



**University of
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Form and meaning of clause linkage in Mon - conditionals

SWL 12

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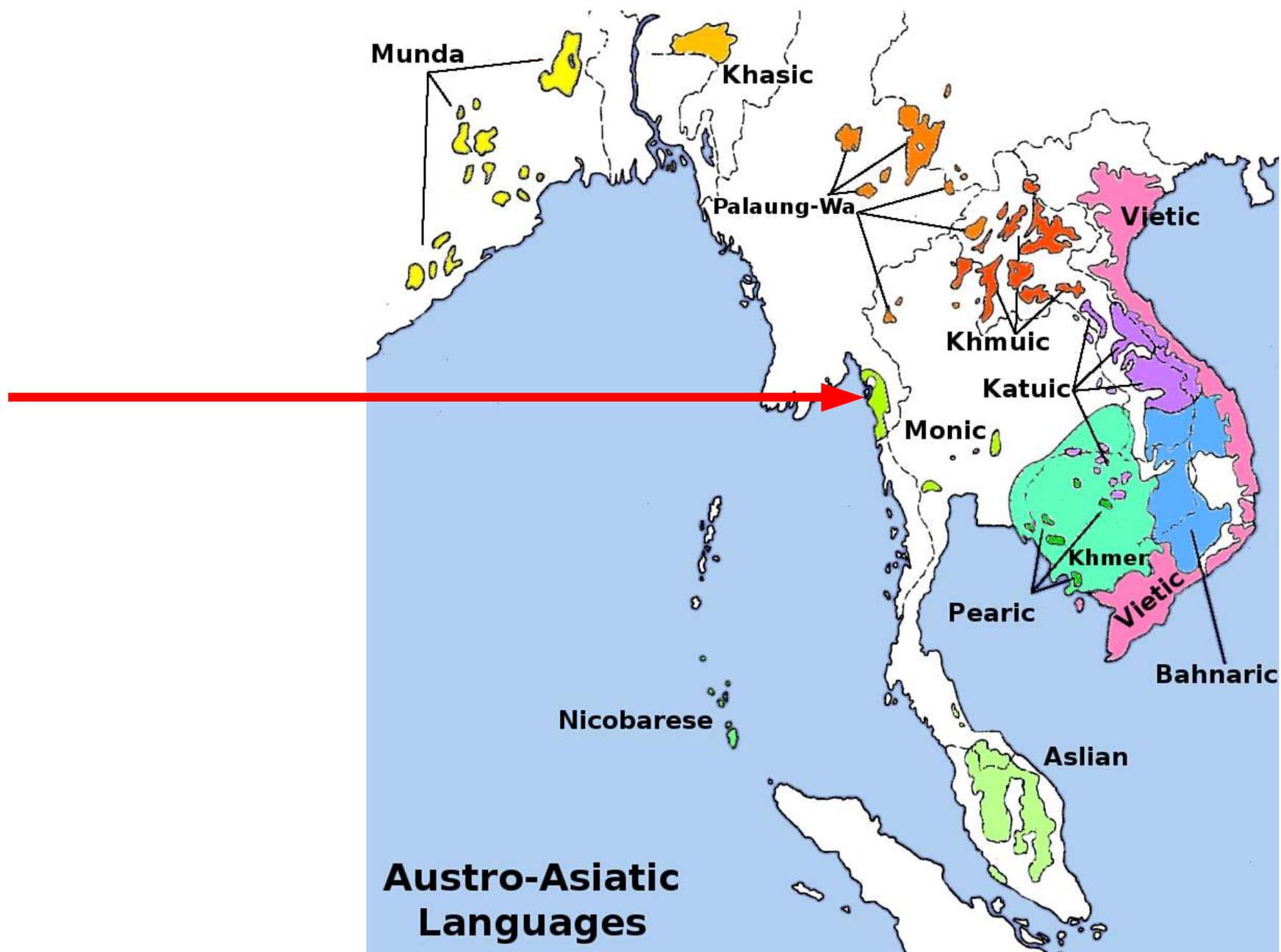
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Overview

1. Background: the Mon language
2. Subordination in Old Mon: conditional clauses
3. Development of conditional clauses from Old Mon to modern Mon
4. Syntax of conditional clauses in modern Mon
5. Conclusions

1. Background: the Mon language

- Austroasiatic language
- spoken in southern Myanmar and central Thailand
- about 800'000 speakers
- literary language since the 6th century
- language of education in some schools in Mon State
- largely isolating, some derivational morphology
- basic word order SV, AVP, AVGT; pragmatic word order changes
- regular omission of known or retrievable arguments
- increasing Burmese influence in vocabulary and syntax



2. Subordination in Old Mon (6th - 13th c.)

Conditional/temporal subordinator <yal>

yal *kcit* *sak* *ñah* *ma* *yām.*
 if die not.exist person REL weep
 'If (or when) they die, there is no one to weep for them.'

yañ *pnāñ* *c?āñ* *ma* *jnok* *kum* *ci* *yal* *gabbha* *tlūñ ...*
 EMPH army foreign REL big also EMPH if happen come
 'If there should come some foreign army, though a great one, ...'

