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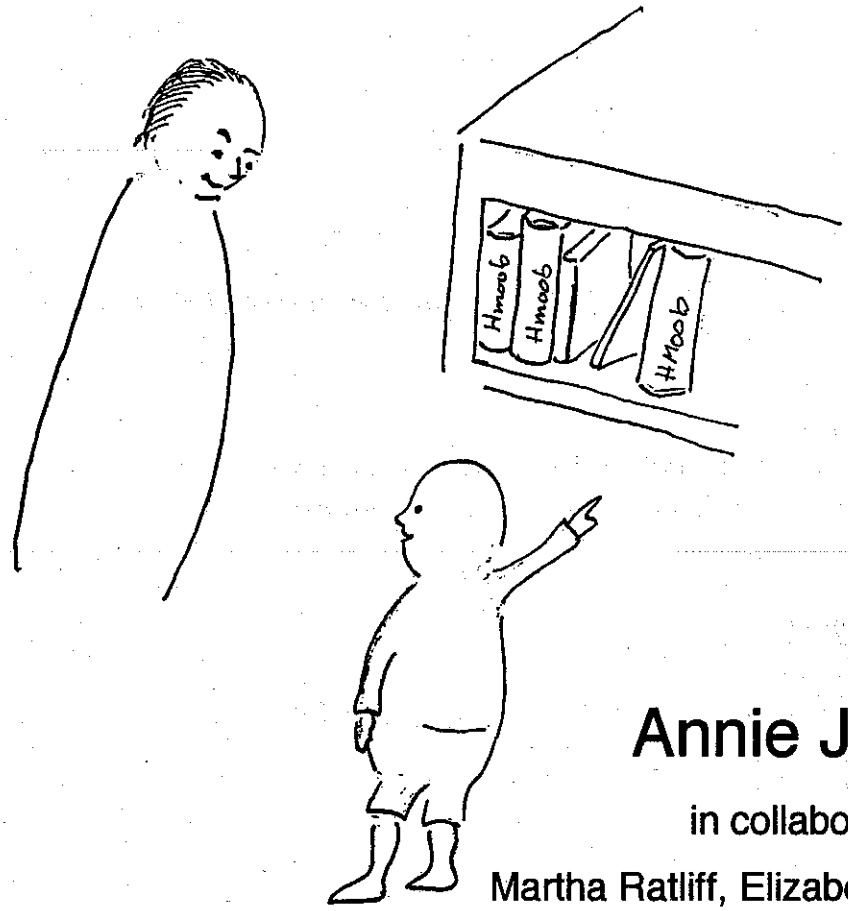
HMONG FOR BEGINNERS



Annie Jaisser

in collaboration with

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David Strecker, Lopao Vang, and Lyfu Vang

Illustrations by Tria Xiong, David Strecker, and Halinka Luangpraseut

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This book is dedicated to

the Hmong people

and

their sophisticated language

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PREFACE

ABOUT *HMONG FOR BEGINNERS*

This book evolved from the 10-week intensive Hmong course offered at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) during the summers of 1985-89. When Hmong was first taught in 1985, there were no instructional materials available. During the five summers Hmong was offered, the instructors—my collaborators and myself—had to create materials and lessons on a daily basis to be able to teach. This was typically done overnight, by the skin of our teeth and relying on illustrations from published sources. My goal in compiling *Hmong for Beginners* was to remedy this situation and to provide a textbook suitable for anyone interested in acquiring basic Hmong language skills. Since this covers a broad range of people with very diverse backgrounds and learning motivations, the instructional materials are presented in a flexible format which allows for either group instruction in a classroom setting or individual instruction with a tutor. The book begins with an introduction to the Hmong sound system and a pronunciation guide to the Romanized Popular Alphabet writing system, which provides pronunciation aids for consonants, vowels, and tones. Next, pedagogical materials are arranged in sections that target the different skills involved in foreign language learning. These sections are organized as follows:

Competency-Based Units: These units cover the basic vocabulary necessary to develop survival skills in areas of everyday life (family/kinship, food, clothing, etc.) and include a few practice dialogues.

Oral Comprehension Units: These units include original stories and exercises geared toward developing listening skills and improving the understanding of spoken Hmong. They are intended for use by a native speaker instructor/tutor.

