Chapter 3

SVC and MVC Discussion and Constituency Tests

Before delving into the description and categorization of particular multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab, the following topics will be presented: a literature review of serial verb constructions and multi-verb constructions, a clear list of definitions of the key terms to be used in the following chapter, an explanation of what constitutes a member of the verb category in Hmong Ntsuab, and a discussion about the structural category constituency tests to be used in dividing multi-verb constructions.

3.1 SVC and MVC discussion

Many linguists have conducted research into serial verb constructions in languages around the world. Goddard notes that serial verbs were first discovered in African languages but have been found to occur in Asia, the Pacific, Papau New Guinea, and Australia (2005: 120). Mark Sebba provides a detailed history of linguistic analysis in West African, Caribbean Creole, and East Asian languages, beginning with the earliest known reference by Christaller in 1875. In his document, Christaller describes the two types of "verbal combinations" he observed in Twi, terming them "essential combination" and "accidental combination." Essential combinations, he explains, have a main verb and an auxilary verb while accidental combinations have "two or more sentences... thrown or contracted into one, and the verbs are coordinate in sense as well as in form" (Sebba 1987: 5-6). Although this is a very simple description, by dividing the verb combination types in this manner, Christaller provided the first known acknowledgement of serial verbs.

Since Christaller's time, descriptions of the phenomena of serial verbs in languages have become much more detailed, as many additional studies have been conducted, analyzing various aspects of serial verb constructions, in an attempt to understand and define them better. There, however, is still considerable disagreement regarding many aspects of serial verb research. Researchers continue to disagree on

terminology, underlying structures, the determination of the category "verb," and the methods of sub-classifying the various types of serial verb constructions.

3.1.1 SVC definitions

Marybeth Clark speaks of serial verbs in a poetic manner stating that serial verbs "spin ideas as it were from a reel, with a minimum of interruptive elements" (1992: 145). Some definitions are found to be as general as: constructions that "use two or more verbs to describe complex events" (Quigley 2002: 14). Others are specific and the source of contention, such as the insistence that serial verbs use two or more verbs, which are lexical verbs, not auxiliary verbs (Wilawan 1995: 54), and that they must be "capable of appearing as the only verb in a simple sentence" (Sebba 1987: 39).

Definitions also address the arguments of SVCs: prototypically, only one overtly expressed (syntactic) subject is present in a serial verb construction (Goddard 2005), which contains at least one shared argument (Aikhenvald no date: 18). The subject of a serial verb is co-referential with the subject of the main verb (Clark 1992: 147), but sentences having the object of one verb as the semantic subject of the second verb may be considered a type of serial verb construction (Aikhenvald no date: 22, Sebba 1987: 87, 43-44).

More definitions include conditions on clauses, events, and propositions such as the following: all verbs must appear in one clause (Foley and Olsen 1985, Baker 1989). They must refer to what is perceived as a "single unitary event" (Aikhenvald no date: 14) or "conceptual event" (Jarkey to appear: 112) and express a single proposition. In the case of sub-events, they are considered facets of a "macro-event" (Payne no date). Interpretation of the event may depend on cultural context (Goddard 2005: 122-124).

Some definitions specify temporal properties of serial verb constructions: The time of a serial verb must be simultaneous with the time of the preceding verb (Clark 1992: 148), unless it expresses a motion event, in which case the time may be after the preceding verb. The same tense, negation, and other TAMs must apply to the whole construction (Aikhenvald 2006). In SVCs, TAMs may be marked only once, or, when marked more than once, each verb is marked as having the same tense, aspect, mood, and/or polarity as the main verb.

These are just a sampling of the possible stipulations when defining SVCs. In reality, what often happens is that researchers create definitions according to what they

deem applicable for the particular language(s) they are studying. In Mandarin Chinese, for example, serial verbs are allowed to have different objects and in White Hmong they are allowed different locative arguments (Aikhenvald no date: 20). In Clark's research, she argues that part of the definition of serial verbs must be that they share a nominative NP and are not predictable (1992: 148). She also disagrees that serialization has "equi-NP deletion" as Fuller claims (1989). Depending on the language and the linguist, different elements are either allowed or not allowed in the definition of serial verb constructions.