Clause initial

S/A or other constituents of subordinate clause may be fronted

Temporal or conditional

3. Development from Old Mon modern Mon

Middle Mon (14th - 16th c.) <yal> → <yar, yaw, yow>

(*mā* cf. B *hma* ‘topic’; OM: “particle marking introduction of new subject of discourse”)

pabway dhaw yaw pūgaw mway pna bak cmat
 ADV Dharma if person one conduct follow true
 ‘if a person truly conforms in conduct to the Doctrine’

yar tdek ma=gah
 if wet REL=say
 ‘if it is wetted’

yow dah mā
 if be TOP
 ‘if it should be the case that’

pḍay paṭisandhi ey kəp.tlā gah, kwon truh mway, ey go? mā
 LOC confinement 1SG first that child male one 1SG get TOP
 ‘If in my first confinement I get a son’

COND clause

Constituents may be fronted

COND clause TOP

clause TOP

Literary Mon (16th c. to present)

<i>yaw.ra</i>	<i>hwaʔ</i>	<i>cau</i>	<i>chak</i>	<i>tuy</i>	<i>yām</i>	<i>mɔ̀n</i>	<i>ɲim</i>	<i>ma=gaḥ</i>
if	NEG	return	connect	finish	weep	stay	still	REL=say

<i>dah</i>	<i>tak</i>	<i>kəw</i>	<i>leʔ</i>	<i>ḃaw</i>	<i>ron.</i>
touch	beat	OBL	stick	rattan	ASRT

‘If you don’t go back and keep weeping, you’ll be beaten by my rattan stick.’

(or ‘I’ll have to beat you with my rattan stick.’)

<yal> → <yaw> ~ <yaw.ra> (from <yal dah> ‘if it is’)

Clause often ends in <ma gaḥ> ‘saying which’ marking a topic

Spoken Mon

yò(.ra?) *dɛh* *hù?* *klɔŋ*
 if 3 NEG come

→ *yò(.ra?)* *dɛh* *hù?* *klɔŋ* ***teh***
 if 3 NEG come TOP

 → *dɛh* *hù?* *klɔŋ* ***teh***
 3 NEG come TOP

‘if he doesn’t come’

COND clause

COND clause TOP

clause TOP > COND

4. Syntax of conditional clauses in modern Mon

4.1 Position

Clause intitial subordinator

yò *ʔuə* *hùʔ* *chɔ* *klɔŋ* *ɲèh* *muə* *hùʔ* *chɔ*.
 if 1SG NEG find come person one NEG find
 ‘If I hadn’t found him, no one would have (found him).’

fronting/extraction of constituents possible

tɛm *lè,* *həmùh* *yò* *ʔa* *noŋ* *kəloŋ* *ʔa* *lè*.
 know EMPH now if go ASRT forget go EMPH
 ‘He knew [me back then, but] if I went there now, he must have forgotten me.’

dɔə *lòkaʔ* *nɔʔ* *hətaoʔ* *cəntèʔ* *tɔʔ* *yò* *hùʔ* *mùə*
 LOC world PROX moon moon PL if NEG exist
 ‘if there were no moon and the like in this world’

Clause initial subordinator and clause final topic marker

pəriəŋ cət nɔʔ yə.raʔ pèh kəʔ ʔəkhon həbɑh sərup bnt
 story drama PROX if 2 get permission show role about

nɔʔ raʔ teh pəm lɔ kəʔ paʔ rao.
 PROX FOC TOP image which get do Q

‘In this drama [of life], if you are allowed to show only this role, what can you do?’

pəm prɛŋ pèh nɔʔ yə.raʔ wətə təm kləŋ chɔ teh
 shape outside 2 PROX if PN know come find TOP

dɛh chɑndu noŋ pèh thiəŋ ha.
 3 pity ASRT 2 think Q

‘If Wati knew and came to see your condition, do you think she would feel sorry for you?’

