

Danian Wang · Xiangyang Cai

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# Research on the Dialects of Myanmar



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# Foreword

December 6, 2017

It is my great pleasure to introduce this book to the general public. This masterly study, [*Research on the Dialects of Myanmar*], by Professor WANG Danian, constitutes a high-water mark in the research by Chinese scholars on the rich array of Burmese dialects.

This large volume of approximately 400,000 characters consists of three parts.

Part I is devoted to phonological and grammatical sketches of 8 major Burmese dialects, including Arakanese, Intha, Taungyo, Tavoyan, and Yaw, etc. In Part II, Professor Wang undertakes a careful comparative study of the various dialects, thoroughly describing the special features of their repertoires of initial consonants, rhymes, and tones, as well as remarks on their systems of particles and other functors. Among the original ideas and insights of the author, we should mention his treatments of consonant clusters and the different ways they are simplified in the dialects; changes in the systems of rhymes, leading to nasalized or creaky vowels, and the relationship of these to tonal developments; weakening of initial syllables in compounds and other collocations; and the significant differences among the grammatical morphemes used to mark phrasal and sentential structures.

Part III, which occupies about half of the volume, is devoted to detailed lexicons of the dialects, largely based on the personal fieldwork of the author. Each dialect is exemplified by approximately 1800 forms, by far the largest corpora of such data ever assembled in one place. It should be emphasized that this fieldwork was carried out under difficult political and military conditions in Myanmar, which makes this material all the more precious.

Professor Wang is to be congratulated on this exemplary volume, which takes Burmese dialect studies to a new level of sophistication and accuracy.

(James A. Matisoff)  
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# Preface

The Myanmar language is the common language of Myanmar, which, located to the southwest of China, is a nation that has friendly diplomatic relations with China. Spoken by approximately 50 million people, the language is an important member in the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. The significance of studying Myanmar dialects can be stated as follows:

1. It is in line with China's pursuit of peace and friendly diplomatic relationships with our neighboring countries in the current international situations, as well as the need to undertake the great strategic deployment of "the Belt and Road Initiative"

Myanmar is a friendly neighbor of China. The two countries share a common border of 2100 kilometers. Myanmar calls the Chinese people "compatriots and brothers". The two countries have a long history of friendly interactions, and have shared many common historical events. Both China and Myanmar are developing countries, facing challenges of maintaining peace and calling for development. In the international situation nowadays, it forms an important part of China's foreign policy to strengthen friendly relations with neighboring countries, enhance mutual understanding between the two peoples, promote cultural exchanges, and develop economy. In particular, China's major initiative of the "the Belt and Road" aims to hold high the banner of peaceful development, progressively develop economic partnerships with countries along the Belt and Road, and jointly build a community of interests and responsibilities featuring political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural inclusion. The initiative is based on a major strategic vision for realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Therefore, adhering to the diplomatic concepts of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness, studying the history, culture, ethnic peoples and languages of Myanmar, China's friendly neighbor, is one basic national policy for China's pursuit of peace and development.

2. Through the study of Myanmar dialects, we can observe unique relationships between Myanmar and Chinese, which opens up a new way to study the development histories of the two languages

According to the Chinese historical book *Song of the King White Wolf*, the earliest ancient precursor of the Myanmar language can be traced back to the first century AD. Around 1057 AD, Anawrahta, the king of Myanmar, conquered Thaton Kingdom and unified Myanmar for the first time, and started to develop the Myanmar alphabet. In Early 12th century (1112 AD), the first relatively complete Myanmar inscription, the Myazedi inscription was created. This and many later inscriptions of all dynasties, palm-leaf manuscripts, as well as the Chinese ancient document *Hua-yi-yi-yu*, in which is documented the middle ancient Myanmar language of the beginning of the 15th century, are all in form of the Myanmar alphabet. The Myanmar alphabet (a.k.a. Burmese alphabet) is an abugida, which records in detail the true nature of how the Myanmar language has been pronounced as it has been developing in various historical periods. Language can be compared to a living fossil, bearing traces of the sound changes and social evolutions in various historical periods. Therefore, these ancient documents play an important role in studying the political and economic developments, cultural exchanges, and ethnic origins in and between China and Myanmar. Meanwhile they are also highly significant to the studies of the linguistic history and status quo of the Myanmar language, its relation with Chinese, and even the developmental history of Chinese. Last but not least, they also serve as valuable materials to the studies of the inter-relationships among different Sino-Tibetan languages, the reconstruction of Proto-Sino-Tibetan and Proto-Tibeto-Burman.

Among the many Tibeto-Burman languages, Myanmar is the most widely used one. Therefore, in the comparative study of Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman languages, in addition to Tibetan, Myanmar also plays an important role. More and more linguists all over the world have come to realize such significance, and have been undertaking research of Myanmar the language and its dialects. In China, scholars studying Chinese have also found that, after applying the traditional method to study Chinese for nearly a thousand years, related development has been plateauing out. Therefore, many of them turned to foreign languages and minority languages seeking new perspectives. For example, Tongqiang Xu mentioned in his textbook, *Historical Linguistics*, that past history has witnessed scholars involved in the historical study of Chinese, informed and inspired by minority languages in China and languages spoken in neighboring countries, have achieved rich results. These endeavours include:

Sanskrit-Chinese phonetic transcription: 4<sup>th</sup> Century (West Jin Dynasty) to 8<sup>th</sup> Century (Tang Dynasty)

Japanese Go'on: 5<sup>th</sup> Century to 6<sup>th</sup> Century

Japanese Kan'on: 7<sup>th</sup> Century

Sino-Korean: approximately 7<sup>th</sup> Century

Chinese-Tibetan phonetic transcription

Sino-Vietnamese: 8<sup>th</sup> Century to 9<sup>th</sup> Century

'Phags-pa Chinese: 13<sup>th</sup> Century

This rich array of transcription materials have enabled tremendous progress in the historical studies of Chinese language.

Few Sino-Tibetan languages have come with their own traditional writing systems, which is one of the factor that makes linguistic comparative research of this language family challenging. Myanmar, with its huge population of speakers, its own traditional writing system, and its close genetic relationship with Chinese, can provide valuable materials for the studies of the Sino-Tibetan family, unveiling much new related information. After examining *Song of the King White Wolf* and Myanmar texts, Zheng Zhang Shangfang achieved new contribution to the phonological reconstruction of Ancient Chinese, which is an instance showing how studying Myanmar can be of help.

However, throughout the research history of Sino-Tibetan languages, when compared with some other languages (such as Chinese and Tibetan), Myanmar is relatively understudied. Linguistic research is not common in Myanmar either. More profound and systematic studies are still required. Fortunately, since the beginning of the 21st century, more and more researchers have figured out the crucial role Myanmar language plays in the studies of Sino-Tibetan family and the historical evolution of Chinese, and are now paying way more attention to the research of Myanmar. Through the efforts, there will certainly be more discoveries and new enlightenment, which will push forward the progress of Sino-Tibetan studies.

