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Topological relations in White Hmong: description and typology

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Outline

- Big picture – topological relations
- Methodology
- Implicational Hierarchy
- Analysis
 - Basic locative construction
 - Verb usage, deictics, adpositions, response stability
- Kilivila (Senft 2006)
 - typological relevance
- Conclusions

Big picture: Topological relations

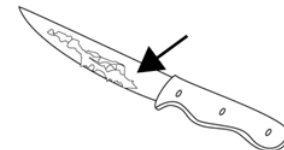
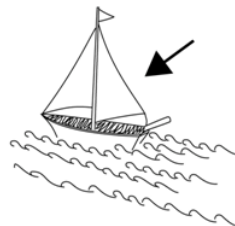
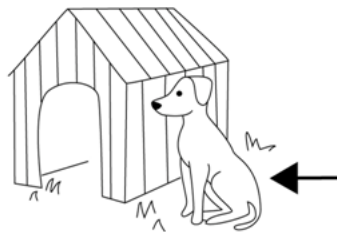
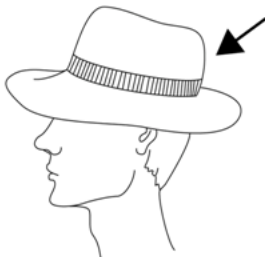
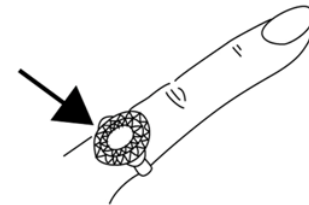
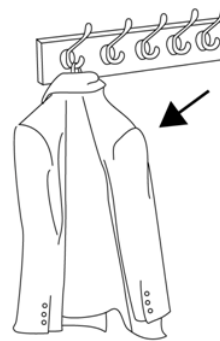
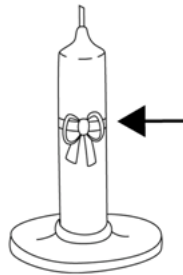
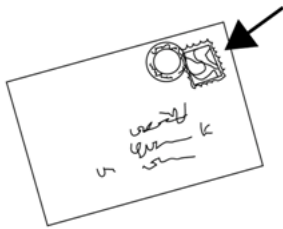
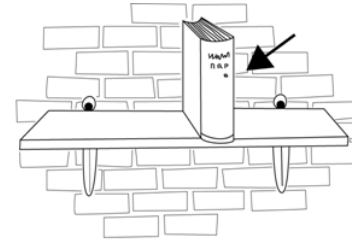
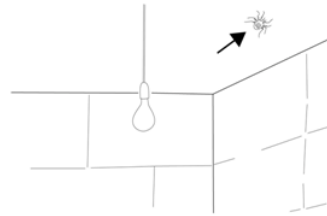
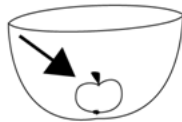
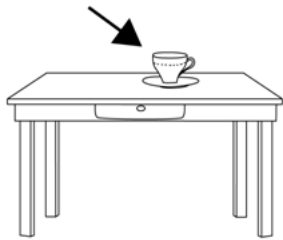
- Lack of semantic research in Southeast Asian Languages – especially related to space (Burenhult 2012)
- No such study has been done in White Hmong before
- Could contribute to space project
- This study is easily comparable with others because of the nature of the data collection
- Does Hmong have a basic locative construction? - what is it?
- Verbs used as locative constructions are rare in the languages discussed in Levinson and Wilkins (2006), but frequent in White Hmong.
 - perhaps this is an areal feature of Southeast Asia?