Reading Units: These units include original stories which incorporate vocabulary presented in the competency-based units and are geared toward developing reading skills.

Grammar Units: These units make up a mini-grammar of Hmong which explains the most important and challenging aspects of Hmong grammar for students with varying backgrounds in foreign language learning. The overall strategy I used was to move from the familiar to the less familiar. Even though Hmong seems wildly exotic, it does share features with English and other languages on a conceptual level, and an effort has been made to point these out to facilitate the learning process.

Lessons can be created by combining elements from the different sections listed above. Using vocabulary and dialogues from the competency-based units as a starting point, complementary materials covering the same topic can be added from other units, thus providing practice in developing skills in all the necessary areas. These complementary materials are listed in the bottom left-hand corner in each competency-based unit and are coded as follows:

OC = Oral Comprehension
R = Reading
CP = Conversation Practice

Appendices 1 and 2 provide answer keys to the exercises as well as translations of the stories in the oral comprehension and reading sections. These are provided primarily for private instruction with a tutor so students can verify their answers and double-check their understanding. They should be consulted only as a last resort.

Appendix 3 is the transcript of an audiotape which provides listening practice in the content areas found elsewhere in the book. The transcript should not be looked at while listening to the tape, at least not at first. A good strategy would be to first listen to a section of the tape several times, and then to transcribe it, using the transcript to verify comprehension and spelling.

Appendix 4 discusses the major differences between the White and Green Hmong dialects (see below) so the book may be used by students interested in learning either or both.

The bibliography lists the resources used in the compilation of this book—including ordering information for several of them.

The glossary includes all the Hmong words contained in the textbook as well as other common words beginners might find helpful in interacting with Hmong people or reading simple texts.

ABOUT THE HMONG LANGUAGE

Hmong belongs to the Hmong-Mien (a.k.a. Miao-Yao) language family. This language family is quite large and diverse, the Hmongic branch of it being as complex as the Germanic branch of Indo-European and the Mienic branch being somewhat less complex. There is controversy among linguists as to the wider genetic affiliation of the Hmong-Mien family : some include it in the Sino-Tibetan language family while others place it within the Austro-Tai family.

The two major dialects of Hmong spoken in Thailand and Laos—and hence in the Western countries where Hmong refugees have relocated—are:

1. Hmong Daw, typically referred to in English as White Hmong
2. Mong Leng, also referred to in English as Green or Blue* Hmong/Mong†

For simplicity's sake I will refer to the two dialects as White and Green Hmong in this book. However, since there is variation within the Hmong community itself as to naming preferences, care should be taken to ask the Hmong with whom one comes in contact what they wish to be called. Linguistically speaking, the differences between the two dialects are relatively minor and the two varieties are mutually intelligible. This mutual intelligibility is enhanced by the fact that White and Green Hmong speakers live either together or in close proximity and consider themselves closely related enough to intermarry. A helpful analogy in characterizing the differences between the two dialects is to think of them as being farther apart than American and British English, but not as far apart as Spanish and Portuguese. Since most linguists who started

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* *Ntsuab* in Hmong, which translates as either green or blue (i.e., the anthropologist's "grue") since it refers to the greenish blue or bluish green portion of the color spectrum.

† The "hm" sound does not occur in Green Hmong; hence the frequently occurring "Mong" spelling for the name of this dialect (see Appendix 4 for details).

to analyze Hmong in the United States happened to rely on White Hmong speakers as language consultants for their research, White Hmong is the more investigated dialect, and hence the one used in this book. However, the major differences between the two varieties are discussed in the "Pronunciation Guide to the RPA" and in Appendix 4; a literate Green Hmong instructor/tutor will be able to make the necessary adjustments to use the book as a teaching tool, and a student interested in learning basic Green Hmong will be able to do the same.

Hmong is presented in the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), the practical orthography developed by missionaries in the early 1950s (see p. 4 for details). Words in Hmong are usually monosyllabic (for example, *qaib* 'chicken,' *tsev* 'house,' etc.), but there are a number of high-frequency words which are disyllabic compounds (for example, *me nyuam* 'child,' *to taub* 'to understand,' *hauj lwm* 'work,' etc.). These compounds are spelled as two words by some Hmong and as single words by others (i.e., the examples just given would be spelled *menyuam*, *totaub*, and *haujlwm*). For lack of standardization and for consistency's sake, everything is written in monosyllables in this book. This choice was further motivated by the fact that tone is easier to deal with in monosyllables in the initial language learning stages. Finally, it is the preferred spelling convention of the main Hmong contributor, Lopao Vang.