### 3. The study of Myanmar dialects has high academic values

With its large population, long history, and abundant written records including inscriptions and historical documents, the Myanmar language, like Tibetan, is an indispensable and important member in the Sino-Tibetan Family. The study of Myanmar dialects is of great significance to the study of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Historically, the Myanmar people are descendents of the Diqiang tribes that migrated southward from the Loess Plateau in western China, integrating many tribes on the way. The Myanmar language is closely related to Chinese, and has developed its own unique nature in its long-term historical evolutionary process. Many Chinese and international scholars attach much weight to the

study of Chinese dialects and the study of its related languages out of China. Bernhard Karlgren's *Études sur la phonologie chinoise* ("Studies on Chinese Phonology") examines the developmental process of Chinese phonology based on dialectal pronunciations of Chinese characters. Famous modern Chinese linguists also attach great importance to the study of Chinese dialects. Studies such as *The Chungshan (Jongshau) Dialect*, *The Studies of Modern Wu Dialects*, and *Hubei Fangyan Daocha Baogao* (A report on a survey of Hubei fangyan) by Yuen Ren Chao, and *Phonetics and Phonology of the Amoy Dialect* and *The Phonetics and Phonology of Lin-ch'uan Dialect* by Luo Chang-Pei all provide powerful evidence and form a solid basis for the historical research of Chinese phonology. Myanmar dialects are like Chinese dialects in that, due to complicated migrations, the dialects in different areas have evolved in different ways during the developmental process, thus have each preserved linguistic features of various historical periods. In particular, many sounds, lexical items and grammatical features of Proto-Sino-Tibetan and Ancient Chinese have been preserved in these dialects. For example, some Myanmar dialects preserves the vowels /a/, /a/, and /ɒ/ of Ancient Chinese; in some dialects one can trace the evolution of /kl, kr → kl → kj → tɕ/; and in some one can detect the developmental pathway through which syllable-final stops became the glottal stop: /k, -p, -t → -k, -t → -ʔ/; and in some dialects nasal finals gave rise to nasalized vowels: /-m, -n, -ŋ → ã, ã̃/.

In Myanmar dialects one can also observe the emergence of the neutral tone, its evolutionary trajectory, as well as its effect on morphology. Studying Myanmar dialects can help one figure out how the morphology of Myanmar has changed, and how the language has evolved from inflectional to analytic. These all demonstrate some patterns of the historical evolution of the Sino-Tibetan family. We have also figured out that some of the commonalities between dialects are due to a common genetic origin, while some others are induced by language contact; and we cannot determine which is which until we undertake cross-dialectal studies. An especially worth-mentioning Myanmar dialect is Hpun, which preserves not only the linguistics features of Old Myanmar, but also many common features shared by Myanmar and many Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Yunnan Province, China. This dialect is crucial for the study of the development of the Myanmar language and Tibeto-Burman languages. Studying Myanmar dialects opens a window to the developmental history and evolutionary patterns of the Myanmar language itself; moreover, comparative studies involving Myanmar can also unveil the diachronic scenarios of Chinese and Tibeto-Burman languages, the interrelationships among Sino-Tibetan languages, as well as their evolutionary pathways and patterns, which guarantees more in-depth understanding of the Sino-Tibetan family. Comparing the dialects may provide valuable support for the basic theories that constitute general linguistics, especially for the research of tonal languages. One can also observe the cultures underlying these dialects, which reflects the historical and cultural characteristics of the different regions where the dialects are spoken. These are of great theoretical and empirical significance for enriching linguistic theories and methodologies, as well as developing Sino-Tibetan linguistics.

#### 4. Research on Myanmar dialects can fill gaps

Over the years, China has highly valued the research on Tibetan and its dialects, which has thus progressed tremendously, attracting more and more scholars to join in the research. In comparison to Tibetan, Myanmar language, although of great importance, has received relatively little attention, at home or from abroad. The studies of Myanmar dialects are still scantier. Even in Myanmar, one can only find sporadic description or accounts of some dialects in journals, let alone systematic studies or monographs dedicated to dialect research. Little has been discussed regarding the number of dialects and varieties, the classification of dialects, characteristics of the dialects, the interrelationships between the dialects, the relationships between Myanmar dialects and Chinese dialects, and the development and characteristics of tonal languages.

5. The investigation and comparative study of Burmese dialects is also an important measure to rescue the endangered languages in the Tibeto-Burman family.

For example, the dialect of Hpun, a northern dialect of Myanmar, is of special significance concerning the evolutionary development of Tibeto-Burman languages, as it serves as a vital link that connects Myanmar and many minority languages. However, this very important speech form is on the verge of extinction, with the population of speakers having shrunk to only a handful. The language is in urgent need of documentation. This is not only about saving a language that is on the verge of extinction, but is also of great significance because it can save and preserve the history and legacy of the nation. The current situation in Myanmar makes it difficult at this point for the country to take into account the survival of endangered languages by their own strength. As a great country adjacent to Myanmar, China is duty bound and should shoulder this urgent rescue task, and it should be done before the loss of this language becomes a permanent regret Sino-Tibetan linguistics.

In order to undertake in-depth investigation of Myanmar language, it is necessary to figure out how dialects have emerged and developed after the language started to be spoken in Myanmar. Dialects are geographical variants of a language. During the evolutionary process, they have preserved some of their ancestral properties, and at the same time their development has been influenced by contact with other languages or dialects, as can be observed in the variations of speech sounds, lexicons, and grammar. The studies of Myanmar dialects are valuable, especially for the historical research of the language.

Some modern linguists in Myanmar have proposed a tripartite classification of Myanmar dialects:

1. Old Myanmar: Included are (1) Tsi (or Szi or A Tsi), (2) Lashi, (3) Maru, (4) A Chang (or Ngawchang), (5) Hpon.
2. Modern Myanmar (literally the Central Dialect of Myanmar)
3. Myanmar Dialects: Such as Arakanses, Merguese, Tavoyan, Yaw, Danu, Taungyo, and Intha

Yet according to all the documents and data gleaned through the years, plus the data collected during our 2004 fieldtrip in Myanmar, the list above does not encompass all the Myanmar dialects, and the some dialects listed should be subsumed under another dialect in the list. For example, based on their linguistic characteristics, it is more adequate to treat Merguese as a sub-branch of Tavoyan.

Based on all the data we have at hand, we propose five dialectal areas: Central, Western, Southern, Northern, and Eastern:

1. The Central dialect: This dialect is spoken in the area of the Irrawaddy River basin, which stretches southwards from Mandalay to Yangon and the delta area of the Irrawaddy River estuary. During the feudal dynastic period, Mandalay, the capital, was the primary political and cultural center. It was not the political, economic and cultural center, but also an important hub of communication. The official language was of course the Mandalay variety of the aristocracy and the court. When British colonists overthrew the Myanmar monarchy, the political center was moved southward to Yangon the harbour city, which later became the capital of the nation. When Myanmar got independent of the British colonial rule, the dialect of Yangon became the common language of Myanmar. The influx of various dialects, ethnic languages and foreign languages impacted Yangon dialect greatly. Its phonological system became less complex, with a smaller number of complex initials and vocalic rhymes. The dialect has only four diphthongs; final consonants /p/, /t/, and /k/ were all reduced to glottal stops; the nasal finals /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ disappeared, leaving vowels preceding them nasalized; and four tones have emerged in Modern Myanmar.

2. The Western dialects: These dialects are spoken in western Myanmar, around the harbor city Thandwe, where Arakanses is the primary dialect. Arakanses has several sub-dialects spoken to the north of Thandwe. The dialect is characterized by its higher preservation of Old Myanmar forms, such as complex initials ending with /j/ and /r/, which in the other dialects have been neutralized, thus the saying “Turn to Arakanses speakers if you can’t distinguish /j/ from /r/.” The Arakanses dialect preserves the distinction between /ɑ/ and /ɒ/; it has fewer cases in which voiceless consonants became voiced; it has less cases of neutral tones in comparison with Modern Myanmar. The dialect distinguish five tones. Yaw is another Western dialect.

3. The Southern dialects: The dialects are spoken in the areas around Tenasserim, Mergui, and Tavoy. Their phonological characteristics are as follows First, the dialects do not have flap /r/ as the second component of the complex initial. Second, the complex initial /jw/ in the other dialects corresponds to /w/ in the Tavoyan dialects. Third, there are four tones, which are different from the four tones of Yangon dialect in that only Yangon has the short checked tone. In the Yangon short checked tone, the vowel in the rhyme is shortened and tense, while in Tavoyan stop finals does not cause the preceding vowel to become short and tense, which is why some proposes that the Tavoyan tonal system constitutes three tones plus a checked rhyme. However, in reality, the sound changes as observed in Merguese show that the stop finals in Tavoyan are being dropped in Merguese, which thus has only three tones.

