’. In the case of test 1, in which tsis ‘not’ is placed before the element to test, tsis txhob produces effectively the same meaning as txhob alone, since txhob is inherently negative; in the case of test 6, while the sequence txhob tau V is possible, it seems that tau actually patterns with the following verb, with ‘shouldn’t have V’ as the most salient meaning, where tau does apply to the following verb, not to txhob. The translation ‘shouldn’t be able to V’, the expected outcome of test 6, is an ambiguous case, since tau can either precede or follow the verb to express ability of differing varieties.142 All of the other tests produced either allowable but strange results, genuinely questionable results,

142 See above for the discussion on the uses of tau.
or unacceptable results.

Thus, \textit{txhob} is not functioning in the same way as a verb like \textit{kom}, and must therefore not be a regular verb. Syntactically, it can either be considered a Modal, though not of the same class as \textit{yuav}, which precedes the negative, or merely an Irrealis marker that can express Modality. Since Dixon (2012)’s Modality markers are all considered irrealis markers, \textit{txhob} should be treated as a Modality marker for purposes of Non-spatial Setting, and this analysis is adopted here. The fact that \textit{txhob} is inherently negative, and when used as a Modal it expresses a possibility that should not come to be, however, seems very unusual for Modals, and provides an interesting insight into what is possible for categories of Modality.

As part of the larger system of Reality and its subcategory of Modality in White Hmong, \textit{txhob} can generally co-occur with morphemes marking Modality, with the pattern in the data being that \textit{txhob} ‘NEGATIVE IRREALIS’ modifies the verb found in the complement of the Modal or Semi-modal, as discussed above. Another possible pattern is for \textit{txhob} to precede the special Modal \textit{txawj} ‘know how to’ in order to produce a negative imperative, as in (129) below.

(129) \textit{Tsis txhob txawj kho mob.} \textit{NEG NEG.IRR know.how.to heal patient} ‘Do not know how to heal patients!’

In this case, \textit{tsis} ‘not’ and \textit{txhob} ‘NEGATIVE IRREALIS’ precede the special Modal \textit{txawj} ‘know how to’, resulting in a negative imperative. Whether this pattern can be extended to Semi-modals is unknown, and is left for further research.
3.4.5 *chiv* ‘begin’

The morpheme *chiv* expresses the meaning ‘to begin, originate, start’ and is regarded by Heimbach to be comparable to the verb *pib* ‘start’ (1969:24, 229). This morpheme belongs to the Beginning action category of Phase of Activity.

An example of the use of *chiv* appears in (130).

(130)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{chiv} & \quad \text{ua} \\
\text{begin} & \quad \text{do}
\end{align*}
\]
(Heimbach 1969:24)  
‘To begin to do.’

Here, *chiv* appears with the verb *ua* ‘do’, providing the ‘to begin to’ part of the translation.

Note that in the data Heimbach (1969) provides, *chiv* only appears before verbs. With nouns, *chiv* is used in a compound form *chivkeeb* ‘begin’, as in (131) below.

(131)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Chiv keeb} & \quad \text{mob} & \quad \text{li cas?} \\
\text{begin} & \quad \text{ailment} & \quad \text{how}
\end{align*}
\]
(Heimbach 1969:24)  
‘How did the ailment begin?’

In this case, the compound *chivkeeb* is followed by the noun *mob* ‘ailment’ and the interrogative phrase *li cas* ‘how?’ and has the meaning ‘begin’. Thus, it seems that on the basis of the scant data available, *chiv* can only appear with verbal complements, and *chivkeeb* appears in other contexts.

This apparent limitation suggests that *chiv* has some sort of grammatical restriction compared to normal verbs, and, when considering its meaning, it falls naturally into the Secondary-A verb category to which other Phase of Activity verbs belong (following Dixon 2006:13). As such, it is clear that *chiv* itself belongs to the Phase of Activity category. As part of the larger system of Phase of Activity, the

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143 The morpheme *chiv* did not appear in the data I obtained from my language consultant, Jay Yang.
145 Heimbach (1969) did not provide a clear gloss for the morpheme *keeb* here; it may be connected with the meaning ‘basis, basic fact, the root of things’ (Heimbach 1979:82).
available data shows *chiv* ‘begin to’ occurring by itself without other Phase of Activity morphemes present, suggesting that these form part of a paradigm; however, due to the scarcity of data for this morpheme, further research is necessary.

### 3.4.6 *pib* ‘begin’

The verb *pib* signals the beginning of an event (following Jarkey 2006:133). It appears before the verb expressing the event that is beginning, as a Secondary-A verb of Beginning (Jarkey 2006:133). This morpheme belongs to the category Phase of Activity as an indicator of Beginning action.

An example of *pib* appears in (132) below.

(132)  
\[
\text{Peb pib nrhiav peb lub hom phiaj li no...}  
\text{IPL start search IPL CLF purpose like this}  
\]

‘This is how we start searching for our purpose...’

Here, *pib* accompanies the verb *nrhiav* ‘search’ to express ‘start searching’.

Jarkey (1991:74) regards *pib* to be a variety of deontic modality, where such modals are accompanied by an unmarked complement, that is, no complementizer is present. This is the case in example (132) above, where *pib* is immediately followed by the rest of the verb phrase without anything in between. Jarkey further argues that *pib* with a following verb do not compose a serial verb construction because they have no arguments in common; rather, the verb phrase following serves as a second argument for *pib* (1991:350). Her research is notable in that *pib* does take the same variety of complement common to modals (1991:74).

Nevertheless, the semantic notion of ‘start’ hardly fits into a natural category marking deontic modality, considering Dixon (2012)’s treatment of it as a type of Irrealis, in spite of Jarkey (1991:350)’s observation that *pib* is similar syntactically to *txawj* ‘know
how to’.\textsuperscript{146} This issue is solved by Jarkey (2006), where she treats \textit{pib} as belonging to a category other than deontic modality. There, she treats \textit{pib} as a ‘Secondary verb’ of ‘Beginning type’ in the verbal framework provided by Dixon (2006) (Jarkey 2006:133). As such, \textit{pib} is syntactically restricted in that it must be accompanied by another verb (Dixon 2006:30).

In addition to this restriction, Jarkey (1991:351-352) also points out that time adverbs associated with the complement verb that appears with \textit{pib} cannot differ from those that have sentence scope. This suggests that \textit{pib} and the verb that follows are associated more closely together than a normal verb-verb sequence, further reinforcing the understanding that \textit{pib} is grammatically less than a full verb.

Since \textit{pib} ‘begin to’ manifests these grammatical restrictions that suggest that it is not a full verb, and since ‘Secondary verbs’ are often associated with grammatical functions in certain languages (following Dixon 2012:26), \textit{pib} should be understood to be a grammatical element. From its semantics, it is clear that it naturally belongs to Phase of Activity, since it marks the beginning of an action. The morpheme \textit{pib} is therefore a Phase of Activity marker indicating Beginning action as part of Non-spatial Setting. As part of the larger paradigm of Phase of Activity in White Hmong, it is unclear what relationships or restrictions exist between \textit{pib} ‘begin to’ and the other members of the category, apart from the fact that \textit{pib} generally does not co-occur with other members such as \textit{chiv} ‘begin to’, \textit{pheej} ‘keep, continue to’, or \textit{tas} ‘finish’ in the data.

\textsuperscript{146} See above for the discussion that places \textit{txawj} into the category of Modal, though with a special syntactic status, a verb that Jarkey (1991:350) includes with \textit{pib} as a syntactic category. It is notable here that in Jarkey (2006:133), she places \textit{pib} and \textit{txawj} in differing categories based on their semantics, following Dixon (2006).
3.4.7 nyim ‘keep -ing’

The word nyim appears before the verb and contributes a sense of “continuous action,” often translated as ‘keep’ (Heimbach 1969:219). It belongs to the Phase of Activity category of Non-spatial Setting as an indicator of Continuing action.

An example of nyim appears in (133) below.

(133) Nws nyim quaj. (Heimbach 1969:219)
3SG keep cry
‘He kept crying.’

Here, the verb quaj ‘cry’ is preceded by nyim, contributing the idea of continuing action indicated by the word ‘kept’ in English.

Syntactically, Heimbach (1969:219) calls nyim a “preverbal intensifying particle,” which suggests that it is a grammatical element. However, since no other data is known to be available, it is assumed here that Heimbach’s analysis is correct, and so nyim is treated below as a grammatical element for purposes of Non-spatial Setting. As part of the larger system, no data is known to be available to determine whether nyim participates in a paradigmatic relationship with other morphemes in the Phase of Activity category, and thus further research is needed.

3.4.8 pheej/pej ‘keep, continue to’

The morpheme pheej (or pej) ‘keep, continue to’ supplies a notion of continuing action to the main verb (following Heimbach 1969, Jarkey 1991, and Jarkey 2006). This idea of continuing can also take on an iterative meaning such as ‘repeatedly’ (Heimbach 1969:242). In terms of word class, according to Jarkey (2006:133), pheej (or pej) is a
Beginning type Secondary-A verb, following Dixon (2006)’s verbal categories. As such, it has a limited distribution as it must occur with a second verb (Dixon 2006:11). As a grammaticalized morpheme, it belongs to the Continuing action class of morphemes of the Phase of Activity category of Non-spatial Setting.

An example demonstrating the two nuances associated with pheej—continuation and repetition—appears in (134) below.

(134) Nws pheej noj tshuaj pheej tsis zoo. (Heimbach 1969:242)
    3SG keep eat medicine keep NEG good
    ‘He keeps taking medicine but gets no better.’

Here, the first instance of pheej appears with noj tshuaj ‘take medicine’ to signify that the person represented by nws ‘he/she’ takes medicine ‘repeatedly’, while in the second instance, pheej implies that the state expressed by tsis zoo is ongoing, without change. As a result, it is clear that pheej covers notions of continuing states as well as repeated actions.

A possible variant pronunciation of pheej is pej, as shown in (135) below.

(135) Nws pej do tsis paub tsum.
    3SG continue.to stir NEG know stop
    ‘He continued to stir without stopping.’

Here, pej supplies the notion of ‘continued to’ for the verb do ‘stir’. In this case, the word indicates a continuing action.

Altogether, pheej/pej marks continuing action, and thus naturally belongs to the Phase of Activity category within Non-spatial Setting. As part of the larger paradigmatic system of Phase of Activity in White Hmong, it is unknown whether pheej/pej can co-

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147 A discussion on Dixon’s verbal categories is beyond the scope of this paper, though it can be noted that virtually all verbs that fit within Dixon (2012)’s Non-spatial Setting appear to be Secondary verbs of some sort.

148 This appears to be either dialectal or idiolectal variation: the language consultant, Jay Yang, rejected pheej as a possible form, and consistently used pej. However, I was unable to find another source in the literature that attests pej as an independent form.
occur with other Phase of Activity items, though the semantics involved suggest otherwise; in either case, further research is needed.

3.4.9 *rau siab ntso* ‘continue to, commit oneself to’

The phrase *rau siab ntso* serves to mark Continuing action as part of the Phase of Activity category of Non-spatial Setting. Examples appear in (136), (137), and (138) below.

(136) *...kuv yeej yuav tsum ua tau xwb ces rau siab ntso ua...*  
1SG certainly must do can indeed then continue.to do  
‘...I will be able to do this, then, continue to do this...’

In (136), *rau siab ntso* appears with *ua* ‘do’, producing ‘continue to do’.

(137) *Kuv rau siab ntso noj mov.*  
1SG continue eat rice  
‘I continued eating.’

In (137), *rau siab ntso* appears with *noj* ‘eat’, resulting in the meaning ‘continued eating’.