3.1.2 Terminology

To make matters more complicated, sometimes the term "serial verb" is not used at all. This phenomenon, or variations of it, is often referred to using terminology such as "complex verb phrases" (Omar 1976), "verb concatenation" (Smith 1979, Hansson 1985), "serialization" (Clark 1992, Filbeck 1975, Jenkins 2006, Goddard 2005) and "consecutivization." Definitions include key terms such as "series of... adjacent verbs" (Smith 1979), "strings of verbs" (Hansson 1985), and "two or more verbs" (Sebba 1987, Goddard 2005).

3.1.3 Underlying structure

In addition, there is also some confusion and disagreement over the structure of so-called serial verb constructions, including debate about if they contain one or more underlying sentence (Sebba 1987: 35) and uncertainty about whether to analyze serial verbs as phrase structures, lexical structures, or transformation (Sebba 1987: 7-26). Defining whether serial verbs are instances of subordination or coordination is another much debated topic. Supriya Wilawan, for example, argues that many supposed "serial verb constructions" are merely instances of nonfinite subordination (1992: 1237).

3.1.4 Verb category

Furthermore, there is additional uncertainty as to how to determine verb category as it relates to serial verb constructions. Some linguists include auxiliary verbs, control verbs, and even what might be considered adverbs, adjectives, and prepositions as verbs in what they accept as serial verb constructions. Filbeck, for example, analyzes the Thai word *klap* 'back' as a verb and not as an adverb, including it in examples of serial verb constructions (1975: 113). Some disagree with this judgment. Others,

such as Wilawan only consider constructions with transitive verbs to be SVCs (1995: 54).

Smith includes preverbs, verbal particles, and preverbal adverbs in the verb concatenations of Sedang (1979). Somphana Srichampa cites Groal (1986) as analyzing "derived prepositions" as directional verbs, but she, herself, analyzes them as coverbs in Vietnamese (1997: 143). Li and Thompson argue, on the other hand, that "coverbs" are prepositions in Chinese (Sebba 1987: 30). It must be noted here that determination of word class across languages is complicated. It is based on multiple features such as formal characteristics, syntactic function, and meaning (Kratochvil 1968: 106-115). The category of "verb," therefore, is often reanalyzed for the purposes of the language being studied.

3.1.5 SVC categorizations and sub-types

There does not seem to be any standard agreement regarding how to categorize and sub-categorize serial verb constructions. In the past, categorization of SVC subtypes was fairly elementary. Omar divided complex verb phrases into three groups. Those in which (a) both VPs were represented by different verbs, (b) VP1 was an adjective and VP2 a verb, and (c) VP1 was a verb and VP2 an adjective (1976: 960). In recent years, some researchers prefer to divide SVCs into types according to their semantic and syntactic properties. Aikhenvald (2006) divides serial verb constructions into four sub categories: switch function SVCs, cumulative subject SVCs, event-argument SVCs, and resultative SVCs. Sudmuk (2006) divides SVCs into the following eight categories based on semantics and specific word forms: motion, posture, 'take', 'use', open class, 'give', causative, and resultative. Others prefer to divide SVC types based on syntactic properties alone. Jenkins divides serial verb constructions into coordinating and subordinating types of serialization (2006: 7). He also makes note of a hybrid type of SVC which allows same-subject or different-subject sub-types. Jarkey, who has conducted extensive research in White Hmong, divides Hmong SVCs into four types: Contemporal, Pivotal, Attainment, and Disposal (2006: 117).

3.1.6 Concluding remarks on SVCs and definitions

Despite the lack of agreement regarding the terminology, definitions, and categorization of "serial verbs," it is apparent that unmarked multi-verb constructions are not only common in many languages, but also worth researching as a particular phenomenon. In an attempt to avoid the ongoing theoretical debate described above (section 3.1) and the restrictions associated with certain

terminology, the term "multi-verb construction" is used in this study. It is believed that the term "serial verb constructions," as Enfield states, may be "too narrowly suggestive of certain specific types of constructions which form only a subset" of multi-verb constructions (2007: 339). "Multi-verb constructions" (MVCs) are defined below for the purposes of this study.

a) They are verb sequences, which will be marked V1-V2, following Enfield (2008).

b) The verbs are unmarked: there is no overt coordinating or subordinating marker to indicate the relationship between verbs in a construction.

c) The verbs form integrated units in which they normally convey facets of one conceptual event.