4. The Northern dialects: Hpun, spoken norther to Mandalay, around Myityina, is of special significance in the developmental history of the language family of Tibeto-Burman, and is a dialect of Myanmar. It is characterized by preserving more phonological characteristics as can also be observed in the languages of the Burman subgroup in China (such as Achang, Zaiwa, and Lhavo). For instance, Hpun contrasts four affricates of different places /ts, tʂ, tʃ, tɕ/ which either are neutralized or disappeared in the other dialects; it has nasal and stop finals /p, t, k, ʔ, m, n, ŋ/; it has reduced syllables; it does not have many two-component or three-component complex initials, and has more simplex initials and monophthongs; it has complex initial /kj/; it has 5-8 tones.

5. The Eastern dialects: The dialects, including Intha, Taungyo, and Danu, are primarily spoken in areas around Inlei Lake in the west of Shan State. Their phonological characteristics are as follows: they do not contrast voiced and voiceless consonants; they have more complex initials; they do not have interdental affricate /tθ/; stops and fricatives like /sh, t, s/ are interchangeable; many preinitials of complex initials are lost; they preserve Old Myanmar complex initials /kl, kr/, in which /r/ and /l/ can be interchanged freely; there are many cases of monosyllabification, for example, /sə pa<sup>55</sup>/ ‘grain’ evolved to /pa<sup>55</sup>/, and /ŋə pi<sup>31</sup>/ ‘fish and shrimp paste’ became /pi<sup>31</sup>/; nasalized vowels in Yangon corresponds to nasalized vowels /ã/ or /ẽ/ in Intha; Intha has four tones.

It is relatively simple and clear to classify the Myanmar dialects into Central, Western, Souther, Northern, and Eastern subgroups according to their geographical distribution. However, a shortcoming of such a classification is that it ignores the inter-relationships among the dialects. After enter Myanmar from Yunnan (China), the Myanmar language once dispersed towards all directions, and it spread westwards to the Arakanses area located to the west of Arakan Mountains. However, speakers of one branch of the Western dialects moved with Taungyo people toward Mandalay, to the surrounding area of Inlei Lake, while another group of people moved southward along the coastline to the southern region. With them the characteristics of the Western dialects were spread to the eastern and southern areas of Myanmar. Another group of Old Burma people migrated southward along the eastern part of Myanmar, and came to the Tavoya and Mergui areas in the narrow and long area of Tenasserim in southern Myanmar. They also preserved the characteristics of Old Myanmar phonology phonetics, and has

developed and evolved in the southern area. However, according to historical legends and documents, a number of speakers of the Southern dialects came as an army to the area around Inlei Lake (East) along with the king of Myanmar, and they also brought along with them the phonetic characteristics of the Southern dialects. This is why in areas around Inlei Lake, there are many Eastern dialects that seem to have incorporated linguistic characteristics of the Southern and Western dialects. For example, Taungyo dialect introduced the archaic form of complex finals in Old Myanmar, and the disappearance of the finals afterwards gave rise to many confusing homophonous forms. The original Taungyo dialect in the west has maintained the original characteristics of Old Myanmar, and that is why later generations turn to it if they are not certain which final-consonant character they should write. So there is a saying in Myanmar: "If you don't know which the final consonant to put down, just ask Taungyo people."

Through the classification of dialect areas and the distribution of the dialects, a better understanding of Myanmar dialects can be achieved.

In 1983, the Myanmar government officially recognized 135 ethnic groups, subsumed respectively to 8 branches: Burma (9 groups), Kachin (12 groups), Karen (11 groups), Mon (1 group), Rakhine (7 groups), Kaye (9 groups), Chin (53 groups), and Shan (33 groups). This classification caused the originally Myanmar dialects to be identified as minority languages of these ethnic branches. For example, The dialects of Taungyo, Danu, and Intha were classified as minority languages of the Shan people; while Arakanses is the only language of the Arakanses people. The reclassification of dialects based on nationalities caused confusion. The distinction between ethnic languages and Myanmar dialects require more future work and discussions. The speech forms described and analyzed in the present monograph are classified into eight dialects of Myanmar.



# Chapter 1 The Primary Dialects of Myanmar

## 1.1. Yangon/Rangoon Dialect, the national common language of Myanmar

### Abstract

This chapter provides a profile for each of the nine primary dialects of Myanmar: Yangon/Rangoon, Arakanses, Yaw, Tavoyan, Merguese, Intha, Taungyo, Danu, and Hpun. Each profile comprises four main sections: demographic and ethnographic information, phonology, morphology, and syntax. The demographic and ethnographic information includes the history of the people using the dialect, migrations in the past, and the present geographical settings where the dialect is spoken, as well as the livelihood of the people. The phonological section discusses consonantal initials, rhymes, tonal categories, and the syllable structure. The morphological section covers monomorphemic words; multi-morphemic words that are formed through the processes of compounding, affixation, and reduplication; an overview of parts of speech including nouns, pronouns, numerals and classifiers, adjectives, verbs, auxiliaries, adverbs, conjunctions, interjections, onomatopoeias, and particles. Finally, the syntax section discusses the formation and functions of various types of phrases; simple sentences including declaratives, questions, negatives, imperatives, and exclamatories; and complex sentences formed via juxtaposition or coordination.

Yangon (or Rangoon) was once a variety of the central dialect of Myanmar. A thousand years ago, the third reunification of Myanmar took place, and the Pagan dynasty was hence established. At the beginning of the 11th century. Ever since then, the political, economic and cultural centers of Myanmar have been the ancient capitals of Bagam (Pagan) and Mandalay, which are both situated in Upper Myanmar.

The literature of the period was primarily royal literature, using the language of the aristocracy and the court. The language was gorgeous and elegant, showing grandeur and nobility, thus it was deemed as the official language. The British colonialists launched three wars to invade Myanmar. Eventually they occupied Mandalay, turning Myanmar into a British colony. After 1885, English became the official language of Myanmar. Myanmar's political, economic and cultural center since then gradually shifted from Mandalay to Yangon, a harbour city. Then, after decades unremitting fight, Myanmar became independent in 1948. Since then, the people of Myanmar have freed themselves from the colonial rule of British imperialism, and the Myanmar language was designated as the national language of the country.

The variety of Yangon belongs to the Central Dialect of Myanmar, which is spoken by native Myanmar people inhabiting the area that stretches from Mandalay in the north to Yangon in the south, including the Irrawaddy River basin and the delta area of the Irrawaddy River estuary. The main cities within the Central-Dialect area include Mandalay, Bagam, Prome, Bassein, Pegu, and Yangon. Mandalay and Pagan were the capital cities of ancient Myanmar. They had their glorious histories of being the political, economic and cultural centers. The city of Yangon is an up-and-youngster, and the variety of Yonggon, with Old Myanmar as its basis, has adopted a rich array of linguistic characteristics from many other dialects and foreign languages, so is now drastically different from Old Myanmar. For instance, the many complex onsets as well as stop and nasal finals as shown in Old Written Burmese (primarily in form of inscriptions of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century) were either dropped or reduced in the variety of Yangon, with tones gradually becoming full-fledged. The Yangon variety of modern Myanmar has become the

common language throughout the country. In recent hundred years, The Yangon-Mandalay Dialect (i.e. The Central Dialect) has changed drastically while still retaining its dominant position in the language of Myanmar. With regard to grammar, Yongong and the other Myanmar dialects do not show salient disparity, but their differences in phonetic inventories and auxiliaries still make it difficult for speakers of different dialects to communicate with each other. In order to better understand the relationships, similarities and distinctions between the dialects, we have to investigate their phonemic inventories, the formation of words, as well as the rules of constructing sentences.

