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# Burmese

## Introduction

Burmese, the national language of Burma (or Myanmar), has been the official language of the country since 1948. Burmese is spoken as a mother tongue by two-third of a population[1] estimated at 52 million[2], that is to say, by around 35 million people (Bradley 1997, 2007, Watkins, 2007: 266). Burmese is spoken mainly[3] in Burma. The standard dialect, the one presented here, has evolved from a central dialect spoken along the lower valleys of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers. It is the dialect taught in schools throughout Burma, and the one used on TV and radio. However, other varieties of Burmese[4] exist in outlying areas, some of them with scant mutual intelligibility, the best known of them being Arakanese or Rakhine (in Rakine State), Marma (west Burma, near the Bangladesh border), Intha (Shan state), Tavoyan (south coast, Tenasserim), and Yaw (west of the Irrawaddy). The dialects differ from the standard variety mostly in pronunciation, but also in lexis and grammar.

Beside Burmese, there are seven other officially-recognized languages in Burma, each of them being the language of a state: Arakanese, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin (or Karen), Shan and Mon. The first five are more or less closely related to Burmese (Tibeto-Burman language family), whereas Shan and Mon belong respectively to the Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer families.

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**1** The lastest complete census dates from 1931, providing information about the ethnicity and linguistic membership of the population. It stated that Burmese was the mother tongue of 67% of the population (Allott 1985: 131).
**2** The results of the 2015 Myanmar population census shows a total population of 51, 486, 253. See *The Myanmar Population and Housing Census- Hightlights of the Main Results- Census Report Volume 2–A*, published by the Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population, May 2015., p. 2. Accessible on line.
**3** Burmese is not used to a significant extent outside of Burma other than by Burmese expatriates. According to Egreteau (2012: 304), more than 3 millions of Burmese live outside of Burma (Thailand, Singapore, Australia and other western countries).
**4** On Burmese dialects other than Standard Burmese, see Lucien Bernot (2000: 60, 74), Denise Bernot (1958), Okell (1995), Bradley (1979: 72sq.).

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Other languages are spoken in Burma besides these official languages. Ethnologue lists more than one hundred individual languages for this country, most of them belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family. See also Bradley (2007a, b) on the endangered languages of Burma.

Burmese is classified as a Lolo-Burmese language within the Tibeto-Burman (henceforth TB) family (Sino-Tibetan *phylum)*. Detailed classifications of TB languages are provided by Matisoff (1986), (1991), Bradley (1994), (2002), and Thurgood & Lapolla (2003). It is the most important TB language and one of the larger languages of the Sino-Tibetan family, along with Chinese dialects, in number of speakers.

Burmese is also one of the few TB languages with an original writing system and literacy tradition, alongside Tibetan, Manipuri (or Meithei) and Naxi. It is documented since the twelfth century[5]. Burmese script, adopted through Mon, is originally derived from *Nâgari* — or *Devanâgari*, a script of *Brâhmi*, used to transcribe the Indo-European languages of India, such as Sanskrit or Pali, and therefore not well suited for transcribing a tonal language like Burmese.

Burmese script is an abugida (or alphasyllabary)[6] script, with each unit denoting a consonant with a particular vowel (an [a] in Burmese). Burmese script contains 33 consonants of that type, some of which are only used for transcribing mainly Pali loanwords. Tones may also be indicated in the script, combined with vowel quality.

Pali, an Indian language used for Buddhist texts, was introduced to Burma through the Mon culture. When King Anawratha (AD 1044–77) established Buddhism as the official religion of his new state, it became the language of religion and literature (Allott, 1985: 133), a prestigious language favoring the unification of the emerging kingdom.

Burmese inevitably borrowed heavily from Pali. However the influence of Pali was not limited to the religious and philosophical domains: it also served as a model in elaborating legal codes (Pruitt, 1994: 25) and grammars. Finally, loanwords from Pali are found in several domains, such as poetry, astrology, medicine and daily life (Hla Pe 1961; Yanson 1994). Examples of Pali loanwords will be given in section § 2.1.3. on loanwords.

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**5** The earliest dated forms of Burmese script are found in Pagan on the Myazedi quadrilingual pillar (1112 A.D), which consists of an inscription related to Prince Rajakumar, in four languages: Pali, Mon, Pyu and Burmese.

**6** Abugida (or alphasyllabary) is a writing system in which vowels are represented by subsidiary symbols, as opposed to a regular alphabet, where consonants and vowels have equal status. See Swank (2009) on the two terms and the relevancy of their definitions.

A general presentation of Burmese language would not be complete without mentioning the diglossia between the spoken (vernacular) and written (literary) registers. Westerners based in Burma in previous centuries (19th and 20th centuries) reported a marked difference between the two styles. Indeed, the relative stability of literary Burmese has to be compared to the rapid evolution of vernacular Burmese between the 15th and the 20th centuries (Allott, 1985: 135). However, the diglossia is now decreasing: the emergence and development of new media (newspapers, magazines, websites, blogs) has compelled literary Burmese to become more like vernacular Burmese. Today, the main differences lie in functional-grammatical morphemes (verbal markers, nominal markers, connectors, etc.) as shown in examples (1) and (2), where the difference between markers is highlighted in bold.

(1)  a.  လူကြီးများသည် ယဉ်ကျေးသောကလေးများကို ချစ်သည်။        [Written Burmese]
         *lu².Ci³* **mya³** *=θi²* *yiN².Ce³* *=θɔ³* *kəle³-**mya³** =Ko²* *Chiʔ* **θi²**
         adult  **PLUR** **S**    polite    **REL**  child-**PLUR**  OBJ    love   **REAL**

     b.  လူကြီးတွေက ယဉ်ကျေးတဲ့ ကလေးတွေကို ချစ်တယ်။        [Spoken Burmese]
         *lu².Ci³-**Twe²** =**Ka¹*** *yaN².Ce³* *Tɛ¹* *kəle³-**Twe²** =Ko²* *Chiʔ* =**Tɛ²**
         adult-**PLUR** **S**    polite    **REL**  child-**PLUR**  OBJ    love   **REAL**
         Adults love polite kids. (lit. Adults love children who are polite.)

(2)  a.  မိုးရွာလျှင် ကျွန်မ၏အခန်းသို့လာ၍ ဖတ်တတ်ပါသည်။        [Written Burmese]
         *mo³ ywa²=**lyiN²** cəma¹ =**ʔi¹** ʔəkʰaN³ =**θo¹** la²  =**ywe¹** pʰaʔ taʔ  =Paʔ =**θi²***
         rainfall  **SUB**  1SG  **POSS** room  **DIR** come **SUB.TPS** read HABIT POL  **REAL**

     b.  မိုးရွာရင် ကျွန်မ(ရဲ့)အခန်းလာပြီး ဖတ်တတ်ပါတယ်။        [Spoken Burmese]
         *mo³ ywa²=**yiN²** cəma¹ (=**ye¹***) *ʔəkʰaN³Ø  la²  =**Pyi³** pʰaʔ taʔ  =Paʔ =**Tɛ²***
         rain fall  **SUB**  1SG  (**POSS**) room  (DIR) come **SUB.TPS** read HABIT POL  **REAL**
         If/When it is raining, (he) is used to come to (/and) read in my room.

In this chapter, we will study vernacular or spoken Burmese and we will make little reference to literary or Written Burmese (WB). Our fieldwork has been conducted mainly in Yangon and Pagan (Central Burma). Therefore our examples will be utterances of the standard variety of Burmese (SB), although we may occasionally mention variations found in other dialects.

# 1 Phonology

The common phonological features observed in languages of the area are: a complex vowel system (diphthongs, large numbers of vowels, contrastive vowel length), tones or register (or mixed) systems, a restricted set of final consonants; and a restricted set of consonant clusters (Enfield, 2005: 186 sqq). The extent to which these features are found in Burmese will be discussed in the following sections.

## 1.1 Segmental phonemes: consonants and vowels

The Burmese phonological system has already been described in many works, some general studies such as Min Latt 1962, Okell 1969, Bernot 1980, Wheatley 1982, and some specific papers (Sprigg 1957, Bernot, 1963, Bradley 1982, Watkins 2000, 2001, Dubach Green 2004). Burmese dialect phonologies have also been studied (see Bernot 1958 on Marma, Sprigg 1963, Bernot 1965), often within a comparative perspective (Bradley 1985b, Okell 1995).

### 1.1.1 Consonants

- **Onset consonants**

Burmese consonants may be divided into three series: plain, voiced and aspirated. In word-initial position voiced consonants are less common than plain or aspirate consonants, and occur mainly in nouns. Table 1 shows the full inventory of Burmese consonants that surface as initials of main syllables.

**Table 1:** Burmese Consonants

| stops/affricates | | | | | nasales | | | | fricatives | | | | Approximants | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| p | t | tɕ | k | ʔ | | | | | θ | s | ʃ | h | | | | |
| pʰ | tʰ | tɕʰ | kʰ | | m̥ | n̥ | ɲ̥ | ŋ̊ | | sʰ | | | ʍ | (ɹ) | ɬ | |
| b | d | dʑ | g | | m | n | ɲ | ŋ | ð | z | | | w | | l | j |

- **Coda consonants**

As in most of the SEA languages described in this book, the coda consonants consist of a small subset of the initial consonants although Written Burmese shows that it was not always the case — see Bradley (1985b: 191 ff.) on the evolution of Burmese dialect rhymes.

As stated by Matisoff (1973b: 80), on the general evolution of syllables in Asian languages, tones appear with the decay and the loss of initial and final consonants in languages that have a predisposition (monosyllabicity) to develop tones.

"It was only when the old consonantal system had decayed through cluster simplification, losses, mergers that the daughter languages were forced to exploit [those] pitch-differences for contrastive purposes." (Matisoff, 1973b: 79)

Thus, changes have occurred in the Burmese syllable structure, with a clear consonantal decay for final nasals and stops. For instance, the four-way contrast among the nasal stops reduced to a simple nasal feature that has lost its point of occlusion and is realized according to the phonological context, e.g. it tends to assimilate to the position of the following initial consonant as in (3). While the contrast between final stops has been reduced to a glottal stop, giving rise to checked syllables (see example (4)).

Today, the Burmese coda consonant inventory is reduced to two items: a nasal consonant (with various realizations) transcribed with a capital /N/, and a glottal stop /ʔ/.

(3) a. ဆင်း      [sʰiː**n**$^{52}$]        /shiN$^3$/        *to go down, descend*
       ဆင်းပါ   [sʰiː**m**$^{52}$ ba$^{22}$]   /shiN$^3$Pa$^2$/   *Please go down*
       ဆင်းတာ  [sʰiː**n**$^{52}$ da$^{22}$]   /shiN$^3$Ta$^2$/   (the fact) *X go/went down*
       ဆင်းခဲ့   [sʰiː**ŋ**$^{52}$ gɛ$^{55}$]   /shiN$^3$Khɛ$^1$/  *went down* (+ change of situation)

   b. ဓာတ်      [daʔ]                /daʔ/              *element, mineral, essence, force*
      ဓာတ်ပုံ    [dap pon$^{22}$]      / daʔ PouN$^2$/   *photograph*
      ဓာတ်ခဲ    [dakʰkʰɛ$^{52}$]     /daʔ Khɛ$^3$/    *battery*

(4) a. တပ်          b. တတ်          c. တက်          d. လပ်          e. လတ်          f. လက်
WB  <tap>           <tat>           <tak>           <lap>           <lat>           <lak>
*Transc.* taʔ           taʔ            tɛʔ            laʔ            laʔ            lɛʔ
       fix, attach   be skilled      go up           be vacant       be fresh        hand

- **Clusters**

Onset consonants may be followed by a glide, either [j] or [w], that may be realized "as a secondary labialization or palatalization of the first position consonant" (Watkins 2001: 292), as shown by example (5).

(5) a. ရွာ        '*village*'      /ywa$^2$/    >    [jwa$^{22}$]
but b. သွား      'to go'        /θwa$^3$/    >    [θ$^w$aː$^{52}$]
   c. များ      'many' (PL)   /mya$^3$/    >    [m$^j$aː$^{52}$]

However, no cluster is uttered in Standard Burmese (SB), although they were present in old Burmese (Matisoff, 1973b)[7] and are still present in some dialects. Thus, Arakanese is well known for its conservative use of the approximant [ɹ], realized as a glide or a palatalization in SB.

For instance, the words meaning 'to like' or 'to fear' are pronounced with the cluster [kɹ] (transcribed /kr/) in Arakanese, and with an affricate consonant in Burmese. Intha and Tavoyan, on the other hand, have kept a cluster with the approximant [l], again realized as a glide in modern Standard Burmese (6c) (see Okell 1995 for details). Example (7) illustrates cluster pronunciations in four dialects.

(6) a. ကြိုက် *'to like'* WB \<kruik\> Arakanese [kɹaɪʔ] SB [tʃaɪʔ]
    b. ကြောက် *'to fear'* WB \<krok\> Arakanese [kɹaʊʔ] SB [tʃaʊʔ]
    c. ခြောက် *'to frighten'* WB \<khrok\> Intha [klɔʔ] SB [tʃʰaʊʔ]

| (7) | | Old Written Burmese | WB | | SB | Arakan. | Intha | Tavoyan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *be full* | | plaññ | praññ. | ပြည် | pye¹ | pre¹ | ple¹ | plɛ¹ |
| *between* | | ('a)krā | ('a)krā | (အ)ကြား | ca³ [tʃa⁵²] | kra³ | kla³ | kla³ |
| *be fast* | | | mran | မြန် | myaN | mrɛn | mlan | byan |

Adapted from Okell 1995 & Nishi 1998

## 1.1.2 Vowels

The Burmese vowel system shows four degrees of openness as shown by table 2. However the roundness feature is not relevant to distinguishing phonemes, unlike what is found in many other languages of the area such as Hmong and Khmer (See Mong Leng rhymes p. 612 and Khmer syllabic Nuclei p. 322).

**7** Matisoff (1973: 78): "Written Burmese (WB) syllables may have initial consonant clusters of up to three members, but no more than a single consonant in final position: \<mrwe\> 'snake', \<krwat\> 'leech', \<krwak \> 'rat'.

**Table 2:** Simple Burmese vowels



Notice also that vowel values vary according to whether the syllable is open or closed: diphthong correlate with coda consonants and do not appear in open syllables (Bradley 1982)[8]. This makes it possible to describe the vowel system using nine vowels only, the realizations depending on the syllable structure (see Watkins 2000 for details). Table (3) presents the different vowel realizations in different contexts.

Finally length is not a feature relevant to distinguish phonological vowels. However and as we will see in next section, it may be used to describe tones.

**Table 3:** Nine Burmese vowels and their realizations in different contexts

| Syllable ending | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -V | i | e | ɛ | a /ɑ | ə | | ɔ | o | u |
| -VN | ɪ | eɪ | | a | | aɪ | aʊ | oʊ | ʊ |
| -Vʔ | ɪ | eɪ | ɛ | a | | aɪ | aʊ | oʊ | ʊ |
| *Transcription* | *i* | *e/ei* | *ɛ* | *a* | | *ai* | *ɔ/aɔ* | *o/ou* | *u* |

To summarize, simple vowels appear in open syllables and only /i, ɛ, a, u/ may appear in close syllables. The consonant coda may trigger a change in the vowel value, leading to diphthongs in checked and nasalized syllables.

### 1.1.3  Tones

- **Emergence of Tones**

It is generally admitted that tones emerged from syllabic reduction under certain conditions (e.g. monosyllabicity). Tonogenesis is best explained as a compensatory mechanism for the loss of consonantal contrasts either in initial or fi-

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**8** Bradley (1982: 121): "The 'killed' type occurs only with a final stop. [...] Burmese orthography still represents the positions of these stops, but in modern spoken dialects the features of the stop have been 'shuffled' into the vocalic nuclei. As a result, the vowel system in killed syllables (and in nasalized syllables, [...]) is radically different from that of open syllables."

nal position (see section § 1.1.1 on final consonants). Tonogenesis in the Lolo-Burmese branch is well understood (Matisoff 1999, Abramson 2004, Michaud 2011) despite a complex interaction of initials, syllable-types (complex syllables with cluster or prefix) and codas (open or close syllables). It is beyond the aim of this grammatical sketch to draw a complete picture of the origin of tones in Burmese. However, tonal correspondences between languages of the family are fairly good, and Burmese tones can be traced back to proto-Lolo-Burmese reconstructed tones as shown in table 4.

- **Burmese, how many tones?**

Although authors working on Burmese language agree on its tonal nature, the consensus does not go far. Suprasegmental systems of SEA languages are hardly ever described in terms of one parameter only, and a comparison of the Burmese tonal system descriptions as provided by Watkins (2000: 140) shows the lack of consensus on important issues such as pitch characteristics, phonation and glottalization. Burmese tone descriptions vary according to what is understood as 'tone', what is considered as part of the syllable structure, and what is due to context (sandhi phenomena).

Regarding the number of tones, some authors have analyzed the language as having up to five opposed suprasegmentals (Bradley 1982), whereas other authors postulate either 4 or 3 contrastive tones (respectively Cornyn 1944, Wheatley 1987, Okell 1969, Watkins 2000 for the former proposal and Bernot 1963, 1980 for the latter). In this study, we will consider Burmese tonal system as having a four-contrast system, as illustrated in (8). Syllables that are not reduced (see § 1.2 on syllabic structure) carry one of these four tones, which may be described more accurately in terms of pitch (contour), phonation type, length and intensity (see table 4).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (8) | စ | /sa/ | Tone 1 (high, creaky, short) | 'start, begin' |
| | စာ | /sa/ | Tone 2 (low, long) | 'letter' |
| | စား | /sa/ | Tone 3 (high-falling, breathy) | 'eat' |
| | စပ် | /saʔ/ | Checked Tone (glottal stop) | 'hot, spicy' |

**Table 4:** Burmese tones description
Adapted from Bradley (1982: 122), Matisoff (1999: 17)

| tone name | pitch | contour | phonation | duration | intensity | transcription | Proto-Lolo-Burmese Tone |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *'even'*/*low* | low | level | normal | long | low | 2 | *1 |
| *'heavy'*/*high* | fairly high | sharp fall | breathy | long | high | 3 | *2 |
| *'creaky'* | high | slight fall with weak glottal stop[9] | creaky | short | high | 1 | *3 |
| | | with different vowel nucleus possibilities, and a final stop | | | | | |
| *'killed'* (or checked) | high | variable with glottal stop | normal | very short | high | ʔ | |

To summarize, the first three tones are found in either open or nasalized sylla-
bles. The 'killed' or checked tone is only found in syllables ending with a (glot-
tal) stop, sometimes realized as homorganic stops.

### 1.1.4 Juncture or sandhi

The realization of the initial consonant (as well as the coda) is often conditioned
by the degree of tightness (or juncture) between syllables. In connected speech
or within compounds (9)b, assimilatory processes are at work.

(9)  a. ဟင်းခတ်               b. ဟင်းခတ်              c. ဟင်းခတ်မှုန့်
     *hiN³ kha?*              *hiN³-Kha?*            *hiN³-Kha?- m̥ouN¹*
     [hiŋ³ kʰa?]             [hiŋ³-**ga**?]          [hiŋ³-**ga**?- m̥õ(n)¹]
     curry (n.) + put in (v.)  curry-put.in (n.)    curry-put.in-powder (n.)
     *to add condiment to dishes*  *condiment*       *sodium glutamate*

For instance, the voiced quality of a consonant depends on the previous (or fol-
lowing) consonant. We have already mentioned the relatively low proportion of

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**9** On creaky tone and differences between creaky and checked tones, see Thurgood 1981,
Bradley 1982, Watkins 2000.

voiced consonants in Burmese (see § 1.1.1.) However, an unvoiced consonant may be realized as voiced in close juncture, as in example (10).

