FOUR-WORD PHRASES IN LAO DISCOURSE:
yuu^{4} dii^{2} mii^{3} hɛɛŋ^{3}

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In his 1975 article, "Rhyme, Reduplication, etc. in Lao," G. Edward Roffe presented and discussed an extensive collection of polysyllabic phrases in Lao which may occur either in oral or written discourse. Using material from Roffe's article and some of his field notes, as well as material from my own field work, I focus on the types of four-word phrases that occur in the Lao data and discuss aspects of the patterns found in them. Such knowledge of four-word phrases and related patterns is seen as significant in developing a deeper understanding of Lao discourse and poetics.

1 Introduction

In this article I focus on four-word phrases in Lao in which each word in the phrase can function independently in some way, but when woven into a phrase produces a meaning which is different from or more intense than smaller sections of the phrase.[1] From my perspective, such four-word phrases are basic components of the discourse structure and poetics of many Tai languages, certainly so in Lao. These phrases occur with high frequency in oral language and are also found in written language. In Lao, they are found not only in everyday speech, written short stories, folk tales and epics, but also in newspapers and magazine articles. The modern short story writer and the traditional *mohlam* singer make use of these phrases because they are a basic part of the language. This weaving of words into four-word phrases is a process which is evident in most Tai languages; I believe all or nearly all of them use these phrases as intellectual building blocks, expressing old concepts with set four-word phrases and creating ways to reflect new ideas using the productive four-word phrases. Not only four-word, but five-word and six-word phrases fill similar positions in many of these languages. In this paper, I focus specifically on the four-word phrases.

2 Four-Word Phrases in Lao

For Lao, the first discussion of four-word phrases in the English literature appears to be in the 1975 article, "Rhyme, Reduplication, etc. in Lao," by G. Edward Roffe. In that article, he presented and discussed an extensive collection of polysyllabic phrases in Lao which may occur either in oral or written discourse

In his article, Roffe presented four major categories of four-word expressions: Fixed expressions, adaptation of foreign terms, reduplication, and rhyming. The fixed expressions he refers to show a "semantic relationship" of the individual words but do not involve reduplication or rhyme. The criteria for a phrase to be considered a "fixed expression" appear to be that the four words are frequently found in a specific order in a phrase with a general meaning related to the meanings of the individual words. An example of a fixed expression is:

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sap[4]	sin[1]	ŋən[3]	thɔɔŋ[3]
treasure	wealth	silver	gold

with the meaning given by Roffe as 'riches.'[2]

The adaptation of foreign terms is a rather small category and includes some repetition. An example of such an item is:

mii[3] *nit*[4] *mii*[3] *nat*[4] from the French 'minister'; the phrase means 'cabinet minister.'

Roffe's third category of four-word phrases, reduplication, is very common and has many variations. Such phrases may contain combinations which include nonsense syllables in part of the phrase or uncommonly used expressions. For Roffe, reduplication may be of exact words or similar sounds. This form has many productive patterns.

The fourth category, rhyming, is a pattern which is quite frequent and also very productive. Usually in this pattern, syllables two and three of the four-word phrase rhyme.

In his paper, Roffe notes that "the basic structure of these expressions is a polysyllabic phrase with an equal number of syllables on either side of an imaginary vertical dividing line" (285). In the data on which my paper is based, I have chosen to focus my attention on the four-word phrases.

3 The Data

In this section, I will present some of the patterns and examples of four-word phrases from field notes and connected discourse in Lao; these are from the beginning stages of my current project on indigenous aspects of Lao grammar. Eventually I hope to be able to tell more about the use, distribution and frequency of occurrence of four-word phrases in Lao. First, we will look primarily at some of the variations and similarities we find with the Lao patterns; then, we will discuss briefly similar patterns found in a few other Tai languages. Finally, we will comment on what appear to be similar patterns in Vietnamese, Khmer and Hmong.

Examples of four-word phrases from G. Edward Roffe's field notes were collected.[3] Hundreds of such phrases occur in his material. From a continuous section of 2,100 lexical entries, 100 items were four-word phrases. I limited the selection of phrases to those having only four words, and I have categorized them in a somewhat different manner that did Roffe. Of these 100 four-word phrases, I found that 70 had a repetition pattern, 22 had a rhyming pattern and 8 involved semantic linking. The 70 phrases involving repetition can be further divided into five types.

