Language Contact in the Thailand-Myanmar Area - Past and Present

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Organization of the presentation

I. Some theory

1. What is Language Contact?

2. How languages influence each other - scenarios and constraints

II. Myanmar and Thailand - data and settings

3. Language Contact in the past

4. Language Contact today
1. What is language contact

According to Weinreich (1953) language contact happens in the bilingual speaker who moves between two linguistic systems.

Matras (2010) claims that the bilingual individual has only one (extended) linguistic system, not two (or more).

If contact occurs within an individual speaker, it has to spread to the language community in order to result in contact-induced change.

The community as such, or only segments of it, may be bilingual. Bilingualism can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, with potentially different outcomes of language contact.

Perfect symmetric bilingualism is potentially unstable.
Language contact usually involves social and cultural contact (apart from language as a product of culture), but this is not necessarily the case (cf. English influence in Thai).

Extended contact situations can lead to convergence of any linguistic subsystem such as phonetics/phonology, morphosyntax, lexicon/semantics, pragmatics.

Traditional view is that it is always the dominant language that influences a subordinate variety. Counterexamples can easily be found, though.

Strong dominance of one language can (and usually does) lead to language shift (i.e. language loss), potentially with substratum interference of the lost language on the new dominant language.
2. Scenarios and constraints of language contact

Settings of language contact - social, cultural, political, linguistic

*Punctuated equilibrium* (Dixon 1997, Aikhenvald and Dixon 2006)

Situations of political and social equilibrium lead to convergence over an extended period, potentially many centuries. Languages involved are basically equal in status and in more or less intense contact with each other. Many individuals and communities are bilingual. **This situation leads to the formation of linguistic and cultural areas.**

Punctuations such as military conquest of an area inhabited by speakers of a different or migration of large populations into new areas lead to sudden language change (shift) and divergence of formerly similar or cognate languages (substrate influence). **This is seen as the major scenario of the split of proto-languages and cultures into modern varieties.**
11 scenarios for language contact (Muysken, in Hickey 2010)

- **Borrowing:** Asymmetrical influence of dominant to subordinate; usually transfer of concrete material, rather than structures. Borrowing of semantics and idioms also occurs. **Universal.**

- **Grammatical convergence:** Prolonged stable bilingualism, often symmetrical. Transfer of more abstract material (constructions, word order, etc.). Basically symmetrical. **Typical for linguistic areas.**

- **L2 learning, shift, substrate formation:** Influence of subordinate on dominant language due to imperfect learning of dominant language. **Common in language shift due to political change.**

- **Relexification:** Asymmetrical; words of source language are inserted in constructions of target language. **Very rare; e.g. Media Lengua:** Spanish words in Quechua constructions.
• **Leveling**: Homogenization of similar varieties, especially due to migration. Potentially symmetrical. *E.g. Hindustani from different North Indian languages.*

• **Simultaneous bilingual language acquisition**: Frequent in individual children, not language communities as whole. Development of common patterns and pragmatics. *Frequent in mixed marriages.*

• **Metatypy and restructuring**: Change in morphosyntactic type of a language due to contact. Difference to convergence probably in asymmetry. In extreme cases the languages can be translated word by word. *E.g. Thai and Nyahkur.*

• **Insertional code-switching**: Insertion of foreign elements in matrix language, usually related to bilingual competence of individual speaker. Asymmetrical. *Frequent in immigrant community settings.*
- **Alternational code-switching:** Similar to ordinary (lexical) borrowing, but distinct from these as more adjunct elements are involved, less lexical nouns, for example. Symmetrical. **Common in widely bilingual communities or with political competition of the languages involved.**

- **Language attrition and death:** Dominant language takes place of subordinate language, which leaves traces as substrate, often in phonetics/phonology and morphosyntax. Asymmetrical. Usually a slow process leading from metatypy to disappearance (or restructuring) of distinctions. In the final stages only a few (culturally important) terms may be left. **Common in strongly asymmetrical language contact situations, e.g. Romani in UK.**

- **Creation of symmetric contact languages/jargons:** Often in trade situations with imperfect competence in the other language. Symmetrical. Probably unstable, not standardized. **E.g. Thinglish.**
Contact-induced change - matter and pattern replication
(Matras, in Hickey 2010)

**Matter replication:** traditional “lexical borrowing”, words of the source language (SL) are replicated in the target language (TL) with their concrete phonological shape (potentially adapted to TL phonology) and meaning (potentially only part of original semantics).