In addition, as far as categorization and subtypes, this study will model Enfield's framework and descriptive approach in his study of multi-verb constructions in Lao (2008). This approach to investigating various multi-verb constructions is a simple, thorough, and organized way to categorize and describe these constructions and better understand the types of multi-verb constructions and their inter-verb relationships in Lao. Enfield divides multi-verb constructions, into what he calls "structural categories," based on the varying semantic and grammatical relations between the verbs, as determined by constituency tests. These constituency tests are further explained below (section 3.2). Here, the term "structural category" is defined for the purposes of this study.

a) Structural categories are based on the semantic and grammatical properties of the verbs in multi-verb constructions.

b) Structural categories include the following: deverbal aspect/modality marking constructions, despatch expressions, disposal constructions, sequences of complex motion, secondary predication constructions, oblique phrases/adjuction, causative constructions, complementation, and coordinating constructions.

c) Some of these structural categories can be further broken down into sub-categories.

The following section (section 3.2), discusses what constitutes a member of the verb category and the various structural category constituency tests. This will help lay the foundation for the description and categorization of some types of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab presented in Chapter four.

3.2 Verb tests and constituency tests

The following section begins with a discussion of some of the tests which demonstrate the grammatical features of prototypical main verbs in Hmong Ntsuab (section 3.2.1). These tests serve to verify that each verb in the multi-verb constructions is a main verb, or is able to function as a main verb in certain grammatical contexts. This main verb section is followed by an explanation of the constituency tests which are used to clarify the relationships of unmarked verbs in multi-verb sequences in Hmong Ntsuab. An understanding of the verb relationships aids in distinguishing and classifying the various types of MVCs. Five constituency tests are discussed:

- Clause separability
- Yes-answer
- Fronting of object complements
- Insertion of a left aspectual marking
- Insertion of a clause linker

3.2.1 Grammatical features of canonical main verbs

Verbs may be defined as members of the "parts-of-speech class in which occur most of the words that express actions, processes and the like" or as forms that foreground "temporal relations" (Schachter and Shopen 2007: 9). Enfield defines verbs as "members of the class of words accessible to a defined set of grammatical markings and processes associated with words denoting semantically prototypical actions/events" (2008: 84). In many languages, verbs have the "normal grammatical features of main verbs" and pass the following tests: they can be directly negated, can take direct irrealis marking, can take marking of achievement and marking of perfect aspect, and/or can be used as nominal attributives in noun phrases (Enfield 2008: 103).

3.2.1.1 Features of verb class in Hmong Ntsuab

Hmong Ntsuab words may be determined to be members of the verb class based on similar tests. The Hmong Ntsuab verb *moog* 'go' will be used to provide examples of these tests, as it passes all the tests. Verbs in Hmong Ntsuab can take direct negation with the preverbal negation marker *tsi* (71) and can take direct irrealis with the preverbal *yuav* (72).

(71)
kuv tsi moog teb
I NEG go field
'I do not go (to the) field.'

(72)
pi kig puab yuav moog Chiang Mai
tomorrow they will go Chiang Mai
'Tomorrow, they will go (to) Chiang Mai.'

Verbs such as *moog* 'go' can also be marked for attainment with preverbal *laij* (73) or preverbal *tau* (74), and can take direct marking of "current relevant state" (Enfield 2008: 103) with postverbal *lawm* (75).

(73)
naag moog puab laij moog kuv tsev
yesterday they ATT go I house
'Yesterday, they went (to) my house.'

(74)
naag moog puab tau moog kuv tsev
yesterday they ATT go I house
'Yesterday, they went (to) my house.'

(75)
kuv moog lawm
I go finish
'I went already.'

The final two examples below show that the verb *moog* 'go' may also be used as an attributive in a noun phrase (76) and may be overtly linked to the modified noun by the relativiser *kw* (77).

(76)
yuav ntau muab tuab neeg moog Chiang Mai
take book BENF CLF person go Chiang Mai
'Give (the) book to the person going (to) Chiang Mai.'

(77)
yuav ntau muab tuab neeg kw moog Chiang Mai
take book BENF CLF person COMP go Chiang Mai
'Give (the) book to the person that (is) going (to) Chiang Mai.'

