

## ***Teaching Burmese as a Foreign Language: A Case Study***

Lwin Ni Ni Khine, Yangon University of Foreign Language, Myanmar

The Asian Conference on Language 2021  
Official Conference Proceedings

### **Abstract**

The development of Myanmar as a country has led to an increased interest from foreign NGOs, businesses, labors and professionals alike. One significant barrier that has arisen is their ability to learn the Myanmar language. The Myanmar language is comprised of a speaking format and a writing format. The current study explored the writing ability of overseas Myanmar language learners ( $n=30$ ) in a Myanmar university from various countries including Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and Thailand. 30 passages of written text were collected and typed in word document for archive. Textual analysis of the 30 essays revealed 23 types of grammatical mistakes, which were categorized into 3 main groups (1) syntax misuse, (2) word misplacement and (3) inappropriateness usage. The inappropriateness usage can be further classified into semantics inappropriateness and pragmatic inappropriateness. Take together, the mistakes highlight a potential learning need or development area, which may be emphasized at the beginning of the learning process. Teachers may benefit from having a greater awareness of the differences of the grammatical features between the learners' mother-tongue and the Myanmar language. Such awareness would ease the writing process and might diminish the written mistakes for learners in the future. The context of the writing should be discussed prior to the writing process and the cultural differences should be highlighted beforehand. Then, the appropriateness of word usage will be maintained.

Keywords: Burmese, Foreign Learners, Grammar, Word, Usage

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, according to the development of Myanmar, there are many foreigners studying Burmese around the world. Therefore, there are various level Burmese classes appear in different countries. In a Myanmar university, foreign learners need to be taught proper grammar in learning Burmese 4 skills. The proper grammar is essential in all levels, basic level, intermediate level and advanced level. Foreign learners start learning Burmese language and grammar in basic level and they can use the learned grammar till advanced level. In intermediate level, learners' learning skills and proficient are well enough to manage daily activities, like journal writing, dairy, and so forth. Knowing the writing ability of the intermediate level foreign learners would help to improve the advanced level teaching pedagogy and readjust the basic level teaching contents.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There are many types of Burmese classes in different settings. The levels can be divided into certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate. Alternatives are basic level, intermediate level and advanced level for vocational training. However, the classes around the world have their own curriculum and teaching materials. Because of the differences between different institutions in different regions, an understanding of the ultimate components in the curricula would be essential. To identify the crucial items in the curricula, understanding of the needs of the foreign learners in practice should be highlighted.

## **Significance of the Study**

Significance of this study is providing an overview of the essential items when teaching Burmese as a foreign language. Indeed, the most essential item is grammar in learning four skills of Burmese. Once the grammar errors and the significant of barriers for the foreigners to learn Burmese are identified, the adjustment of the curricula will be more effective. And, I expect that a better or a tailor-made curriculum can be developed accordingly.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions of this study are:

- 1) What are the common grammatical errors of Burmese as foreign language in the learning process?
- 2) Why foreigners have these errors?
- 3) What does we need to fill for these errors to be less and easier in teaching and learning Burmese?

## **Literature Review**

There are many studies about learning foreign languages as second language.

Kenzie Shofner (2020) explored the differences between speaking format and writing format in learning Burmese are main barriers for foreign learners. Win Hein (2013) found that the pronunciation, spelling or Burmese sentence structures are difficulties from the learners' perspectives. May Nyane and Maryland (2015) indicated that the usage of Burmese is the biggest challenge for foreigners according to the learners' tasks.

According to Lan Luu (2019) had identified the grammatical mistakes found from foreigners in the grammatical learning process of Japanese language. Due to the Japanese grammar is similar to Burmese grammar, the grammatical learning would also become a potential challenge for the Burmese learners.

There are rare study exploring the intermediate level foreign learners' writing 'Burmese as a second language' ability. Such gap is identified. Thus, this study is mainly exploring the writings from foreigners in an intermediate class in a Myanmar tertiary education.

## **Methodology**

When I found methodology to use in this study, I choose case study approach because it is suitable for collecting grammatical data from the writing of foreign learners in one specific level as a case. For this study, I located an intermediate level class of a foreign language institution in Myanmar. I choose intermediate level foreign learners because their Burmese 4 skills are not starters as basic level foreigners and their proficiency is not skillful as advanced level foreigners.

For data collection, I collected 30 essays with the title of 'Introduction of a place', written by 30 foreign learners from 6 nations (Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and Thailand). 30 foreign learners included 4 Indians, 1 Australian, 5 Japanese, 1 Thai, 2 Koreans and 17 Chinese.

For data management, I numbered 30 foreign learners as learner 1, learner 2. Then, I managed the sentences of each essay according to correct and incorrect usages and sentence structures. I identified the incorrect sentences and highlighted the grammatical errors.

## **Data Analysis**

First, I summarized the correct and incorrect sentences in number and percentage according to learners' serial numbers and nationalities (see Table 1). The 30 learners wrote 407 sentences. Correct sentences are 202 (49.63%) and incorrect sentences are 205 (50.36%).

Learners' serial number	Nationality	No. of Nationality	no. of Sentences (100%)	Correct (%)	Incorrect (%)
Learner 1	Indian	1	11	3 (27.27%)	8 (72.72%)
Learner 2	Chinese	1	15	9 (60%)	6 (40%)
Learner 3	Japanese	1	18	7 (38.88%)	11 (61.11%)
Learner 4	Thai	1	17	10 (58.82%)	7 (41.17%)
Learner 5	Japanese	2	11	6 (54.54%)	5 (45.45%)
Learner 6	Chinese	2	14	10 (71.42%)	4 (28.57%)
Learner 7	Japanese	3	7	2 (28.57%)	5 (71.42%)
Learner 8	Chinese	3	16	7	9

