White Hmong Dialogues

Southeast Asian Refugee Studies
Occasional Papers

White Hmong Dialogues (Goes With Tape)
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*HMO.3338.02*
WINTER 2003

Number Three
by
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SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEE STUDIES
Occasional Papers

Series Editor: Bruce T. Downing

Number One: A Bibliography of the Hmong (Miao)
Compiled by Douglas P. Olney

Number Two: White Hmong Language Lessons
By Doris Whitelock

A publication of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, 330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center, 301 19th Avenue South, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

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1986

Publication No. 86-5

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Introduction

Hmong is spoken by several million people in China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Burma, and by Hmong living in such countries as Australia, France, French Guiana, and the United States. In Thailand, Laos, and the overseas Hmong communities there are two principal varieties of Hmong, White Hmong (Hmooq Dawb) and Green Hmong (Hmooq Ntsuab). They differ from one another in many details of pronunciation and vocabulary, but they are sufficiently similar to one another that speakers of one dialect can understand the other without difficulty. The dialogues in this book are in White Hmong.

These dialogues were originally developed for an intensive beginning Hmong class taught by the authors. They are not a complete course in Hmong. In our class we also used pronunciation drills, conversation drills, exercises and readings. The dialogues, however, were an important part of the course. The students first mastered the dialogues on their own, imitating tape recordings made by Lopao Vang, and then paired off in class to practice the dialogues under the supervision of the teachers, who corrected their pronunciation. Eventually the students found that they had learned certain dialogues by heart and when they were conversing in Hmong they found themselves spontaneously using phrases from the dialogues at appropriate points in the conversation. We have tried, therefore, to provide appropriate natural utterances for a variety of social situations.

We hope that these dialogues will be useful both in the classroom and to people studying Hmong on their own. We recommend that users of these dialogues also obtain a copy of Ernest E. Heimbach's White Hmong-English-Dictionary, Data Paper Number 75, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, revised edition, 1979.

We would like to thank Mim Yaj (Mrs. My Xiong), Dao Xiong, and Brenda Johns for their help in writing these dialogues and Robins Burling, Thomas J. Hudak and Yang Dao for advice and suggestions on language learning. The present version of the dialogues has also benefited from the comments and criticisms of our students.

Note: Many of the dialogues in this book are based on dialogues in Baccam Don and James L. Brase, English-Thai Dam Language Lessons, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Huntington Beach, California, 1977. We have also adapted some dialogues and parts of dialogues from the following books: Jean Mottin, Elements de Grammaire Hmong Blanc, Don Bosco, Press, Bangkok, 1978; Lus Akyi-Lus Hmooq, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1978; Cheu Thao, English-Hmong Phrasebook with Useful Wordlist (for Hmong speakers), Center for Applied Linguistics, 1981. But we have made changes in arrangement and wording and we have also written some new material.
White Hmong Spelling and Pronunciation

Hmong spelling is phonemic, that is, each letter or combination of letters represents one sound and each sound is represented by one letter or combination of letters. The principal difficulty for English speakers learning Hmong is that many letters have values very different from their English values. In particular, note that:

(1) Doubling a vowel means that the vowel is followed by an 'ng' sound.
(2) Consonant letters at the end of a syllable represent tones, not consonants.

For example, the name "Hmong" is written Hmoob: oo represents "ong" and b represents high level tone.

Consonants:
c ch d dh f g (see below) h hl hm hml hn hny k kh l m ml n nc nch nk nkh np npn lph nq nqh nr rh nt nth nts ntsh ntx ntxh ny ph pl plh q qh r rh s t th ts tsh tx txh v x xy y/z

Vowels: a ai au aw e ee i ia o oo u ua w

Tones: (no letter) b d g j m s v

Notes:
1. The consonant g occurs only in two or three words. Many Hmong books do not use this letter.
2. In the Protestant spelling, one writes hnl and nl instead of hml and ml. Heimbach's dictionary uses the Protestant spelling.
3. In dictionaries and other materials written for people learning Hmong as a second language the spellings ww and on are used for nasalized vowels similar to w and o. These nasalized vowels occur only in a couple of grammatical particles and in Hmong books are simply written w and o.