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For helping me get this project off the ground, I am deeply indebted to my remarkable collaborators. We were all instructors involved in creating teaching materials for the Hmong courses offered at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) during the summers of 1985-89. *Hmong for Beginners* includes samples of each person's creative efforts and expertise. Lopao Vang made up the imaginative stories designed toward developing oral comprehension skills. Elizabeth Riddle, Lopao Vang, and Lyfu Vang contributed stories for reading practice as indicated in the body of the book. I could not have compiled the mini-grammar of Hmong without the contributions from my linguist colleagues, friends, and mentors: Martha Ratliff and Elizabeth Riddle supplied several drafts which I used as starting points, and I relied on results of their research to write about a number of topics; Nerida Jarkey lent her expert hand in revising my verb serialization draft; Susan Herring provided helpful information and insights on the notions of tense and aspect; Leanne Hinton gave me valuable feedback on my drafts based on her expertise in developing instructional materials for Native Americans; Jim Matisoff inspired me to come to Berkeley to pursue Hmong studies and continues to encourage me and to share his vast knowledge of Southeast Asia as a linguistic area.

For providing original and culturally sensitive artwork, I am grateful to Halinka Luangpraseut, David Strecker, and especially Tria Xiong. Their individual creative drawing styles make this a uniquely illustrated book.

For compiling from scratch an English-Hmong glossary, I thank Elizabeth Riddle. This glossary is a wonderful pedagogical tool and makes the book more complete.

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A.J.

ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

Below is a list of the abbreviations and conventions used in the book:

clf	classifier
comp	comparative marker
dir	direction marker
e.o.	each other
fut	future marker
imp	imperative
int	intensifier
irrls	irrealis marker
loc	locative marker
neg	negation marker
neg uncert	negation uncertain
perf	perfective marker
pl.	plural
prog	progressive marker
prt	particle
Q	question marker
quant	quantifier
recip	reciprocal action marker
sg.	singular
superl	superlative marker
t.c.	tone change
top	topic marker
* X	X is ungrammatical
'X'	X is English translation of Hmong
< X	from X
(X)	X is optional

INTRODUCTION: THE SOUND SYSTEM OF HMONG

The purpose of this section is for you to become familiar with the general sound structure of Hmong (White and Green).

SYLLABLE STRUCTURE

Hmong is largely a monosyllabic language, meaning that most words appear in the shape of a single syllable (but see section on compound nouns for two-syllable words, some of which are used frequently in everyday speech). Each syllable is made up of an initial consonant or consonant cluster, a vowel or a diphthong, and a *simultaneous* tone. There are no final consonants, except for *ng* [ŋ], as in English *sing*, which occurs only as part of the pronunciation of the nasalized vowels of Hmong and hence is not considered a full-fledged final consonant (see section on vowels below).

TONES

Hmong—like hundreds of languages in Asia (e.g., Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, etc.), Africa, and the Americas—is a tone language. This means that each syllable is pronounced with its own distinctive tone.

There are different types of tones; the most common makes use of normal voice quality and changes in pitch (e.g., low vs. high pitch, falling pitch, rising pitch). English—like other European languages with which you may be familiar—is not a tone language, but it does make use of pitch changes at the level of intonation (i.e., the melody/music of a phrase or sentence). For instance, expressions such as *Yes! Great!* have a falling pitch and are interpreted as statements expressing enthusiasm, whereas those such as *Yes? Great?* have a rising pitch and are interpreted as questions. Pitch changes do not result in different words with different meanings; rather, they indicate that a word is used as a statement, a question, and/or to express speaker attitude (e.g., enthusiasm, surprise, hesitation, etc.). By contrast, in Hmong, pitch changes do affect the meaning of the word: *dej* with a falling pitch means 'water'; *dev* with a rising pitch means 'dog.'