Methodology

- Bowerman/Pederson - Topological Relations Picture Series (TRPS) (1992)
 - 71 pictures
 - Examples include: apple on table, fruit in bowl, ring on finger...
- Will focus primarily on the 8 examples which are focussed on in Levinson and Wilkins (2006)

Topological Relations Picture Series

71 pictures – figure-ground relationships suggested by arrows pointing at figure



Source of Data

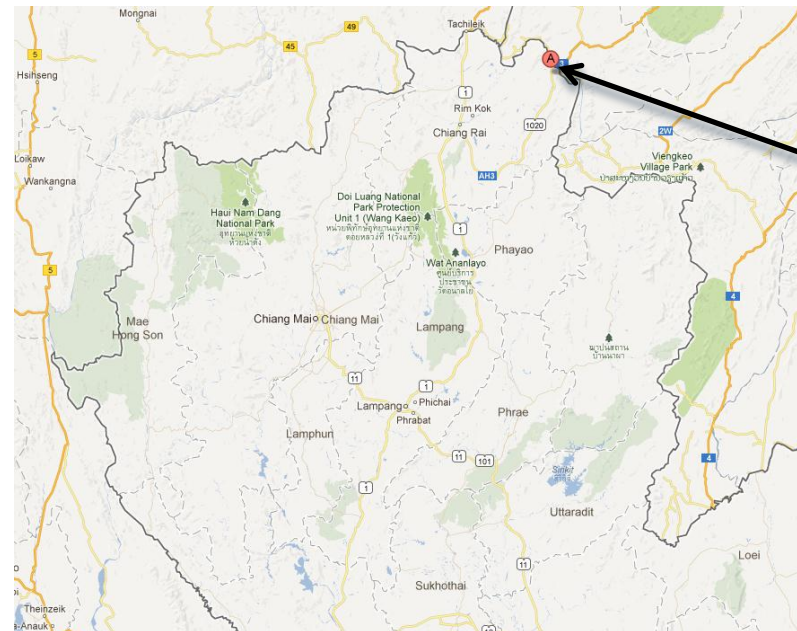
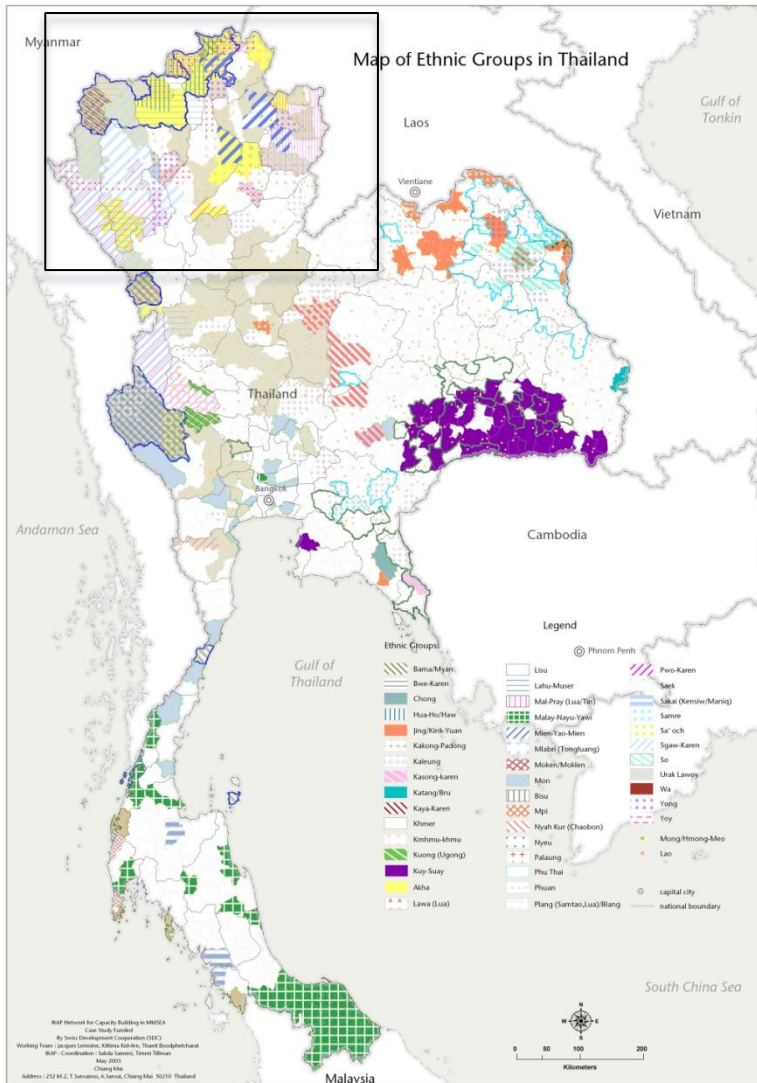
- **Four complete data sets/one incomplete data set**
- 6 primary consultants: (approximate ages range from 30-61)
- 2 primary female consultants, 4 primary male consultants
- At least 3 college educated
- All speak Hmong as first language (the youngest woman and man may have been slightly less fluent than the others)
- 2 speak fluent English
- 5 speak fluent Thai
- All but one consultant lives in Thailand, all born in SEA