### 1.1.1. Yagon simplex onsets

(1) There are 26 simplex onsets:

k , kh , g , ŋ

s , sh , z , ɲ

t , th , d , n

p , ph , b , m

j , l , w , tθ

h , ʔ

tɕ , tɕh , dz , ɕ

(2) There are 38 complex onsets:

pj , phj , bj , tj , mj , lj

kw , khw , gw , ŋw

sw , shw , zw

tw , thw , dw , nw

pw , phw , bw , mw

tɕw , tɕhw , tθw

lw , jw , hw , ɕw

hm , hn , hŋ , hn̩ , hl

hlw , hmw , hnw , hlj

hmj

Examples of Yangon onset consonants:

consonants	example	IPA transcription	Gloss
k	က	ka <sup>53</sup>	to dance
kh	ခါး	kha <sup>55</sup>	waist
g	ကောက်သီး	gaoŋ <sup>4</sup> tθi <sup>55</sup>	marbles
s	စာငယ်	sa <sup>22</sup> ŋe <sup>22</sup>	sparrow
sh	ဆန်	shā <sup>22</sup>	rice
z	ဈေး	ze <sup>55</sup>	market
t	တား	ta <sup>55</sup>	obstruct
th	ထ	tha <sup>53</sup>	rise / stand up

d	ထူး	du <sup>55</sup>	knee
p	ပ	nu <sup>22</sup>	hot
ph	ဖဲ	phe <sup>55</sup>	silk fabric
b	သဲ	be <sup>55</sup>	duck
tɕ	ကျဲ	tɕa <sup>53</sup>	to drop
tɕh	ခြင်	tɕhi <sup>22</sup>	mosquito
dʒ	ဂျီ	dʒi <sup>22</sup>	wheat
	ချေးတူန်း	dʒi <sup>55</sup> tou <sup>55</sup>	rub mud
m	မာ	ma <sup>22</sup>	hard
n	နေ	ne <sup>22</sup>	sun
ŋ	ငါ	ŋa <sup>22</sup>	I
n̥	ညီ	ni <sup>22</sup>	even, level
tθ	သား	tθa <sup>55</sup>	son
l	လ	la <sup>53</sup>	moon
w	ဝါ	wa <sup>22</sup>	yellow
j	ဂ	ja <sup>52</sup>	get, acquire
ɕ	ရှာ	ɕa <sup>22</sup>	find, look for
h	ဟောင်း	haũ <sup>55</sup>	used, old
ʔ	ကျပ်	tɕaʔ <sup>4</sup>	tight, narrow
tj	တျားတျားနီ	tja <sup>55</sup> tja <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>22</sup>	bright red
pj	ပြား	pja <sup>55</sup>	flat (and shallow)
phj	ဖျာ	phja <sup>22</sup>	summer mat
bj	ပြောင်းပြန်	bjaũ <sup>55</sup> bjã <sup>22</sup>	reverse
mj	မြေ	mje <sup>22</sup>	earth
lj	အလျား	ə lja <sup>55</sup>	length
kw	ကွာ	kwa <sup>22</sup>	distinction,
khw	ခွေး	khwe <sup>55</sup>	dog
gw	ကွက်	gweʔ <sup>4</sup>	square
tw	တွေ့	twe <sup>53</sup>	meet, come across
thw	ထွာ	thwa <sup>22</sup>	thumb to out-stretched
dw	ခွေးတော်	dwe <sup>55</sup> do <sup>22</sup>	stepmother
pw	ပွဲ	pwe <sup>55</sup>	play, performance
phw	ပွဲ	phwe <sup>55</sup>	sugar
bw	ဘွဲ့	bwe <sup>53</sup>	title
sw	စွဲ	swe <sup>55</sup>	be addicted to
shw	ဆွဲ	shwe <sup>55</sup>	pull
zw	နွဲ	zwe <sup>55</sup>	willpower
tɕw	ကျွေး	tɕwe <sup>55</sup>	debt
tɕhw	ချွေး	tɕhwe <sup>55</sup>	sweat
mw	မွေး	mwe <sup>55</sup>	give birth to, raise
	မြွေ	mwe <sup>22</sup>	snake
nw	နွား	nwa <sup>55</sup>	cattle
	နွေး	nwe <sup>55</sup>	warm
ŋw	ငွေ	ŋwe <sup>22</sup>	silver
tθw	သွေး	tθwe <sup>55</sup>	blood
lw	လွဲ	lwe <sup>55</sup>	miss, waste

jw	ရွတ်	jwɛʔ <sup>4</sup>	page
ɕw	ရွှေ	ɕwe <sup>22</sup>	gold
hm	မှန်	hmã <sup>22</sup>	correct
hn	နှေး	hne <sup>55</sup>	slow
hŋ	ငါး	hŋa <sup>55</sup>	to borrow
hɲ	ညှို့	hɲi <sup>22</sup>	fishy-smelling
hl	လှ	hla <sup>53</sup>	pretty, beautiful
hw	လှေ	hwe <sup>53</sup>	wave (something)
mjw	မြွေ	mwe <sup>22</sup>	snake
hlw	လှဲ	hlwe <sup>55</sup>	turn over
hmw	မွှေး	hmwe <sup>55</sup>	fragrant
hnw	နှစ်	hnwa <sup>22</sup>	peel, sheel (v.)
hlj	လျှပ်	hljaʔ <sup>44</sup>	electricity
hmj	မျှ	hmja <sup>53</sup>	even, equal

Description and notes of the consonantal phonemes in Yangon:

(1) Labiodental consonants /f/ and /v/ do not exist in Yangon, except in loanwords, in which the labiodentals are sometimes replaced with /ph/ and /b/.

(2) The ဝ/ha/ in the Myanmar alphabet is actually produced as [x]. In the present study [h] and [x] are phonemically represented as /h/, which is also used to represent aspiration.

(3) In Myanmar writing, alveolar sounds /t, th, d/ and lateral /l/ are represented using two sets of characters. One of the sets is used specifically for transcribing Sanskrit and Pali loanwords. In the past, this set of characters were used to represent cerebral sounds (marked with a dot right beneath the character), but afterwards the two sets of sounds became non-distinctive, thus nowadays in Myanmar writing there are two sets of characters representing the same set sounds, i.e. တ, ထ, ဒ, န, လ and င, ဋ, ဍ, ဎ.

င, ဋ, ဍ, ဎ.

(4) Voiced consonants /g, d, b, z/ are also represented by two sets of characters in the Myanmar alphabet. One of the sets represent voiced sounds, while the other set was for voiced-aspirated sounds in loanwords, which afterwards became regular voiced consonants (that is, ဃ, ဇ, ဘ, ဈ were symbols for voiced aspirated sounds /gh, dh, bh, zh/; and ဂ, င, ဖ, ဖ were their voiced unaspirated counterparts), thus nowadays in the Myanmar alphabet there are two sets of characters representing the same voiced consonants.

(5) Tap /ɾ/ existed in Old Myanmar, but in modern Myanmar it barely occurs, except in a few dialects (such as the dialects of Tavoyan, Taungyo, Arakanses, and Intha). In Standard Myanmar, tap is only used for the spelling of loanwords, such as ရေဒီယို /re di jo/ ‘radio’ and ရေဒါ /re da/ ‘radar’.

(6) The affricate /tθ/ is often produced as voiced /dð/ in the flow of speech, but since they are not distinctive, the two sounds are treated as allophones of one phoneme.

(7) /m, n, ŋ/ and /ɲ/ can combine with [h], resulting in voiceless nasals /m̥, n̥, ŋ̥/ and /ɲ̥/.

(8) The three-component cluster comprising /m/, /j/ and /w/ tends to drop /j/ in the surface representation. For example, mjwe → mwe ‘snake’.

