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Expression of Goal and Source in Burmese: Is there an asymmetry?

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Oct. 10th 2023
ICSTLL56
Bangkok
Outline

1. Methodology and data
   a. SpOTy Project
   b. Burmese data

2. Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

3. The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions

4. Asymmetry in Burmese
1. Methodology and data

SpOTy Project

- Projet SpOTy (Spatial Ontology and Typology, Labex ASLAN, Université de Lyon, 2020-2024)

- Aim of the project:
  - Typology of Motion expression
  - Ontology of spatial relations (cross-connected network)
  - Web application: incremental database and SPARQL/Sparnatural query tool

- Database:
  - 67 languages (20 phyla)
  - Genetically, geographically, and typologically diverse
  - However: sample is not balanced
1. Methodology and data

Data collected

- For this presentation specifically:
  - Central Burma variety of Burmese
  - Collected in Yangon (Burma) between 2008 and 2010
  - Video stimulus *Trajectoire*, designed to elicit descriptions of motion events (Ishibashi et al. 2006, Vuillermet & Kopecka 2019), but also *Frog Story* (Mayer 1969) and narratives
Outline

1. Methodology and data

2. Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds
   a. About the Burmese language
   b. Spontaneous motion event in Burmese

3. The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions

4. Asymmetry in Burmese
2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

About the Burmese language

- National language of Myanmar (Burma). Native language of 2/3 of the population (± 35 M)
- Phonological features (cf. MSEA languages): complex vowel system, tone system, restricted set of final consonants
- Tendency to monosyllabicity, non-inflectional language (analytic), widespread compounding
- Optionality (pragmatically-driven) of many grammatical categories (grammatical tense, personal marking...)
- (SO)V language, postpositions

(1) ပြင်ပေးလိုက်မယ်။
pyiN² pe³ laiʔ =mɛ²
V_H: fix V_AUX: BENEF ASP: terminative=IRR

‘(I) will fix (it) for (you)....’
2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

About the Burmese language

- **Grammatical features**
  - ...
  - (SO)V language, postpositions
  - **Serial verb constructions (SVC)**
    - `(2)` ဓေးပ ပတွေပေနတ် ြစ်ပပြြေး တယ်
      
      də.mya¹ -twe² ʔənaʔ =nɛ¹ piʔ pye³ =tɛ²
      
      bandit -PL gun =with shoot, throw run =REAL
      
      ‘The bandits shot with their guns and ran.’
    - ‘**Directional**’ SVC **⇿** includes at least one path verb
      - `(3)` ပကောင်မပလေး ဂူထဲကပန ထွက်သွ ြေး တယ်
        
        kaɔN²ma²le³ gu² tʰɛ³ =kə¹.ne² tʰwe³ ʔwa³ =tɛ²
        
        young.woman cave interior =ABL go.out go/CFG =REAL
        
        ‘A young lady goes out from the cave [away from the deictic center].’

**Serial Verb Construction (SVC)**
- No connector
- Same grammatical informations
- Shared argument(s)
- Describe a single event
2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

*Spontaneous motion event in Burmese*

- Spontaneous Motion: “Spontaneous motion refers to an event that semantically encode a figure (F) moving (path) from a ground (Source) to another ground (Goal) in a certain manner (manner/ caused)” (Talmy 1972:1, also 2000)

- Burmese Ground expression in spontaneous motion events:
  - Bare noun (*no post-positiion, no relator noun*)
  - Noun and postposition
  - Noun and relator noun
  - Noun and both relator noun and postposition
2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

*Spontaneous motion event in Burmese*

- Burmese postpositions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1a: Burmese postpositions found in motion events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ka¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ka¹ne²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m̥a²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?əTaiN³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[(4)\]

\[
\text{piN²lε²-kaN³-ce²=ka¹} \quad \text{gu²} \quad \text{thε³=ko²} \quad \text{wiN²} \quad \text{θwa³=te²}
\]

sea-shore-origin=ABL  cave interior=ALL  enter  go=REAL

‘(She) went into the cave from the sea shore [away form the deictic center].’
2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