To summarize, in Hmong, pitch changes are part of a phenomenon called tone and form an intrinsic part of the syllable; in English, pitch changes are part of a phenomenon called intonation and are superimposed on the syllable. Hence, even though pitch changes are used at a different level of linguistic structure and for different purposes in the two languages, you do know how to modulate your voice to produce different pitch patterns, and are thus already capable of producing some of the Hmong tones without being aware of it. This should help you relax and give you confidence—Hmong is less "exotic" than you think. Hmong has six such simple tones characterized by normal voice quality and changes in pitch:

- High level
- High falling
- Mid rising
- Mid level
- Low level with slight fall
- Low rising, long

For the tones described above, the hearer relies on pitch alone to distinguish among them. There are also more complex tones, whose salient characteristic is either a different type of voice quality from the one we use for normal speech, or some additional sound feature. Hmong has two such complex tones:

- Falling with breathy/whispery voice
- Low falling ending with a glottal stop (i.e., sharp catch in the throat) or creaky voice

In the "Pronunciation Guide to the Hmong Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) Writing System" (below), you will find more details on each one of these tones.

VOWELS

The White Hmong vowel system is relatively simple; it includes six simple vowels and seven complex vowels: two nasalized ones, and five diphthongs.

Simple vowels (e.g., i [i] as in *see*) are sounds pronounced on airflow escaping through the mouth alone. Nasalized vowels are more complex in that the air comes out not only through the mouth, but also through the nose while they are being produced. Besides the nasalization, the Hmong nasalized vowels are characterized by an additional feature: they end in the nasal consonant *ng* [ŋ] (as in English *sing*), which is part of the nasalization of the vowel and serves to make it more distinct. White Hmong has two such nasalized vowels, and Green Hmong has an additional one (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for more details).

Diphthongs are complex vowels in that they start with a particular vowel sound, but end in another, as in English *high* or *house*. Hmong also has these two diphthongs, plus three additional ones which do not occur in English (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for more details).

CONSONANTS

While the vowel system of Hmong is relatively simple, the consonant system is extremely rich and complex. Hmong seems to make use of just about every place of articulation (lips, teeth, front and back palate, uvula) and tongue position possible in the mouth to produce the fifty-seven consonant/consonant-cluster sounds of the language (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for minor differences in the consonant system of the two dialects). This means that you will have to listen carefully to train your ear to hear the subtle differences between consonant sounds and to learn how to position your tongue in the mouth to pronounce them properly (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for more details).

While complex, the consonant system is also a marvel of symmetry in its structure. The complexity is greatly reduced once you realize that a large number of these consonants actually boil down to a series with four variants:

- Simple unaspirated consonants
- Aspirated consonants—i.e., consonants which are pronounced with a puff of air coming out of the mouth, as in English *spin*, where the *p* is unaspirated, vs. *pin*, where the *p* is aspirated. (You can test this by putting your hand in front of your mouth while saying the two words out loud.) In the RPA, aspirated consonants are written with an *h* following the consonant.

- Pre-nasalized unaspirated consonants—i.e., consonants are pronounced with an *m*, *n*, or *ng* nasal consonant sound right before them. In the RPA, pre-nasalized unaspirated consonants are represented with an *n* right before the consonant.
- Pre-nasalized aspirated consonants—i.e., consonants are pronounced with an *m*, *n*, or *ng* nasal consonant sound right before them and a puff of air coming out of the mouth. In the RPA, pre-nasalized aspirated consonants are represented with an *n* right before the consonant and an *h* right after the consonant. Let us illustrate these four variants with *p*:

peb	1. 'three'; 2. 'we/us/our'	simple unaspirated *p*
phem	'evil, bad'	aspirated *p*
npe	'name'	pre-nasalized unaspirated *p*
nphau	'to tip over, turbulent'	pre-nasalized aspirated *p*

As seen in the Hmong Consonant Chart, the same four-way symmetrical pattern obtains with the following consonants: pl, t, tx, r, c, ts, k, and q (see the "Pronunciation Guide" for details on how to sound them out) and makes the system as a whole less daunting and more manageable.

HMONG CONSONANT CHART

(Sounds in *italics* occur only in White Hmong; sounds in **boldface** are specific to Green Hmong.)