(10)  a.  ဖြည်း      b.  ဖြည်းဖြည်း      c.  ငါး      d.  ငါးထုပ်

       *phye³*           *phye³-**PH**ye³*      *ŋa³*          *ŋa- THoʔ*

       *[pʰje³]*        *[pʰje³.**bj**e³]*      *[ŋa³ ]*        *[ŋə. **d**oʔ]*

       slow            slow (x2)         fish         fish-wrap

       slow            slowly (adv)      fish         fish fritters

Other assimilatory processes may:

     (i)  assign the point of articulation to a nasalized final consonant (see example 3 above),

     (ii)  realize a (glottal) stop as an homorganic stop, i.e. articulated similarly to the initial consonant of the following syllable as in (4) or (11).

     (iii) replace a syllable with an unstressed and tonally non-contrastive one as in (12): for instance, the disyllabic word 'thief' in (a) is composed with /u²/ (3sg pronoun or agent-nominalizer) and /kho³/ 'to steal'; it is however uttered with a reduced first syllable, i.e. creating a sesquisyllabic word (see sections § 1.2 and § 2.1 respectively on syllable structure and word structure).

Notice that in the case of sesquisyllabic words, the assimilatory process may affect the entire word: the consonant of the reduced syllable may become voiced (see (13) a), although this voicing process often does not occur when the initial consonant of the major syllable is aspirated (13)c.[10]

(11)  သစ်            [θiʔ]           / θiʔ/           *wood*[11]

       သစ်ခိုင်း        [θikʰ kʰain⁵²]     / θiʔ KhaiN³/    *branch*

       သစ်သီး         [θiθ θi⁵²]        / θiʔ θi³/       *tree's fruit*

       သစ်ပင်         [θip pin²²]       / θiʔ PiN²/      *tree*

       သစ်တော       [θit tɔ⁵²]        / θiʔ Tɔ³/       *forest*

(12)  a.  သူခိုး                b.  လူတစ်ယောက်

       *θu² + kho³ > θə.kho³*       *lu²+ tiʔ + yaɔʔ > lu. tə. yaɔʔ*

       3SG/NMLZ steal            man one  CLF

       thief                   one man

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**10** The image is more complex than that we described here. See Bernot (1958: 198 ff.) for details.

**11** Adapted from Bernot (1958: 209).

(13) a. စားပွဲ       b. ငါးဆုပ်       c. ပုဆိုး

     **sa³+pwɛ³>[zə.bwɛ⁵²]**    ŋa³+shoʔ>[ŋə. sʰoʔ]    pu¹+sho³>[pə.sʰo⁵²]

     eat  festival         fish  handful       ??short  dye

     table                fish ball           men's sarong

One way to represent these phonetic variations or realization relying on the context (close juncture, compounding) is to use a capital letter to show when a phoneme may be subject to voicing, that is to say as an archiphoneme symbol.

### 1.1.5  Summary

In this section, we have described the phonological system of SB, which contains 34 consonants (most of them used only in initial position) and 9 phonological vowels (their realization depending of the syllable structure and/or the tone). In this system, aspiration is a much more relevant feature than voicing as generally observed in SEA languages. However, no uvular-velar distinction nor pre-glottalized or pre-nasalized consonants, are found in SB, all features often said to be shared by MSEA languages. The onset is simpler in Burmese than in other languages of the area. The Burmese vowel system is far less complex than those of other SEA languages (compare Hmong or Vietnamese), but it does have a mixed supra-segmental system, properly described in terms of pitch, contour and phonation.

## 1.2  Syllable structure:

Two syllable types need to be distinguished in Burmese: full major syllables and reduced minor syllables.

Minor syllables are unstressed and tonally neutral. Their distinctive phonological features are confined to the onset consonants, the vowel quality being reduced to a schwa (14).

Major syllable structure is given in (15). It can be characterized by the following properties:
–  it contains any vowel except the schwa
–  it bears tone except in checked syllables
–  it may have a simple (C) or a complex onset (CG)

Notice also that a vowel cannot appear in initial position, and that consonant clusters are not found in Standard Burmese, as seen in § 1.1.1.

(14) a.  ပုခက်        b.  ငါးပိ
     **pə**.$k^h\varepsilon$ʔ      **ŋə**.$pi^1$
     **Cə**.CVC       **Cə**.CVᵀ
     cradle       fermented fish paste

(15)          (Tone)
     $C_i$   (G)    V    (C)

# 2  Morphology

## 2.1  Word structure

### 2.1.1  General facts

- **Monosyllabicity**

Burmese, like the other languages of the area, lacks extensive morphology and shows a greater tendency to monosyllabicity compared with other Tibeto-Burman languages such as Jinghpo (Matisoff, 1999: 14). Although most Burmese words are made of one syllable, looking at Burmese data gives the impression of multi-syllabic words. This is due to a great use of compounding (§ 2.1.2.), which offsets the low proportion of sesquisyllabic and disyllabic words. Sesquisyllabic structures, i.e. "morphemes that are a syllable and half in length" (Matisoff, 1973b: 86), appear both in the lexicon (16) and also in tight collocations (17). Disyllabic words on the other hand are often loan words from Pali, Mon or other languages (see § 2.1.4). Disyllabic words of Burmese origin may be compounds with an unpredictable meaning (18) or with a meaningless rhyming[12] syllable (19).

(16) a.  စားပွဲ     (Written Burm.) sa: (eat)+pwɛ: (party)  > **[zə** bwɛ⁵²]  'table'
     b.  ကစား       (WB) ka + sa:        > [**gə** za⁵²]   'to play'
     c.  ငါးမန်း      (WB) ŋa: (fish)+ man:   > **[ŋə** mɛ̃⁵²]  'shark'
     d.  ပုစွန်       (WB) pu' + swan      > **[bə** zõ(n)²²] 'shrimp'

(17) a.  လူနှစ်ယောက်              b.  တစ်ခါ      c.  သူကြီး
     $lu^2$    $ṇi$ʔ    $yaɔ$ʔ       $ti$ʔ  $kha^2$      $\theta u^2$ $Ci^3$
     [lu²²   **nə**   yaɔʔ]       [**tə**  kha²²]      [θə dʑi⁵²]
     person two  CLF:hum        one  moment      3SG  big
     'two persons'              'once'        'village head-man'

---

**12**  On rhyming and chiming syllables in Burmese, see Wheatley (1985: 35–36).

Disyllabic words in (18) are idiomatic expressions: the meaning of the whole does not correspond to the meaning of the components, as shown by the gloss.

(18) a. ဆုံးဖြတ်       b. စဉ်းစား       c. ပြူစား

     shouN³   phyaʔ     siN³   Sa³ [sĩn⁵²za⁵²]     pyu¹   Sa³ [pju⁵⁵za⁵²]

     conclude cut      mince   eat/consume      act   eat

     'to decide'      'think'      'bewitch, captivate'

In each word presented in (19), rhymes are identical in both syllables, but only the first one is meaningful.

(19) a. ခေါ်ဝေါ်      b. ခင်မင်      c. လှပ

     khɔ²   wɔ²      khiN²   miN²      l̥a¹   pa¹

     call   EUPH      friendly EUPH      pretty EUPH

     'call, name'      'be friendly with/ fond of'      'be beautiful'

- **Analytic or agglutinative language?**

Burmese is generally held to be a non-inflectional language (Min Latt 1962: 103), although the 'induced creaky tone' phenomenon — change of tone fulfilling several grammatical and pragmatic functions (Allott 1967)[13]—, can be considered as inflectional. While most words are monomorphemic, productive processes of compounding and lexicalization often create polysyllabic words. Due to its one-to-one correspondence of morphemes to words, Burmese can be seen as an isolating or analytic language (ex (9)). It is, however, also considered as an agglutinative language by some authors (Wheatley 1990[14], Delancey (1990: 78), Bernot 2010) given its use of some derivational morphology, illustrated in (10) (see section § 3.4.2 on nominalization processes). Compounding seems, however, more widespread than derivation.

(20) a. လှောင်ကန်      b. လှောင်အိမ်      c. မျက်လှည့်ဆရာ

     l̥aɔn².KaN²      l̥aɔn².ʔeiN²      myɛʔ- l̥ɛ¹-sʰəya²

     store up.pool      store up.house      eye – twist/rotate – master

     'tank'      'cage'      'magician'

---

**13** Delancey (1987: 120) sums up the various functions of the creaky tone upon words with low or high tones: abruptness and urgency (pragmatic function), repeated words, possession or attribution, grammatical dependency mainly with human referent objects.

**14** In a previous work, Wheatley (1985: 28) analyses Burmese as an isolating language, thereby confirming the difficulty of deciding on a morphological type for Burmese.

(21) a. အလုပ်     b. ပြောကြားချက်     c. ကစားစရာ

     ***Ɂə-loɁ***           *pyɔ³-Ca³-**ChɛɁ***      *gəza³-**Səya²***

     **NMLZ**- work (v.)      talk-hear-**NMLZ**      play-**NMLZ**

     'work (n.)'            'speech'           'toys'

Although some morphemes may be considered as real affixes i.e. bound morphemes, others are better analysed as clitics, as they behave syntactically as free morphemes but show evidence of being phonologically bound. Clitics in Burmese are functional elements such as syntactic / pragmatic particles (/nɛ¹/, /Ka¹/, /Ko²/, /M̥a²/...), negation, politeness and TAM operators (/Tɛ²/...), etc.

(22) ခွေးနဲ့လူက အိပ်ပျော်တဲ့အချိန်မှာ ဖားလေးကအပြင်ကို ထွက်သွားတယ်။      [MoMo,

    05_frog2]

    *khwe³ = **nɛ¹***        *lu² = **Ka¹***        *ɁeiɁ.pyɔ²*      *= **Tɛ¹***        *Ɂacheiɴ² = **Ma²***

    dog=with        man=TOP         sleep         =REL.REAL    moment = LOC

    *pha³-le³ = **Ka¹***    *Ɂəpyiɴ² = **Ko²***    *thwɛɁ*         *θwa³*         *= **Tɛ²***

    frog-DIM =S. /TOP    outside=DIR     go out        CTFG         = REAL

    'As the dog and the man [boy] were sleeping, the little frog 'went-out' outside.'

## 2.1.2 Compounding and class terms

As stated earlier, compounding is a frequent device in Burmese[15]. However, the line between lexical and syntactic compounds is not always easy to draw (see (23)a although some lexical compounds are easily distinguishable in particular when the compound items are semantically related: synonymous or similar terms (24)a & b, opposite terms (c), or superordinate terms (25). Notice that 'pleonastic' compounds such as (24)a & b, are mainly used in formal and literary styles to add weight and colour to regular monosyllabic forms.

(23) a. မြွေအရေခွံအိတ်        b. စာတိုက်     c. စားပွဲခင်း

     *mwe² Ɂəye² KhuN² ɁeiɁ*     *sa² TaiɁ*      *Sə Pwɛ³ KhiN³*

                                                   *[zəbwɛgin]*

     snake skin peel/skin bag    letter building    eat.festival [table] spread

     'tortoiseshell-plastic bag'    'post office'      'tablecloth'

---

**15** See Wheatley (1985: 40sq) and Bernot (2005) on Burmese compounds.

(24) a. ပြောဆို  b. ဖြူဖွေး  c. ရောင်းဝယ်

   a. *pyɔ³ sho²*   b. *pyu²  phwe³*   c. *yaɔN³  wɛ²*
   say  say/sing     white  white        sell  buy
   'say'            'be white'          'trade'

(25) a. ရိုက်နှိပ်  b. ကျိုးပဲ့  c. ဝေလငါး

   a. *yaiʔ  ŋ̊eiʔ*   b. *co³  pɛ¹*   c. *we² la¹  ŋa³*
   hit/strike  press   break  break off/chip   'whale'  fish
   'stamp, imprint'   'chip'          'whale'

Compounding is a favorite way of coining new technical vocabulary in Burmese (26)[16]. It is also used extensively in some semantic domains such as wildlife and plants, according to typological studies (Grinevald 2000: 59). Fruits, plants and flowers are therefore designated by the name of the species followed by a generic term indicating the part of the plant in question, i.e. the class term (table 5)[17].

(26) a. ချက်လက်မှတ် b. ယာဉ်မောင်းလိုင်စင်  b. အဝတ်လျှော်စက်

   a. *cɛʔ lɛʔ.m̥aʔ*   b. *yaN²  maɔN³  laiN²siN²*   b. *ʔəwaʔ ʃɔ² Sɛʔ*
   'check'-note    *yāna* (vehicle) drive 'license'   cloth  wash  machine
   'check (n.)'    'driving license'            'washing machine'

**Table 5:** CLASS TERMS in the botanical domain (fruits, plants and flowers)

|     | FRUIT |     |     | PLANT |     |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1a | ငှက်ပျော သီး <br> ŋəpyɔ³ -θi³ <br> specie - FRUIT | banana | 1b | ငှက်ပျော ပင် <br> ŋəpyɔ³ -PiN² <br> specie - PLANT | banana tree |
| 2a | သရက် သီး <br> θəyɛʔ - θi³ <br> specie - FRUIT | mango | 2b | သရက် ပင် <br> θəyɛʔ - PiN² <br> specie - PLANT | mango tree |
| 3a | သံလွင် သီး <br> θaN²lwiN² - θi³ <br> specie - FRUIT | olive | 3b | သံလွင် ပင် <br> θaN²lwiN² - PiN² <br> specie - PLANT | olive tree |

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**16** On Burmese lexicon, see Bernot & Pemaungtin (1966), Bernot (1994), Kasevitch (1994).
**17** Burling (1984: 14): "… *noun compound constructed from a categorizing initial portion to which is added one or more syllables that indicate the specific member of the category*". See also Jacquesson (1998).

| | **FRUIT** | | | **PLANT** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4a | စံပယ် ပန်း<br>zəPɛ² - PaN³<br>specie - FLOWER | jasmine (flower) | 4b | စံပယ် ပင<br>zəPɛ² - PiN²<br>specie - PLANT | jasmine plant |
| 5a | ဒေလီယာ ပန်း<br>de² li² ya² - PaN³<br>specie - FLOWER | dahlia (flower) | 5b | ဒေလီယာ ပင်<br>de² li² ya² - PiN²<br>specie - PLANT | dahlia plant |
| 6a | ဒေစီ ပန်း<br>de²si² - PaN³<br>specie - FLOWER | daisy (flower) | 6b | ဒေစီပင်<br>de²si² - PiN²<br>specie - PLANT | daisy plant |

Class terms are restricted to lexical composition; unlike classifiers (see § 3.2.3), they have no functional use. They characterize the noun and co-occur with it; they also correlate with inherent semantic features of the noun, and often display a generic-specific relationship with it (Vittrant 2005:138).

Class terms may be used as general nouns. They therefore appear with a nominalizing prefix as in (27)b.

(27) a. … အသီးတွေ လျှောက်ခူးနေတယ် ။  [AA/08, 55_001]
    **ʔə-θi³**    =Twe²  ʃaɔʔ       khu³   ne²        =Tɛ²
    **NMLZ-fruit**  = PLUR  walk>at random  pick  stay>INACC =REAL
    '(He) is picking fruits at random.'

   b. ကောင်မလေးက ငှက်ပျောသီး ပေးတယ် ။       [HNTH/08, 29_011]
    kaɔN²ma²-le³    =Ka¹   ŋəpyɔ³-**θi³**    pe³    =Tɛ²
    woman-DIM     =S/top  banana-**fruit**   give   =REAL
    'The young lady, (she) gives/ gave (him) banana(s).'

Vittrant (2005) shows that Burmese has superimposed strata of noun classification systems:
(1) an old stage of classifying prefixes, similar to those found in other languages of the family such as Naga or Lushai, (Matisoff 1999: 16), with possibly a phonetic erosion of the classificatory prefix leading to sesquisyllabic word (see fish compounds),
(2) a new stage following the syntactic determination construction with categorizing morphemes (superordinate or generic nouns) ending the compound, similar in position to head nouns appearing in final position in the Noun Phrase (§ 3.2), and based on taxonomy.

Subsequently, the second categorizing structure may enter into competition with the old structure, as shown by the doublets shaded in table 6. However,

while this second process is productive (see names for imported flowers *dahlia* and *daisy* in table 5 above), it seems restricted to the usual fields in which languages of the world categorize, i.e. the plant and animal realms.

Finally, notice that the same morpheme occurs either as a categorizing prefix or as a suffix, but that it does not match the usual numeral classifier used for those nouns (Vittrant, 2005: 146–47).

**Table 6:** Two structures for noun classification

| prefixed class term (1) | | | suffixed class term (2) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | ငါး မန်း <br> ŋə – maN³ <br> **FISH** – *name* | shark | 3. | ယင်ပေါင်စာ ငါး <br> yiN² paɔN² sa² – ŋa³ <br> *name* – **FISH** | white bellied opsarion |
| 2. | ငှက် ခါး <br> ŋɛʔ – kha³ <br> **BIRD** – *name* | jay | 4. | သိမ်း ငှက် <br> θeiN³ – ŋɛʔ <br> *name* – **BIRD** | falcon |
| 5a. | ငါး ဝေလ <br> ŋə – waN² <br> **FISH** – *name* | whale | 5b. | ဝေလ ငါး <br> we² la¹ – ŋa³ <br> *name* – **FISH** | whale |
| 6a. | ငှက် ကြီးဝန်ပို <br> ŋɛʔ – Ci³ waN² po¹ <br> **BIRD** – *name* | pelican | 6b. | ဝန်ပို ငှက် <br> waN² po¹ – ŋɛʔ <br> *name* – **BIRD** | pelican |

To sum up, Burmese like other languages in the area (Thai, Vietnamese), displays a class term device, partly related to its classifier device[18] (cf. § 3.2.3).

### 2.1.3 Loanwords

Loanwords[19] constitute the majority of dissyllabic words (other than compounds) in Burmese lexicon. The more ancient and numerous ones are from Pali, the language of Buddhist scriptures and a highly esteemed language in the area (Hla Pe 1961, Yanson 1994). Most of these loanwords concern abstract vocabulary, philosophy and religion (28)a, b.

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**18** DeLancey, in his history of the Tai classifier system, says that '*lexically the two categories overlap to a considerable degree*' (1986: 442), and suggests that CLASS TERMS [*class nouns in De Lancey's terms*] provide a source for Numeral Classifiers (1986: 445–46).

**19** On loanwords and neologisms in Burmese, see Hla Pe (1961), (1967), Bernot (1979), Bernot & Pemaungtin (1966), Wheatley & Hnin Tun (1999), Bernot & al (2001: 67sq). On political and religious vocabulary, see Kasevitch (1994).