				(43.75%)	(56.25%)
Learner 9	Korean	1	12	6 (50%)	6 (50%)
Learner 10	Indian	2	15	5 (33.33%)	10 (66.66%)
Learner 11	Chinese	4	15	9 (60%)	6 (40%)
Learner 12	Chinese	5	12	8 (66.66%)	4 (33.33%)
Learner 13	Chinese	6	9	1 (11.11%)	8 (88.88%)
Learner 14	Chinese	7	11	3 (27.27%)	8 (72.72%)
Learner 15	Chinese	4	12	6 (50%)	6 (50%)
Learner 16	Japanese	5	16	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)
Learner 17	Chinese	8	10	6 (60%)	4 (40%)
Learner 18	Australian	1	12	3 (25%)	9 (75%)
Learner 19	Korean	2	15	7 (46.66%)	8 (53.33%)
Learner 20	Chinese	9	13	3 (23.07%)	10 (76.92%)
Learner 21	Chinese	10	13	3 (23.07%)	10 (76.92%)
Learner 22	Chinese	11	15	11 (73.33%)	4 (26.66%)
Learner 23	Chinese	12	13	10 (76.92%)	3 (23.07%)
Learner 24	Chinese	13	17	12 (70.58%)	5 (29.41%)
Learner 25	Chinese	14	14	8 (57.14%)	6 (42.85%)
Learner 26	Chinese	15	11	6 (54.54%)	5 (45.45%)
Learner 27	Indian	3	15	11 (73.33%)	4 (26.66%)
Learner 28	Chinese	16	15	5 (33.33%)	10 (66.66%)
Learner 29	Chinese	17	16	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)
Learner 30	Indian	4	17	5 (29.41%)	12 (70.58%)
<b>Total</b>			407 (100%)	202 (49.63%)	205 (50.36%)

Table 1: Correct and Incorrect Sentences of Each learner

Correct and incorrect sentences according to nationality can be seen in Figure 1.

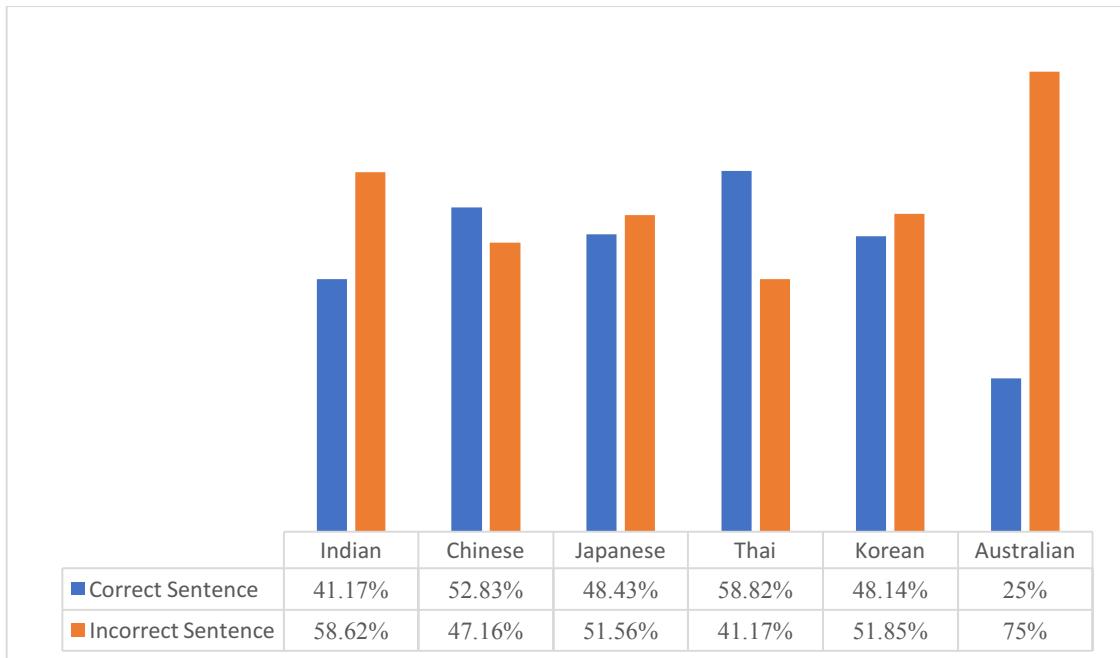


Figure 1: Correct and Incorrect Sentences According to Nationality

I analyzed the sentences into 4 parts as follows:

correct sentence = no mistake = ok

incorrect sentence = grammatical mistake= X

rearrangement of sentence order = need to change= Y

spelling error = green words

Figure 2 show that the percentages of these 4 parts.

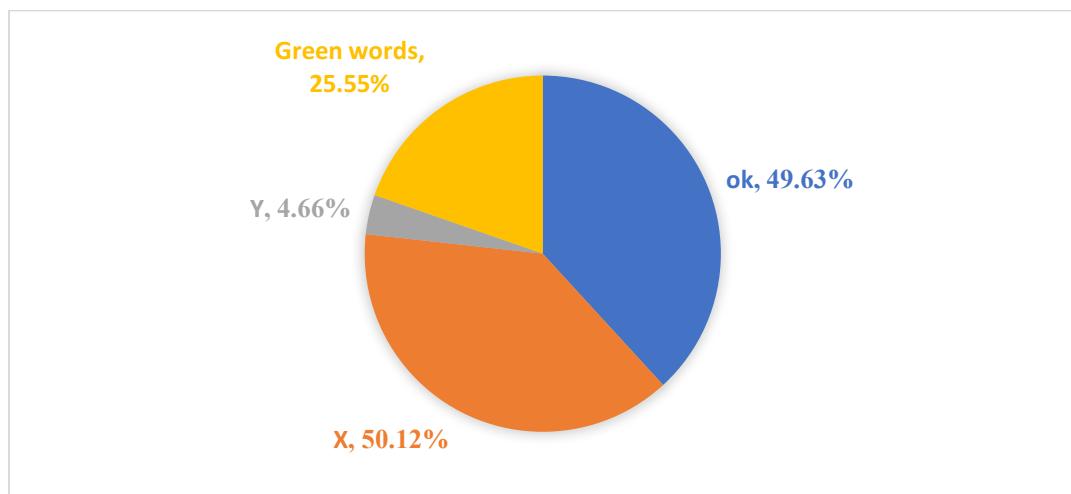


Figure 2: Percentages of 4 Parts

There are 23 types of grammatical errors are identified. (see Figure 3).