*Spontaneous motion event in Burmese*

- **Burmese Relator Noun (RN):**
  - Configurational information about the Ground, topological features
  - 9 RNs found in our data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relator nouns</th>
<th>Burmese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ထဲ</td>
<td>tʰɛ³</td>
<td>interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပြေါ်</td>
<td>pɔ²</td>
<td>top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပအောက်</td>
<td>ʔaɔʔ</td>
<td>bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပပြေ</td>
<td>cʰe²(yiN³)</td>
<td>foot, origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဆီ</td>
<td>sʰi²</td>
<td>place, in presence of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဘက်</td>
<td>bɛʔ</td>
<td>direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စ ်</td>
<td>saʔ</td>
<td>edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပဘေး</td>
<td>be³</td>
<td>side</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1b: Burmese Relator Nouns found in motion events*
Outline

1. Methodology and data

2. Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

3. The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions
   a. Cognitive hypothesis
   b. Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

4. (A)symmetry in Burmese
3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

**Cognitive Hypothesis**

- Differences and similarities in verbalization between the starting point (Source) and the endpoint (Goal) when describing a path followed by a Figure
- The Goal is cognitively more prominent (more salient)
- The Goal is favored over the expression of the Source in the descriptions of motion events

3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

(A) Semantic Asymmetry

- Conflation: tendency to encode Goal (allative) and Location (essive/locative) in the same morpheme. Conflation of Location and Source is rare. (Creissels 2008)

**Catalan:**

LOC-ALL conflation

(5) a. Els hem trobat / enviat a la botiga

O3PL AUX.S1PL find / send LOC/ALL DEF.F.SG shop

‘We found / sent them at / to the shop’

b. Vénen de la botiga

come.S3PL ABL DEF.F.SG shop

‘They are coming from the shop’
3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

*Linguistic realization of the asymmetry*

(A) Semantic Asymmetry

- Greater semantic granularity: more morphemes for Goal-encoding than Source-encoding. (Bourdin 1997:190)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of forms</th>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ยัง jaŋ / สู่ sù / ถึง tʰɯ́ŋ / หา hǎː</td>
<td>Allative, different meaning (to, up to, towards) and uses (places, objects, people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>จาก caːk / แต่ têː</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Motion-encoding prepositions in Central Thai*
3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

- Goals markers are morphologically less complex
  (Kopecka & Vuillermet 2021:10)

French: complexity of Source markers
(Creissels 2006: 22)

(6) a. Je vais chez mon oncle
    S1SG go AT.HOME.OF my uncle
    ‘I am going to my uncle’s.’

b. Je viens de chez mon oncle
    S1SG come ABL AT.HOME.OF my uncle
    ‘I am coming from my uncle’s.’

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry
3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

**Linguistic realization of the asymmetry**

- **Encoding of Goal is more straightforward:** Goal markers may be optional
  
  (Bourdin 1997: 187, Ikegami 1987)

**Stieng (Austro-Asiatic, Cambodia):**

optionality of the Goal preposition

(Bon 2014:551)

(7) a. sədiŋ lap di ga:h
person enter to forest
'The person enters (to) the forest.'

b. sədiŋ lap Ø ga:h
person enter Ø forest
'The person enters the forest.'
3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

**Linguistic realization of the asymmetry**

### (C) Syntactic Asymmetry

- Syntactic constraints on Goal / Source arguments. (Kopecka & Vuillermet 2021)

(8)  
- a. I climbed from my room up the ladder onto the room.
- b. I climbed onto the room.
- c. I climbed up the ladder
- d. *I climbed from my room.

*All these examples point in the same direction: from differences in the way languages express Source and Goal to a tendency to favor the Goal or the endpoint when expressing a motion event.*
Outline

1. Methodology and data
2. Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds
3. The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions
4. Asymmetry in Burmese
   a. Semantic asymmetry
   b. Morphosyntactic asymmetry
   c. Syntactic asymmetry
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(A) Semantic asymmetry: Case conflation

- Locative postposition မ can be used with:

  • Static Locative Ground

    (9) ကပလေးပတွေ ကမ်းပပြေ မကစောပနတယ်

    kəle³-twe² kaN³cʰe²=ma² ɡəza³ ne²=tɛ²
    child-PL shore=LOC play IPFV=REAL
    ‘The children are playing at the beach.’