**Pattern replication:** Abstract elements are replicated in TL, including syntactic constructions, semantics of words, etc., i.e. a specific mapping relation of meaning to form, or structural relation among two or more word forms, e.g. through their position (word order).
Factors facilitating contact influence - selection (Aikhenvald 2006)

- Pragmatic salience of a construction
- Existence of perceivable gap in target language
- Pre-existing structural similarity; internal “drift” of TL
- Morphosyntactic and phonetic transparency of the construction
- Existence of lookalike in target language
- Typological similarity of the two languages
- Tendency to achieve word for word translatability
- Frequency of construction
- Impact on cultural conventions
- Lack of social stigmatization of foreign elements (the resistance against matter replication is often stronger than pattern, which is less conscious)
What is replicated in language contact situations? Pattern replication

**Diffused categories**

**Nominal classes**

e.g. German  *die Butter* ‘the butter’  FEM
    Swiss  *dr putr*  M  < French  *le beurre* m.

**Verbal categories**

Thai  *dây pay*  ‘went’  < English  PAST
    *kamlaŋ pay*  ‘is going’  < English  CONTINUOUS
    *pay lɛɛw*  ‘has gone’  < English  PERFECT

**Diffused syntactic features**

e.g. Rumantsch  *i vain bain*  ‘it will be fine’  (lit. ‘it comes good’)
    Swiss (E)  *əs xunt ɡuat*  ‘it will be fine’  (German  *es wird gut*)
**Diffused discourse structures**

e.g. Topic-Comment prominence in SE and E Asian languages

**Diffused semantic patterns, derivations, calques**

e.g. Eng *undertake* ~ Fr *entreprendre* ~ Ger *unternehmen* < Lat

Eng *state* ~ Fr *état* < Lat

**Diffused grammaticalization**

e.g. *pè* ‘give’ as *PERMISSIVE* marker in Burmese < Mon?

*kèh* ‘say’ as *COMPLEMENTIZER* in Literary Mon < Thai?
The present language situation in SEA
3. Past language contact in the Myanmar-Thailand area

First half of 1st millennium

Central Thailand, southern Burma: Mon
Central Burma: Pyu
Northern Burma: Karen ??

End of 1st millennium

Intrusion of Burmese from north into northern and central Burma
Push of Khmer into central Thailand

Early 2nd millennium

Migration of Tai into northern, northeastern and central Thailand
Pagán:

Mon first local language to be written, showing its high prestige at the Burmese court. **Mon as superstrate language** => lexical and some structural influence on Burmese expected.

**Old Mon words in Burmese:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>OM</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>katow /gədɔ/</td>
<td>kindar</td>
<td>kəlɔ</td>
<td>‘wife of official’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kantoʔ /gədɔ́/</td>
<td>kindoʔ</td>
<td>kəlɔʔ</td>
<td>‘pay respect’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tow /dɔ/</td>
<td>thar</td>
<td>thɔ</td>
<td>‘gold’ &gt; <strong>ROYAL SUFFIX ??</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pali words that entered Burmese via Mon:**

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pūjow /puzɔ/</td>
<td>pūjau</td>
<td>pūjā</td>
<td>‘worship’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pud /pouʔ/</td>
<td>piud</td>
<td>pada</td>
<td>‘verse’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thailand:

Tai peoples migrated to areas populated by Mon speaking communities, who adapted the Tai language of the conquerors (> Thai). **Mon as substrate => lexical, phonological and structural influence expected.**

### Old Mon words in Thai:

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kwel</td>
<td>kwɨən</td>
<td>kwi</td>
<td>‘cart’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɖek</td>
<td>dɛk</td>
<td>doc</td>
<td>‘inferior person’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brāw</td>
<td>mAʔ-phráaw</td>
<td>prɛə</td>
<td>‘coconut’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blāy</td>
<td>(cháaŋ) phlaay</td>
<td>plɛə</td>
<td>‘young man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāy</td>
<td>naay</td>
<td>nɛy</td>
<td>‘master’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glɔŋ (LM)</td>
<td>khlɔɔŋ</td>
<td>klɔŋ</td>
<td>‘way’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

cf. also *khanlɔɔŋ*, with Khmer (?) infix; base not in Khmer!