- |     |   |       |
|-----|---|-------|
| 1)  | Particle for intended place/person<br>(ရှေးရှာပြုဘတ်)                               | (1X)  |
| 2)  | Particle for place<br>(နေရာပြုဘတ်)  | (2X)  |
| 3)  | Usage of verb<br>(ကိုယာအသုံးပြုပုံ)   | (3X)  |
| 4)  | Speaking and writing<br>(အပြောအရေး)   | (4X)  |
| 5)  | Extra and need<br>(အပိုအလို)  | (5X)  |
| 6)  | Particle for possession<br>(ပိုင်ဆိုင်ခြင်းပြုဘတ်)                                  | (6X)  |
| 7)  | Adjective for indicating<br>(အညွှန်းပြနာမတိသေသန)                                    | (7X)  |
| 8)  | Particle for object<br>(ကံဝါဘတ်)  | (8X)  |
| 9)  | Conjunction for one after one<br>(တစ်ခုပြီးတစ်ခုပြသမွန့်)                           | (9X)  |
| 10) | Conjunction for reason<br>(အကြောင်းပြသမွန့်)  | (10X) |
| 11) | Levels of adjective/ adverb<br>(နာမတိသေသန/ကိုယာတိသေသနအဆင့်)                         | (11X) |
| 12) | Particle for separating<br>(ခွဲထုတ်ရာပြုဘတ်)  | (12X) |
| 13) | Particle for changing to adjective<br>(နာမတိသေသနပုံဖြောင်းပစ္စည်း)                  | (13X) |
| 14) | Pronoun for indicating<br>(အညွှန်းနာမ်စား)  | (14X) |
| 15) | Mathematical adjective<br>for amount and number<br>(ပမာဏပြ/အရေအတွက်ပြသချာနာမတိသေသန) | (15X) |
| 16) | Conjunction for opposition<br>(ဆန့်ကျင်ပြသမွန့်)                                    | (16X) |
| 17) | Particle for argument<br>(အငြင်းပြပစ္စည်း)  | (17X) |
| 18) | Particle for subject<br>(ကတ္တားဝါဘတ်)   | (18X) |
| 19) | Particle for variety<br>(မိုးပြပစ္စည်း)   | (19X) |
| 20) | Particle for supporting noun<br>(နာမ်ထောက်ပစ္စည်း)                                  | (20X) |
| 21) | Conjunction for combining<br>(ပေါင်းစည်းပြသမွန့်)                                   | (21X) |

- 22) Particle for verb of time (ကာလပါကိုယာဝိဘတ်) (22X)
- 23) Noun-changing from verb (ကိုယာနာမ်) (23X)

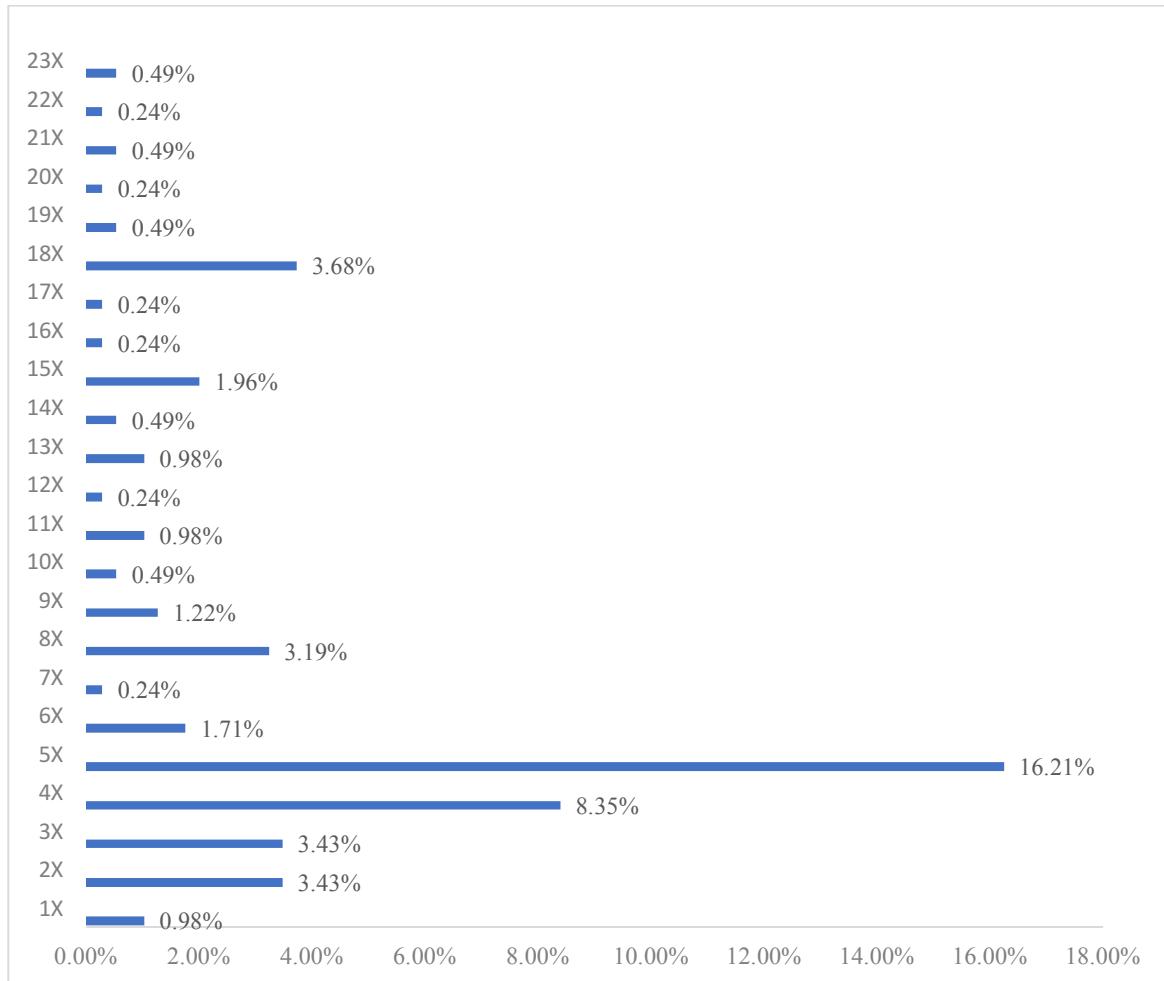


Figure 3: Percentages of 23 Types

As shown in Table 2, we can see the total of sentences and percentages of each nationality.