1. First of all, there are those phrases in which words 1 and 3 are exactly the same and words 2 and 4 share a **clear semantic** link. Of the 70, 34 phrases fell into this category. For example: *khii*[5] *loŋ*[1] *khii*[5] *l~~i~~m*[3] 'absent-minded'.

2. Secondly, there are those phrases in which words 1 and 3 are exactly the same and 2 and 4 share a **vague semantic** link. Of the 70 phrases having repetition, 13 were of this type.

3. In this group, **repetition with compounds**, words 1 and 3 are again the same while 2 and 4 are words that are often used as a compound, but in the phrase are separated by the repeated words. There are 17 of these phrases.
4. In the next group, **repetition with opposites**, 1 and 3 are exactly the same, but 2 and 4 are opposites in meaning or opposed in meaning in some way. There are five such phrases.
5. Just one example was found of this final type of repetition, **double reduplication**. In this case words 1 and 2 are the same and represent one compound meaning 'different' while words 3 and 4 are the same and represent another compound meaning 'various.' Roffe glosses this phrase as 'all sorts of things.'

The following table illustrates the types of repetition found in the 100 entries from Roffe's field notes. In the first four types, words 1 and 3 are identical. In the fifth type, 1 and 2 are the same word and 3 and 4 are the same word.

Table 1: *Types of repetition in Lao four-word phrases*

1.	0	0	0	0	
	1	2*cs*	3	4*cs*	(where *cs* stands for *close semantic link*)
2.	0	0	0	0	
	1	2*vs*	3	4*vs*	(where *vs* stands for *vague semantic link*)
3.	0	0	0	0	
	1	2*c*	3	4c	(where *c* stands for an element of a *compound*)
4.	0	0	0	0	
	1	2*op*	3	4*op*	(where *op* stands for an *opposing* meaning)
5.	0	0	0	0	
	1	1*r*	2	2*r*	(where *r* stands for a *reduplicated* word)

In the next table, examples are presented of each type of repetition found among those hundred phrases. All of the examples in the table below are from Roffe's field data.

Table 2: *Examples of repetition in Lao four-word phrases*

1.	Repetition with Close Semantic Link				
	thuun^{3}	hua^{1}	thuun^{3}	kaw^{6}	
	lift up	head	lift up	head	'adore'
	0	0	0	0	
	1	2cs	3	4cs	(close semantic link)

2. Repetition with Vague Semantic Link

taam^{2}	mii^{3}	taam^{2}	kəət	
as	have	as	born	‘according to one’s means’
0	0	0	0	
1	2vs	3	4vs	(vague semantic link)

3. Repetition with a (Split) Compound

pen^{2}	thaa^{4}	pen^{2}	thaaŋ^{3}	
be	manner	be	way	‘(in the) accepted manner’
0	0	0	0	
1	2c	3	4c	(elements of a compound)

thaa^{4} thaaŋ^{3} = ‘manner, character’

4. Repetition with Opposites

kuay^{4}	hua^{1}	kuay^{4}	haaŋ^{1}	
put	head	put	tail	‘alternate’
crosswise		crosswise		(head to feet, as lying down)
0	0	0	0	
1	2op	3	4op	(opposing elements)

5. Double Reduplication

taaŋ^{4} taaŋ^{4}	naa^{3} naa^{3}	
different	various	‘all sorts of things’
0 0	0 0	
1 1r	2 2r	(r stands for a reduplicated word)

The following table illustrates the types of internal rhyme found in the four-word phrases from Roffe’s data. As I noted earlier, 22 of the 100 four-word phrases in his data showed a rhyming pattern. In 19 of these phrases standard internal rhyme, in which words two and three rhyme, was found. Three phrases were found to have variant rhyme. In two of these phrases, words two and four rhymed; one phrase had rhymes between words one and three.