(138) *...yog hais tias yus rau siab ntso ua tiag tiag*  
if that INDF.PRON149 commit.to do really  
‘...if you’re willing to commit yourself to doing it.’

In (138), *rau siab ntso* again appears with *ua*, though a new nuance appears: ‘commit yourself to doing’, also having a notion of continuity, though of a markedly volitional nature. Thus, *rau siab ntso* expresses an idea of continuing action with a connotation of intentional willfulness.

Jarkey (2006:133) provides a gloss for *rau siab ntso*, “put (one’s) heart into it,” or more exactly, “put in liver steadily,” that reveals an idiomatic quality, providing support for its existence as a unit as well as the degree of volition found in example (138) above.

In contrast to the treatment above as continuity, however, Jarkey (2006:133) treats *rau siab ntso* as a verb of Trying type, rather than Beginning type like *pheej*. This suggests

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149 Gloss following Jarkey (1991:70). Also in another example below.
that *rau siab ntso* expresses a degree of effort. While example (138) would agree with this (as well as at least one other example in my data), examples (136) and (137) are not completely explained. If the idea of continuing action salient in (136) and (137) is combined with the degree of effort found in Jarkey (2006) and example (138), a solution is found: treat *rau siab ntso* as continuing action with a high degree of effort. This would then naturally contrast with *pheej/pej* ‘keep, continue to’, which expresses simple continuing action. Adopting this analysis, White Hmong has two varieties of continuing action, where *rau siab ntso* expresses continuing action with willful effort.  

3.5 Post-main-verb position

The “Post-main-verb position” represents the placement of Attainment SVC markers, the second element in reduplication, the Temporal shifter *ntua* ‘immediately, just (now)’, the Semi-modal *taus* ‘be physically/materially able to’, and the Perfect marker *dua* ‘EXP’. Other elements already mentioned, such as *tau* ‘ATT, be able’ can be placed in this position as part of an Attainment SVC.

3.5.1 Attainment Serial Verb Constructions

The Accomplishment (Jarkey 1991) or Attainment Serial Verb Construction (Jarkey 2004) is a construction that is characterized by having multiple verbs where “the final verb in the series serves to describe the successful accomplishment or achievement of the action or event depicted by the preceding verb” (Jarkey 1991:214). In other words, this type of

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150 It is notable here that in at least some contexts, the language consultant, Jay Yang, rejected *pej* but accepted *rau siab ntso* unless a clause stating a reason for continuing was provided.

151 The exact placement of *dua* in the larger sentence is ambiguous, due to a lack of clear data demonstrating the exact ordering of *dua* with other post-verbal elements. It is placed in the “post-main-verb position” provisionally, as the other non-grammaticalized morphemes that have the form *dua* are all verbs—one of which means ‘to pass on, to go’ (Heimbach 1979:38)—and the post-main-verb position is a very common position for other verbs to appear. This analysis is corroborated by the fact that the experiential perfect marker in Mandarin, *-guo*, is grammaticalized from a verb meaning ‘to pass,’ suggesting a link through the typological generality aspect of grammaticalization.
construction serves as a form of indicating the Perfect, since it signals “successful” completed action. While postverbal tau ‘ATT, be able’ often occurs in this construction, other verbs, such as cuag ‘reach’ or txog ‘arrive’ can serve in this role as well (Jarkey 1991:214, 229). An example of this construction with one of these other verbs appears in (139) below.

(139) Kuv mus raws cuag lawv. (Jarkey 1991:214)
     1SG go pursue reach 3PL
     ‘I caught up with them.’

In this example, the verb raws ‘pursue’ is followed by the second verb cuag ‘reach’ to signal the idea of ‘catch up’, that is, expressing the successful completion of the action indicated by raws.

As an indicator of completed action, this Attainment Serial Verb Construction (SVC) belongs to Completion as an indicator of the Perfect, along with the more general marker tau ‘ATT, be able’, which participates in the construction. As for its relationship with other Completion markers, the Attainment SVC can co-occur with the marker lawm ‘CP’, as in (140) below.

(140) Nws mus txog tom khw lawm. (Jarkey 1991:214)
     3SG go arrive over.there market CP
     ‘She has arrived at the market.’

Here, mus ‘go’ and txog ‘arrive’ are combined to produce the meaning ‘arrive’, and appear along with the Perfect marker lawm ‘CP’, showing that these can co-occur. As a result, it is clear that the Attainment SVC can occur with at least one other Perfect marker,

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152 Tau ‘ATT, be able’ is distinctive because of both its semantic and syntactic complexity and the fact that the function of tau in this construction is such that the “goal” indicated by tau “is the performance of the activity itself,” that is, the activity indicated by the main verb (Jarkey 1991:229). In other words, tau is much more semantically bleached than other verbs used in this construction, which generally “[express] a fairly precise goal” (Jarkey 1991:229). For a detailed discussion on tau, please see section 3.4.1 above.
though further research is necessary to determine the relationship of the Attainment SVC to other Completion markers.

### 3.5.2 Reduplication

Reduplication of verbs generally reflects ongoing action in White Hmong, and as such, marks Imperfect as part of Completion in Non-spatial Setting. More specifically, reduplication of verbs produces several distinct nuances, including the imperfective, habitual action, repetitive action, or action lasting for a period of time (Jarkey 1991:75; Owensby 1986:237-239). Each of the functions is discussed in turn below.

First, reduplication can signal the imperfective, as in (141) below.

(141) \[ Nws \ txham \ nws \ noj-noj \ (Owensby 1986:239) \]
\[ 3SG \ choke \ 3SG \ eat\rightarrow REDUP \]
‘He choked while he was eating.’

Here, the verb \textit{txham} ‘choke’ signals an action that takes place momentarily while the event signaled by the reduplicated verb \textit{noj} ‘eat’ is happening. This usage matches Dixon (2012:35)’s description of the imperfective, in that the “temporal make-up of the event”—namely, that of eating in this case—is in view, and the act of choking is placed as a single event within the larger time frame of eating.

Second, reduplication can mark habitual action, as in (142) and (143) below.

(142) (a) \[ Tus \ lwzaj \ mas \ nws \ da-da \ dej \ tau \ ob \ peb \]
\[ CLF \ lake \ TOP \ 3SG \ immerse\rightarrow REDUP \ water \ ATT \ two \ three \]
‘That lake, he’s been taking his bath (in it) for several...’

(b) \[ xyoo \ no..., \ (Jarkey 1991:75) \]
\[ year \ this \]
\[ ...years now...’ \]

Here, the verb \textit{da} ‘immerse’ has been reduplicated to signal a habitual action, ‘taking his bath’, over a period of time, i.e. \textit{ob peb xyoo no} ‘for several years now’.
Here, *ua* ‘do’ has been reduplicated to indicate that the making of *paj ntaub* is a habitual, common activity on the part of *nws* ‘3SG’.

Third, reduplication can signal a non-habitual, repetitive action. This is shown in (144) below.

(144)  
\[
\text{dhia~dhia} \quad \text{(Owensby 1986:238)} \\
\text{jump~REDUP} \\
\text{‘jumped many times’}
\]

Here, *dhia* ‘jump’ has been reduplicated to signal the notion of ‘many times’.

Fourth, reduplication can indicate an event’s taking place for an amount of time.

Examples appear in (145) and (146).

(145)  
\[
\text{Txiv Nraug Ntsuag pw~pw ib tsam ov,...} \quad \text{(Jarkey 1991:75)} \\
\text{the Orphan Boy rest~REDUP little.while IP} \\
\text{‘(After) the Orphan Boy slept for a while,...’}
\]

In this case, the verb *pw* ‘rest, sleep’ is reduplicated and appears with the phrase *ib tsam* ‘a while’, signaling an event that took place for a period of time.

(146)  
\[
\text{tau qw~qw} \quad \text{(Owensby 1986:238)} \\
\text{ATT shout~REDUP} \\
\text{‘shouted (for a long time)’}
\]

Here, the verb *qw* ‘shout’ has been reduplicated to indicate that it was an ongoing event ‘for a long time’, perhaps as a series of shouts over an extended period of time. Note also the particle *tau* here indicating the repetitive action’s completion. Thus, reduplication can serve to mark the imperfective, habitual action, repetitive action, and an action that lasted for a certain amount of time.

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153 Heimbach (1979:223) defines *paj ntaub* as ‘embroidery.’
In regard to the placement of reduplication into Non-spatial Setting, the four uses, when considered separately, would fall into several different categories, namely, Composition (Imperfective), Frequency and Degree (habitual, repetitive), and Completion (Imperfect marking duration). However, all of the four uses can be treated as different aspects of a single notion: ongoing action. In fact, for several of the above categories, Owensby (1986:238) notes that “the function of reduplication of verbs may vary according to semantic classes of verbs,” and so it should be expected that, while on the surface there are several different functions, underlyingly there is a common element. In this case, the imperfective meaning is drawn from the notion that the action is ongoing rather than representing a single point in time, in contrast to its unmarked perfective counterpart. The habitual and repetitive meanings would stem from an action that is repeated on an ongoing basis through a longer period of time. The use associated with duration is ongoing action for an unspecified amount of time, with no further specialization in meaning. Thus, all of the common meanings associated with reduplication can be connected to ongoing action. As such, it is an Imperfect as part of Completion, in the sense that the action is ongoing and therefore incomplete. This is the analysis adopted for purposes of Non-spatial Setting below.

3.5.3 ntua ‘just, immediately’

The word ntua “adds the idea of immediacy to the action of the verb” (Heim bach 1969:193). Heim bach (1969) treats it as a ‘restricted post verbal intensifier’, and provides glosses such as ‘just’, ‘straight’, or ‘right’, with a nuance that the event takes place in immediate proximity to something else, whether physical or temporal. Thus, part of the function of this word falls into the semantic realm of Non-spatial Setting, as a Lexical
Time Word in Dixon (2012)’s category of Tense, while part of it does not. Examples of ntua where it provides its temporal sense appear in (147) and (148) below.

(147) *los txog ntua*  
    (Heimbach 1969:193)  
    come arrive just  
    ‘Just came, just arrived, just returned.’

In (147), ntua appears with the verbs *los* ‘come’ and *txog* ‘arrive’ and provides the meaning represented by the English ‘just’, that is, immediate proximity in time.

(148) *Lawv teb ntua kuv*  
    (Mottin 1978:118)  
    3PL answer immediately 1SG  
    ‘They answered me immediately.’

Here, ntua follows *teb* ‘answer’ to produce the meaning ‘immediately’, again indicating proximity in time.

Heimbach (1969)’s treatment of ntua as belonging to the class of “restricted post verbal intensifier[s]” means that he regards it as a particle (1979:468) and is “restricted” in terms of which verbs with which it can appear.† Thus, it serves a grammatical role, and belongs to Non-spatial Setting.

### 3.5.4 *taus* ‘be physically/materially able to’

The morpheme *taus* ‘be physically/materially able to’ is a post-verbal marker that signifies ability (Mottin 1978:103).† As such, it marks one type of Ability Modality in Non-spatial Setting.

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† The gloss and translation of the French *aussitôt* here and in the prose following relies in part on Kellogg (2014).

† It should be noted here, however, that many of Heimbach (1979)’s “restricted post verbal intensifiers” may actually be morphemes belonging to a class of onomatopoeia-like words (following Ratliff 1986), rather than genuine grammatical elements.

† It is notable here that, after consulting with a relative, the language consultant, Jay Yang, suggested that the difference between *taus* and *tau* is one of euphony rather than function. Nevertheless, *taus* is given its own section here as it is treated by scholarly works as a separate word. Further research is necessary to determine this morpheme’s exact status.
Examples of *taus* marking physical ability and material ability appear in (149) and (150) below, respectively.