(28) a. စက် < Pali *cakka* (wheel)    b. ပညာ < Pali *paññā* (wisdom)
      *sɛʔ*                      *pyiN²ɲa²*
      'machine'                'knowledge'

    c. ရုပ်ရှင် < Pali *rupā*[20] (form)    d. မှန်ဘီလူး < Burmese မှန် /maN²/
                                              (glass)

        + Burmese ရှင် /ʃiN²/            + Pali *bīruka* bhīru
        (alive)                         (ogre)

    *yoʔ ʃiN²*                         *ṃaN² bi²lu³*
    'movies'                        'microscope'

Moreover, Pali has been the main source for new lexical material throughout Burmese history as Latin and Greek were for European languages, and specialized words in Burmese often contain Pali material, frequently compounded with native stock (28)c, d.

Beside Pali, two other languages have given significant linguistic material to Burmese: chronogically, the first is Mon, and the more recent is English. Mon loanwords are mainly cultural (architecture, artistic, customs, etc.), whereas English provides new words related to technical innovations, fashion and politics (29).

Loanwords from other languages like Chinese, Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Malaysian, Shan and French are also found in Burmese (30).

(29) c. ဖိနပ်      a. ဆိုက်ကား      b. ဒီမိုကရေစီ
      *pənaʔ*         *shaiʔ ka³*         *di² mo² kə re² si²*
      *khanap* < MON      *side-car* < ENG      *democracy* < ENG
      'shoes'          'Burmese trishaw'      'democracy'

(30) a. လုံချည်      b. ခေါက်ဆွဲ      c. အရက်
      *louN² Chi²*       *khaɔʔ shwɛ³*      *ʔəyɛʔ*
      long skirt < PERSIAN    noodles < SHAN, THAI    *arak* < ARABIC
      'Burmese sarong'     'noodles          'alcool'

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**20** The transliteration of the Burmese term pronounced /yoʔ/ is <rup>.

## 2.2 Psycho-collocations and elaborate expressions

'Expressives' are one of those striking similarities between Southeast Asian languages, at the crossroad of the phonetic, morphosyntactic and semantic domains that are regularly omitted or neglected in grammars, maybe because they are extremely difficult to elicit in the field. They rarely appear in declarative and neutral speech, as they represent an attempt by the speaker to transmit a sensation to the hearer.

Nonetheless, expressives constitute yet a fundamental word class in many of these languages. These idiomatic forms — sometimes also known as ideophones, 'onomatopoetic' forms or 'phonaesthetic' words — express emotional phenomena and display special phonological and structural properties with often a 'direct' or 'unmediated' relation to meaning (Vittrant, 2013: 255–56). In Burmese, these are of two kinds: psycho-collocations and elaborate expressions.

### 2.2.1 Psycho-collocations

The human body is frequently used as a metaphorical source domain across languages. Thus, body parts, either internal or external, are easily conceptualized as the locus of emotions and mental states. As such, they are regularly invoked in the description of these states and processes.

MSEA languages make a great use of polymorphemic expressions known as 'psycho-collocations'[21], and described for a number of MSEA languages (Matisoff 1986; Jaisser 1990; Clark 1996; VanBik 1997; Vittrant 2013). They involve metaphorical uses of high-frequency adjectives (or verbs) explicitly collocated with body-part terms to refer to psychological phenomenon (emotional and mental states or processes, physical and emotional feelings). These psycho-collocation constructions are also peculiar in terms of their structure: the psycho-nouns generally do not have argument status, the noun and the verb being semantically tight and working as single predicate[22].

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**21** The term 'psycho-collocation' was coined by Matisoff (1986a: 7): *"Psycho-collocation [is] a polymorphemic expression referring as a whole to a mental process, quality, or state, one of whose constituents is a psycho-noun, i.e. a noun with explicit psychological reference (translatable by English words like heart, mind, spirit, soul, temper, nature, disposition, mood). The rest of the psy[cho]-collocation contains morphemes (usually action verbs or adjectives) that complete the meaning. This element we call the psycho-mate".*
**22** Psycho-collocation constructions raise the question of the relationship between the verb and the body-part term and the status of the latter as being incorporated into the verb. See Vittrant (2013: 271 sq) on syntactic properties of these constructions.

Although these 'body part-adjective' expressions may be seen as part of a universal metaphorical tendency, there seems to be a qualitative difference in the extremes to which MSEA languages carry this tendency: most of these languages cannot express mental activities, emotion, or character features without referring to a body part. However, beside the cross-cultural or universal status of the metaphors involved in these psycho-collocations, there are culture-specific ways of combining psycho-nouns and psycho-mates, i.e. body-part terms and predicates: every language has its favorite location for psychological states and feelings, either the heart as in English and Thai (cf. p. 566–67), the liver as in Malay and Hmong (cf. p. 484 and p. 617), or the guts or the stomach as in Vietnamese (cf. p. 395).

Burmese preferred body-part term for psycho-collocations is စိတ် *seiʔ* 'mind'[23], although other internal organs such as 'heart', 'liver', 'belly' also appear in collocation with stative verbs[24], as shown by examples (31) and (32).

(31)  a.   ... သူ့အဖေ သူ့အပေါ် မှာ စိတ်ကုန်သွားပြီ ။

       ... *θu¹*  *ʔəphe²* *θu¹*  *ʔə-pɔ²*    =*Ma²*   **seiʔ**  **-kouN²** *θwa³* =*Pyi²*

       3SG.GEN father 3SG.GEN NMLZ-top  =<u>LOC</u>  **mind run**  ACC  =CRS

                                            **out**

       'His father is fed up with him [because....]'

  b.  စိတ် ပေါက်      c.  စိတ်တို        d.  စိုက်ရှုပ်

     *seiʔ paɔʔ*          *seiʔ to²*            *seiʔ ʃoʔ*

     mind + explode    mind + be short    mind + be complex

     *'become angry'*    'to be short-tempered'  'be confused'

(32)  ကျမ အသည်းကို မခွဲပါနဲ့ ။

     *cəma¹*  **ʔəθɛ³**  =*Ko²*   *mə=*    **kʰwɛ³**     =*Pa²*   =*nɛ¹*

     1SG    **liver**  =OBJ   NEG=  **break/split**  =POL  =INJ

     '(Please), don't break my heart.'

### 2.2.2 Elaborate expressions

In many Asian languages, expressives appear in a specific form, intermediate in structure between an ordinary compound and reduplication. They are known as

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**23** The word စိတ် /seiʔ/ (transliterated *cit*) comes from Pali *citta,* via Mon. Interestingly, the same etymon is found as a psycho-noun in other Southeast Asian languages, such as Mon (See example (3), p. 286) or Khmer (See Table 2, p. 335).

**24** See Vittrant (2013: 267 ff) for a more detailed list of psycho-nouns in Burmese.

'elaborate expressions' (Haas 1964), and have been described by Matisoff (1973: 81) as "a compound containing four (usually monosyllabic) elements, of which either the first and third or the second and fourth are identical (A-B-A-C or A-B-C-B) [and that] characteristically convey a rather formal or elegant impression.". The two non-reduplicated elements of the quadrisyllabic expression (bold terms in (33)) are usually referred to as an 'elaborate couplet,' i.e. pair of phonologically different but roughly synonymous or antonymic morphemes that conventionally appear together.

(33) a.  မ နီး မ ဝေး                    b.  ခြေစ လက်စ

        *mə - ni³-   mə - we³*          *che² - Sa¹-   lɛʔ -   Sa¹*

        NEG **close** NEG **far**          **foot** begin **hand** begin

        'not so far, (to be) at a good distance'   'aptitude, qualification'

These expressions usually function as adverbials (34), but, as shown by the Burmese example (33)b, they may form nominal compounds or other parts of speech (Wheatley 2013: 237).

(34) a.  ကိုကိုမောင်သည် … ခုတင်ပေါ် တွင် ခြေပစ်လက်ပစ် လဲနေလေသည်။

       [literary Burmese][25]

       *ko²ko²maɔN² =θi² ...      KəTiN²   Pɔ²=TwiN²    **che²-Piʔ-lɛʔ-Piʔ***

       Ko Ko Maung =S./TOP    bed       top =LOC     <u>foot-throw-hand-throw</u>

       *l̥ɛ³    ne²    le²=θi²*

       lie    INACC   EUPH =REAL

       'Ko Ko Maung [after...] lay down on the bed without a care in the world [in the state of exhaustion]'

## 2.3 Reduplication

Reduplication in Burmese concerns mainly the major parts of speech, i.e. the noun and the verb, and two kinds of reduplication are distinguished here[26]:

1. **simple reduplication** corresponds to a simple copy (total or partial) of a lexical root associated with a change of meaning or value

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**25** From Bernot (1989–88), vol. 3: 131.

**26** Stolz et al (2011) provides an excellent review of works (and definitions) on reduplication. For a more detailed list of reduplication processes in Burmese, see Okell & Allott (2001: 274–75), Vittrant & Robin (2007).

2. **complex reduplication** involves, beside the lexical root and its copy, another item inextricably linked to the process of reduplication, either morphologically or syntactically.

### 2.3.1 Simple reduplication

Simple reduplication may occur with nouns, although the process is more frequent with verbs. A reduplicated nominal form unsurprisingly means plurality of the referent designated by the noun. However, it differs from the sequence [noun + plural morpheme တွေ /Twe²/] (see § 3.2 on Noun Phrase). While this sequence means several occurrences of the N, the reduplicated form specifies sequential occurrences that have to be considered as a whole, as shown in (35).

(35) နင် မိုးမိုးရဲ့ဦးလေးနဲ့ ခဏခဏ တွေ့ဖြစ်(သ)လား ။
　　 *niN² mo³mo³　=yɛ¹ ʔu³le³ =nɛ¹ **khəna¹-khəna¹** twe¹ phyiʔ (θə)　　=la³*
　　 2SG　Moe Moe =GENuncle =with**often**　　　meet POSSIB (QST.REAL) =QST
　　 'Do you often have the opportunity to meet Moe Moe's uncle?'

Verb reduplication is more frequent and has two different values depending on the type of verb and the context: quantification (repeated actions) or qualification (modifying actions).

–　The quantification carried by the reduplication process may be iterative, habitual (36)(a), continuative (b) or distributive (37). In all these cases, the reduplicated form keeps its verbal properties, being the head of the verbal phrase. It however must have an auxiliary following.

(36) a.　ဝယ်ဝယ် ပေးလာတယ် ။
　　　　　*wɛ² wɛ²　　pe³　　　la²　　　=Tɛ²*
　　　　　buy (x2)　BENEF　come/CPETE　=REAL
　　　　　(He) came and bought (things) for me several timesor
　　　　　'(He) used to buy and bring me (things).'

　　b.　ကျမ ရှင့်ကို ပြောပြောနေတာပေါ့ ။
　　　　　*cəma¹　　ʃiN¹　　=Ko²　pyɔ³ pyɔ³　ne²　　=Ta²　=Pɔ¹*
　　　　　1SG.FEM　2SG.DAT　=OBJ　tell (x2)　INACC　=REAL.NF =DM
　　　　　'I am telling (it) to you constantly! (or I tell (it) to you again and again).'

In (36)(b) above, the repeated verb ပြော /pyɔ³/ indicates an action occurring several times, while the auxiliary နေ /ne²/ carries the continuity of this repetition, rather than the repetition itself.

Example (37) shows the distributive value of verb reduplication. These sentences refer to sequential actions implying different participants, either the agents (a) or the beneficiaries (b) of the action. In (a), several persons do the same action while in (b) one person does the same action once for each child. Thus, the distributive interpretation requires the presence of a plural argument in the sentence.

(37) a. ကျမကလေး အလုပ်ရဖို့ သူတို့�’ဘဲ ပြောပြောပေးနေတယ် ။

| *cəma¹* | *khəle³* | *ʔəloʔ* | *ya¹* | *=Phoˡ* | *θu²-Toˡ* | *bɛ³* | *pyɔ³* | *pyɔ³* | *pe³* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1SG.FEM | child | work | obtain | =SUB | 3-**COLL** | only | tell | (x2) | BENEF |

| *ne²* | *=Tɛ²* |
|---|---|
| INACC | =REAL |

'They were the ones who kept intervening to help my child get a job.'
(lit. Only they intervened on behalf of me to help my child to get a job.)

b. ကျမကလေးတွေ အလုပ်ရဖို့ သူတို့’ဘဲ ပြောပြောပေးနေတယ် ။

| *cəma¹* | *khəle³* | *=Twe²* | *ʔəloʔ* | *ya¹* | *Phoˡ* | *θu² -Toˡ* | *bɛ³* | *pyɔ³* | *pyɔ³* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1SG.FEM | child | =**PLUR** | work | obtain | SUB | 3SG =PLUR | only | tell | (x2) |

| *pe³* | *ne²* | *=Tɛ²* |
|---|---|---|
| BENEF | INACC | =REAL |

'It was he who kept intervening to help my children get a job.'
(lit. Only he intervened on behalf of me to help my **children** to get some job.)

– In qualifying reduplication, the repeated verb modifies another verb, i.e. the head verb (in bold). The process often adds intensification. The reduplicated form may be either mono-morphemic or a compound as shown respectively in (38)a & b. In colloquial speech, the repeated form may undergo slight changes, the rhyme becoming /-ɛʔ/ as in (39) (See Okell & Allott, 2001: 273).

(38) a. ကောင်းကောင်း စောင့်ရှောက် ခံရတဲ့ကလေးက ...

| ***KaɔN³ KaɔN³*** | *saɔNˡ ʃaɔʔ* | *KhaN²* | *ya¹* | *=Tɛˡ* | *khəle³* | *=Ka¹* ... |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **be good** (x 2) | look.after | suffer | GET | =REL:R. | child | =TOP |

'A child that is looked after very well... [will be happy].'

b. ပြေပြေ ပြစ်ပြစ် လက်ခံကြိုဆို ပါတယ် ။[27]
**pye² Pye² pyi? Pyi?**     lɛ? khaN²     co²Sho²    =Pa²    =Tɛ²
**adapted, smooth** (x 2)   harbour.sb   welcome   =POL   =REAL

< ပြေ ပြစ်
[pye²pyi?]
[be smooth, adapted]
'(She) welcomed and hosted (him) smoothly.' (Fr. *Elle l'accueillit sans difficulté*).

(39) a. ခဲတံကို အမြန် ကောက်ကက် ယူတယ်။
khɛ³TaN²   =Ko²   ?ə-myaN²   **ka?? kɛ?**   yu²   =Tɛ²
pencil    =OBJ    NMLZ-fast   **pick.up-(x2)**   take   =REAL
'(He) swiftly snatched up the pencil].'

b. ကြည့်ကြက်လည့် သွားအုံး ။
**Ci² Cɛ?**    lɛ³    θwa³    =?ouN³
**look** (x2)   also   go    =ITER.PROSP
'Look carefully while going.'    or    'Be careful when going (there).'

## 2.3.2 Complex or constructional reduplication

**Complex reduplication** involving another item inextricably linked to the process of reduplication appears in both the nominal and verbal domains.

Within the nominal domain, the reduplication process is typically a morphological process, involving a nominalizing prefix, or other phonologically reduced syllables. In (40), the prefix အ /?ə-/ appears with a repeated noun adding the meaning of genericity. In (41), an indefinite NP is created by reduplicating the classifier with the reduced form of the numeral 'one'.

(40) a. မြို့     b. အမြို့မြို့
    *myo¹*         *?ə-*     *myo¹ myo¹*
    town         NMLZ    town (x2)
    'town'       'towns in general, various towns'

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**27 Adapted** from Bernot (1978–88), vol. 10, p. 85.

(41) တစ်ယောက်ယောက် လာမယ် ॥
    *tə-*     *yaɔʔ yaɔʔ*     *la²*     *=mɛ²*
    one-     CLF:HUM (x2)     come     =IRR
    'Someone will come.'

Two types of complex verbal reduplication are illustrated below. One is a morphological process similar to the nominal one above, involving prefixes and creating verbal modifiers as in (42) and (43)[28]. Example (44) compares different verbal modifiers from the same verbal root[29].

(42) ဒီမနက်လေ တဖျူးဖျူး တိုက်နေတယ် ॥
    *di²*     *mənɛʔ*     *le²*     *tə-*     **phyu³ Phyu³**     *taiʔ*     *ne²*     *=Tɛ²*
    DEM     morning     wind     **PFX-**     **sprinkle (x2)**     blow     INACC     =REAL
    'The breeze blows gently this morning.'

(43) a. ခပ်ဟောင်းဟောင်းဘဲ ॥           b. တဖြေးဖြေးစား ॥
      *khaʔ -*    *haɔN² haɔN²*    *bɛ³*            *tə -*    *phye³Phye³*    *sa³*
      PRF (adv)-    be old (x2)    DM:excl       PFX-    be slow (x2)    eat
      'It is pretty old!'                'Eat slowly.'

(44) a. မြန်         b. အမြန်
      *myaN²*          *ʔə-myaN²*
      be fast, quick      NMLZ-fast
      'fast'              'quickly'

      c. မြန်မြန်      d. ခပ်မြန်မြန်
      *myaN² myaN²*       *khaʔ-myaN² myaN²*
      fast (x2)         PFX(adv) - fast (x2)
      'quickly, rapidly'      'very fast, very quickly'

The second type of verb reduplication is better analyzed as part of a syntactic process. For instance, the reduplication of the verb is triggered by the use of the subordinator ချင်း /ChiN³/ in (45). Other syntactic structures conveying meanings such as goal, concession (46), epistemicity (47)b, emphasis or intensification (47)a, require repeating the verb, the two occurrences being sometimes separated by various morphemes (conjunction, subordinator, discourse marker, etc). See Okell & Allott (2001: 151), Vittrant (2004: 347 ff).

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**28** See Bernot & *al.* (2001: 122sq), Okell & Allott (2001: 257) for more examples.
**29** See Vittrant & Robin (2007: 84) for other similar examples.

(45) အကြော်သည်း အော်သံကြားကြားချင်း သူ ပြေးထွက်တယ် ။

| ʔə-cɔ²-θɛ³ | ʔɔ²-θaN² | **ca³ Ca³** | =ChiN³ | θu² | pye² | thwɛʔ | =Tɛ² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NMLZ-fry-AGENT | shout-cry | **hear (x2)** | SUB | 3SG | run | go.out | =REAL |

'He runs out as soon as he hears the cry of the fried-food seller.'[30]

(46) နင် ဘာပြောပြော ငါကြည့်ကြည့်နေတယ် ။

| niN² | **ba²** | **pyɔ³ pyɔ³** | ŋa² | ci¹ ci¹ | ne² | =Tɛ² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2SG | **QST** | **tell (x2)** | 1SG | look (x2) | INACC | =REAL |

'**Whatever** you say, I am watching you constantly.'[31]

(47) a. စားတော့ စားတယ် ၊ ဒါပေမဲ့ မဝတူး ။

| **sa³** | **=Tɔ¹** | **sa³** | =Tɛ² | da²Pe²mɛ¹ | mə= | wa¹ | =Phu³ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **eat(1)** | **DM:even** | **eat(2)** | =REAL | but | NEG= | be fat | =NEG |

'As for eating, (he) is eating; but (he) does not become fat.'

b. မနက်ဖြန် သူ လာရင်လာမယ် ။[32]

| mənɛʔphyaN² | θu² | **la²** | =yiN² | **la²** | =Mɛ² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| tomorrow | 3SG | **come** | =SUB | **come** | =IRR. |

'He may come tomorrow [but I am not sure].'

# 3 Grammar and Syntax

Burmese has been studied by Western scholars since the 18th century (Pruitt, 1994: 35). Missionaries wrote the first grammars and dictionaries in Western languages, including the English-Burmese dictionary by the American Baptist Judson in (1852), followed by other language studies by both Western and Burmese scholars – Saint-John (1936), Cornyn (1944), Stewart (1936), Pe Maung Tin (1956) and Min Latt (1962-63-64).

