# **Learning Lahu**

for English speakers

#### **About This Book**

This book is designed to get an English speaker to a basic level of understanding of the Lahu language. It has been designed to cover the various areas of the language in a logical order and one that allows you to build up your knowledge throughout your course.

Some exercises have been provided to give you an opportunity to use the information you have just studied. You will find the vocabulary needed for the exercises and examples is defined at the beginning of each section, prior to actually using it. Practise saying the words in the vocabulary sections so you are familiar with them when they are used in examples. Also be sure to use the vocabulary sections and the dictionary at the end of the book for more comprehensive listings.

This book has hopefully been designed to be useful both short and long term. Sufficient space has been left in the margins for notes (and corrections!) and extensive appendices can assist you long after you have finished the main course material.

These abbreviations are used throughout the main text and the dictionary.

n noun
 p final partical
 verb
 subject
 object
 pol polite
 par partical (general)
 lit literally

Words placed in square brackets '[]' have been added to complete the sense of sentences.

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# Part I Introduction

# Lahu People & Language

The Lahu people are a people without a country and inhabit areas within Thailand, China, Burma, Laos and Vietnam. Their population has been estimated at around 800,000 people and these are generally divided up into five main subgroups:

La`hu\_ na` Black Lahu
La`hu\_ nyi Red Lahu
La`hu\_ hpu White Lahu
La`hu\_ sheh` leh\_ Shehleh
La`hu\_ shi Yellow Lahu

The traditional clothing of each group is the easiest way to tell them apart and is often the reason for their particular name.

The Lahu language is in the Tibeto-Burman group of languages and is spoken by the Lahu people throughout the regions of China, Myanmar and Thailand. Each subgroup of Lahu people has its own particular dialect or way of speaking. Most, though, can understand Black Lahu (Laˇhu\_ naˆ) and this is regarded as the "lingua franca" of the Lahu people.

# **Alphabet**

The written Lahu alphabet is based on the Roman alphabet with only a few diacritics to identify tones. For this reason many people who are already familiar with the Roman alphabet (English speakers particularly) should be able to begin reading within a short period of time.

Several methods of writing the sounds (orthographies) in the Lahu language exist. The *Protestant* and *Catholic* orthographies were, naturally, created by missionaries. *Matisoff* by James A. Matisoff, a linguist from Berkeley University, California, uses a different system and may be regarded as being a more accurate representation of the spoken language. There is also the *Chinese* system. Of these four main orthographies, the *Protestant* method is the most widely used and understood by the Lahu people themselves and is therefore the method that is used here. See Appendix A for a chart showing a comparison between the four orthographies.

The order of the alphabet generally follows the same order as that of the English alphabet. Some references, namely Matisoff[1], use a method of ordering the alphabet based on the traditional order of Sanskrit-derived languages. This uses the method of articulation to determine the order of the letters.

#### 2.1 Consonants

Most consonants in Lahu should not present a problem for English speakers. There are a few differences that should be noted.

The consonants in the Lahu language are listed in Table 2.1.

#### 2.1.1 Aspirated & Unaspirated

As with many other languages in the area of South East Asia, there is a difference between *aspirated* and *unaspirated* sounds. To appreciate the difference between them some have tried saying the sounds with their hand in front of

Lahu	English Equivalent
Ъ	same as in English
ch	same as in English
c	<i>j</i> in 'jaw' (the unaspirated version of 'ch')
d	same as in English
f	same as in English
g	as in English
g g' h	a coarse 'g' or a throaty 'r' like in French, a fricative
h	as in English
j k	as in English
k	g in 'git' (like 'ก' in Thai)
hk	c in 'cat'
k'	c in 'coat', at the back of the throat
hk'	c in 'caught' but further back in throat
1	as in English
m	as in English
n/ny	same as in English
ng	as in English
p	b in 'bat', unaspirated p or b (like the Thai '닙')
hp	p in 'people', aspirated
pf	as in English
s/sh	as in English, often <i>sh</i> sounds like just <i>s</i>
t	cross between 'd' and 't' (like the Thai 'በ')
ht	a 't' in English
V	as in English
y	cross between a 'y' and 'j'

Table 2.1: Lahu Consonants

their mouth. With an aspirated sound you should feel a puff of air against you hand. Unaspirated sounds should have no puff.

For example, the sounds made by the letters 'p', 't' and 'c' in the words *spar*, *star* and *scar* are unaspirated and have no puff of air. In contrast, the sounds made by the letters 'c', 't' and 'p' in the words *car*, *tar* and *par* are aspirated by the puff of air. It is essential that this difference in appreciated by the speaker and heard by the listener as it changes most words.

#### 2.1.2 Fricatives

These are sounds that are made by using the throat or the rear of the palate and are primarily made using friction rather than contact. Some letters require more fiction and some require more contact. These guttural sounds are often difficult for native English speakers to master and use fluently.

Another (perhaps more technical) way of representing the various consonants and their articulation is shown in table 2.2.

Bilabial Using both lips

Labio-dental Bottom lip and upper teeth

Alveolar Tongue on palate just behind teeth

Alveo-palatal Tonge on palate

Velar Tongue at rear of palate

Post-velar Using the throat

Unaspirated No puff of air (see 2.1.1)

Asiprated With a puff of air (see 2.1.1)

Voiced Using the voice box

Nasal Using the nasal cavity

Lateral Using the side of the tongue

Bilabial Labiodental Alveolar Alveopalatal Velar Postvelar Unaspirated k hp b Aspirated ht ch hk hk' Voiced d j g' Nasal m n ng Voiceless h Lateral

Table 2.2: Consonant Articulation

#### 2.2 Vowels

Table 2.3 lists the vowels used in Lahu. There is also a tenth vowel 'uh' that

Lahu	English Equivalent
i	as in <i>i</i> n
e	as in get
eh	as above
ui	like the Thai <sup>เ</sup> ื <b>-</b> อ'
eu	like the Thai 'เ-อ'
a	as in <i>a</i> re
u	as in cue
0	as in got
aw	as in cl <i>aw</i>

Table 2.3: Lahu vowels

does not occur at the beginning of a word. It only occurs with nine consonants and in these cases can actually sound different. Table 2.4 shows how 'uh' is effected with various consonant combinations.