1st Consultant location (XFC)

- Madison, Wisconsin



Map of field location – Chiang Rai - Thailand



Region:
Chiang
Khong
Village:
Ban Kiew
Karn

All of the other consultants are from Chiang Rai Province

Issues with data collection

- Difficulty eliciting response to ‘Where is x?’
 - The consultant might not include both a figure and ground, or may switch the two
 - The pictures were not always culturally relevant
 - Eg. Dog bed, apples, ribbon, pencil, shelf, receipt holder...
- Translation issues:
 - Possibility of translator potentially influencing construction choice in Hmong by giving hints about topological relationships in Thai

Observation 1 – Does White Hmong have a basic locative construction?

- Basic locative construction cline:
 - 1. nyob + deictic/adposition
 - 2. non-nyob verb + deictic
 - 3. non-nyob verb (alone)
 - 4. other constructions

Approximate % values for verbs in locatives

<i>nyob</i> + x	67%
<i>nyob</i> (alone)	0%
<i>nyob</i> + <i>ntawm</i>	25%
<i>nyob</i> + <i>saum</i>	17%
<i>nyob</i> + <i>hauv</i>	17%
non- <i>nyob</i> verb + x	24%
non- <i>nyob</i> verb (alone)	9%

‘alone’ means aside from the figure and ground

‘+ x’ is anything else in the construction aside from figure and ground

Approximate % values for deictics and adpositions in locatives

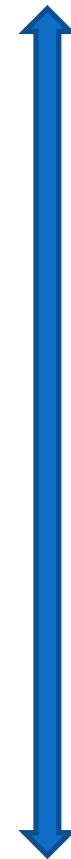
<i>ntawm</i>	38%
<i>saum</i>	24%
<i>hauv</i>	21%
adpositions (<i>qab/sab</i>)	18%

Observations 2: *nyob* and other verbs

- *Nyob* is the most common verb in the data and cannot be used without at least a deictic or adposition
 - this is also true for verbs such as *dai* ‘to hang’
- Non-*nyob* verbs in the data include:
 - Including: *lo* ‘to glue’, *khuam* ‘to hang’, *khi* ‘to tie’, *ntxig* ‘to be poked by’, *dai* ‘to hang’, *vov* ‘to cover’, *chob* ‘to hook’, *nkaug* ‘to poke through’, *khoov* ‘crouch’, *raug* ‘hit’, *zaum* ‘sit’, *pheeb* ‘lean against’, *ntim* ‘put object into bag’, *sia* ‘wear on waist’, *hla* ‘drape over’, *ncig* ‘to surround’, *txawb* ‘lie on top of’,
- Some verbs like *khi* don’t seem to allow deictics or adpositions in their constructions

Implicational Hierarchy from Levinson and Wilkins (2006)