3.2.1.2 Further clarification

Before continuing to the discussion of the various structural tests, it is important to note that all the verbs used in each of the MVC structural categories in this study were tested to check that they could, in fact, function as verbs. However, some of the surface forms used in this study may serve other grammatical functions as well, due to varying degrees of grammaticalization. When forms are not functioning as verbs, they may not possess all the grammatical features of main verbs. As Enfield describes it, "verbs in secondary or subordinate function often are not accessible to some or all of these properties" (2008: 103).

In keeping with Enfield's framework, a few verbs with this duality of grammatical function are included in the MVCs in this study, as they provide additional valuable data as particular MVC types and are useful for comparison to other MVC types.

3.2.1.3 Summary

The vast majority of the verbs detailed in the multi-verb constructions in Chapter four possess all the grammatical features of main verbs. They can be directly marked for modification in various ways. The few exceptions that exist are a result of the varying grammatical functions of the surface form. Verbs with multiple grammatical functions which are less accessible to some of the grammatical features of main verbs are still included in a few of the different multi-verb construction types in this study. The following section begins the discussion of constituency tests that are used to clarify the relationships of verbs in unmarked sequences.

3.2.2 Clause separability test

A clause separability test can be used to distinguish between some types of multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab. Enfield defines "clause separability" as a MVC that "can be paraphrased with insertion of overt marking which forces a reading of the verbs as each belonging to an independent clause, and where this causes no significant changes in the basic semantic relationship between those verbs" (2008: 103-104). Although Enfield does not define what a "significant change" is, for the purposes of this study a significant change in the semantic relationship of the verbs will be considered one that affects the temporal sequence, the specific semantic relationship, the definition of the individual verbs, or the meaning of the combined verbs.

Examples of clause-separability tests below show the insertion of overt elements, such as the coordinator *hab* 'and', which create two separate clauses. This type of test serves as an aid in determining the relationship between verbs in that construction. The verbs in MVCs that are clause separable are generally not subordinating, and have a looser semantic and syntactic relationship than those that are not clause separable.

3.2.2.1 Clause separable constructions

Some types of MVCs, such as resultatives (section 4.5.1) and verb chains (section 4.9.1) are clause-separable. The purposive verb chain construction *moog kawm* 'go study' is clause-separable and not subordinating, as clause separation does not change the relationship of the verbs, as shown in the comparison of the two examples below (78) (79).

(78)

puab	*txau sab*	*moog*	*Chiang Mai*	*kawm*	*ntau*
they	interested	go	Chiang Mai	study	book

'They (are) interested (in) going (to) Chiang Mai (to) study.'

(79)

puab	*txau sab*	*moog*	*Chiang Mai*	*hab*	*kawm*	*ntau*
they	interested	go	Chiang Mai	and	study	book

'They (are) interested (in) going (to) Chiang Mai and studying.'

The insertion of the coordinating conjunction *hab* 'and' does not cause a significant change to the semantic content on the whole or to the V1-V2 semantic relationship. As demonstrated in the gloss and free translation the verbs maintain their individual meanings after clause separation. In addition, the temporal sequence of the verbs is maintained and the inter-verb relationship does not change, as V2 occurs because of V1 in both constructions. This clause separability indicates a fairly loose syntactic relationship between verbs.

3.2.2.2 Constructions that are not clause separable

The examples above (78) (79) show a MVC that is clause-separable, however, testing other types of MVCs in Hmong Ntsuab, shows that many of them are not clause-separable. Certain types of subordinating constructions, such as despatch constructions (section 4.2) are not clause-separable. This is shown in the comparison of the two examples below (80) and (81). Significant semantic change in the

meaning of the verbs *muab* 'take' and *tsuab* 'give' is noted when the clauses are separated (81).

(80)
nwg muab ntau tsuab fw sw
s/he take book APPL teacher
'She gave (the) book to (the) teacher.'

(81)
nwg muab ntau hab tsuab fw sw
s/he take book and give teacher
'She took (the) book and gave (it to the) teacher.'

When the two verbs *muab tsuab* exist in one clause, they combine to convey the single conceptual event of 'giving', occurring at one point in time, as demonstrated in the free translation of the first example above (80). When the clauses are separated, the verbs convey two separate events *muab* 'taking' and *tsuab* 'giving', with a consecutive temporal relationship (81). Since the separation of clauses causes a significant change in the semantic relationship of the verbs, the construction is not considered to be clause separable. This may indicate a tight relationship between verbs.