	Lips		Teeth			Front Palate			Back Palate	Uvu -la	Vocal Cords
Unaspirated	p	pl	t	*d* **dl**	tx	r	c	ts	k	q	
Aspirated	ph	plh	th	*dh* **dlh**	txh	rh	ch	tsh	kh	qh	
Pre-nasalized unaspirated	np	npl	nt	**ndl**	ntx	nr	nc	nts	nk	nq	
Pre-nasalized aspirated	nph	nplh	nth	**ndlh**	ntxh	nrh	nch	ntsh	nkh	nqh	
	m	nl	n				ny		g		
	hm **m**	*hnl* **nl**	*hn* **n**				*hny* **ny**				
	f		x			s	xy				h
	v		l			z	y				
			hl								

To summarize, the sound inventory of White Hmong includes:

- Eight tones
- Thirteen vowel sounds
- Fifty-seven consonant/consonant-cluster sounds.

REPRESENTING HMONG SOUNDS: THE ROMANIZED POPULAR ALPHABET (RPA) WRITING SYSTEM

The writing system used in this book is the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA). The RPA is a practical orthography based on the Roman alphabet and developed in Laos in the early 1950s by the missionary linguists Linwood Barney, Yves Bertrais, and William Smalley. There are other writing systems—both older and more recent—for Hmong (see, e.g., Lemoine 1972 and Smalley et al. 1990), but the RPA is used here because it is not only the orthography accepted by most Hmong resettled in the Western world, but also the system most accessible to native speakers of English. Linguistically speaking, it is a good, clear, and consistent orthography in most respects; it is also quite phonetic, meaning that the relationship between the spoken language and the written language is a close one (along the lines of spoken/written Spanish and much better than written English or French). The next section will introduce you to the RPA in greater detail.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE TO THE HMONG RPA WRITING SYSTEM

The purpose of this guide is to help you learn how to pronounce Hmong on the basis of the RPA writing system. The first section deals with the tones, the second with the vowels, and the third with the consonants.

I. TONES

In the chart below the first column gives the RPA symbol for each tone. Since Hmong does not have final consonants, it was decided to use 8 arbitrary consonant letters and to attach them at the end of syllables to represent tone in the writing system.

The second column indicates what each tone sounds like; tone values are given on a five-point pitch scale, where 5 is the higher end of the pitch range and 1 the lower end—relative to each speaker's voice range. The first digit indicates the starting point of the pitch and the second digit the ending point.

The third column gives a description of each tone as well as helpful pronunciation strategies.

The fourth column gives an example word for each tone; notice that all the words given share the same consonant and vowel, and are *differentiated by tone alone* (except for the *-d* tone, where the vowel is different since *pod* does not occur as a word). Each word first appears with a graphic representation of its tone, where the vertical line stands for the full spoken voice range (going from high to low), and the line extending from it for the contour of the tone in relation to the voice range. Then the word is given in RPA and translated into English.

NOTE: The graphic representation of each tone is a good visual memory aid for learning tones and should help you remember that final consonants are not sounded out.

RPA Symbol	Tone Value	Tone Description + Pronunciation Aid	Example + Translation
-b	55	• High level; • Use high pitch in your voice range and maintain level pitch throughout the syllable.	po˥ *pob* 'lump'
-j	52	• High falling; • Start high in your voice range and drop pitch throughout the syllable to below middle of the range (pretending to be standing at the edge of a cliff and falling down helps achieve the desired effect); • Similar to falling intonation in English "Yes!"	po˥˩ *poj* 'female'
-v	24	• Mid rising; • Start just below the middle of your range, maintain level pitch first, and then raise your voice at the end of the syllable; • Similar to rising intonation in English yes/no questions.	po˧˥ *pov* 'to throw'
-Ø (no symbol)	33	• Mid level; • Use mid-range pitch and maintain it throughout the syllable.	po˧ *po* 'pancreas, spleen'
-s	22	• Low level; • Start just below the middle of your range, maintain level pitch at first, and then drop voice slightly at the end of the syllable.	po˩ *pos* 'thorn'

NOTE: As you can see, the *-Ø* tone and the *-s* tone are very close in pitch, which makes it sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. Rather than relying on pitch alone, listen for the fall at the end of the *-s* tone; this is what will help you differentiate it from the *-Ø* tone. Also, the *-Ø* tone seems to have a slightly "chanted" quality to it.

