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16 Psycho-collocational expressives in Burmese

Alice Vittrant

1 Introduction

Burmese as part of the Mainland Southeast Asia linguistic area shares many linguistic features with other related and unrelated-related languages of the area. Since Henderson (1965) noticed striking similarities between Southeast Asian languages, Mainland Southeast Asia (henceforth MSEA) has been recognized as a *Sprachbund* (Migliazzia 1996; Matisoff 2001; Enfield 2005; Vittrant 2010) or a ‘zone of structural convergence’ (Bisang 2006). The features shared belong to different domains (cf., Bisang 1991, 1996; Clark 1989; Matisoff 1986, 1991, for details). ‘Expressive’ is one of these features, at the crossroad of the phonetic, morphosyntactic, and semantic domains. This feature also illustrates the aesthetic components of the grammar of MSEA languages, being a productive and significant device to express emotion, feelings, and mental states in these languages. Two kinds of expressive are found in MSEA languages: elaborate expressions and psycho-collocations. The purpose of this chapter is to present Burmese psycho-collocations, focusing on their forms, their syntactic behaviours, their similarities and differences with psycho-collocations in other languages of the area.

2 About expressives or how to express emotional phenomena

2.1 *What is an expressive?*

Many languages of the world have a lexical category referred to as expressives (Fudge 1970), phonaesthetics (Henderson 1965¹), or ideophones to refer to noise, animal cries, mental states, physical states, and actions. Expressives may be divided in sub-categories. For instance Antilla (1977) distinguished three classes of words: ‘onomatopoetic’ for words describing animal cries and noise, ‘descriptive’ for those referring to physical states and actions, and ‘affective’ for

¹ Henderson (1965) labeled ‘phonaesthetic’ words for descriptive noises and sudden darting movement (instead of onomatopoetic).

mental states words; whereas Diffloth (1972, 1976², 2001) defines ideophones and onomatopoeic as sub-classes of 'expressives'. Expressive is sometimes considered as a distinguished part-of-speech category. Most recently, Potts et al. (2009) have discussed expressives as a class of emotive morphemes, words, and constructions.

However they are labelled, expressive words have a tendency in a wide range of languages to be associated with structural and phonological peculiarities, although these are not sufficient conditions for defining this category cross-linguistically. For instance, Henderson (1965: 460) evokes secondary phonological pattern of 'affective' language whereas Mithun (1984)³ notices that expressives are 'particularly resistant to regular phonetic change'.

As for the syntactic patterns exhibited by expressives, Clark (1996: 535) and Goddard (2008: 89) point out the non-standard or reverse order of components in expressive compounds. Jaisser (1990: 160) reports on syntactic device for differentiating the locus of emotion from a single organ in Hmong language, whereas Diffloth (1972, 1976) and Mithun (1984) noted unusual syntactic properties of these expressives.⁴

Expressives are regularly omitted in grammars, and generally neglected although they constitute a fundamental word class in many Asian languages. They are however extremely difficult to elicit in the field as noted by Diffloth (2001: 267).⁵ They indeed rarely appear in declarative and neutral speech as they represent an attempt by the speaker to transmit a sensation to the hearer as

² Diffloth (1976: 264): 'Onomatopoeic forms are those displaying acoustic symbolism and having syntactic and morphological properties totally different from those of verbs and nouns. *Ideophones* are words displaying phonological symbolism of any kind (acoustic, articulatory, structural) and having distinct morphosyntactic properties; ideophones include onomatopoeic forms as a subclass. *Expressives* have the same morphosyntactic properties than ideophones, but their symbolism, if such exists, is not necessarily phonological; expressives contain ideophones as a subclass.'

³ Expressive words found in related Iroquoian languages do not exhibit the expected sound correspondences for cognates.

⁴ Diffloth (1972: 445) noticed unusual negative properties in negative sentences containing ideophones, a 'morphology that is semantically and formally unlike anything found in nouns and verbs' (1976: 251); whereas, Mithun (1984: 50) wrote about Iroquoian languages: 'Expressive terms are characterized by special syntactic, morphological . . . patterns. Their syntactic patterns are quite limited. They do not enter into the same kinds of grammatical constructions as other lexical items. Instead, they occur either as complete, independent utterances, or as the objects of a verb like *say*.'

⁵ Diffloth (2001: 267): '*De façon plus générale, comment faire pour récolter les expressifs? Il serait toujours possible de oser une question du genre: "Y a-t-il un mot comme XXX? . . . On pourra aussi pêcher au hasard et demander à satiété: "Quel expressif, quel mot utiliseriez-vous si vous voulez transmettre la sensation x, l'impression y, z, etc.," en suggérant peut-être divers contextes. L'interrogé restera en général perplexe. . . Il faut donc guetter les expressifs, les attraper au vol; mais dans le feu de l'action et de la discussion animée où ils naissent, qui aurait le culot d'interrompre tout le monde afin de pouvoir vérifier une voyelle, un sens, une intention?'*

directly as language allows. This is why they may sometimes be considered interjections (see Headley 1977).

In this paper, expressives are considered to be idiomatic forms that display special phonological and structural properties with often a 'direct' or 'unmediated' relation to meaning.

2.2 *Expressives and body-part terms*

According to Wierzbicka (1999), who looks for universal parameters in the definition of emotions and their linguistics coding, all languages describe emotions, to a certain degree, via bodily symptoms (blush) or sensations (feeling hot as a reaction to an emotional situation). Body is also central in decoding other people's emotions: there is a range of physiological characteristics such as smiles, eyebrow shapes by which we judge if a person is happy, sad, etc. The human body is moreover frequently used as metaphorical source domain across languages (Fedry 1976; Vandeloise 1986; Sweetser 1990). Therefore, body parts, either internal or external, may easily be conceptualized as the locus of emotions and mental states. As such, they are regularly invoked in the description of these processes. This is particularly true for East and Southeast languages as noted by Matisoff (1986a), Clark (1996), Wayland (1996), Yu (2002), Musgrave (2006), and Compton (2007 inter al.).