(9) The three-component initial /hlj-/ is usually produced as /ɕ/. For example, လျှောက် /hljauʔ<sup>44</sup>/ → /ɕauʔ<sup>44</sup>/ ‘walk’.

<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: The IPA symbol for alveolar tap is /ɾ/, but in this monograph tap is represented using /r/.

(10) When bilabial sounds /p, ph, b/ and /m/ combine with high front vowels, a glide /j/ is usually inserted in between. For example, /mi/ →→ /mji/ ‘name’

(11) Affricates including /tɕ, tɕh/ and /dʒ/ actually resulted from the palatalization of Old Myanmar consonant clusters kj, khj, and gj. Therefore, while the clusters still exist in the Myanmar alphabet, they are pronounced as affricates in Modern Yangon.. For example, ကြာ: is transliterated as /kja:./, but its pronunciation is /tɕa:./ ‘hear’.

(12) The clusters /hl/ and /hr/ in the Myanmar alphabet are produced respectively as /ʎa/ and /ɕa/ in Yangon.

(13) The Myanmar Alphabet has a particular character, အ, which can represent either the vowel /a/ or the consonant /ʎ/. Without any character signaling the initial, the said character stands as a vocalic character, and can constitute a syllable on its own. However, in Old Written Myanmar, it also represents a consonant that serves as a syllable-final consonant. For example, the character နှင် in Old Written Myanmar inscription has become နှင် in Modern Myanmar. In Modern Written Myanmar, it can represent the consonant /ʎ/, which can combine with a vowel to constitute a syllable. For instance, အ can combine with the vowel character /<sup>၀</sup>/ to constitute a syllable အိ/<sup>၀</sup>i<sup>53</sup>/, with the character အ representing the onset /ʎ/. When အ combines with <sup>၀</sup>ai /ʎ/ to constitute a syllable, အ only serves as the onset consonant.

1.1.2. Yangon Rhymes

Yangon rhymes can be based on monophthongs and diphthongs, however, diphthongous rhymes are only attested in nasalized and checked rhymes.

Monothongous rhymes: /a, i, u, e, ε, o, ɔ/

Nasalized rhymes: /ã, ã, ã, ãĩ, eĩ, oũ, au/

Short checked rhymes: /aʎ, iʎ, uʎ, εʎ, aiʎ, eiʎ, ouʎ, auʎ/

Rhyme Chart

Monophthongs			Checked Vowels	Nasalized Vowels		
အ a <sup>53</sup> အာ	အာ a <sup>22</sup>	အား a <sup>55</sup>	အပ် aʎ <sup>44</sup> အဝ်	အံ ã <sup>53</sup> အံ့	အံ ã <sup>22</sup> အံ	အမ်း ã <sup>55</sup>
အိ i <sup>53</sup>	အိ i <sup>22</sup>	အီး i <sup>55</sup>	အပ် iʎ <sup>44</sup>	အင် ãĩ <sup>53</sup> အင်	အင် ãĩ <sup>22</sup> အင်	အင်း ãĩ <sup>55</sup> အင်း
အု u <sup>53</sup>	အု u <sup>22</sup>	အူး u <sup>55</sup>	အွတ် uʎ <sup>44</sup> အွပ်	အွံ ãũ <sup>53</sup> အွံ့ အွံ	အွံ ãũ <sup>22</sup> အွံ အွံ	အွမ်း ãũ <sup>55</sup> အွမ်း
အေ e <sup>53</sup> အေ	အေ e <sup>22</sup>	အေး e <sup>55</sup>	အိတ် eiʎ <sup>44</sup> အိပ်	အိန် eĩ <sup>53</sup> အိန်	အိန် eĩ <sup>22</sup> အိန်	အိန်း eĩ <sup>55</sup> အိန်း

အဲ ဧ <sup>53</sup>	အယ် ဧ <sup>22</sup>	အဲ	အက် ဧ <sup>44</sup>			
အော့ ဝ <sup>53</sup>	အော် ဝ <sup>22</sup>	အော့ ဝ <sup>55</sup>				
အို ဝ <sup>53</sup>	အို ဝ <sup>22</sup>	အို ဝ <sup>55</sup>	အိုတ် ou <sup>44</sup> အိုပ်	အို ဝို <sup>53</sup> အိုန့် အိုမ်	အို ဝို <sup>22</sup> အိုန့် အိုမ်	အို ဝို <sup>55</sup> အိုန့်
			အိုက် ai <sup>44</sup>	အိုင်း ai <sup>53</sup>	အိုင်း ai <sup>22</sup>	အိုင်း ai <sup>55</sup>
			အောက် au <sup>44</sup>	အောင်း au <sup>53</sup>	အောင်း au <sup>22</sup>	အောင်း

A few notes on Yangon rhymes:

- (1) There are seven monophthongous rhymes in Yangon, namely /a , i , u , e , ε , ဝ , o/.
- (2) Monophthongous rhymes can be realized on three tones: high-falling (53 in terms of five-scale notation), low level (22), and high-level (55).
- (3) Yangon diphthongs only occur in checked and nasalized rhymes.
- (4) Nasalized rhymes, like monophthongous rhymes, also come in three tones: high-falling (53), low level (22), and high-level (55).
- (5) In the chart of nasalized vowels, there are sounds that are each represented by two or three symbols. The characters became homophonous after related sound changes occurred. In the previous stage, Myanmar had final consonants like [k, t, p, m, n, ŋ], which were represented by different characters, including ဝ်, ဝ်, ဝ်, ဝ်, ဝ်, ဝ်, c.
- (6) Final consonants /k, t, p/ in Old Myanmar were later reduced to the glottal stop /ʔ/. Syllables with the glottal stops later show two developmental pathways. On one of them the target syllables retain the glottal-stop final, as in the dialects of Tavoyan and Intha. Along the other pathway, the existence of the glottal stop caused the duration of the vowel to shorten, and the vowel is produced with creaky phonation. The latter development prompted us to propose a fourth tonal category--- the short checked tone (marked with 4 or 44).
- (7) The nasalized rhymes in Yangon developed from rhymes with nasal finals /m, n, ŋ/, which thus gave rise to many homophonous characters. Some nasalized vowels are each represented by three different characters, such as /ã, ã, ã/ in the table above.
- (8) Because the nasalization of rhymes, /ĩ/ is pronounced as /ĩ /, and /ũ/ is pronounced as /ũ /.
- (9) Diphthongs in Myanmar are all falling diphthongs, with the first vowel fully produced before gliding toward (but not necessarily reaching) the target position of the second vowel.
- (10) Therefore, based on the phonetic and phonological characteristics of the modern Yangong dialect of Myanmar, Yangong has only 22 rhymes (while Old Myanmar, with the various consonantal finals, has a substantially larger number of rhymes.)