(149) Ces cov uas muaj zos thiab mus taus kev ces
then CLF REL have strong and go able.to road then
‘Then, those that had strength and were able to walk, then,...’

[lawv thiaj li los mus rau Thaib Teb lawm.]
3PL consequently\(^{157}\) come go to Thailand CP
‘...they went to Thailand.’

In (150), *taus* accompanies *mus kev* ‘walk’ to signify ‘were able to walk’, denoting physical ability in this case.

(150) Kuv pab tsis taus koj (Mottin 1978:103)
1SG help NEG able.to 2SG
‘I don’t have the means to help you.’

In (149), *taus* is negated with *tsis*, and the resulting phrase *tsis taus* ‘don’t have the means’ qualifies *pab* ‘help’ to express the idea that the speaker lacks the material ability to help.

Syntactically, *taus* generally behaves like post-verbal *tau* ‘can’ in that it follows the verb it modifies and can take the negative marker *tsis*. Thus, on the basis of limited evidence, it is likely a verb of the same class as *tau*, indicating Ability Modality. As part of the larger system of Modality marking in White Hmong, there is no evidence that would suggest that *taus* can co-occur with other Modality markers, suggesting a paradigmatic relationship with these others; however, more research is necessary to prove this.

### 3.5.5 *dua* ‘EXPERIENTIAL MARKER’

The morpheme *dua* generally means ‘again’, though in conjunction with *tau* or *lawm* indicates past experience (Heimbach 1969:38, Mottin 1978:85). This latter construction

marks a distinct variety of Perfect as part of Dixon (2012)’s Completion category, namely, the Experiential Perfect (following the terminology of Comrie 1976:58).

Examples of this construction with *dua* combined with *tau* or *lawm* appear in (151), (152), and (153) below.

(151)  
\[ \text{Kuv} \ \text{tau} \ \text{mus} \ \text{dua} \ \text{lawm}. \]  
(Mottin 1978:85)  
\[ \text{1SG ATT go EXP CP} \]  
‘I’ve already been there.’

In (151), *tau* and *dua* are placed on either side of the verb *mus* ‘go’ and this phrase is followed by the perfect marker *lawm*. This results in the meaning ‘have already been there’.

(152)  
\[ \text{Kuv} \ \text{tsis} \ \text{tau} \ \text{mus} \ \text{dua} \ \text{(ib zaug)}. \]  
(Mottin 1978:108)  
\[ \text{1SG NEG ATT go EXP (one time)}^{158} \]  
‘I’ve never been there.’

In (152), *tau* and *dua* are again placed on either side of *mus*, though the negative marker *tsis* appears in front of this phrase, producing the meaning ‘have never been’. The phrase *ib zaug* ‘one time’ can also appear with this example, with no apparent change in meaning.

(153)  
\[ \text{ua \ dua \ lawm} \]  
(Heimbach 1969:38)  
\[ \text{do EXP CP} \]  
‘To have done before.’

In (153), *dua* and *lawm* appear together with *ua* ‘do’, though without *tau*, yet still giving the meaning ‘have done before’. In each of these cases, the use of *dua* with another marker expresses past experience.

Comrie (1976:58) considers constructions marking past experience to be a form of perfect within his ‘experiential perfect’ category. He defines this category as

“indicat[ing] that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past

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leading up to the present” (1976:58). This falls within Dixon (2012:31)’s broader definition of the perfect, namely, that “‘perfect’ is taken to mean ‘an action which is completed before the present time’, to which is often added ‘and which has present relevance’, in that the situation in the past is relevant to the present situation in terms of one’s personal experience. Thus, this construction with dua and tau or lawm (or both) should be considered as a variety of perfect.

In addition, this construction is slightly different in meaning from those without dua in that they do not treat as salient this notion of experience, whereas the construction with dua does. In conclusion, the dua construction should be treated as distinct for purposes of the various forms of the perfect in relation to Non-spatial Setting.

One final interesting trait of dua is the unity in its use between Comrie’s experiential perfect and its use with the meaning ‘again’, shown in (154) below.

(154) ua dua ib zaug (Heimbach 1969:38)
        do again one time
        ‘To do a second time.’

Here, dua appears with the verb ua ‘do’ and is accompanied by the phrase ib zaug ‘one time’. In (152) above, ib zaug could appear with the experiential perfect with no apparent change in meaning compared to its absence. In both cases, the full phrase dua ib zaug can be used, showing a distinct unity in form between the two meanings, with the difference stemming from the presence of tau or lawm, as is the case in (152) and (153).

\[^{159}\] It should also be noted that Dixon (2012)’s broader definition here is remarkably similar to the general definition of the perfect in Comrie (1976:52), which states that “the perfect indicates the continuing present relevance of a past situation,” where the ‘present relevance’ is a primary element in focus.

3.6 Phase of activity—Finishing position

This is the position where Finishing action is indicated by the verbal items *tas* ‘finish’ and *tia* ‘finish’.\(^{161}\)

3.6.1 *tas* ‘finish’

The morpheme *tas* ‘finish’\(^{162}\) is a verb that functions as a marker denoting the finishing of an action (following Heimbach 1969:304). This fits into Non-spatial Setting as a Phase of Activity morpheme denoting Finishing action.

An example of this notion of finishing appears below.

(155) (a) ... *ces thaum koj muab do tas lau ces koj tos* then when 2SG get stir finish EP\(^{163}\) then 2SG wait

‘Then, when you are done stirring, then you wait...

(b) *li... [about] ib na thi li tej ntawd* for one minute around those there

‘...for about a minute or so.’

In this example, *tas* expresses the idea of ‘done’ in relation to the phrase *muab do* ‘stir’.

In this case, it conveys the idea that one event needs to finish before the next one begins, in this case *koj tos* ‘you wait’.

*Tas* regularly appears with *lawn* ‘CP’ (in line with Jaisser 1984:15, Mottin 1978:85), as in (156) below.

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\(^{161}\) It should be noted here that this position is more or less the same as the post-main-verb position, with the exception that *tas* ‘finish’ and *tia* ‘finish, complete’ are likely part of a distinct serial verb construction, perhaps the Disposal SVC, where the object noun appears before the second verb (Jarkey 1991:240).

\(^{162}\) Gloss following Fuller (1988). It should be noted that *tas* can also very occasionally appear by itself without an object as a regular verb. The only case of this in the data I obtained from Jay Yang may actually be a set phrase. Further research is needed.

\(^{163}\) The treatment of this particle as an ‘exclamatory particle’ is based in part on Jay Yang’s description of it. Mottin (1978:146) provides a description of a particle *lauj*, for which he describes its range of meaning as including “very great joy, surprise.” These are likely the same particle.
Here, the phrase *noj mov* ‘eat (rice)’ is followed by the complex *tas lawm*, producing the idea of both ‘finishing’, supplied by *tas*, and a notion of current relevance, supplied by *lawm*.

*Tas* can also indicate when an event is not finished as part of the phrase *tsis tau* *tas* ‘not done’. An example of this appears in (157) below.

(157) *Tam sim no kuv tab tom ua tsis tau tas*  
right.now 1SG IPRF do NEG ATT finish  
‘Right now, I’m not done working on it yet.’

In this case, the event expressed by *ua* ‘do’ is ongoing, and the phrase *tsis tau* is accompanied by *tas* to mean that completion has not occurred. Thus, *tas* can be used with the negative to indicate the lack of completion.

As part of the larger system of Phase of Activity, the data does not provide any known instance where *tas* ‘finish’ can co-occur with other Phase of Activity morphemes such as *pib* ‘begin to’, *pheej* ‘continue to’, or *tiav* ‘finish’. As a result, it is assumed here that *tas* forms a paradigmatic relationship with the other members of this set, though further research would prove useful.

### 3.6.2 *tiav* ‘finish’

The morpheme *tiav* ‘finish’ is very similar to *tas* above in that it conveys an idea of finishing (following Heimbach 1969), and appears to function in more or less the same way. As such, it is an indicator of Finishing action as part of Phase of Activity.

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164 See above for the discussion of Jarkey (1991) and the meaning and function of *lawm*.
165 All of the glosses from available sources, including the language consultant, make this an adjective or past participle in English, such as ‘finished’ or ‘done’ (Heimbach 1979:320), though it will be seen below that this is actually a verb in Hmong.
An example of *tiav* appears below in (158).

(158) *Tam sim no kuv tab tom ua tsis tau tiav*

right.now ISG IPRF do NEG ATT complete

‘Right now, I’m still doing it, it’s not complete yet.’\(^{166}\)

Here, *tiav* appears in place of *tas* in example (157) above, and there is no change in meaning. In this case, *tsis tau* conveys the notion of ‘not yet’ and *tiav* supplies the idea of ‘complete’.

Another example, in what appears to be a serial verb construction, is (159) below.

(159) *Yuav ua tiav huv huv li*

POS.IRR do finish completely

(Heimbach 1969:320)

‘It must be completely done./(You) must finish it.’

In this example, the idea of ‘done’ or ‘finish’ is supplied by *tiav*, following the verb *ua* ‘do’.

In terms of word class, while *tiav* generally appears after another verb in the data, it passes the seven verbhood tests of Jaisser (1984). The results of these tests appear in Table 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th><em>tiav</em></th>
<th><em>kom ‘tell’</em> (Jaisser 1984)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative <em>tsis</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question particle <em>puas</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“past tense” <em>tau</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“future tense” <em>yuav</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative imperative <em>txhob</em></td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-verbal ability <em>tau</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question construction with <em>los tsis V</em></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 15.** Test results for verbhood of *tiav*.

The verb *tiav* passes all of the tests. One case, test 5, provided a situation where *tiav* could be used by itself with the negative irrealis marker *txhob*, though not as the second

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\(^{166}\) This appears to be one clause in the original, though attempting to render this into English as a single clause would likely have a rather awkward result, hence Jay’s translation here.
verb in the sequence; in all other cases, tiav could follow another verb, such as ua ‘do’, as was done with these tests. Thus, it can be readily concluded that tiav is in fact a verb.

In contrast to this, Heimbach (1969:320) provides the definition “finished, sign of completed action” for tiav, which appears to suggest that tiav may be a grammatical marker of some sort. However, while the definition is accurate semantically, the tests above clearly conclude that tiav is a verb, suggesting a more complicated usage for this morpheme. Nevertheless, tiav is most often used as a verb after another verb, and when used after another verb, it cannot appear with txhob ‘NEGATIVE IRREALIS’, suggesting altogether that in most circumstances, it is being used in a manner akin to tas above. As a result, it can be concluded that while tiav does have properties of regular verbs, it is also used to mark Phase of Activity in the same way as its counterpart tas, indicating Finishing action. In terms of the larger category of Phase of Activity, tiav generally does not appear with tas, nor with markers of Beginning and Continuing action, suggesting a paradigmatic relationship with these others; however, more research would be necessary to make further conclusions.

3.7 Final adverbs and particles position

The previously discussed Degree of Certainty markers kiag (li) ‘really’ and possibly also tiag ‘really’ may appear in this position, as well as a large number of Lexical Time Words and phrases.

3.8 lawm ‘COMPLETION MARKER’

The morpheme lawm is typically a clause-final marker that conveys an idea of ‘completion’ (following Heimbach 1969). In this sense, lawm can serve the role of a

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167 There is the possibility that this restriction is due to a prohibition on txhob ‘do not, should not’ appearing in certain positions of the construction in which tiav ‘finish, complete’ generally takes part.
perfect marker, where the action is finished, and may also be optionally connected to relevance to another time (following Jarkey 1991, Dixon 2012). It can also function as a marker of finishing, where an action is signified to be completed before another begins. In either case, it performs the role of a Perfect of completed action as part of Dixon’s Completion category, similarly to its cognate counterpart lawm ‘Completion aspect marker’ in Laotian Green Hmong.