Example (1) contains an internal body-part term and illustrates a mental state. Emotions are expressed with internal body-part terms in examples (2), (3), and (4b) and with external body-part terms in (4a) and (5).

- (1) HMONG from Jaisser (1990: 167)
- a. nkag **siab**
 crawl **liver**
 'to understand (lit. to crawl into the liver)'
- b. txiav **siab**
 cut **liver**
 'to decide, make a decision'
- (2) WOLOF from Becher (2003) [cited by Verhoeven (2007:92)]
- Sama **xol** dafa tang
 POSS.1.SG **heart** SUBJ.3.SG be hot
 'I am angry. (lit. : 'my heart is hot)'
- (3) KAMBERA from Klamer (2002: 369)
- mbaha – naya – ka na **eti** – na na maramba
 be.wet – 3SG.SUBJ – PERF ART **liver-** 3SG.POSS ART king
 'The king is pleased.' (lit. : The king's liver is wet.)

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- (4) CHINESE from Yu (2002)
- a. hui – **tu** tu – **lian**
grey/dusty – **head** earthy – **face**
'(dial) dejected; despondent, depressed'
- b. **gan** – **chang** yu – duan
liver – **intestines** about.to split
'be heartbroken; be deeply grieved'
- (5) Burmese⁶
- a. ခြေခံလက်ခံ ။
c^he² – naiN² – lɛʔ – naiN²
foot CAN **hand** CAN
'within one's means or capacity'
- b. လက်လွယ် ။
lɛʔ – lwɛ²
hand free
'generous, open-handed'
- (6) THAI from Matisoff (1986a: 41, 45)
- a. dii n'ya dii caj
good flesh good heart, breath
'glad, delighted'
- b. caj hãaj caj khwâm
heart, breath vanish **id.** overturn
'get scared out of one's wits'

1.3 *Expressives in Asia: elaborate expressions and psycho-collocations*

In many Asian languages, expressives appear with a specific form, intermediate in structure between ordinary compound and reduplication. Known as 'elaborate expressions', a term coined by Mary Haas (1964) talking about Thai literary four-syllables expressions, this type of construction is typical of East and Southeast Asian languages. Matisoff (1973: 81) describes them as a 'compound containing four (usually monosyllabic) elements, of which either the first and

⁶ About Burmese transcription: my phonemic transcription roughly follows Bernot's (1980) proposal, with some minor changes for tones and diphthongs. Tones are indicated by superscript numbers at the end of the syllable: [1] stands for brief, high and creaky tone; [2] stands for long, low and breathy tone; [3] stands for long, clear, high-falling tone. The fourth tone corresponds to a glottal stop. Atonal (and unmarked) syllables may appear in disyllabic words with [ə] as the main vowel. Capital letters stand for stops that can be realized as voiced or unvoiced depending on the phonological (and morphosyntactic) context. Most of the grammatical morphemes start with a capital letter, given that they are usually (but not always) syntactically closely related to the preceding morpheme.

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 are usually referred to as an ‘elaborate couplet’, i.e. a pair of phonologically different but roughly synonymous or antonymic morphemes that conventionally appear together. The same couplet may appear in a large number of different expressives, simply by varying the reduplicated element. Examples (7) and (8) from Burmese provide illustrations.

- (7a) မနီး မဝေး ။
 mən – ni³ – mən – wɛ³
 NEG close NEG far
 ‘not so far, (to be) at a good distance’
- (7b) အတော် အတန် ။
 ʔə -tə² ʔə -taN²
 NMLZ -be sufficient, fit NMLZ -be worth, fit
 ‘fairly, moderately’
- (8a) ခြေချော်လက်ချော် ။
 c^he² - C^hɔ̄² - lɛʔ - C^hɔ̄²
foot miss **hand** miss
 ‘accidentally, inadvertently’
- (8b) ခြေစလက်စ ။
 c^he² - Sa¹ - lɛʔ - Sa¹
foot begin **hand** begin
 ‘aptitude, qualification’

Although elaborate quadrisyllabic expressions may be characteristic of formal speech in some languages such as Thai, they are part of everyday language in others such as Hmong languages (Jaisser 1990: 160) or Dong, a Tai-Kadai language spoken in China (Gerner 2004, 2005). They usually function as adverbials, but as shown by the Burmese and Hmong examples, respectively (8b) and (9b), they may form nominal compounds or other parts of speech.

- (9) HMONG (Mortensen 2003)
- a. nrawm – caj nrawm – tuag
 fast alive fast dead
 ‘very quickly’
- b. ntxhais – um ntxhais – tswv
 girl official girl lord
 ‘princess’

However, the psycho-collocation is another kind of expressive found regularly in Asian languages, containing body-part or organ terms and expressing

emotional states and other mental activities. As psycho-collocations are at the core of this chapter, the next sections will be dedicated to this second kind of expressive. Section 2 presents the phenomenon and its important place in Asian languages and Section 3 is dedicated to the phenomenon in Burmese, highlighting its peculiarities in this language.

2 About psycho-collocations

2.1 Defining psycho-collocation

The ‘psycho-collocation’ areal feature, described for a number of MSEA languages (Matisoff 1986b; Jaisser 1990; Oey 1990; Clark 1996; VanBik 1998), refers to a collocation, i.e. a conventionalized combination of words that may become idiomatic to differing degrees. These polymorphemic expressions make an explicit reference to body parts or organs as the locus of emotions or psychological states. The term ‘psycho-collocation’ was coined by Matisoff (1986) to describe expressions that involve metaphorical uses of high frequency adjectives (or verbs) explicitly collocated with person part terms to refer to psychological phenomenon.

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. (Matisoff, 1986a: 7).