Table3: *Internal rhyme in Lao four-word phrases*

1. *Standard internal rhyme two-three rhyme*

0	0	0	0	
1	2*ry*	3*ry*	4	(*ry* stands for a *rhyming* word)
viak^{6}	baan^{6}	kaan^{2}	hɨan^{3}	
work	house; village	work	house	‘domestic affairs’
thon^{3}	khom^{1}	ʔom^{2}	vaan^{1}	
endure	bitter	keep in mouth	sweet	‘take the bitter with the sweet’

2. *Variant internal rhyme two-four rhyme*

0	0	0	0	
1	2*ry*	3	4*ry*	(*ry* stands for a *rhyming* word)
pen^{2}	kaan^{2}	pen^{2}	ŋaan^{3}	
be	work	be	work	‘be businesslike’
tham^{3}	haay^{6}	haaŋ^{4}	kaay^{2}	
do	bad	form	body	‘assault’

One-Three Rhyme

0	0	0	0	
1ry	2	3ry	4	(*ry* stands for a *rhyming* word)
hen^{1}	phit^{3}	pen^{2}	sɔɔp^{6}	
see	error	be	to like	‘mistake bad for good’

Table 4 illustrates the semantic linking found in four-word phrases that do not have specific repetition of words. These are phrases which are linked primarily by the meanings of the individual words; alliteration and rhyme may be found, but it is the semantics that dominates. Eight such phrases were found among the 100 four-word phrases from Roffe’s material.

Table 4: *Semantic Linking in Lao Four-Word Phrases*

0	0	0	0	
1	2	3	4	(*semantically linked* words)
hua^{1}	nɔɔn^{3}	paay^{2}	tin^{2}	
head	sleep	tip	feet	‘background of a person’
vaw^{6}	nam^{6}	thuam^{5}	thoŋ^{4}	
speak	water	flood	field	‘talk a blue streak’
səə^{6}	saa^{6}	ŋoo^{4}	ŋaaw^{4}	(with *alliteration)*
stupid	stupid	ignorant	foolish	‘blundering’
puu^{4}	ñaa^{4}	taa^{2}	ñaay^{3}	(with *internal rhyme*)
paternal grandfather,	grandmother	maternal grandfather,	grandmother	‘ancestors’

Note that though there are three main patterns of linkage discussed above for four-word phrases in Lao, there can be overlapping of these patterns. Many four-word phrases may be found to have at least two of these linkage characteristics (repetition, rhyme, or semantic links); some may have all three. As Roffe notes in his article on this topic, he long sought “some underlying principle governing the construction of expressions of this kind”; though he failed to find it, he did suggest that “it may lie buried deep in the subconscious” (1975: 285). Though one can find patterns of linguistic linkage weaving such phrases together, clear criteria for what constitutes a four-word phrase need to be

developed, taking into account information on how native speakers distinguish and interpret such phrases.

4 Similar Phrases in Lao Discourse Data

Having compiled the list of 100 examples of four-word phrases from Roffe's field data, I sought four-word phrases in connected discourse in a number of Southern Lao *mohlam* performances which I had translated (Compton 1975; 1979; 1992) to see how they fit with the three major types of four-word phrase patterns resulting from the above analysis. Examples of the patterns found in that material are presented in the following table.

Table 5: *Repetition excamples from Lao discourse*

Pattern: Repetition with *close semantic link*				
0	0	0	0	
1	2*cs*	3	4*cs*	
hɔɔt^{6}	hɬan^{3}	hɔɔt^{6}	law^{6}	(1992: 242)
reach	house	reach	granary	'reach…your house and granary'
con^{2}	hɔɔŋ^{6}	con^{2}	hay^{5}	(1992: 243)
until	cry	until	cry	'until (one) weeps'
tɛɛ^{4}	kii^{6}	tɛɛ^{4}	kɔɔn^{4}	(1979: 206)
since	first	since	before	'from the beginning'
Pattern: Repetition (with alliteration)				
0	0	0	0	
1	2	3	4	
con^{2}	cuan^{2}	con^{2}	cɛɛŋ^{6}	(1979: 234)
until	almost	until	bright	'nearly dawn'

Table 6: *Rhyme examples from Lao discourse*

Pattern: Internal rhyme				
0	0	0	0	
1	2*ry*	3*ry*	4	
ʔaan^{4}	hen^{1}	pen^{2}	day^{6}	(1975: 71)
read	see	be	able	(we) 'can understand (it)'

Table 7: *Semantic link examples from Lao discourse*

Pattern: Semantic link (with variant rhyme)				
0	0	0	0	
1	2*ry*	3	4*ry*	
din^{2}	daaw^{6}	faay^{1}	laaw^{3}	(1992: 242)
earth	forest; region	side	Lao	'Laos'

In my own data, the four-word phrases with the repetition pattern were found most often, probably because many of them are productive and thus give the *mohlam* flexibility. As I commented in an earlier paper, "These flexible four-word expressions are thus useful to the *mohlam*, who can manipulate them creatively to fit the variety of topics and performance situations they face" (Compton 1992:233). Examples with internal rhyme or semantic links as the dominant pattern, however, were found less frequently in this material.