**Structural influence of Mon in Thai needs further study, especially in terms of typology of Tai and Mon-Khmer languages in general.**
During Middle Mon, structural convergence with Burmese after extended period of close contact (more or less peaceful).

Mon and Burmese typologically very different (SVO vs. SOV), but many constructions are transparent => replication possible.

Borrowing of some grammatical items (restrictive marker *hmaʔ* ~ *hmá*, additive marker *lɛ* ~ *lè*, etc.).
Mon influence in Burmese:

**Sesquisyllabic**ity (also phrase level in southern dialects)

\[ bhurañ > bəyin \] ‘king’
\[ sūkhiuḥ > θəkhò \] ‘thief’

‘give’ as **PERMISSIVE** marker (more common in southern dialects)

**(FB) PERMISSIVE** (Okell and Allott 2001:53)

\[ ?ənauʔ dəgà.pauʔ ká shìn se pa θi. \]
behind door SRC descend CAUS POL NFUT

‘(The conductor) lets (the passengers) off by the rear door (of the bus).’

**JUSSIVE** (Okell and Allott 2001:28)

\[ bá.cì.maun θi ṭè.nèin ko ṭəpyin thweʔ ywé zè yàun mə=khàin. \]
BGM SBJ AN OBJ outside exit SEQ market sell NEG=order

‘Ba Gyi Maung didn’t make Aye Nyein go out and sell.’
‘Don’t let the shirt get wet.’

‘I didn’t let him go.’

‘I didn’t tell him to go.’
Preverbal auxiliaries in Burmese

\[ da \quad po \quad (pì \ tó) \quad kàun \ tɛ. \]
this.NML exceed (SEQ CHNG) good NFUT
‘This one is better.’

\[ θu \ shɛʔ \ (pì \ tó) \quad gəzà \ tɛ. \]
3 join (SEQ CHNG) play NFUT
‘He went on playing.’

\[ tɕənɔ \ ʔətɕhein \ θeiʔ \ (pì \ tó) \quad mə=ɕí \ phù. \]
1m time very (SEQ CHNG) NEG=exist NEG
‘I don’t have much time.’

BUT

\[ θú \quad ko \ pè \quad (*pì \ tó) \quad θwà \ tɛ. \]
3.ATTR OBJ GIVE (SEQ CHNG) go NFUT
‘I let him go.’

→ Preverbal \( pè \) is different from other preverbal auxiliaries.
Okano (2005)

“It is suggested that Burmese may have borrowed the causative ฤ: pè construction from Mawlamyine dialect Burmese, itself influenced by Mon, where ວ kп is a productive causativiser. If this situation is true, then this construction may have begun to appear in Yangon Burmese during the 1970s.” (p. 103) “Is the Mon causative the source of the Burmese causative ฤ: pè construction? Did the Mon construction directly influence Burmese? [...] One might speculate that Mon affected the Mawlamyine dialect of Burmese, and that it was this, rather than Mon, which influenced Yangon Burmese.” (p. 103) “The causative ฤ: pè construction is a recent development in colloquial Burmese.” (p. 104)

Preverbal pè common in southern dialects, found in spoken Yangon Burmese but considered substandard (or “Mon”) by some speakers, ungrammatical in Mandalay. Not found in literary language.
Widespread phenomenon in Southeast Asian languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>ᵇʰᵃʸ</td>
<td>‘give, let’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan</td>
<td>ᶡʰɤ钨</td>
<td>‘let’ (‘give’ = ʰⁿᵉⁿ; cf. Thai ʰᵃⁿ ‘share’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>ʔᵃᵒʸ</td>
<td>‘give, let’ (already Old Khmer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>ʰⁿ</td>
<td>‘give, let’ (already Old Mon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semelai</td>
<td>dụⁿ⁴</td>
<td>‘give, allow’ (cf. Mon ʰⁿʰᵃⁿ ‘hand over’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahasa</td>
<td>ᵇᵉʳⁱ</td>
<td>‘give, (coll.) allow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pyu (Myazedi A26; Shafer 1943:337, 360)

```
medeya ᵇᵃ.ʰᵃ:  ḋi  chʰi:  tʰi  tmū  ma  pᵃ:  che  cho:.
```

