Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 found Hkongso to primarily use the same complementation pattern as the languages around it, but differ in the main word order. However, they also showed that Hkongso speakers do create post-verbal complementation with no complementizer, which is not found in the languages around Hkongso. These results lead me to posit that Hkongso's rare combination of SVO main word order and SComp complementation order occurs because the group moved into the area and the language began to adopt the features of the languages around it. Peterson and Wright (2009) presented this hypothesis when they shared the similarities between Hkongso and Mru and claimed that these languages originated in the Bodo Garo region. Mru, which lies closer to the Bodo Garo region, does contain postverbal complementation (Peterson 2005b), as illustrated in (65).

(65) waj-pe tangka sum lap=khe naw po döj
VENIT-give money three CL=TEMP.LOC want take NEG
tangka=pe
money=EVID
'...when I came to give her three taka, she didn't want to take the money.'

The hypothesis that Hkongso's rare SComp order came from a process of language change led me to see if complementation strategies differed among generations of Hkongso speakers. The original nine interviewees' ages ranged from 18

to 41. Would older Hkongso speakers employ different complementation strategies? The fourth research question, shown below, proceeded from these thoughts.

4. Would word order patterns, particularly complementation patterns, differ among generations of Hkongso speakers?

   What does this data reveal about the nature of Hkongso's anomalous word order? Does this provide evidence of language change?

To answer these questions I interviewed 5 more speakers over the age of 60. I expected to see greater frequency and range of postverbal complementation. However, the data did not fulfill this expectation. Only 6.6% (4/61) of the sentences elicited contained postverbal complementation, which is shown in examples (66), (67), and (68). Also, causative complements such as these are not as clear examples of complementation as sentential or desiderative complements in Hkongso.

(66) əl mi˥ rəca˦˥ həm˥ boŋ˧ pa˧ pək˧ jok˦˥ kram˦˥ tam˦˥
there this child OBJ don't do make give be.afraid PRT
'That child there, don't make (him) be afraid.'

(67) əl mi˥ kətaŋ˦˥ həm˥ pək˧ jok˦˥ lɔn˦˥ de˥ ren˥ ra˦˥ kʰə˦˥
there 3P old.man OBJ made give joke IMP laugh come having
'Tell (lit. make) a joke to that old man (so that) he will also laugh.'

(68) pək˧ jok˦˥ rəlrə˥ kram˦˥ vəŋ˨˩˦ n̥ak˧
made give constantly be afraid keep.on INTENS
'(His) constant making (me) scared frightened me to no end.'

This research reveals that postverbal complementation is possible in Hkongso but is much more restricted than the more common preverbal SComp

complementation. Due to the complete omission of postverbal CompS complementation in the languages around Hkongso, I hypothesize that the fossilization of postverbal complementation in Hkongso occurs due to language change. These forms remain from the time Hkongso employed more typical SVO word order features. As the language changes to SOV, word order features such as complementation are changing to resemble the patterns found in the languages surrounding it, leaving fossilized SVO structures. The order of the main clause may be the last to change.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Notices and Recommendations

This section discusses the effectiveness of the study, particularly with regard to the objectives of the study and the data collection methodology. I found the methodology to be effective in collecting relevant data, but there were some areas that could have been improved. To improve this research a pilot study could have been implemented and the objectives could have been narrowed.

The research methodology was comprised of elicitation techniques. The word-list based elicitation (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 370), in which I asked for sentences containing words known to trigger complementation, was beneficial. I collected 193 example sentences from 14 participants. Out of those, 159 contained complementation. That means that the participants also gave 34 sentences that did not contain a subordinated complement. This reveals that the participants had the freedom to respond however they wanted. They were not forced to create sentences with complementation. I also observed that the participants responded naturally and easily when I used this form of elicitation. At the beginning of the interview, they seemed tense. However, after a few questions, they visibly relaxed and often began

to joke and laugh, offering sentences that were funny. For this reason, I feel that it was beneficial to interview more than one participant at a time. The ones that I interviewed together were more relaxed. I believe this led to more spontaneous and natural examples.