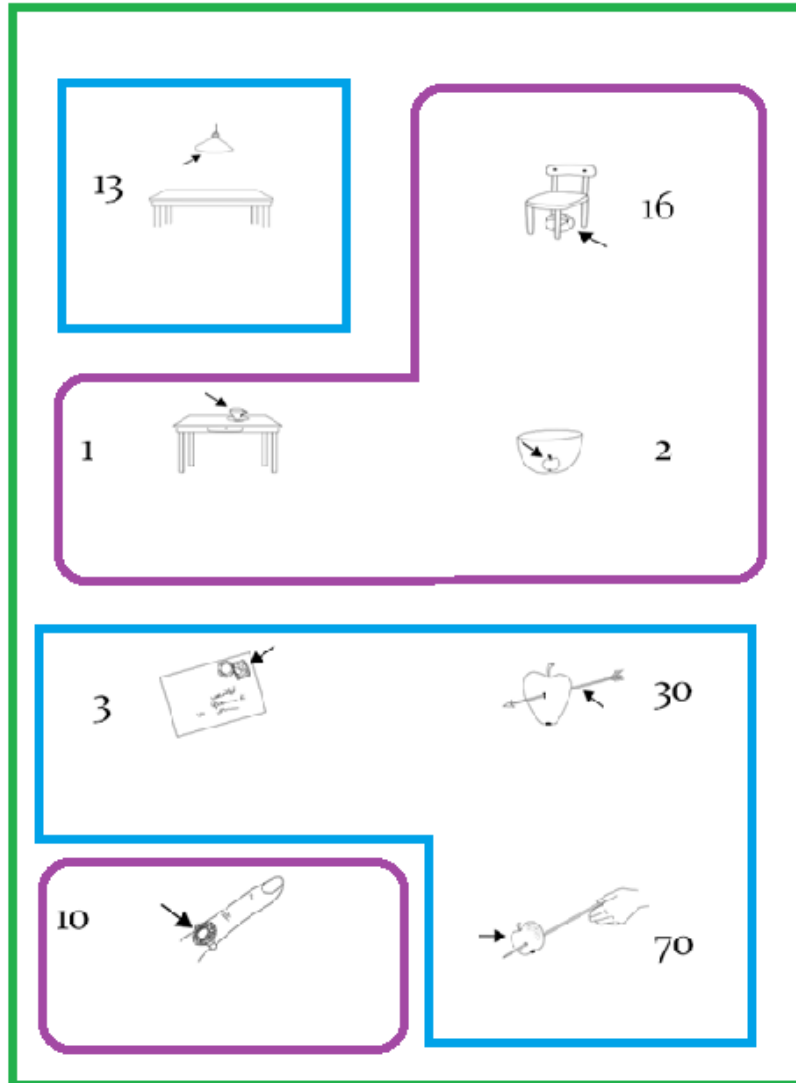
- *Core scenes*
 - Cup on table (1)
 - fruit in bowl (2)
 - lamp over table (13)
 - ball under chair (16)
- *Adhesion*
 - Stamp (3)
- *Ground-pierced*
 - Arrow in apple (30)
- *Figure-pierced*
 - Apple on skewer (70)
- *Animate-ground*
 - Ring on finger (10)