-m	31ʔ	• Low falling with glottal stop/creaky voice at end; • Start mid-range and drop your voice to lower end of your pitch range; end syllable abruptly with a sharp catch in the throat (glottal stop—i.e., the sound in the middle of "oh-oh") or a bit of creaky voice (both are acceptable to native speakers); • Easy to recognize because of short duration and truncated quality at the end.	po˩ˀ	*pom*	'to see'
-g	42	• Breathy/whispery falling; • Use a sultry or spooky voice quality and a falling pitch to produce this tone (I call it the Marylin Monroe tone); • This tone starts at different points of the voice range, depending on the speaker, but always has a falling contour; salient feature is the breathy, hollow voice quality.	po˩˩	*pog*	'grand-mother'

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-d	213	• Low rising, noticeably longer than other tones; • Start just below the middle of your range, drop voice slightly, and then raise it sharply (similar to mid rising *-v* tone, but lower in pitch and longer). *N.B. This is a marginal tone, a variant of the -m tone, which is used only under certain grammatical conditions (see section on -d tone).*	po˨˧˥	*ped*	'up there'

NOTE: These are auditory descriptions of tones in citation form; in rapid, connected speech tones are influenced by neighboring sounds and syllables and are harder to make out. But context combined with knowledge of vocabulary and grammar will help you understand.

II. Vowels and Consonants

The first column of the chart below shows the RPA symbols for vowels and consonants (for ease of reference, consonant symbols appear in alphabetical order). They represent both dialects, with sounds specific to Green Hmong in boldface characters (for a more detailed discussion of the major pronunciation differences between the two dialects, see Appendix 4).

The second column provides phonetic values for the benefit of those who are familiar with phonetic transcription, but it may be safely ignored by others.

The third column exhibits comments about the pronunciation of the RPA symbols:

- "As in X" means that the sound exists in English as a distinctive sound unit and hence will not present any learning difficulties;
- "No equivalent" means that the sound does not exist in English as a distinctive sound unit and hence will require extra work on your part;
- "(Roughly) similar to X" means that for sounds which do not have an equivalent in English, an example of an English sound sequence can be given which approximates the sound.

Sounding out the English examples in this column focusing on the underlined sounds will help you pronounce the Hmong sounds better.

The fourth column contains illustrative examples in RPA followed by their translation. It includes many Hmong proper names since it is important to learn how to prounounce them well right from the start. Try to sound the illustrative examples out with the help of a native speaker.

A. VOWELS

RPA Symbol	**Phonetic Symbol**	**Pronunciation Aid**	**Example(s) + Translation**
Simple vowels			
i	[i]	As in see; "the smiling vowel"	*ib* 'one' *yim* 'eight'
e	[e]	No equivalent; similar to play, but without diphthongization	*peb* 1. 'three'; 2. 'we/us/our' *tes* 'hand'
a	[a]	As in father for many speakers; "the dentist vowel"	*Yaj* 'Yang (clan name)' *Vaj* 'Vang (clan name)'
o	[ɔ]	No equivalent; similar to lawn	*Thoj* 'Thao (clan name)' *mov* 'cooked rice'
u	[u]	As in soon	*kub* 1. 'hot'; 2. 'gold'; 3. 'Kou, Ku (boy's name)'
w	[ɨ]	No equivalent; similar to houses, but with the lips rounded a little.	*Vwj* 'Vue, Vu (clan name)' *twm* 'water buffalo'

Nasalized vowels

ee	[ɛ̃ŋ]	No equivalent; roughly similar to sang	*nees* 'horse' *Lees/**Leeg*** '(Hmong) Leng'
oo	[ɔ̃ŋ]	No equivalent; roughly similar to song	*Hmoob* 'Hmong' *khoom* 'thing'
aa	[ãŋ]	No equivalent; nasalized [a]; only in Green Hmong	***Yaaj*** 'Yang (clan name)' ***Vaaj*** 'Vang (clan name)'

Diphthongs

ia	[ia]	No equivalent; roughly similar to see a (person)	*liab* 'monkey' *liaj* 'rice paddy'
ua	[ua]	No equivalent; roughly similar to sue a (person)	*ua* 'to do, to make' *npua* 'pig'
ai	[aj]	As in Hi and Bye	*Maiv* 'Mai, My (girl's name)' *qaib* 'chicken'
au	[aw]	As in outhouse	*plaub* 'four' *Lauj* 'Lo, Lor, Lau (clan name)'
aw	[ɤɨ]	No equivalent.	*dawb* 'white' *Hawj* 'Her, Heu (clan name)'

NOTE: Notice how in the RPA writing system simple vowels are represented with a single vowel symbol while complex ones appear as sequences of two vowel symbols. Nasalization is represented by a doubling of the vowel, and diphthongization by a sequence of the two vowel symbols involved in the diphthong—one of them always being the symbol a.

B. CONSONANTS

c	[ʈ]	No equivalent; pronounced with blade of tongue behind teeth and pressed against front part of the palate	*cev* 'body' *cuaj* 'nine'
ch	[ʈʰ]	No equivalent; same as above with aspiration	*cheb* 'to sweep'
d	[dː]	Roughly similar to do; = **dl/tl** [tɭ̥] in Green Hmong	*dawb* 'white' *dev* 'dog'
dh	[dːʰ]	No equivalent; rare; = **dlh/tlh** [tɭ̥ʰ] in Green Hmong	*dhia* 'to jump'
dl/dlh	See d/dh above		

f	[f]	As in five	*Faj* 'Fang (clan name)' *faib* 'to divide'
g	[ŋ]	No equivalent; similar to sing; very rare	*gig gog* 'sound of tigers fighting' *gus* 'goose'
h	[h]	As in happy	*Ham* 'Hang, Ha (clan name)' *hais* 'to speak, to say'
hl	[l̥]	No equivalent	*hli* 1. 'moon'; 2. 'Hli (girl's name)' *hlub* 'to love/care for'
hm	[m̥]	No equivalent; only in White Hmong	*Hmoob* 'Hmong' *hmo* 'night'
hml	[m̥l̥]	No equivalent; only in White Hmong; rare	*hmlos* 'to dent, to be dented'
hn	[n̥]	No equivalent	*hnov* 'to hear' *hniav* 'tooth'
hnl	Alternate spelling for *hml*		
hny	[ɲ̊]	No equivalent; only in White Hmong	*hnyav* 'heavy' *hnyuv* 'intestine'
k	[k]	No equivalent; similar to skin	*Koo* 'Kong (clan name)' *Kwm* 'Kue, Ku (clan name)'
kh	[kʰ]	As in cake	*Khab* 'Khang, Kha (clan name)'
l	[l]	As in life	*Lis* 'Le(e), Li, Ly (clan name)' *los* 'to come'
m	[m]	As in map	*Muas* 'Moua (clan name)' *mus* 'to go'
ml	[ml̥]	No equivalent; rare; similar to hamlet	*mloog* 'to listen' *mluas* 'sad'
mlh	Alternate spelling for *hml*		
n	[n̪]	As in near	*noj* 'to eat' *niam* 'mother'
nc	[n̪d̪ʒ]	No equivalent	*nco* 'to remember' *ncauj* 'mouth'
nch	[n̪t̪ʰ]	No equivalent	*nchuav* 'to pour out, to spill'

