

The Orthography: Historical Development Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) Writing System (Part I)

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Agenda

Welcome, Introduction, and Introduction

- I. Historical Development of the Mong/Hmong Orthography in Context
- II. RPA System is **Phonemic-Based** and Past RPA Reforms & Implications
- III. English Phonology to understand Basic Elements of the Mong/Hmong Language
- IV. Recommendations ~ **No change to the RPA System in place now**

(Cont. Part II)

via Zoom on 3-25-2026 at 6:30 p.m. Central Time)

- V. Research on the Importance of Teaching & Learning Mong/Hmong
- VI. Issue of Monosyllabic vs. Polysyllabic Lexicons
- VII. Word Coinage (Different ways in which new words enter the language)
- VIII. Curriculum Development ~ Scope, Sequence & Courses of Studies for College, HS, & Elementary Schools
- IX. Lesson Planning & Design ~ Suggest Model in 3 Columns: Bidialectal & English ~ Mong, Hmong, and English ~ See Samples for WLC 195, WLC 295 & WLC 395
- X. Pedagogies on How to Teach Mong/Hmong Students
- XI. **Suggestions for Future Directions in Mong/Hmong Studies**
- XII. **Conclusion**

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V. Research on the Importance of Teaching and Learning our Native Language

- Research indicates that teaching and learning in the heritage language are critical for cognitive development (Cummins, 1976, 1979 & 2008); Bialystok, 2001 & Valdes, 2001), academic achievement (Valdes, 2001; Cummins, 1976, 1979; Carreira & Chik, 2014), and emotional well-being in the early years of education (Oh & Fuligni, 2010).
- In addition, native language instruction improves foundational literacy and numeracy skills, boosts self-esteem, facilitates smoother second-language acquisition, and preserves cultural heritage, according to [UNESCO](#), Ghatar and Ahmad (2025), and studies done by Skutnabb-Kangas (2012) support that mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) strengthens foundational skills, builds self-esteem, improves L2 acquisition, and preserves cultural heritage.
- There is tremendous language loss in the heritage language, including indigenous languages among the 7,000 languages of the world (Fillmore, 2000; Bower, 2022; Cummings, 2023).

VI. Issue of Monosyllabic vs. Polysyllabic Lexicons

- The Mong/Hmong language has been classified by linguists as monosyllabic. However, there are sizeable disyllabic as well as polysyllabic words. A resolution is needed to standardize the Mong/Hmong language (Thao, 1997, 1999, & 2023). For deeper insight into the compounding of Mong/Hmong lexicons, readers are encouraged to read *Kevcai siv lug Moob* (Foundations of the Mong language, Thao, 1997, pp. 29-31) for more details.

VII. Word Coinage

- There are several ways in which new words can enter the Mong/Hmong language, including:
 - 1) Compounding (Kev sistxuas-lug)
 - 2) Blending (Kev sislug-lug or Kev sislov-lus), e.g. ab ab → ab heev or iab iab → iab heev, for example.
 - 3) Clipping (Kev sistxav-lug / Kev sistxiav-lus), e.g. suav quasdlawg -- > suavdlawg
 - 4) Changing the tone (kev hloovsuab), e.g. kaum, neeg nkaum, peb caug.
Kaavkab/kavkiab xaav/xav → xaam/xam rauj → raug

- 5) Derivation, e.g., add the word “Kev” to form the noun in Mong/Hmong language, e.g Kev ua si (entertainment);

For deeper insight into word coinage of Mong/Hmong lexicons, readers are encouraged to read *Kevcai siv lug Moob* (Foundations of Mong language) (Thao, 1997, pp. 29-32) for more details.

VIII. Curriculum Development: Scope, Sequence & Courses of Studies for College, HS, & Elementary Schools

- As always, I recommend three (3) different levels of Scope, Sequence, and Courses of Studies to develop for elementary school level, high school level, and college and university level. Since the Committee is currently working on the Scope, Sequence, and Courses of Study for K-2, my comments are based on the documents provided by the Committee and sent to me by Ms. Sue Vang on March 11, 2026.
- So far, K-2 Scope and Sequences have been developed, so my comments are centered around these documents:
- Due to the lack of a sense of direction on what documents to comment on, I will provide my feedback on certain documents as referred to in my links to the cross-references) Based on the Google Doc. Files:
 - [Revised Hmong Alphabets](#)
 - [Rev. Hmong Alphabet.png](#)

Comment: Need some more clarification from the Committee on several items. I need to spend more time digesting and reflecting on some of the vowel digraphs and vowel blends suggested by the Committee.