BLC more likely

BLC less likely

Verb usage in Locative constructions

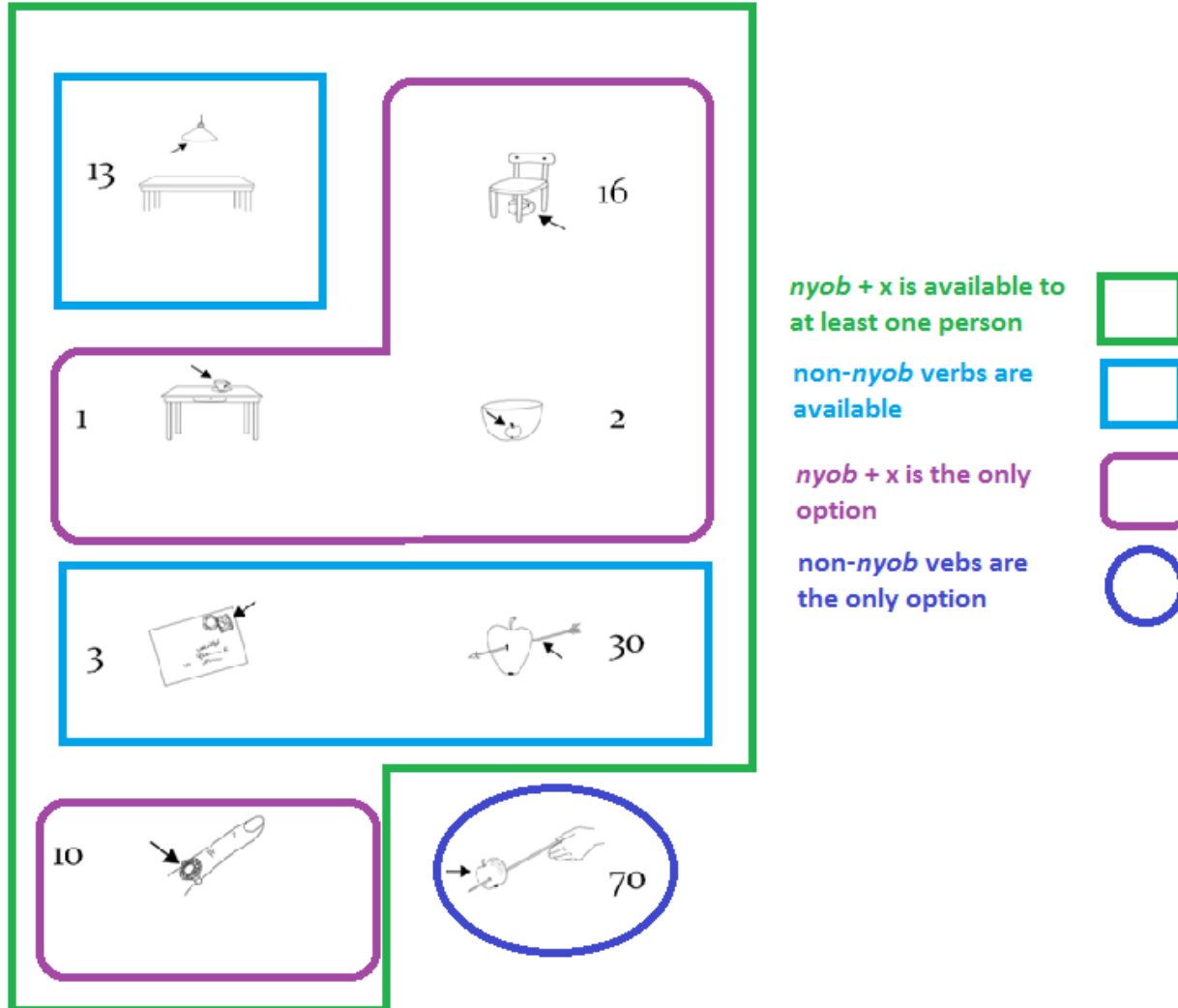


nyob + x is available to at least one person

non-*nyob* verbs are available

nyob + x is the only option


Verb usage in locative constructions: without data from youngest speaker




Observations 3 – Deictics


- *ntawm* – ‘at, by (loc)’
 - (seems most basic) - (is most common in the data at 38% of sentences)
- *saum* - ‘above’
 - does not necessarily imply attachment or non-attachment
 - *sab saum* -> approximately above/beside (in example (not touching))
- *hauv* ‘inside’ (containment) and *nraum* ‘outside’ (non-containment)
- *nram* – ‘below’
- *tim* – ‘there’
 - only found in data with non-*nyob* verbs of attachment (i.e. *khuam* ‘hang’/*lo* ‘glue’)