Tones:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Rising</th>
<th>Falling</th>
<th>Whisperry</th>
<th>Creaky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid letter</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simple vowels: i e a o u w
Diphthongs: ai aw au e (with tones v, d) ia ua

Vowel plus nasal: ee oo

Consonants listed according to the parts of the mouth used to pronounce them:

1. p ph np nph hm m
2. pl plh npl nplh hml ml
3. f v
4. t th nt nth hl l hn n
5. d dh
6. tx txh ntx ntxh x
7. r rh nr nrh
8. ts tsh nts ntsh s z
9. c ch nc nch
10. xy y hny ny
11. k kh nk nkh g
12. q qh nq ngh
13. h
Kuv xav kawm hais Lus Hmoob. Koj puas Kam ghia huv?

Kam xwb.
White Hmong Dialogues

ZAJ KAWM ZAUM IB

A: Koj tuaj los?
B: Kuv tuaj os.
    Kuv xav kawm hais lus Hmoob.

    Koj puas kam qhia kuv?
A: Kam xwb.
B: Ua tsaug.
    Tag kis kuv mam rov qab tuaj dua puas tau?
A: Tau xwb.

Vocabulary:
dua 'again'
hais 'to speak'
Hmoob 'Hmong'
ib 'one, first'
kawm 'to learn, to study'
kis
    tag kis 'tomorrow'
kam 'to be willing to'
koj 'you'(singular)
Koj tuaj los? 'Hello.'
    spoken to a person entering your house.
kuv 'I, me'
Kuv tuaj os. 'Hello',
    response to Koj tuaj los?
los (here, it is a grammatical particle used at the end of a sentence to form a yes-no question)
lus 'language'
mam 'therefore'
os (grammatical particle used at the end of a sentence)

LESSON ONE

Hi!
Hi!
I would like to learn to speak Hmong.
Will you teach me?
All right (yes).
Thank you.
May I come back tomorrow?
Yes.

puas (grammatical particle used before the verb to form a yes-no question)
qab 'back'
qhia 'to teach'
rov 'to return'
tag kis 'tomorrow'
tau 'to be able'
tuaj 'to come'
tsaug 'thanks'
uu 'to do'
Ua tsaug 'Thank you'
xav 'to want'
xwb 'indeed'
zaum 'time'
Pattern drills:

1. Koj xav ua dab tsi?

Kuv xav kawm hais lus Hmoob.
Kuv xav nyeem ntayw Hmoob.
Kuv xav ntuxav tes.
Kuv xav haus dej.

2. Koj puas kam qhia kuv?
Koj puas kam pab kuv?
Koj puas kam coj kuv mus?

Kam xwb.

What would you like to do?
I would like to learn to speak Hmong.
I would like to read Hmong books.
I would like to wash my hands.
I would like to drink some water.

Are you willing to teach me?
Are you willing to help me?
Are you willing to take me there?

Yes.

Answer the following questions in Hmong:

1. Koj xav kawm hais lus dab tsi?
2. Koj hais lus Hmoob puas tau?

**ZAJ KAWM ZAUM OB**

A: Kuv yuav rov qab mus tsev.

B: Nrog peb nyob mas.
A: Aws, tau lawm os.

B: Yog li ces tsis cheem koj.
   Mus koj nawj.
A: Aws, kuv mam mus os.

**LESSON TWO**

Well, I guess I have to be getting home now.
Please stay with us.
Thank you, but I have to go home.
Okay, well I won't keep you then. Bye.

Bye.
Vocabulary:

aws 'oh', 'yes'
Aws, kuv mam mus os.

'nawj (grammatical particle used at the end of a sentence)

'Good-bye.' (Response to Mus koj nawj.)

