

Tone Changes

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to use the dictionary, studying Hmong words, and you just can't find the definition that fits what you are trying to look up. Let's review one aspect of the language that is unfamiliar to us in English: **TONE CHANGES**.

A **tone change** (T.C.) is where the tone of a word or syllable changes the tone of the following word or syllable. Most often, the 'b' or 'j' tone will produce this change.

Example: 'leej' - by itself it is spelled with a 'j' tone marker. It means 'person'.

'ib leeg' - now, when a word with a 'b' tone marker comes before it, the *tone changes* from a 'j' to a 'g'.

***The frustration comes in, because you look up 'leeg' in the dictionary and you find it to say 'tendon, vein, or artery,' when you need it to say 'person'.

More Examples:

<u>Base word</u>	<u>Word with T.C.</u>	<u>Definition you don't want</u>
txoj kev = road >	ib txog kev = one road >	(txog = about)
ntses = fish >	txaj ntseg = fish trap >	(ntseg = upright, stable, straight)
cov = 'groups' >	ib co = one group >	(co = shake, sway, vibrate)
lo = word >	ib los lus = one word >	(los = come, or bury)
pua = hundred >	ib puas = 100 >	(puas = Question word / broken)

Get the idea yet? Here's a chart to help see *what* can change into *what*.

Remember, this doesn't happen all the time, but it does happen often!

Original	Changes to
j, s, m	g
v	- (no tone)
- (no tone)	s

Homework: Find a publication, print out a page, and identify and label every tone change you find on the page!