5 Similar Phrases in Other Tai Languages

Four-word phrases showing the same or similar patterns to those discussed for Lao can be found in many Tai languages. Below I present examples of such patterns found in the work of those who have been looking at this phenomena over the past century. These examples of four-word phrases are from Shan, Thai, Black Tai, and Lue; examples from other Tai languages can also be found, but these will suffice to illustrate this point. I will begin with examples from Shan material that was originally published in 1914.

Shan Examples:

In his "Introduction" to the phonetic version (2000) of Cushing's 1914 *Shan-English Dictionary*, Hudak notes that Cushing mentions two types of elaborate expressions, which he calls "double phonetic couplets."

> In the first, a four-syllable expression is created with the following:1 - a word, 2 - an open syllable with the initial consonant of the word plus the vowel [i], 3 - a repetition of the word, and 4 - the usual phonetic couplet of the word….The open syllable always has the third tone regardless of the one on the original word…. The second type derives from compound nouns and verbs. With this type, the phonetic couplet is separated from its principal word by the repetition of the first syllable of the compound (xvii-xviii).

Table 8: *Repetition in Shan four-word phrases or "double phonetic couplets"*

Pattern: Repetition with alliteration					
shuk^5	shi^3	shuk^5	shak^5	(xvii)	
confused	C+I	confused (usual phonetic couplet)			'confused, disordered'
Pattern: Repetition with compound					
maak^2	kɛŋ^4	maak^2	kaaŋ^4	(xviii)	
fruit	tamarind	fruit (usual phonetic couplet)			'tamarind'
maak^2 kɛŋ^4 = 'tamarind'					

The examples from Shan in the table above differ from the Lao examples presented earlier in that the Shan examples use syllables which may or may not have individual meanings; four-word phrases with "double phonetic couplets" found in the Lao data were not analyzed for this paper. There do appear to be some examples in Hudak's phonetic version of Cushing's dictionary which have the double reduplication found in the Lao phrases.[4]

Thai Examples:

In the introduction to her *Thai-English Dictionary* (1964), Haas says that elaborate expressions, her term for phrases similar to the Lao four-word phrases discussed in this paper,

> are usually colloquial but a few are considered elegant. They are frequently based on compounds…. and are expanded by repeating a part of the compound and adding a new part, by inserting a syllable for the sake of rhyme, or by inserting a syllable which has some vague semantic relation to one of the original parts" (xvii).

Haas notes that most such expressions "are made up of four parts." She identifies three basic types of these expressions: semi-repeated expressions, expressions characterized by rhyme, and those that have a semantic linkage.

Table 9: *Thai patterns and examples from Haas (1964)*

Semi-repeated expressions: (those having the first and third word the same)

0	0	0	0	
1	2	1	3	
rûab	hŭa	rûab	hăaŋ	(xvii)
to gather together	head	to gather together	tail	'to gather everything together; to sum everything up'

(or those having the second and fourth word the same)[5]

0	0	0	0
1	2	3	2

Rhymed expressions: (those in which, usually, the second and third words rhyme)

0	0	0	0	
1	2r	3r	4	
mŭu	hèd	pèd	kàj	(xviii)
pig	mush-room	duck	chicken	'meats of various kinds'

(Note that in this pattern, 2r may have no meaning, inconsistent meaning or more or less consistent meaning with whole.)

Vague semantic relation: (the semantically related words often occur in the second and fourth position)

0	0	0	0	
1	2s	3	4s	
lyym	hŭu	lyym	taa	(xviii)
open	ear	open	eye	'to open one's eyes to what is going on around one'[6]

Tai Dam Examples:
Jay Fippinger in his article on Black Tai sentence types (1975) notes that "Syntactic structure is basically a form - a device specific to a given language - by which its speakers express underlying semantic concepts, many of which are common to human beings throughout the world" (130). Some of the sentences he presents as data in his article (although not intended to do so) provide examples from yet another of the Tai languages of patterns of four-word phrases in discourse. All but one of the examples which occur in that data happen to be of the type in which the first and third words are the same and the second and fourth words are semantically related to each other. They can be seen in the following table.