Psycho-collocations may be classified from several points of view; (1) semantic, (2) morphological, or (3) syntactic. The following features may be used to distinguish different sub-types of psycho-collocations:

1. – the particular kind of mental activity that the collocation refers to (cf. Matisoff 1986a: 7ff),
 - the physical or metaphorical states (Clark 1989),
 - the type of psycho-noun : body part or abstract noun (VanBik 1998);
2. – the part of speech of the psycho-noun, i.e. common noun or nominalized verb (VanBik 1998);
3. – the syntactic status of the psycho-noun, i.e. subject or object of the predicate (Matisoff 1986: 11), (Goddard 2008: 89),
 - the compositionality or non-compositionality of the expressions (Bickel 1997: 141ff),
 - the status of the expression: compound or incorporation (Clark 1989).

2.2 *Psycho-collocation in Asian languages*

Metaphorical expressions involving body parts or organs are found in many of the world's languages (English: 'Take **heart**' to one's **heart's** content; big-**hearted**, French: '*sans cœur*' (heartless); *écœuré* (be disgusted, be sicken); *cœur d'artichaut* (someone who falls in love with every girl/boy he/she meets); '*avoir les foies* [liver]' (to be scared to death), Spanish 'echar los higados [liver] (to sweat one's guts out)). In the major European languages (French, English among others), the expression of mental activities or emotional states is typically treated as a covert class: nothing in the words '*espérer*'/hope, or '*furieux*'/angry, or '*heureux*'/happy tell us they refer to psychological or mental phenomena.

On the other hand, Asian and MSEA languages tend to treat the expression of emotional and mental states or processes much more like an overt class. When describing physical and emotional feelings, i.e. psychological phenomena, Southeast Asian languages (and to a certain extent East Asian languages⁷) commonly use a distinctive construction consisting of a body-part term and a stative/adjective verb; a construction that has been labelled a 'psycho-collocation',⁸ by Matisoff (1986a). Although these 'body part-adjective' expressions may be seen as part of an universal metaphorical tendency – closely related to French expressions such as '*avoir le sang chaud*'/'hot-blooded,' *avoir le cœur gros*'/'fat-hearted', there seems to be a qualitative difference in the extremes to which MSEA⁹ languages carry this tendency: most of these languages cannot express mental activities, emotion, or character features without referring to a body part, as noted by VanBik (1998: 227) about Lai, a Tibeto-Burman language of Burma: 'Psycho-collocations are essential in the daily use of Lai. It is impossible to discuss the life of the mind without them.'

This construction is widespread in all languages of the area whatever the linguistic family they belong to. It is therefore found in Sino-Tibetan languages (ST), Tai-Kadai languages (TK), Hmong-Mien languages (HM), Austroasiatic languages (AA), and Austronesian (AN) languages, as shown by examples

⁷ See for instance Yoon (2003) on uses of *maum* ('heart, mind') in Korean as in *마음이 가다* (*maumi kata*: lit. *maum* goes): 'tend to be attracted'.

⁸ Psycho-collocations constructions are also known as 'experiential collocation' (Verhoeven 2007), or compositional and non-compositional collocations (Bickel 1997).

⁹ This is particularly true for languages of Mainland Southeast Asia, and under discussion for the insular languages, such as those of the Western Malayo-Polynesian grouping. While Oey (1990) illustrates the phenomenon for Malay, Musgrave (2006) reports about two constructions types for emotions predicates in the area. According to the latter author, Western Malayo-Polynesian (Indonesian, Balinese) typically uses simple predicates to denote emotional states, whereas Eastern Indonesian languages use complex predicates involving body-part terms. However, Donahue (2004: 223) demonstrates the pervasiveness of the construction in Western Malayo-Polynesian languages.

(10)–(14). This construction is also known as one of the numerous features shared by languages of the MSEA Sprachbund. However it does exist in SEA languages of the islands such as Bahasa Indonesia, Malay (Oey 1990; Goddard 2008; Siahaan 2008), and in languages belonging to the Papuan linguistic family (cf. Klamer 2002; Musgrave 2006; Gaby 2008).

- (10) Sino-Tibetan
 a. LAI (VanBik 1998: 213)
 ka – luŋ – na – tliŋ
 1SG.POSS-**heart** -3SG.OBJ-complete
 ‘I am satisfied.’ (lit.) : *My heart is complete*
- b. BURMESE
 ဝမ်းသာတယ် ။
 waN³ θa² Te²
belly pleasant REAL
 ‘(I) am pleased.’
- c. BELHARE (Bickel 1997: 143)
 a-niuta ta-he
 1sg.poss-**mind** activate-pt
 ‘I am pleased.’
- (11) Tai-Kadai
 a. THAI (from Jenny to appear)
 thuùk – cay
 correct – **heart**
 ‘please, satisfy’
- b. SHAN¹⁰
- (2) t^huk² tsau
 be suitable – **mind**
 ‘be pleased, be pleased with, like’
- (12) Austroasiatic
 a. MON (from Jenny to appear)
 cət – kle?
heart – short’
 ‘short tempered’
- b. WA (from Watkins to appear)
 ?ət – r^həm
heart – salty
 ‘angry’

¹⁰ From the online version of Dr J. N. Cushing’s Shan-English Dictionary (1881, Rangoon) <http://sealang.net/shan/>.

- (13) Hmong-Mien
 a. HMONG from Jaisser (1990: 159, 163)
 (3) tus kwv mas siab ncjag
 CLF younger brother TOP liver straight
 ‘Youngest brother, you are honest.’ (lit.) : Younger brother, (your) liver is straight.
 b. siab – luv
 liver – short
 ‘impatient, short tempered’
- (14) Austronesian
 a. MALAY from Donahue (2004: 223)
 saya hati senang
 1SG **liver** content
 ‘I am content’
 b. NIAS from Laiya 1985 (cited by Donahue 2004)
 a-fōkhō tōdō nia khō-gu
 STAT-sick **liver** 3SG.GEN DAT-1SG.GEN
 ‘He is jealous of me.’