Deictics in locative constructions

13 

saum

1 

3 

10 

 16

hauv


 2

 30


ntawm

 70

Deictics in locative constructions: without youngest speaker data

13 


saum

1 


 16


hauv


 2

3 

ntawm

10 

 30

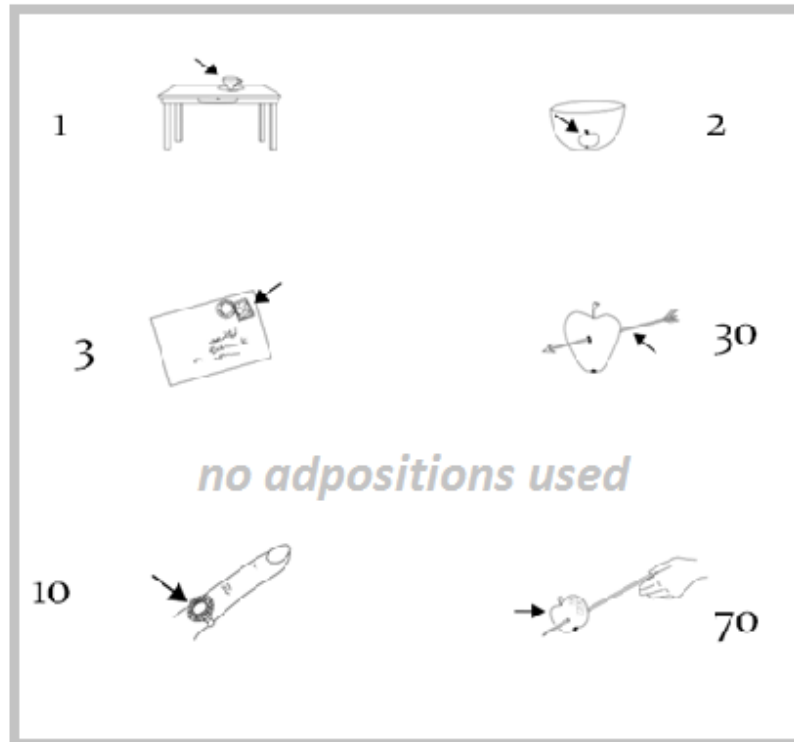
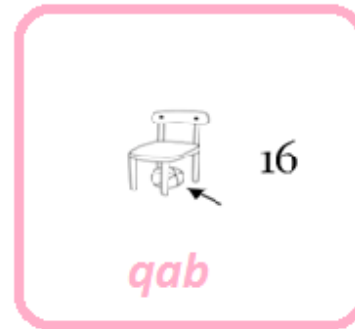
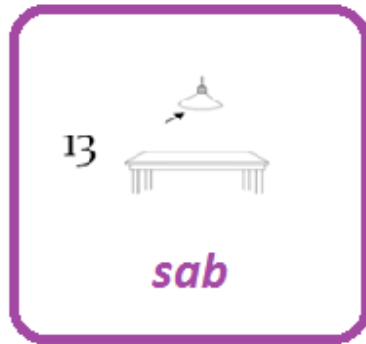
 70

Observations 4: adpositions









- The adposition can be before or after the deictic if there is one
- The adposition and deictics always follow the verb
- The adposition is almost always a preposition, however in the example below, the adposition is a postposition

1. *Lub teeb dai saum rooj sab sauv*
pic #13 CL lamp hang above table side above.on.top
Handout #2 'The lamp is hanging above the table.' (Z, VD, TL)

Adposition use in locatives



Response stability: how many different options are there for expressing the same relationship?

<p>13  13 Three</p>	<p>16  16 One</p> <p>1  1</p> <p>2  2</p>
<p>3  3 Three</p>	<p>30  30 Four</p>
<p>10  10 Two</p>	<p>70  70 Three</p>

Topological relations in Kilivila

Senft (2006; 214-216)

- 2 *Miyana leta ekausi stampa epakisi otapwala*
mi-ya-na leta e-kau-si stampa e-paki-si otapwala
Dem-CP.flexible-Dem letter 3.-take-Pl stamp 3.-glue-Pl at the side
'They take this letter and glue a stamp on its side'¹¹
- 3 *Manakwa boli osukwavela sea ekanukwenu*
ma-na-kwa boli osukwavela sea e-kanukwenu
Dem-Dem-CP.thing ball under(neath) chair 3.-rest
'This ball rests (lies) under a chair'
- 4 *Lampa olakeva tebeli esoya*
lampa olakeva tebeli e-soya
lamp over table 3.-hang
'The lamp is hanging over the table'

Kilivila semantic map Senft (2006)