Types	4 Indians	17 Chinese	5 Japanese	1 Thai	2 Koreans	1 Australian
ok	24 (5.89%)	121 (29.72%)	31 (7.61%)	10 (2.45%)	13 (3.19%)	3 (0.73%)
1X	2 (0.49%)	2 (0.49%)	-	-	-	-
2X	3 (0.73%)	8 (1.96%)	2 (0.49%)	1 (0.24%)	-	-
3X	2 (0.49%)	8 (1.96%)	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)
4X	15 (3.68%)	16 (3.93%)	-	-	2 (0.49%)	1 (0.24%)
5X	10 (2.45%)	38 (9.33%)	7 (1.71%)	4 (0.98%)	5 (1.22%)	2 (0.49%)

<b>6X</b>	-	7 (1.71%)	-	-	-	-
<b>7X</b>	-	1 (0.24%)	-	-	-	-
<b>8X</b>	1 (0.24%)	7 (1.71%)	1 (0.24%)	-	-	4 (0.98%)
<b>9X</b>	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)	-	1 (0.24%)
<b>10X</b>	-	-	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)	-	-
<b>11X</b>	-	3 (0.73%)	-	-	-	1 (0.24%)
<b>12X</b>	-	1 (0.24%)	-	-	-	-
<b>13X</b>	-	1 (0.24%)	3 (0.73%)	-	-	-
<b>14X</b>	-	-	2 (0.49%)	-	-	-
<b>15X</b>	2 (0.49%)	4 (0.98%)	1 (0.24%)	-	1 (0.24%)	-
<b>16X</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.24%)
<b>17X</b>	1 (0.24%)	-	-	-	-	-
<b>18X</b>	1 (0.24%)	6 (1.47%)	3 (0.73%)	-	-	5 (1.22%)
<b>19X</b>	-	2 (0.49%)	-	-	-	-
<b>20X</b>	-	-	1 (0.24%)	-	-	-
<b>21X</b>	-	1 (0.24%)	-	-	1 (0.24%)	-
<b>22X</b>	-	1 (0.24%)	-	-	-	-
<b>23X</b>	-	2 (0.49%)	-	-	-	-
<b>Y</b>	3 (0.73%)	11 (2.70%)	2 (0.49%)	1 (0.24%)	1 (0.24%)	-
<b>Green words</b>	5 (1.22%)	54 (13.26%)	22 (5.40%)	4 (0.98%)	6 (1.47%)	5 (1.22%)

Table 2: 23 Types of grammatical errors according to nationality

## Findings

The 23 types of grammatical errors are classified into 3 categories.

- 1) Syntax Misused
- 2) Word Misplacement
- 3) Usage Inappropriateness

## 1) Syntax Misused

"Syntax misused" is the usage of grammatical words are misplaced, misused or missed. Among the incorrect sentences, foreign learners usually mixed up with some grammatical words in speaking format of Burmese. It could be due to the differences between speaking format and writing format.

### a) Particle for subject (ကတ္ထားဝိဘတ်)

In Burmese grammar, Particles for subject (ကတ္ထားဝိဘတ်) are "သည်၊ က".

#### Example a (Learner 16)

ဘာဖြစ်လိုလဲဆိုရင် Okinawa ခရိုင်က ကမ်းခြေမှာ အရမ်းလှတယ်။

In this example, learner 16 misplaced က and မှာ. Because they are similar in some speaking usages in Burmese. က is grammatical word for subject and မှာ is for places. Okinawa ခရိုင် is the subject. ကမ်းခြေ is the place. Therefore, the correct sentence should be: ဘာဖြစ်လိုလဲဆိုရင် ခရိုင်မှာ ကမ်းခြေက အရမ်းလှတယ်။

### b) Particle for Object (ကံဝိဘတ်)

In Burmese grammar, Particle for object (ကံဝိဘတ်) is "ကို".

#### Example b (Learner 20)

ခရီးသည်တွေဟာ Cang Shan တောင်ပေါ်မှာ သွားရင် ကြိုးဆွဲယဉ်နဲ့ စီးနိုင်တယ်။

Learner 20 misused နဲ့ and ကို. နဲ့ is Particle for using as **by car** = ကားနဲ့ in English. She mixed up the usage of နဲ့ and the object particle usage ကို. It is because of verb စီးတယ်။ In Burmese, we use like this ကားကိုစီးတယ်။ and ကားနဲ့သွားတယ်။. In this sentence, ကြိုးဆွဲယဉ် is the object. It is not the used transport. Therefore, the correct sentence should be ခရီးသည်တွေဟာ Cang Shan တောင်ပေါ်မှာ သွားရင် ကြိုးဆွဲယဉ်ကို စီးနိုင်တယ်။

### c) Particle for Intending Place/Person (ရေးရှုရာပြုဝိဘတ်)

In Burmese grammar, Particle for intended place/person (ရေးရှုရာပြုဝိဘတ်) is "သို့" (speaking form-ကို့).

#### Example c (Learner 1)

ရှိနာဂမြို့ဟာ ကား၊ ဘတ်စ်ကား၊ လေယာဉ်ပုံတို့နဲ့ သွားနိုင်ပါတယ်။

Learner 1 misused ဟာ and ကို့. ဟာ is speaking word of Particle for subject. ကို့ is speaking word of Particle for intending place/person. ရှိနာဂမြို့ is the place. It is not the subject.

Therefore, the correct sentence should be ရှိနာဂြို့ကို ကား၊ ဘတ်စ်ကား၊ လေယဉ်ပံ့တိနဲ့သွားနိုင်ပါတယ်။

#### d) Particle for Place (နေရာပြုံးဘတ်)

In Burmese grammar, Particles for place (နေရာပြုံးဘတ်) are "၌၊ မှာ၊ တွင်၊ ဝယ်၊ က)".

##### Example d (Learner 4)

ကောင်းမွန်စွာတဲ့ ကျွန်းမာရေးအတွက် ရေပူစမ်းကို စိမ်နိုင်ပါတယ်။

Learner 4 misused ကို and မှာ. ရေပူစမ်း is the place. It is not the object. Therefore, the correct sentence should be ကောင်းမွန်စွာတဲ့ ကျွန်းမာရေးအတွက် ရေပူစမ်းမှာ စိမ်နိုင်ပါတယ်။

For the above examples, the foreign learners misplaced, misused and missed some of the grammatical words for subject, object, places and so forth. The other potential reason for these mistakes would be the variations between Burmese and their own mother-tongue language.