  • Goal Ground

    (10) အဲပတောစ်မပရောက်တဲဲ့ အြေကျပတောဲ့...

    ?ɛ³ to³ sa?=mə2 yac?=tɛ¹ ʔəkha2 ca1=Tə1 ...
    DEM forest edge=LOC arrive=REAL moment fall=WHEN

    When he arrived at the edge of the forest,
4. Asymmetry in Burmese  
(A) Semantic asymmetry: *Put on / Take off*

- In the clothing lexicon, verbs show more semantic granularity with ‘*put on*’ (Goal-oriented) than ‘*take off*’ (Source-oriented)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Put on (Goal oriented)</th>
<th>Take off (Source oriented)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>စီး si³ ‘put on, wear (shoes, etc.)’</td>
<td>ြေျွတ် chuʔ ‘take off, remove’ (shoes, clothes, hat, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စွေ suʔ ‘put on (socks, gloves, mask, etc.)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ရန်ေး yaN³ ‘(of monk) wear or put on robe’</td>
<td>ပ ြုတ် pʰyouʔ ‘take off, uncouple, unhitch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ရ youN¹ ‘wear or put on (a cloak or robe)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဝတ် wuʔ ‘wear, put on’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပဆောင်ေး shaN² ‘wear a hat’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>န် paN² ‘wear in the hair’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Verbs for ‘*put on*’ and ‘*take off*’*
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Inventory size

- More postpositions dedicated to Source than Goal:
  - 1 Goal postposition
  - 2 Source postpositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th># of Goal</th>
<th># of Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ကပန k¹ ne²</td>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>က ka¹</td>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>မ ော m̥a²</td>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>က ို ko²</td>
<td>Allative</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Postpositions used for Goal and Source Grounds

Asymmetric but in favor of Source (against general tendency)
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Inventory size

- However, no semantic distinction between the 2 Source postpositions

(11) a. ကြန်မာလေးတစ်ပယောက် ဂူထဲ ကထွေက်ေွေေေေးတယ်။ [TRAJHNTH_44]
   kaɔN²ma²le³  tỹ=yaɔʔ  gu²  tʰɛ³=ka¹  tʰwɛʔ  θwa³=te²
   young.woman  one=CLF  cave  inside=ABL  exit  go=REAL
   ‘A young woman goes out of a cave.’

b. ကြန်မာလေး ဂူထဲ ကပေထွေက်ေွေေေေးတယ်။ [TRAJAA_36]
   kaɔN²ma²le³  θə=yaɔʔ  gu²  tʰɛ³=ka¹ne²  tʰwɛʔ  θwa³=te²
   young.woman  one=CLF  cave  interior=ABL  go.out  go=REAL
   ‘A young woman goes out of a cave.’

Against general tendency
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Optionality

- Out of 126 Goal expressions, 25 are not marked with a postposition > Goal-marking is optional
- Source-marking is compulsory
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Complexity

- Source marking is **NOT** fundamentally more complex than Goal marking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction</th>
<th># of Goal</th>
<th># of Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bare noun</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N – Rel</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N – Rel – Rel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N – PostP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N – Rel – Post</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N – Rel – Rel - PostP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Number of Source and Goal Grounds, according to the type of construction

*As seen before, only Goals can appear without a postposition*

*Similar proportion of Goals and Sources for the three constructions involving postpositions*

Symmetric (against general tendency)
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Complexity

- We note that all Relational Nouns appears in both Goal and Source expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th># of Goal</th>
<th># of Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ထဲ tʰɛ³</td>
<td>Inside</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပ ေါ် pɔ²</td>
<td>Top</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကကောေး ca³</td>
<td>Between</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စ ် saʔ</td>
<td>Edge</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပအောက် ʔa ɔʔ</td>
<td>Place, in presence of</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဗမာ sʰi²</td>
<td>Underside</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Number of relator nouns occurring with Goals and Sources (only showing forms with at least 5 total occurrences)