'ces 'so'

cheem 'to detain'

koj 'you' (sing.)

kuv 'I'

lawm 'already'

li 'thus'

mam 'will'

mas (grammatical particle used at the end of a sentence)

mus 'to go'

Mus koj nawj. 'Goodbye.'
(speaking to someone leaving your house. Literally 'go by yourself.' This is a polite expression meaning in effect 'please forgive for letting you go off by yourself like this and not accompanying you part way.')

tsis 'not'
yog 'if'
yuav 'to want'; 'will'

Pattern drills:

1.
Kuv yuav rov qab mus tsev. Well, I guess I have to be getting home now.

Nrog peb nyob mas. (Please) stay with us.
Nrog peb zaum mas. (Please) sit with us.
Nrog peb mus mas. (Please) go with us.
Nrog peb noj mov mas. (Please) eat with us.

2.
Koj yuav ua dab tsi? What are you going to do?

Kuv yuav mus tsev. I'm going to go home.
Kuv yuav nyeem ntawv. I'm going to read.
Kuv yuav ntxuav tes. I'm going to wash my hands.
Kuv yuav haus dej. I'm going to drink some water.

Answer the following questions in Hmong:

1. Koj yuav ua dab tsi?
2. Koj puas kam nrog peb nyob?
AZA KAIM ZAUM PEB

A: Nej puas nyob tsev?
B: Nyob os, los tsev mas!
   Koj tuaj los?
A: Tuaj os.
B: Koj tuaj dab tsi?
   Koj tuaj xyuas peb los?
A: Kuv tsis tuaj dab tsi,
   kuv tuaj xyuas nej xwb.
   Nej puas khoom?
B: Khoom los mas.
   Los tsev os.
A: Nej puas caiv os?
B: Peb tsis caiv os.
   Los tsev mas!

Vocabulary:
caiv 'to observe a prohibition'
dab tsi 'what', 'anything'; see note on grammar.
koj 'you' (singular)
   (spoken to a person entering your house.)
kuv 'I'
khoom 'free, not busy, available'
los (grammatical particle used at the end of a sentence to form a yes-no question)
los mas (interjection expressing encouragement or invitation)
los tsev os. 'come in'
mas (see los mas)

Note on grammar: In certain sentences using dab tsi, 'what, 'anything', the word ua 'to do' is understood:

Koj tuaj (ua) dab tsi?
   What did you come (to do)?
Kuv tsis tuaj (ua)
   I did not come (to do)
dab tsi.
   anything.

LESSON THREE

Are you home?
Yes, come in!
Hello.
Hello.
What brings you here?
Did you come to visit us?
I didn't come for anything special, just to see you.
Are you free/available?
By all means.
Do come in.
Are you observing any prohibitions?
No, we aren't.
Come in!

nej 'you' (plural, referring to three or more people; if there are only two, use 'neb')
nyob 'to be located'
os (emphatic particle to soften the phrase)
peb 'we, us'; (plural, referring to three or more; if only two use 'wb')
puas (grammatical particle placed before the verb to form yes-no questions)
tuaj 'to come'
tuaj os! 'Hello', response to 'koj tuaj los?'
tsev 'house'; 'home'
ts
   dab tsi 'what, anything'
tsis 'not'
xwb 'only'
xyuas 'to visit'
Pattern Drills:

Koj puas (xav) nyeem ntawv? ('Xav' is understood) (kuv) Nyeem os. ('Kuv' is optional)

Koj puas (xav) ntxuav tes? (kuv) Ntxuav os.

Koj puas (xav) noj mov? (kuv) Noj os.

Koj puas (xav) mus tsev? (kuv) Mus os.

2. Koj puas (xav) nyeem ntawv? (kuv) Tsis nyeem os.

Koj puas (xav) ntxuav tes? (kuv) Tsis ntxuav os.

Koj puas (xav) noj mov? (kuv) Tsis noj os.

Koj puas (xav) mus tsev? (kuv) Tsis mus os.

ZAJ KAWM ZAUM PLAUB
A: Txiv Ntxawm, kuv yuav tsum mus.
   Yuav tsaus ntuj lawm.
B: Txhob mus los mas.
   Nrog peb pw ib hmos.

A: Tsis tau.
B: Yog li ces, mam mus koj os.

A: Sawv daws nyob zoo!
B: Mus ho tuaj os.
A: Aws, Aws.
   Lwm zaug nej ho tuaj xyuas peb thiab os.