This is one area that was not previously considered. Is it better to interview participants together or in groups? Without previous consideration, when participants came in pairs, I had to make a choice to interview some of the participants together or make one wait while I interviewed the other. I ended up interviewing those that came in pairs together. There was some influence when interviewed together. For example, after Participant 6 said (69), Participant 7 said (70). A great deal of laughter followed this. Examples like these show that the participants were more relaxed when being interviewed together and that feeling of being relaxed is important to getting natural, spontaneous responses. So, I feel that the benefit was worth the potential risk of skewing the data. In future studies it would be beneficial to think about this situation and decide if the study will permit simultaneous interviews beforehand.

(69) po˧ juˀ həmˀ miˀˀ aŋ˧ ʃaˋ
take wife IRR LNK 1sg want
'I want to take a wife.'

(70) aŋ˧ pəˀ hʷaˋ həmˀ miˀˀ no˧ caˀ
1sg do husband IRR LNK NEG want
'I don't want (to get) a husband.'

The next elicitation technique used was paradigmatic substitution elicitation (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 371), where I removed the complement clause from a sentence and asked the participants to fill in the slot. I did not expect this to produce drastic results. However, it was beneficial to see the participants respond quickly and easily. This showed to some extent the naturalness of the SComp structure in Hkongso. The reliability of this data is questionable though, as fieldworker observatory data is not quantifiable. However, this technique was helpful as it set up the final elicitation

technique, which was fieldworker-driven transformational elicitation (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 373).

In the final elicitation I modified the sentence from the previous technique and asked for grammaticality judgments. I kept this section short as this type of elicitation can create confusion or mental fatigue and after a while sentences which are normally ungrammatical may start to seem acceptable. The result from this was clear. The participants quickly accepted SComp + SUBJ + Matrix or SUBJ + SComp + Matrix structures, which were commonly found in previous data. However, when new structures such as SUBJ + Matrix + SComp or SUBJ + Matrix + CompS or even SUBJ + Matrix + Comp were introduced, the participants unanimously declared the sentences to be ungrammatical. However, some of the participants did produce postposed complement clauses during the first elicitation technique. Would the result have been different if I had used one of the verbs that allowed for postposed complementation? A future study from this question would be to do this type of elicitation on each verb that triggers complementation and see which verbs can take postposed complement clauses. During this study I became very interested in learning more about the range of postverbal complementation in Hkongso.

This study would have benefitted from a more direct pilot study. I did a minor pilot study, but if the pilot study was more developed, I believe the results would have been more beneficial.

As shown in Appendix A, I created a very thorough research instrument. I knew that I would not have the time to complete all of the questions in the research instrument. I did this with the idea of a pilot study in mind. It would have been good to think through this more and outline in the proposal how I was going to do the pilot study. The idea was to initially use a larger research instrument with a large number of words that triggered complementation. Then after one or two interviews I could see which words most frequently produced complementation and narrow the instrument to something the participants could complete in 60-90 minutes. This would allow me

to remove items that created confusion or difficulty for the participants. This worked well, but it could have been improved. I should have done the pilot study with more time to analyze the data and condense the questionnaire. Longer reflection would have enabled me to see which words were triggering postverbal complementation, and I could have paid more attention to those words and asked better questions about them. However, this could have been a challenge as there was no easy access to printers when doing the fieldwork, which would have been required if I had changed the questionnaire.

While interviewing the first nine participants, I noticed that the ages of the participants ranged from 18-41, and another research question came to me, as shown below. I thought that if older speakers of Hkongso used different complementation patterns from younger speakers, then this may provide evidence of language change.

4. Would word order patterns, particularly complementation patterns differ among generations of Hkongso speakers?

I then had my research assistant travel to the village area to interview speakers over the age of 60. If this was considered at the beginning of the study, I would have been able to design the study to accommodate a greater range of participants, and that would have helped the study go smoother. At this point I think that any study of syntax will benefit from having participants with a wide range of ages, as it allows the researcher to observe potential changes that are occurring in the language.

