Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample Group

The collection of data was limited due to the government restrictions placed upon foreigners. I was not able to travel to Southern Chin State, so my sample group was restricted to Hkongso speakers that were currently living in or visiting Yangon. One result of this sampling was that all of my participants were between the ages of 18 and 41.

In the course of the research I felt that it would be beneficial to include participants that were over 60 to compare syntactic usage across generations. To fulfill this need, my research assistant traveled to the Hkongso area and interviewed 5 participants aged 60 to 70.

In descriptive linguistics skewing can occur if participants have lived outside of the area for a significant period or if their mother or father spoke a different first language. Because of these reasons and the restrictions on the sampling method, detailed questions about where the participants had lived, where their parents were born, and what language their parents spoke with them were included in each interview, allowing the researcher to account for possible skewing in the data (see Appendix A).

3.2 Instruments for Data Collection and Quality Checking

Chelliah and de Reuse (2010: 361) identify two main types of elicitation, schedule-controlled elicitation and analysis-controlled elicitation. As an analysis of

the structures already exists, I used analysis-controlled elicitation. An important note in either type of elicitation is that the instrument of elicitation is never perfect, and the actual elicitation may drift away from the original as analysis dictates change. Therefore, it is good to view schedules as guidelines, rather than strict rules to follow and be prepared with contingency plans. This was one benefit to having had others analyze the research instrument beforehand. They identified possible deviations from the plan and helped form contingencies.

More specifically, I used target language manipulation elicitation. In this type of elicitation, "some word or structure of the target language is manipulated, and the consultant is asked to react to it, or correct it" (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 370). Minor types of elicitation under this that I used are listed below.

1. I used a type of word-list based elicitation (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 370) by taking from previous research (Wright 2009) words marking or triggering complementation and asked the language consultant to create new sentences using those words. I then analyzed the forms that they created and asked follow up questions as needed.

2. Fieldworker-driven transformational elicitation – "In this method, the fieldworker begins with a sentence in the target language and modifies it in some way, such as moving a constituent. Then the fieldworker asks for a grammaticality judgment, or asks about the pragmatic situation where the "changed" sentence can be used, and asks about any socio-linguistic details" (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 373). This method enabled me to ask follow up questions from the word-list based elicitation. I also prepared several sentences taken from natural texts (Ancillary/Text Based Elicitation) to do this type of elicitation. Problems arising from this method include contrived sentences and the difficulty of judging grammaticality. I used natural text examples to avoid

26

contrived sentences. I also minimized grammaticality judgment skewing by initially training my research assistant and asking less intrusive questions, such as "Have you ever heard a Hkongso speaker say it this way?" and "How would it sound to you if someone said it like this?"

3.   Paradigmatic substitution elicitation – This is where a fieldworker "deletes a word or constituent from the sentence, and asks for another word or constituent that can fit that slot" (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 371). I used this method to test the constituency of the set of words previously analyzed as the complement clause.

I purposefully created the research instrument with more questions than needed. This allowed me to use the first interviews as a pilot study to judge how long each section and each question would take and then narrow the questions to an amount that the participants could answer in 60-90 minutes. Any longer might have caused mental fatigue which may have skewed the data. This also allowed me to take into account the ability of the participants. Some went much faster through the questions than others. Therefore, some questions were not completed on the individual research instruments and the number of questions answered are not the same on each questionnaire. See Appendix A for the research instrument.

3.3 Procedure of Data Collection Based on the Research Plan

I took the following steps in carrying out the research.

1.   I printed off the questionnaires, which began with the biographical information about the language resource person (LRP). I had my research assistant (RA) write the biographical information for the LRP in English as she/he dictated the information in Hkongso. My RA then used Hkongso to inform the LRP about

27

what we were doing and how we would use the information, and then asked if they gave their consent for us to use the data in research papers and presentations.

2.   After the biographical data came the elicitation of sentences using words marking or triggering complementation. My RA explained in Burmese and Hkongso what would happen in the elicitation and discussion section. I interjected from time to time in Burmese and Hkongso with additional information. Then my RA led the elicitation using Hkongso and wrote the elicited sentences on the questionnaire in Hkongso while I recorded the sentences. I did this as I wanted the LRP to be focused on speaking. The language has not been written for long and writing adds another complication to the grammaticality judgment process.

3.   After recording the elicited sentences, we then did the transformation elicitation of the sentences the LRP produced and substitution elicitation. I led this using Burmese and Hkongso with my RA making any clarifications necessary in Hkongso.

4.   Finally, we did transformation and substitution elicitation on the sentences I collected from natural texts in the same way.

5.   After the elicitation session, the LRP left and I went through the elicited sentences with my RA to write out the free translations in English.