Table 10: *Repetition in Black Tai four-word phrases (from Fippinger 1975)*

bɔn^{2}	kin^{1}	bɔn^{2}	ju^{2}	
place	eat	place	dwell	'a place to live' (140)
pa:n^{3}	mɨəŋ^{1}	pa:n^{3}	fa:i^{1}	
build	dam	build	dam	'construct irrigation dams' (141)
jet^{5}	suəŋ^{3}	jet^{5}	sɨə^{3}	
make	trousers	make	shirt	'to sew some clothes' (144)
laŋ^{1}	fai^{4}	laŋ^{1}	fɨn^{4}	
build	fire	build	fire	'to build a fire' (144)

The other example from Fippinger's article illustrates a four-word phrase which is knit by its semantic pattern rather than by rhyme or specific word repetition. This phrase is seen in the example below.

Table 11: *Semantic linkage in a Tai Dam phrase*

Semantic pattern:				
0	0	0	0	
1s	2s	1s	2s	
nam^{6}	loŋ^{4}	fon^{1}	tok^{2}	
water	descend	rain	fall	'the rains come' (141)

From the examples presented in this section we can see an increasing number of ways in which four-word phrases have been discussed as being woven together in various Tai languages; the Tai data used was gathered and published between 1914 and 1975, and each author saw some of the aspects of the structure of Tai four-word phrases. We find phonetic similarity, rhyme, repetition and semantic similarity discussed in these materials.

Tai Comparisons
The same or similar four-word phrases can be found in many other Tai languages, often with the same or similar meanings. For example, Seree Weroha (1992:182) provides us the same phrase, with the phonological differences, for Vientiane Lao and Lue; he provides the same English translation for both.

Table 12: *Lao Lue comparison*

saaŋ^{2}	pai^{1}	saaŋ^{2}	maa^{4}	(Lao Vientiane)
expert	go	expert	come	'knowing when to visit'
caaŋ^{5}	pai^{1}	caaŋ^{5}	maa^{4}	(Lue)
expert	go	expert	come	'knowing when to visit'

Many similar phrases may be found between Lao and Thai as well. One occurred in the data presented earlier in this paper.

Table 13: *Lao Thai comparison*

Lao (from Roffe field notes)				
muu^{1}	het^{3}	pet^{3}	kai^{4}	'miscellaneous meats'
pig	mushroom	duck	chicken	
Thai (from Haas 1964)				
mŭu	hèd	pèd	kàj	'meats of various kinds'
pig	mushroom	duck	chicken	

6 Four-Word Phrases in Other Southeast Asian Languages

Many other Southeast Asian languages appear to make use of similar patterns of four-word phrases. In his 1965 article, "Parallel Constructions in Vietnamese," Nguyen-Dinh-Hoa discussed Vietnamese four-word phrases (128). He pointed out a pattern of repetition which is apparently the same as that discussed earlier in this paper for Lao: words one and three are repeated and words two and four have a close semantic link. He also noted that in some four-word phrases in Vietnamese "rhymes are utilized for the second and the third word of the construction" (128); this is the same pattern found for standard internal rhyme in Lao four-word phrases.

Judith Jacob has written about similar patterns in Khmer. In her 1975 article, "Observations on the Uses of Reduplication as a Poetic Device in Khmer," some of her examples are similar to types found in the Lao data. One type of repetition she presents for Khmer is "repetition of a word with the interpolation of the components of a compound word" (117); this type appears to be the same as that presented for the Lao data in Table II, 3, of this paper as "Repetition with a (Split) Compound." Another type she lists for Khmer is "repetition of a word with the interpolation of two words which are lexically opposites" (117). This type appears to be the same as the Lao type presented in Table II, 4, "Repetition with Opposites."

Writings on the Hmong language also give evidence that four-word phrases with constructions similar to that of Lao are to be found in Hmong. In her 1992 book, *Meaningful Tone,* Martha Ratliff includes a Hmong phrase that illustrates this. This Hmong four-word phrase with its English gloss appears to be of the same type of repetition as that presented in this paper in Table II, 1, "Repetition with Close Semantic Link," in which words one and three are the same and words two and four have a close semantic link. The phrase is presented in the next table.

In a 1999 article, "Metaphorically Speaking in White Hmong," Elizabeth Riddle also includes some Hmong four-word phrases that show repetition with close semantic links. Two such phrases are presented below.