The role of lawm as a Completion marker is shown below in (160).

(160) ...ces lawv thiaj li los mus rau Thaib Teb lawm
then 3PL consequently come go to Thailand CP
‘...then they went to Thailand.’

In (160) above, lawm is used with a past event, namely, los mus rau Thaib Teb ‘go to Thailand’, to signify that the action was completed (with potential continuing relevance).

It is clear that the primary meaning of lawm is to mark completion.

An extended use of lawm is when it is used to refer to a future event for which a decision has been made. This idea of ‘already decided’ was the intuition of my language consultant, Jay Yang, for this kind of usage. An example appears in (161) below.

(161) Kuv yuav ua lawm.
1SG POS.IRREALIS do CP
‘I will do (this).’

Here, the future is indicated by the Modal-type word yuav ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS’ (see below), yet the completion marker lawm also appears, producing the meaning of ‘will do’ for yuav ua lawm. However, with the consultant’s intuition that a decision already has been made, lawm can be taken to mean that something has in fact already occurred.

Drawing from typological considerations from the region (see above), particles like lawm often reflect a change of state or have ongoing relevance. In this case, the change of state

168 Jaisser (1984) uses the term ‘perfective’ to characterize the usage of lawm.
would be the decision made, and the ongoing relevance would be connected with the future act. Thus, lawm allows for reference to time other than the past when expressing an idea of completion.

The morpheme lawm can also be used in conjunction with time adverbs to express completion of time (following Mottin 1978). An example of this usage appears in (162).

(162) Yav tag los lawm kuv yeej noj hmo tas li
     the.past come CP 1SG always eat dinner finish PART
     ‘In the past, I always ate dinner.’

In (162), the phrase yav tag ‘the past’ is accompanied by los lawm, literally, ‘came’, to signal that the period of time indicated is in the past, and has thus come to completion.

Altogether, lawm signals the completion of an act or of a period of time. As such, it is a Perfect marker signaling completed action in the category of Completion in the framework of Dixon (2012). In terms of the larger framework of the Perfect, however, lawm can co-occur with the other types of Perfect, namely, the Experiential Perfect dua ‘EXP’ and the Attainment Perfect tau ‘ATT’. This co-occurrence appears in (151), repeated in (163) below.

(163) Kuv tau mus dua lawm. (Mottin 1978:85)
     1SG ATT go EXP CP
     ‘I’ve already been there.’

Here, lawm ‘COMPLETIVE PARTICLE’ appears in the same sentence as dua ‘EXPERIENTIAL PERFECT’ and tau ‘ATTAINMENT PERFECT’. As a result, it is clear that these three morphemes do not form a paradigm together, but each makes its own unique contribution to the sentence. In other words, Dixon (2012)’s Perfect as manifested in White Hmong is actually three distinct categories that can co-occur. However, the fact that dua in the

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169 Heimbach (1969:111) lists this as a particle with a meaning such as “like, as, after the manner of.” In final position in contexts like this, the meaning and function is not necessarily clear, and determining its use is outside the scope of this paper. As such, when its meaning and function are unclear, it is glossed as PART.
Perfect sense must co-occur with one of the other Perfect markers such as lawm
suggests that these three words are connected to one another, and each of the three should
be seen as individual parts of a more cohesive system of Perfect in White Hmong.

3.9 xwb ‘indeed’
The word xwb, as a grammatical morpheme in Non-spatial Setting, indicates a high
Degree of Certainty, and can be glossed as ‘indeed’ (Strecker & Vang 1986:5) or ‘truly,
for sure’ (Mottin 1978:114). It often co-occurs in the data from Jay Yang with yeej
‘certainly’, and generally appears at the end of the clause. An example appears in (n)
below.

(164) kuv yuav tsum ntseeg hais tias kuv yeej yuav tsum ua tau xwb...
    1SG must believe that 1SG certainly must do can indeed
    ‘I must believe that I will be able to do this...’

In this case, xwb accompanies the subordinated clause kuv yeej yuav tsum ua tau ‘I will
be able to do this’ to indicate a high Degree of Certainty.

This use of xwb can also be extended to indicate emphasis, as in (n) below.

(165) ces tas li no lawm xwb.
    then finish like this CP indeed
    ‘And this is the end.’

Here, xwb emphasizes the meaning signaled by the phrase ces tas li no lawm ‘and this is
the end’ to indicate that the end has indeed been reached.

In cases such as (n) above, xwb clearly marks a high Degree of Certainty within
Non-spatial Setting, and the emphatic use in (n) can be seen as an extension of it. As part
of the larger system of Degree of Certainty, xwb is allowed to co-occur with at least yeej

170 Note that xwb can also mean ‘only’. There are some cases in the available data where it is ambiguous
whether xwb means ‘only’ or ‘indeed’; for the purposes of this thesis, only those cases that unambiguously
mark Degree of Certainty are glossed ‘indeed’, and ‘only’ appears in all other cases.
‘certainly’, while more research is necessary to determine its relationship with other elements.

3.10 Morphemes not belonging to Non-spatial Setting

Several morphemes have been treated in the literature as belonging to categories that form a part of Non-spatial Setting, such as Modality, but do not fulfill the definitions and expectations put forth by Dixon (2006, 2012) for their respective category as they possess either semantic values or syntactic behavior that deviates from both the definitions and the tendencies of their Non-spatial Setting counterparts. The candidates closest to true Non-spatial Setting in terms of semantics include kam ‘be willing to’, kheev ‘be willing to’, and xav ‘want’, and these will be shown not to belong to Non-spatial Setting below. Others also exist such as laj ‘be tired of doing’, maj ‘be in a hurry to/be busy doing’, nyiam ‘like to’, and sim ‘try doing’ (Jarkey 1991:74), though treatment of these are outside the scope of this thesis.  

3.10.1 kam ‘be willing to, have the habit of’

The morpheme kam is a verb with two uses: one with the meaning ‘be willing to’ (Jarkey 1991:74), or ‘consent, agree, allow’ (Jaisser 1984) and precedes the main verb (Mottin 1978:97), and the other with the meaning “have the habit of” (Mottin 1978:97) or “accustomed to” (Heimbach 1979:75) when used with the negative marker tsis after the main verb (following Mottin 1978:97). While neither use belongs to Non-spatial Setting, the first is relevant as it is regarded by Jarkey (1991) to be a deontic modality marker. Each of the two uses is discussed below in turn.

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171 The primary reason that these are not considered here is the fact that their semantics stray far from the notion of Irrealis that Modality markers in Dixon (2012)’s framework contribute. It is notable, however, that these look like what Dixon (2006) refers to as Secondary-A verbs.

172 Heimbach (1978:75) treats this as ‘willing, agreeable.’
The first usage of *kam*, which has the meaning ‘be willing to, consent, agree’, is as a Secondary-C verb (following Jarkey 2006:133) and, as such, does not mark Modality (in line with Dixon 2012:26). This first usage is demonstrated with the examples (166) and (167) below.

(166)  Koj  puas  kam  mus  tag  kis?  (Jarkey 1991:350)
   2SG  Q   KAM  go  tomorrow

‘Are you willing to go tomorrow?’

In (166), *kam* appears with the subject *koj* ‘2SG’ and the complement verb *mus* ‘go’, where *koj* is the subject of both.

(167)  Nws  kam  kuv  txiv  ua  (Jarkey 1991:348)
   3SG  willing  1SG  father  do

‘She is willing (for) my father (to) do (it).’

In (167), *kam* has the subject *nws* ‘3SG’, while the complement has its own subject, *kuv txiv* ‘my father’. Thus, *kam* can have a complement where the subject is the same for both *kam* and the complement verb, or a different subject for each.

As mentioned above, this verb is relevant to the discussion on Non-spatial Setting since Jarkey (1991:350) treats the ‘be willing to’ variety of *kam* as a type of deontic modality when the subject of *kam* and that of its complement refer to the same entity.

However, since this variety of *kam* can also take part in constructions such as (167), this suggests that *kam* is not a Secondary-A verb in Dixon (2006)’s verbal classification framework at all, since Secondary-A verbs must have the same subject for both the verb itself and for its complement. As a result, since Dixon (2012:26) requires Modality-marking morphemes to be Secondary-A verbs, it is clear that this first use of *kam* does not mark Modality.

The second usage of *kam*, with the meaning “have the habit of” or “accustomed to” and following the main verb, is shown in (168) below.
Here, *kam* follows the main verb *mus* ‘go’ and the negative marker *tsis*, producing the meaning ‘don’t have the habit of going there’. This usage, while behaving similarly in terms of syntax to Modality markers such as *tau* ‘be able’, does not appear to have any bearing on the Non-spatial Setting of the sentence, especially when considering that an alternative translation for *kam* in this kind of context is ‘accustomed to’. As a result, this second usage should likely be treated as a grammaticalized morpheme of some sort, but not one indicating Non-spatial Setting.

### 3.10.2 *kheev* ‘be willing, be inclined to’

The morpheme *kheev* meaning ‘to be willing, to be inclined to’ (Heimbach 1969:97) also appears in the literature and is a verb similar to *kam* ‘be willing to, consent’ (following Jarkey 2006). As such, it does not operate as a member of Non-spatial Setting. Also like *kam*, it is relevant to the discussion here as at least one usage of it has been treated by Jarkey (1991:350) to indicate modality.

Examples where *kheev* appear in a modal-like context are given in (169) and (170) below.

(169) *Kuv kheev mus.* (Heimbach 1969:97)

1SG be.willing.to go

‘I’m willing to go.’

In (169), *kheev* appears with the single argument *kuv* ‘1SG’ and the verb *mus* ‘go’, forming the phrase ‘I’m willing to go’.
In (170), *kheev* appears with the subject argument *kuv txiv* ‘my father’ and the complement *mus tag kis* ‘go tomorrow’, where the complement’s subject, *kuv* ‘1SG’, differs from the subject of the main clause. Thus, like *kam* ‘be willing to’, *kheev* allows either a single argument or both a subject and object argument, though, unlike *kam*, the two resulting meanings, namely, ‘be willing to’ and ‘consent’, are semantically much similar, suggesting that the actual difference between the use of *kheev* in (169) and (170) is merely syntactic. In this case, the primary difference between the two construction types is the use of a different variety of the “serial-like complementation strategy” (following the terminology of Jarkey 2006) that permits an additional subject in the case of (170). As a result, it is reasonable that *kheev* does not mark Modality in Dixon (2012)’s Non-spatial Setting, since, as stated earlier, morphemes that truly mark Modality must be Secondary-A verbs (Dixon 2012:26), and as such, they cannot have a complement clause with a different subject (Dixon 2006:13).

### 3.10.3 *xav* ‘want’

The word *xav* ‘want’ is a Secondary-B verb within Dixon (2006)’s verbal classification scheme (Jarkey 2006:133), and as such, it is not part of the Modality system the language.\(^{173}\) This verb is relevant to Non-spatial Setting as it has been treated in the past as an indicator of modality by Jarkey (1991). The most important piece of evidence against *xav* as being part of the system of Modality of White Hmong is that, while *xav* can take the “serial-like complementation strategy” when its subject and that of its

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\(^{173}\) The following discussion on the status of *xav* ‘want to’ relies to a certain extent on the ideas expressed in Jarkey (2006:131-134).
complement are the same, it can also take a complement when the two subjects differ (Jarkey 2006:133). This is shown in (171) and (172) below.