LESSON FOUR

Uncle, I must be going.
It's getting dark.
Don't go.
Sleep over at our house one night.
I can't.
If you insist, then, take care.
Everyone stay well!
Please come again.
I will.
And you come visit us sometime!
Vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>daws</th>
<th>tsaus 'to be dark'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sawv daws 'everyone'</td>
<td>tsaus ntuj 'to be dark, to be nighttime'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ho 'then'</td>
<td>txiv ntxawm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hmo 'night'</td>
<td>(1) 'uncle' (father's younger brother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hmos (form of hmo occurring after tone b and tone j)</td>
<td>(2) polite form of address to an older man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lwm 'another, the next'</td>
<td>tsaus ntuj 'to be dark, to be nighttime'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mam 'then, therefore'</td>
<td>txhob 'don't!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mam mus koj os! (Literally, 'then you go' but means 'take care.' )</td>
<td>zaug 'a time, an occasion'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntuj 'sky'</td>
<td>zoo 'good, well'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntuj 'sky'</td>
<td>nyob zoo 'to be well'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntxawm (see txiv ntxawm)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyob zoo 'to be well'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pw 'to lie down, to sleep'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sawv daws 'everyone'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thiab 'also'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pattern drills:

1:

Yuav tsaus ntuj lawm. It's getting dark.
Yuav sov lawm. It's getting warm.
Yuav no lawm. It's getting cold.

2:

(tsis) Txhob mus los mas. Please don't go.
Nrog peb pw ib hmos. Sleep over at our house one night.

(tsis) Txhob pw los mas. Please don't go to bed.
Nrog peb than ib pliag. Talk with us for a while.

(tsis) Txhob rov qab mus los mas. Please don't go back.
Nrog peb zaum ib pliag. Sit with us for a while.

los mas (in this sense, it is acting like 'please')
ZAJ KAWM ZAUM TSIB
A: Kuv tuaj kawm lus Hmoob.
B: Los tsev os.
   Los zaum.
A: Qhov no hu li cas?
B: Hu ua "ib phau ntawv".
A: Qhov ntawd hu li cas?
B: Hu ua "ib tug cwj mem".
A: Puas yog hu ua "ntawv" no?
B: Yog.
A: Puas yog hu ua
   "lub rooj zaum"?
B: Tsis yog, hu ua "lub rooj" xwb. No, it's called "a table".

Vocabulary:

- **cas**
  - li cas? 'how?'
- **cwj mem** 'pen'
- **hu** 'to call'
- **hu ua** 'to call' (in the sense of 'to call something by a certain name')
- **ib** 'one, a'
- **li cas? 'how?'
- **lub** (grammatical particle used with nouns)
- **lub rooj** 'table'
- **lub rooj zaum** 'chair'
- **mem (cwj mem)** 'pen'
- **ntawd** 'that' (demonstr. adj.)
- **ntawd 'that'** (demonstrative pronoun)
- **ntawv** 'paper'
- **phau ntawv** 'book'
- **qhov ntawv** 'this'(demonstrative pronoun)
- **qhov ntawd** 'that'
  (demonstrative pronoun)
- **rooj** 'table'
- **rooj zaum** 'chair'
- **tug** (form of tus occurring after tone b and tone j)
- **tus** (grammatical particle used with nouns)
- **tus cwj mem** 'pen'
- **ua 'as' (see hu ua)
- **yog** 'to be so' , 'to be the case that ...'
- **zaum** 'to sit'
- **lub rooj zaum** 'chair'

Pattern drill:

Koj tuaj dab tsi?

Kuv tuaj kawm lus Hmoob.
Kuv tuaj nyseem ntawv.
Kuv tuaj ntuxuav tes.
Kuv tuaj haus dej.

What have you come to do?

I've come to study Hmong.
I've come to read.
I've come to wash my hands.
I've come to drink some water.
A: Koj ua dab tsi? What are you doing?  
B: Kuv tab tom noj hmo. I'm eating dinner.  
A: Koj noj dab tsi? What are you eating?  
B: Kuv tab tom noj nqaij nyug. I'm eating beef.

