CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

In the beginning, was the storyline verb, and the verb was with tense/aspect/voice, and the verb was preterite. The preterite was a narrative tense. It was in the beginning on the storyline. "Find the narrative tense and the storyline will be given unto you," said a textlingist. There came a cognitive linguist sent from a narrative space, whose name was Foregroundedness. And he said, "Let transitivity and sequentiality serve the storyline;" and the storyline became foregrounded perceptually in a canonical narrative space. Tense was a relation between the textlinguist and the cognitive linguist. Then, a voice of an author intrusion was heard from another space, "A new aspect I give unto you. That is, go hand in hand."

6.1 Summary of Findings

A semantic investigation into the storyline in Iu-Mienh has taken us through the preceding four chapters. Our original goal was to account for the meaning of storyline in discourse without separating grammar and semantics.

For that goal, in chapter 2, we surveyed twelve different linguistic theories and schools or approaches and have categorized them into four basic attitudes with regard to the semantic study of discourse and text. These are formal (or descriptive), mental, sociolinguistic and symbolic approaches. While the second approach provides a framework of discourse semantics from a broad cognitively oriented perspective, the fourth approach, represented by Langacker's Cognitive Grammar, has been chosen as appropriate to achieve our goal of analyzing the conceptual structure of storyline. This is because of its principal claim that a linguistic unit, including a discourse, is a symbolic entity comprising a phonological representation of concept and its semantic content, viz. the form and meaning are inseparable within a linguistic and social context.

In chapter 3, we have described some selected grammatical features of Iu-Mienh. Some important characteristics of Iu-Mienh grammar that are relevant to the investigation of storyline involve the following aspects:

(i)   the extensive use of lexical verbs together with their derived grammatical functional verbs, e.g. directional, aspectual and modal verbs,

(ii)   the frequent use of the Serial Verb Constructions, sequenced SVCs in multiclause constructions and topic chains,

(iii)   all these verbs have the same form, and

(iv)   the pragmatic use of aspectual and sentence final particles.

Chapter 4 has taken us back to the inception of Longacre's storyline theory with his particular adherence to the preterite verb in Biblical Hebrew (*wayyiqtōl*) as a guiding principle in the development of his theory.   The chapter has also compared two different definitions of storyline: from a textlinguistics perspective;

> the storyline is the most foregrounded main line of narrative discourse whose semantic values are substantive, narrative, realis, dynamic, sequential and punctiliar, and whose morpho-syntactic marking is the preterite tense or completive aspectual verb form.

From a CL perspective:

> the storyline is a perceptually foregrounded line of a narrative discourse. The line is foregrounded by two major causes: the sequence of events and the movement of events along a timeline toward its goal or conclusion, which is pragmatically planned by the narrator. The former is referred to as sequentiality of events, the latter transitivity of events.   Thus, the storyline consists of sequentiality and transitivity of events.

Subsequently, the fourth chapter has presented the profile/plot analysis of seven Iu-Mienh narratives, has analyzed the storyline, and has proposed the salience scheme based on 715 sentences in this corpus. The chief characteristics found there are:

(i)   the storyline verbs are unmarked by default,

(ii)   clauses containing SVCs, topic chains, directional SVCs with directional verbs (*mingh* and *daaih*), aspectual SVCs with aspectual verbs (*mingh* and *daaih*) are on-the-line,

(iii)   clauses containing not only verbal constructions but also the conjunction *ziouc* and the development marker *aengx* are on the storyline, and

(iv)   the pivotal storyline band has (a) the aspectual markers, *aqv* 'perfective' and *mi'aqv* 'resultative,' and (b) the realis adverb *za'gengh*.

In chapter 5, we discussed three areas: a prototype analysis of salience scheme, the conceptual structure analysis of action/event transitivity and the conceptual structure analysis of sequentiality. First, the prototype effect of transitivity has been found in reference to the prototypical transitivity of the verb *mborv* 'beat/hit' on a continuum with varying constructions to the verb *gorngv* 'say/speak.' We have also found a small example of the gradient relation among five equation/copulative particles in Band 5-setting: *benx*, *zoux*, *zeiz*, *se* and *dongh*. The materials in the pivotal storyline have been analyzed as grounding elements; viz. the narrator pragmatically and epistemically establishes rapport with the audience by bringing their attention back to an anchor into the storyline (particularly after an author intrusion and empathy, a long direct speech, a participant's internal monologue).

Second, we have analyzed the conceptual structure of action/event transitivity, and how it is related to the foregroundedness of storyline. For that, we have utilized Langacker's billiard-ball model with a few modifications, and applied it to some selected SVCs and topic chains. It was shown that a construction of this kind profiles "movement" and "speed"; viz. high transitivity and a high rate of action movement. These two conceptual factors have a foregrounding effect in the perception of storyline by the conceptualizer (hearer). Underneath this perceptual foregroundedness lies the principle of human cognitive ability that perceives a fast moving object as more salient than a static or slow-moving one.