As mentioned before, I felt that it would be beneficial to include participants that were over 60. So, once the initial research was completed, the research assistant traveled to the Hkongso area with questionnaires and a voice recording device to carry out interviews with participants from 60 to 70 years old. Once collected this information was sent to the head researcher via email.

All data collected from the interviews has been interlinearized by the head researcher and the research assistant, and the head researcher entered the data into the computer via Fieldworks.

This research also includes information from three new Hkongso texts. These were recorded from one of the participants in the study.[9] He is a Hkongso speaker well known for his storytelling ability. The research assistant then interlinearized the data and the head researcher entered the data into the computer via Fieldworks, checking the lexical meanings for consistency with preexisting data.

3.4 Data Analysis and Statistics

All data was entered into Fieldworks by the head researcher and then analyzed to answer the research questions. From the 14 participants 193 sentences were elicited. Out of these sentences 159 contained complementation.[10] The totals for each participant are listed in Table 3.4.1.

---

[9] This occurred while I was in the room. Dr. Larin Adams pointed out that speakers might tell a story differently if an outsider is present. In the future I will test this hypothesis and employ the method that produces the most natural text.

[10] This difference comes from the elicitation method, which was to request an example sentence using words that the researcher knew to trigger complementation, such as tʰaŋˊ 'to think' and tukˊ 'to know'. No translation was involved, allowing the participant to create sentences with or without complementation.

29

Table 3.4.1 Number of sentences with complementation

Participant	Total sentences[11]	Sentences with complementation	Sentence with direct report
1	27	20	0
2	13	11	0
3	14	7	0
4	13	11	0
5	19	14	0
6	10	9	1
7	10	8	0
8	12	10	0
9	10	8	0
10	11	12	0
11	14	14	0
12	12	12	0
13	14	11	0
14	13	12	0
Totals	193	159	1

Out of these, 146 sentences contained preverbal complementation and 13 had post-verbal complementation. Of the 146 preverbal complementation sentences, 98 examples also contained a complementizer. The 13 post-verbal complementation sentences contained no complementizer. These numbers are shown in Table 3.4.2.

---

[11] The research instrument in Appendix A has a potential for 44 sentences per participant. The variance occurs because the instrument was narrowed down during elicitation to what could be done in 60-90 minutes. Also, each participant produced examples at varying speeds. Some took much longer than others.

Table 3.4.2 Complementation statistics

Participant	+ Complementation	+ Complementizer	- Complementizer	Preverbal Complementation	Postverbal complementation	Preverbal with a complementizer	Preverbal without a complementizer	Postverbal with a complementizer	Postverbal without a complementizer
1	20	14	6	18	2	14	4	0	2
2	11	7	4	11	0	7	4	0	0
3	7	5	2	7	0	5	2	0	0
4	11	10	1	11	0	10	1	0	0
5	14	10	4	11	3	10	1	0	3
6	9	8	1	9	0	8	1	0	0
7	8	5	3	6	2	5	1	0	2
8	10	3	7	9	1	3	6	0	1
9	8	3	5	7	1	3	4	0	1
10	12	7	5	12	0	7	5	0	0
11	14	7	7	13	1	7	6	0	1
12	12	6	6	10	2	6	4	0	2
13	12	8	4	11	1	8	3	0	1
14	11	5	6	11	0	5	6	0	0
Total	159	101	58	146	13	98	48	0	13
Percent of total	-	64%	36%	92%	8%	62%	30%	0%	8%

To summarize Table 3.4.2, 92% of sentences with complementation contained preverbal complement clauses. Also, 62% of sentences with complementation had preverbal complementation with a complementizer.

31

Table 3.4.1 and Table 3.4.2 do not discuss the position of the complementizer relative to the complement clause. This is because there is no variation to the order of complement clause followed by the complementizer, namely SComp. There is one example that seems to go against this. At first glance example (35) seems to show the matrix verb followed by the subordinator and the complement clause after that. However, the topic marker follows the complementizer. This reveals a subordination strategy that has not been seen in previous data on Hkongso. The subordinator *mi?l* is functioning as a nominalizer and then the matrix clause is topicalized by the topic marker with the clause following, creating a topic-comment construction.[12]

(35) aŋ˧   kəko˧ mi?˧ cə˦   kəmai˧ faŋ˦ ra˧   həm˦
     1sg   think LNK TOP today rain come IRR
     'I'm thinking…today it will rain.'

This study also collected three natural texts, to analyze for complementation patterns (see Appendix C). In the texts there were 9 instances of complementation, as shown in Table 3.4.3. Complementation in the natural texts was more restricted than in the elicited examples. All sentences in the texts contained preverbal complementation. Seven sentences contained a complementizer following the complement clause. Two sentences contained complementation with no complementizer. Fifteen sentences contained direct quotes without a complementizer.