To sum up, whatever language is studied, psycho-collocation constructions are always peculiar in terms of their structure, conveying either figurative or metaphorical meanings. However, studies of the phenomenon bring out two opposite properties of these psycho-collocations: there is cross-cultural or universal status of the metaphors involved in these psycho-collocations while there are also culture-specific ways of combining psycho-nouns and psycho-mates, i.e. body-part terms and predicates.

The conceptualization of body parts or organs as the locus of emotional and mental activities reveals different cultural models, derived sometimes from cultural tradition or ethnic religious beliefs (Siahaan 2008: 48): every language has its favourite location for psychological states and feelings, either the heart as in English and Thai (see example (11a)), the liver as in Malay and Hmong (see examples (14a) and (13)), or the guts or the stomach as in Vietnamese (see example (15)).

- (15) VIETNAMESE (from Clark 1996: 538)
 Nàng đau lòng lắm
 3SG sick intestines/guts very
 ‘She’s heart-broken.’

So what about Burmese? What are the body-part terms found in Burmese psycho-collocations? What is the favourite locus of emotions and feelings for Burmese speakers? What about the syntactic behaviour of these polymorphic expressions? These are all issues that will be addressed in the next section.

3 Psycho-collocations in Burmese

Spoken in Burma by nearly 50 million speakers (Wheatley 2003: 195), Burmese is a member of the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family, but also clearly a Southeast Asian language, sharing many features with languages spoken in the MSEA area (Vittrant 2010): tonal system, tendency to monosyllabicity, classifier device, serial verbs constructions, etc. ... and of course expressives. Elaborate quadrisyllabic expressions and psycho-collocations are therefore found in Burmese, the latter type of expression being the only means expressing emotions, psychological states in this language, unlike what is found in Vietnamese (Clark 1989: 537) or Indonesian (Musgrave 2006).

In this section, I will first present the body-terms used to express emotions and psychological states in Burmese within the context of what is found in other Asian languages. Then, I will focus on the preferred body-part term of Burmese psycho-collocation, that is to say *၆၆ sei?*, tracing back its origin and examining the predicates it combines with. Then I will end by observing some of the peculiarities of Burmese psycho-collocations.

3.1 *The organs and body-part terms in expressive constructions*

Looking at organs and body-part terms in Burmese polymorphemic expressions reveals an impressive list, containing either elaborate and quadrisyllabic expressions and psycho-collocations.

3.1.1 Body-parts terms in quadrisyllabic and elaborate expressive constructions As seen in Section 2.2, body-part terms may be used in Burmese elaborate expressions (cf. examples (5) and (8)). Bernot's Burmese-French dictionary (1978–1992) – henceforth BFDic – gives around fifteen quadrisyllabic constructions containing the couplet 'foot ~ hand' (and four with the reverse order 'hand ~ foot'), most of them referring to mental or psychological states. Although some of them exhibit the expected structure ABAC or ABCB (cf. (16)), others are just quadrisyllabic expression containing a couplet of body-part terms (cf. (17)). Apart the couplet <foot ~ hand>, the following combinations <mind ~ belly>, <mind ~ heart>, <mind ~ hand>, <mind ~ body (corpse)> are also common in Burmese expressives. Table 16.1 indicates the number of expressions found for each association in Bernot's Burmese-French dictionary.¹¹

¹¹ I do not claim that BFDic provides an exhausted list of this type of expressions. However, other dictionaries such as Burmese–English (1993) or Burmese–Burmese (1991) dictionaries published in Yangon (Myanmar) by the Department of the Myanmar Language Commission, give similar or shorter list of expressions for these couplets. Moreover, as shown by the couplet <mind/heart>, some expressions are not listed at all in dictionaries. Therefore, the number of expressions given here for each couplet is only indicative.

Table 16.1 *Frequency of body-part couplets in Burmese from BFDic*

Couplet of	Body-terms	Number of tokens found	Illustration
<hand~foot>	လက်ခြေ /leʔ- C ^h e ² /	18+4 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	Cf. examples (5) and (8)
<mind ~ belly>	စိတ်ဝမ်း /seiʔ- waN ³ /	6 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	စိတ်ဝမ်းကွဲ seiʔ waN ³ kwe ³ mind-belly – be broken become desunited
<Mind ~ heart>	စိတ်နှလုံး /seiʔ- ၵၢၤလၢN ³ /	7 expressions given by informants ¹²	Cf. examples (18)
<mind ~ hand>	စိတ်လက် /seiʔ- leʔ/	10 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	Cf. examples (16) and (17)
<mind~body (corpse)>	စိတ်ကိုယ် /seiʔ- ko ² /	5 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	စိတ်နောက်ကိုယ်ပါ seiʔ naʔ ko ² pa ² mind- soon-body- accompany impulsively, rashly
<mind~nature (corpse)>	စိတ်သဘော /seiʔ- θၢၤbo ³ /	2 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	စိတ်တူသဘောတူ seiʔ tu ² θၢၤbo ³ tu ² mind- similar-nature-similar in agreement (adv.)

• < mind ~ hand>, စိတ်လက်, seiʔ- leʔ

(16a) စိတ်ပါလက်ပါ ။
seiʔ pa² leʔ pa² seiʔ
mind be with, accompany **hand** idem
'willingly'

(16b) စိတ်ပျက် လက်ပျက် ။
seiʔ pyeʔ leʔ pyeʔ
mind be destroyed **hand** idem
'in disappointment, dejectedly'

(17a) စိတ်ပြေလက်ပြေဘက် ။
seiʔ pye² leʔ pyaʔ
mind be relieved **hand** drop
'for a change, a respite'

¹² On Mon and Pali loanwords in Burmese, see Hla Pe (1961, 1967), Kasevitch (1994). On Mon and/or Pali influence on Burmese language, see Yanson (1994), Naess & Jenny (2011) and Jenny (2011).