Base Vowels:

i (pib – start) ~ Mong Leng use – “cuab”

Comment: No need to add “i” ~ ~ the current RPA can accommodate these variations of pronunciations

iw (txiwv – dad) ~ Mong Leng use “txiv,” “txwv,” “iv”

Comment: No need to add “i” and “iw” ~ the current RPA can accommodate these variations of pronunciations

Common Vowel Blends:

*uo puob – them (need clarification and rationale)

Comments: I don’t know what the Committee means, and I need more clarification. After getting clarification,

*ia (already covered by Hmong Dawb – No need to add “ia” into the current RPA system ~ the current RPA can accommodate this diphthong)

Comments: There are some regional dialectal differences between those coming from the former province of Sayaboury, e.g. “Yag” -- used “Yiag”

Possible Vowel Blending:

ae	ao			
ea	ei	eo	eu	ew
ie	io			
oa	oe	ou	ow	
ua	ue	ui	uw	
wa	we	wi	wu	

Comment: I need clarification and justification as to the reason why we need to add the aforementioned vowel blendings ~ I think this will complicate our system, but I am open to listening to see if they are viable options.

Recommendations ~ No need to add these vowel blendings into the current RPA system ~ the current RPA can accommodate all these diphthongs)

No change to the RPA System in place now

Scope, Sequences & Courses of Study

- [Chiv Suab- K-2 Teacher Scope & Seq – Hmong Phonics.docx](#)
- [Chiv Suab- K-2 Teacher Scope & Seq – Hmong Phonics.doc](#)
- [2020 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts \(ELA\) 02224 Updated.pdf](#)

Comments:

- I have reviewed the two documents on K-2 Teacher Scope & Seq ~ Hmong Phonics, along with the 2020 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) 02224, and the following are my comments.
- **Comments:** I reviewed this document, and it is a good reference for developing the Scope, Sequence, and Courses of Study. However, the standards from [2020 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts \(ELA\) 02224 Updated.pdf](#) are quite complex for our K-2 students, for example:

Reading Standards for K ~

C-ref to 0.1.1.1 to 0.1.1-3 on pp. 1-7

1. R1 Demonstrate knowledge of oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, and morphology to read accurately and fluently (pp. 1-7).

C-ref to 0.1.2.1 to 0.1.2.3 on pp. 7-8

2. R2 - Read and comprehend independently
 - A) both self-selected and teacher-directed texts,
 - B) complex literary and informational texts, and
 - C) from multiple sources representing perspectives and identities like and unlike their own from dominant, non-dominant, and marginalized social groups.

C-ref to 0.1.4.1 to 0.1.4.4 on p. 9

3. R3 - Read critically to comprehend, interpret, and analyze themes and central ideas in complex literary and information texts

C-ref to 0.1.4.1 to 0.1.4.3 on p. 9

4. R4 Read critically to comprehend, interpret, and analyze themes and central ideas in complex literary and informational texts.

C-ref to 0.1.5.1 to 0.1.5.3 on p. 9.

5. R5 Apply knowledge of text structure to understand and evaluate a wide variety of complex literary and informational texts.

- The Committee may want to consider revising the Scope, Sequence, and Courses of Study for K-2 and extending it to K-4 rather than K-2.

Recommendations:

- The Committee may want to turn to developing the Scope, Sequence, and Courses of Study using the [MN WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020](#) (adopted since 2010), fully aligned with the standards developed by the University of Wisconsin – Madison, including the adopted [Common Core ELA standards](#). The framework integrates language development with content instruction, focusing on four key language uses (narrate, inform, explain, argue) across academic disciplines to ensure equitable access
- The principle for teaching and learning to read, or literacy, is a well-balanced curriculum that combines phonics and whole-language approaches.
- Phonics is based on the following premises. From K through the middle or 4th grade, we need to teach children to read, meaning we should use Systematic Explicit Phonics Instruction until students become fluent readers. After the 4th grade level, the more students read, the more they learn, so we could use different pedagogical approaches to teach them. Given that,
- Knowledge of language (linguistics) serves as the foundation for reading and literacy education
- Many teachers may not have studied the forms and functions of language like linguists, speech-language pathologists, actors, singers, and anthropologists.
- Explicit teaching of oral and written language involves the forms and functions of language since it remains the core principle of effective instruction for both novice and struggling readers.
- The teacher who knows about language is more likely to impart clear, accurate, and organized information about sounds, words, sentences, and discourse.
- Therefore, the missing foundation in teacher education is the study of the forms and functions of language.