## 2) Word Misplacement

The second category is word misplacement. Word misplacement is the placement of the words are misplaced or missing. It would be due to their misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about buffer language, their mother-tongue language and Burmese.

#### a) Levels of Adjective/Adverb (နာမဝိသေသန/ကြိုယာဝိသေသနအဆင့်)

In Burmese grammar, levels of adjective/adverb (နာမဝိသေသန/ကြိုယာဝိသေသနအဆင့်) are such as "ကောင်းသောနေရာ၊ ပိုကောင်းသောနေရာ၊ အကောင်းဆုံးနေရာ".

It looks like comparative and superlative in English such as "good place, better place, best place".

##### Example a (Learner 18)

ပါးနဲ့အလူးခြောင်းကြော အကောင်းဆုံး စားနိုင်ပါတယ်။

Learner 18 misplaced the words, ပါးနဲ့အလူးခြောင်းကြော and အကောင်းဆုံး. ပါးနဲ့အလူးခြောင်းကြော is noun. အကောင်းဆုံး is the highest level of adjective. In Burmese syntax, level of adjective is in front of noun. Therefore, the correct sentence should be အကောင်းဆုံး ပါးနဲ့ အလူးခြောင်းကြော စားနိုင်ပါတယ်။

I found that the misplacing of levels of adjective/adverb and noun/verb in the above incorrect sentences. Because of these examples, the intermediate foreign learners are mixed up with the placement of words in Burmese sentences.

**b) Mathematical Adjective for Amount and Number**  
(ပမဏပြ/အရေအတွက်ပြသချာနာမစီသေသန)

In Burmese grammar, Mathematical adjective for amount and number are such as "ကောင်းသားအခါး". Because noun is always in front of the number or the amount in Burmese sentence structure. It is different from other foreign language sentence structure, especially in English (for example- some students).

**Example b (Learner 19)**

အနက်ရောင်ကောက်တောင်မှာ **သေးသေးလေးတွေ** **လိုက်** များ**ကြီး** ရှိတယ်။

Learner 19 misplaced the words, **သေးသေးလေးတွေ** and **လိုက်**. **သေးသေးလေးတွေ** is the mathematical adjective for amount. **လိုက်** is noun. Therefore, the correct sentence should be **အနက်ရောင်ကောက်တောင်မှာ **လိုက်** **သေးသေးလေးတွေ** များ**ကြီး** ရှိတယ်။**

**c) Particle for Supporting Noun (နာမ်ထောက်ပစ္စည်း)**

In Burmese grammar, Particles for supporting noun are such as "သား၊ ပင် (ပ-for speaking form)၊ ချဉ်း". They mean that "only" in English. Normally, they are behind noun in Burmese sentence but in English, only one (စာစိယောက်ပဲ). Sometimes they are behind the Particle or other which is connected with noun, not behind the noun, for example, (ဒါက မြေမြေအတွက်ပဲ။= This is only for Mya Mya.)

**Example c (Learner 16)**

ရွှေင်းလှပြီး Okinawa ခရိုင်ပဲမှာ ရှိတဲ့ တိရစ္ဆာန်လည်း များတယ်။

Learner 16 misplaced the word, **ပဲ**, behind **ခရိုင်**. Normally, it is correct. But **ခရိုင်** is not noun. It is place because of **မှာ**. Therefore, the correct sentence should be **ရွှေင်းလှပြီး Okinawa ခရိုင်မှာပဲ ရှိတဲ့ တိရစ္ဆာန်လည်း များတယ်။**

In the above examples, I found that there are many foreign students made these kinds of mistakes because of studying Burmese from the translation of their mother-tongue language.

**3) Usage Inappropriateness**

The third category is usage inappropriateness. This category can be further divided into two categories. Usage inappropriateness is using incorrect usage in sentence. It is classified into two parts.

- a) Semantic Inappropriateness
- b) Pragmatic Inappropriateness

## a) Semantic Inappropriateness

Semantic inappropriateness is using incorrect usage in sentence that makes the meaning of sentence, incorrect or mislead. It is because of the different usages between Burmese and other languages.

### i) Usage of Verb (ကြိုယာအသုံးပြုပုံ)

In Burmese grammar, usage of verb is such as "ကြိုယာ + ဝိဘတ် = စာ: + သည်/တယ်". There are 3 kinds of verb, (1) verb for continuous (example- စာ:သည်), (2) verb for possession/location (example- မမော စာအုပ် ရှိတယ်။-possession, မမ၏အိမ်သည် သူခလမ်းတွင် ရှိသည်။-location) and (3) verb for being (example- မမသည် ကောင်းသူ ဖြစ်သည်။). There is another kind of verb usage in Burmese is totally different from English or other foreign language. For example, ဖွင့်တယ် and ပွင့်တယ် in the sentences "သူက တံခါးကို ဖွင့်တယ်။" and "ကိုကိုက တံခါးပွင့်နေတာကို တွေ့တယ်။". In English, "He **opens** the doors." and "Ko Ko saw the **open** doors." are the same using "open". It is different in Burmese. It depends on the noun that do other and the noun that be done by other. In the first sentence, the verb "" is for the noun "" who do "open". In the second sentence, the verb "" is for the noun "" that is done or opened by other.

#### Example i (Learner 8)

နွေဦးရာသီမှာ အမျိုးမျိုး ပန်းမန် ဖွင့်တယ်။

Learner 8 use incorrect usage ဖွင့် instead of ပွင့်. ဖွင့် is for the noun that is done by other. ပွင့် is for the noun do other. In this sentence, ပန်းမန် is the noun that do other. Therefore, the correct sentence should be နွေဦးရာသီမှာ အမျိုးမျိုး ပန်းမန် ပွင့်တယ်။

### ii) Particle for Verb of Time (ကာလပြကြိုယာဝိဘတ်)

In Burmese grammar, Particle for verb of time is tense of sentence. There are 3 tenses of sentence, (1) Present tense (example- ဒီနေ့ ကောင်းသွားတယ်။), (2) Past tense (example- မနေ့က ကောင်းသွားတယ်။), and (3) Future tense (example- မနက်ဖြန် ကောင်းသွားမယ်။). Present tense usage and past tense usage are only different in time usage, other are same. Future tense usage is "မယ်၊ လိမ့်မယ်".

