

Certification course for Myanmar Language Studies:

“Language and society in Myanmar and beyond”

July 26 - August 20, 2021

Mo, We, Fr 2pm - 3pm (Myanmar time)

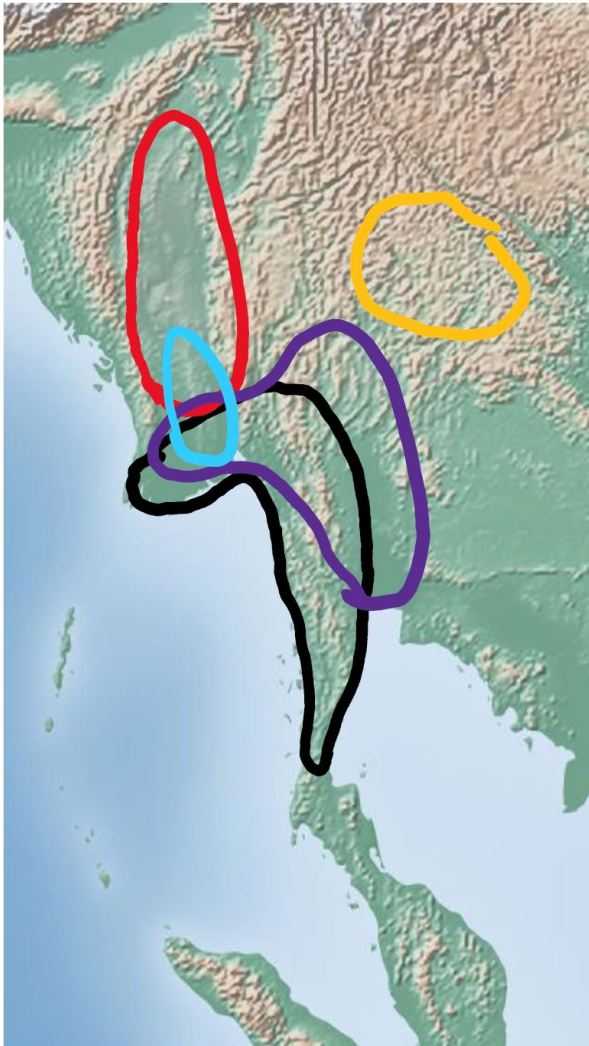
Lesson 9: Multilingualism and language contact - Myanmar

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Languages of Myanmar - some history