Written	Meaning	Spoken (and often written)
tcuh ve	to send	cuh ve
tsuh* ve	to wash	chuh ve
tzuh^ ve	to itch	juh^ ve
suh ve	to die	suh ve
zuh ̯ ve	to sleep	yuh¸ ve

Table 2.4: The vowel 'uh'

#### 2.2.1 Diphthongs

Diphthongs can easily be described as a sound made by combining two vowels together smoothly in one syllable. For example the word 'kite' in English has a diphthong represented by the letter *i*. Phonetically it could be written 'k-eye-ee-t' if said slowly.

Table 2.5 shows the diphthongs used in Lahu.

Lahu	English Equivalent
ai	the 'y' in fly 'ou' in grouch
ao	'ou' in gr <i>ou</i> ch
aweh	like the 'oy' in boy
awan	said quickly as written (rare)

Table 2.5: Diphthongs

#### 2.3 Tones

Tones are often one of the more difficult aspects of many Asian languages for English speakers to master. In English the main use of tones is to indicate a question. By raising the tone at the end of a sentence it is usually understood to be a question. This is not the case with Lahu! Tones in Lahu are used like a letter of the alphabet. For example, if two words have exactly the same letters but a different tone then it is actually a different word.

Table 2.6 lists the 7 tones in Lahu.

To illustrate the difference a tone makes, the word  $la^*$  means 'tiger',  $la^-$  is a 'saddle basket',  $la^*$  is the classifier for a mile (see 11) and la is the verb 'to come'. Obviously the context can help give the correct meaning but in most cases the correct tone is needed to be properly understood.

### 2.4 Useful Expressions

You should now be able to use the following useful greetings and expressions. Many of the words used will be discussed in the following chapters.

Tone Mark	Name	Description
(no mark)		no tone
~	hkaw` mvuh	high, falling
-	hkaw` mvuh ta^	high, rising
^	hkaw mvuh che	high, clipped
~	hkaw` neh¸	low, long
_	hkaw neh zuh_	very low, long
^	hkaw neh che	low, clipped

Table 2.6: The Lahu tones

Cheh, sha cheh, aw_la*? Cheh, sha cheh, aw_la*? Cheh* sha cheh* aw  I am fine.  Naweh,? And you?  Hk'aw_k'ai le? Where are you going? Hk'aw_ka_la_le? (Aw_) ca* peuo_la*? Aw_ ca*-o_la*? Have you had a meal yet?  Ca*-o I have eaten.  Ma* ca* she I haven't eaten yet.  Tu la-o_la*? Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw_hk'a_lo tu la ve le? What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le? Whats going on? A yeh_yeh_k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving) K'oe sha_meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving) A shu cheh*-aw_la*?  Te* paw* k'aw_maw_daa_ A hto_ma te cheh* ve le? What are you doing?  Aw_bon ui_ja* Thank you Yo_ Yes		
Cheh sha cheh aw. I am fine.  Naweh? And you?  Hk'aw_k'ai le? Where are you going?  Hk'aw_ka_la_le? Where have you been?  (Aw_) ca peuo_la ARW. Have you had a meal yet?  Aw_ca o_la RRW. Have you eaten yet?  Ca o I have eaten.  Ma ca she I haven't eaten yet.  Tu la-o_la RRW. Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw_hk'a_lo tu la ve le? Where are you from?  Naw_aw_meh a_hto_ma meh ve le? What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le? Whats going on?  A yeh_yeh_k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o_e sha_meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh aw. la RRW. See you again.  A hto_ma te cheh ve le? What are you doing?  Thank you	Vocabulary 2.1 Useful Expressions	
Naweh,?  Hk'aw_k'ai le?  Where are you going?  Hk'aw_ka_la_le?  Where have you been?  (Aw_) ca peu_o la'?  Have you had a meal yet?  Aw_ca'-o, la'?  Have you eaten yet?  Ca'-o,  I have eaten.  Ma' ca' she  I haven't eaten yet.  Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw_hk'a_lo tu la ve le?  Where are you from?  Naw_aw_meh a_hto_ma meh ve le?  What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le?  A yeh_yeh_k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o_e sha_meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh'-aw_la'?  Te' paw'k'aw_maw_da_a_ See you again.  A hto_ma te cheh' ve le?  What are you doing?  Thank you	Cheh, sha cheh, aw_la*?	How are you?
Hk'aw_k'ai le?  Hk'aw_ka_la_le?  (Aw_) ca peuo_la'?  Have you had a meal yet?  Aw_ca o_la'?  Have you eaten yet?  Ca o_la'?  Have you eaten yet?  I have eaten.  I haven't eaten yet.  Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw_hk'a_lo tu la ve le?  Naw_aw_meh a_hto_ma meh ve le?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le?  A yeh_yeh_k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o_e sha_meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh'-aw_la'?  Te paw^k'aw_maw_da_a_ A hto_ma te cheh' ve le?  Where are you going?  Have you been?  Have you had a meal yet?  Have you eaten yet.  Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Where are you from?  What is your name?  What going on?  Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o_e sha_meh_ Soodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh'-aw_la'?  Te paw^k'aw_maw_da_a_ See you again.  A hto_ma te cheh' ve le?  What are you doing?  Thank you	Cheh sha cheh aw	I am fine.
Hk'aw_ka_la_le?  (Aw_) ca peuo_la ?  Have you had a meal yet?  Aw_ ca -o_la ?  Have you eaten yet?  La have you eaten yet?  I have eaten.  Ma ca she  I haven't eaten yet.  Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw_hk'a_lo tu la ve le?  Where are you from?  Naw_aw_meh a_hto_ma meh ve le?  What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le?  Whats going on?  A yeh_yeh_k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'oe sha_meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh -aw_la ?  Te paw k'aw_maw_daa_ See you again.  A hto_ma te cheh ve le?  What are you doing?  Thank you	Naweh,?	And you?
(Aw_) ca peuo, la ?Have you had a meal yet?Aw_ ca -o, la ?Have you eaten yet?Ca -o,.I have eaten.Ma ca sheI haven't eaten yet.Tu la-o, la ?Good morning. (Are you up yet?)Naw, hk'a, lo tu la ve le?Where are you from?Naw, aw, meh a, hto, ma meh ve le?What is your name?Hk'a hk'e g'ai le?Whats going on?A yeh, yeh, k'ai meh_Goodbye (said to one leaving)K'o, -e sha_ meh_Goodbye (said by one leaving)A shu cheh -aw, la ?Is anyone there?Te paw k'aw, maw, da, -a_See you again.A hto, ma te cheh ve le?What are you doing?Aw, bon ui_ ja *Thank you	Hk'aw_ k'ai le?	Where are you going?
Aw_ caˇ-o¸ laˇ?  Caˇ-o¸.  I have eaten.  Maˇ caˇ she  I haven't eaten yet.  Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw¸ hk'a¸ lo tu la ve le?  Where are you from?  Naw¸ aw¸ meh a¸ hto¸ ma meh ve le?  What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le?  Whats going on?  A yeh¸ yeh¸ k'ai meh_  Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o¸-e sha_ meh_  Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu chehˇ-aw¸ laˇ?  Is anyone there?  Teˇ pawˆ k'aw¸ maw¸ da¸-a_  A hto¸ ma te chehˇ ve le?  What are you doing?  Thank you	Hk'aw_ ka_ la_ le?	Where have you been?
Caˇ-o¸. I have eaten.  Maˇ caˇ she I haven't eaten yet.  Tu la-o¸ laˇ? Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw¸ hk'a¸ lo tu la ve le? Where are you from?  Naw¸ aw¸ meh a¸ hto¸ ma meh ve le? What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le? Whats going on?  A yeh¸ yeh¸ k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o¸-e sha_ meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu chehˇ-aw¸ laˇ? Is anyone there?  Teˇ pawˆ k'aw¸ maw¸ da¸-a_ See you again.  A hto¸ ma te chehˇ ve le? What are you doing?  Aw¸ bon ui_ jaˇ Thank you	(Aw_) ca peu -o la ?	Have you had a meal yet?
Maˇ caˇ she I haven't eaten yet.  Tu la-o¸ laˇ? Good morning. (Are you up yet?)  Naw¸ hk'a¸ lo tu la ve le? Where are you from?  Naw¸ aw¸ meh a¸ hto¸ ma meh ve le? What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le? Whats going on?  A yeh¸ yeh¸ k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o¸-e sha_ meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu chehˇ-aw¸ laˇ? Is anyone there?  Teˇ pawˆ k'aw¸ maw¸ da¸-a_ See you again.  A hto¸ ma te chehˇ ve le? What are you doing?  Aw¸ bon ui_ jaˇ Thank you	Aw_ caˇ-o¸ laˇ?	Have you eaten yet?
Tu la-o, la*?  Naw, hk'a, lo tu la ve le?  Where are you from?  Naw, aw, meh a, hto, ma meh ve le?  What is your name?  Whats going on?  A yeh, yeh, k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o, -e sha_ meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh*-aw, la*?  Te* paw* k'aw, maw, da, -a_ A hto, ma te cheh* ve le?  What are you doing?  Thank you	Caˇ-o¸.	I have eaten.
Naw, hk'a, lo tu la ve le?  Naw, aw, meh a, hto, ma meh ve le?  What is your name?  What s going on?  A yeh, yeh, k'ai meh.  Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o, -e sha, meh.  Goodbye (said by one leaving)  Is anyone there?  Te' paw' k'aw, maw, da, -a.  A hto, ma te cheh' ve le?  What are you doing?  Thank you	Maˇ caˇ she	I haven't eaten yet.
Naw, aw, meh a, hto, ma meh ve le? What is your name?  Hk'a hk'e g'ai le? Whats going on?  A yeh, yeh, k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o,-e sha_meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh'-aw, la'? Is anyone there?  Te' paw' k'aw, maw, da,-a_ See you again.  A hto, ma te cheh' ve le? What are you doing?  Aw, bon ui_ja' Thank you	Tu la-o¸ laˇ?	Good morning. (Are you up yet?)
Hk'a hk'e g'ai le?  A yeh, yeh, k'ai meh  Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o, -e sha_ meh  Goodbye (said by one leaving)  Is anyone there?  Te' paw' k'aw, maw, da, -a  A hto, ma te cheh' ve le?  What are you doing?  Thank you	Naw, hk'a, lo tu la ve le?	Where are you from?
A yeh, yeh, k'ai meh_ Goodbye (said to one leaving)  K'o,-e sha_ meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving)  A shu cheh'-aw, la'? Is anyone there?  Te' paw' k'aw, maw, da,-a_ See you again.  A hto, ma te cheh' ve le? What are you doing?  Aw, bon ui_ ja' Thank you	Naw, aw, meh a, hto, ma meh ve le?	What is your name?
K'oe sha_ meh_ Goodbye (said by one leaving) A shu cheh'-aw_la'? Is anyone there?  Te' paw' k'aw_ maw_daa_ See you again. A hto_ ma te cheh' ve le? What are you doing?  Aw_ bon ui_ ja' Thank you	Hk'a hk'e g'ai le?	Whats going on?
A shu cheh -aw la ?  Te paw k'aw maw da -a See you again.  A hto ma te cheh ve le?  What are you doing?  Aw bon ui ja Thank you	A yeh¸ yeh¸ k'ai meh_	Goodbye (said to one leaving)
Te' paw' k'aw maw da -a See you again.  A hto ma te cheh' ve le? What are you doing?  Aw bon ui_ja Thank you	K'o´-e sha_ meh_	Goodbye (said by one leaving)
A hto ma te cheh ve le? What are you doing?  Aw bon ui_ja Thank you	A shu cheh -aw la ?	Is anyone there?
Aw bon ui_ja Thank you	Teˇ pawˆ k'awˆ mawˆ daˆ-aˆ	See you again.
	A hto ma te cheh ve le?	What are you doing?
Yo, Yes	Aw¸ bon ui_ jaˇ	Thank you
	Yo	Yes
Ma he No	Ma` he^	No
Kaˇ na⁻ ui Chapter	Kaˇ na⁻ ui	Chapter
Kaˇ na¯ eh Verse	Kaˇ na¯ eh	Verse

# Part II

# Grammar

### **Sentence Structure**

Lahu follows the general pattern of *subject object verb*. The *subject* can simply be defined as the origin of the action, the *object* is the recipient of the action and the *verb* is the action.

Generally the verb is the most important part of any sentence and often the subject or object are implied and can be omitted. The following examples display some typical sentence structures (for now just observe the structure):

```
(3.1) Nga, hui li hta g'aw ve yo.
(sbj) (obj) (vb)
'We read the book.'
(3.2) Nga, g'aw ve yo.
(sbj) (vb)
'I read.'
(3.3) Yaw hui leh i ka daw ve yo.
(sbj) (obj) (vb)
'They drink water.'
(3.4) Cheh -aw.
(vb) (fp)
'[he] is here.'
```

#### 3.1 Particles

In examples such as those above, the subject and object are often very clear. In example 3.1, the book can only *be read* by us, it cannot *read us*. In more complex sentences, however, it is necessary to clarify various parts of the sentence such as identifying the subject and object. Particles allow us to do this.

#### Vocabulary 3.1 Common Particles

```
leh_Subject particleyo_Final affirmative particlehta_Object particle or indicatormeh_Final emphatic request (polite)ve(Many uses) Identifies verbsshe_Final emphatic request (more forceful)(see 6), possession (see 4.3)forceful)
```

#### 3.1.1 Subject & Object

Often in spoken Lahu the subject and/or object are obvious and so the particles are not needed. This is the case in example 3.2 where the speaker is obviously the subject and there is no object. In example 3.1 the object particle <code>hta\_</code> would not actually be spoken as it is implied and obvious. In written Lahu, however, it is more acceptable to include the particles unless they are overly obvious. Foreigners speaking Lahu are often guilty of using too many particles in their speech. While the sentence may be correct it is not colloquial and may seem overly formal.

```
(3.5) Yaw hui leh, Li hpu hta hen ve yo. They (sbj) bible (obj) study 'They study the bible'
```

```
(3.6) G'ui, sha leh,, nga, hui hta, ma_la`ve yo,. God (sbj) us (obj) teach 'God teaches us.'
```

The previous examples demonstrate the use of the particles. In example 3.6 it is particularly necessary to qualify the subject and object to get the correct sense.

### **Nouns**

Vocabulary 4.1 Nouns used in the following sections

spring washer asdfsdf

Nouns make up the majority of most peoples' vocabulary. They are the 'names of things'. *Proper nouns* are a type of noun that identify a unique entity such as 'Jehovah'. These are generally capitalised in Lahu as they are in English.

#### 4.1 Number

To express the idea of more than one noun in Lahu extra words need to be used such as  $te^*hpa_\_$ ,  $te^*g'ui$  and hui.

- (4.1) Nu te hpa cow plural cows
- (4.2) *Chaw hui* man plural men
- (4.3) Ya te g'ui, child plural children

#### 4.2 Gender

Gender in Lahu is generally expressed using suffixes, *pa\_* for male and *ma* for female. This is the case for humans and many animals. Some words do not need

the suffix to indicate the gender as it is already implied, for example haw hka for man and ya mi for woman.

```
(4.4) Nu pa_cow male bull
```

- (4.5) *nu* ma cow female cow
- (4.6) va pa pa pig male
- (4.7) va ma pig female sow

#### 4.3 Possession

When something *belongs* to someone then the possessive particle 've' is used *after* the pronoun (or proper noun) and *before* the thing that is possessed. Do not confuse this particle with the particle used with verbs (see section 6). The possesive particle is more often used with pronouns (see section 5) and these are used in the following examples.

```
(4.8) Yaw hui ve hpu.
they (par) money
'Their money.'
```

(4.9) Naw ve li you (par) book 'your book'

It is often omitted in such expressions as these:

```
(4.10) nu hkeh cow manure cow's manure
```

(4.11) g'a^ aw myuh chicken feather chicken's feather

# **Pronouns**

Vocabulary 5.1 Common Pronouns			
I, me you he, she	nga naw yaw`	<pre>we, us</pre>	

In any language the most common expressions are about either ourselves or the people we are with. We often use pronouns for these references. These are usually found in the position of either the subject or the object of a sentence. In many sentences in spoken Lahu the pronouns for I, me and you are not actually used but are implied by the context.

You will notice in the vocabulary for this section that there are three main pronouns for the first, second and third person. The plurals of each of these are obtained by adding the work 'hui'. Notice that Lahu also has a pronoun for the second person plural which is not present in (correct!) English.

# **Verbs**

Verbs (or action words) are the main part of Lahu speech. Many complete sentences can be composed of just a verb and a particle (see example 3.4). Verbs in their infinitive form are usually written with the particle 've' after them. This is usually separated by a space that is purely to assist the reader.

<b>Vocabulary 6.1</b> Basic verbs used in the following sections			
caw ve	have, to	g'aw ve	read, to
ca ve	eat, to	shi_ ve	know, to
daw ve	drink, to	te ve	do, to
bvuh ve	write, to	hen` ve	study, to
k'ai ve	go, to	yaw^ yan te v	e pay respect, to

### 6.1 Verb negation

To negate the meaning of a verb the word 'ma' is used *before* the verb. The particle 've' is often omitted when a verb is negated as example 6.1 shows.