Table 16.2 *List of Burmese psycho-nouns*

INTERNAL ORGANS		
heart	နှလုံး:	ɲaloN ³
liver	အသည်း:	?əθe ³
belly	ဝမ်း:	waN ³
intestines, guts	အူ	?u ²
EXTERNAL ORGANS / BODY PARTS		
hand	လက်	le [?]
foot	ခြေ	c ^h e ²
ear	နား:	na ³
nose	နှာ	ɲa ²
eye	မျက်စိ	mye? [?] .si ¹
face (eye-nose)	မျက်နှာ	mye? [?] .ɲa ²
PSYCHOLOGICAL REFERENCE		
mind	စိတ်	sei [?]
nature	သဘော	θəba ³
consciousness	သတိ	θəti ¹

- (20) a. eye + turn မျက်စိ လှည့် *Find someone confusing*
 mye?[?] si¹ + le²
- b. eye + (be) clear မျက်စိ ရှင် *Be sharp-eye*
 mye?[?] si¹ + jiN²
- c. eye + (be) opened မျက်စိ ပွင့် *Be sophisticated*
 mye?[?] si¹ + pwiN¹
- (21) a. face + (be) dark မျက်နှာ မည်း *Dislike, disapproval*
 mye?[?].ɲa² + me³
- b. face + destroy မျက်နှာ ဖျက် *Damage or mar the reputation of a person; soil a person's good name.*
 mye?[?].ɲa² + p^hye[?]
- c. face + (be) opened မျက်နှာ ပွင့် *Be popular*
 mye?[?].ɲa² + pwiN¹

3.2 *Origin of the most productive body-part terms in Burmese psycho-collocations*

3.2.1 *Origin of the main psycho-nouns* Two origins could be reconstructed for Burmese nouns used in psycho-collocations. Most of them are inherited Tibeto-Burman terms as listed in Table 16.3, with cognates in languages that also make use of psycho-collocations such as Lai (Haka Chin).

Table 16.3 *Inherited Tibeto-Burman terms (from Matisoff 2003)*

Burmese term	Matisoff Transliteration <	Proto-Tibeto-Burman term
<heart> နှလုံး / ၵၻloN ³ /	hnəlûm	*s-nij (cf. Benedict 1972: 217)
<liver> အသည်း /ʔəθe ³ /	ʔəθāñ	*m-sin
<belly> ဝမ်း /waN ³ /	wām	*p ^w am [stomach]
<hand> လက် /leʔ/	lak	*lak
<eye> မျက် /myeʔ/	myak	*mik ~*myak
<ear> နား /na ³ /	nā	*g-na
<nose> နှာ / ၵၻa ² /	hna	*s-na

Examples (22) and (23) show Lai and Burmese cognate psycho-nouns for ‘heart’ and ‘ear’.

- (22) a. Lai (from VanBik 1998:217)
 na **niṅ** ʔa ḥṅal
 2SG.POSS **heart** 2SG. SUBJ know-I
 ‘You are presumptuous.’
- b. Burmese
 မပြောချင်ဘူး ၊ ဒီကောင်နှလုံးနာလွန်းလို့။
 mə pya ChiN Pu di KaəN² ၵၻloN³ na² lwaN³ lo¹
 NEG talk wish NEG DEM guy **heart** hurt in excess
 SUB:because
 ‘(I) don’t want to talk (about that). Because (I) can’t stand this guy.’
 (lit.) : I don’t want to talk. Because, this guy, heart is hurting in excess.
- (23) a. Lai (from VanBik 1998:217)
 ka **hna** ʔa ṅam
 1SG.POSS **ear** 3SG. SUBJ at home-I
 ‘I am content/ I am not worried’ (lit. ‘My ear is at home’).
- b. Burmese
 တစ်ချိန်မှာ သူ ကျွန်တော်ကို နားလည်လာမှာပါ ။
 ta-cheiN² Ma² θu² cəno² Ko² na³-le² la² ma²
 Pa²
 one-time LOC 3SG 1SG (H.P) OBJ understand (**ear.turn**) AUX:inchoat IRR
 POL.
 ‘Once, he will begin to understand me.’

As noted in Table 16.3, Tibeto-Burman terms found in psycho-collocations refer to body parts and organs. On the other hand, abstract and psychological nouns used as psycho-nouns such as ‘mind’, ‘nature/ disposition’, or ‘attention/ consciousness’ (သတိဓာတ်¹), are not inherited; they are mainly loanwords from Pali as Table 16.4 demonstrates.

Table 16.4 *Loanwords from Pali used as psycho-nouns*

Burmese term	Transliteration	< Pali	Meaning in Pali
< mind> စိတ် /seiʔ/	cit	citta	<i>heart (psychologically), i. e. the centre & focus of man's emotional nature</i>
<nature / disposition> သဘော /θəbɔ ³ /	sabhô	sabhāva	<i>State of mind, nature, condition; character, disposition; truth, reality</i>
<attention / consciousness> သတိ /θəTi ¹ /	sati	sati	<i>memory, recognition, consciousness</i>

3.2.1 'Mind' versus 'liver': the Burmese choice Contrary to the Hmong languages (Jaisser 1990), the Austronesian languages (Siahaan 2008), and some Tibeto-Burman languages (see VanBik 1998, 2010 about Lai), the most productive psycho-noun used in psycho-collocations in Burmese is not 'liver' but the word စိတ် /seiʔ/ that could be translated by 'mind, the seat of emotion or life'. စိတ် /seiʔ/ is indeed very productive. The Burmese–French Dictionary gives nearly eighty psycho-collocations (sixty entries in Burmese–English Dictionary), whereas 'heart' နှလုံး ဂုၤလၢN³ is found in about thirty psycho-collocations and 'liver' အသဉ်း /ʔəθɛ³/ barely in about fifteen. Moreover, as seen in the previous section, it combines with many other body-part terms to produce elaborate expressions.