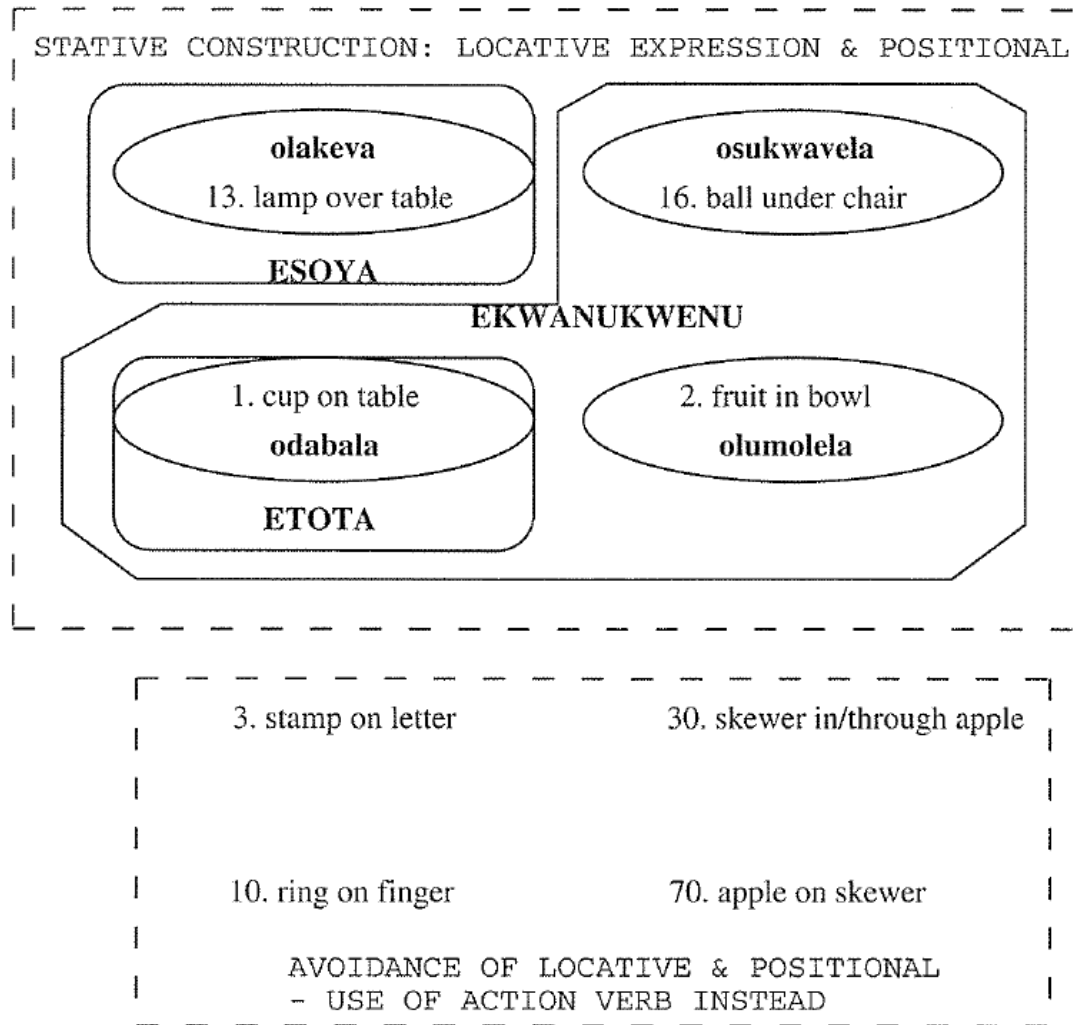


Figure A3 Kilivila

Issues that White Hmong poses for implicational hierarchy

Animate-Ground > Figure-Pierced > Ground-Pierced > Adhesion > Core-Scenes

Ring on finger > apple on skewer > arrow in apple > stamp > cup on table,
 fruit in bowl,
 -BLC ←————→ +BLC **lamp over table,**
 ball under chair

5. *Lub teeb dai saum rooj sab sauv*
 pic #13 CL lamp hang above table side above.on.top
 Handout #2 'The lamp is hanging above the table.' (Z, VD, TL)

6. *Lub nplhaib nyob ntawm tus ntiv tes*
 pic #10 CL ring be there CL digit hand
 Handout #15 'The ring is on the finger.' (all but Z)

Conclusions

- If a BLC exists in White Hmong, then the implicational hierarchy is not completely representative for every language
- Influence of age on responses
 - Often become less complex and semantic extensions change in younger speakers
- Like Kilivila, White Hmong makes use of various action verbs to express some more complex relationships

References

Bowerman, Melissa & Eric Pederson. 1992. Topological relations picture series. In Stephen C. Levinson (ed.), *Space stimuli kit 1.2: November 1992*, 51. Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.

Levinson, Stephen C. & Wilkins David P. (ed.) (2006) *Grammars of space: Explorations in cognitive diversity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Senft, G. (2006). Prolegomena to Kilivila grammar of space. In S. C. Levinson, & D. P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Grammars of space: Explorations in cognitive diversity* (pp. 206-229). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ua Tsaug os! Thank You!

- Consultants
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