Third, we investigated the conceptual structure of event sequentiality and its relation to the foregroundedness of storyline. Here the constructions analyzed fall into two major groups. Group one contains the conjuction/sequential marker *ziouc* and the conjunction *cingx_daaih*. Langacker's notion of "retrospective" and "prospective" linguistic elements proved to be useful in analyzing the conceptual storucture of these entities. While the conjunction *cingx_daaih* profiles a retrospective referent, *ziouc* profiles a prospective referent. Thus, the latter has a function of incrementing the current discourse space (CDS), which, in turn, creates the sequentiality resulting in making the storyline foregrounded perceptually. Group two includes the topic marker *aeqv* and the adverbial clause V + *liuz*. Though both are materials of Band 8-cohesive, they have some qualities that move the storyline forward. Whereas *aeqv* profiles the bi-directional reference in CDS, V + *liuz* profiles a prospective reference point in the newly built mental space. This CDS incrementing function of the V + *liuz* is enhanced by the characteristic rightward focus structure of Iu-Mienh. That is, V + *liuz* occupying the left most position in a sentence with its prospective reference function (i.e. pointing toward the right), the expectation and focus of attention by the hearer is strongly directed to the right-most position of the sentence. This mechanism creates sequentiality in the perception of narrative and evokes expectation for an upcoming discourse space. The bottom line is that the tightly sequenced objects in a line are more conspicuous to our cognitive perception than scattered and unrelated ones. This perception of salience helps us mentally see the storyline standing out or foregrounded.

6.2 Implications of the Findings to the Hypotheses

We started with the following hypotheses.

H1: *The relationship between storyline and non-storyline in Iu-Mienh is a gradient.*

H2: *The storyline in Iu-Mienh is characterized both semantically by transitivity and sequentiality of events and syntactically also by various linguistic constructions.*

Based on the findings in the present study, some conclusions are summarized below:

1. The relationship between storyline and non-storyline in Iu-Mienh is a gradient. Not only that, the gradient relation can be found inside the storyline itself and the off-the-line bands as well. The nature of the gradient relation is that the cluster of different features are lined up from a prototypical feature of a construction to the deviations of it. Moreover, it is recognized that there is a pragmatic interaction between Bands 1 and 7-9, through the grounding function of the pivotal storyline. Thus, the relationship between storyline and non-storyline in Iu-Mienh is not a binary distinction of foreground vs. background.

2. The storyline in Iu-Mienh is characterized both semantically and syntactically. It is not characterized exclusively by syntactic codings.

3. The storyline in Iu-Mienh is characterized by various kinds of linguistic constructions and configurations. It is difficult to identify the storyline exclusively depending on a particular coding of verbs.

4. Semantically, the storyline is identified by perceptive foregroundedness resulting from transitivity and sequentiality of events in narrative.

6.3 Suggested Areas of Further Study

The present study has been of a selective nature, and there are many other items awaiting further investigation. First, from the category of *ziouc*, other similar conjunctions should be studied further: *joc* (*jouc*) 'immediately,' *yaac* 'and/also/even/besides/ still,' *youc* (*yoc*) 'again/and/also.' It seems that *ziouc* and *joc* (*jouc*) can be grouped together whereas *yaac* and *youc* form another group. Clark (1991) seems to lump these two different groups, which correspond with the Iu-Mienh items of these kinds, in other languages in one discussion of

conjunction-cum-topicalizer. It seems that there is a distinction between *ziouc* and *yaac*, which probably corresponds with *cɯɯŋ¹* and *kɔ:³* in Thai respectively.

Second, another conjunction *weic_naaiv* 'for this reason' has to be studied with regard to its similarity and difference to *cingx_daaih*.

Third, on the pivotal storyline, where *za'gengh* has received some investigation, there is one more important entity, viz. *aengx* 'again/furthermore/and_then.' This can be termed as a development marker, which obviously works for the furtherance of the storyline. It has some similarity with *de* (δέ) and *kai* (καί) in Koine Greek discussed in Levinsohn (1992b:31-7).

Fourth, the construction V + *liuz* has two more members, *baac* and *gau* in this group within adverbial clauses. The distinction between *liuz* and *gau* is that the former is clearly prospective wheareas the latter sometimes profiles a temporally overlapping relation between the event of the preceeding sentence and the event of the succeeding main clause. As to *baac* it is difficult to find its difference from *liuz* as far as our corpus of seven stories and discussion with the native speakers are concerned. A speculation is that *baac* is an Iu-Mienh original word and *liuz* is a loan from Chinese (了), functioning in the same way. If this is the case, a topic of historical background of synonyms and how loan words are integrated into Iu-Mienh until their origins are completely forgotten is an interesting area of study.

Fifth, the issue of gramaticalization in Iu-Mienh should be studied more. Court may well be right in saying, "My impression is that the coverbs are not as 'deverbalized' as in Mandarin: for instance, they may take aspectual markers freely" (1986:249). Kingkarn also states "lexical verbs in Thai still retain their semantic properties in every case" (1986:245). If so, a kind of storyline theory that depends on a particular verb form as a criterion for its identification has to be revised, at least for Iu-Mienh (and possibly Thai).

Sixth, since some insights from common areal features in other authors' studies have been helpful to describe some aspects of Iu-Mienh grammar, further studies

in other cognate languages will be needed and rewarding; viz. Kim Mun, Biao Mon, and Dzau Min, as well as other non-related languages of the area.

Seventh, the development of metalanguage in Iu-Mienh will be an enterprise but may be possible. In the course of elicitation and discussion with the Iu-Mienh, one comment was interesting: *naaiv joux waac maiv maaih gorn-baengx* 'this sentence has no foundation.' This explanation exactly fitted Langacker's concept of grounding. More tools of this kind, as well as encouragement, will be needed for the Iu-Mienh to think and talk about their language in their language.