Vocabulary:

hmo 'supper'
noj 'to eat'
nqaij 'meat'
nqaij nyug 'beef'
nyug (form of nyuj occurring after tone b and j)
nyuj 'cow, bull'
tab tom (grammatical particle placed before the verb to denote progressive aspect; similar in meaning to English be...-ing)

Pattern drills:
1. Koj ua dab tsi? What are you doing?
   Kuv tab tom noj hmo. I'm eating dinner.
   Kuv tab tom haus dej. I'm having a drink of water.
   Kuv tab tom cheb tsev. I'm sweeping the floor(house).
   Kuv tab tom ntxuav tais diav. I'm washing dishes.
   Kuv tab tom ntxuav tes. I'm washing my hands.
   Kuv tab tom ntxhua khaub ncaws. I'm washing clothes.
   Kuv tab tom nyeem ntawv. I'm reading.
   Kuv tab tom nrhiav tus cwj mem. I'm looking for a pen.
   Kuv tab tom so rooj. I'm wiping the table.

2. Koj noj dab tsi? What are you eating?
   Kuv noj nqaij nyug. I'm eating beef.
   Kuv noj nqaij ntses. I'm eating fish.
   Kuv noj nqaij npuas. I'm eating pork.
ZAJ KAWM ZAUM XYA  

A: Koj ua dab tsi?  
B: Kuv ua vaj zaub.  
A: Kuv tsis hnov koj hais dab tsi.  
B: Kuv hais tias kuv ua vaj zaub.  

A: Nws ua dab tsi?  
B: Nws ua hmo.  
A: Kuv tsis to taub.  "Ua hmo" yog hais dab tsi?  
B: "Ua hmo" yog "npaj zaub npaj mov noj".  
A: Nws ua dab tsi?  
B: Kuv tsis paub.

Vocabulary:

hais 'to say'  
yog hais 'to mean'  
hnov 'to hear'  
mov 'cooked rice'  
nws 'he, she'  
npaj 'to prepare'  
paub 'to know'  
taub (see to taub)  
tias 'that' '(conjunction)  
to taub 'to understand'  
uu 'to do, to make'  
vaj 'garden'  
yog 'to be'  
yog hais 'to mean'  
zaub 'vegetable'  

Pattern Drills:

1.  
Kuv ua vaj zaub.  
Kuv tsis hnov koj hais dab tsi.  
Kuv hais tias kuv ua vaj zaub.  

Kuv nyeem ntawv.  
Kuv tsis hnov koj hais dab tsi.  
Kuv hais tias kuv nyeem ntawv.  

Kuv ntxuav tes.  
Kuv tsis hnov koj hais dab tsi.  
Kuv hais tias kuv ntxuav tes.  

LESSON SEVEN

What are you doing?  
I'm making a garden.  
I didn't hear what you said.  

I said that I'm making a garden.  

What is he/she doing?  
He/she is making supper.  
I don't understand.  

What does "making supper" mean?  
"Making supper" means "preparing rice and vegetables to eat".  

What is he/she doing?  
I don't know.  

What is he/she doing?  
He/she is making supper.  
I didn't hear what you said.  

What does '#making supperu mean?  
"Making supper" means "preparing rice and vegetables to eat".  

I don't know.  

I'm eating.
I didn't hear what you said.
I said that I'm eating.

I'm drinking some water.
I didn't hear what you said.
I said that I'm drinking some water.
I'm going home.
I didn't hear what you said.
I said that I'm going home.

I'm making a garden.
I don't understand.
What does "ua vaj zaub" mean?

I'm reading.
I don't understand.
What does "nyeem ntawv" mean?

I'm eating.
I don't understand.
What does "noj mov" mean?

I'm drinking some water.
I don't understand.
What does "haus dej" mean?

I'm going home.
I don't understand.
What does "mus tsev" mean?

What is he/she doing?

He/she's preparing vegetables to eat.
He/she's giving it to my father to eat.
He/she's reading to my mother (literally "He/she's reading to my mother to listen.")
**LESSON EIGHT**

What day are you going shopping?
I don't know yet whether it will be Friday or Saturday.
If you go on Saturday, I would like to go with you.
I'm leaving at four thirty.