- Literacy is “an achievement that rests primarily on language processing at all levels, from elemental sounds to the most overarching structures of text” (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018; Seidenberg, 2017, as cited in Moats, 2020, p. 2).
- Literacy is the ability to read and write language with competence at all levels from the sound level to the overarching structures of text (Moats, 2010, p. 2).

Pedagogy (by Pang Yang)

- After reviewing the document on Pedagogy by Pang Yang in the Google Drive, the documents are still in a draft stage.
- Relating to pedagogies, we need to be able to make a selective adaptation or become eclectic by using research from various sources, e.g. from *first language acquisition* (Clark, 2024), teaching children starting from perception, early words, constructions, and meanings, using language from both our heritage language and English to going through the process in acquisition to specialization in academic language with continuity and constantly change, just to name a few.
- From *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (VanPatten, Keating & Wulff, 2025), bilingual education (Cornwell, 2022), and multicultural education (Banks, 2016), including culturally relevant pedagogies that are found to be effective, for the grade-appropriate.

Comments: For a younger student population, just like ours, we could adopt and adapt some of the following sources for implementation:

- 1) Five (5) methods of teaching and assessment introduced in *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print* (Adams, 1994 & 1990, & Moats, 2010), including:
 - 1) Phonemic Segmentation Tasks
 - 2) Phonemic Manipulation Tasks
 - 3) Syllable-splitting Tasks
 - 4) Blending Tasks
 - 5) Oddity Tasks
- 2) And principles of effective teaching, reading, spelling, and writing in [*Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers*](#) (Moats, 2010, pp. 16-17).
- 3) National Reading Panel ~ Resources developed by [The Reading Panel](#) (1997)

Curriculum Development and Lesson Planning

Comments: Need a Curriculum Mapping out from K-4 grade along the line of MN WIDA-ELD - Standards-Framework

- **Common Progression**

Comment: After reviewing the common progression handout, I recommend the following steps for teaching the Mong/Hmong alphabets in the following steps:

- 1) Introduce the Mong/Hmong RPA system that aligns with the American alphabetic system, following a – z, just like English, since the Mong/Hmong RPA is derived from the 26 Roman letters, just like in English.
- 2) As teachers, start introducing the lesson with the letter “a.” They will introduce the syllable pattern, as the Mong/Hmong letter begins with a consonant, followed by a vowel, and a tone marker, e.g. “ab, aj, av, am, for example) without the semantics of the word, but focus on the pronunciation. Then connect the students using grapho-phonics (sound-symbol relationship), make a connection with the pronunciation of “a” with some practice on the tone markers to begin with, introduce the semantics, and so on, and then continue the cycle until all the single consonants are done.
- 3) After the single consonants are introduced to students, move on to the double consonant blends, triple consonant blends, and quadruple consonant blends, in that order. See the link to the sequence of the Table of Contents of [*Mong Primer Book I*](#) (Yang, 2007, pp. 5-6) for more details.

Curriculum Development and Courses of Study ~ Pending the revision of the Scope and Sequence document:

- [Am I ready for the SEALS test. Pdf](#)
- [Chiv Suab Lesson 1_M m- Day 1 & 2.pdf](#)
- [Chiv Suab Ntawv HMoob Overview Progression.docx](#)
- [Chiv Suab Slides 1_M m Day 1 & 1.pptx.pdf](#)
- [Hmong Phonics Instruction Routine.pdf](#)

- [Hmong RPA Pedagogy Teaching Infographic.pdf](#)
- [MN SEALS Testing options Widely used assessment \(18x4](#)

Response: These are part of the Curriculum and Instructions and Assessment needed to be revisited when the time comes.

- IX. Lesson Planning & Design ~ Suggest Model in 3 Columns: Bidialectal & English ~ Mong, Hmong, and English ~ See Samples for WLC 195, WLC 295 & WLC 395
- X. Pedagogies on How to Teach Mong/Hmong Students
- XI. Suggestions for Future Directions in Mong/Hmong Studies
- XII. Conclusion

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