‘May he never be permitted to approach the presence of the lord Buddha Ariya Metteya’

Syntax of Pyu expression? Is ʰⁿᵃ: full verb or postverbal auxiliary?
Lahu (Matisoff 1973: 247)

\[ \text{nà pî} \quad \text{‘hurt so.’} \\
\text{šì pî} \quad \text{‘kill’} \\
\text{pò pî} \quad \text{‘bring to an end’} \]

**Postverbal** \(\text{pî}\) as **causative** marker only with intransitive bases, otherwise **benefactive** (like postverbal \(\text{pè}\) in Burmese).

Lai Chin (Matisoff 2003:399, 615)

\[ \text{tlaak-òr} \quad \text{‘cause to fall’}, \text{kayû-òr} \quad \text{‘cause to burn’}, \text{rilû-òr} \quad \text{‘cause to roll’} \]

(s. also Peterson 2003:418)

**Postverbal** \(-\text{ör}\) marks **causative**

cf. Tibetan (Jäschke 1881:222): \(\text{stér-\text{ba}}\) ‘to give, grant, concede, allow, let’

▶ **Syntax different from Burmese:** \(\text{V} + \text{‘give’} \) (like Burmese \(\text{V} + \text{se}\))
Kayah Li  S V O

(Solnit 1997:314)
ʔa  le  dálū  ḥikwa tə=phre  tə=phō  rə.
3SG descend  give 3OBV  stick  one=CL.HUM  one=CL.BLOOM  PTCL
‘He came down and gave each a stick.’

(Solnit 1997:65)
vē  dál  cwá ne  to.
1SG  give  go  2SG  NEG
‘I won’t let you go.’

CAUSER [GIVE - V] CAUSEE  →  causative ‘GIVE’ + V as root serialisation
   →  similar to Burmese: CAUSER CAUSEE [GIVE - V]

► Same syntax in Sgaw, but ‘give’ ̸= ‘CAUSATIVE’:
Karen (Moulmein Sgaw)

(Jones 1961:212)

sɔpa báʔ yéʔ næʔliʔ=phó ló ʔəʔ=phómýʔθəʔdá lə.
king HIT give Nyali=little to 3SG=youngest.daughter CFP
‘The king had to give Nyali his youngest daughter.’

(Jones 1961:57)

dyʔ ʔə dáʔ pyakəʔnó kəʔθíʔ.
CAUS drink independently Karen medicine
‘Let them drink Karen medicine.’

(Jones 1961:53)

təʔ. báʔ dyʔ le diʔ (?ə) təʔ=ye.
NEG CAUS go yet (3SG) NEG=good
‘Don’t let him go yet.’

‘give’ = yéʔ, ‘allow’ = dyʔ

Kayah Li dá, Lai Chin -ter < PTB *ter ‘give, CAUSATIVE’ (Matisoff 2003:399, 615)
Angami Naga (Giridhar 1980:66ff, Matisoff 2003:132)

(Giridhar 1980:46)

\[ rākā \ kēniē \ piē \ â \ tsè-ciē. \]

rupee two give 1SG give(?)-IMP

‘Give me two rupees!’

Causative prefix \( pē- \) < \( piē \) ‘give’ (Giridhar 1980:66ff)

\[ krā \rightarrow pēkrā \quad 'cause \ to\ cry' \]
\[ vó \rightarrow pēvó \quad 'cause \ to\ go' \]
\[ šī \rightarrow pēšī \quad 'cause \ to\ know, \ inform' \]

Preverbal ‘give’ → causative in some TB languages in Assam

Connection with Burmese structure (if any) indirect, perhaps as “internal drift” (Sapir 1921:147ff, LaPolla 1994)
‘Give’ in Mon

1. Ditransitive verb (Recipient > Theme)

\[
deh \ kv \ ʔuə \ hloə.
\]
3 give 1sg money
‘He gave me money.’

2. Preverbal causative marker

\[
deh \ kv \ ʔuə \ ʔa.
\]
3 give 1sg go
‘He let me go.’

3. “Dummy causative” (Enfield 2009:811)

\[
ʔuə \ məkəʔ \ kv \ deh \ ʔa.
\]
1sg des give 3 go
‘I want him to go.’
Spread of CAUSATIVE construction from Mon into Burmese?