- (6.1) ma caw not eat
- (6.2) Nga hui ma caw. We not have 'We do not have [it].'
- (6.3) Yaw ma shi.
  She not know
  'She does not know.'

#### 6.2 Verb Combination

Verbs can be combined in various ways to produce more complex ideas. A main verb can have an additional verb placed *before* it (pre-head) or *after* it (post-head).

#### **Pre-head Verbs**

Pre-head verbs are often used to indicate the number, aspect, time, limitiations etc..

```
(6.4) g'a caw ve must have
```

- (6.5) g'a k'ai ve must go
- (6.6) *h'aw k'ai ve* again go 'to go again'
- (6.7) g'a hen ve must study
- (6.8) k'aw haw ve again study 'to study again'

Note in example 6.5 that if the word 'g'a' is placed *after* the main verb it would be a different word meaning 'to be able to'. Compare example 6.14.

#### Post-head Verbs

'Post-head' verbs often indicate the direction of the main verb.

```
(6.9) ca caw ve
eat should
'should eat'
```

- (6.10) ma ca caw not eat should 'should not eat'
- (6.11) hpaw k'ai ve flee go 'to flee away'

```
(6.12) hpaw ta ve flee up 'to flee to higher point'
(6.13) ma la caw not come should 'shouldn't come'
(6.14) k'ai g'a ve go can '[I] can go'
```

Remember that the verb particle 've' is omitted when the verb is negated, as example 6.10 shows.

#### 6.3 Verb Duplication

To intensify the effect of some verbs they can be duplicated. This is quite common in Lahu as it is in Thai.

```
(6.15) yaw yan te ve
      respect do
     'to pay respect'
(6.16) yaw^ yaw^ yan
                         yan
                                  te ve
            pay great respect'
(6.17) ma<sup>*</sup>
              ve
       'many'
(6.18) ma*
             ma`
                    caw ve
      many many have
     'to have many'
(6.19) ma<sup>*</sup>
             ma`
                    ma caw
      many many not have
     'to have not many'
```

In example 6.19 the last 'ma' is the negative one. It can also be seen that example 6.17 is not negative as the verb particle 've' is present.

You should now be able to form many sentences using just nouns, verbs and some particles.

#### 6.4 Verb Tense

Verb tense in Lahu is denoted by means of suffixes. Not all tenses and aspects<sup>1</sup> in the English language can easily be expressed in Lahu so some of the following sections combine some English language concepts.

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#### 6.4.1 Present Tense

This is the 'default' tense for verbs.

- (6.20) *Nga*, *te* I do
- (6.21) Yaw te He does

#### 6.4.2 Past Tense

This describes actions that occurred in the past. The word *peu* is used after the verb to signify it is in the past tense.

- (6.22) Nga te peu I did
- (6.23) Naw te peu You did

#### 6.4.3 Perfect Tense

Perfect aspect can be described as an action that has been completed, for example, "I have eaten rice". <sup>2</sup> The particle *peu*, is used as a suffix to denote the affirmative perfect tense.

(6.24) Yaw ga la peu he arrive (par)

'He has arrived'

(6.25) Nga aw ca peu I rice eat (par)

'I have eaten rice'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>English is quite a complex language in terms of tense, mood and aspect. This section of verb tenses is very simplified and does not try to map all the available English tenses, moods and aspects to Lahu.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>This is actually termed the *perfect aspect in the present tense* (or *present perfect*) as it refers to an event that has been completed in the past (perfect aspect) from the viewpoint of the present (tense).

To denote the negative perfect tense the particle *peu* is omitted and *ma* · ... *she* wraps the verb. *she* could be interpreted as 'yet' so it would become "not *some-thing* yet".

```
(6.26) Yaw ma ga la she he not arrive yet 'He has not arrived yet'

(6.27) Nga aw ma ca she rice not eat yet
```

'I have not eaten [rice] yet'

#### 6.4.4 Future Tense

To speak in the future tense simply use the particle 'tu,' *after* the verb that is in the future but *before* any final particle such as 'yo,'.

```
(6.28) Nga li te k'o hta g'aw tu yo I book one (clf) (par) read [will] (fp) 'I will read one book'
(6.29) Yaw hui ma yaw tu they not speak [will]
'They will not speak'
```

#### 6.4.5 Continuous Tense

Continuous tense in English is primarily represented by adding 'ing' to the end of a verb. To indicate continuous tense in Lahu add the verb 'cheh'' (to be) after the verb that is continuing. This is an example of a post-head verb (see section 6.2).

```
(6.30) Yaw k'ai cheh ve yo he go [continue] (par)
'He is going'
(6.31) Nga nga te hkeh o ve hta ca cheh ve yo I bird two (clf) those (par) eat [continue] (par)
'I am eating those two birds'
```

#### 6.4.6 Indefinite Perfect Tense

This is similar to the perfect tense (see section 6.4.3) except that it points to some more distant or less distinct time. In English we would perhaps use the word 'ever' or 'never'.

```
(6.32) Aw sa-hte li_-a nga ma k'ai jaw
Australia I not go ever
'I have never been to Australia'
```

(6.33) Aw sa-hte li\_-a yaw k'ai jaw Australia he go ever 'He has been to Australia'

#### 6.4.7 Imperative Mood

The imperative mood expresses commands or requests. In Lahu the particles 'meh\_' or 'she\_' are used at the *end* of the sentence. The word 'she\_' is more forceful.

```
(6.34) Nga hta ma_la meh_
me (par) teach (par)
'Teach me'
```

(6.35) Aw ca she rice eat (par)
'Eat rice!'

(6.36) *Lo´,-e she\_* enter (par) 'Enter!'

(6.37) La, meh\_ come (par) 'Come'

(6.38) *Mui* she\_ sit (par) 'Sit!'