The word စိတ် /seiʔ/ (transliterated *cit*) comes from Pali *citta*, via Mon. Burmese has also borrowed many religious and political words (and concepts) from these two languages during the Pagan period (eleventh to fourteenth centuries), with the influence of the Pali being more substantial than that of Mon.¹³

Interestingly, the same etymon is found as a psycho-noun in other Southeast Asian languages, such as Mon or Khmer. However the meaning of the word is both perceptibly and noticeably different in the three languages. Whereas Burmese dictionaries give 'mind' as the first meaning for စိတ် /seiʔ/, both Mon /cɔt/, and Khmer /cət/ have 'heart' as the main meaning (see definitions in (25)).

Notice that Southeast Asian cultures differ from Western ones, which clearly distinguish heart and mind (spirit) as illustrated by this French maxim: 'Le cœur

¹³ Vittrant (1998) lists eight-three pairs in Burmese, showing either aspiration or tonal alternations. Gyurme (1992: 258) gives a list of ninety-six pairs for literary Tibetan, specifying that it is not an exhaustive list.

a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas' ('The heart has reasons that reason does not comprehend.')

- (24) KHMER, from Clark (1996: 553)
 tɲay nih kñom sapbaay cət nah
 day DEM ISG happy heart very
 'Today, I'm very happy.'
- (25) a. Definition of Burmese *စိတ်* /sei?/
 from *Myanmar–English Dictionary by Myanmar–English Dictionary (1993), Myanmar Language Commission; republished 1996, Dunwoody Press*
 1. n mind; thought; consciousness; heart
 2. n. desire; will; interest
 3. n. preoccupation
- b. Definition of Khmer 'cət, **cetta?**'
 from *Cambodian–English Dictionary by Robert K. Headley, Kylin Chhor, Lam Kheng Lim, Lim Hak Kheang, and Chen Chun (1977), <http://sealang.net/khmer/dictionary.htm>*
 1. n heart (as the seat of emotions), feelings, emotions; mind, spirit, will (power); intention; thought, opinion; nature, disposition; is often paired with 'liver' to emphasize the totality of the emotion or trait).

3.2.2 *စိတ် sei?* and its psychomates What about the psychomates, i.e. the predicates used with *စိတ် sei?* ? We found stative verbs (equivalent to adjectives in other languages) and action verbs in equal proportion. Stative verbs are often high-frequency verbs, associated with physical properties (hot, cold, big, small, dirty, clean, etc.)

One sub-class of active verbs regularly found with psycho-nouns is motion verbs. Example (26) illustrates the combination of *စိတ် sei?* 'mind' with the verb လည် *le?* 'to rotate, go around', a verb that also combines with 'ear', 'eye' (cf. (19), (20), (23)).

Indeed, the same psycho-mate may appear with different psycho-nouns, with relatively/quite distinct meanings. For instance, *စိတ်ဆိုး sei? sho?* ('mind + be bad') and *သဘောဆိုး θəbɔ? sho?* ('nature + be bad') mean respectively 'be angry' and 'be bad natured'. See also example (27) where the stative verb ပေါက် *paɔ?* combines with *စိတ် sei?* 'mind,' *အူ ʔu?* 'intestines' and *သဘော θəbɔ?* 'nature.'

- (26) သူ စိတ်(ပြန်)လည်လာပြီ ၊ အရင်လိုမစိမ်းကားတော့ဘူး ။
 θu¹ sei?- (pyaN²)-le² la² Pi² ʔəyiN².lo² mə saiN³.Ka³ Tɔ¹ Phu³
 3sg.GEN mind (again) rotate INCHOAT CRS hurry.NEG be distant ASP NEG
 '(He) reverts to a former opinion. He is not as distant as before (towards me).'

- (27)
- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. mind + be broken,
explode | စိတ် ပေါက်
sei? paʔ | <i>Become angry, lose one's head</i> |
| b. intestines + be broken,
explode | အူ ပေါက်
ʔu ² paʔ | <i>Digress, ramble</i> |
| c. nature + be broken,
explode | သဘော ပေါက်
θəbɔ ³ paʔ | <i>Realize, comprehend</i> |

A last peculiarity about psycho-mates is the existence of psycho-collocations using both members of causative verb pairs. These pairs of verbs, realized with a consonantal or tonal alternation, reflect an earlier process of causativisation. Many Tibeto-Burman languages have preserved a few pairs of verbs, and Burmese still possesses a lot of them alongside a morphological process to form causatives.¹⁴

- (28)
- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| a. ကျမအသည်းကို မခွဲပါနဲ့ ။
cəma ¹ ʔəθɛ ³ ko ² mə k ^h wɛ ³ Pa ² nɛ ¹
1SG liver OBJ NEG be broken/split POL INJ
'(Please), don't break my heart.' | b. အသည်းကွဲတယ်
ʔəθɛ ³ - kwɛ ³ Tɛ ²
liver- be broken REAL
'(I) am heart-broken.' | c. အသည်းခွဲတယ်
ʔəθɛ ³ - k ^h wɛ ³ Tɛ ²
liver - break REAL
'(I) broke (his) heart.' |
|---|---|--|

3.3 Structure and properties of Burmese psycho-collocations

Several issues emerge as we examine utterances containing psycho-collocations: firstly, the number and nature of the arguments; secondly, the syntactic functions of these arguments, and the way the language expresses the grammatical roles they fulfil; and thirdly, the relationship between stative verb and body-part term, and the possibility of noun incorporation into the verb.

3.3.1 Nature and number of psycho-collocation's arguments

Arguments of an emotional predicate containing a psycho-noun are various: simple nominal phrase (NP) as in (22) where the NP marked for its syntactic/pragmatic function (cf. (23), (29a)) as a nominalized clause (cf. (29b)), subordinated clause (cf. (29c)) or with no overt argument (cf. (18a)).