More recent works also contain good descriptions of the language that avoid the Latin-Greek framework imposed by Western grammatical traditions. See Allott (1965), Okell (1969), Bernot (1980), Wheatley (1982), Bernot & al.

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**30** From Allott & Okell (2001: 38).

**31** This structure is similar in meaning to the nominal reduplication used to create indefinite nouns. It also carries an indefinite meaning.

**32** This reduplication expression may be analyzed as a merging of two clauses : လာချင်ရင် /la² CiN² =yiN²/ come-desire-if "If you wish to come", and လာမယ် /la²=Mɛ²/ come-IRREALIS/ "you could come".

(2001), Okell & Allott (2001), Vittrant (2004) Watkins (ed.) (2005) and Jenny & Hnin Tun (2016) among others.

The influence of Pali on Burmese grammar is substantial and started in the early Burmese kingdom (Esche, 1994: 395)[33], with a continuous attempt to adapt Burmese to Pali grammatical rules[34]. For instance, contemporary Burmese grammars analyze the language in terms of the Pali tradition, with inherited grammatical categories whose existence may be doubtful in Burmese. Pali was an Indo-European language, structurally distant from Tibeto-Burman.

## 3.1 General facts word classes

### 3.1.1 Parts of speech in traditional Burmese grammar

Traditional Burmese grammar distinguishes nine parts of speech (ဝါစင် / waziŋga/) comprising lexical (ပုဒ် /poʔ/) and grammatical categories[35]. Lexical categories include ကြိယာ /kəri²ya²/ 'verb' and နာမ် /naN²/ 'noun'. The adjective and adverb categories, whose statuses are controversial (Wheatley 1982: 87, Bernot 1983, Vittrant 2004: 119) are related to the verb and noun categories and respectively called ကြိယာ–ဝိသေသန /kəri²ya² – wi¹θe²θəna¹/ and နာမ်-ဝိသေသန /naN² – wi¹θe²θəna¹/, where the second term means ' qualifiying'.

Regarding grammatical categories, Burmese, based on the Pali tradition, distinguishes 3 types of function word : ဝိဘတ် /wi¹baʔ/ from Pali '*vibhatti*' (division, grammatical inflection), ပစ္စည်း /pyiʔsi³/ from '*paccaya*' (cause, means) and သမ္ဗန္ဒ /θaN²baN²da¹/ from '*sambandha*' (connection).

These unsuitable transplanted categories are quite heterogeneous, including morphemes with various functions. For instance, the modal verb morpheme လိမ့် /leiN¹/ conveying probability, and also case markers က /Ka¹/ or ကို /Ko²/, are all described as ဝိဘတ် /wi¹baʔ/ in the Burmese dictionary published by the Ministry of Education in Yangon (1991). By contrast, ပစ္စည်း /pyiʔsi³/ (a word which also means 'thing, item') includes nominalizing affixes, but also auxiliary verbs such as နေ /ne²/ 'to stay' > INACC (progressive or stative aspect).

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**33** Esche (1994: 395): "Already during the Bagan times the strictly regulated grammar of Pali and Sanskrit was highly appreciated and therefore regarded as a shining example for the compilation of original works."

**34** See for instance the study of Burmese grammar within a Pali framework by Aung San Hta Sayadaw (1748).

**35** Bernot & al (2001: 16) gives a table of Burmese traditional grammatical and lexical categories with approximate corresponding terms in French grammar.

Thus next section presents a list of word categories based on the interactional and functional properties they can assume in modern Burmese.

### 3.1.2 Defining parts of speech in contemporary Burmese

A tentative list of part of speech comprises the lexical categories noun, verb, pronoun and classifier, and the grammatical categories postposition, demonstrative and subordinator (or conjunction). The categories adjective and adverb categories may be added to this list although these lexical categories contain very few members.

- **Noun**

Nouns are generally mono-morphemic (apart from the compounds). However, there is a small set of complex nouns that consist of a noun (or a root) preceded by a nominalizing prefix (48) or another noun it modifies (49). They are called 'Relator nouns' (RN) by DeLancey (1997) — a category that comprises Okell's 'Subordinate-nouns' and 'Location-Nouns' (also known as 'Internal Localization Nouns'[36]) (Okell, 1969: 141–144).

RNs are defined by their ability to follow a lexical noun with no genitive marking, and by their use of the nominalizing prefix အ /ʔə-/ when appearing as a lexical noun as in (49)b.

Nouns can be followed by a quantifier or a postposition associated to nominal functions.

(48) စားပွဲ ၊ ကုလားထိုင်အစား ဖျာခင်းမယ်။  [from Bernot & al, 2001: 93]
   *SəPwɛ³*      *kələ³.thaiN²*   ***ʔə.sa³***   *phya²*    *khiN³*    *=Mɛ²*
   table       Indian.seat    **instead.of**   mat       spread     =IRR
   'We will put a mat instead of tables and chairs.'

(49) a.   ဂူပေါက်ထဲကို ဝင်လာတယ် ။
       *gu² . paɔʔ*       ***tʰɛ³=Ko²***      *wiN²*    *la²*       *=Tɛ²*
       cave. opening    **interior**=DIR   go.in    come/CPETE    =REAL
       '(She) enters [towards DC] **in** the cave.'

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**36** 'Internal Localization Nouns' (ILN) may be viewed as a kind of NR. They are lexical items which refer to a portion of an entity as opposed to a whole entity, for instance: top, front, edge, interior, corner, etc. They form a sub-class of nouns that exhibit spatial relational features. They also tend to form frozen complex postpositions. On ILN, see Borillo 1988, Aurnague 1989, and Aurnague & al 2000.

b. ဂူအပြင်ကို ထွက်သွားတယ် ။

| $gu^2$ | ***?ə.pyiN²*** = $Ko^2$ | $t^hwɛʔ$ | $θwa^3$ | = $Tɛ^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| cave | **NMLZ-exterior** = DIR | go.out | go/CFUGE | =REAL |

'[She] went out to the **exterior** of the cave (away from DC).'

- **Pronoun**

Burmese pronouns are of nominal origin. Following the cross-linguistic tendency in SEA languages (Ishiyama, 2008: 205), (Cooke, 1968), Burmese first and second person pronouns originated from the words meaning respectively 'slave, servant' and 'master, lord, king' (see table 7). Unsurprisingly, while the lexical source of these pronouns expresses the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee, that of the third person pronoun is rather different. It simply denotes a 'person', a 'human' and rarely an 'object'.

As shown by table (7), first and second person pronouns are numerous. They differ in the degree of respect and politeness appropriate to the relationship between the speaker and hearer, reflecting their relative status and age. They are also differentiated by the sex of the speaker.

**Table 7:** Burmese Pronouns adapted from Bernot & al (2001: 100–102), Okell (1969: 100–101)

| FIRST PERSON: I (WE) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Burmese form* | | *sex of the speaker* | *original meaning* | *degree of politeness* |
| ငါ | $ŋa^2$ | male & female | < *proto-TB | familiar |
| ကျုပ် | $coʔ$ | male | slave | fairly polite |
| ကျွန်တော် | $cənɔ^2$ | male | royal slave | polite |
| ကျွန်မ | $cəma^1$ | female | female slave | polite |
| တို့ / ဒို့ | $to^1$ / $do^1$ | plural (we) | | familiar |
| တပည့်တော်(မ) | $təpi^1Tɔ^2(ma^1)$ | male (female) | honorable disciple | speaking to monks |
| SECOND PERSON: YOU | | | | |
| *Burmese form* | | *sex of the speaker* | *original meaning* | *degree of politeness* |
| နင် | $niN^2$ | male & female | | familiar |
| မင်း | $miN^3$ | male & female | king | familiar |
| ခင်ဗျား | $kəmya^3$ | male | lord, master | polite |
| ရှင် | $ʃiN^2$ | female | lord, master | polite |
| ညည်း | $ɲiN^3$ | female (to female) | | familiar |
| အရှင်ဘုရား | $ʔəʃiN^2 phəya^3$ | male & female | lord Buddha | speaking to monks |
| THIRD PERSON: HE, SHE, (IT) | | | | |
| *Burmese form* | | *sex of the speaker* | *original meaning* | *degree of politeness* |
| သူ | $θu^2$ | male & female | person | |

Moreover, relational terms such as kinship terms (အဖေ /ʔəphe²/ 'father', အမေ /ʔəme²/ 'mother', ဒေါ် /dɔ²/ 'aunt', ...), proper names and titles (ဆရာ /səya²/, ...) may be used as pronouns, referring to first or second person. In these cases, the context will indicate to which grammatical person the term refers. In (50), the expression အမေတို့ /ʔə.me²-To¹/ 'mother-COLL' refers to a first person singular despite the collective marker: the author, a sixties-year-old woman, wrote for young people. She refers to herself as a mother, as a member of the mother class.

(50) မင်းတို့က အမေတို့ ဆဲတဲ့အဆဲကို နားလည်ကြရဲ့လား ။ [B2/11]

  *miN³-To¹* =*Ka¹* *ʔə.me²-To¹* *shɛ³* =*Tɛ¹* *ʔə.shɛ³* =*Ko²*
  2P-COLL =TOP mother-COLL [> 1P] insult(v.) =REL.REAL NMLZ.insult =OBJ.

  *na³.lɛ²* =*Ca¹* =*yɛ¹* *la³*
  understand =PLUR =REAL QST
  'Eh you! Do you understand the insults that I [of the mother class] was using?'

Pronouns differ from common nouns in several syntactic respects. They may not be determined by a demonstrative, nor may they be reduplicated. Finally, pronouns are frequently omitted in natural speech, as they generally refer to accessible referents.

- **Adverb**

As mentioned before, the 'adverb' category is questionable: almost all the expressions that appear in the adverbial function as modifiers of verbs are transparently derived from verbs by processes of reduplication (44), prefixation (42), (43), (44), rhyme or chime (i.e. elaborate expressions).

　There are few adverbs that are not derived from a verb: a few monomorphemic words borrowed from pali (51) along with frozen expressions that have become institutionalized enough to be considered as true adverbs such as လုံးဝ /louN³.wa¹/ 'totally' (from <'be round' + 'be full') (52) or တခါတလေ /tək^ha² təle²/ 'sometimes' (from < အခါ /ʔə.k^ha² / 'moment' + ?).

(51) a. မုချလာမယ်။　　　b. ကောင်မလေးကလဲ တကယ်ချစ်တယ်။ [SSN_3]

  **mo?cha¹** *la²* =*mɛ²*　　　*kaɔN²ma²-le³* =*Ka¹* *lɛ³* **tə-gɛ²** *chi?* =*Tɛ²*
  **certainly** come =IRR　　　woman-DIM =TOP also **really** love =REAL
  '(I) will **certainly**　　　'The young lady, she also **really** loved
  come.'　　　[him].'

(52) သူ မိတ်ဆွေ လုံးဝ မရှိတာ ...                                                 [HP-10]

     *θu²*    *meiʔsʰwe²*    ***louN³.wa¹***              *mə=*    *ʃi¹*    *=Ta²*    ...

    **3SG**    friend    **ADV** [be round. be full]    NEG=    have    =REAL.NF

    [Maybe] he *didn't have any friends* [at Hogwarts].

    (lit. ... he totally did not have friends)

Lastly, onomatopoeic expressions such as ideophones that refer to noise, animal cries, mental states and the like, could also be classified as adverbs. These elaborate expressions[37], generally formed by reduplication of an element (cf. § 2.2.2), display acoustic symbolism and function as verb modifiers.

(53) ဒီစကားကြားတာနဲ့ သူတခစ်ခစ်ရယ်တော့တယ် ။                       [DB/6, p.84]

    *di²*    *SəKa³*    *ca³*    *=Ta²*       *=nɛ¹*    *θu²*    ***tə-kʰiʔ-kʰiʔ***        *yei²*

    DEM    speech    hear    =NMLZ.REAL    =with    3SG    sound.of.discreet.laugh    laugh

    *=Tɔ¹*    *=Tɛ²*

    =ASP    =REAL

    Hearing that, he starts to giggle.

- **Adjective**

Adjectives are not a universal linguistic category: many languages have no separate class of words referring to properties and qualities, whereas other languages only have a small, closed set of adjectives at their disposal. Burmese belongs to the second type. Beside a rather small set of adjectives — mostly loans from Pali —, adjectival words are better analyzed as a subclass of verbs, i.e. stative verbs. When used predicatively, they function like intransitive verbs, and they generally cannot directly modify or qualify a following noun.

Notice, however, that a few common stative verbs, used within a large semantic domain and referring to fundamental qualities (i.e. 'big, good, bad, etc...), may be used attributively without a relator term (see လူကြီး /lu²-Ci³/ human-big > 'adult' in example 1). They are closely associated with the noun they modify and their initial consonant becomes voiced (table 8).

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**37** On expressives and elaborate expressions, see Vittrant (2013) and Wheatley (2013).

**Table 8:** Burmese adjectives

| Position | Burmese form | | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| — N | ပထမ – | pət$^h$əma$^1$- | first |
| — N | ဒုတိယ – | du$^1$ti$^1$ya$^1$ - | second |
| — N | သာမန်– | θa$^2$maN$^2$ - | ordinary |
| — N | အဓိက | ʔədi$^1$ka$^1$- | principal |
| — N | ယာယီ | ya$^2$yi$^2$- | temporary |
| N— | ကြီး | - Ci$^3$ | big |
| N— | ကောင်း | - KɔN$^3$ | good |
| N— | လှ | - l̥a$^1$ | beautiful, pretty |
| N— | နီ | - ni$^2$ | red[38] |

- **Classifier**

Classifiers may be viewed as a sub-class of nouns as in Vietnamese (cf. this volume, p. 398). They may also be considered as a grammatical category rather than a lexical one, given the functional properties associated with these words (numeration, individuation…). However, given their large numbers, and the fact that they are not a closed category (see repeater CLFs in section § 3.2.3), we list them within the lexical categories, and they will be examined in detail in section § 3.2.3.

- **Grammatical categories or function words**

Different classes of function word must be distinguished in Burmese, based on form, semantics and distributional properties. Thus, according to the grammatical level at which the words are used (sentential, clausal or phrasal), we distinguish the following subclasses, of which only the 'clause final particle' subclass will be detailed here:
- sentence particles (discourse markers): cf. § 4.2 *on pragmatics and discourse*
- clause-final particles (subordinating conjunctions)
- nominal particles: cf. § 3.2.2 *on relators*
- verbal particles: cf. § 3.3.2 *on verbal categories*

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**38** Color terms, as often in languages, constitute a sub-class of stative verbs with particular syntactic properties. Thus for instance, beside ကားနီ /ka$^3$ ni$^2$/, "red car", it is possible to get ကားနီနီ /ka$^3$ ni$^2$ ni$^2$/ or ကားအနီ /ka$^3$ ʔəni$^2$/ with equivalent meanings.

In these subclasses, the term *'particle'* designates an invariable morpheme that is not syntactically autonomous and generally functions as a bound (or clitic) grammatical morpheme without lexical meaning, at least synchronically.

*Clause-final particles* are function words used to mark a dependency between a head constituent (the main clause, the head noun) and its modifiers (subordinating clauses, relative clauses), in other terms 'subordinating conjunctions' at clausal level[39]. For instance, the marker တဲ့ /Tɛ¹/ in example (38) relates the head noun 'child' to the preceding relative clause (cf. also (22), (50), (65), (66) and (73)).

Example (54) shows two clause-final particles, the conditional subordinating marker ရင် /yiN²/ and the causal marker လို့ /lo¹/. As *clause-final particles*, they appear at the end of the clause in place of a *Verb-Final Particle* (VFP) that indicates the status of the event and the finiteness of the clause (see Vittrant *to appear*).

Table 9 gives a list of the main clause final particles with their semantics[40].

(54) ဒါပေမယ့် ဒီအတိုင်း ဆက်သွားရင် သူတတ်လို့သေနိုင်တယ် ။                [HP/22–24]
    *da²pe²mɛ¹   di²  Ɂə-TaiN³  sʰɛʔ    θwa³ =**yiN²**  θu²  ŋaʔ  =**lo¹***
    but       DEM pattern go.on  ASP   =**SUB:if** 3SG starve =**SUB:cause**

    *θe²    naiN²  =Tɛ²*
    die    CAN    =REAL
    … but the way things were going, he'd probably starve to death anyway.
    (lit. … but **if** this pattern goes on, he could die **because** he will starve)

**Table 9:** Burmese main Clause final particles

|  | *Clause final particle* | **Meaning** |
|---|---|---|
| ရင် | yiN² | Conditional : 'if' |
| လို့ | lo¹ | Causal : 'because, like' Quotation |
| တုံး(က) | TouN³ (=Ka¹) | Temporal: 'when' (past event) |
| တော့ | Tɔ¹ | Temporal: 'when' (future event) |
| မ… ခင် | mə -V- KʰiN² | Temporal : 'before' |

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**39** Co-ordinating conjunctions will be treated with Relators as they mainly operate at phrasal level.
**40** For an extensive list of Final Clause Particles, see Bernot & al (2001: 136 ff), Okell (1969: 173 ff).

| | *Clause final particle* | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| ရင်း | yiN³ | Simultaneity : 'while' |
| ပြီး | pyi³ | Consecutive (and simultaneity) : 'after, as' |
| ဖို့ | pʰo¹ | Goal : 'for, in order to' |
| အောင် | ʔaɔN² | Goal: 'in order to, so that' |

Some nouns, such as 'sound' ((အ) သံ) /(ʔə)θaN³/), 'image' ((အ) ပုံ /(ʔə)pouN²/) or 'place' (နေရာ /nəya²/) may fulfill the function of a clause-final particle while partly keeping their original meaning, as shown by example (55) (Bernot & al 2001: 147–48).

(55)　　　သူနားလည်ပုံ မရဘူး ။

θu²　　na³.lɛ²　　　-pouN²　　　mə=　　ya¹　　=Phu³

3SG　　understand　-SUB:image　NEG=　get　=NEG

'It doesn't seem that he understands.'

(lit)　　'We don't get the image of him understanding.'

## 3.2 The nominal domain

### 3.2.1 Basic structure of the NP

A noun phrase (NP) is minimally constituted of a bare noun, to which modifiers can be added in a certain order. In some rare and restricted cases, the N may be omitted (See section on CLF). Within a slot — corresponding to a syntactic position—, elements are exclusive. Semantic constraints may also prevent the use of modifiers from different slots from appearing in the same NP.

Here is the schema for the Burmese NP. (*Small Brackets stand for optional items, large brackets stand for slot positions in the NP.)*

**Figure (1):** NP Component order for Colloquial Burmese
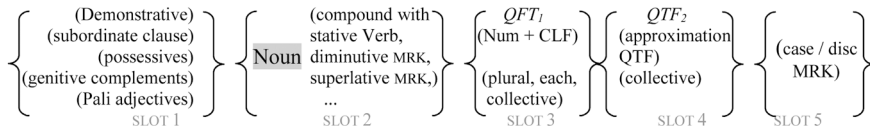


[slot 1]: Modifiers precede the head noun as expected in a verb-final language.