(171)  \[ \text{Kuv xav tau ib phau ntawv} \]  
\[ 1SG \text{ want get one CLF book} \]  
‘I want to get a book.’

Here, \text{xav} is followed by the complement \text{tau ib phau ntawv} ‘get a book’, where the subject of \text{tau ‘get’} is the same as that of \text{xav ‘want’}.

(172)  \[ \text{Nws xav kom kuv yuav koj} \]  
\[ 3SG \text{ want PC 1SG marry 2SG} \]  
‘He wants me to marry you.’

In this case, \text{xav ‘want’} is followed by the complement \text{kom kuv yuav koj} ‘that I marry you’. In this case, the complement subject, \text{kuv ‘1SG’}, differs from the subject of \text{xav, nws ‘3SG’}. The fact that the subject of the complement can be different from the subject of \text{xav itself disqualifies it from Secondary-A verb status (Dixon 2006:13). As such, since Dixon (2012:26) requires Modality-type verbs to be Secondary-A verbs, by definition, \text{xav} is not part of the system of Modality in White Hmong.
4. Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong

This section covers the full system of Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong, organizing the above morphemes. It is found that White Hmong has a system that contains Lexical Time Words as part of Tense, markers of Reality, including Modality, Degree of Certainty, Phase of Activity, Completion, and Speed and Ease. Each of these categories is presented below in turn.\(^{174}\)

4.1 Tense

White Hmong does not mark tense. However, it does have a system of Lexical Time Words, as shown in Table 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Lexical Time Words</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Respect to Expectation</td>
<td>twb ‘already’, yeej ‘already’, tseem ‘still’(^{175})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Shifters</td>
<td>tag kis ‘tomorrow’, neeg kis ‘the day after tomorrow’, puag nraus ‘three days from now’, puag nag nraus ‘four days from now’, nag hmo ‘yesterday’, hnub hmo ‘the day before yesterday’, hnoob hnub ‘three days ago’, puag hnoob hnub ‘four days ago’, ntuav ‘just’, nyuam qhuav ‘just, a moment ago’, maj mam ‘after a while’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 16. Lexical Time Words in White Hmong.**

4.2 Reality

There is no distinct marker for Dixon (2012)’s Realis category in White Hmong.

However, the language has a robust system of Irrealis and Modality markers. This is shown below in Tables 17, 18, and 19. One point of interest here is the division of labor between Modal type markers and Semi-modal type markers, where markers of a certain variety usually do not have equivalents of the other syntactic type.

\(^{174}\) For each subsection, please see the discussion for each word above for the source of the glosses found.

\(^{175}\) As mentioned above, the adverbial *tab tom* ‘currently’ and other Imperfect markers fit with *twb* and *tseem* syntactically.
### Table 17. Basic irrealis system in White Hmong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Modal type</th>
<th>Semi-modal type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Irrealis (incl. Future and many modalities)</td>
<td>yuav ‘POSITIVE IRREALIS, intend’</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Irrealis</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>txhob ‘NEGATIVE IRREALIS, should not’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 18. Modality system in White Hmong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Modal type</th>
<th>Semi-modal type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Necessity/Obligation</td>
<td>yuav tsum ‘should, have to, must’, yuav tau ‘must, have to’</td>
<td>(txhob)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity/Ability</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>tsum ‘can, have to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Ability</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>tau ‘can’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Ability</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td>tsis yeej ‘can(not)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired Ability</td>
<td>txawj ‘know how to’ (special)</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire/Intent</td>
<td>yuav</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 19. Adverbial and other marking of irrealis in White Hmong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Adverbial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Irrealis (and Future)</td>
<td>mam (li) ‘will’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.3 Degree of Certainty

White Hmong has a set of words that signal high and moderate levels of certainty, as shown in Table 20.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Certainty</th>
<th>Adverb/Particle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>kiag (li)(^{176}) ‘really’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tiag (tiag) ‘really’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>twb ‘indeed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yeej ‘definitely’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>xwb ‘indeed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>tej zaum ‘maybe’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ntshai ‘maybe’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{176}\) In some ways, kiag behaves like a particle, and in others like an adverb, as discussed above.
4.4 Phase of Activity

White Hmong possesses three ways to mark beginning action, three ways to mark continuing action, and two ways to mark finishing action, as shown in Table 21.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase type</th>
<th>Pre-verbal</th>
<th>Post-verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td><em>pib</em> ‘begin to’, <em>tab tom</em> ‘begin to’, <em>chiv</em> ‘begin to’</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing, Willful Effort</td>
<td><em>pheej/pej</em> ‘continue to V, keep Ving’, <em>nyim</em> ‘keep Ving’</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td><em>rau siab ntso</em> ‘keep Ving, commit oneself to V’</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishing</td>
<td>(none)</td>
<td><em>tas</em> ‘finish Ving, be done Ving’, <em>tiav</em> ‘finish Ving’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21. System of Phase of Activity in White Hmong.

An interesting observation here is the ‘iconic’ nature of Phase of Activity in White Hmong: the marking of beginning and continuing always precedes the main verb, while finishing is always indicated after the verb. It seems here that beginning is placed before the verb and finishing after the verb to iconically place the action’s taking place relative to its beginning and ending in the actual ordering of the words themselves.

4.5 Completion

Completion is represented by three perfect forms, one perfect construction, two imperfect forms, and one imperfect construction, as shown in Table 22.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of completion</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perfect, Completion with Present Relevance</td>
<td>lawm ‘CP’</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect, ‘Attainment’</td>
<td>tau ‘have Ved’</td>
<td>Attainment SVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect, ‘Experiential’</td>
<td>tau...dua, dua...lawm ‘have Ved’</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect</td>
<td>tab tom ‘IMPERFECT’</td>
<td>Reduplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect, Ongoing/Repetitive</td>
<td>sij ‘continually, repeatedly’</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22. Completion markers in White Hmong.

4.6 Speed and Ease

White Hmong has one clear marker of speed, *maj mam* ‘slowly, progressively, gradually’, marking slowness of an action.

4.7 Summary of system

Altogether, White Hmong possesses a system of Lexical Time Words, Reality and Modality, Degree of Certainty, Phase of Activity, Completion, and Speed and Ease. As stated above, the constituents of Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong take the following order:

PreS NP PreMOD MOD NEGP IRR PreV Verb PostV NP PF ADP lawm xwb

In this ordering, the Lexical Time Word category of Temporal Shifters generally fits into both PreS and PreMOD positions, where some words have a preference for one or the other position, while With Respect to Expectation adverbials always fit into the PreMOD slot. Reality is represented by: 1) *mam (li)* ‘will’, which fits into the PreMOD slot; 2) Modals, which fit into the MOD slot; 3) postverbal *tau* ‘can’ and *taus* ‘able to’, which fit into the PostV slot; and 4) other Semi-modals, which belong to the PreV slot.

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177 Experiential Perfect, as a category of the perfect, following Comrie (1976).
178 It should be reiterated here that while the ordering presented here is the most general, exceptions can be made for purposes of emphasis, local scope, or clausal subordination, where markers may appear in positions other than the ones presented here. This usually results in markers being found further to the right than as presented in this scheme.
(including txhob ‘should not, NEGATIVE IRREALIS’). Degree of Certainty is represented by:

1) kiag ‘really’, which is found in PreMOD, PostV, and ADP positions, as well as between verbs in a serial verb construction; 2) tiag ‘really’, which seems to appear in PreMOD\(^\text{179}\) as well as ADP position; 3) yeej ‘certainly’, which fits into PreMOD position; 4) ntshai ‘maybe’ and tej zaum ‘maybe’, which are found in the PreS slot; and 5) xwb ‘indeed’ is clause-final. Phase of Activity markers appear in several positions: all of the Beginning and Continuing action markers are found in PreV position, and the Finishing action markers tas ‘finish’ and tiav ‘finish’ are placed in the PF slot. As for Completion, all Imperfect morphemes appear in the PreMOD position, while reduplication involves the Verb and PostV positions. Perfect markers can appear in one of several locations, depending on the marker: tau ‘ATT’ appears either in PreV or PostV position, dua ‘EXP’ appears in PostV position, and lawm appears in its own slot near the end of the clause. The remaining means to mark the Perfect, the Attainment SVC, takes place in the Verb and PostV positions. The slow Speed marker, maj mam ‘slowly, progressively, gradually’, appears in PreMOD position.

4.8 Further directions of inquiry in White Hmong

While this thesis generally covers all of the common markers of Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong, a few more potential candidates do appear in the literature, all of which either have very little available data or their membership in Non-spatial Setting is doubtful as they may not actually be grammatical markers or at least markers that genuinely form a part of Non-spatial Setting. These include sam sim ‘still, in the process of’ (Heimbach 1979:287), nyaj ‘without [a] doubt’ (Mottin 1978:115), and sub

\(^{179}\) This seems to be the case on the basis of example (64) above combined with the similar data on kiag, though more research is needed to determine whether it actually appears in PreV position in that instance.
‘interrogative and completive particle used to express probability with some doubt attached’ (Heimbach 1979:299). In addition, as mentioned above, further research is needed to prove what co-occurrence restrictions and paradigmatic relationships exist between a number of markers, especially those of the Degree of Certainty and Phase of Activity categories, as well as the Imperfect markers of the Completion category.

4.9 Typological implications for Basic Linguistic Theory

While most of the above findings fit neatly into what would be expected for markers of Non-spatial Setting, several important features are notable: the existence of the modal-like adverbial particle mam (li) ‘will’, the three-way distinction marking various types of Ability, the three-way distinction marking the Perfect—including an experiential perfect—with co-occurring markers, and the iconic nature of beginning and continuing versus finishing in terms of verbal placement as part of a larger system.

First, mam (li) is significant in that it is semantically a type of Modality marker, but syntactically it is an adverb. As Dixon (2012:26) points out, Modality markers are typically morphological markers or Secondary verbs of some sort. This would suggest that a language can have a full system of Modality markers as verbs, while also containing a morphological marker in the form of an adverb.

Second, the existence of a three-way distinction between various types of ability—in the form of tau, taus, and txawj, as shown above—is significant in that multiple possible forms of ability can distinctly be marked, rather than all falling into one general category of Ability, as Dixon (2012:26) presents it for English. It is also notable that this division of labor in the area of Ability is paralleled by Mandarin Chinese and Honghe Green Hmong.
Third, the three-way contrast in the Perfect, especially the existence of the existential perfect as a distinct category with the addition of an adverbial, is significant in that there exists a three-way distinction in Perfect types, and more significantly, that these three Perfect types can co-occur. The existential perfect is also a category that needs to be considered cross-linguistically as part of Non-spatial Setting in general, especially as it is one of Comrie (1976)’s basic forms of the perfect and because it is found as a distinct form in many languages in East Asia.

Fourth, the iconic nature of Phase of Activity in White Hmong in its placing of markers of Beginning, Continuing, and Finishing action is important as it shows how a grammatical system that uses Secondary verbs can have a split where the items belonging to the set fall into different positions (in line with Dixon 2012:40) based on the semantic perceptualization of an event, as a part of Non-spatial Setting. In addition, it shows how the existence of other constructions, such as the Accomplishment or Disposal Serial Verb Constructions, may have an influence on where markers of Finishing appear in the larger system, since as the verbs indicating the accomplishment or result of the disposal follow the main verb, so do the markers of Finishing.