3.2.2.3 Constructions that are not clause-separable due to ungrammaticality

Above (section 3.2.2.2), some MVCs that are not clause-separable due to significant semantic change are detailed. In other MVC types, however, the construction is not clause-separable because testing for clause separability actually results in an ungrammatical construction. This is demonstrated in the examples of a deverbal construction below (82) (83), where V1 is *txeev* 'accustomed' and V2 is *moog* 'go'. Deverbal constructions are discussed further in (section 4.1).

(82)
kuv txeev moog Chiang Mai
I accustomed go Chiang Mai
'I have gone (to) Chiang Mai.'

(83)
* *kuv txeev hab moog Chiang Mai*
I accustomed and go Chiang Mai

When forcing the separation of clauses results in an ungrammatical construction (83), the construction is not considered to be clause-separable. In addition, the ungrammaticality of the resulting construction may indicate that the verbs have an

even tighter subordinating relationship than those discussed above (section 3.2.2.2) where semantic change is noted.

3.2.2.4 Summary

As demonstrated, multi-verb relationships can be tested through the insertion of the conjunction *hab* 'and' between verbs to create two separate clauses. In testing for clause-separability some MVCs are not clause-separable but others are. Clause-separability indicates a loose semantic and syntactic relationship between verbs and non clause-separability indicates a tighter relationship between verbs. It is proposed that the tightest relationship between verbs is demonstrated when forcing clause-separability results in an ungrammatical construction.

3.2.3 Insertability of the clause linker *kuj* test

The various functions and constraints of the clause linker *kuj* have already been discussed in detail in Chapter two (section 2.4.6). *kuj* can be used to separate clauses, similar to the conjunction *hab* 'and'. However, *kuj* can also serve to link clauses or indicate semantic relationships between clauses. Because of this, it is included as a separate test from the clause separability test detailed above (section 3.2.2).

In testing for the insertability of the clause linker *kuj*, it is important to remember that it commonly appears directly before V1 and its appearance in this location does not seem to cause any significant semantic change in the relationship of the verbs as shown in the comparison of the following examples (84) (85). In fact, when *kuj* appears before V1 it is usually serving to link the following clause to a previous clause or sentence (85).

(84)
puab *poob* *tuag*
they fall die
'They fell (to their) death.'

(85)
puab *kuj* *poob* *tuag*
they then fall die
'They then fell (to their) death.'

It is when *kuj* is medially inserted, between verbs, that different patterns are observed in the various types of multi-verb constructions. The following distinctions can be made based on this test: MVCs that allow medial insertion of *kuj*, MVCs that

do not allow medial insertion of *kuj* due to significant semantic change, as previously defined (section 3.2.2), and MVCs that do not allow medial insertion of *kuj* due to a resulting ungrammaticality.

3.2.3.1 Medial insertion of *kuj* allowed

Multi-verb constructions, such as projected resultatives (section 4.5.1.3) allow the medial insertion of *kuj*, as displayed in the examples below (86) (87).

(86)
nwg *ncha* *pum*
s/he seek find
'She looked (and) found (it).'

(87)
nwg *ncha* *kuj* *pum*
s/he seek so find
'She looked so (she) found (it).'

In MVCs like this, the medial insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, results in a construction with a similar meaning and does not alter the semantic relationship of the verbs. The projected V2 *pum* 'find' is a result of the occurrence of V1 *ncha* 'seek' in both sentences (86) (87). The temporal sequence does not change.

3.2.3.2 Medial insertion of *kuj* not allowed due to semantic change

In some constructions, the clause linker *kuj* may be inserted immediately before V1 or before V2 and still result in a grammatical construction. However, in some of these cases, insertion of *kuj* before V2 often creates a different reading, changing the relationship of the verbs. This is demonstrated in the comparison of the different-subject control complementation constructions below (88) (89).

(88)
kuv *pum* *lug*
I see come
'I see (them) come.'

(89)
kuv *pum* *kuj* *lug*
I see so come
'I see (them) so (they) come.'