11th century



21th century

Burmese

Pyu

Mon

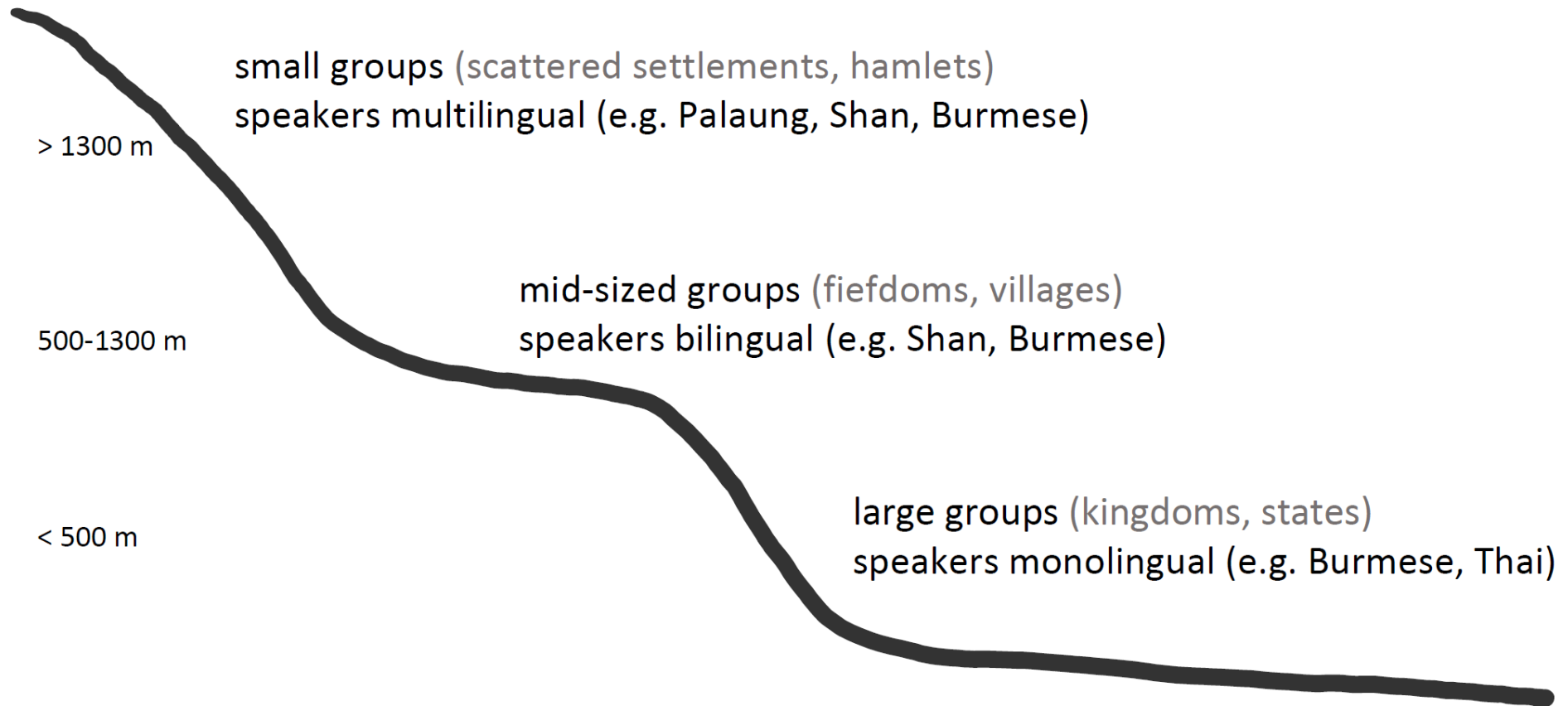
Karen, Pa-O

Shan, Khamti, Khuen

Gorakha, Rohingya

+Pali, English, Chinese

To recall ... topography and social groups



Social and geographical hierarchies

Spread Zones (lowlands)

central languages

high prestige

standardized, literary

large numbers of L2 speakers

L1 speakers monolingual

hierarchical society

lowlands, valleys

wet rice cultivation, vegetables

Residual Zones (mountains)