**Table 10:** Illustration of current pre-nominal modifiers

| Burmese form | | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| ဒီ | di² + N | deictic proximal (this one)[41] |
| ဟို | ho² + N | deictic distal (that one) |
| ဘယ်– | bɛ² + N | interrogative or indefinite expressions |
| ပထမ | pəthəma¹ + N | cardinal (first) |
| တခြား | təcha³ + N | other |

[slot 2]: The noun may be a mono-morphemic word or a lexical compound. It may also be followed by a restricted set of stative verbs with attributive function.

[slot 3]: Nominal plural is not a compulsory grammatical category. It is rather pragmatically constrained, plural morphemes appearing with specific nominal reference.

[slot 4]: Indefinite quantifiers are morphemes that modify a quantifying expression and they convey a numeral approximation ('about, exactly, less than, both, together, all', etc.). They follow the first quantifier without a pause.

[slot 5]: Relators or postpositions have syntactic or pragmatic functions: they indicate arguments of the process but also reinforce their status (emphasis) in the discourse. Some postpositions are complex, compounded with 'relator nouns', as shown by (56)a (cf. also § 3.1.2).

(56) a. အခင်းလေးပေါ်မှာ  b. အဲဒီစာအုပ်ကြီး ၂ အုပ်
　　　 ʔə-khiN³-le³　　 pɔ² =Ma²　 ʔɛ³di² 　　sa³ʔoʔ-Ci³ ṇə-ʔoʔ
　　　 NMLZ-spread-DIM top =LOC　 DEM.ANAPH book-big 2 CLF:bound obj.
　　　 'On the small tablecloth'　　 'These two big books'

### 3.2.2 Case-markers, postpositions or relators

In Burmese, syntactic functions are expressed by morphemes postponed to NPs and thus are usually considered as 'postpositions'. However, following Hagège 1997, we will refer to *'relators'*, a term that subsumes adpositions and case-markers under a single concept that relies on syntactic rather than morphological criteria. It shows the dependency of a constituent (generally a complement) on a head (generally a verb).

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**41** Notice that demonstratives may also be used as nouns and are directly followed by a case marker in expressions meaning 'here','there'.

Burmese relators are multifunctional; they mark certain grammatical functions, pragmatic functions and basic locational relations. As clitics, they undergo voicing of the initial consonant according to general phonological rules. The most frequent ones are listed in table 11.

Notice, however, that they are not systematically expressed (see 52). They are used sparingly: their presence depends on the properties of the verbs (transitive, intransitive, motion...), on the number of arguments expressed, and on the amount of 'sharedness': the greater the shared context or the shared cultural background is, the less necessary it is to specify grammatical relations. Often, the markers appear to disambiguate relations between arguments. For instance in (36)b, the marker ကို /Ko²/ helps to identify the argument recipient of the talk.

**Table 11:** Relators (or Postpositions) in Burmese

| Relator | | Functions |
|---|---|---|
| ကို | =Ko² | Syntactic[42]: object (accusative)(1), (36), (39), (50), direction, (allative), destination (22), (49), distributive, recipient, future time<br>Pragmatic: focus, emphasis |
| က | =Ka¹ | Syntactic: subject (nominative), source (ablative), 'giver', past time<br>Pragmatic: topic, delimit constituent in nominal predicates |
| မှာ | =Ma² | Syntactic: location, experiencer, possessor (22), (31) |
| နဲ့ | =nɛ¹ | Syntactic: instrumental, comitative (22), (53) |
| ရဲ့ | =yɛ¹ | Syntactic: Possession (genitive) |
| ဟာ | =ha² | Syntactic/Pragmatic: Subject topicalizer |

As noticed in table 11, some of the Burmese relators have not only a syntactic function but also a pragmatic function, namely topicalization and focalization of the host constituent to which they attached. For instance, က /Ka¹/ attached to the single argument of a predicate, designates the referent it refers to as the topic of the discourse. See examples (22) and (51)b.

On the other hand, the relator ကို /Ko²/ is required when the goal argument of the event has been moved from its expected position (preverbal). In that case, it denotes an emphasis on this argument, focalizing it.

ကို /Ko²/ may also be attached to other kinds of constituent (adverbial, clausal) with the same pragmatic functions (57).

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**42** Sawada (1995) examines in detail the usages and functions of postpositions က /Ka¹/ and ကို /Ko²/. He also reviews previous descriptions of these two relators (p. 154–57), and discusses the adequacy of the concepts of 'subject' and 'object' in Burmese (p. 175 ff). See also Okell & Allott (2001: 2, 7) on the same markers.

(57) a. ပြောကိုမပြောချင်ပါဘူး ။                    [from Okell & Allott (2001: 9)]

   *pyɔ³*   *=**Ko²***   *mə=*   *pyɔ³*   *ChiN²*   *=Pa²*   *=Phu³*

   say      **=EMPH**   NEG=   say    want    =POL    =NEG

   '(I) don't **even** want to say it!'

   b. သိပ်ကိုတော်တာဘဲ ။

   *θeiʔ*   *=**Ko²***   *tɔ²*   *=Ta²*   *bɛ³*

   very    **=EMPH**   be skill   =REAL.NF   DM:excl

   '(He) is **incredibly** skilled.'

Finally, some derived nouns such as အတွက် /ʔə.Twɛʔ/ (from တွက် /twɛʔ/ 'to calculate') or အတိုင် /ʔə.TaiN²/ (from တိုင် /taiN²/ 'to measure') with purposive and similar (like, as) meanings respectively, may also function as relators, keeping some of their nominal properties (Wheatley 1982: 92, Bernot & al, 2001: 92).

   One final relator should be mentioned here: the 'induced creaky tone', the function of which clusters around genitive, dative and related subordination constructions. Formally, certain types of syllable shift to creaky tone (tone 1), indicating dependency of the constituent bearing the tonal shift. It is usually analysed as a relic or a reflex of an old genitive postposition (Thurgood 1981, Delancey, 1997: 62). See examples (31) and (78).

### 3.2.3 Classifier device

The Burmese Classifier (henceforth CLF) device is quite well known in the literature (Haas 1951, Burling 1965, Hla Pe 1965, Becker 1975, Goral 1978, Vittrant 2005a, Simpson 2005[43]). All of the surveys mentioned deal with various aspects of the Burmese Numeral CLF system, such as morpho-syntactic patterns, semantic features, pragmatic uses and lists of the classifiers— the most extensive list can be found in Burling's article.

- **Form and Nature**

According to Hla Pe (1965: 167-68), the use of CLF is attested in Burmese from the earliest records of the language, i.e. 12th-13th centuries. At that time these morphemes were not systematically used: they became more consistent later.

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**43** See Vittrant (2005: 131) for a more detailed survey of previous studies of Burmese classifiers.

Burmese numeral CLFs are divided into two semantic subcategories: classifiers and quantifiers, also called sortal and mensural classifiers[44]: sortal CLF individuate whatever they refer to in terms of the kind of entity that it is. In other words, they categorize referents in terms of their inherent characteristics, such as animacy, humanness, shape, social status or function. Repeater or 'unique' CLFs are a sub-class of sortal CLF (Hla Pe 1965: 166; Okell 1969: 213; Vittrant 2005: 134). Mensural CLFs, on the other hand, individuate in terms of quantity. They group objects in a unit of measure that can be understood as being countable. For instance, they occur in structures of measuring mass nouns or non-discrete physical entities, but also in the arrangement of units of countable nouns.

Some quantified sequences remain in need of explanation: units of time or dimension are commonly quantified without any apparent classifier. But a better examination of those sequences reveals that units of measure like dimensions and lengths of time (such as 'year' and 'time') in fact consistently appear to the right of the numeral (Num) in the CLF position, and not in the N- position which occurs to the left of Num in surface word order.

- **Syntax**

Languages of East and Southeast Asia fall into two large groups according to the structure of noun phrases involving classifiers. Jones (1970) noticed that word order within the NP follows an areal pattern. In the North, represented by Chinese, Vietnamese and Hmong[45], the head noun follows the numeral and the classifier ([NUM-CLF]-N). Whereas in the South, represented by Thai and Khmer, the head noun precedes the numeral-classifier group (N- [NUM-CLF]). Unsurprisingly, the Burmese NUMERAL CLF construction belongs to the second group.

Numbers and CLFs in a quantified NP commonly occur together as a single unit, a phonologically and syntactically *uninterrupted* sequence.

- **Function**

The basic function of a CLF is to encode a counting unit, when used with numerals. Thus, they are known as numeral classifiers. However, underlying quantification is the primary semantic function of *individuating* NPs, i.e. to conceive of NPs as discrete, individuated entities.

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**44** On the distinction between sortal and mensural classifiers, see Craig (1992: 279) and Aikhenvald (2000: 115–18).

**45** On classifier devices in these languages see also Bisang (1999: 118) and Simpson (2005).

CLF in many languages may be used beyond counting. Functional expansions of CLFs have been studied by Bisang (1999), Craig (1982), Grinevald (2000) inter al.

Burmese CLFs, beside their occurrence with numerals, appear in indefinite expressions (58), and anaphoric expressions, i.e. referentialization function (59). They are not, however, used with demonstratives, or to indicate singulative, specificity or definiteness of the noun as in Hmong (this volume, p. 624–27) or Vietnamese (this volume, p. 399–405).

Indefinite expressions such as 'someone' or 'something' are formed by reduplication of the CLF following the numeral 'one', whereas negative indefinite expressions ('none', 'no one', 'nothing') require also the numeral 'one' followed by respectively the appropriate CLF and the particle မှ /m̥a¹/ 'only' (Vittrant 2005: 136). See examples in (60).

(58) a. တအုပ်အုပ် ယူပါ ။
   ***tə-ʔoʔ-ʔoʔ***        *yu²*      *=Pa²*
   **one-CLF:book** (x2)   take   =POL
   'Take any (book).'

   b. တယောက်ယောက် ဖြေးနိုင်မလား ။
   ***tə-yaɔʔ-yaɔʔ***        *phye²*      *naiN²*      *=mə*      *la³*
   **one-CFL:hum** (x2)   answer   CAN   =IRR   QST
   'Could someone answer [this question]?'

(59) ကောင်မလေးက ငှက်ပျောသီးလေးလုံးထဲကနေ နှစ်လုံးကိုဖြတ်ပြီး ကောင်လေကို ပေးတယ် ။
   [AA/08, 66_011]
   *kaɔN²ma¹-le³*      *=Ka¹*      *ŋəpyɔ³θi³*      *le³-**louN³***      *thɛ³*      *=Ka¹-ne²*
   woman-DIM   =S/TOP   banana   4-**CLF:rond**   inside   =S.(FROM)

   *ŋə-**louN³***      *Ko²*   *phyaʔ*   *=Pyi³*      *kaɔN²-le³*      *=Ko²*   *pe³*   *=Tɛ²*
   2-**CLF:round**   =OBJ   cut   =SUB:TPS   man-DIM   =OBJ   give   =REAL
   'The young lady gave two bananas to the young man, after cutting them off the four.'

(60) တောင်းတာ တခုမမပေးဘူး ။
   *taɔN³*   *=Ta²*      ***tə-khu¹-m̥a¹***      *mə=*   *pe³*   *=Phu³*
   ask   =NMLZ.REAL   **one-clf:general-only**   NEG=   give   =NEG
   'He gives nothing of what has been asked.'

## 3.3 The verbal domain

This section is organized as follows: after a brief overview of the Burmese verb phrase structure, we examine the notional categories expressed in the verb complex[46], and try to distinguish between all the verbal morphemes that appear in the verb complex, before dealing with serial verb constructions.

### 3.3.1 Verb phrase structure

• **Minimal structure**

The Verb Phrase in Burmese minimally contains a verb and a *Verb Final Particle* (henceforth VFP), to which aspectual and modal morphemes and the like may be added. These modifiers are analyzed as *Verb Particles (VP)* or *Auxiliary verbs*. The former cannot be used as a head verb, although they are often from verbal origin. In the latter case, the morpheme conveying a grammatical notion may also appear as a head verb synchronically.

$(V_{AUX})$   **-V-**   (VP)      $(V_{AUX})$   (VP)      **- VFP**

(61)  … ဆက်မသင်နိုင်တော့ဘူး ။
     *shɛʔ*        *mə=*   **θiN²**      *naiN²*    *Tɔ¹*      *=Phu³*
     V_AUX:join   NEG=   **V_H: learn**   V_AUX:can   VP:ASP    =NEG
     '(I) cannot go on learning….'

The verb phrase may also include a NP_OBJ (see for instance the psycho-collocation expressions in § 2.2.1).

• **No inflection, no agreement, no tense marking**

SEA languages are mostly isolating, that is to say words do not vary according to grammatical roles, as these languages lack inflection.

Unsurprisingly, Burmese lacks verbal cross-referencing (agreement). It also lacks tense markers, and expressing number is optional (or only required under specific pragmatic conditions).

To sum up, apart from the status (REALIS, IRREALIS, etc. cf. table 12 below) expressed by the VFPs, no grammatical category is compulsory in the VP.

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**46** On 'verb complex', see footnote 50 or Vittrant (2010: 104).

Nevertheless, Burmese speakers may use optional particles and auxiliaries for aspectual, modal and causal specifications. See next section.

Notice, however, a vestigial inflection in the verbal domain that originates from a causative prefix in Proto-Tibeto-Burman (Maspero 1947). Burmese, like many other Tibeto-Burman languages (Vittrant 1998: 5–15), possesses over a hundred pairs of verbs that are semantically and formally related[47]. Each pair consists of a transitive (or causative) member and an intransitive (or stative) one. In most cases, the former has an aspirated (or voiceless) consonant whereas the latter has a plain (or voiced) one. Other pairs have deviations in tone as in (62)c.

This phenomenon, however, is no longer alive in Burmese.

(62) a. ဖွင့်    ပွင့်        b. ခြောက်    ကြောက်    c. ကော်    ကော့
     *phwiN¹*  *pwiN¹*        *chaɔʔ*    *caɔʔ*          *kɔ²*    *kɔ¹*
     'open'   'be opened'    'frighten'  'be afraid'    'lever up' 'curl up'

- **Verb Final Particles**

The *Verb-Final Particle* (VFP) is the only grammatical element required in a verbal predication. It is the final element in the verb phrase and it indicates the status of the event, that is to say whether the event is realized, unrealized, potential or refers to a new situation. Burmese has a set of 5 main[48] particles (Vittrant 2005: 158) of which the REALIS တယ် /Tɛ²/ (with its allomorphs) is the most used. The lack of a VFP in a verbal predicate stands for injunction when it occurs with an active verb in main clause. This is summarized in table 10.

The allomorphs of the VFP are used under specific syntactic and grammatical conditions: in complement clause, headless relative clause, sentential nominalization, expressive sentences (တာ /Ta²/, / မှာ Ma²/) and relative clauses (တဲ့ /Tɛ¹/, မဲ့ /Mɛ¹/) (Vittrant 2001, Simpson 2008).

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**47** Exhaustive lists of 'simplex-causative' pairs of verbs in Burmese may be found in Okell (1969: 205ff) and Vittrant (1998: 113ff).

**48** Apart from these 5 main VFP, a few other miscellaneous particles or idiomatic expressions could be added, such as ရဲ့/yɛ¹/, ကဲ့ /kɛ¹/ (considered here as allomorphs of the REALIS VFP) or ရော/yɔ³/ (statement + speaker's point of view), သလိုလိုဘဲ /θəloʔloʔbɛ³/ (speaker doubt) (Vittrant, 2004: 360, 374).

**Table 12:** Verb Final Particles

| Burmese form (and allomorphs) | | | Prototypical Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| တယ် $\left(\text{တာ} - \text{ရဲ့} - \text{သ}\right)$ | Tɛ² - (Ta², yɛ¹...) | REAL | Realis (past event, present event, realized event, habitual event ...) |
| မယ် (မှာ – မ) | Mɛ² - (Ma², ...) | IRR | Irrealis (potential event, future event, unrealized or hypothetical event ...) |
| ပြီး | Pyi² | CRS | Current Relevant State or New Situation (realized event) |
| မ ... ဘူး | mə ... Phu³ | NEG | Negation of realized and non-realized event |
| မ ... နဲ့ | mə ... nɛ¹ | INJ | Negative injunction (prohibitive) |
| – | Ø | IMP | Imperative (order) |

## 3.3.2 Verbal Categories

Previous descriptions of Burmese verb phrase (Allott 1965; Okell 1969; Bernot 1980; Wheatley 1982 and Vittrant 2005) show great variations in the definition of grammatical verbal morphemes, in particular the optional ones. The number and the functions of these morphemes vary depending on the criteria used by the author for the analysis. For instance, the classification given by Okell & Allott (2001) based on semantic criteria, leads to a list of 60 verbal morphemes, whereas the Bernot (1980) and Wheatley (1982) classifications, which are based on phonological, syntactic and semantic criteria, distinguish between "auxiliaries" and "verbal particles", although they do not list exactly the same morphemes.

So-called auxiliaries and optional verbal particles express mainly aspectual and modal notions (Vittrant 2005)[49]. Most of them are postponed to the main verb, but pre-verbal auxiliaries exist (cf. (61) or appendix 2/n°35). However, the status of auxiliary — roughly defined as a subordinated verb or a grammatical element of verbal origin — of these preverbal elements is questionable. They belong to an open class and above all, they have not undergone a change of meaning from lexical to grammatical. Thus they may be simply seen as the first element of a 'verb complex', that is to say a combination of bare verbs that

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**49** Whereas Vittrant (2005) lists all these verbal morphemes with their main grammatical meanings, the following papers are dedicated to particular verbal morphemes: see for instance Myint Soe (1994), Romeo (2009) on grammaticalization of motion verbs, Jenny (2009), van Auwera & al (2009) and Vittrant & Auwera (2010) on modal morphemes, Allott Romeo (2009), Vittrant (2013) on aspectual morphemes, Okano (2005) on 'give'.

functions as a morpho-syntactical unit[50], a kind of Serial Verb Construction (see next section).

- **Verbal particles**

The term "verbal particle" is here used to refer to bound morphemes that convey grammatical information. Often originating from verbs, they never occur as main verbs synchronically. Vittrant (2005: 154) lists around twenty items, some of which are rare or literary. The plural morpheme က /Ca¹/ (50), the aspectual marker တော့ /Tɔ¹/ 'imminence', the spatio-temporal particle ခဲ့ /khɛ¹/ (Vittrant 2013), the modal particles ချင် /ChiN²/ 'desire' (57)a or လိမ့် /leiN¹/ 'probability' are common (optional) Verbal Particles.

- **Auxiliaries**

Auxiliaries, that is to say verbs that have undergone a semantic change and are used as modifiers of another verb, are numerous in Burmese. Following universal grammaticalization clines (Heine, 1993), non-specific motion verbs ('go', 'come', 'come back', 'follow') have been grammaticalized to several degrees, becoming aspectual markers (Romeo, 2008). Other common grammaticalizations include the change of နေ /ne²/ 'to stay, to dwell' and ပေး /pe³/ 'to give' toward respectively an aspect marker (progressive or stative), and an applicative or benefactive marker.

Less prototypical and universal verb changes (Heine & Kuteva, 2002) are also found in Burmese. For instance, the verb ထား /tha³/ 'to put' used with an active verb conveys a RESULTATIVE meaning, a grammaticalization path found with similar aspectual meanings in other Tibeto-Burman languages (Lahu, Lalo, Akka, Thangkul, Karen, Kachin, Tibetan, Newar, Kham).