#### Example ii (Learner 22)

ဒီနေ့ ကျွန်ုံမက တရုတ်နိုင်ငံမှာရှိတဲ့ ခွန်မင်းမြို့အကြောင်းကို မိတ်ဆက်ပေးပါတယ်။

Learner 22 use incorrect usage တယ် instead of မယ်. တယ် is verb for present tense in this sentence because of ဒီနေ့. မယ် is verb for future tense. This sentence shows the future tense that is coming nearly. Therefore, the correct sentence should be ဒီနေ့ ကျွန်ုံမက တရုတ်နိုင်ငံမှာရှိတဲ့ ခွန်မင်းမြို့အကြောင်းကို မိတ်ဆက်ပေးပါမယ်။

### iii) Extra and Need (အပိုအလို)

Extra and need is more extra usage and need usage than normal usage should be or must be in the sentence of Burmese.

#### Example iii (Learner 24)

ဂျင်းရဲ့အရွက်တွေကို ကျတယ်။

Learner 24 wrote the sentence with the extra usage "ကို". "ဂျင်းရဲ့အရွက်တွေ" is the subject, not object. And then, "ကို" is Particle for object. Therefore, the correct sentence should be ဂျင်းရဲ့အရွက်တွေ ကျတယ်။

For the above examples, the semantic inappropriateness of foreign learners can make the meanings of sentences incorrect or mislead. These mistakes showed that learners forget to care about the characteristics of Burmese sentence structures. The mother-tongue language of the learners would affect the learning of Burmese. This fact would be quite common in all kinds of language learning process.

## b) Pragmatic Inappropriateness

In usage inappropriateness, pragmatic inappropriateness is using incorrect usage in sentence or syntax that cannot make the meaning of the context clearly. This kind of incorrect usage cannot make the meaning of sentence incorrect. But it might lead to incorrect sentence structure or usage.

### i) Noun-changing from Verb (ကိုယာနာမ်)

In Burmese grammar, verb changes into Noun when some words are adding in front of or behind that verb. (example- အ + စား = အစား၊ စား + စရာ = စားစရာ). We called that kind of noun as "noun-changing from verb".

#### Example i (Learner 23)

ရေပက်ခြင်းရဲ့အဓိပ္ပာယ်ဟာ အချင်းချင်း ဆုတောင်းပေးပါတယ်။

Learner 23 use incorrect usage ဆုတောင်းပေးပါတယ် instead of ဆုတောင်းပေးခြင်းဖြစ်ပါတယ်. This sentence is explanation of the meaning of "ရေပက်ခြင်း". In Burmese, explanation ends with "ခြင်းဖြစ်ပါတယ်". Therefore, the correct sentence should be ရေပက်ခြင်းရဲ့အဓိပ္ပာယ်ဟာ အချင်းချင်း ဆုတောင်းပေးခြင်းဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

### ii) Pronoun for Indicating (အညွှန်းနာမ်စား)

In Burmese grammar, pronouns for indicating are "ဤ၊ ထို၊ သင်း၊ ငါး" (in speaking "ဒီ၊ အဲဒီ၊ ဒဲ၊ အဲဒဲ၊ ဟို"). They are used instead of noun.

### Example ii (Learner 7)

အခါတွေက အရင်ကတည်းက ဂျပန်လူမျိုးတွေလည်း ချစ်တဲ့အကြောင်းအရာ ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

Learner 7 use incorrect usage အခါ instead of အခါ. အခါ is for the place. အခါ is for the thing. အကြောင်းအရာ is the thing. Therefore, the correct sentence should be အခါတွေက အရင်ကတည်းက ဂျပန်လူမျိုးတွေလည်း ချစ်တဲ့အကြောင်းအရာ ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

### iii) Adjective for Indicating (အညွှန်းပြနာမဝိသေသန)

In Burmese grammar, adjectives for indicating are "ဤ၊ ထို၊ ယင်း၊ င်း" (in speaking "ဒီ၊ အဲဒီ၊ ဒါ၊ အဲဒါ၊ ဟို"). They are behind noun.

### Example iii (Learner 11)

Nanjing လမ်းဟာ ရှိန်ဟဲမြို့ရဲ့အစည်းဆုံး ကုန်သွယ်ရေးလမ်း ဖြစ်တယ်။ ဟိုလမ်းအဆုံးမှာ Waitan ရှိတယ်။

Learner 11 use incorrect usage ဟို instead of အဲဒီ. ဟို is for the things we do not know definitely. (for example- ဟိုလမ်းကို သိလား။ = Do you know that road?). အဲဒီ is for the things we know definitely. (for example- ပြည်လမ်းကို သိလား။ အဲဒီလမ်းက ရှည်တယ်။ = Do you Pyi Road? That road is long.) In English, they are the same. Therefore, the correct sentence should be Nanjing လမ်းဟာ ရှိန်ဟဲမြို့ရဲ့အစည်းဆုံး ကုန်သွယ်ရေးလမ်း ဖြစ်တယ်။ အဲဒီလမ်းအဆုံးမှာ Waitan ရှိတယ်။

### iv) Particle for Possession (ပိုင်ဆိုင်ခြင်းပြုပိုဘတ်)

In Burmese grammar, Particle for possession is "၏" (in speaking "ရဲ့"). They are behind noun.

### Example iv (Learner 2)

အဲဒီနေရာဟာ ရွှေလီမြို့က ထင်ရှားကျော်စောတဲ့နေရာ ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

Learner 2 use incorrect usage က instead of ရဲ့. က is for subject and ရဲ့ is for possession. Therefore, the correct sentence should be အဲဒီနေရာဟာ ရွှေလီမြို့ရဲ့ ထင်ရှားကျော်စောတဲ့နေရာ ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

### v) Particle for Separating (ခွဲထုတ်ရာပြုပိုဘတ်)

In Burmese grammar, Particle for separating is "တွင်၊ အနက်၊ အထဲမှ၊ အထဲမှာ" (in speaking "အထဲက၊ ထဲက"). They are behind noun.