ndl	[n̪d̪l]	In Green Hmong only; no equivalent; similar to candle	*ndluav* 'to throw out (liquid)'
ndlh	[n̪t̪ɬʰ]	In Green Hmong only; no equivalent; very rare; similar to mantle	*ndlhij ndlhuaj* 'sound of walking through mud'
nk	[ŋg]	No equivalent; similar to finger	*nkoj* 'boat' *nkees* 'tired, lazy'
nkh	[ŋkʰ]	No equivalent; similar to incomplete	*nkhaus* 'crooked'
nl	Alternate spelling for *ml*		
np	[mb]	No equivalent; similar to combine	*npua* 'pig' *Npis* 'By (boy's name)'
nph	[mpʰ]	No equivalent; similar to computer	*nphau* 'to tip over, turbulent'
npl	[mb̥l̥]	No equivalent; similar to emblem	*nplej* 'unhulled rice' *nplooj* 'leaf'
nplh	[mpl̥]	No equivalent; similar to complain	*nphlaib* '(finger) ring'
nq	[ɴɢ]	No equivalent	*nqaij* 'meat, flesh' *nqe/nqi* 'price'
nqh	[ɴqʰ]	No equivalent; rare	*nqhuab* 'dried up'
nr	[ɳɖ̤]	No equivalent; similar to can drink	*nram* 'down below, downhill' *nres* 'to stop'
nrh	[ɳʈ̤ʰ]	No equivalent; similar to control	*nrhiav* 'to look for'
nt	[n̪d̪]	No equivalent; similar to endanger	*ntaub* 'cloth' *ntawv* 'paper'
nth	[n̪t̪ʰ]	No equivalent; similar to contend	*nthuav* 'to open out, unfold' *nthab* 'storage platform'
nts	[ndʒ]	No equivalent; similar to and Zaza (Gabor)	*ntsuab* 'green, greenish blue, color of vegetation' *ntses* 'fish'
ntsh	[ntʃʰ]	No equivalent; similar to can cheat	*ntshai* 'to fear, be afraid of'
ntx	[n̪d̪z̪]	No equivalent; similar to and Xerox	*ntxawm* 'youngest daughter; Yer (girl's name)' *ntxuav* 'to wash (hands, body)'

ntxh	[ⁿtsʰ]	No equivalent; similar to ants here	*ntxhw* 'elephant' *ntxhua* 'to wash (clothes), scrub'
ny	[ɲ]	No equivalent; similar to canyon, onion	*nyob* 'to reside' *nyiaj* 'silver, money'
p	[p]	No equivalent; similar to spin	*paj* 'flower' *paub* 'to know'
ph	[pʰ]	As in peace	*phem* 'evil, bad' *Phab* 'Phang, Pha (clan name)
pl	[pl]	No equivalent	*plaub* 'four' *plig* 'soul, spirit'
plh	[pl̥]	No equivalent; similar to play	*plhu* 'cheek'
q	[q]	No equivalent; similar to sky, but farther back in mouth; open mouth very wide, pull tongue back until you feel sick	*qaib* 'chicken' *qub* 'old (of things)'
qh	[qʰ]	No equivalent; same as above, but with aspiration; similar to car, but farther back in mouth	*qhia* 'to tell, teach'
r	[ɽ]	No equivalent	*roob* 'mountain' *Riam* 'Tria, Tia (boy's name)'
rh	[ɽʰ]	No equivalent; roughly similar to trough	*rhiab* 'to tickle'
s	[ʃ]	As in shoe	*sau* 'to write' *siab* 'liver'
t	[t̪]	No equivalent; similar to stay	*tub* 'son' *twm* 'water buffalo'
th	[t̪ʰ]	As in time	*them* 'to pay' *Thoj* 'Thao (clan name)'
tl/tlh	See d/dh		
ts	[tʃ]	No equivalent; similar to June, but a little harder	*Tsab* 'Chang, Cha (clan name)' *tsev* 'house'
tsh	[tʃʰ]	As in chair, church	*tsheb* 'vehicle' *tshuaj* 'medicine, herbs'
tx	[ⁿts]	No equivalent; similar to beds, but a little harder	*(lub) txiv* 'fruit' *txob* 'pepper'

txh	[tʂʰ]	No equivalent; similar to tsetse (fly), Tsongas	*txhuv* 'hulled, uncooked rice' *txhiab* 'thousand'
v	[v]	As in very, visa	*Vaj* 'Vang (clan name)' *Vwj* 'Vue, Vu (clan name)'
x	[ʂ]	As in see	*xa* 'to send' *xeem* 'clan'
xy	[ç]	Roughly similar to mash your (potatoes)	*Xyooj* 'Xiong (clan name)' *xyoob* 'bamboo'
y	[j]	Similar to yes	*Yaj* 'Yang (clan name)' *yeeb* 'opium'
z	[ʒ]	Similar to pleasure, vision	*zaj* 'dragon' *zos* 'village'

In summary, White Hmong has fifty-seven consonant sounds while Green Hmong has fifty-six (for more details on the major pronunciation differences between the two dialects, see Appendix 4).