What time will we get back?
If I can find the things I need, we'll come back at seven.
If I'm not home by six I'm afraid I'll miss supper.

**Vocabulary:**

khw 'market'
hnub vas Xuv 'Friday' (Lao van suk)
hnub vas Xaum 'Saturday' (Lao van sao)

**LESSON NINE**

Where are you going?
I'm going shopping.

How are you going there?
I'm going to walk.

How far is it from here?
It's only three blocks from here.

**Vocabulary:**

mus kav khw 'to go shopping'

blov (derived from 'block' in English)
A: Puag ta koj mus dab tsi lawm?
B: Kuv mus yuav khoom tom
    khw lawm.
A: Koj yuav tau dab tsi?
B: Kuv yuav tau ib co qe, ngaij
    qaib, zaub xav lav, zaub paj,
    piam thaj, thiab txhuv.

Vocabulary:
puag ta 'a little while ago'

A: Koj puas tau noj sus?
B: Tsis tau.
A: Koj puas tshaib plab?
B: Tshaib.
    Puas muaj tsev noj mov nyob
    ze ntawm no?
A: Nrog peb noj mov xwb los mas.

Vocabulary:
ntxim 'to look'; 'to appear'
ntxuag 'with'(used after eat, e.g. eat with rice)
tsuag 'not salty'
This is very delicious.
Please tell me again what it is called.
It's called "zaub tsuag."
How do you make it?
First you put in the water.
When it is boiling, then you break vegetables into it.
Would you like a cup of tea?
Yes, thank you.
With or without sugar?
Without.

Vocabulary:
saib 'to look', but here just a sentence connector.

When you go to the zoo, I would like to go with you.
Our neighbors want to go with you too.
Let's go together.
Sure.
The more the merrier.
We'll leave the children with my mother.
She will watch them and they can play together.
No, don't leave them there.
We should take our children; they will enjoy looking at the animals too.
If we do that, then someone will have to look after them.
I will watch them.

Vocabulary:
litnawd 'like that'
mamlit 'in that case'
Can I give you a ride somewhere?  
Yes, if it's not out of your way.
Where are you going?  
I have to get to Jacobson's department store.
It's on the corner of Maynard and Liberty.

Vocabulary:

ceg kaum 'corner'

ghov twg  
(1) 'where?'
(2) 'anywhere'
yuav tsum 'must, ought, have to'

I've come to see if you have any paj ntaub to sell.  
Yes, we do.
Would you like to see them?  
Yes, please.  
Oh, this one is very beautiful.  
We also have one that is larger.
Would you like to see it?  
Yes, I would.  
I would like to buy this small one.  
How much is it?  
Fifty dollars.  
That's very inexpensive.
LESSON SEVENTEEN

Hello
Hello.
What can I do for you?
Do you have any Hmong clothing to sell?
We don't have anything that we're selling.
We have some just to look at.
This is txoj phuam.
Women wear it on their heads.
This is a Hmoob Ntsuab skirt.
Hmoob Dawb wear Hmoob Ntsuab skirts because Hmoob Ntsuab skirts are beautiful.
Yes, Hmoob Ntsuab skirts are really beautiful.
Do you have any other Hmong things I can look at?
Right now we don't.
Next week if you come back we may have something.
Thank you.
So next week I'll come back.

Vocabulary:

Lim piam 'week' (Many people, however, use 'as thiv', from Lao.)

LESSON EIGHTEEN

Hello.
Come in.
I came to look at your new car.
Go ahead.
Would you like a ride?
Where should I sit?
Sit up in front.

Look!
That man is driving very fast.

It's raining hard. He should drive slowly.
Lesson Nineteen

I'd like to drive a little.
May I?
Yes, but drive carefully.

Your car is different from mine.
How?
My car doesn't have a radio and is not as large as yours.

Lesson Twenty

How long have you lived in this apartment?
Two years.
Since I came to this country.

How much longer will you live here?
I will live here until I buy a house of my own.

Are you looking for a house to buy now?
No.
I can't afford to buy a house yet.