(6.39) Li te k'o hta g'aw meh book one (clf) (par) read (par) 'Read the book'

Negative commands simply use the word 'ta'' *before* the verb. As with verb negation (see section 6.1) the particle 've' is omitted. The imperative particles 'meh\_' and 'she\_' can also be used to give added meaning.

(6.40) *Ta* \* *te* don't do 'Don't do [that]!'

(6.41) Ta\* mui don't sit 'Don't sit!'

#### 6.4.8 Participles

Participles describe a type of verb, either the action is happening now (present participle), or the action happened in the past (past participle). The present participle is denoted by the word 'tcuh<sup>-</sup> ta\_' added after the verb.

- (6.42) *k'ai* tcuh<sup>-</sup> ta\_ ve go continuous 'to go continuously'
- (6.43) Yaw daw tcuh ta\_ve yo he think continuous 'He is thinking'
- (6.44) Yaw hui baw da tcuh ta\_ leh la ve yo they fight continuous and come 'They came fighting'

# **Adjectives**

Adjectives are words or phrases that describe a noun. So in English we would have 'a *red* dog' or 'a *yellow* door'. There is no strict rule as to whether the adjective goes before or after the noun.

#### 7.1 Proper

Proper adjectives usually have an initial capital letter and are derived from proper nouns such as country names etc.

- (7.1) Yunnan La'hu\_ Yunnan Lahu 'Lahu of Yunnan'
- (7.2) *Yan* \* chaw Karen person 'Karen people'

#### 7.2 Descriptive

- (7.3) cheh ha ve ya eh sick child 'a sick child'
- (7.4) ni ma ha han ve ya pa brave hearted boy 'a brave boy'

#### 7.3 Quantatative

These adjectives are used for describing amounts that cannot generally be measured or counted.

- (7.5) yaw aw ca ma ve he rice eat much 'he ate a lot'
- (7.6) yaw a ci ti ca ve he a little only eat 'he only ate a little'
- (7.7) yaw te chi ma ca he nothing not eat 'he ate nothing'
- (7.8) yaw ca law ve he eat enough 'he ate enough'
- (7.9) yaw hk'a peu-e ca ve he all eat 'he ate [it] all'

#### 7.4 Demonstrative

These are used to indicate a particular object or noun or to distinguish one noun from another.

- (7.10) *nu* chi cow this 'this cow'
- (7.11) *i* mvuh o ve horse that 'that horse'
- (7.12) g'a^ chi te hpa\_ chicken this plural 'these chickens'
- (7.13) a peh o' ve te' hpa duck that plural 'those ducks'
- (7.14) *no* ve *nu* te hkeh that cow plural 'those cows over there'

```
(7.15) mo ve yeh, that house 'that house over there'
```

Notice that Lahu has a demonstrative for 'this', 'that' and 'over there'. Example 7.14 and 7.15 both indicate 'over there' or 'yonder' with the words 'no' and 'mo' respectively. The difference between them being that 'no' refers to things *higher* and 'mo' refers to things *lower*.

#### 7.5 Distributive

Distributative adjectives are used to describe amounts that could be counted as apposed to some of the quantatative adjectives in section 7.3 which are unmeasureable. Most of these adjectives require classifiers which are described in chapter 11.

#### **Every**

To denote 'every' the phrase 'te' ...le le' is wrapped around the classifier.

```
(7.16) te g'a le le te (clf) le le e all people?
(7.17) te ka le le te (clf) le le every place?
(7.18) te nyi hkan te nyi te (clf) hkan te (clf) every other day?
```

#### Some

To denote 'some' the phrase 'te' and a repeated classifier is used.

```
(7.19) te * g'a * g'a * g'a * te * (clf) (clf)  
'some people'
```

 $<sup>^1\</sup>mathrm{This}$  is due to the Lahu people mainly residing on hillsides where 'up' and 'down' are descriptions used very often

#### Only

To denote 'only' the word 'ti-' is used after the classifier.

```
(7.20) te g'a ti te (clf) ti 'only one person'

(7.21) sheh nyi ti three (clf) only 'only three days'
```

#### 7.6 Numeral

To describe a specific number of nouns in Lahu you need to use classifiers. These are discussed in more detail in chapter 11.

```
(7.22) Chaw sheh chi g'a sha g'a ve yo man thirty (clf) hunt 'Thirty men went hunting'
```

For a more indefinite or general amount the phrase 'a\_la\_' (about) or 'a\_la\_hk'e' (nearly) can be added.

```
(7.23) Chaw a la sheh chi g'a sha g'a ve yo man about thirty (clf) hunt

About thirty men went hunting
```

# **Adverbs**

Adverbs (words that describe a verb) appear immediately before a verb. There are four types of adverbs in Lahu [2] as follows.

#### **Negative adverbs**

We have seen these in 6.1 but here are a few more examples:

- (8.1) ma\* te not do
- (8.2) ta te don't do

#### Positive adverbs

These have a positive sense. Some examples:

- (8.3) g'a hte te with all strength do
- (8.4) g'a hte feu ku ve with all strength intensely call
- (8.5) ha^ te quickly do

#### hk'a adverbs

The word 'hk'a' means *all* but can be combined with other verbs to create adverbial expressions such as the following.

- (8.6) hk'a bi' keu ve fully to fill 'to fill fully'
- (8.7) hk'a bvuh ca ve to be full eat 'to eat to the full'
- (8.8) hk'a law ca ve sufficient to cook 'to cook sufficiently'

#### -eh adverbs

The syllable '-eh' could be called an adverbalising particle as it can be added to the end of words to make them an adverb.

(8.9) naw green
naw-eh

(8.10) ba ve to be bright

greenish

*ba-eh* brightly

# **Prepositions**

Prepositions indicate a relation between things mentioned in a sentence. Commong prepositions in English are *on*, *above*, *below*, *before*, *after* etc.. Prepositions come in a number of varieties but here we will discuss just *place* and *time*.