When *kuj* appears after V1 *pum* 'see' and immediately before V2 *lug* 'come' (89), it forces a reading of two distinct clauses and changes the semantic relationship

between the verbs, where *pum* 'seeing' is considered to cause *lug* 'coming'. In addition, the temporal sequence of the verbs is changed to V2 occurring after V1 and not simultaneous as in the first construction (88). This is not the same relationship that the verbs had before the insertion of *kuj*. As Enfield explains it, if you were to insert the clause linker between verbs it would 'disallow a reading in which the lower clause... were subordinate to the higher verb... and would instead force a biclausal coordination reading" (2008: 112). It is no longer possible to consider the verbs to portray the same event, or sub events of the same event. In cases like this, when there is a significant semantic change due to the medial insertion of the clause linker *kuj*, insertion is considered to be not allowed. Different-subject control complementation constructions are discussed further below (section 4.8.1.2).

3.2.3.3 Medial insertion not allowed due to ungrammaticality

In some constructions, such as causatives (section 4.7), the insertion of *kuj* in between verbs results in an ungrammatical construction. Consider the following causative construction (90).

(90)

kuv	*ua*	*rau*	*koj*	*tu*	*sab*
I	do	CAUS	you	sad	heart

'I made you sad.'

In these types of MVCs medial insertion of the clause linker *kuj* is clearly not allowed, as it results in an ungrammatical construction (91).

(91)

*	*kuv*	*ua*	*kuj*	*rau*	*koj*	*tu*	*sab*
	I	do	so	give	you	sad	heart

3.2.3.4 Other semantic considerations

In some constructions, the semantic scope of the verbs and arguments must be considered, as they may be ambiguous. The example below (92) employs the same two verbs (*ua* 'do' and *rau* 'CAUS/BENF') as the above example (90). Here, the medial verb insertion of the clause linker *kuj* does not result in an ungrammatical construction, as shown above (91), but it does result in meaning change (93). Clearly, *ua rau* does not form the same type of constructions in these two examples (90) (92).

(92)

kuv	*ua*	*mov*	*rau*	*koj*	*noj*
I	do	rice	BENF	you	eat

'I made rice for you (to) eat.'

(93)

kuv	*ua*	*mov*	*kuj*	*rau*	*koj*	*noj*
I	do	rice	then	give	you	eat

'I made rice then gave (it to) you (to) eat.'

3.2.3.5 Summary

When considering the clause linker *kuj*, it becomes clear that the semantic usages and grammatical constraints on it make it useful in conducting structural testing. It is helpful in clarifying the organizational structure of some clauses in MVCs. Testing for the insertion of *kuj* between verbs helps to distinguish between MVCs which allow the insertion of *kuj*, MVCs that do not allow the insertion of *kuj* due to semantic change, and MVCs that do not allow the insertion of *kuj* due to ungrammaticality.

3.2.4 Polar questions and the yes-answer test

As discussed above (section 3.2.4), there are many methods of forming polar questions in Hmong Ntsuab. The method employed in the yes-answer test makes use of the preverbal interrogative particle *pua*. The examples below show this type of polar question (94) and a V1-V2 answer to that question (95).

(94)

puab	*poob*	*choj*	*pua*	*tuag*
they	fall	bridge	QST	die

'(Did) they fall (from the) bridge (to their) death?'

(95)

poob	*tuag*
fall	die

'(They) fell (to their) death.'

In all the constructions surveyed in this study, polar questions are able to be answered by repeating both verbs (V1-V2), as in the above example (95). However, depending on the construction type, there exists a variety of other answers, each of which indicates a particular relationship among the verbs in the construction. When a particular yes-answer is not allowed, it is because it is odd, ungrammatical, or not

a straight answer to the question[5]. Possible answers include V1, V2, V1-V2, and V1 or V2. Each of these answer-types and their significance to this study will now be discussed.

3.2.4.1 V1-answers

The quickest and most common response to polar questions often involves a simple repetition of one verb. In cases like this, the yes-answer test is helpful in determining the main verb in a MVC because, as explained by Enfield, in "answering... by means of repetition of some portion of the question, the main verb... is necessary and sufficient as a yes-answer" (2008: 105). In answering a polar question, some MVC types, such as preverbal deverbals (section 4.1.1) prefer a V1-answer (96) (97).

(96)

koj	*pua*	*txeev*	*moog*	*Chiang Mai*
you	QST	accustomed	go	Chiang Mai

'Have you gone (to) Chiang Mai?'

(97)

txeev
accustomed
'(I) have.'

In this case, a V2 answer is not quite a straight answer to the question (98).