peripheral languages

low prestige

non-standardized, oral

no L2 speakers

L1 speakers multilingual

egalitarian society

highlands, mountains

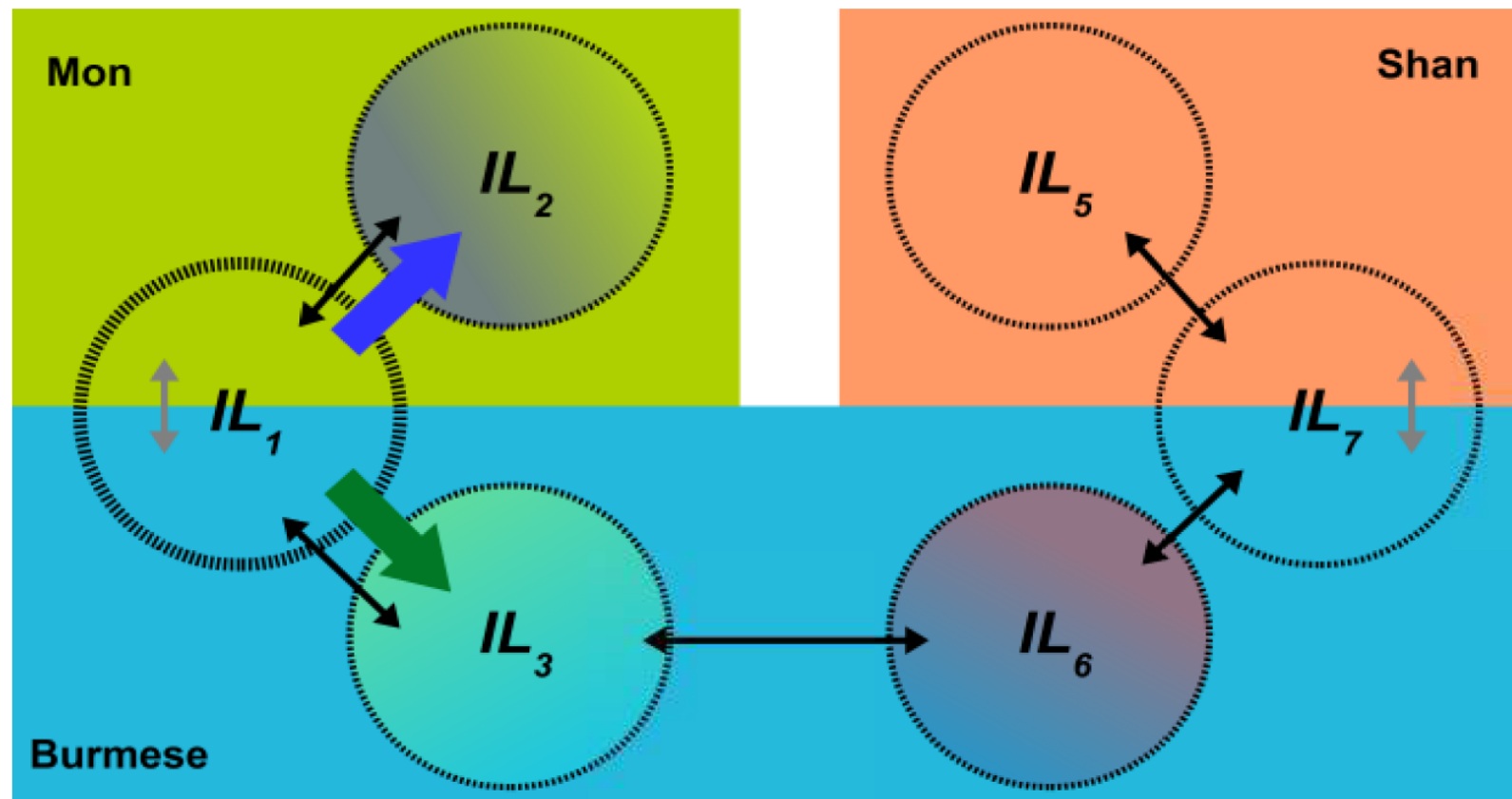
dry rice, vegetables, fruit, forest products

Nichols, Johanna. 1996. *Linguistic diversity in space and time*. 1992. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Scott, James C. 2009. *The art of not being governed. An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.

Spread of linguistic features in contact scenarios

“A language is a heterogeneous population of idiolects.” (Mufwene 2009)



Examples of contact scenarios in Myanmar:

1. Shan

Spoken in small towns and villages on the high plateau

Farming, trade

Traditionally Buddhist, literate since around the 15th century (?)

Formerly dominant language of a wider area covering Shan and parts of Kachin States and Sagaing Region

Shan as subordinate language – influence from Burmese

	Shan		Burmese		orthogr.	Loan type
‘left (over)’	<i>kjàn</i>	ကျၢ်ဆံး,	<i>can</i>	ကျန်	<kyan>	phonetic
‘long time’	<i>kjà</i>	ကျၢ်,	<i>ca</i>	ကြာ	<krā>	phonetic
‘document’	<i>kjà</i>	ကျၢ်,	<i>sa</i>	စာ	<cā>	orthographic
‘ordinary’	<i>jó</i>	ယူဝ်း	<i>jò</i>	ရိုး	<riuḥ>	phon (recent)
‘matter’	<i>ʔalé</i>	ကလေး	<i>ʔajè</i>	အရေး	<areḥ>	orthographic
‘train’	<i>rat^há</i>	ရထား	<i>jat^hà</i>	ရထား	<rathāḥ>	orthographic (< Pali)
‘use’	<i>súnj</i>	သုင်း	<i>ʔòun</i>	သုံး	<sumḥ>	phonetic (early)

Old Burmese forms conserved in Shan:

cā, areḥ, rathāḥ, sumḥ, wamḥ

Shan as subordinate language – influence from Thai

	Shan		Thai		
‘politics’	<i>kǎn-mýŋ</i>	ၵၢၼ်ႈမိၼ်း	<i>ka:n-muəŋ</i>	การเมือง	
‘official’	<i>cew-na.ti</i>	လင်းဆူးတီး	<i>câ:w-nâ:.tʰî:</i>	เจ้าหน้าที่	
‘reveal’	<i>pùt-pʰǎj</i>	ပိုတ်, ဗိုလ်	<i>pɤ:t-pʰǎj</i>	เปิดเผย	
‘fight’	<i>tò.su</i>	တေႃးသူး	<i>tò:-sû:</i>	ต่อสู้	
‘since’	<i>teŋ.tè</i>	တင်းငတ,	<i>tâŋ.tè</i>	ตั้งแต่	
‘chairman’	<i>náj.jôk</i>	ဆီးယုၼ်.	<i>na:jók</i>	นายก	(< Pali)
‘association’	<i>səməkʰóm</i>	သမူးခွမ်း	<i>səma:kʰom</i>	สมาคม	(< Pali)