(1) Monophthongous rhymes in Yangong

Yangong rhymes	examples	Gloss
a	ငါး /ŋa <sup>55</sup> /	fish
i	မီး /mi <sup>55</sup> /	fire
	ချေး /tɕhi <sup>55</sup> /	to borrow
	မြည့် /mji <sup>55</sup> /	taste, try the flavor of
u	လူ /lu <sup>22</sup> /	person
e	သေ /θe <sup>22</sup> /	die
ɛ	သဲ /tθɛ <sup>55</sup> /	sand
ɔ	ပေါ် /pɔ <sup>22</sup> /	appear
o	မိုး /mo <sup>55</sup> /	rain

(2) nasalized vowels

nasalized vowels in Standard Yangong	Examples	Gloss
ã	ပန်း /pã <sup>55</sup> /	flower
	စမ်း /sã <sup>55</sup> /	try, attempt
	ခံ /sã <sup>22</sup> /	role model
ĩ	ဆင် /shĩ <sup>22</sup> /	elephant
	စင် /sĩ <sup>22</sup> /	clean
	စဉ်းစား /sĩ <sup>55</sup> za <sup>55</sup> /	think
	ပင်ပန်း /pi <sup>22</sup> bã <sup>55</sup> /	be tired / fatigued
ũ	ခွန် /zũ <sup>55</sup> /	spoon
	ရွှမ်း /gũ <sup>55</sup> /	cotton
ẽĩ	သိမ်း /tθẽĩ <sup>55</sup> /	keep, gather in, take in
	သိန်း /tθẽĩ <sup>55</sup> /	one hundred thousand
oũ	အားလုံး /a <sup>55</sup> lõ <sup>55</sup> /	all, the whole
	ကုန် /koũ <sup>22</sup> /	finish, be over
	မုန့် /mou <sup>53</sup> /	snack; food other than
	ခေါင်းအုံး /gaũ <sup>55</sup> oũ <sup>55</sup> /	pillow
	စုန်း /oũ <sup>55</sup> /	wizard, sorcerer
aĩ	ဝိုင်း /waĩ <sup>55</sup> /	round
aũ	တောင် /taũ <sup>22</sup> /	mountain

## (3) short checked vowels

Yangong has rhymes checked with the glottal-stop, which caused the vowel preceding it to shorten and be produced with creakiness. We therefore treat syllables with the glottal-stop final as of a separate tonal category. It forms the fourth tonal category, in addition to the three tonal categories that occur on monosyllabic syllables and syllables with a nasal final.

short checked vowels in Yangon	Examples	Gloss
aʔ	အံင် /aŋ <sup>44</sup> /	needle
	ပာင် /paŋ <sup>44</sup> /	twine
ɪʔ	ဆိင် /shiŋ <sup>44</sup> /	joint
uʔ	ကြံင် /tɕuŋ <sup>44</sup> /	crisp, brittle
eiʔ	အိင် /eiŋ <sup>44</sup> /	sleep
	အိင် /eiŋ <sup>44</sup> /	a bowl
ɛʔ	ကြက်သား /tɕɛŋ <sup>44</sup> tθa <sup>55</sup> /	chicken (as food)
	ဖက် /phɛŋ <sup>44</sup> /	embrace, hug
auʔ	ကောက် /kauŋ <sup>44</sup> /	become curved /
	ကောက် /kauŋ <sup>44</sup> /	rice, paddy
ouʔ	မှင် /hmouŋ <sup>44</sup> /	blow
	လှင် /hlouŋ <sup>44</sup> /	shake, tremble
aiʔ	အ မိုက် /ə hmaiŋ <sup>44</sup> /	garbage, rubbish
	ကြိုက် /tɕaiŋ <sup>44</sup> /	like, love
	လိုက် /laiŋ <sup>44</sup> /	chase after

## 1.1.3. Yangon Tones

Modern Myanmar, like most Sino-Tibetan languages, is tonal. Every Myanmar syllable mandatorily comprises an initial, a rhyme, and a tone. Tone distinguishes meanings by modulating pitch in terms of high vs. low, rising vs. falling, levels and contours. Consider က/ka<sup>53</sup>/ ‘to dance’, က/ka<sup>22</sup>/ ‘surround’, ကး/ka<sup>55</sup>/ ‘car’, and ကံင်/kaŋ<sup>44</sup>/ ‘to approach’ in Yangong. Segmentally all these words share the same initial and the same rhyme, but they differ in tonal values, and they thus distinguish meanings. To an extent tones, initials and rhymes condition one another. That is to say, tones can vary with different initials and rhymes.

The tonal system of Myanmar share many features in common with the tonal systems of Chinese, Tibetan and many other minority languages in China. Commonalities can be observed in the emergence and developments of tones, their special features and functions, as well as tonal variations.

The exact number of tonal categories in Myanmar is still a moot point.<sup>2</sup> We propose four tonal categories: high level, low level, high falling, and short checked. The tonal values of these categories are demonstrated in the following table:

tonal categories	low level	high fall	high level	short checked
pitch values	22	53	55	4(or 44)
Examples	မာ/ma <sup>22</sup> / hard	မာ/ma <sup>53</sup> / raise	မာ/ma <sup>55</sup> / 'grand' (particle that indicate magnitude)	မာ/ma <sup>44</sup> / upright
	ပိ/pi <sup>22</sup> / accurate	ပိ/pi <sup>53</sup> / press	ပိ/pi <sup>55</sup> / finish, end	ပိ/pi <sup>44</sup> / shoot
	ကု/ku <sup>22</sup> / help	ကု/ku <sup>53</sup> / cure	ကု/ku <sup>55</sup> / cross (water)	ကု/ku <sup>44</sup> / kill, execute by royal order

Tone markers in Myanmar: Some alphabets in Myanmar writing are dedicated to vowels. Syllables without consonantal initials can be represented only the vowel alphabets. For example, /a<sup>53</sup>/ is represented with အ, /i<sup>53</sup>/ is represented with ခိ, and /u<sup>53</sup>/ is represented with ဝ.

However, in the Myanmar alphabet, tonal distinctions are indicated using an array of diacritics. For example:

Monosyllables and tonal diacritics

Monosyllables	diacritics	High fall	Low Level	high level
a	none	none	၁	၁း
i	placed above	ိ	ိ	ိး
u	placed below	ု	ု	ုး
e	placed before	ေ့	ေ့	ေ့း
ε	placed above and after	ဲ	ဲ	ဲး
o	placed before and after	ေ့	ေ့	ေ့း
o	placed above and below	ိ	ိ	ိး

<sup>2</sup> cf. Wang, Danian. 1997. *Miandianyu Gailun* (An Introduction to Myanmar). p. 55. Beijing : Peking University Press.



In modern Myanmar, a tone can come in a rich array of variants depending on different factors in daily use. The primary factors are the phonetic contexts, grammatical functions, as well as the emotions of the speaker. The most prominent tonal variations as observed in Myanmar are of four kinds: tone sandhi, tone neutralization (in which a tone becomes ‘light’ or de-emphasized), tonal variations in speech flow, and grammatically-induced tonal variations. Tone sandhi is rather common in the Yangon dialect of Modern Myanmar. The primary tone sandhi variations are tone neutralization and the sonorization of voiceless consonants. In Myanmar, voiceless initials come with a high pitch, while voiced initials come with a low pitch. However, since the phenomenon is analyzed as a contrast between voiceless and voiced initials, no new tonal category is proposed, and the said pitch difference is ignored. In Yangong, a very important and common tonal variation is tonal neutralization.

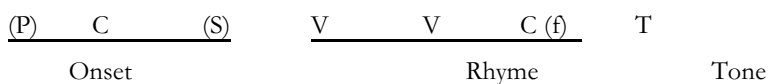
The neutral tone in Myanmar share a lot commonalities with the neutral tone in Mandarin. Mandarin syllables on neutral tone are produced as ‘light’ and short. For example, grammatical words like *le* and *zhe*, as well as suffixes *zi* and *tou* are on neutral tone. Some bisyllabic words have the second syllable produced on neutral tone, such as *fu* in *dài fu* ( ‘doctor, physician’ ) and *fang* in *dì fang* ( ‘place, area’ ). The neutral tone occurs more commonly in Myanmar than in Mandarin. The neutral tone in Myanmar also can only occur in words of two or more syllables. It is a kind of tone-sandhi variation. When a rhyme is on neutral tone, the vowel is always reduced to a schwa [ə]. Consider these examples:

tθi <sup>22</sup> tɕhĩ <sup>55</sup>	→	dðə tɕhĩ <sup>55</sup>	song
bɛ <sup>22</sup> dðu <sup>22</sup>	→	bə dðu <sup>22</sup>	who
kã <sup>53</sup> lã <sup>53</sup> ka <sup>55</sup>	→	kə lə ka <sup>55</sup>	curtain
ja <sup>22</sup> za <sup>53</sup> wĩ <sup>22</sup>	→	ja <sup>22</sup> zə wĩ <sup>22</sup>	history

The neutral tone in Myanmar is not produced on a specific pitch, its surface realization in most cases varies with the tone of the following syllable. If the following syllable is on a high tone, the neutral tone is realized on a high pitch; if the following syllable is on a low tone, the neutral tone is realized on a low pitch. However, whether the neutral tone is realized on high or low pitch does not change the lexical meaning of a word, so its surface pitch variations are not contrastive. We therefore do not specify the pitch value of the neutral tone any more. The neutral tone occurs prevalently in Myanmar, and is worth noting. However, unlike all the other tones, the neutral tone does not combine with onset or rhyme to make up an unseparable whole. For this reason, we do not analyze the neutral tone as standing by itself as a distinct tonal category, but just as a kind of tone sandhi variation.