In sum, the grammatical forms for Non-spatial Setting in White Hmong present an intriguing set of implications for this part of a grammar cross-linguistically.
5. Conclusion

Altogether, White Hmong possesses a system of Non-spatial Setting that includes Lexical Time Words in the place of a tense system, Irrealis and Modality markers, Degree of Certainty markers indicating a high level of certainty, Phase of Activity markers that appear on one side of the verb or the other, depending on its type, a robust system of Completion markers, and one Speed and Ease marker.
References


Appendix A

Narrative Text

(1) nyob zoo.
   hello

Hello.

(2) ntawd no kuv yog Txawj Zeb Yaj.
    here 1SG\(^{180}\) COP Txawj Zeb Yang

My name is Txawjzeb Yang.

(3) kuv zoo siab hais tias hnb no Nej Teem wb tau tuaj nyob ua ke hauv
    1SG happy that day this Nathan 1DU can come gather.together in
    kuv tsev no sib tham me ntsi txog kuv lub neej nyob tim ub tuaj txog
    1SG house this talk.about a.little.bit about 1SG CLF story over.there come arrive
    rau tim no.
    to here

I’m very happy that today Nathan and I would be able to meet together in my house to
talk a little about my story from over there to here (Laos to America).

(4) yog li kuv xav piav rau nws mloog.
    that.is.why 1SG want tell to 3SG listen

That’s why I would like to tell it to him.

(5) kuv lub npe hu ua Txawj Zeb.
    1SG CLF name call do Txawj Zeb

My name is Txawjzeb.

\(^{180}\) The reader is referred to the relevant section of the body of the thesis for citations of the glosses of
morphemes discussed there. Other citations, when needed, are given once for the first instance and apply to
the remainder of the three appendices.
I was born in the town of Tojpob, in the province of Xieng Khouang, Laos.

My father’s name was Toojkhwb.

My mom’s name was Maochue Vang.

I remember one time we moved to live in the town of Nalong to live with my mom’s side of the family.

I think it was from '75 to '77.
When we came to live there, after we celebrated New Year’s, then my father had a very bad sickness.

Then that sickness made my dad see things and came to harm him.

He saw his ancestors come to live with him.

This sickness made my dad go crazy.

So, where we lived in the town of Nalong, we did not have any close relatives living with us there.

My father’s relatives lived in a town called Kiamana.

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181 This gloss is tentative, as other sources do not appear to contain it. The status of twj as a classifier is based on syntax and the fact that Jay Yang treated it in glossing in a manner similar to known classifiers. It is possibly related to Mottin (1978:67)’s twg ‘that, whichever,’ though the syntax of twj here differs noticeably from what Mottin provides.
I guess it would take about one day’s walk to get there.

And then, when my dad’s older brother—that is, my dad’s oldest brother—heard of my dad’s sickness...

...that’s why he came to stay with my dad for a week and he (my uncle) came to “make jingle” to heal my dad for one week.

Then, he (my uncle) kept doing it. Then my dad calmed down.

Then he said to my dad, “Living in Nanglong, you live only with your wife’s relatives.”

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(17) kab hais tias mus li ib hnub ke thiaj mus txog.

(18) yog li thauam kuv txiv tus tij laug hlob hnov -- ua yog kuv txiv tus and then when 1SG father CLF older brother hear do COP 1SG father CLF tij laug hlob hlob hnov -- hais tias kuv txiv mob mob. eldest brother hear that 1SG father sickness sickness

(19) yog li nws thiaj li tuaj nrog kuv txiv nyob tau ib vas nthiv that is why 3SG consequently come with 1SG father live ATT one week thiab nws tuaj ua neeb kho kuv txiv tau ib vas nthiv. and 3SG come do jingle heal 1SG father ATT one week

(20) ces ua ua rau ces kuv txiv kuj has nyob then do repeatedly to then 1SG father consequently get a little better in tu zog lawm. not worse or better CP

(21) ces nws kuj tau hais rau kuv txiv hais tias nyob rau hauv then 3SG consequently ATT say to 1SG father that live to in naj loom ntaud ces yog raws neej tsa xwb. Nanglong there then COP live with in-laws only

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182 Glosses for thiaj and thiaj li are from Heimbach (1979:340).
183 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:88).
Then he took my father to live with him in his town, so he would have time to go find a shaman to come to heal my dad.

So, he took my dad and my mom with my youngest brothers and my youngest sister and left.

So, they went for a week; at that time my oldest brothers and I would live back home because we still had unhulled rice in the farm that still needed to be done.

Then that’s why we stayed so we could go finish the unhulled rice.
That’s why we stayed behind. We stayed behind for about a week, then we heard the bad news coming to us saying that my dad got a gun and killed my mom and she died.

Then he turned the gun against himself and killed himself.

Then both of them were dead forever in the town of Kiamana.

Then that’s why this news made me very sad and my brother and I cried.

---

184 Gloss relying on Heimbach (1979:316).
When my mom and dad died, our uncle came to take us children to go live with him. That’s why we moved out of Nanglong to go live with my uncle in Kiamana.

Then when we came to live there for only about six months, then the Vietnamese (soldiers) came and then we moved out of Kiamana to hide in the jungle.

At this time, it was the time when America—and the Vietnam War was going on—and they lost the war.

And America lost the war with Vietnam.
And they went back home and also the war in the country of Laos ended at that time too.

And also we got to go back home.

This time was the time that the Vietnamese were searching for those that served with America at that time to kill them.

And then therefore we had to move and hide in the jungle because my uncle was a captain working with General Vang Pao too.
Therefore, when we moved to live in the jungle for about six months to a year, then it was very hard because we had women and children with us hiding there in the jungle; we were very hungry because there was nothing to eat or drink.

Then my uncle said that those who are little and the old people who cannot walk should go back to town and surrender to the Vietnamese.

Then those that had strength and were able to walk, then they went to Thailand.

So when they had gone to Thailand, then we went and surrendered to the Vietnamese.

---

185 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:53).
Then, we stayed in the town of Kiamana for about one year. Then my brother sent people—there were some people returning—then he told them to take me and my sister—us—(and) go to Thailand.

So then, we got to Thailand.

Then, we made a decision not to stay there because that country is poor and there were wars going on.

That’s why we came here to America, because America is one of the countries that does not have war and it also has plenty to eat and drink.

So then we made the decision to interview to come here to America.

So, in the month of January we came to stay in Bangkok.

We came to stay there about a month, then, on February 24, 1980, we came to Nebraska.

We came to live there for five years.

Then we moved to live here in California.

---

187 My transcription here corrected from txiav tsis siav to match line 44, based in part on several sources (Heimbach (1979), Jarkey (2006), Xiong (2012)).
When we came to live here in California, then I finished my education here and got married here in Fresno.

Right now I have two children: one of them is named Toucheng, and the other one is named Youpheng, with my wife—her name is Choua Lee.

Right now, we live here in Fresno.

This is a little story about my life that I told Nathan.

---

188 Gloss based on “there-nearby” found in Jarkey (1991:42). Found here and below.
Appendix B

Procedural Text

(1) nyob zoo.
    hello

Hello.

(2) hnung no yog lub ob hlis ntuj vas nthiv nees ngaum plaub ob phay
    day this COP CLF two month sky week twenty four two thousand
    kaum plaub.
ten four

Today is February 24, 2014.

(3) Neb tee rov qab tuaj rau hauv kuv tsev thiab wb yuav sib tham
    Nathan go.back come to in 1SG house and 1DU POS.IRR RECP talk189
    me ntsis txog kev ua noj yog li hnung no qhov kuv txiav txim siab los mus
    little about way do eat so.then day this thing 1SG make.decision come go
    tham txog me ntsis yog tham txog kev ua qe noj.
talk about little COP talk about way do egg eat

Nathan came back to my house and we will talk a little bit about cooking, so then, today
I’m going to make a decision about how to cook eggs.

---

This is the Hmong way of how to cook eggs. First, you need to get some onion and slice it into thin (pieces), then, if you like ginger with it, you can get a little bit of ginger and crush it into very small pieces, and then you put it away.

Then, you get a pan and you get about two tablespoons of oil and put it into the pan.

And, you put the pan on the stove.

And then, you turn to Medium High.

Then, you wait for about twenty seconds until the oil is hot.

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190 Glosses for li rely on Heimbach (1979:111).
192 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:130).
(9) koj mam muab ob lub qe coj los tsoo tso rau hauv.
   2SG will\textsuperscript{193} get two CLF egg take come crush drop to in

Then, you get two eggs and break them and put them in there.

(10) ces koj muab tso rau hauv.
   then 2SG get drop to in

Them. you put them in there.

(11) ces koj tso me ntsis ntsev rau thib.
   then 2SG drop little salt to also

And then, you put a little salt in there.

(12) ces koj muab cov dos uas koj tsuav ntawd thiab cov qhiav koj tsoo
   then 2SG get CLF onion that 2SG chop there and CLF ginger 2SG crush
   ntawd muab tso rau hauv.
   there get drop to in

Then, you put the onions that you chopped there, and the ginger that you minced, put in there.

(13) ces koj mam li muab do rau kom zoo zoo tib si tas.
   then 2SG need get stir to so.that good good together finish

Then, you will need to stir until it is mixed really well.

(14) ces thaum koj muab do tas lau, ces koj li about ib na thi
   then when 2SG get stir done EP\textsuperscript{194} then 2SG about one minute
   li tej ntawd.
   around there

Then when you are done stirring, then you wait for about a minute or so.

\textsuperscript{193} Glosses for mam and mam li in line with Xiong (2014).
\textsuperscript{194} The treatment of this particle as an ‘exclamatory particle’ is based in part on Jay Yang’s description of it. Mottin (1978:146) provides a description of a particle lauj, for which he describes its range of meaning as including “very great joy, surprise.” These are likely the same particle.
Then, you watch the eggs. If you like to eat them well-done, then you need to make it well-done.

(16) thiab si li kuv no ces kuv tsuas nyiam noj kom siav kiag xwb.
    but as 1SG this then 1SG only\(^{195}\) like eat so.that well-done really only
But for me, I only like to eat them just right.

(17) ces køj ua li ntawd ces nws zoo qab dua rau kuv.
    then 2SG do about there then 3SG good taste.good more\(^{196}\) to 1SG
Then you do it this way, it tastes better to me.

(18) qhov ntawv lau køj ua tas , ntawm no ces køj muab coj los mus
    thing paper EP 2SG do done right.here then 2SG get take come go
tso , hai ib tais mov thiab køj muab coj qe ntawd tso rau saum toj cov
drop say one plate rice and 2SG get CLF egg there drop to over CLF
mov ces køj mam li noj mas zoo nkaus li qab kawg li .
rice then 2SG may eat IP\(^{197}\) good look.like taste.good very\(^{198}\)
This is when you are done here, then you scoop it out, and put the eggs on top of the rice.
And you may eat, it looks really good.

(19) ces kuv qhia li no rau køj paub hai tias ua qe hmoob yog ua
    then 1SG teach like this to 2SG know that do egg Hmong COP do
li cas .
how\(^{199}\)
Then, I’m letting you know how to make Hmong eggs.

\(^{195}\) Gloss corroborated by Heimbach (1979:359).
\(^{196}\) Gloss following Mottin (1978:56).
\(^{197}\) Gloss following Fuller (1988).
\(^{198}\) Gloss following Mottin (1978:110).
\(^{199}\) Gloss following Mottin (1978:64, 67).
(20) ces tas li no lawm xwb.
    then finish like\textsuperscript{200} this CP indeed\textsuperscript{201}

And this is the end.

(21) ua tsaug.
    thank you

Thank you.