Notice also the 'temptative' value conveyed by the verb ကြည့် /ci¹/ meaning 'to look at', a grammaticalization labelled under different terms, such as 'connative', 'experimentative' (Vittrant 2004: 208), and often translated by 'try/test V' (Voinov, 2013).

(63) ဒိန်ခဲကိုခဏခဏ နမ်းကြည့်ပါ ။

| *deiN²gɛ³* | *=Ko²* | *khəna¹ khəna¹* | *naN³* | ***ci¹*** | *=Pa²* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| cheese | =OBJ | often | smell | **look >TRY** | =POL |

'Smell the cheese often, [so you know when it gets old].'

---

**50** The *complex verb* notion is first found in Hagège (1975) and his study of Chinese prepositions that originate from verbs. It must be distinguished from a compound verb (idiomatic expression) and from a 'complex predicate' that contains verbs with different status, i.e. head verb plus dependent verbs.

Unlike other MSEA languages and likely related to its syntactic type (SOV language, modifier-head), Burmese uses mainly the post-verbal position for auxiliary verbs.

The pre-verbal position is not very common, which may be partly due to language contact (cf. Mon 'to give', preV: permissive, 'postV: benefactive, p. 297.

**Table 13:** Common Verb grammaticalizations in Burmese (from Vittrant 2005: 150 ff)

| Verb form | | Lexical meaning | Grammaticalized meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| သွား | /θwa³/ | go | PstV: (1) directional/deixis (away from DC); (2) aspect (accomplishment, perfective, instantaneous change of state) (3) detrimental |
| လာ | /la²/ | come | PstV: (1) directional/deixis (toward DC); (2) aspect (inchoative, leading to a change of state) (3) laudative |
| လိုက် | /laiʔ/ | follow | PstV: (1) aspect (accomplishment, action undertaken precipitately) (2) exclamation (with the REALIS VFP) PreV: (3) sequential or distributive action |
| နေ | /ne²/ | to stay, to dwell | PstV: aspect (unaccomplished: progressive or stative) |
| ပြန် | /pyaN²/ | to come back | PstV: simple iteration PreV: reverse action or iteration |
| ပေး | /pe³/ | to give | PstV: applicative (benefactive) PreV: modal (permissive) |
| ရ | /ya¹/ | to get, to obtain | PstV: modal (deontic, possibility) |
| ကြည့် | /ci¹/ | to watch, to look | PstV: attemptive |
| ထား | /tha³/ | to put | PstV: resultative aspect |
| ပစ် | /pyiʔ/ | to throw (away) | PstV: completive aspect |
| ပြီး | /pyi³/ | to finish | PstV: (1) aspect (accomplishment, perfective) (2) sequential subordinator: 'after P' ***With modification in the form/ tone:*** (3) CRS (current relevant state), new situation |

Some verbs have been completely grammaticalized while others have not undergone a complete change, retaining some of their lexical meaning and verbal properties (cf. ထား /tha³/ 'to put', ပြန် /pyaN²/ 'to come back') as shown by syntactic tests such as negation.

### 3.3.3 Serial verb constructions

Burmese verbal predicates exhibit strings of verbs that (i) are not separated by a connector, (ii) share the same grammatical information and sometimes the same arguments, and (iii) describe a single event. These sequences are known as Serial Verb Constructions and are regularly found in SEA languages, as noticed by Matisoff (1983), (1991), DeLancey (1991), Clark (1989), (1992) and Bisang (1996). The phenomenon, which has been described extensively in Burmese by Vittrant (2006, 2012)[51] is illustrated by examples (64) to (66). Notice that, while the verb strings are identical on the surface, their underlying structures differ: consecutive or simultaneous actions in (64), characterization of an event in (65), adding grammatical information in (66). Thus SVC is far from being a uniform phenomenon, and most authors, after agreeing on a core set of properties, propose sub-types of SVC. Two types of SVC are generally distinguished, labeled respectively 'Symmetrical SVC class' (co-ranking predicates) and 'Asymmetrical SVC class' (implying a head-modifier hierarchy). See Bril (2004), Aikhenvald and Dixon (2006) for details.

Examples (64) and (65) illustrate a Symmetrical SVC in Burmese, whereas (66) and (67) illustrate an asymmetrical one.

(64) ခြင်္သေ့ဟာ သိုးကလေးကို ကိုက်စားလိုက်တယ် ။
$chiN^2\theta e^1$=$ha^2$   $\theta o^3 K\partial le^3$=$Ko^2$   **kai?**   **$sa^3$**   $lai?$   =$T\varepsilon^2$
lion = TOP      lamb = OBJ      **V1:bite**   **V2:eat**   TERM   = REAL
'The lion devoured the lamb.'

(65) စလေမှာ ဘုန်းကြီးရှင်းပြတဲ့လိပ် ၊ ...
$sa^1le^2$ = $Ma^2$   $phouN^3Ci^3$   **$\int iN^3$**   **$pya^1$**   =$T\varepsilon^1$   $lei?$ ...
Sale   = LOC   monk   **V1:clear**   **V2:show**   = REL.R.   turtle
'... the turtle about which the monk, in Sale, tells [the story]...'

*lit.   ... the turtle to which the monk shows clearly [the story]....*

(66) ဝင်းဝင်းမော်က ကျမကို ထူးဆန်းတဲ့နေရာရွတာကို လိုက်ပို့ပေးတယ်။
$wiN^3 wiN^3 mɔ^2$   =$\underline{Ka}^1$   $c\partial ma^1$   =$\underline{Ko}^2$   $thu^3 ShaN^3$   =$T\varepsilon^1$   $ne^2 ya^2$   =$Twe^2$   =$\underline{Ko}^2$
Win Win Maw   =S   1SG   =DAT   be strange   =REL:R   place   =PLUR   =DIR

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**51** On SVC containing motion verbs in Burmese, see Vittrant 2015.

*lai?*       **po¹**       **pe³**       =*Tɛ²*
**[V1:follow V2:send off] V3:give/BENEF**    =REAL
'Win Win Maw, she took me to strange places.'

Finally, diachronic studies of verb serialization show a tendency for verbs to shift from isolation (serial verbs) to boundness. To put it in other words, serial verbs tend to lexicalize or to grammaticalize, with common cross-linguistic changes, leading synchronically to different types of serial verb constructions corresponding to different stages of the process.

## 3.4 Sentence organization

### 3.4.1 General facts

Although basic word order for SEA languages is (S)VO, Burmese, like the majority of Tibeto-Burman languages, is an SOV or verb final language. However, sentences are often reduced to OV or simply V, with the referents of the SoA not being represented by referential expressions or agreement. Zero referential form or zero anaphora is particularly typical of East and Southeast Asia languages, where referential choice is cognitively determined, and relies on the notion of topic continuity or accessibility of the referents (Lambrecht 1994). To put it in other words, a focally attended referent in clause *n*, stays the topic (or theme) in clause *n+1*. As such, it does not need to be expressed. Moreover, some referents, such as the ones present in the speech situation or animate referents, are easily accessible, and so are often not represented by referential expressions.

Sentence (67) illustrates the absence of referential expressions: the arguments of the V are omitted, recoverable from the context.

(67) ပြင်ပေးလိုက်မယ်။
     *pyiN²*     *pe³*        *lai?*         =*mɛ²*
     repair    give/BENEF    follow/TERM    =IRR
     '[I] will repair [it] for [you].'

Beside uncluttered verbal clauses, Burmese makes great use of nominal clauses of the form NP₁- NP₂, where no copular verb is expressed, as in (68). See also (79)a and (84).

(68) a.  မဆလာက မှုံ့�’�’ ။                b.  အလုပ်သမား သူ ။
        *mashəla²*        *=Ka¹ m̥ouN¹*   *(bɛ³)*     *ʔə-loʔ-θəma³*     *θu²*
        [curry masala]ₙₚ =TOP [POWDER]ₙₚ DM:excl    NMLZ-work-NMLZ   3SG
        'Masala, [it is] a powder.'                    'The worker, [it is] him.'

### 3.4.2 Clause types

Independent (verbal) clauses are characterized by the use of a VFP, whereas in dependent clauses VFPs have been replaced by a subordinating marker or a VFP reduced form marked for dependency, as in a relative clause.

- **Citation**

A citation is an independent or finite clause embedded in a matrix clause containing a *dicendi* verb and optionally closed off by a quotative particle, generally လို့ /lo¹/[52], that appears after the VFP. However, reported speech may be indicated by an evidential marker, the discourse particle တဲ့ /Tɛ¹/ (or ဆို /sho²/) appearing after the VFP as in (70).

(69) မနေ့က တို့သူငယ်ချင်းလာတယ်လို့ (သူက)ပြောတယ် ။
    *məneʰKa¹ To¹*     *θəŋɛ²ChiN³ la²*     *=Tɛ²* **lo¹**   *(θu² =Ka¹) pyɔ³ =Tɛ²*
    yesterday 1SG.COLL friend     come  =REAL **QUOT**   (3SG =S.) say  =REAL
    'He says that his friends came yesterday.'
or    He says: "My friends came yesterday."

(70) အမ မသွားနိုင်ဘူး ၊ မသွားနဲ့တဲ့။                     [A4/38]
    *ʔəma¹*      *mə= θwa³ naiN² =Phu³ mə= θwa³ =nɛ¹*   **Tɛ¹**
    older sister  NEG= go  can  =NEG  NEG= go  =INJ.NEG  **QUOT**
    'You (sister) cannot go (there). Don't go there, they said.'

- **Coordination and subordination**

Burmese, as a typically WITH-language[53] (Stassen 2000), does not have any dedicated coordinating marker either at the phrasal level or at the clausal level.

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**52** The other citation particles are *dicendi* verbs such as ဆို /sho²/ 'tell, say' in colloquial Burmese or ဟု /hu¹/ a verb meaning 'say' in literary Burmese.
**53** WITH-languages take the comitative encoding to express either 'John and Mary left' vs. 'John left with Mary', although they tend to differentiate the comitative and coordinate strategies by changing one or more features, i.e. 'doubling' the comitative marker in coordination (Stassen 2000).

Connecting nominal phrases[54] is done by the comitative marker နဲ့ /nɛ¹/. At the clausal level, on the other hand, conjunction may be realized by juxtaposition of independent and finite clauses, the only indication of the link being the intonation, and sometimes the use of the discourse marker လဲ /lɛ³/ 'also'. Clauses may also be linked by weakly subordinating particles such as the 'conjunctive' marker ပြီး /pyi³/, or the simultaneous marker ယင်း /yiN³/. In the following examples, the first constituent of both sentences is a subordinated clause ending with a Clause Final particle (cf. § 3.1.2) and followed by the matrix clause.

(71)  a.  ရေချိူးရင်း သီချင်းဆိုတယ် ။

| *ye²-cho³* | ***yiN³*** | *θi²chiN³* | *sho²* | *=Tɛ²* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| water-wash | **SUB** | song | say | =REAL |

'(She) bathes and sings.'

or  '(She) sings while bathing.'

b.  ပြုံးပြီး နားထောင်နေတယ် ။

| *pyouN³* | ***Pyi³*** | *na³-thaɔN²* | *ne²* | *=Tɛ²* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| smile | **SUB** | listen | INACC | =REAL |

'(He) was smiling and listening.'

or  '(He) was smiling while listening.'

- **Complement clauses**

Complement clauses are embedded as arguments of the matrix clause through the use of a VFP displaying a dependant form similar in function to nominalizers, or through the replacement of the VFP with an appropriate member of the nominalizing nouns set (cf. § 3.1.2, example (55)). In the former case, the clauses may be considered as nominalized clauses although keeping the grammatical information that anchors the process (i.e. TAM, status), a phenomenon common in the area (DeLancey, 2011). See also Sawada (1994) and his review of complement clause types in Burmese.

(72)  မတို့လုပ်တာကို ပြောခိုင်းတာလေ ။                    [A5/14]

| *ma¹-To¹* | | *lo?* | *=Ta²* | *=Ko²* | *pyɔ³* | *khaiN²* | *=Ta²* | *le²* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| older.sister-COLL | | work | =NMLZ.REAL | =OBJ | say | order | =REAL.NF | DM |

'She asked us (sister & co) to say what we have done.'

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54  It is also possible to connect two noun phrases A and B using the structures A-ရော B-ရော /A-yɔ³ B-yɔ³/ or A- ရော B- ပါ /A-yɔ³ B-pa²/.

- **Relative clauses**

Unsurprisingly, relative clauses precede the modified noun and are closed off by a VFP marked for dependency by the induced creaky tone 1 (Allott 1967). The induced creaky tone may indicate dependency in other situations, being similar in function to the genitive marker ရဲ့/yɛ¹/. Thus, the morphemes glossed 'relative marker' also carry information on the status (realis, irrealis) of the process expressed in the relative clause.

(73) ကျမ မပိုင်တဲ့အိမ်ဖြစ်လို့ မရောင်းနိုင်ဘူး ။

| *cəma¹* | *mə=* | *paiN²* | *=Tɛ¹* | *ʔeiN²* | *phyiʔ* | *lo¹* | *mə=* | *yaɔN³* | *naiN²* | *=Phu³* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1SG | NEG= | possess | =REL.R | house | be | SUB | NEG= | sell | CAN | =NEG |

'I cannot sell this house because it is a house **that does** not belong to me.'

(74) အိမ်ဝယ်မဲ့လူ ရှိတယ် ။

| *ʔeiN²* | *wɛ²* | *=mɛ¹* | *lu²* | *ʃi¹* | *=Tɛ²* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| house | buy | =REL.IRR | (hu)man | have, be | =REAL |

'There is someone **who could** buy the house.'

### 3.4.3 Sentence types and Nominalization

- **Interrogative and exclamative sentences**

Burmese distinguishes polar questions and wh-questions. The former are formed by the addition of a question marker, i.e. the Sentence Particle လား /la³/ after the VFP – which might be reduced or omitted in realis context (cf. (35)) – see examples (50) and (58).

Content questions, on the other hand, contain beside the (final) Sentence Particle လဲ /lɛ³/, an indefinite phrase indicating the element to be supplied. The indefinite phrase consists of the Wh-morpheme ဘယ်–�‌ဘာ /bɛ² ~ba²/ in combination with a postposition, a classifier or other element such as a noun.

(75) ဘယ်လမ်းက သွားရမလဲ ။

| ***bɛ²-laN³*** | *=Ka¹* | *θwa³* | *ya¹* | *=mə* | ***lɛ³*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **QST.INDEF-road** | =S | go | GET | =IRR | **QST** |

'Which road should we take?'

(76) ဒီမှာ အလုပ်လုပ်တာ ဘယ်လောက်ကြာပြီလဲ ။                    [B4/51]

| *di²-m̥a²* | *ʔə-lo̞ʔ* | *lo̞ʔ* | *=Ta²* | ***bɛ²*** | *- laɔʔ* | *ca³* | *=Pyi²* | ***lɛ³*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| here | NMLZ-work | work | =NMLZ.REAL | **QST.INDEF.** | -amount | last | =CRS | **QST** |

'How long have you been working here?'
lit.   'The fact you are working here, how long has it lasted?'

Exclamative sentences express the speaker's attitude towards a certain state of affairs that is not in accordance with his expectations. Unlike declarative sentences that supply information, exclamatives have a propositional content assumed by the speaker to be true (Potsdam, 2011). Formally, Burmese exclamative sentences are typically associated with a syntactically-determined clause-type, i.e. nominalized clauses, and are often marked by discourse markers (see also next section on Pragmatics). However, other syntactic means exist such as the collocation of the verb လိုက် /laiʔ/ 'to follow' and the reduced form of realis VFP as in (77).

(77) နေရာလေးက ကောင်းလိုက်တာ ॥
    *ne²ya²-le³*    *=Ka¹*   *kaɔN³*   *laiʔ-Ta²*
    place-DIM   =TOP   good   follow-REAL.EXCL
    'What a nice (little) place!'

- **Nominalization**

Nominalization in Burmese applies at two different levels of the grammar, both lexical and clausal levels as regularly observed in Asian languages.

–   At lexical level, nouns are derived by the addition of an affix, usually a suffixe. For instance, သူ /θu²/ — also functioning as the third person pronoun— သည် /θɛ³/ and သမ /θəma¹/ are agentive nominalizers (see respectively examples (78), (45), (68)). Burmese however also possesses a derivational and very productive prefix အ /ʔə-/, inherited from Proto-Tibeto-Burman (Maspero, 1947: 155–56, 167–68), (Matisoff, 2003: 104ff, 112), which can combine with nouns (40), (49), (50), class terms (27) or verb roots (45), (56), (76).

(78) သူ့သားဖြစ်ဟန်တူတဲ့သူ၊
    *θu⁽²⁾⁽¹⁾*     *θa³*   *pyiʔ*   *haN²*   *tu²*     ***-θu²***
    3SG.GEN   son   be   attitude   look.like   -**AGENT**
    'A person who appears to be her son.' (Okell & Allott, 2001: 238)

–   At clausal or sentence level (Simpson 2008), the nominalizer has scope over the entire clause and may exhibit verbal features, encoding for instance TAM or status. The resulting nominalized-event has the same morphosyntactic characteristics as non-derived nouns, i.e. followed by adpositions/relators (see (53) and (72)).

In this second class of nominalizers, subtypes must be distinguished between (i) morphemes that bear some verbal features (REALIS/IRREALIS) as in (79) and (ii) those that simply nominalize actions.

The former are allomorphs of VFP (cf. § 3.3.1), whereas the latter are dedicated morphemes or may be generic nouns (or nominal roots) such as 'business', 'sound', 'place' as in example (80) a & b (Vittrant 2002: 343ff)[55].

(79) သူရန်ကုန်မှာ၀ယ်မှာက စာအုပ်နဲ့ ခဲတံပါ ။
   *θu² Yan²gon² =Ma² wɛ² =Ma²     =Ka¹ sa²ʔoʔ   =nɛ¹ khɛ³daN² =Pa²*
   3SG Yangon =LOC buy =NMLZ.IRR =TOP book(s) =with pencil(s) =POL
   'What he is going to buy in Yangon is book(s) and pencil(s).'

(80) a.   ဒီအသံက စိတ်တိုစရာကောင်းတယ် ။
      *di²  ʔə-θaN²          =Ka¹ seiʔ.to²    -Səya²      kaɔN³ =Tɛ²*
      DEM noise (NMLZ-sound) =TOP mind.short NMLZ.'able' good  =REAL
      'This noise is irritating.'
   lit. 'This noise, it is good at making one feel 'short-tempered.'

   b.   ကပျာကယာလုပ်ပုံရတယ်။
      *Kə Pya² Kə ya²    loʔ   pouN²        ya¹      =Tɛ²*
      hurriedly      work NMLZ.IMAGE obtain =REAL
      'It seems that (they) they work hurriedly.'

### 3.4.4 Information Structure

Information structure is understood here as the *packaging* of information that meets the immediate communicative needs of the participants of the discourse situation (Krifka 2006).

Some languages indicate preferentially the informative status of the constituents in terms of background, new, presupposed or alternative information. Their clause structure is based on pragmatic relations, organized according to the communicative goal rather than grammaticalizing semantic roles. These languages are known as 'topic-prominent' rather than 'subject-prominent', or pragmatic languages rather than syntactic languages (Huang 2000). Burmese, like many other SEA languages makes great use of grammatical devices for focusing, defocusing, or topicalizing (see § 3.2.2 on relators).