**Symmetric**
(against general tendency)
4. Asymmetry in Burmese
(C) Syntactic asymmetry: Biclausal constructions

- Biclausal construction for Source expression
  - Source is often expressed in a different, non-finite clause, in an iconic sequence (Schapper 2011)
  - Source is syntactically more complex than Goal

(12) a. ပက င်မပ ြေးတစ်ပ က် သစ်ြင်ပပြေရင်ြေးကပေ ပမက်ြေင်ေးပ ေါ်က ို ပပ ေး လောတယ်။  [TRAJHNTH_13]
   [kaɔN²ma¹le³ tə-yaɔʔ  θiʔpiN² cʰe²yiN³=ka¹ ne²=pyi³tɔ¹]  myɛʔkʰiN³ pɔ²=ko² pye³ la²=te²
   young.woman one-CLF tree foot=TOP stay=SUB.TIME lawn on=ALL run come=REAL
   'A young woman comes running onto the lawn from the foot of the tree.'
   (lit. 'having stayed at the foot of the tree, the young woman ran onto the lawn')

b. ပက င်မပ ြေးတစ်ပ က် ဂူထဲကပေ ပြ ြေးပတ ော့ ထွေက်ေွေောေးတယ်။ [TRAJHNTH_22]
   [kaɔN²ma¹le³ tə-yaɔʔ gu² tʰe³=ka¹ ne²=pyi³tɔ¹]  tʰweʔ la²=te²
   young.woman one-CLF cave inside=ABL stay=SUB.TIME exit come=REAL
   'A young woman came out of the cave.' (lit. 'having stayed inside the cave, a young woman came out.')
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(C) Syntactic asymmetry: Constraints on arguments

- Syntactic constraint: Goal-oriented verbs may licence Source arguments

  (13) a. လူတစ်ပယောက် ဂူထဲက ို ဝင်ေွေောေးတယ်။ [TRAJHNTH_03]

   person one-CLF cave inside=ALL enter go=REAL

   Verb ဝင် wiN² ‘enter’: With Goal Ground

   ‘A person went into the cave.’

  b. သိချင်း ကမ်းပပြေက ဂူထဲက ို ဝင်ေွေောေးတယ်။ [TRAJAA_02]

   sea-shore-origin=ABL cave interior=ALL enter go=REAL

   ‘(She) went into the cave from the sea shore [away from the deictic center].’

  c. သိချင်း ကမ်းပပြေက ဂူထဲက ို ဝင်ေွေောေးတယ်။ [Elicited]

   outside=ABL enter go=REAL

   ‘She entered from the outside.’

Symmetric (against general tendency)
5. Conclusion

Expression of Goal and Source in Burmese: Is there an asymmetry?

- **Spatial symmetries:**
  - Source-marking is not more morphologically complex than Goal marking
  - Goal-oriented Verbs may licence Goal and Source arguments

- **Spatial asymmetries favoring Goals:**
  - Locative postposition can be used for Goal Grounds
  - Goal markers are optional
  - Source marking can be more syntactically complex than Goal marking, using biclausal constructions

- **A spatial asymmetry favoring Source?**
  - More postpositions are *dedicated* to Source: $ka^1$ and $ka^ne^2$
  - However, they convey the same meaning (true synonyms) and do not add any semantic granularity into the postpositional system
5. Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Cross-linguistic tendency</th>
<th>Case of Burmese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semantic</td>
<td>Conflation Locative-Allative rather than Locative-Ablative</td>
<td>Locative postposition မ ော* ma² can be used for Goal Grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More semantic granularity for Goal markers</td>
<td>No semantic granularity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphosyntactic</td>
<td>Goal marking is less complex</td>
<td>Goal marking is not less complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal markers are optional</td>
<td>Goal markers are optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More markers for Goals than Sources</td>
<td>More forms dedicated to Source marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic</td>
<td>Verbs tend to allow for Goal arguments but not Source arguments</td>
<td>Goal and Source Arguments licensed by verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More complex syntax for Source expression</td>
<td>Yes, with biclausal constructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for your attention!


References