---

[12] This is a strategy commonly seen in Burmese. The participant who gave the example has spent more time in Yangon than any other Hkongso speaker. Therefore, I posit that contact with Burmese is the reason for this construction.

32

Table 3.4.3 Complementation in natural texts

Text	Type	Instances of complementation	Direct quotes	Type
1	Prayer	2		Preverbal with complementizer (SComp)
2	Story	2		Preverbal with complementizer (SComp)
			6	Preverbal, no Comp (direct quotes)
3	Story	3		Preverbal with complementizer (SComp)
		2		Preverbal, no Comp
			9	Preverbal, no Comp (direct quotes)
Total		9	15	

Besides the elicitation of sentences and the collection and analysis of natural texts, I also used paradigmatic substitution elicitation and fieldworker-driven transformational elicitation to manipulate a sentence from a natural text and observe the participants' responses (see Section 3.2). To do this I began with example (36), removed the verb and the object from the subordinate clause, and presented the participants with example (37) for them to fill in the slot. Every participant did this quickly and easily, answering by filling in with a verb or a verb followed by an object, as in (38) and (39).

33

(36) kəak˥ cə?˩ kʰam˩ tuɨ˩ həm˥ mi?˥ kətʰip˩ təo˦

crow SUBJ drink water IRR LNK go.down stream

'The crow went down to the stream to drink water.'

(37) kəak˥ cə?˩ _____ həm˥ mi?˥ kətʰip˩ təo˦

crow SUBJ IRR LNK go.down stream

'The crow went down to the stream to _____.'

(38) kəak˥ cə?˩ kəɬe˥ həm˥ mi?˥ kətʰip˩ təo˦

crow SUBJ play IRR LNK go.down stream

'The crow went down to the stream to play.'

(39) kəak˥ cə?˩ hau˦ ləmcak˩ həm˥ mi?˥ kətʰip˩ təo˦

crow SUBJ look.for food IRR LNK go.down stream

'The crow went down to the stream to look for food.'

After this I asked the participants using Burmese and my RA using Hkongso, "What happens if we move the _____ həm˥ mi?˥? Do Hkongso people speak that way? If so, how does the meaning change?" I also asked, "What happens if we leave off həm˥ mi?˥? If we do, will the order stay the same or would it need to change? Does the meaning change?"[13] The participant's responded using words from the particular sentences we were looking at. In order to simplify the data and coordinate their responses, I summarized their responses using technical terms in Table 3.4.4.

---

[13] Due to the limitations discussed in Section 1.5, my research assistant had to conduct the interviews with participants 10-14. He simply stated that each participant replied that the complement clause could be moved to the front but could not be moved behind the matrix verb.

Table 3.4.4 Fieldworker-driven transformational elicitation responses

Participant	Can we move the ____ həm˥ mi˥˥ (complement clause) to the front?	Can we move the ____ həm˥ mi˥˥ (complement clause) behind the matrix verb?	Can we remove the _ həm˥ mi˥˥ (complementizer)?
1	Yes	No	Not unless we remove the matrix verb.
2	It is okay.	Not possible.	Not possible.
3	It is okay.	Not possible	Maybe in a poem.
4	Yes. If we do, the subject does not need the topic marker.	No.	Only if we remove the matrix verb as well.
5	Yes. We could then mark the complement clause with the topic marker.	No.	Not unless we remove the matrix verb as well.
6	Yes, but we need to remove the topic marker from the subject.	No.	If we do the actions sound sequential. We should remove the matrix verb if we remove the complementizer.
7	Yes	No	We can't remove it. Unless, we remove the matrix verb.
8	Yes, but is better if we keep the topic marker on the complement clause if we do that.	It could come after if we background the information in the matrix verb.	Only if we remove the matrix verb, but would still need to add a location word to the sentence.
9	Yes. But we should keep the topic marker with the complement clause.	It could come after if we background the information in the matrix verb.	Not unless we remove the matrix verb as well.
10	Yes.	No.	No.
11	Yes.	No.	No.
12	Yes.	No.	No.
13	Yes.	No.	No.
14	Yes.	No.	No.

The participants responded quickly and confidently when asked if the complement clause could come at the beginning with the subject following and then the matrix verb following the subject. However, when asked if the complement clause could come after the matrix verb, the initial response was either laughter or confusion. Most of the participants laughed about this idea and said, "No". Participants 8 and 9 did come up with a way to move the information in the complement clause behind the verb. This consisted of backgrounding the matrix clause, thereby removing complementation by making the subordinate information the main information, as shown in example (40).

(40) kəakˈ1 cə?ˈ kətʰipˈ tao˦ kʰəˈ hau˦ ləmcakˈ həm˥
    crow SUBJ go.down stream having look.for food IRR
    'The crow, having gone down to the stream, will look for food.'