(98)

? moog
go
'(I) went.'

This strong preference for a V1 answer is important as it contributes to understanding the relationships of the verbs in these types of constructions. It indicates that V1 serves as the main verb in this multi-verb construction, as it is both necessary and alone sufficient when answering the question. This structure is indicated by the following brackets: $[V_1\ [V_2]_{VP}\ ]_{VP}$

3.2.4.2 V2-answers

In the same-subject resultative (section 4.5.1.1) examples above (94) (95), V1-V2 was shown to be a possible answer to the polar question. Because all constructions

[5] Constructions are denoted with the following symbols: odd "%", not a straight answer to the question "?", ungrammatical "*".

allow this answer type, this result is unremarkable. In fact, in speaking with the language resource persons when using the yes-answer test, it was explained that, although V1-V2 is a possible answer, *tuag* 'die' V2 is the preferred answer (100). This is because, in same-subject resultatives, V1 *poob* 'falling' is entailed. The question (99) is not asking if the subject fell (V1) but if he died (V2).

(99)

puab	*poob*	*choj*	*pua*	*tuag*
they	fall	bridge	QST	die

'(Did) they fall (from the) bridge (to their) death?'

(100)

tuag
die
'(They fell to their) death.'

Answering with V2 alone is sufficient because of V1 entailment, and the fuller V1-V2 answer is unnecessary. This preference for the V2-answer indicates that V2 *tuag* 'die' serves as the main verb in this multi-verb construction. This structure is indicated by the following brackets: $[[V_1]_{VP}\ V_2\ ]_{VP}$

3.2.4.3 V1-V2 answers

Although all MVCs in this study allow a V1-V2 answer, some constructions *require* a V1-V2 answer. This is the case with left-marking adverbial compounds (section 4.5.3.2), as shown in the polar question (101) and answer (102) below.

(101)

nwg	*pws*	*pua*	*saib*	*TV*
s/he	recline	QST	watch	television

'(Does) he recline (to) watch TV?'

(102)

pws	*saib*
recline	watch

'(He) reclines (to) watch (TV).'

(103)

?	*saib*
	watch

'(He) watches (TV).'

(104)
? pws
recline
'(He) reclines.'

In these cases, a single-verb answer is not allowed because it is not a straight answer to the question (103) (104). This is different than the constructions described above (96) (99) where it is possible for polar questions to be answered with a single verb as well. These types of MVCs require a V1-V2 answer, which indicates a fairly equal head status among the two verbs in these types of constructions. This structure is indicated by the following brackets: $[[V_1]_{VP}\ [V_2]_{VP}]_{VP}$

3.2.4.4 V1 or V2 answers

In the final type of answer, it is possible for either verb to suffice as a single-verb answer to a polar question. This flexibility is seen in certain types of verb compounds where V1 and V2 are synonyms (section 4.9.2). The following examples (105) (106) (107), which make use of the near-synonyms *ntswb* 'meet' and *pum* 'see', show this.

(105)
koj pua ntswb pum nwg tom teb
you QST meet see s/he at field
'(Did) you encounter him at (the) field?'

(106)
ntswb
meet
'(I) met (him).'

(107)
pum
see
'(I) saw (him).'

The structure of these types of MVCs is indicated by the following brackets: $[V_1\ V_2]_{VP}$

3.2.4.5 Summary

When answering polar questions in Hmong Nstuab, different types of MVCs prefer different answers. This yes-answer test is used to divide up the types of MVCs, as some constructions strongly prefer a one-verb answer, others require a two-verb

(V1-V2) answer, and still others can use either verb (V1 or V2) as an answer. These preferences indicate the headship qualities of verbs in otherwise unmarked constructions.

3.2.5 Fronting of object complement test

As previously discussed, (section 2.4.1) object complements in multi-verb constructions are often able to be ellipted when they are contextually retrievable (108) (109).

(108)
puab coj TV lug noog
they take television come listen
'They bring (the) TV (to) listen (to).'

(109)
puab coj lug noog
they take come listen
'They bring (it to) listen (to).'

Although the ellipsis of object complements is very common across MVC types, the movement of object complements is more restricted. Because of this restriction, testing the various types of multi-verb constructions, to see if object complements are able to be fronted, aids in distinguishing between MVC types.