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**55** See also Bernot & al (2001: 134,135, 146), Wheatley (1982: 280ff).

- **Topic and topicalization**

Sentences are generally structured in two parts, the topic and the comment. The topic roughly corresponds to the information mutually shared by the discourse participants. As such, the topic constituent may be omitted, a situation often encountered in Burmese. Zero marking guarantees that the referent intended is maximally salient in the immediate Common Ground, that is to say the most accessible one (given the speech situation, background knowledge).

If not omitted, the topic constituent may be marked as the protagonist of the discourse either by syntactic particles, dedicated expressions or simply by being fronted as in (81).

In (22) for instance, the particle က /Ka¹/ marks the single referential expression of the clause as the topic, either in the first subordinated clause or the matrix. See also (50), (51)b, (68)a, (77), which contain a nominal phrase marked as the discourse topic by က / Ka¹/.

Sentences (82) and (81) exhibit another way of indicating a constituent as the topic. Using a topicalizing expression of the form < X say-(if )> , i.e. ဆို(ရင်) /... sho² (yiN²)/ equivalent in meaning to "about X", reinforces the status of a referent as the topic or given information. Similarity between topicalization and conditional structures has already been noticed cross-linguistically (Haiman, 1978).

(81) အလုပ်မစသေးတာက အလုပ်ခေါင်း မလာသေးလို့ ။

*Ɂə-loɁ mə= sa¹ θe³ =Ta²*      *=Ka¹ Ɂə-loɁ- KhaɔN³ mə= la² θe³*
[work NEG=start YET NMZL.REAL]$_{TOP}$ =TOP NMZL-work-head NEG= come yet

*=lo¹*
SUB.cause

'The fact that we haven't yet started work, it is because the foreman hasn't come yet.'

(82) လိပ်စာအရဆိုရင် ဒီခြံနဲ့ ဒီတိုက်ဘဲ ။

*lei?sa²*    *Ɂə-ya¹*    *sho²*   *yiN²*   *di²*    *chaN²*    *=nɛ¹*   *di²*
[address    about]$_{NP}$   say   if[TOP]   [DEM   garden   =with   DEM

*tai?*            *bɛ³*
construction]$_{NP}$   DM:excl

'(According to) the address, [it is] this ground and this building!'

lit.   'If (we) speak (according to) the address, this ground with this building!'

(83) အဲဒီမိန်းမကြီး ကျမအတွက်စိုးရိမ်တယ်။ အဲဒါဆိုတော့ သူတို့လိုက်ပို့ပေးတယ် ၊ တောင်ပေါ်မှာ ။

*Ɂɛ³- di²*      *meiN³ma²-Ci³*   *=Twe²*   *cəma¹*   *Ɂə-Twɛ?*   *so³yeiN²*   *=Tɛ²*
ANAPH-DEM   woman-adult    =PLUR   1SG     FOR       worry      =REAL

$[ʔɛ^3\text{-} da^2 \qquad sho^2 \quad =Tɔ^1]_{TOP}$    $θu^2\text{-}To^1$   $laiʔ\text{-}po^1$    $pɒ̰^3$    $=Tɛ^2$
ANAPH-DEM.thing say   CONTRAST   3-COLL   accompany   BENEF   =REAL

$taɔN^3$    $Pɔ^1$    $=Ma$
montain   top    =LOC

'These mature women were worried about me. And so [saying that], they accompanied [me]. On the mountain.'

- **Focus and focalization**

The classical pragmatic use of focus is to highlight a constituent, a clause (81) or a sentence.

When focusing a constituent, the speaker indicates that in a set of alternative propositions, he picks out one of them, either to correct or confirm information, or to highlight parallel propositions.

Subtypes of focus are usually distinguished, such as (i) sentence focus, (ii) predicate (or 'broad') focus and (iii) argument (or 'narrow') focus (Lambrecht, 1994). Burmese differs in the way it marks these foci. The third type is often marked by a cleft construction[56] as shown by sentence (b) in (84). Predicate focus, on the other hand, refers generally to sentences with a topic-comment structure, the focus corresponding to the comment.

(84) a. ဒီခွေး ကျမကို ကိုက်တယ် ။
     $di^2$    $khwe^3$   $cəma^1$    $=Ko^2$   $kaiʔ$    $=Tɛ^2$
     DEM   dog    1SG.FEM   =OBJ   bite    =REAL
     'This dog bit(e) me.'

    b. ကျမကို ကိုက်တာ ဒီခွေး�’ ။
     $[cəma^1$    $=Ko^2$   $kaiʔ$    $=Ta^2]$     $[di^2$    $khwe^3]_{FOC}$   $bɛ^3$
     1SG.FEM   =OBJ   bite    =NMLZ.REAL   **DEM**   **dog**    DM:EXCL
     'It's THIS DOG who bit me !'

(85) အခုအလုပ်လုပ်တာက ပဲခူးမှာ ။
     $ʔəkhu^1$   $ʔə\text{-}loʔ$   $loʔ$      $=Ta^2$     $[Pəgu^3$   $=Ma^2]_{FOC}$
     now    work   (to) work   =NMLZ.REAL   **Pegu**    **=LOC**
     'Now, I work IN PEGU. [It is IN PEGU that I work now].'

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**56** On cleft (and pseudo-cleft) constructions in Burmese, see Wheatley (1982: 172ff), Sawada (1994b) and Vittrant (2002).

As noticed in other verb final languages (Simpson and Watkins, 2005:43), pre-verbal position is preferred for the focused constituent, regardless of its syntactic function or semantic role.

The particles meaning 'only, also and 'even' should be mentioned here: they are commonly associated with focus as they generally refer to the notion of alternatives, central in focus.

**Table 14:** Some pragmatic particles associated with information structure

| Burmese | | Meaning | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|
| ဘဲ(ပဲ) | bɛ³ | 1. just, only – even, very (argument marker) | Okell & Allott (2001: 121–22) |
| | | [2. *really, indeed (sentence final marker)*] | |
| လည်း | lɛ³ | 1. also, as well, too, in addition, both/neither XP$_1$ and/nor XP$^2$ | Okell & Allott (2001: 217–18) |
| | | [2. *content question (sentence final marker)*] | |
| တောင် | taɔN² | even, as much as | Okell & Allott (2001: 81) |

# 4 Semantics and pragmatics

## 4.1 Common semantic domains

As mentioned by Matisoff (1983: 79) on the subject of areal features of SEA languages, there is another domain that needs to be investigated, namely comparative semantics, given that these languages seem to share basically similar conceptual frameworks concerning man and nature.

### 4.1.1 Food terminology

Rice, first cultivated 2000 years ago in Southeast Asia (Bernot, 2000: 106), is intimately related to the Burmese (and Southeast Asian in general) way of living. It is the staple crop in Burmese agriculture, produced in large quantities — thanks to the monsoon rains —, and also the staple food[57] of the Burmese peo-ple. The central position of rice in Burmese culture is evident in the language.

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[57] Before World War II, Burma was one of the biggest rice exporters, producing more rice than needed to feed the Burmese people, although a Burmese consumer eats up to 300 kg per year. Compare with the European consumer who eats around 3 kg of rice per year (Bernot, 2000: 101).

Like Hmong (cf. Mong Leng, p. 638), the Burmese lexicon is rich in expressions for talking about rice and its transformations, with different terms according to the stage in the crop's production. It is also the default object of the verb စား /sa³/ meaning 'to eat' (cf. Mon, p. 286).

**Table 15:** Burmese Rice terms
*Adapted from L. Bernot (2000: 103), and Myanmar English Dictionary (1993)*

| English | *French* | Burmese | |
|---------|----------|---------|--|
| rice plant seedling | *plant de riz à repiquer* | ပျိုး | pyo³ |
| paddy, rice in the field | *riz sur pied* | စပါး | zəba³ |
| unhusked rice, paddy | *grain vêtu* | ကောက် | kaɔʔ |
| husked rice (grain with husks removed) | *riz blanchi* | ဆန် | shaN² |
| cooked rice | *riz cuit* | ထမင်း | thəmiN³ |

- **Carrying in Burmese**

SEA languages tend to show fine lexical distinctions in certain particular semantic domains such as carrying. In Burmese, carrying lexemes specify the part of the body involved in the action of carrying (hand, shoulder, back, arm(s), etc...)

**Table 16:** Burmese expressions for carrying

| English | Burmese | |
|---------|---------|--|
| carry with the hand, carry off | ဆွဲ | shwɛ³ |
| carry on the shoulder or on the back | ထမ်း | thaN³ |
| carry on one's head (or with a headband) | ရွက် | ywɛʔ |
| carry something slung across one's shoulder | သိုင်း | θaiN³ |
| carry hanging from the shoulder | လွယ် | lwɛ² |
| carry on the back | ပိုး | po³ |
| carry over there, transport | သယ် | θɛ² |

## 4.2  Pragmatics & discourse

### 4.2.1  Pragmatic particles

Discourse particles provide instructions for understanding the referential message in the speech context. They anchor the clauses in the discourse by expressing notions such as surprise, certainty, doubt, ask for confirmation (question tag) as shown by example (86).

Syntactically, these particles may occur in different positions: (1) at the end of the sentence, or (2) linked to a constituent in order to bring it out and signal it as important in the discourse situation.

- **Sentence-final particles**

Burmese, as other SEA languages, has a sentence-final particle device as a basic mean of distinguishing illocutionary force (requesting, questioning, persuading, advising, reminding, instructing...) (cf. § 3.4.3), but also for expressing 'propositional attitudes', emotions of the speaker (surprise, doubt, impatience, reluctance, hesitation, ...) in face-to-face interactions.

Example (86) is adapted from Hnin Tun (2006: 40); the request has different values depending on the sentence final-particle used.

(86) a. ဒီကိုလာနော် ॥          Come (here), OK?
      *di²=Ko²    la²    **nɔ²***    *soften the request; solicit the addressee agreement*
                                *[> from a nurse to old people, from an adult to a kid]*

   b. ဒီကိုလာလေ ॥          Please, come! (or Come along!)
      *di²=Ko²    la²    **le²***    *soften the order while giving a feeling of being impatient*
                                *[> intimate friendly conversation]*

   c. ဒီကိုလာကွာ॥          Come (here)! (or Come on, won't you?')
      *di²=Ko²    la²    **Kwa²***    *compelling attention, informal request*
                                *[> to inferior or equal]*

   d. ဒီကိုလာစမ်း॥          Please come (here)! (or Get over here!)
      *di²=Ko    la²    **SaN³***    *peremptory request, conveys urgency, abrupt command*
                                *[> to inferior person]*

   e. ဒီကိုလာဆို ॥          Come (here) (I already called you, so please do come!)

      *di²=Ko²    la²    **sho²***    *Reiterating a request, impatiently.*
      DEM=DIR   come   **DM**

Some of these sentence-final particles may be combined and co-occur together at the end of a sentence in a relatively restricted order, leading to some expressive combinations.

(87) ညစာ မစားရဘူးဆိုတော့ သိပ်ဆာမှာပေါ့နော် ॥    [adapted from Bernot & Pasquet (1991)]
     *ɲa¹Sa²    mə=    sa³    ya²    =Phu³    sho²=Tɔ¹*
     dinner   NEG=   eat    CAN    =NEG     say =TOP

| *θeiʔ* | *sha²* | *=Ma²* | ***Pɔ¹*** | ***nɔ²*** |
|--------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| very | hungry | =NMZL.IRR | **DM:**emph | **DM:**soften+approval |

'Well, if (we) cannot eat dinner, we will be starving, won't we!?'

- **Other pragmatic particles**

Other pragmatic particles in Burmese help to interpret correctly the propositional content of a discourse. They occur in various syntactic positions, following the constituent they highlight. Their functions are merely similar: bringing out a constituent (ကို /ko²/ in (57), တော့ /Tɔ¹/ in (47) and (81)) either for reference maintenance in discourse, anaphora (လဲ /lɛ³/ in (39), (51)) or signaling alternative referents (ဘဲ /bɛ³/ in (37), (43), (57), (68) and (82)).

## 4.2.2 Politeness and honorifics

Languages spoken by large and hierarchical communities usually have devices to indicate respect for the addressee and/or for the referent, that is to say, politeness and honorifics devices. Burmese systems are not highly developed compared to Japanese or Korean ones. Apart from a good set of sentence-final particles that help to soften requests and orders (cf. previous section), Burmese expresses politeness through the use of the particle ပါ /Pa²/, that may appear either in verbal and nominal sentences. See examples (32), (38)b, (57), (58), (63), and (80).

As for expressing deference toward the referent, Burmese, like the languages of other Buddhist communities, has special lexicon to refer to monks, lords and kings. Here again, Burmese device is not as developed as Tibetan.

Deference may also be seen in the pronoun set, which contains honorific and self-humbling forms (cf. § 3.1.2, table 7, p. 84).

# 5 Summary

Although spoken on the border of the Mainland Southeast Asian area, Burmese shares most of the prototypical features of a Southeast Asian language, the main deviation being word order.

With its complex tones, its vowel system with four levels of aperture and the presence of sesquisyllabic structures, Burmese phonology conforms to what is expected for a SEA language. As for morphology, Burmese is less isolating than

its neighbors, with a few affixes besides a great use of compounding. It has, however, developed a rich classifier system, and makes use of verb serialization like the majority of SEA languages.

As regards word-order, Burmese is a verb-final language, with post-positions, i.e. mainly a modifier-head language due to its family membership: Burmese syntax is in accordance with the syntax of Tibeto-Burman languages.

In summary, and as we have already shown in Vittrant 2010, Burmese, beyond its position on the edge of Southeast Sprachbund, close to South Asia, is undeniably a Southeast Asian language.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ACC | accomplished (aspect) |
| AGENT | agentive nominalizer |
| ANAPH | anaphoric |
| ASP | aspect |
| ASS | assertive |
| AUX | auxiliary |
| BENEF | benefactive |
| CLF | classifier |
| COLL | collective |
| CFUGE | motion away from deictic center |
| CPETE | motion toward deictic center |
| CRS | current relevant state, new situation |
| DAT | dative |
| DEM | demonstrative |
| DIM | diminutive |
| DM | discourse marker |
| DIR | directional |
| EMPH | emphatique |
| EUPH | euphonique |
| EXCL | exclamative |
| FEM | feminine (or woman speaking) |
| GEN | genitive |
| HUM | human |
| IMP | imperative |
| INACC | inaccomplishment (aspect) |
| INCHOAT | inchoative (aspect) |
| INDEF | indefinite |
| IRR | irrealis |
| ITER | iterative (aspect) |
| LOC | locative |

| NEG | negation |
|---|---|
| NF | non-finite form |
| NMLZ | nominalizer |
| OBJ | object |
| PFX | prefix |
| POL | politeness |
| POSSIB | possibility (modality) |
| PLUR | plural |
| PROSP | prospective (aspect) |
| QUOT | quotative |
| QST | question |
| R. OR REAL | realis |
| REL | relative marker |
| RESULT | resultative (aspect) |
| S | source of the action (« ablative » or « nominative ») |
| SG | singular |
| SUB | subordinator |
| SPT | spacio-temporal, |
| TAM | tense, aspect, modality |
| TERM | terminative (aspect) |
| TOP | topic |
| TPS | temporal (consecutive, sequential) |
| VFP | verb final particle |
| VP | verb particle |

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# Appendix 1: Summary of linguistic features

Legend

+++ the feature is pervasive or used obligatorily in the language

++  the feature is normal but selectively distributed in the language

+   the feature is merely possible or observable in the language

−   the feature is impossible or absent in the language

Language studied: Burmese

Area/countries where it is spoken: BURMA (Myanmar)

|  | Feature | +++/++/+/− | § ref. in this chapter |
|---|---|---|---|
| Phonetics | Lexical tone or register | +++ | §1.1.3, p.63 |
| Phonetics | Back unrounded vowels | − | − |
| Phonetics | Initial velar nasal | +++ | §1.1.1, p.59 |
| Phonetics | Implosive consonants | − | − |
| Phonetics | Sesquisyllabic structures | +(+) | §1.2, p.66 |
| Morphology | Tendency towards monosyllabicity | +++ | §2.1.1, p.67 & also p.62 |
| Morphology | Tendency to form compounds | +++ | §2.1.2, p.69 & also 67–68 |
| Morphology | Tendency towards isolating (rather than affixation) | ++ | §2.1.1, p.68 |
| Morphology | Psycho-collocations | +++ | §2.2.1, p.74 |
| Morphology | Elaborate expressions (e.g. four-syllable or other set patterns) | ++ | §2.2.2, p.75 |
| Morphology | Reduplication generally | +++ | §2.3, p.76 |
| Morphology | Reduplication of nouns | +++ | idem |
| Morphology | Reduplication of verbs | +++ | idem |
| Grammar | Use of classifiers | +++ | §3.1.2, p.87 & §3.2.3, p.92 |
| Grammar | Classifiers used in counting | +++ | §3.2.3, p.93 |
| Grammar | Classifiers used with demonstratives | − | − |

| | Feature | +++/++/+/− | § ref. in this chapter |
|---|---|---|---|
| Grammar | Adjectival verbs | +++ | §3.1.2, p.86 |
| Grammar | Grammatical number | + | §3.1.1 & 3.3.1, p.95 |
| Grammar | Inflection of verbs | − | §3.3.1, p.95 |
| Grammar | Use of tense/aspect markers | +++ | §3.3.1, p.95 & 3.3.2, p.97 |
| Grammar | Use of verb plural markers | + | §3.3.2, p.98 |
| Grammar | Grammaticalization of GET/ OBTAIN (potential mod. resultative/perfect aspect) | ++ | §3.3.2, p.99 & p.104 |
| Grammar | Grammaticalization of PUT, SET (completed/resultative aspect) | +++ | §3.3.2, p.98–99 |
| Grammar | Grammaticalization of GIVE (causative, benefactive; preposition) | ++ | §3.3.2, p.98–99 |
| Grammar | Grammaticalization of FINISH (perfective/ complete aspect; conjunction/temporal subordinator) | +++ | §3.3.2, p.99 |
| Grammar | Grammaticalization of directional verbs e.g. GO / COME (allative, venitive) | +++ | §3.3.2, p.98–99 |
| Grammar | Grammaticalization of SEE, WATCH (temptative) | +++ | §3.3.2, p.98 |
| Grammar | Grammaticalization of STAY, REMAIN (progressive and continuous, durative aspects) | +++ | §3.3.2, p.98 |
| Grammar | Serial verb constructions | +++ | §3.3.3, p.100 |
| Grammar | Converbs | −/+ | + |
| Syntax | Verb precedes object (VO) | − | §3.4 & §3.4.1, p.101 |
| Syntax | Auxiliary precedes verb | −/+ | §3.3.1, p.98 |
| Syntax | Preposition precedes noun | − | §3.2.1, p.89 |
| Syntax | Noun precedes adjective | −/+ | §3.2.1, p.89 |
| Syntax | Noun precedes demonstrative | − | − |
| Syntax | Noun precedes genitive | − | − |
| Syntax | Noun precedes relative clause | − | − |
| Syntax | Use of topic-comment structures | +++ | §3.2.2, p.91, §3.4.3, p.101 & §3.4.4, p.106–08 |
| Syntax | Ellipsis of arguments known from context | +++ | §3.4.1, p.101 |
| Lexical semantics | Specific terms for forms of rice | +++ | §4.1.1, p.109–10 |
| Pragmatics | Use of utterance-final pragmatic particles | ++ | §4.2.1, p.111 |

|  | Feature | +++/++/+/− | § ref. in this chapter |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pragmatics | Encoding of politeness | ++ | §4.2.2, p.112 |
| Pragmatics | Encoding of honorifics | + | §3.1.2, table 7, p.84 & also §4.2.2, p.112 |