Table 14: *Repetition in Hmong four-word phrases*

tawv	ncauj	tawv	tsaig	(Ratliff,1992:89)
hard	mouth	hard	jaw	'indocile'
kub	tes	kub	taw	(Riddle, 1999:383)
hot	hand	hot	foot	'busy doing many things at once'
cua	daj	cua	dub	(Riddle, 1999:384)
wind	yellow	wind	black	'storm'

Four-word phrases with patterns of repetition, rhyme and semantic linkage appear not on ly in Lao and other Tai languages, but apparently in other Southeast Asian languages as well. The few examples discussed for Vietnamese, Khmer and Hmong in this section indicate that this is a potentially rich area for linguistic investigation and comparison within and between the languages of the region

7 Conclusion

There are three main patterns to be found in the four-word phrases looked at thus far for Lao: repetition, rhyme and semantic linkage. These patterns can overlap. As Roffe has noted, there are both fixed expressions and productive patterns to be found in the Lao material. In the connected discourse samples from the *mohlam* performances, it is the productive patterns with repetition dominant that appear most frequently.

In addition to the Lao phrases provided in this paper, we have also given examples of similar patterns in four-word phrases in other Tai languages. Finally, we have presented some material which suggests that similar patterns of four-word phrases can be found in other Southeast Asian languages of the region, specifically Vietnamese, Khmer and Hmong.

Four-word phrases in Lao have been gathered and analyzed for patterns within these phrases. In my continuing work on this project, I will investigate their use, distribution and frequency in a number of types of discourse. Further analysis of the role of four-word phrases and related patterns by linguists, language teachers and translators of literature should be productive in expanding our knowledge of aspects of Lao discourse and poetics and could have value for exploring discourse structures and poetics in other Tai languages as well.

It seems fitting to end this article with a traditional Lao farewell,[7] which contains a fixed four-word phrase with internal rhyme meaning essentially 'Be well.'

khɔɔ^{1}	hay^{5}	yuu^{4}	dii^{2}	mii^{3}	hɛɛŋ^{3}
request	give	exist	good	have	strength

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Notes

1. There are a number of phrases in Lao made up of four syllables, which actually consist of two words. In this paper, I will not be discussing them. In addition, there are Lao four-word phrases in which one element appears to be a nonsense syllable. Such phrases will not be discussed in this paper.
2. Note that even though this is a fixed expression, there is a variation of it in which the last word in the phrase is *kham*^{3} rather than *thɔɔŋ*^{3} for the word 'gold.' See Kerr (1972: 505) for this variation. In his article on reduplication Roffe did not use a phonemic transcription; the one given in this example is one I am using for this paper. See further explanation in the next note.
3. All of the Lao examples in Roffe's field notes were written in the Lao script; an English gloss was provided, but no phonemic transcription. In his 1946 article on Lao phonemic structure, Roffe uses a numbering system to indicate the six tones he describes there (292). For that 1946 paper, Roffe's informant was a member of the royal family from the Luang Prabang area, and Roffe describes this as a "dialect of North Laos" (289). For more information on Roffe's presentation of tone there, see that article.
   In their 1956 language learning textbook, the Roffes use symbols to indicate the six tones of the Luang Prabang dialect which they describe there (11). In that book, the transcription system they use is similar to the one used by Haas for Thai. However, the numbering system I use in this paper for these six Northern Lao tones and the six tones in the Southern Lao dialects in my material is an adaptation of the Gedney tone chart (1972). The value of the tone indicated by each number varies according to the dialect it represents.
4. Double reduplication may be the pattern of the Shan phrases meaning 'with a glistening sheen' (299) or 'off and on for a long time' (301).
5. Haas indicates that there is an alternate form of semi-repeated expression, those having the second and fourth word the same (xvii). I show that pattern in this table; however, she does not provide an example of this variation.
6. Note that in Table II., No. 1, I have considered a Lao phrase with 'ear' and 'eye' to have a close semantic link, rather than the vague semantic relation which Haas attributes to them in her Thai example (xviii).
7. There are a number of possible criteria for deciding that a particular phrase is a "fixed expression." One of these is the high frequency of use of a particular four-word phrase in everyday speech or in particular cultural situations. The phrase *yuu*^{4} *dii*^{2} *mii*^{3} *hɛɛŋ*^{3} meets this criterion in being heard frequently in daily speech, particularly at times of farewell. Another criterion is finding the phrase listed and defined as a unit in a Lao-Lao or Lao-English dictionary. This phrase can be found in Kerr (1972: 956).

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