Loans from Northern Thai or Standard Thai:

cew na.ti < Northern Thai

səməkʰóm < Standard Thai (Bangkok)

Shan as dominant language – traces in Pa-O

	Pa-O	Shan	
‘cave’	<i>t^hâm</i>	<i>t^hem</i>	ထမ်း
‘lake’	<i>t^hì nòη</i>	<i>nêm-năη</i>	ဆမ်.ဆွင်
‘love’	<i>rák</i>	<i>hêk</i>	ရှ်း
‘lift up’	<i>jùk</i>	<i>jôk</i>	ယုၼ်း
‘pick up, collect’	<i>kép</i>	<i>kép</i>	ဂိပ်း
‘tell a story’	<i>k^hrái nè</i>	<i>k^hej-ně</i>	ခိးငဆ

Old Shan forms conserved in Pa-O:

rák

k^hrái

Shan as dominant language – traces in Palaung (Shwe)

Traditionally literate in Shan, more recently Burmese, some in Palaung

	Shwe	Shan	
‘lady’	<i>nan</i>	<i>nán</i>	ဆၢင်း
‘palace’	<i>hɔ</i>	<i>hǎ</i>	မ္ၚၢ
‘arrive’	<i>rɔt</i>	<i>hot</i>	ၵၢဝ်း
‘love’	<i>rek</i>	<i>hêk</i>	ၵၢၼ်
‘follow’	<i>ɰm</i>	<i>cóm</i>	လွမ်း
‘swim’	<i>lɔj</i>	<i>lój</i>	လွဲး
‘able’ (< ‘win’)	<i>pɛ</i>	<i>pê</i>	ပု
‘become’	<i>pɛn</i>	<i>pěn</i>	ပိခ်

Old Shan forms conserved in Palaung:

rek

rɔt

ɰm

Shan as dominant language – traces in Jinghpaw (Kachin)

	Jinghpaw	Shan		
‘market’	<i>kat</i>	<i>kàt</i>	ၵၢတ်,	
‘food market’	<i>khau kat</i>	<i>kàt k^hew</i>	ၵၢတ်ခဝ်း	
‘oil’	<i>nam man</i>	<i>nêm-mén</i>	ဆမ်.မဆ်း	
‘ghost’	<i>hpi</i>	<i>p^hĩ</i>	ပဗီ	
‘pagoda’	<i>kawngmu</i>	<i>kóng.mú</i>	ၵွင်းမူး	(< Burmese)
‘Lord, Buddha’	<i>hpra</i>	<i>p^hrá</i>	ပြေး	(< Burmese)
‘king’	<i>khawkham</i>	<i>k^hũn hǎ-k^hém</i>	ခုဆ်ငှါခမ်း	
‘soldier’	<i>luksuk</i>	<i>luk-súk</i>	လုဂ်းသိုဂ်း	
‘town’	<i>mung</i>	<i>mýŋ</i>	မိုင်း	

Example 2: Mon

Lowlands, former kingdom with large population

Farming, trade

Spoken in a wide area in Lower Burma and Thailand

Traditionally Buddhist

Literate since 6th century

Old Mon and Bagan Burmese

Old/Middle Mon		Burmese		gloss	
Cultural lexicon					
<i>kindoʔ/kinḍoʔ</i>	ကိန္နောအ်	<i>gadó</i>	ကန်တော့	‘beg pardon’	
<i>pūjāw</i>	ပူဇော်	<i>puzə</i>	ပူဇော်	‘worship’	(< Pali)
<i>kanā</i>	ကနာ	<i>kənà</i>	ကနား	‘pavilion’	
<i>clēc, clac</i>	စေ့စ်	<i>saliʔ</i>	စလစ်	‘flame ornament’	
<i>tāl</i>	တာလ်	<i>ta</i>	တာ	‘7 cubits’	
Grammatical morphemes					
<i>mā</i>	မာ	<i>hma</i>	မှာ	‘TOPIC marker’	
<i>tūn</i>	တူန်	<i>toun</i>	တုံ	‘particle for ALTERNATING act’	
<i>taʔ</i>	တံ	<i>tó</i>	တို့	‘PLURAL suffix’	
<i>lew</i>	လေဝ်	<i>lè</i>	လည်း။ လဲ	‘ADDITIVE particle’	