1.1.4. The syllable structures in Yangon.

The syllable cannon of Yangon is:



Yangon and the other dialects basically share the same syllable cannon, the differences being whether or not the onset contains pre-initials or post-initials, whether the nucleus is a monophthong of a diphthong, whether the final is a glottal stop, one of the other stops, or a nasal.

Many of the sounds in Old Myanmar have changed in Yangon. For example, complex onsets became simplex onsets; stop finals gave rise to the short checked tone; nasal finals caused the nasalization of the vowel preceding them. Modern Yangon has simpler rhymes and syllable construction. Following are the attested syllable structures: (In the following table, V stands for ‘vowel’, C stands for ‘consonant’, and T stands for ‘tone’.)

No.	syllable structures	Examples	Gloss
a	V T	i <sup>22</sup>	this
b	CVT	la <sup>22</sup>	come
c	CCVT	pja <sup>53</sup>	produce, show
d	CCCVT	hmja <sup>53</sup>	even, equal
e	VVT	aũ <sup>22</sup>	victory
f	CVVT	kaũ <sup>55</sup>	good
g	CCVVT	pjaũ <sup>55</sup>	change
h	CVCT	paŋ <sup>44</sup>	surround
i	CVVCT	kauŋ <sup>44</sup>	pick up
j	CCVVCT	pjauŋ <sup>44</sup>	lose, mislay
k	CCCVVCT	hmjauŋ <sup>44</sup>	agitate

#### 1.1.5. Morphology of Yangon

The writing of Myanmar is alphabetic, in which, generally speaking, a character represents a syllable and also a word with its own content meaning. In such cases the number of characters amounts to the number of words. On the other hand, there are characters that have no meaning, nor can they be used freely. Characters with meaning but cannot be used freely represents only morphemes not words. As for characters that have no meaning nor can be used independently, they represent only syllables. For example:

Words composed of two meaningless syllables (i.e., characters):

ရိုသေ	/jo <sup>22</sup> tθe <sup>22</sup> /	‘respect’	တိုက်ရိုက်	/daiŋ <sup>44</sup> jaiŋ <sup>44</sup> /	‘direct’
အာဏာ	/a <sup>22</sup> na <sup>22</sup> /	‘regime’			

သစ်ပင်	/tθiŋ <sup>44</sup> pĩ <sup>22</sup> /	‘tree’	ပန်းပင်	/pã <sup>55</sup> pĩ <sup>22</sup> /	‘flower sprig’
ကောက်ပင်	/kauŋ <sup>44</sup> pĩ <sup>22</sup> /	‘rice plant’			

Based on the nature of composition, words in Myanmar can be divided into mono-morphemic and multi-morphemic types:

(1) Monomorphemic words

A monomorphemic word is composed of one single character, or of two or more syllables that are not separable from each other. For example:

- ① Monosyllabic monomorphemic words:
- |      |                       |        |    |                     |         |
|------|-----------------------|--------|----|---------------------|---------|
| မိုး | /mo <sup>55</sup> /   | ‘rain’ | လူ | /lu <sup>22</sup> / | ‘human’ |
| ခွေး | /khwe <sup>55</sup> / | ‘dog’  |    |                     |         |
- ② Multisyllabic monomorphemic words:
- |          |   |                  |                                       |   |          |
|----------|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|---|----------|
| ဆွေးနွေး | /shwe <sup>55</sup> nwe <sup>55</sup> / | ကြိုးစား         | /tɕo <sup>55</sup> za <sup>55</sup> / | hard-working, exerting                    |          |
| ရတနာ     | /jə də na <sup>22</sup> /               | treasured object | ပြဿနာ                                 | /pja <sup>44</sup> dðə na <sup>22</sup> / | question |

In Modern Myanmar, some disyllabic words show patterns that are also observed in Chinese i.e., words of two syllables that have identical initials or rhymes. For example:

- ① Words of two syllables that have identical initials (but different rhymes)
- |           |  |       |         |                                       |             |
|-----------|--|-------|---------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| ကောင်းကင် | /kaũ <sup>55</sup> ki <sup>22</sup> /  | ‘sky’ | တောက်တဲ | /tau <sup>44</sup> tɛ <sup>44</sup> / | gecko       |
| ဆည်းဆာ    | /shi <sup>55</sup> sha <sup>22</sup> / |       | ညက်ညမ်း | /nɛ <sup>44</sup> nã <sup>55</sup> /  | ‘pollution’ |
- ② Words of two syllables that have identical rhymes (but different initials)
- |            |   |         |           |  |  |
|------------|---|---------|-----------|--|--|
| တိုက်ရိုက် | /dai <sup>44</sup> jai <sup>44</sup> /  | direct  | တန်းလန်း  | /tã <sup>55</sup> lã <sup>55</sup> /   |  |
| ဆွေးနွေး   | /shwe <sup>55</sup> nwe <sup>55</sup> / | discuss | ချင်းနင်း | /tɕhĩ <sup>55</sup> nĩ <sup>55</sup> / |  |

(2) Multi-morphemic words

The majority of words in Myanmar are multi-morphemic. By structuring there are the following types of multi-morphemic words.

① Compounds: A compound is composed of two words. By the interrelations between the components, compounds come in many types.

A. Coordinate Compounds. In these compounds the components are in coordinate construction. For example:

- |            |   |          |        |                                       |             |
|------------|---|----------|--------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| မိတ်ဆွေ    | /mei <sup>44</sup> shwe <sup>22</sup> / | friend   | တောရွာ | /tɔ <sup>55</sup> jwa <sup>22</sup> / | countryside |
| စိုက်ပျိုး | /sai <sup>44</sup> pjo <sup>55</sup> /  | planting | ချမ်း  | /e <sup>55</sup> tɕhã <sup>55</sup> / | tranquility |

B. Subordinate Compounds. One component describes or defines another component. In Myanmar generally it is the former component that modifies the latter, which is the head of the whole noun phrase. For example:

- |         |  |             |        |                                       |        |
|---------|--|-------------|--------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| သံလမ်း  | /tθã <sup>22</sup> lã <sup>55</sup> /  | railway     | ခဲတံ   | /khe <sup>55</sup> dã <sup>22</sup> / | pencil |
| ရှင်းပြ | /tɕĩ <sup>55</sup> pja <sup>53</sup> / | explanation | မီးဖို | /mi <sup>55</sup> pho <sup>22</sup> / | stove  |