3.2.5.1 Frontable

Certain multi-verb constructions allow the fronting of object complements. This is shown in the example of a different-subject control complement construction (section 4.8.1.2 and section 4.8.1.3) below, with the fronted object 'television' (110).

(110)
TV puab coj lug noog
television they take come listen
'(The) TV, they brought (to) listen (to).'

Constructions such as these, which allow the fronting of their object complements, generally consist of verbs in a tightly connected relationship. In the above example (110), the verbs *coj* and *lug* are working together to convey the single conceptual event of 'bringing', and not two sub-events of 'taking' and 'coming'. The fronting of the object complement does not affect the understanding of the event. This is dissimilar to constructions that do not allow object fronting.

3.2.5.2 Not frontable

Some types of MVCs do not allow the fronting of object complements. Examples of resultative constructions (section 4.5.1) demonstrate this below (111) (112) (113) (114).

(111)
puab poob choj tuag
they fall bridge die
'They fell (from the) bridge (to their) death.'

(112)
% choj puab poob tuag
bridge they fall die

(113)
puab ntsau nyuj tuag
they crash cow die
'They crashed (into the) cow (to their) death.'

(114)
** nyuj puab ntsau tuag*
cow they crash die

Constructions that do not allow the fronting of their object complements tend to contain verbs that are more loosely connected. In the MVC examples above, the V1 and V2 represent temporally sequential sub-elements of the single conceptual event where *poob* 'falling' results in *tuag* 'dying' and *ntsau* 'crashing' results in *tuag* 'dying'. The removal, or displacement, of the object complement affects the understanding of the sub-parts of the event and, therefore, the understanding of the event as a whole.

3.2.5.3 Summary

This object complement fronting test serves to divide multi-verb constructions into two types: MVCs which allow object complements to be fronted and MVCs that do not allow the fronting of object complements. It also aids in the further understanding of the relationship of the verbs in the MVCs. Interestingly, MVCs that are clause separable generally do not allow object complement fronting.

3.2.6 Insertability of *tsi* 'NEG' aspect-modality marking test

In multi-verb constructions in Hmong Ntsuab, certain left aspect-modality marking is common on the verbs, such as *tsi* 'NEG'. Some MVCs allow this marking of

negation immediately before V1 and some MVCs allow it immediately before V2, at which point it is termed "medial negation." This distinction in placement of this left aspect-modality marker serves to divide MVCs into those that do not allow medial negation and those that allow medial negation.

3.2.6.1 Medial negation not allowed

Certain multi-verb constructions, such as verb compounds (section 4.9.2) do not allow medial negation (115).

(115)

*	*kuv*	*ntswb*	*tsi*	*pum*	*nwg*	*tom*	*teb*
	I	meet	NEG	see	s/he	at	field

The inability to be medially negated indicates a tight syntactic relationship between the two verbs in these types of constructions. In fact, as Enfield puts it, verb compounds in Lao are "effectively a single verb" (2008: 172). In this particular example (115), the two Hmong Ntsuab verbs *ntswb* 'meet' and *pum* 'see' demonstrate that same sense. In addition, the inability to take medial negation indicates a particular semantic relationship between verbs in the construction. The verbs in this example, *ntswb* 'meet' and *pum* 'see', are synonyms in which V1 'meeting' entails V2 'seeing'. Because of this, the negation of V2 alone is not allowed.

3.2.6.2 Medial negation allowed

Other multi-verb constructions, such as resultatives (section 4.5.1), allow medial negation (116).

(116)

puab	*poob*	*choj*	*tsi*	*tuag*
they	fall	bridge	NEG	die

'They fell (from the) bridge (but did) not die.'

The fact that resultatives allow medial negation indicates that, syntactically, these MVCs are not as tightly bound as the verb compounds discussed above (section 3.2.6.1). Semantically, these types of constructions have a temporally sequential relationship, and can be considered to be somewhat independent as sub-events of a single conceptual event, making it possible for V2 to not occur, even though V1 occurs. This means that *poob* 'falling' can occur without *tuag* 'dying'. In these constructions, the negation of V2 entails V1.

3.2.6.3 Summary

This negation test serves to divide MVCs into two groups: MVCs that do not allow medial negation and MVCs that allow medial negation. Furthermore, negation patterns provide insight into the differing semantic and syntactic relationships of the verbs in multi-verb constructions.