

Grammar and Syntax

Before we dive into grammar, let's review the keys I used in my Hmong Dictionary:

No	English	Abbreviation	Hmong	Luv
1	pronoun	<i>pro</i>	tswv	<i>t</i>
2	adverb	<i>adv</i>	piav ua	<i>pu</i>
3	verb	<i>v</i>	ua	<i>u</i>
4	conjunction	<i>conj</i>	txuas	<i>tx</i>
5	adjective	<i>adj</i>	piav yam (<i>piav txog</i>)	<i>p</i>
6	noun	<i>n</i>	yam	<i>y</i>
7	interjection	<i>interj or int</i>	nthe	<i>nth</i>
8	preposition	<i>prep</i>	rau	<i>r</i>
9	classifier	<i>cl. or cla.</i>	hom	<i>h</i>
10	article (<i>a, an, the</i>)	<i>art</i>	[number] + classifier, i.e., ib lub	

Below is a simple syntax structure between English and Hmong.

	<u>Pronoun</u>	<u>Verb</u>	<u>Article</u>	<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Adverb</u>	
English	I	like	a	red	car	a lot	
	↕	↕	↓ ↘		↕ ↘	↕	
	<u>Pronoun</u>	<u>Verb</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Classifier</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Adjective</u>	<u>Adverb</u>
Hmong	Kuv	nyiam	ib	lub	tsheb	liab	heev.

Here is the translation breakdown of the above sentences:

I = Kuv, **like** = nyiam, **a** = ib lub, **red** = liab, **car** = tsheb, **a lot** = heev.

Perhaps the English line could have been written to match the Hmong line as follows:

I like one classifier/a car red much.

Since Hmong does not have articles, i.e., a, an and the, there will always a number plus a classifier. For example:

Kuv muaj **ib lub** tsheb = I have **one** car. In this case, we could write, "I have **a** car."

Another difference is adjectives. For English, adjectives go before objects, but for Hmong, the adjectives go after, *mostly*. Also, there is no "to-be" verbs in Hmong. For example:

English: I **want to** eat. I **want to be a** teacher. I **am** mad.
Hmong: Kuv **xav** noj. Kuv **xav** ua ib tug xibfwb. Kuv **>>** chim.

Thaum hluas muab zog pauv nyiaj; thaum laus muab nyiaj pauv zog.