Mon and southern Burmese (Mon and Kayin States)

Overall dominant language: Burmese

→ Mon speak Burmese, Burmese don't speak Mon

Observed mutual linguistic influence:

- Numerous lexical loans from Burmese in Mon (as expected)
- No lexical loans from Mon in local Burmese (as expected)
- Syntactic influence on local Burmese from Mon (unexpected)

Standard Burmese

tɕəŋə mə-pjə̀-daʔ-pʰù.

1M NEG-speak-able-NEG

ကျွန်တော်မပြောတတ်ဘူး။

Local Burmese

tɕəŋə pjə̀ mǝ-taʔ-pʰù.

1M speak NEG-able-NEG

ကျွန်တော်ပြောမတတ်ဘူး။

Mon

ʔuǝ hɔm hùʔ-lèp pùh

1SG speak NEG-able NEG

အဲဟိုဟွံလေပ်ပုတ်။

‘I don’t know what to say.’, ‘I can’t speak.’

→ Modal *taʔ* ‘be able’ in southern Burmese as free form like in Mon

Standard Burmese

ʃí-go pjə-zəja mə-lo-bù.

3.DEP-OBJ speak-GRNDV NEG-need-NEG

သူ့ကိုပြောစရာမလိုဘူး။

Local Burmese

ʃí-go mə-pjə-tʰí-bù

3.DEP-OBJ NEG-speak-touch-NEG

သူ့ကိုမပြောထိဘူး။

Mon

hùʔ-təh həm kə dɛh.

NEG-touch speak give 3

ဟုံဒးဟိုကိုဧံ။

‘You don’t have to tell it to him.’

→ Modal use of *tʰí* ‘touch’ > ‘have to’ in southern Burmese like in Mon

Standard Burmese	<i>ʔame</i>	<i>ʔà-go</i>	<i>zè</i>	<i>ʔwà</i>	<i>kʰàin-dɛ.</i>
	mother	son-OBJ	market	go	order-NFUT
	အမေ သားကို ဈေးသွားခိုင်းတယ်။				

Colloquial Burmese	<i>ʔame</i>	<i>ʔà-go</i>	<i>zè</i>	<i>pè</i>	<i>ʔwà-dɛ.</i>
	mother	son-OBJ	market	give	go-NFUT
	အမေ သားကို ဈေးပေးသွားတယ်။				

Mon	<i>mìʔ</i>	<i>kɒ</i>	<i>kon</i>	<i>ʔa</i>	<i>pʰja.</i>
	mother	give	offspring	go	market
	မိကိုးကောန်အဖျာ။				

‘The mother allows/tell her son to go to the market.’

→ Causative use of *pè* ‘give’ > ‘let, allow’ in preverbal position

Contact scenario

Burmese culturally and politically dominant → Mon speak Burmese as L2

Burmese high prestige language → no Mon loans in Burmese

Mon numerically dominant → L2 features spread to L1

Matter replication: **Burmese (high prestige)** > **Mon (low prestige)**

Pattern replication: **L2 speakers (Mon)** > **L1 speakers (Burmese)**

L2 (Burmese) > L1 (Mon)

[depending on proficiency in L2]

Note: Situation was reverse 1000 years ago!

Summing up

- **Pattern replication can go from $H > L$ and from $L > H$**

Depending on demographic and social factors

Tells about intensity of contact (number and proficiency of L2 speakers)

Not conscious → not stigmatized

- **Matter replication goes from $H > L$**

Tells about hierarchical structure

Time of contact (shape of loans)

Kind of contact (semantic domains)

- **Language is a social-cultural artefact, and as such an integral part of the cultural identity**
- **The status and profile of a language is never stable**
- **All languages are the product of their history, which in most cases includes contact**
- **The history of the social relations of the communities is reflected in direction, form, and semantic domains of loanwords**

In the next lesson, we'll have a look at the role and fate of non-national languages around the world.