#### 9.1 Place

Vocabulary 9.1 Some prepositions of place			
aw, hk'aw	in	aw haw	under
law ka_	between	la meh_	left
aw ja ¯	around	la sha	right
aw hk'o	on	aw g'u suh	in front
aw pa	next to	aw hk'aw naw	

#### **9.2** Time

<b>™ Vocabulary 9.2</b> Some prepositions of place			
caw ve after before	now		

# **Conjuctions**

☞ Vocabulary 10.1 Common Conjunctions				
leh ya hk'a` k'o hta` htaw` pa taw	and but if when even though becuase	ya hk'a` hk'e hta pa taw hk'e te leh aw teh k'o k'o chi hta pa taw aw pon	so actually	

Conjuctions are words or phrases that join words or phrases in a sentence. Some examples are the words 'but', 'and' and 'or'. Two types of conjuctions are common in Lahu. They are commonly called 'Coordinating' and 'Subordinate' conjuctions.

### **Coordinating Conjuctions**

These are conjuctions that join two phrases in a sentence that equal in importance or are not dependent on each other. Examples of coordinating conjunctions are 'and', 'or' and 'but'.

```
(10.1) Hk'e te leh nga hui nyi ma lu ve yo so we sad
'So, we were sad'
(10.2) Ya hk'a yaw ma k'ai she but he not go yet
'But he hasn't gone yet'
```

#### **Subordinate Conjunctions**

A subordinate conjuction joins two clauses (or phrases), one being subordinate or dependent on the other. These conjuctions can be a little more difficult to get right. The order of a sentence in Lahu is different to the same sentence in English when using subordinate cunjunctions. The following examples show subordinate conjuction use in English.

```
    (10.3) 'If has has money he will go' (conjuction) (subordinate clause) (main clause)
    (10.4) 'He will go if he has money' (main clause) (conjuction) (subordinate clause)
```

In the above examples, the sentence can be structured in two different orders. In Lahu, however, the subordinate clause must always precede the main clause.

```
(10.5) Yaw hpu hta caw ve k'o, k'ai tu yo he money have if go will (subordinate clause) (conjuction) (main clause) 'If he has money, he will go'
```

One technique to get the sentence in the correct order is to start with the conjunction when saying the sentence in English. The resulting two clauses of the sentence are then in the correct order. So instead of thinking like this:

He will go if he has money

think in this order:

If he has money, he will go

The meanings are the same in English but you now have the clauses in the correct order for Lahu. All that is needed, then, is to place the conjuction (in this case 'if') between the two clauses. See example 10.5. Examples of subordinate conjunctions are 'if', 'for', 'even though' and 'because'.

Here are some more examples:

```
(10.6) Nga bvuh ve k'o, naw g'aw ve yo
I write if you read
'If I write, you read'
'You read if I write'
(10.7) Naw yaw hta*...
you spoke when
'When you spoke...'
(10.8) Naw yaw ve htaw*, nga ma* ka*
you speak even though I not hear
```

'Even though you speak, I don't hear [you]'

- (10.9) Yaw nga hui hta ma\_la ve pa taw, nga hui ha leh ve yo [he] us (par) teach because we happy 'We're happy because [he] taught us'
- (10.10) Ya hk'a yaw ma k'ai she but [he] not go yet 'But [he] hasn't gone yet'
- (10.11) Hk'e hta pa taaw nga ca ma g'a therefore I each not can
  - 'Therefore I cannot eat'
- (10.12) Hk'e te leh nga hui nyi ma lu ve yo so we sad 'So we are depressed'
- (10.13) Aw, teh, k'o^k'o yaw ma na yu, actually [he] not listen 'Actually, [he] did not listen'
- (10.14) Chi hta pa taw i mvuh nyi hkeh o ve suh peu ve yo because of that horse two (clf) those die complete 'Because of that those two horses died'
- (10.15) Te tu, yaw aw chaw sheh g'a hta g'a do in order to [he] friend three (clf) (par) must ca ve yo find

'In order to do it, [he] must find three friends'

(10.16) Yaw aw pon te she [he] on behalf of do (par) 'Do it for [him]'

Notice in example 10.15 that the word 'tu' is the same word used for future tense (see 6.4.4). For the conjuction 'in order to' it is used in the middle of a sentence.

### Classifiers

When referring to a number of items in Lahu you are required to use classifiers. These are not used in English but could be likened to saying 'three *pairs* of trousers'. The word 'pairs' could be termed a classifier for this example. In

#### Wocabulary 11.1 Common Classifiers

ma	for people gerneral classifier for sections	shi_	for plants for round things e.g. fruit for places
hkeh k'o^	for animals for books for days	mo_ pe^	for groups for pieces of things e.g. land for 'types' of things

Lahu (and Thai) there are many different classifiers that all have specific uses. For example, there is a classifier for fruit, a classifier for people, a classifier for 'sections' of things and so on. There is also a general classifier for objects that either do not have a specific classifier already or for instances where the classifier is not known at the time.

Some examples of classifiers in phrases:

```
(11.1) Li hpu sheh^
                           k'o^
               (number) (clf)
       (n)
       bible
               three
                           (clf)
     'Three bibles'
            te*
(11.2) li_{2}
       book one (clf)
     'one book'
(11.3) chaw ya * te *
                       g'a*
       person
                 one (clf)
     'one person'
```

(11.4) Li hpu aw hk'aw lo aw tawn te tawn bible in section one (clf) 'one scripture'

In example 11.4 above the classifier *tawn* is used for sections of things. A scripture is considered a section or passage in the bible and so the appropriate classifier needs to be used. Also note in example 11.1 the order in which classifiers need to be used.

While you may think the number of classifiers would be large in actual fact you will find yourself using just a small subset for most situations.

See also section 7.5 on distributive adjectives for describing more general and indefinite amounts of nouns.

## **Chapter 12**

## **Conversations**

These are some example conversations that you can practice. Obviously there are many ways to say the same thing, these are just some examples to get you started.

#### 12.1 Greetings

Judi: How are you?

Judi: Cheh \* sha cheh \* aw\_ la \*?