- (29)
- | |
|--|
| a. ...သူ့အဖေ သူ့အပေါ်မှာ စိတ်ကုန်သွားပြီ ။
...θu ¹ ʔəp ^h ɛ ² θu ¹ ʔə-pa ² ma ² sei? -koN ² θwa ³ Pi ²
3SG.GEN father 3SG.GEN NMLZ-above LOC mind-run out ASP.PRFS CRS
'His father is fed up with him [because. ...]' |
|--|

¹⁴ On noun incorporation, see Mithun 1984 and Clark (1995: 541ff).

- b. ကျမ ဒီလို ခိုင်းတာ စိတ်မရှုပ်ပါနဲ့ ခင်ဗျား ။
 cəma¹ di² lo² k^haiN³-Ta² sei?²-mə -fi¹ Pa² ne¹
 1 SG.FEM DEM. like order-NMLZ.REAL mind-NEG-happen POL INJ
 kəbya³
 2 SG.MASC.POL
 ‘Don’t be angry if I give you such orders.’
 (lit.) : Don’t be angry [with the fact that] I order you like this.
- c. သူ စာရေးဆရာဖြစ်ဖို့ စိတ်သန့်နေတယ် ။
 θu² sa².ye³-s^həya² p^hyi? pho¹ sei? -θaN² ne² Tε²
 3 SG writing-master be SUB:for mind -be strong IPFV REAL
 ‘He really wants to be a writer.’

Notice also that the number of arguments varies for these psycho-collocations; some are strictly intransitive where the expressive meaning ‘to be mixed up, confused’ စိတ်ရှုပ် /sei? fo?/ (‘mind + be complex’) can occur with a unique argument marked as a topic or a subject (/ka¹/) and will not permit a NP marked as an object with ကို /ko²/ – that is to say a second argument, as shown by the examples in (30).

- (30) a. သူ (က) စိတ်ရှုပ်နေတယ် ။
 θu¹ (Ka¹) sei? -fo? ne² Tε²
 3 SG.GEN (TOP/S) mind -be complex IPFV REAL
 ‘(As for him), he is confused.’
- b. *သူ့ကို စိတ်ရှုပ်နေတယ် ။
 θu¹ Ko² sei? -fo? ne² Tε²
 3 SG.GEN OBJ mind -be complex IPFV REAL

On the other hand, some expressives need two arguments, whether they are overt or not. Sentences in (32) contain the expressive စိတ်တို /sei? to²/ meaning ‘to be short-tempered, lose one patience’. In (32a), one argument (the source of the irritation) appears in the sentence and it is marked as an object. In (32b), although two participants are needed to fulfil the process of irritating, none of them is expressed. Whereas in (32c), the sentence contains a unique argument marked as the topic or subject of the expressive predicate: the sentence is ungrammatical with a stative reading. As shown by (32d), the intransitive reading requires another structure, a topic-comment structure, which is very common in Asian and Southeast Asian languages (Goddard 2008: 126ff). This kind of information structure is indeed reported by Matisoff for Lahu, which language exhibits sequences containing a noun followed by a ‘transhemistichial compound’, i.e. a noun and a verb semantically tight: some sequence that are clearly related to constructions of the type: ‘NP_{TOPIC} + N-V’ (see 31).

- (31) Lahu, from Matisoff (1973: 310)
 áp-pò? chi i-ká? nê? ve
 shirt DEM water be wet IND
 ‘As for this shirt, it is water-wet.’
- (32) a. သူ့ကို စိတ်တိုတယ် ။
 θu¹ Ko² sei? - to² Tε²
 3SG.GEN OBJ **mind - be short** REAL
 ‘He gets on (my) nerves.’
- b. စိတ်တိုလာတယ် ။
 sei? -to² la Tε²
mind - be short INCHOAT REAL
 ‘(You) get on my nerves more and more.’ or ‘(You)’re becoming really irritating.’
- c. *ဒီအသံက စိတ်တိုတယ် ။
 di ʔəθaN² Ka¹ sei? - to² Tε²
 DEM noise TOP/S **mind - be short** REAL
 (intend : this noise is irritating.)
- d. ဒီအသံက စိတ်တိုစရာကောင်းတယ် ။
 di ʔəθaN² Ka¹ sei? -to² -Səya kəN Tε²
 DEM noise TOP/S **mind - be short** -NMLZ be good REAL
 ‘This noise is irritating.’
 (lit.): This noise, it is good in causing one feeling ‘short-tempered’.

3.3.2 *Functions of the psycho-collocation's arguments* Psycho-collocation constructions raise two questions regarding grammatical relationships and functions among components of the sentences. One is 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. By incorporation we mean that the incorporated noun and the verb, which incorporates it, function as a single grammatical unit.¹⁵ The second question deals with the relation of inalienability between the subject whole and the body part: what is the relationship between the body part used as a psycho-noun and the possessor of this body part?

Although psycho-nouns do not have argument status in sentences like (33) for instance – the two argument positions in (33) are already occupied by NPs marked syntactically as the main arguments by က /Ka¹/ and ကို /Ko²/ –, there are several reasons to hesitate considering psycho-collocations as having

¹⁵ Syntactic dependency is often marked in Burmese by a short-high and creaky tone (tone 1) that replaces the original lexical tone of the last syllable of the word. However, this tone is noticeable only on syllables which original tone is low (tone 2). In other terms, if the possessor is expressed with a high-falling tone (tone 3) or high-creaky tone (tone 1), the modifier status of the possessor won't be marked.

incorporated nouns as noticed by Clark (1996) for other Southeast Asian languages. Among these reasons, the probability of incorporation is ruled out by the existence of sentences like (34) and (35). In the former, the psycho-noun is treated as an argument, being syntactically marked, and therefore separated from the psycho-mate, whereas in the latter example, psycho-noun and verb are separated by negation. Then the typological nature of Burmese also argues against incorporation since this language has no morphological indication and few phonetic clues for incorporation: sandhi will occur only in the case of tight relationship, and only under specific phonetic conditions.