Clause final topic marker → function of conditional subordinator

pə-khyi hə-nɔʔ teh pɛŋka hətɑʔ tɕʔ khyi.
 CAUS-move ADV-PROX TOP fan tail DIST move

‘If you moved like this, the tail rotor would move.’

dɛh hùʔ kwèʔ dɛh kòŋ klɕŋ teh ʔuə lɛ kòŋ tɕŋ.kəlɕŋ raʔ.
 3 NEG shy 3 dare come TOP 1SGADD dare welcome FOC

‘If he is not too shy and dares to come, I dare to welcome him.’

cut həʔuy teh cut.
 put medicine TOP put

‘If [you want to] put on medicine, do it.’

mèn mən teh mèn.
 wait win TOP wait

‘If [you] can wait, wait.’

Non-verbal expressions

yəmù? *cəpan* *kòh* *chàn* ***teh*** *hnòk* *ra?* *noŋ* *ʔuə* *həya?* *ròŋ.*
 name Japan MEDL *san* TOP big FOC ASRT 1SG think look
 ‘The Japanese names, if [there is a] *san*, they are important people.’

kə? *ra?* *mələ* ***bət*** *nɔ?* ***teh*** *wətəə* *lɛ* *kləh* *ket* *ra?*
 get FOC PN about PROX TOP PN ADD understand take FOC
 ‘That’s ok, Mali, if that’s all there is, I understand it.’

ʔupəma ***teh*** *mòŋ* *wəŋka?* *nɔ?* *mìp* *ha.*
 example TOP stay PN PROX happy Q
 ‘Supposed [you would] stay in Wangka, would you be happy here?’

Multiple embedded conditionals

hɔm kəh puə nɔʔ ləh hùʔ toə pùh teh
 speak MEDL performance PROX dance NEG finish NEG TOP

cao ʔa teh ʔaca càt həlah ʔəkhon ha.
 return go TOP teacher drama release permission Q

‘Let’s say, if you (want to) go home if the performance is not finished (yet), would the director give you permission?’

Prohibitive in subordinate clause

ərèə wətɔə kɔ hù? màn kòh pa? ?at teh toə ra?
 thing PN give NEG win MEDL PROH beg TOP finish TOP

'If you don't ask for anything I cannot give you, that's fine.'

(or 'Don't ask me anything I can't give you, then that's fine.'

Object = N + RC

Object fronted

Chaining function of *teh* - tail-head linkage

ɲuə klù? teh dɛh toc, dɛh toc hloŋ ʔa.
 sun dark TOP 3 sleep 3 sleep asleep go

‘When it got dark, they went to sleep, they fell asleep.’

dɛh toc hloŋ ʔa teh ɲèh ba kɔ klɔ kòh
 3 sleep asleep go TOP person two OBL dog MEDL

klɔ toc mɔŋ ʔatao dɛh.
 dog sleep stay on.top 3

‘When they fell asleep, the two of them, the dog slept on top of him (the boy).’

mənìh toc hɛt teh ɲèə kòh tɛt klɔŋ
 human sleep quiet TOP frog MEDL exit come

nù kɔ pələŋ kòh.
 ABL OBL bottle MEDL

‘When the boy was fast asleep, the frog came out of the bottle.’

Chaining function with implicated causal reading

mənìh tət pə̌ kəɾɔp bɛŋ.kya tɔʔ, dɛh hɔm kɔm lɛ
 human exit watch <NML>near airplane DIST 3 speak also ADD

həkaoʔ hùʔ kləh teh bɛŋ.kya kə̌h tao phɔc khyɔt
 body NEG understand TOP airplane MEDL burn fear die

pə̌ ʔət ʔəcon.
 watch all EMPH

‘The (village) people came out to have a close look at that airplane, though they (the English) warned them, but as they (the villagers) did not understand, the airplane might burn, they (the English) were afraid that they (the villagers) would die, but they (the villagers) all came to look.’

Differences between *yò ~ yò.ra?* and *teh*

yò.ra?

Reading restricted to conditional (less common temporal)

Constituent order fixed within conditional clause (SV, AVP)

More common in counterfactual conditional expressions (though not restricted to these)

teh

Frequently used in chaining

Free constituent order (extraction not readily detectable)

Reading context-dependent:

Event does/did occur:

Event may or may not occur:

Event does/did not occur:

sequential or causal

possible conditional

counterfactual conditional

5. Conclusions

Clause initial subordinators in Old Mon, constituents can be extracted

Emerging clause final subordinators in Middle and Modern Mon

Competing with old clause initial subordinators

Functions of newer forms less fixed/specific

New form not introduced to strengthen bleached meaning of old form.

Choice of forms partly exploited for distinction possible vs. counterfactual

teh clauses do not show all signs of subordinate clauses (free word order, possibility of non-declarative IF)

Mon seems to be developing away from subordinating to chaining or juxtaposing structure in conditional (and other) 'subordinate' clauses.