# Part III Appendices

# Appendix A

# **Phonics**

The following tables show the differences between the four main orthographies developed for the Lahu language. The *Protestant* orthography is given priority as it is the most widely used.

Protestant	Matisoff	Catholic	Chinese
a	a	a	a
i	i	i	i
u/uh	u	u/ö	u
e	e	e	e
0	О	О	О
eh	3	è	ie
aw	Э	ò	aw
ui/uh	i	ü/ö	eu
eu	Э	ë	eu
ai	ay	ai	ai
ao	aw	ao	ao
u-i	wi		
o-e	we		
aweh	wε		

Table A.1: Vowel Orthographic Comparison (adapted from Matisoff[1])

Protestant	Matisoff	Catholic	Chinese
k'	q	q	q
hk'	qh	qh	qh
k	k	k	k
hk	kh	kh	kh
g	g	g	g
ng	ŋ	ng	ng
c/tc	c	c/tc	c/z
ch/ts	ch	ch/ts	ch/zh
j/dz	j	j/dz	j/dz
t	t	t	t
ht	th	th	th
d	d	d	d
n/ny	n	n/gn	n
p/pf	p	p/pf	p
hp/hpf	ph	ph/phf	ph
b/bv	Ъ	b/bv	b
m/mv	m	m/mv	m
h	h	h	h
g'	ÿ	gh	X
sh/s	S	sh/s	sh/s
y/z	y	y/z	y/r
f	f	f	f
v	v	v	V
1	1	1	1

Table A.2: Consonant Orthographic Comparison (adapted from Matisoff[1])

Protestant	Matisoff	Catholic	Chinese
ca	ca	ca_	ca
ca <sup>-</sup>	cá	ca	caq
caˇ	câ	ca	cad
ca、	cà	ca,	cal
ca_	cā	ca	cal
ca^	câ?	ca^	cat
ca	cà?	ca	car

Table A.3: Tonal Orthographic Comparison (adapted from Matisoff[1])

# Appendix B

# Vocabulary

#### Numbers

to_nya^	0	te <sup>*</sup> chi te <sup>*</sup>	12
te	1	nyi <sup>*</sup> chi	20
nyi	2	nyi` chi te`	21
sheh <sup>^</sup>	3	nyi <sup>*</sup> chi nyi <sup>*</sup>	22
aw	4	te* ha	100
nga <sup>*</sup>	5	te ha nyi ch	i sheh^ 123
hkaw	6	J	
suh_	7	nyi` ha	200
hi <sup>-</sup>	8	te' hin-	1,000
k'aw`	9	te' meun_	10,000
te* chi	10	te shehn	100,000
te* chi te*	11	te' lan	1,000,000

#### Colours

Na^	Black	Nyi shu-eh_	Orange
Hpu	White	Shi <sup>-</sup> -eh_	Yellow
Hpui <sup>-</sup> -eh_	Grey	Naw <sup>-</sup> -eh_	Green
Nyi <sup>-</sup> -eh_	Red	Naw <sup>-</sup> -eh_	Blue

Shi na^ meu ¯ ve Brown Nyi na^ meu ¯ leh \_ Purple

#### **Bible Books**

Aw, hkui pui_	Genesis	Cuˇ ye_ piˇ ve	Proverbs
Taw^ kai ve	Exodus	Saw <sup>-</sup> la <sub>_</sub> mon_ k'a	<b>mui</b> Song of Solomon
O k'o pui ve	Leviticus	Гsa_ya^	Isaiah
Heh pui hk'aw	Numbers		
Bon ma_ve	Deuteronomy	Ye_ra_mi^ Daw`ha_ ve	Jeremiah
Yaw <sup>*</sup> su <sup>^</sup>	Joshua	_	English
Suh <sup>-</sup> jeh <sub>,</sub> ve	Judges	Ye_sa_ke_la^ Da_ye_la^	Ezekiel Daniel
Ru <sup>-</sup> hta <sup>^</sup>	Ruth	Haw'se_	Hosea
1 Sa_mo-e_la^	1 Samuel	Yaw`la^	Joel
2 Sa_mo-e_la^	2 Samuel	A_mo^	Amos
1 Jaw' maw'	1 Kings	Aw`ba_di^	Obadiah
2 Jaw` maw`	2 Kings	Yo`na^	Jonah
1 Ra_sa_van_	1 Chronicles	Mi^hka_	Micah
2 Ra_sa_van_	2 Chronicles	Na_hun_	Nahum
E`za_ra^	Ezra	Ha_ba_ku^	Habakkuk
Ne_ha_mi^	Nehemiah	Ze_hpa_ni^	Zephaniah
Γsa_ta^	Esther	Ha^geh*	Haggai
Chi <sup>*</sup> mvuh ve	Job	Za_hka_ri^	Zechariah
Taw na ve	Psalms	Ma_la_hki^	Malachi

#### **Pronouns**

Nouns

Verbs

Classifiers

**Adjectives & Adverbs** 

**Propositions** 

Conjunctions

**Particles** 

**Demonstratives** 

Quantifiers

# **Appendix C**

# **Dictionary**

This appendix inputs all the words in the previous appendices but in a alphabetical list.

# Appendix D

### **Fonts**

This book was produced using the XaTeX typesetting system. The font used was 'Charis' available from the SIL website, http://www.sil.org/. This font conforms to Unicode 5 which contains the characters necessary to render *all* the tone marks for Lahu. See table D.1 for the specifics.

Character	Code	Unicode Label
^	U+02C6	MODIFIER LETTER CIRCUMFLEX ACCENT
•	U + 02C7	CARON
-	U + 02C9	MODIFIER LETTER MACRON
_	U + 02CD	MODIFIER LETTER LOW MACRON
•	U + 02EC	MODIFIER LETTER VOICING
^	U + F1E7	MODIFIER LETTER LOW CIRCUMFLEX ACCENT

Table D.1: Unicode Characters

Part IV

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