As stated by Mithun (1984: 948ff) in her discussion of noun incorporation, different types of noun incorporation exist and represent historical development of incorporation, the first type being a sort of lexical compounding and the last one being distinguished by possessor promotion. Different stages co-exist in Burmese. It should be noted, however that compounding is very productive in Burmese, and Type I of noun incorporation (defined as loose-bound simple juxtaposition type) in which the noun loses its syntactic status as an argument of the sentence, seems to be the most frequent. This peculiar syntactic behaviour is emphasised by Matisoff's (1973: 309ff) definition of transhemistichial compound that points out the existence of 'specifying nouns' (N_{spec}) that 'are neither subjects nor objects, but simply limiters of the unspecified generality of the naked verb'.

- (33) မိုးမိုးက သူ့ကို စိတ်ကုန်သွားပြီ။
 mo³ mo³ Ka¹ θu¹ Ko² sei? - koN² θwa³ Pi²
 Moe Moe TOP/S 3SG.GEN OBJ **mind** - run out ASP.PRF CRS
 'Moe Moe can't stand him any longer.'
- (34) a. စိတ်ကို တိုသွားတာဘဲ။
 sei?- Ko² -to² θwa³ Ta² be²
mind OBJ/FOCUS **be short** ASP.PRF REAL DM
 '(He) REALLY gets on (my) nerves [when he says that].'
- b. သူ့ကို လုပ်ချင်တာ အသံကို ယားနေတာဘဲ။
 θu¹ Ko² lo? C^hiN² Ta² ʔəθə³ Ko² -ya³ ne²
 3SG.GEN OBJ work wish NMZL.REAL **liver** OBJ/FOCUS **itch** PRF
 Ta² be²
 REAL DM
 '(I) am dying to make something [hit] to him.'
 (lit.) : (My) liver is itching to the fact (I) wish to make [something] to him.
- (35) ဝေဝေမှာ တွေးမိတိုင် စိတ်မချမ်းသာ ...။ from Bernot et al. (2001:17)
 we² we¹ ma² twe³ mi¹ TaiN² sei?- mə -c^haN³ θa²
 WeWe LOC consider NON-VOLITION each **mind** NEG be rich ...
 'Each time WeWe thought about it, she was not in peace.'

3.3.2.1 Possessor and body part Psycho-collocations involve also the relationship between the body part used as a psycho-noun and the possessor

of this body part. In other Southeast Asian languages such as Vietnamese, a body-part term may be treated as being possessed (see example (36a)), but the possessor might also be promoted from its position of modifier of the possessee (body part) to first argument of the sentence (36b).

VIETNAMESE (from Clark 1996: 544)

- (36) a. *bụng* *tôi* (*bi*) *đau*
 stomach 1SG suffer sick
 ‘My stomach aches’
- b. *Tôi* (*bi*) *đau* *bụng*
 1SG suffer sick stomach
 ‘I ache/am sick in the stomach.’ (< ‘I stomach-ache’).

Although the two strategies coexist in Vietnamese where sentences with possessed body part or promoted subject (with body-part compound with verb) are given as equivalent, it is not the case in Burmese. None of my examples contains a body-part term marked for possession, although it is difficult sometimes to distinguish possessor due to specific phonetic rules.¹⁶

4 Conclusion

This discussion of Burmese expressives aims to show the aesthetic qualities of constructions used to express emotional or mental process, trying also to reveal the place of aesthetics in Burmese grammar. Two kinds of expressives have been discussed and distinguished as for their functions, their forms, and their semantics in this chapter. The first category of expressives, i.e. elaborate expressions, described more extensively by Wheatley in this volume, tend to be used as adverbial or sometimes nominal, whereas the second ones, psycho-collocations, are generally verbal predicates referring to mental and emotional process.

Regarding their forms, elaborate expressions and psycho-collocations differ in respect of their phonological pattern, their internal structure and number of syllables, although body-part terms are found in both categories of expressives. Elaborate expressions have a predilection for patterns involving rhyme, repetition, and alliteration, which are not aspects of the construction of psycho-collocations.

As for their structure, elaborate expressions are generally four-syllable expressions, although three-syllable expressions do occur frequently in Burmese as also discussed by Wheatley in his contribution to this volume. They are also polymorphic expressions that often combine, in special

¹⁶ None of these expressions are listed in the BFDic, neither in the two dictionaries published in Yangon (Myanmar) by the Department of the Myanmar Language Commission. They have been elicited by Burmese informants.

patterns (ABAC, ABCB), semantically related morphemes (synonymous, antonymous, generic/ specific, etc.). On the other hand, psycho-collocations are mostly bisyllabic (and bi-morphemic) expressions formed with a body-part or organ term and a verbal lexeme, either static or dynamic. Semantically, elaborated expressions may create nuanced meanings, imitative or evocative sounds (onomatopoeic), whereas psycho-collocations describe emotions, feelings, mental states, or processes.

Among these idiomatic expressions that display special structural and phonological properties, we focus on the ones containing body-part or organ terms and expressing mental and physical states. My study of Burmese psycho-collocations shows that these expressions are numerous and part of everyday language. A general picture of the terms used as psycho-noun in Burmese reveals that the most common and productive term found in psycho-collocations is the word meaning 'mind' (cit= *sei?*) unlike what is frequently found in other Southeast Asian languages, such as Lai (VanBik 1998) or Hmong (Jaisser, 1990). In these two languages, the most frequent psycho-noun is the term for 'liver'. However, as I examine the origin of the term စိ *sei?*, I found the same etymon in Khmer and Mon psycho-collocations.

This study of a particular type of expressive in Burmese, i.e. psycho-collocations, leads us to the conclusion that the aesthetic component is clearly visible in the sonorous and rhythmic quality of elaborated expressions, but less obvious in psycho-collocations. However, shouldn't we consider either the poetic images generated by collocation of psycho-nouns and psycho-mates, as revealing the aesthetic of this language, as reflecting the Burmese worldview?

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