# Appendix 2: Text interlinearized

*Dialogue between Daw Pu and her sister. Yangon (Burma), 1999.*

[Recording accessible online : https://cocoon.huma-num.fr/exist/crdo/meta/crdo-MYA-001_SOUND]

Nº1 – Speaker A (Daw Pu)

| Burm | အဲဒီ လီယို့ Express ကို သွားဝယ်ရော လက်မှတ်။ | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | $\text{?}\epsilon^3$ | $\text{di}^2$ | $\text{li}^2\text{yo}^2$ | $\epsilon\text{kpr}\epsilon\text{s}$ | $=\text{Ko}^2$ | $\theta\text{wa}^3$ | $\text{w}\epsilon^2$ | $\text{y}\text{ɔ}^3$ | $\text{l}\epsilon\text{?}.\text{Ma}\text{?}$ |
| gl | DEM.anaph | DEM | Leo | express | DIR | go | buy | REAL | ticket |
| transl | We went to buy it at that 'Leo express', the ticket. | | | | | | | |

Nº2

| Burm | အဲဒီ အဲဒီဆိုင်လည်း သူသိတယ်၊ လီယို့ Express ကို။ | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | $\text{?}\epsilon^3.\text{di}^2$ | $\text{?}\epsilon^3.\text{di}^2$ | $\text{shaiN}^3$ | $\text{l}\epsilon^3$ | $\theta\text{u}^2$ | $\theta\text{i}^1$ | $=\text{T}\epsilon^2$ | $\text{li}^2\text{yo}^2$ |
| gl | DEM.anaph | DEM.anaph | shop | also | 3SG | know | REAL | Leo |

| phono | $\epsilon\text{kpr}\epsilon\text{s}$ | $=\text{Ko}^2$ |
|---|---|---|
| gl | express | OBJ |
| transl | And that… that shop, she knew it, (this) 'Leo Express'. | |

Nº3

| Burm | ဝယ်ဝယ်လည်း ပြီးလည်းပြီးရော ငါတို့လို့ အခု စကော့ဈေး သူက စကော့ဈေးသွား မယ်တဲ့။ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | $\text{w}\epsilon^2\text{-w}\epsilon^2$ | $\text{l}\epsilon^3$ | $\text{pyi}^3.\text{l}\epsilon^3.\text{pyi}^3.\text{y}\text{ɔ}^3$ | $\eta\text{a}^2\text{-To}^1$ | $\text{lo}^1$ | $\text{?}\text{ə-khu}^1$ | $\text{s}\text{ə}\text{K}\text{ɔ}^1$ |
| gl | buy-REDUPL | also | SUB.tps | 1SG-PLUR | QUOT | now | Scott |

| phono | $\text{ze}^3$ | $\theta\text{u}^2$ | $=\text{Ka}^1$ | $\text{s}\text{ə}\text{K}\text{ɔ}^1$ | $\text{ze}^3$ | $\theta\text{wa}^3$ | $=\text{m}\epsilon^2$ | $=\text{T}\epsilon^1$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| gl | market | 3SG | S./TOP | Scott | market | go | IR | QUOT |
| transl | When we were all done buying [the ticket], she said, 'Now we are going to Scott Market.' | | | | | | | |
| lit : | After also buying, we, now, scott market, she said : (we) should go to Scott market. | | | | | | | |

N°4

| Burm | အင်္ကျီချုပ်တာ သွားယူမယ်တဲ့။ | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | ʔiN²Ci² | choʔ | =Ta² | θwa³ | yu² | mɛ² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | shirt | sew | NMLZ.REAL | go | take | IR | QUOT |
| transl | She said that (she) was going to pick up a blouse she'd had made. | | | | | |

N°5

| Burm | ဘယ်လမ်းကသွားရမလဲ။ | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | bɛ² | laN³ | =Ka¹ | θwa³ | ya¹ | =mə | lɛ³ |
| gl | PR:QST | road | S. | go | AUX:GET | QST.IR. | QST |
| transl | Which way should we go? | | | | | |

N°6

| Burm | ငါရပ် စဉ်းစားတယ် သိလား။ | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | ŋa² | yaʔ | siN³ za³ | =Tɛ² | θi¹ | la³ |
| gl | 1SG | stop | think | REAL | know | QST |

| Burm | ကုန်းကပဲ သွားရမလား။ | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | gouN³ | =Ka¹ | bɛ³ | θwa³ | ya¹ | mə= | la³ |
| gl | footbridge | S. | DM:EXCL. | aller | AUX:GET | IR. | QST |
| transl | I stopped to think about it, you know: should we go over the foot-bridge? | | | | | |

N°7

| Burm | လာ၊ လာတဲ့။ | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| phono | la² | la² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | come | come | QUOT |
| transl | 'Come on,' she said. | | |

N°8

| Burm | ငါလမ်း သိတယ်တဲ့။ | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | ŋa² | laN³ | θi¹ | =Tɛ² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | 1SG | road | know | REAL | QUOT |
| transl | 'I know the way,' she said. | | | | |

N°9

| Burm | သူ့က ရှေ့ ကနေ ခေါ် သွားလိုက်တာ။ | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | θu² | =Ka¹ | ʃe¹ | =Ka¹.ne² | khɔ² | θwa³ | laiʔ-Ta² |
| gl | 3SG | S./TOP | front | FROM | call | go | follow-REAL.EXCL |
| transl | She was in front, calling me to go with her. | | | | | | |

N°10
Burm   Traders ဟိုတယ် ရှေ့ ကနေ စကော့ဈေးကို အတူ သွားကြတာ။
phono  'Traders'-ho²Tɛ²   ʃe¹   =Ka¹.ne²   səKɔ¹   ze³   =Ko²   Ɂə-Tu²
gl     Traders hotel   front   FROM   Scott   market   DIR.   together

phono  θwa³   =Ca¹   =Ta²
gl     go   PLUR   REAL.NF
transl From in front of Traders Hotel, we went to Scott Market together.

N°11
Burm   အဲဒါ ပြီးလည်းပြီးရော အပေါ်ထပ်ကို သူ ဆိုင်က
phono  Ɂɛ³-da²          pyi³.lɛ³.pyi³.yɔ³   Ɂə-pɔ²      tha?   =Ko²   θu¹
gl     DEM.ANAPH.-that   SUB.TPS            NMLZ-top   floor   DIR   3SG.GEN.

phono  shaiN²   =Ka¹
gl     shop   TOP

Burm   အပေါ်ထပ်မှာ သူက ရှေ့ က ငါက နောက်က လိုက်တာ။
phono  Ɂə-pɔ²      tha?   =Ma²   θu²   =Ka¹   ʃe¹   =Ka¹   ŋa²   =Ka¹   naɔ?
gl     NMLZ.-top   floor   LOC.   3SG   TOP   front   S.   1SG   S./TOP   behind

phono  =Ka¹   lai?-Ta²
gl     S.   follow-REAL.EXCL
transl So then in the end, this shop of hers was upstairs, and we went up, her
       in front and me following behind.

N°12  –  speaker B (sister)
Burm   သူ တစ်ခါတည်း ရောက်ဖူးတာ မှတ်လား။
phono  θu²   tə-kha²-Tɛ³   yaɔ?   phu³   =Ta²      m̥a?         =la³
gl     3SG   one-time-only   arrive   EXPER   REAL.NMLZ   remember   QST
transl Was it that she'd remembered it from just going there one time ?

N°13  –  Speaker A
Burm   သူ မနှစ်ကလည်း ရောက်ဖူးတယ်။
phono  θu²   mə ɳi?.Ka¹   lɛ³   yaɔ?   phu³   =Tɛ²
gl     3SG   last year   also   arrive   EXPER   REAL
transl She had been there last year as well.

N°14

| Burm | အဲဒီ မိုးမိုးနဲ့လည်း သူငယ်ချင်း ဖြစ်နေတာ။ | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | Ɂɛ³.di² | mo³mo³ | =nɛ¹ | lɛ³ | θəŋɛ²ChiN³ | phyiɁ | ne² | =Ta² |
| gl | DEM.anaph. | Momo | with | also | friend | be | AUX:INACC | REAL.NF |
| transl | She is friends with this Moe Moe as well. | | | | | | | |

N°15

| Burm | အေး ဒါပေမဲ့ သူ မှတ်မိနေတယ်။ | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | Ɂe² | da²pe²mɛ¹ | θu² | m̥aɁ.mi¹ | ne² | =Tɛ² |
| gl | EUPH. | but | 3SG | remember | AUX:INACC | REAL |
| transl | Yes – but she remembers it. | | | | | |

N°18

| Burm | ဝန်းသိုကနေ လာပြီးတော့ အကျႌ ချုပ်တာတဲ့။ | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | waN³θo² | =Ka¹.ne² | la² | pyi³-Tɔ¹ | ɁiN²Ci² | choɁ | =Ta² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | Wantho | FROM | come | SUB.tps-EMPH | shirt | sew | REAL.NF | QUOT |
| transl | She [Momo] told (her) that she came from WanTho and she is a dress-maker. | | | | | | |
| lit. | She said she had sewn shirts after she came from Wantho. | | | | | | |

N°19

| Burm | ကောင်မလေးက တော်တယ် သိလား။ | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | kaɔN²ma¹le³ | =Ka¹ | tɔ² | =Tɛ² | θi¹ | =la³ |
| gl | young woman | TOP | be smart | REAL | know | QST |
| transl | She's a clever girl, you know? | | | | | |

N°20

| Burm | တော်တော်လေးလေ ဟို nice ဖြစ်တယ်လေ။ | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | tɔ²-Tɔ²-le³ | le² | ho² | nice | phyiɁ | =Tɛ² | le² |
| gl | smart-x2-DIM | DM:insist | EUPH | <nice>[Engl.] | be | REAL | DM |
| transl | Really quite clever, erm, well she's nice, you see. | | | | | |

N°21

| Burm | အဲဒါ အန်တီရယ်တဲ့။ | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| phono | Ɂɛ³- da² | ɁaNti²-yɛ² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | DEM.anaph.- that | Aunty-AFFECT. | QUOT |
| transl | Moreover, [she called] me 'Aunty'. | | |
| lit. | So s.o. called [her] 'Aunty'. | | |

N°22

| Burm | သူနဲ့ မနှစ်က သူငယ်ချင်း ဖြစ်တာတဲ့။ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | θu² | =nɛ¹ | mən̥iʔ.Ka¹ | θəŋɛ²ChiN³ | phyiʔ | =Ta² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | 3SG | with | last year | friend | be | REAL.NF | QUOT |
| transl | She said they became friends last year. | | | | | | |

N°23

| Burm | �’ဘယ်သူ သွားပို့လဲတော့ မသိဘူး မိုးမိုးကို။ | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | bɛ²θu² | θwa³ | po¹ | lɛ³ | =Tɔ¹ | mə | θi¹ | =Phu³ | mo³mo³ | =Ko² |
| gl | WHO | go | carry | QST | TOP | NEG | know | NEG | Momo | OBJ |
| transl | I don't know who took her there. To Moe Moe's place. | | | | | | | |

N°24

| Burm | သူနဲ့ မနှစ်က သူငယ်ချင်း ဖြစ်တာ၊ မနှစ်က သူ့ကို လျှောက်ပို့နိုင်တယ်။ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | θu² | =nɛ¹ | mən̥iʔ.Ka¹ | θəŋɛ²ChiN³ | phyiʔ | =Ta² | mən̥iʔ.Ka¹ |
| gl | 3SG | with | last year | friend | be | REAL.NF | last year |

| phono | θu¹ | =Ko² | ʃaɔʔ | po¹ | naiN² | =Tɛ² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| gl | 3SG.OBL. | OBJ | AUX:at random | accompany | can | REAL |
| transl | She became friends with her last year, so she could have taken her around with her. | | | | | |
| lit. | (She) is friend with her (since) last year ; last year, (she) could take her around anywhere. | | | | | |

N°25

| Burm | လျှောက်လည်နိုင်တယ်တဲ့။ | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | ʃaɔʔ-lɛ² | naiN² | =Tɛ² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | walk-visit | can | REAL | QUOT |
| transl | They were able to go around [together]. | | | |

N°26

| Burm | အဲဒါနဲ့ သူ အကျႌ ချုပ်တယ်။ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | ʔɛ³- da² | =nɛ¹ | θu² | ʔiN²Ci² | choʔ | khaiN³ | =Tɛ² |
| gl | DEM.anaph.-that | with | 3SG | shirt | sew | order | REAL |
| transl | And so she had some blouses made. | | | | | | |

N°27

| Burm | ချုပ်ခိုင်းလည်း ပြီးလည်းပြီးရော၊ အဲဒီ အပေါ် ကို သူတက်တာပေါ့။ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| phono | choʔ | khaiN³ | lɛ³ | pyi³.lɛ³.pyi³.yɔ³ | ʔɛ³di² | ʔə-pɔ² | =Ko² | θu² |
| gl | sew | order | also | SUB.tps | DEM.anaph | NMLZ.-top | DIR | 3SG |

| phono | tɛʔ | =Ta² | pɔ¹ |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| gl | go.up | REAL.NF | DM:EXCL. |

transl When she'd done with asking to have the blouses made, she went right upstairs.

N°28

Burm အဲဒီ အပေါ် မှာတဲ့ အသစ်နေရာမှာ။

| phono | ʔɛ³- di² | | ʔə-pɔ² | =Ma² | =Tɛ¹ | ʔə-θiʔ | | ne²ya² | =Ma² |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| gl | DEM.anaph.-DEM. | | NMLZ.-top | LOC. | QUOT | NMLZ-be.new | | place | LOC |

transl She said it was upstairs, in a new place.

N°29

Burm အဲဒါ တက်လည်း ပြီးလည်းပြီးရော။

| phono | ʔɛ³- da² | | tɛʔ | lɛ³ | pyi³-lɛ³-pyi³-yɔ³ |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| gl | DEM.anaph.-that | | go.up | also | SUB.tps |

transl So up we went, and that was it.

N°30

Burm အပေါ် လည်း ကျလည်းကျရော အကျီ့တွေဘာတွေ ချုပ်ချက်လည်း ပြီးလည်းပြီးရော။

| phono | ʔə-pɔ² | lɛ³ | ca¹ | lɛ³ | ca¹ | yɔ³ | ʔiN²Ci²-Twe² |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| gl | NMLZ.-top | also | happen | also | happen | REAL | shirt-PLUR |

| phono | ba²-Twe² | | cho? - chɛʔ | | lɛ³ | pyi³-lɛ³-pyi³-yɔ³ |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| gl | PR.QST-PLUR:some | | sew-REDUPL. | | also | SUB.tps |

transl So once we got upstairs, and we were all finished with having the blouses and what not made.

N°31

Burm အောက်ပြန်၊ ငါတို့ဆို၊ ခါတိုင်းဆို အောက်ကိုဆင်ပြီး

| phono | ʔaɔʔ | pyaN² | ŋa²-To¹ | sho² | kha²-TaiN³ | sho² | ʔaɔʔ | =Ko² |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| gl | below | back | 1SG-PLUR. | say | time-each | say | below | DIR. |

| phono | shiN³ | pyi³ |
| --- | --- | --- |
| gl | go.down | SUB.tps |

Burm အောက်ကနေ သွားတာ သူ့က မဟုတ်ဘူးတဲ့။

| phono | ʔaɔʔ | =Ka¹ | ne² | θwa³ | =Ta² | θu² | =Ka¹ | mə | hoʔ | =Phu³ | =Tɛ¹ |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| gl | below | S. | place | go | REAL.NF | 3SG | TOP | NEG | be true | NEG | QUOT |

transl To go back down, normally we go down the bottom way, but she said 'No'.

N°32

| Burm | သူက | အပေါ်က | သွားမယ်တဲ့။ | | | | |
|------|-----|--------|-----------|--|--|--|--|
| phono | θu² | =Ka¹ | ʔə-pɔ² | =Ka¹ | θwa³ | =mɛ² | =Tɛ¹ |
| gl | 3SG | S./TOP | NMLZ-top | S. | go | IR | QUOT |
| transl | She said : 'We'll go the top way.' | | | | | | |

N°33

| Burm | အပေါ် ကဆိုင်တွေ့ကနေ ဖြတ်ဖြတ်ဖြတ်ဖြတ်ပြီး ထွက်တာ | | | | | |
|------|-----|--|--|--|--|--|
| phono | ʔə-pɔ² | =Ka¹ | shaiN²-Twe² | =Ka¹.ne² | phyaʔ phyaʔ phyaʔ phyaʔ | |
| gl | NMLZ-top | TOP | shop-PLUR | FROM | (cross.REDUPL).REDUPL | |

| phono | pyi³ | thwɛʔ | =Ta² |
|------|------|-------|------|
| gl | SUB.tps | go.out | REAL.NF |

| Burm | ဟို အရှေ့ ဝရံတာနား ရောက်သွားရော ။ | | | | | |
|------|-----|--|--|--|--|--|
| phono | ho² | ʔə-ʃe¹ | wə-raN²da² | na³ | yaɔʔ | θwa³ | yɔ³ |
| gl | DEM.distal | NMLZ.-front | corridor | nearby | arrive | go | REAL |
| transl | We went all the way right past the shops upstairs to get out, and ended up near the front balcony. | | | | | | |

N°34

| Burm | နင် အဲဒီနေရာ သိလား လို့ ငါ တစ်ခါမှ မသိဘူးလို့။ | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-------|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| phono | niN² | ʔɛ³.di² | ne²ya² | θi¹ | la³ | lo¹ | ŋa² | tiʔ | kha² | ma¹ |
| gl | 2SG. | DEM.anaph. | place | know | QST | QUOT | 1SG | one | time | only |

| phono | mə= | θi¹ | =Phu³ | lo¹ |
|------|-----|------|-------|------|
| gl | NEG | know | NEG | QUOT |
| transl | 'Do you know that place?' I asked; 'I've never known it,' I said. | | | |

N°35

| Burm | အဲဒီကနေ သွားပြီးမှ လှေကားကနေ ပြန်ဆင်းပြီးမှ သူဟာ ဘာ ဝယ်လဲ သိလား။ | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|---------|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|------|
| phono | ʔɛ.di² | =Ka¹.ne² | θwa³ | pyi³ | ma¹ | le² ka³ | =Ka¹.ne² | |
| gl | DEM.anaph | FROM | go | finish/SUB. | only | stairs | FROM | |

| phono | pyaN² | shiN³ | pyi³ | =Ma¹ | θu² | ha² ba² | wɛ² | lɛ³ | θi¹ | la³ |
|------|-------|-------|------|------|------|---------|------|------|------|------|
| gl | AUX:back | go.down | SUB.tps | only | 3SG | TOP PR.REL. | buy | QST | know | QST |
| transl | So after we'd gone back down the staircase from there, do you know what she bought then? | | | | | | | | | |

N°36
Burm    မြွေအရေခွံအိတ် ဝယ်တယ်။
phono    mywe²-ʔəye²KhuN³    ʔeiʔ    wɛ²    =Tɛ²
gl       snake-skin.animal        bag    buy    REAL
transl    She bought a 'snakeskin' bag.