\textsuperscript{200} Gloss relying in part on Heimbach (1979:111).
\textsuperscript{201} Gloss following Strecker & Vang (1986:5).
Appendix C

Hortatory Text

(1) Nyob zoo .
   hello

Hello.

(2) Ib tsoom niam txiv kwv tij neej tsa hmov thiab tshua ntawm no kuv yog
    everybody mother father brothers in-laws all.my.beloved right here 1SG COP
xib fwb txawj zeb yaj .
Teacher Txawj Zeb Yang

All my beloved, this is Teacher Tzerge Yang.

(3) kuv yog tus yuav tuaj muab Vaj Tswv txoj lus rau peb sawv daws sib
    1SG COP CLF POS.IRR come get God word to 1PL everyone RECP202
cog mloog nyob rau lub caij lub nyoog no .
bring listen in to at this.time.and.hour this

I am the one that will come to preach to you at this time.

(4) kuv vaj thiab cia siab hais tias nej sawv daws yuav koom nrog kuv
    1SG hope and let liver that 2PL203 everyone POS.IRR join with 1SG
thiab nrog kuv nyob es peb sib cog kawm Vaj Tswv txoj lus seb
and with 1SG in and 1SG RECP bring learn God word whether
Vaj Tswv txoj lus hais li cas rau peb es peb thiaj li yuav paub coj
God word say what to 1PL and 1PL consequently POS.IRR know take
los ua peb lub neej kom muaj nuj qis nyob rau ntawm Vaj Tswv .
come do 1PL CLF life so that have important in to there God

I hope that you will join with me and stay with me so we can learn the word of God
together, to see what God’s word means to us so we know that it’s important to live our
lives according to God.

203 Gloss supported by Mottin (1978:44).
Today I will preach God’s word on the title of “Everything Starts with God.”

If you have the word of God, please, I invite you to get the word of God and open to Colossians chapter 1, verse 16, so we can read together to see what the word of God says to us so we can learn and respond together.

In Colossians chapter 1, verse 16, this is what it says: [Text read from Colossians 1:16]

All my brothers and sisters, what did God’s word say to us in Colossians chapter 1, verse 16?

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204 Gloss from “Hmong Dictionary Online by James B Xiong.”
205 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:53).
God’s word told us that God is the creator of all things, the things that are in the sky, and also things here on earth, and the things that the eye can see, and the things that the eye cannot see, all the gods, and also those that are powerful.

(10) Vaj Tswv yog tus tsim ib puas tsav yam.

God COP CLF create everything.

God is the creator of all things.

(11) Yog li qhov ntawd qhia rau peb hais tias txhua yam tsav nyob hauv lub so thing there tell to 1PL that each type kind in in CLF ntiaj teb no tsis yog av luaj dag tawg es cia li tsim muaj los xwb tiam sis earth this NEG COP come.by.itself so let as create have come only but nws yeej muaj ib tug tswv yog tus tsim ib puas tsav yam ntawd tsis 3SG certainly have one CLF lord COP CLF create everything there NEG tas li ntawd xwb txawm yog peb los Vaj Tswv yog tus tsim peb huv finish about there only even COP 1PL come God COP CLF create 1PL all tib si thiab yom.

together and TAG.

So this tells us that all the things in this world did not just come up by themselves, but there is a God who created all things—not just those things, but us also, OK?

---

207 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:56).
208 Gloss and treatment based on Xiong (2014).
209 Gloss from Xiong (2014).
210 Gloss following Xiong (2014).
211 Gloss corroborated by Heimbach (1979:429).
(12) Yog li ib tsoom niam txiv kwv tij neej tsa sawv daws, yog hai s tias so everybody mother father brothers in-laws everyone COP that koj thia b kuv peb tis ntseeg los sis tsis paub hai s tias Vaj Tsiv tis sim 2SG and 1SG 1PL NEG believe or NEG know that God create ib puas tsav yam cai peb yuav saib peb lub neej tsis muaj nuj nqis everything then212 1PL POS.IRR look at 1PL CLF life NEG have important thia b peb yuav saib ib puas tsav yam hauv lub nti a j teb no tsis muaj and 1PL POS.IRR watch everything in CLF earth this NEG have nuj nqis dab tsi rau peb hlo li. important what to 1PL at.all

So, all my brothers and sisters, if, you and I, we do not believe or know that God created all things, then we will look at our lives as not important, and we will look at all things here on earth as not important at all.

(13) Yog hai s tias tham zoo li no lawm cai peb yuav tsis paub hlub COP that when good as here CP then 1PL POS.IRR NEG know love thia b txuag ib puas tsav yam uas tshwm sim nyob rau hauv lub nti a j teb no . and take care everything that appear in to in CLF earth here

When we see things like this, then we will not know how to love and take care of all the things that appear here on earth.

(14) Peb yuav muab siv ua lwj ua liam pov tseg kom tag rau peb 1PL POS.IRR get use213 do run do ruin214 throw away so that finish to 1PL hnub no xwb.

day this only

We will waste all these things, just on ourselves, only for today.

---

212 Mr. Yang glossed the word cais as ‘then’ in two other locations, consulting an unknown source when glossing the second of these two others (in line 30); none of my sources had this gloss for cais, however. This gloss is applied here as well, based on the free translation.
213 Gloss supported by Heimbach (1979:295).
214 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:113).
(15) Peb tsis pom tag kis hais tias muaj nuj nqis dab tsi ntxiv rau koj
IPL NEG see tomorrow that have important what anymore\textsuperscript{215} to 2SG thiab rau kuv peb lawm.
and to 1SG 1PL CP

We cannot see that tomorrow is important to you or me—us—anymore.

(16) Ib tsoom niam txiv kwv tij neej tsa kuv xav kom koj thiab kuv peb
everybody mother father brothers in-laws 1SG want PC 2SG and 1SG 1PL paub zoo li no hais tias lub hom phiaj uas peb los nyob rau hauv ntiaj teb know good as here that CLF purpose that 1PL come live to in earth no tsis yog rau peb tus kheej nyob ib pliag xwb nawb mog.
this NEG COP to 1PL CLF self live one moment\textsuperscript{216} only TAG

My brothers and sisters, I really want you and me to understand that the purpose for which we live in this world is not just to live for ourselves only temporarily, OK?

(17) Vaj Tsvw lub hom phiaj rau peb lub neej nws zoo tshaj txhua yam
God CLF purpose to 1PL CLF life 3SG good more\textsuperscript{217} each type tsav uas nyob rau hauv peb lub neej uas peb niaj hhub ua nov.
kind that in to in 1PL CLF life that 1PL every\textsuperscript{218} day do this

God’s purpose for our lives is much better than what we have everyday here (on earth).

(18) nws zoo tshaj peb tsev neeg , nws zoo tshaj peb lub hom phiaj thiab peb
3SG good more 1PL family 3SG good more 1PL CLF purpose and 1PL lub hwj chim uas peb niaj hhub ua npauv suav xav yuav xav tau nyob rau CLF glory that 1PL every day do dream think want think get in to yav pem ntej.
in.the.future

It’s better than our family. It’s better than our purpose and our glory that we dream of having in our lives in the future.

\textsuperscript{215} Gloss from Heimbach (1979:212).
\textsuperscript{216} Gloss from Heimbach (1979:251).
\textsuperscript{217} Gloss following Mottin (1978:56).
\textsuperscript{218} Gloss confirmed by Heimbach (1979:140).
If we want to know why we came to live in this world, we must start searching for ourselves in God.

Because God created us for him and for his purpose, and it is not for our purpose, OK?

If we look only in ourselves, we won’t be able to find it, because we are not created for our purpose.

---

We are searching for our purpose in life everyday in this world. What is it that we are looking for—for so many years and so many generations—that we cannot find and have no knowledge of?

Why is that, brothers and sisters?

Because we are searching in the wrong place—that’s why we cannot find it or have no knowledge of it—why we came to live in this world.

This is how we start searching for our purpose: we search in ourselves first.

---

220 Gloss corroborated by Heimbach (1979:319).
221 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:2).
222 Gloss following treatment for ho ‘so’ above.
We are asking ourselves like this: “What do I really want to do?"

What do I really want my life to be?

What are my goals or my dreams for my future?”

If we’re searching only in ourselves, then let me tell you, we won’t be able to find it.

This is what God’s word said: God is the one who controls our lives and God is the one who controls all things that have life in this world, in Job chapter 12, verse 10.
(31) yog li kuv xav kom peb nkag siab rau nqi vaj lu kub no hais tias
so 1SG want PC 1PL understand\textsuperscript{227} to verse Bible this say that
Vaj Tswv yog tus ua ib puas tsav yam ntawd.
God COP CLF do everything that
So, I would like us to understand this Bible verse that says that God is the one who
created all things.

(32) yog li peb yuav tsum los nrhiav ntawm nws xwb peb thiaj li nrhiav
so 1PL must come search there 3SG only 1PL consequently search
tau peb lub hom phiaj.
ATT 1PL CLF purpose
So, we must search in God in order for us to find our purpose.

(33) twb yeej muaj ntau phau ntawv, ntau liab nam thiab ntau
already certainly have many book many CLF\textsuperscript{228} movie and many
lub rooj cob qhia rau peb hais tias peb yeej nrhiav tsis tau peb lub
CLF conference to 1PL say that 1PL certainly search NEG can 1PL CLF
hom phiaj ntawm peb lub neeg los ntawm peb tus kheej ib zaug hlo li.
purpose there 1PL CLF person come there 1PL CLF self one time at all
Already there are many books, many movies, and many teaching conferences for us that
we absolutely cannot search our purpose of our lives in ourselves at all.

(34) Tej zaum peb twb muaj coob tug sim tas lawm.
maybe 1PL already have many CLF try\textsuperscript{229} done CP
Maybe we have many people who have tried it already.

\textsuperscript{227} Gloss and treatment following Heimbach (1979:151).
\textsuperscript{228} The gloss here is uncertain. It follows Jay Yang’s tendency to gloss classifiers as “the,” as he did with
\textit{liab} here.
\textsuperscript{229} Gloss following Heimbach (1979:294), Jarkey (2006:133).
We are not the ones who created us. How can we find our purpose in ourselves?

Let’s take a look at one individual who created a knife or an axe or a hoe.

What did he create all those things for?

He created an axe for chopping trees, splitting wood.

That is its purpose, so that he created an axe for it.

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230 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:5).
231 Gloss confirmed by Heimbach (1979:274).
(40) Nws tsim rab hlau yog los ncaw ab thiab los khaw nroj los ua 
   3SG create CLF hoe COP come till soil and come dig up weed come do 
   tej yam ntawd .
   that kind this

He created a hoe to till soil and to dig up weeds, and that’s the kind of job that it does.

(41) yog li nws lub hom phiaj nws tsim rab hlau los ua qhov ntawd . 
   so 3SG CLF purpose 3SG create CLF hoe come do thing that

So its purpose that the creator created the hoe for is to do that kind of job.

(42) yog li rab hlau tshwm sim vim tus tswv uas tsim rab hlau ntawd nws 
   so CLF hoe appear because CLF lord that create CLF hoe there 3SG 
   muaj lub hom phiaj rau rab hlau ntawd . 
   have CLF purpose for CLF hoe this

So, the hole exists because the Lord who created this hoe—he has a purpose for this hoe.

(43) yog vim li cas Vaj Tswv tsim peb ? 
   COP because what God create 1PL

Why does God create us?

(44) rau qhov vim Vaj Tswv tsim peb los rau nws lub hom phiaj . 
   because God create 1PL come for 3SG CLF purpose

Because God created us for his purpose.

(45) nws yeej muaj lub hom phiaj zoo rau koj thiab kuv peb . 
   3SG certainly have CLF purpose good for 2SG and 1SG 1PL

He has a good purpose for you and me—us.
So, God created us for his purpose only.