Dialects စကား Particles ဝစ္စည်း	Yangon ရန်ကုန်	Merguese မြိတ်	Arakanse ရန်နိုင်း	Tavoya ထားဝယ်	Intha အင်းသာ	Danu ဓနု	Yaw ယော	Taungyo တောင်ရိုး	Hpun ဖွန်း
modal particle သလား	dðə la <sup>55</sup>	fiε <sup>33</sup> la <sup>53</sup>	hou <sup>42?</sup> la <sup>44</sup>	ε <sup>11</sup> bε <sup>42?</sup> wo <sup>11</sup>	woɽ <sup>45</sup> la <sup>53</sup>	hou <sup>32?</sup> pε <sup>53</sup> wo <sup>32/</sup> ε <sup>33</sup> la <sup>53</sup>		shə lo <sup>55</sup>	ho <sup>52?</sup>
modal particle မလား	mə la <sup>55</sup>	mε <sup>33</sup> bε <sup>32</sup> la <sup>53</sup>	pho <sup>42</sup> la <sup>44</sup> mə tθi <sup>42</sup>	lo <sup>11</sup>	fĩ <sup>53</sup> kə lε <sup>53</sup> la <sup>53</sup>	ε <sup>32</sup> la <sup>53</sup>		mə lo <sup>55</sup>	ho <sup>52?</sup>
modal particle ဝါလား	ba <sup>22</sup> la <sup>55</sup>	bε <sup>32</sup>	ja <sup>22</sup> mə la <sup>55</sup>	mjo <sup>44</sup> wε <sup>42?</sup> le <sup>44</sup>	ku <sup>53</sup> p a <sup>31</sup> /p ə le <sup>33</sup>	i <sup>53</sup> pε <sup>34</sup>		pa <sup>32</sup> lo <sup>53</sup>	
modal particle sentence-final interrogative particle content questions လဲ	le <sup>55</sup>	fiε <sup>33</sup>	le <sup>42</sup>	fi <sup>42</sup>	la <sup>53</sup>	oũ <sup>53</sup>	le <sup>44</sup>	la <sup>55</sup>	poŋ <sup>454</sup>
modal particle ( appreciation or complaint ) လိုက်တာ	lar <sup>44</sup> tha <sup>22</sup>	sho <sup>53</sup> bε <sup>53</sup>	lar <sup>42?</sup> te <sup>22</sup>	wo <sup>44</sup> le <sup>42</sup> fiε <sup>11</sup>	pə le <sup>3</sup> 3	lã <sup>32</sup> ka <sup>33</sup> ɔ <sup>53</sup>	lar <sup>42?</sup> tha <sup>11</sup>	li <sup>42</sup> ta <sup>32</sup>	khə mai <sup>22</sup>
modal particle ( emphasis ) တောင် ( ဝင် )	taũ <sup>22</sup>	taũ <sup>33</sup>	daũ <sup>22</sup>	ko <sup>11</sup>	təŋ <sup>33</sup>	taũ <sup>33</sup>	təŋ <sup>11</sup>	təŋ <sup>32</sup>	
Modal particle ဖြစ်ဖြစ်	phjɽ <sup>44</sup> phjɽ <sup>44</sup>	phjɽ <sup>44</sup> phjɽ <sup>44</sup>	phjɽ <sup>44</sup> phjɽ <sup>44</sup> phjɽ <sup>44</sup> phjɽ <sup>44</sup>	phjɽ <sup>44</sup> phjɽ <sup>44</sup>	hn̩ <sup>31</sup> hn̩ <sup>31</sup>	n̩ <sup>32</sup> n̩ <sup>3</sup> 2		phəler? phəler?	
Modal particle	ne <sup>55</sup> ne <sup>55</sup>	ne <sup>53</sup> ne <sup>53</sup>		ne <sup>44</sup> ne <sup>44</sup>	ne <sup>53</sup> n e <sup>53</sup>	ne <sup>53</sup> ne <sup>53</sup>		na <sup>55</sup> na <sup>55</sup>	shi <sup>454</sup> s hai <sup>22</sup>

Dialects စကား Particles ဝစ္စည်း	Yangon ရန်ကုန်	Merguese မြိတ်	Arakanse ရန်ခိုင်	Tavoya ထားဝယ်	Intha အင်းသာ	Danu စနေ	Yaw ယော	Taungyo တောင်ရိုး	Hpun ဖွန်း
နံနံ		၇၉ <sup>33</sup>							
Modal particle ရအောင်၊ရို့	ja <sup>53</sup> aũ <sup>22</sup> / zo <sup>53</sup>	ja <sup>32</sup> aũ <sup>33</sup>	gaŋ <sup>33</sup> me <sup>22</sup>	zo <sup>42</sup>	ja <sup>31</sup> ၁၇ 33	mə la <sup>53</sup>	၁၇ <sup>11</sup>	jɔ <sup>42</sup> θ̃ <sup>32</sup>	re <sup>51</sup> je <sup>51</sup> ʏe <sup>51</sup> xe <sup>51</sup> 1
Reduplication ချဉ်တင်တင်	tɕhĩ <sup>22</sup> fĩ <sup>22</sup> fĩ <sup>22</sup>	tɕhĩ <sup>33</sup> fĩ <sup>33</sup> fĩ <sup>33</sup>	tɕha <sup>42</sup> tɕhaĩ <sup>22</sup> tɕha <sup>42</sup> tɕhaĩ <sup>22</sup> ne <sup>42</sup>	ɕĩ <sup>44</sup> ɕĩ <sup>11</sup> hi <sup>11</sup> na <sup>42</sup>	tɕĩ <sup>33</sup> fĩ <sup>33</sup> fĩ <sup>33</sup>	tɕĩ <sup>33</sup> sou <sup>32?</sup> sou <sup>32?</sup> hĩ <sup>32</sup>		gə leĩ <sup>33</sup> teĩ <sup>33</sup> teĩ <sup>33</sup> na <sup>32</sup>	
Reduplication ငြိမ်ငြိမ်နေပါ	nɛĩ <sup>22</sup> nɛĩ <sup>22</sup> ne <sup>22</sup> ba <sup>22</sup>	nɛĩ <sup>33</sup> nɛĩ <sup>33</sup> ɲe <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>33</sup> tɕi <sup>32</sup>	i <sup>44</sup> lo <sup>42</sup> tθa <sup>22</sup> ni <sup>22</sup> ba <sup>22</sup>	nã <sup>33</sup> ɲi <sup>55</sup> ɲi <sup>53</sup> ne <sup>33</sup> wɔ <sup>31</sup>	nɛĩ <sup>33</sup> nɛĩ <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>33</sup> w ɔ <sup>53</sup>	nɛĩ <sup>33</sup> nɛĩ <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>33</sup> tɕe <sup>32</sup>	nɛĩ <sup>32</sup> nɛĩ <sup>32</sup> ne <sup>11</sup> ba <sup>11</sup>	ɲi <sup>32</sup> ɲi <sup>32</sup> ni <sup>32</sup> pa <sup>32</sup>	
particle (plural marker on nouns) နှ+တို့	do <sup>53</sup>	lo <sup>32</sup>	ro <sup>42</sup>	wɔ <sup>44</sup> le <sup>1</sup> 1	loŋ <sup>45</sup>	to <sup>32</sup>	te <sup>11</sup>	tu <sup>42</sup>	te <sup>51</sup>
particle ( plural marker on verbs) က+ကြ	tɕa <sup>53</sup>	tɕa <sup>32</sup>	ga <sup>42?</sup>	le <sup>42</sup> /ke 42	tɕa <sup>31</sup>	tɕa <sup>32</sup>	tɕa <sup>42</sup>	tɕɔ <sup>42</sup>	
particle တ	da <sup>22</sup>	za <sup>33</sup>	sɔ <sup>44</sup>	fiɛ <sup>11</sup>	fiã <sup>33</sup>	fiã <sup>33</sup>	tha <sup>11</sup>	da <sup>32</sup>	
particle မှ	hma <sup>22</sup>	leĩ <sup>32</sup> me <sup>33</sup>	pho <sup>42</sup>	ho <sup>42</sup>	ma <sup>11</sup>	ma <sup>33</sup>	ma <sup>11</sup>	hma <sup>32</sup>	

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