### Example v (Learner 2)

ချူကျင့်မြို့ဟာ တရာတ်နိုင်ငံက အသင့်တော်ဆုံးနေထိုင်တဲ့ မြို့၁၀ မြို့မှာ တစ်မြို့ ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

Learner 2 use incorrect usage မှာ instead of ထဲက. မှာ is Particle for place and ထဲက is Particle for separating. Therefore, the correct sentence should be ချိုက်ငြို့ဟာ တရုတ်နိုင်ငံက အသင့်တော်ဆုံးနေထိုင်တဲ့ မြို့၁၀ မြို့ထဲက တစ်မြို့ ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

But it cannot make the meaning of sentence incorrect largely. We can understand the meaning of sentence clearly even with this kind of incorrect usage. It is only grammatically mistake.

#### vi) Classifiers (မျိုးပြုပစ္စည်း)

In Burmese grammar, particle for variety is "ပင်၊ ယောက်၊ ခုံ . . ." . This kind of usage is depending on the kinds of things. (for example- သစ်ပင်တစ်ပင်)

Example vi (Learner 14)

နှစ်းကျင်မြို့ဟာ ရေးခေတ်မင်းဆက် ၆၉၇၈.မြို့တော်ဟောင်း ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

Learner 14 use incorrect usage ခုံ instead of ဆက်. ခုံ is general classifier. ဆက် is the generation of kings. When foreigners are not sure, they use it. For the natives, it is an incorrect usage. Therefore, the correct sentence should be နှစ်းကျင်မြို့ဟာ ရေးခေတ်မင်းဆက် ၆၉၇၈.မြို့တော်ဟောင်း ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

This learner used it because it is general usage. Natives can understand this kind of incorrect usage. This would be quite complicated for foreign learners.

#### vii) Particle for Changing to Adjective (နာမဝိသေသနပုဒ်ပြောင်းပစ္စည်း)

In Burmese grammar, particle for changing to adjective is "သော၊ သည့်၊ မည့်" (in speaking "တဲ့၊ မယ့်/မဲ့"). When verb combines with this particle, it changes to adjective. (example- လွှာပ+သော = လွှာပသော) It is in front of noun.

Example vii (Learner 22)

ခွဲန်မင်းမြို့မှာ အများကြီး လှုပေါ်သော်လည်း ရှိပါတယ်။

Learner 22 use verb "လွှာပ" in front of noun "သော်လည်း". This verb needs to change to adjective by adding "တဲ့". Therefore, the correct sentence should be ခွဲန်မင်းမြို့မှာ အများကြီး လွှာပတဲ့သော်လည်း ရှိပါတယ်။

#### viii) Particle for Argument (အငြင်းပြုပစ္စည်း)

In Burmese grammar, particle for argument is "မ၊ မ . . . ပါ၊ မ . . . နှင့်" (in speaking, မ . . . ဘူး၊ မ . . . နဲ့"). Burmese sentence with negative usage is such as မစားပါ, မစားဘူး, မစားနှင့်, မစားနဲ့.

### Example viii (Learner 10)

ထိုကြောင့် ကျေရာပွန်ကို ခရီးသွားရင် ထိုးမမေ့ပါ။

Learner 10 use verb "မမေ့ပါ". This usage is for self. This sentence is for giving advice to other. Therefore, the correct sentence should be ထိုကြောင့် ကျေရာပွန်ကို ခရီးသွားရင် ထိုးမမေ့ပါနဲ့။

### ix) Conjunction for One after Another (တစ်ခုပြီးတစ်ခုပြုသမ္မန္ဒာ)

In Burmese grammar, conjunction for one after another is "ဘာ ၍" (in speaking, "ပြီး"). This usage is used for verb. If we use for noun or other, we need to add "ဖြစ်/ရှိ" in front of it.

### Example ix (Learner 27)

စည်းလုံးဖြူက တစ်နှစ်လုံး အအေးဆုံးနဲ့ ကောခဏဗိုးရွာပါတယ်။

Learner 27 wrote one after another, အအေးဆုံး and ကောခဏဗိုးရွာပါတယ် by connecting with incorrect conjunction "နဲ့". အအေးဆုံး is not verb. Therefore, we need to add "ဖြစ်" in front of "ပြီး". The correct sentence should be စည်းလုံးမြှုက တစ်နှစ်လုံး အအေးဆုံးဖြစ်ပြီး ကောခဏဗိုးရွာပါတယ်။

### x) Conjunction for Combination (ပေါင်းစည်းပြသမ္မန္ဒာ)

In Burmese grammar, conjunction for combination is "လည်း . . . လည်း၊ သာမက . . . လည်း၊ ရုံသာမက . . . လည်း၊ အပြင် . . . လည်း". This usage is used for combination 2 nouns or 2 verbs or 2 sentences. (example- ညီညီသာမက ကိုကိုလည်း ပေါင်မှန် စားတယ်။ -for 2 nouns, ညီညီက ပေါင်မှန်စားရုံသာမက ကိုတ်မှန်လည်း စားတယ်။ -for 2 verbs or 2 sentences)

### Example x (Learner 26)

ခွန်မင်းမြှုဟာ ရွှေခင်းသာဟာသာမက လူမျိုးလည်း စိတ်အားထက်သန်တယ်။

Learner 26 use incorrect conjunction "သာမက" for combining 2 sentences instead of "ရုံသာမက". Therefore, the correct sentence should be ခွန်မင်းမြှုဟာ ရွှေခင်းသာဟာရုံသာမက လူမျိုးလည်း စိတ်အားထက်သန်တယ်။

### xi) Conjunction for Opposition (ဆန့်ကျင်ပြသမ္မန္ဒာ)

In Burmese grammar, conjunction for opposition is "သို့ရာတွင်၊ သို့သော်၊ သို့သော်လည်း၊ သော်လည်း" (in speaking, "ဒါပေမယ့်၊ ပေမယ့်"). This usage is used for opposition 2 sentences in different meanings. They are different in 1 sentence or 2 sentences. (example- "နီနီက ကြက်ဥ မကြိုက် ပေမယ့် ကျွန်းမာရေးအတွက် စားတယ်။" -1 sentence, "နီနီက ကြက်ဥ မကြိုက်ဘူး။ ဒါပေမယ့် ကျွန်းမာရေးအတွက် စားတယ်။" -2 sentences)

### Example xi (Learner 18)

လန်ဒန်မြို့ကို အရမ်းကြိုက် ဒါပေမယ့် လန်ဒန်မြို့ အရမ်းချေးကြီးပါတယ်။

Learner 26 use incorrect conjunction "ဒါပေမယ့်" for combining 2 sentences instead of "ပေမယ့်". Therefore, the correct sentence should be လန်ဒန်မြို့ကို အရမ်းကြိုက် ပေမယ့် လန်ဒန်မြို့ အရမ်းချေးကြီးပါတယ်။