The main objective of this research, shown below, could also have been improved. The scope should have been narrowed to only look at Hkongso complementation. Trying to include the other word order features was distracting and as discussed in Section 4.1, unnecessary, since it revealed no new information.

1. Use Hkongso speakers' intuitive knowledge to test the grammaticality of Hkongso word order, primarily focused on SVO and SComp and looking at NegV, NAdj, DemN, NNum, and AdjDeg.

The first objective said that the primary focus was on the order of complementation compared with the order of the main clause. This focus on the order of Hkongso complementation was very important, as it was clear that the order of complementation in Hkongso was very rare and was therefore important to collect further data to help understand how the order came to exist.

Previous data on Hkongso complementation was limited, showing only preverbal SComp complementation. This research revealed further complementation possibilities, particularly postverbal complementation strategies. The data collected was therefore very relevant to the primary objective of the study. By documenting the possible orders of complementation, it is possible to compare Hkongso with the languages around it to see where Hkongso fits, thereby fulfilling the second objective of the study.

2. Show how Hkongso word order compares to other Chin languages, Tibeto-Burman languages, and languages throughout the world.

There were several ways the study could have been improved, but the data obtained through this research is beneficial and relevant as it furthers our understanding of one of the rarest complementation structures in the world.

5.2.2 Recommendations for Solutions and Development

The focus of this study, which it accomplished, was to collect further examples of Hkongso complementation and see if other complementation structures or strategies are possible. However, during the course of the study, I became further interested in the history of the language.

It is clear that Hkongso word order is anomalous in the region. Therefore, where did the language originate? This led me to add further research questions and to interview an older generation of speakers to see if older speakers employed different complementation patterns from younger speakers. This seems to be the main problem that the topic of Hkongso complementation addresses. The question is not simply, "What is the structure of Hkongso complementation or grammar?", but "What do the word order features of Hkongso reveal about the origin of Hkongso and its place in the Tibeto-Burman family?" Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this study. However, this study creates a foundation by which these questions can be addressed. To answer these questions, the researcher needs to take the information in this study and ask, "What syntactical evidence would offer proof of language change?", and also, "Does the data from this study provide sufficient evidence to make a claim about Hkongso's origins?" These questions will direct the researcher to create further studies pursuing evidence needed to make a claim about Hkongso's origin. This will answer the question about how a language comes to have the orders SVO and SComp and will aid in linguists' understanding of language change from SVO to SOV.

5.2.3 Recommendations for Further Research Projects

There are three main projects that could come from this project. The first is to study languages that have undergone a change of main word order from SVO to SOV, seeking to understand the syntactical signs of language change. With that understanding, is it possible to point to similar signs in the Hkongso data? With this information the research could then hypothesize about the origins of Hkongso and add to linguists' understanding of the process of language change.

Another project would be to take words triggering complementation and do fieldworker-driven transformational elicitation (Chelliah and de Reuse 2010: 373), seeing if it is possible to create postposed complements with each of them. This study would provide further insight into the range of postposed complementation in Hkongso. This study says it is "restricted". Well, how restricted is it? It would be vital to include speakers of multiple generations in this study to see if postposed complementation is more acceptable among older speakers. This could also be more objectively quantified by doing language perception testing. This could be set up using audio tokens with some of the tokens having preposed complementation and some having postposed complementation. Then the researcher could add an equal range of clarity to both types and see which type is more quickly understood, judging based on the timing of the participants' responses.

A final project that would be very beneficial to the linguistic community would be to write a more comprehensive description of Hkongso complementation based on complement taking verbs and complementation strategies that Hkongso speakers employ. Dixon and Aikhenvald (2006) separate verbs into primary and secondary verbs. Some verbs may take clauses as arguments and some must take clauses as arguments. These are then further separated into minor types. They also discuss different complementation strategies such as nominalization and serial verb constructions. These criteria are then used by other linguists in the description of complementation in various languages. This type of description of Hkongso would be very useful to linguists as it provides a clearer, more comprehensive picture of the complementation patterns employed in the language.