So, you and I—we—cannot find our purpose in ourselves because we are not the one who created us.

We do not have a purpose.

How can we find this purpose (in ourselves)?

So, God’s word says in Job chapter 12, 10, that: [quote from Job 12:10]

So, we have to start searching for ourselves in God, because God is the one who created us for his purpose.
(52) qhov uas peb tshwm sim los ua neeg nyob rau hauv lub ntiaj teb no ,
thing that 1PL appear come do person in to in CLF earth here
vim twb yog Vaj Tswv tsim peb thiaj li muaj peb .
because already COP God create 1PL consequently have 1PL

How we came about in this world is because God is the one who created us to be here.

(53) Vaj Tswv yog tus tsim peb thiab nws tsim peb los rau lub hom phiaj
God COP CLF create 1PL and 3SG create 1PL come for CLF purpose
uas nws muaj ntawd .
that 3SG have here

God is the one who created us and he created us for the purpose that he has.

(54) tsis yog rau peb lub hom phiaj yog hais tias peb tsis nkag siab zoo li
NEG COP to 1PL CLF purpose COP that 1PL NEG understand good like
no ces peb yeej tsis paub lub hom phiaj uas peb los ua nyob rau
this then 1PL certainly NEG know CLF purpose that 1PL come do in to
hauv lub ntiaj teb no yog dab tsi hlo li nawb mog , peb cov niam txiv
in CLF earth this COP what at.all TAG 1PL CLF mother father
kwv tij neej tsa e
brothers in-laws PPART233

It is not for our own purpose; if we do not understand this, then we won’t know what we
came to live in this world for. OK, my brothers and sisters?

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233 Gloss here based on treatment of es ‘PPART’ above.
The way for us to find our purpose in life and the way that we are going, we must start searching only in God so that we will know where we are supposed to go, what is really our purpose.

All the roads in this world won’t be able to help us to know our purpose why we came to live in this world.

I have read many books to help my life.

Every book that I read, they all teach me how to search for my life the same way.

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235 Gloss here relying on Heimbach (1979:419).
These books taught me that I will have to look at my dreams to see which one I like more.

I must take all my dreams and write them down to see what my dream really is.

I need to see what I know how to do.

I must believe that I will be able to do this, then, continue to do this, do not lose hope, and one day you will be able to have your dream the way you always wanted and wanted to have.

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236 Mr. Yang may have obtained this gloss from an outside source, or read material from an outside source and thought of this gloss; in either case, none of my sources contained it.

Those books that are in this world, it all teaches you about all these things (dreams).

I did not mean that all these books cannot help me.

All these teachings, maybe it will be able to help you to become successful if you’re willing to commit yourself to doing it.

My brothers, if we want to have money, then we must commit ourselves to working really hard day and night, seven days and seven nights. Then we will have money.
If we want to become a doctor, then we aspire to learn, (then) we will become one.

But what I bring to preach to us tonight or today or in this hour, it is not about the success in this world or in our life here.

What I’m talking about: what really is the purpose that God created you and me—us—to live in this world for.

This is it! It is what I want to take you and me—us—into discussion about what I was saying before.
This is not about the success in yourself in this world.

Because the purpose that makes your life a success in this world and the purpose why you are in this world are different—not the same. OK, my brothers?

I want us to know like this so that we know to search for our purpose in God.

Even you and I, we already have a successful life in this world now, but we still don’t know why God created us to live in this world.

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239 Gloss from Heimbach (1979:85).
(75) Vaj Tsvv txoj lus hais li no tias : [quote from Matthew 16:26].

God word say like this that

This is what God’s word says: [quote from Matthew 16:26].

(76) nyob rau hauv ma thais tshooj kaum rau nqi nee nkaum rau hais li no in to in Matthew chapter ten six verse twenty six say like this.

In Matthew chapter 16, verse 26, it says like this.

(77) nqi vaj lub kub no tau hais tias yog peb nrhiav peb lub hom phiaj ntawm verse Bible this ATT say that COP 1PL search 1PL CLF purpose there peb tus kheej xwb peb yeej nrhiav tsis tau li nwb mog . 1PL CLF self only 1PL certainly search NEG can/ATT TAG

This Scripture has said that we cannot find our purpose in ourselves. We will not be able to find it. OK?

(78) peb yuav tsum los nrhiav ntawm Vaj Tsvv t xo j kev xwb peb thiaj li 1PL must come search there God CLF way only 1PL consequently yuav nrhiav tau peb tus kheej thiab qhov tseeb ntawm peb tus kheej . POS.IRR search can/ATT 1PL CLF self and thing240 true241 there 1PL CLF self

We must search only God’s way so that we can find ourselves and the truth about ourselves.

240 Gloss following Mottin (1978:25).
241 Gloss following Heimbach (1979:350).
This is it, my brothers! What I’m teaching today or at this time for you and me and us to learn is not the same as what the books of this world teach you—how to find a good job for you, help you fulfill your dreams, teach you how to help prepare for your life in this world.

I’m not trying to teach you to find another burden for your life.

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242 Mr. Yang originally gave this word as nra, though after checking an outside source, he decided on nras. This appears to be a case of tone sandhi in any case (following Jarkey 1991:25, Mottin 1978:18, etc.). Heimbach (1979:173) glosses nra as ‘goods, baggage’—a clear match.
(81) tiam sis qhov kuv qhia hnub no los sis hmo no los sis lub sij hawm but thing 1SG teach day this or evening this or CLF time no yog qhia hais tias peb yuav nrhiav li cas thiaj li paub nrhiav lub this COP teach that 1PL POS.IRR search how consequently know search CLF nras kom sib los rau peb lub neej los ntawm kev saib seb burden so.that light come to 1PL CLF life come there NMLZ look.at whatever yam twg yog yam tseem keeb tsaj es ua yam ntawd mus xwb. type which COP type important more then do type that243 go only

But what I’m teaching you today or this evening or at this time is teaching us how to find a lighter burden for our lives by looking at which one is the more important thing, then do that one only.

(82) txhob mus lob yam ub yam no yam pev yam nrav los rau NEG.IRR go grab type this type this type over.there type over.here come to peb tus kheej. 1PL CLF self

Don’t go grab things from here and there, over there and over here, for ourselves.

(83) qhov ntawd nws yuav ua lub nras hnyav thiab yuav ua thing that 3SG POS.IRR do CLF burden heavy and POS.IRR do kev nyuab siab rau peb nyob rau hauv lub ntaij teb no. trouble to 1PL live to in CLF earth this

These things, it will make a heavy burden and will make troubles for us to live in this world.

(84) yog qhia kom peb paub ua peb lub neej los sis ua ib tug neeg COP teach PC 1PL know do 1PL CLF life or do one CLF person raws li Vaj Tswv lub hom phiay uas nws tsim peb los ua neeg nyob according.to God CLF purpose that 3SG create 1PL come do person live rau hauv lub ntaij teb no xwb. to in CLF earth this only

It is teaching us to know our lives or to become a person according to God’s purpose alone, for which he created us to live in this world.

243 Gloss following Heimbach (1979:186).
So, what do we need to do so that we know about our purpose why God created us to live in this world?

What is really the purpose in our lives that God created us to live in this world for?

The easiest way is to go back to the one who created us—he will know why.

God does not let us stay in the dark knowing nothing at all, and does not let us think that our lives are just like this or like that.
God has taught us the truth about five types of purpose in our lives in God’s word which is the Bible.

In the word of God, it teaches us why we are able to live, how we will live our lives, which one is the one that we must not do, and what he has waiting for us in the future.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 7, it says like that.

He is not only the starting point of life, but he is the founder of life.

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244 Gloss is Mr. Yang’s original, which is corroborated as “spoken truth” in Heimbach (1979:350).
(94) **yog peb xav paub txog peb lub hom phiaj ntawm peb lub neej hais tias COP 1PL want know about 1PL CLF purpose there 1PL CLF life that yog vim li cas peb ho los nyob hauv lub ntiaj teb no peb yuav tsum los COP because what 1PL so come live in CLF earth this 1PL must come nrhiav ntawm Vaj Tswv uas yog tus tsim peb nawb mog cov kwv tij . search there God that COP CLF create 1PL TAG CLF brothers**

If we want to know about our purpose in our lives—why we are here in this world—we must come search in God, the one who created us, my brothers.

(95) **peb tsis txhob mus nrhiav ntawm neeg lub tswv yim . 1PL NEG NEG.IRR go search there person CLF wisdom**

We shouldn’t go search in the wisdom of man.

(96) **peb yuav tsum ua peb lub neej nyob rau ntawm txoj kev tseeb uas nyob 1PL must do 1PL CLF life live to there NMLZ true that lives tas mus ib txhis tsis zoo li neeg ntiaj teb lub tswv yim es nyob ib pliag forever NEG like person earth CLF wisdom so245 live temporarily xwb . only**

We must live our lives in the truth that lives forever, not like the wisdom of man in this world that lives only temporarily.

(97) **thaum muaj tus neeg txawj tshiab los ces nws yuav hais tias yog when have CLF person educated new come then 3SG POS.IRR that COP li no lawm .**

When there is a new educated person coming, then he will say that it is like this now.

(98) **Vaj Tswv txoj lus hais li no ntxiv : [ quote from Ephesians 1:11]. God word say about this add**

In addition, this is what God’s word says: [quote from Ephesians 1:11].

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245 Gloss from Xiong (2014).
In Ephesians chapter 1, verse 11, (it) says like this.

In this Bible verse here, it has three meanings to teach us.

The first meaning: we must be able to search ourselves and our purpose by having a good relationship with Jesus Christ.

Here is the second meaning: God already knew us before we knew him.

God already prepared our lives and our purpose when we did not yet exist.

The third meaning says like this: God’s purpose for us is bigger than what we think and want.
God’s purpose is for us to have life with him forever.

This is it!

My brothers, this is the purpose that God wants you and me—to have and is what God created us to live in this world here for.

So, I do not want you and me—to go search for our lives in ourselves or our purpose in ourselves everyday.

But, we must search in God. So, we know that our purpose is in God.
(110) los sis peb lub hom phiaj yog dab tsi tiag tiag .
or 1PL CLF purpose COP what really

Or we know what is really our purpose.

(111) nawb mog .
TAG

OK?

(112) Es kuv vam thiab siab hais tias nej sawv daws yuav nkag siab zoos es and 1SG hope that 2PL everyone POS.IRR understand good and nej yuav muab qhov no coj los ua ib txoj kev rau nej npaj nej lub 2PL POS.IRR get thing this take come do one CLF way to 2PL prepare 2PL CLF neeg nyob rau hauv lub ntiaj teb no nawb mog .

person live to in CLF earth this TAG

And I hope that everyone will understand well and will take this as one way to prepare your lives here in this world. OK?

(113) Es yog li thov Vaj Tswv nrog nrain nej thiab thov Vaj Tswv and so please God with 2PL and please God pub koob hmoob nej cov uas nej koom nrog kuv nyob rau lub sj hawm no .
bless 2PL CLF that 2PL join with 1SG in to CLF time this

And may God be with you and may God bless you—those that join with me at this hour.

(114) Es peb mam li rov sib ntsib dua nawb mog yog Vaj Tswv tsis tau and 1PL will return meeting again TAG COP God NEG ATT los .
come

And we will meet again—OK?—if God has not come.

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246 Mr. Yang found the gloss ‘hope’ for vam in an outside source, and decided that ‘hope’ best matched the full phrase here. The gloss for vam as ‘hope’ is corroborated by Jarkey (2006:133).