### xii) Conjunction for Reason (အကြောင်းပြသမွန်)

In Burmese grammar, conjunction for reason is "ခဲ့၊ နှင့်၊ သဖြင့်၊ သောကြောင့်၊ ကြောင့်" (in speaking, "ကြောင့်၊ လို့"). It depends on that they are after noun or verb. (example- "ဆရာမက သူကြောင့် စိတ်ဆိုးတယ်။" -after noun, "သူက မိုးရွှေလို့ ကြောင်းမသွားဘူး။" -after verb)

### Example xii (Learner 5)

ဆောင်းရာသီမှာ ရွှေက အနိရောင်ကို ပြောင်းသလို လှပါတယ်။

Learner 26 use incorrect conjunction "သလို" for reason instead of "လို့". Therefore, the correct sentence should be ဆောင်းရာသီမှာ ရွှေက အနိရောင်ကို ပြောင်းလို့ လှပါတယ်။

### xiii) Speaking and Writing (အပြောအရေး)

In Burmese grammar, the differences between speaking usage and writing usage are commonly known by the foreigners, though it is not easy to use for them. However, the incorrect usages might not twist the meaning of the sentence. It is quite complicated for foreign learners.

### Example xiii (Learner 30)

အဘယ်ကြောင့်ဆိုသော် ကြားတွင် world war II ထင်ရှားသော ရှိပါတယ်။

Learner 30 use writing usage "အဘယ်ကြောင့်ဆိုသော်", "တွင်" and "သော" instead of speaking usage "ဘာဖြစ်လိုလဲဆိုတော့", "မှာ" and "တဲ့". Therefore, the correct sentence should be ဘာဖြစ်လိုလဲဆိုတော့ ကြားမှာ world war II ထင်ရှားတဲ့ ရှိပါတယ်။

From the above examples, the learners could be due to the lack of exposure to the local culture or lack of chance to use in real practice. The intermediate level students always have a myth in mind, longer sentence is better. Somehow which is true in Burmese writing. However, because the skill level is only intermediate, the sentence structure would not be smooth in some usage. Another problem is the using of grammatical words to indicate the places or subjects.

## Discussion

According to the findings, there are some grammatical items for foreign learners in learning Burmese. The grammatical problems are particles, conjunction, and sentence structures or

syntax. To resolve the problem of found grammatical errors, the readjustment of the basic level curriculum is an alternative. This curriculum must be structured by concluding general grammar items and exercises that are useful in real life.

Another item is "Bilingual mutual understanding". According to the examples in this study, the mother-tongue language of the foreign learners might affect their learning. The differences between Burmese and foreigners' mother-tongue language can mess up in daily usages. The main problem of this fact is thinking from the translation of mother-tongue language before writing or speaking Burmese. This problem is common if the sentence structures of mother-tongue language and Burmese are similar. If not, both teachers and students, all, must be careful in teaching and learning.

Another factor is the strength of the writing competence. It means that the more practice in learning Burmese four skills, the more careful in writing skill. Because practicing for writing skill is the easiest way to remember important basic usage for other skills. So, various practice with different contexts seems importance to eliminate the errors in usage.

## **Implications**

There are two awareness that we should pay attention to. They are:

- 1) Pre-stage awareness and
- 2) Tailor-made awareness (learner-centered).

### **1) Pre-Stage Awareness**

For pre-stage awareness, first, the curriculum should provide the grammatical differences since basic level. Because many curricula are prepared for four skills without grammar. Even concluding with grammar, only giving basic usages such as noun, pronoun, verb, subject, object, and the sentence structure such as subject + verb. Other usages and structures are being proficiency by practicing four skills in real life.

Second, not only foreign learners but also native teachers should be careful that learning and teaching must be based on the differences between speaking and writing in Burmese since basic level. If they do not care about these variations, they cannot reach for better teaching and learning in Burmese.

Final, learning language is not one-man band. For this fact, learners must go to public and practice in real life. Because practice in real situation is crucial.

### **2) Tailor-Made Awareness**

For tailor-made awareness, teachers should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learners beforehand. Teachers can prepare for students by students' proficiency level and nationalities. A good preparing is pre-testing students' needs on first lecture day.

Then, different exercises should be given according to individual needs. This approach can use during teaching period or one semester. After teaching first week or some weeks, teachers can know about the needs of each student in the class. Giving different exercises as the need of each student is really helpful for learners.

And then, the exposure of the usage in daily activities should be emphasized. Because teaching and learning language is not for one person. It is for communication. If teachers want students to be proficiency in language, they should add daily usages in lessons, give activities or projects connecting with daily life and listen to and explain students' questions out of the class.

## **Conclusion**

This is a case study about 30 foreign learners learning Burmese as a foreign language in the intermediate level. Based on their writing, there are 23 grammatical errors are being identified. They are further classified as (1) Syntax misused; (2) Word misplacement; and (3) Usage inappropriateness. To improve the intermediate level of Burmese learning for the foreigners, the pre-stage awareness of the grammatical teaching content in the basic level is crucial. The tailor made of the explanation of the grammatical usage to different mother-tongue learners might ease the grammatical misunderstanding in Burmese throughout the learning process.

## **Acknowledgements**

This paper is a culmination of 8 years of experience in teaching Burmese to foreign learners. It could not have been written without the data of 30 individuals, foreign learners from intermediate level, and my best friend, Eaindry Oo. She provided inspiration for many ideas in the arrangement of the initial stage of the PowerPoint presentation.

## References

- Shofner, K. (2020). *Highlights and challenges of the Burmese Language*. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from <https://www.unitedlanguagegroup.com/blog/highlights-challenges-burmese-language>
- Luu, L. (2019). *Common Grammatical Errors made by Foreign Learners of English*. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from <https://englishforforeignersonline.com/common-grammatical-errors-that-foreigners-make/>
- Nyane, M. and Maryland. (2015). *Little Tricky Things in the Burmese Language*. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from <https://www.embracemyanmar.com/little-things.html>
- Hein, W. (2013). *You Wanna Learn Burmese, Too?*. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from <https://whiteboylearningburmese.wordpress.com/>

**Contact email:** lwinninikhine@gmail.com