(Mon)

dɛh ɩv ʔuə ɡəŋ.
3 give 1sg rice → ʔuə kɤ̀ʔ pɤŋ.
‘He gave me rice.’

3 ɗɛh kɒ ʔuə ɕiəʔ. ʔuə kɤ̀ʔ ɕiəʔ.
GIVE 1SG eat → 1SG GET eat
‘He let me eat.’

(Burmese)

θu tɕənɔ́ ko thəmìn pè te.
3 1m.ATTR OBJ rice give NFUT → tɕənɔ thəmìn yá te.
lm rice get NFUT

--- →  tɕənɔ sà yá te.
lm eat GET NFUT
Explanation of Burmese preverbal pè:

- Gap in the Burmese system - grammatical use of ‘get’, but not of ‘give’ - filled by copying the corresponding Mon construction, which is perfectly transparent, both semantically and syntactically

- Mon model is replicated directly, including un-Burmese syntax

- Model (‘give’ as causative) pre-existing (drift) in Tibeto-Burman languages

- The new construction takes over part of the meaning of pre-existing constructions and replaces them in some contexts (se, khàin)

- Extension of permissive to jussive very rare; not used as “dummy causative” like in Mon (in this function only postverbal se) → probably recent development in Burmese
Possible Burmese influence in Mon

Sentence final “conditional subordinator” *teh* < **TOPIC** marker

\[
pèh \ ?a \ teh \ ?uə \ le \ ?a.
\]
‘If you go I’ll go too.’

Buemese: ʹmìn ɔwà yin tʃənɔ lè ɔwà mɛ.

**Fronted interrogatives**

\[
chəlɔʔ \ cao?
\]
‘When return’

Burmes: ʹbɛtɔ́ pyan mə=ɔlè?

Complex adpositions

M: ɗɔə kɒ hʊə?
B: ?ein thè hma
\[\text{cf. Shan: } ti \ néw \ hyn\]
\[\text{LOC OBL house house in LOC in house}\]
More recent influences

**Burmese in Mon: Large parts of everyday vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Burmese</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yè-kè</td>
<td>ye-gè</td>
<td>‘ice’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se-yèŋ</td>
<td>shè-youn</td>
<td>‘hospital’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

including English loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Burmese</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ka-làŋ</td>
<td>làin-kà</td>
<td>‘bus’ (&lt; line-car)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phỳŋ</td>
<td>phòn</td>
<td>(tele)phone’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and kinship terms

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?əkə</td>
<td>?əko</td>
<td>‘elder brother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?əməʔ</td>
<td>?əmá</td>
<td>‘elder sister’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mè</td>
<td>?əme</td>
<td>‘mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paʔ</td>
<td>bá</td>
<td>‘father’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mon in southern Burmese

Non-standard use of secondary verbs

$sà$ ‘eat’ $< \varepsilon αʔ$ ‘eat’ \textcolor{green}{\textsc{habitual, intensive, self-interest}}

$thí$ ‘touch’ $< \textcolor{green}{tèh}$ ‘touch’ \textcolor{green}{\textsc{must, correctly}}

Position of negation marker before V2, not main verb as in standard Burmese

$pyò mə=taʔ (phù).$ for $mə=pyò taʔ phù.$ ‘I don’t know how to say it.’

$sà mə=nain (phù).$ for $mə=sà nain phù.$ ‘I cannot eat (I’m full).’

Frequent drop of final negative marker $phù$

Hardly any lexical items (apart from cultural items)
Conclusions:

Centuries of coexistence resulted in widespread mutual influence in Burmese and Mon, as well as other languages of the area.

The influence of Burmese and Mon on Thai is difficult to determine at the present stage of research. Close relationship between Old Khmer and Old Mon makes a distinction of loan words often difficult or impossible.

Changing political dominance can be seen in some cases (increased Burmese influence since Middle Mon).

Mon exercises influence on southern Burmese dialects, although Burmese is the dominant language. Mon is dominant in numbers in some areas, though, which leads to a spread of Mon features into monolingual Burmese speakers’ usage.

Structural influence is less conscious in speakers than lexical borrowing, therefore less stigmatized.
References:


