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

Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom  
August 25, 2010

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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  
*kamlan pay* ‘is going’ < English CONTINUOUS  
*pay léew* ‘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 ġuət* ‘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

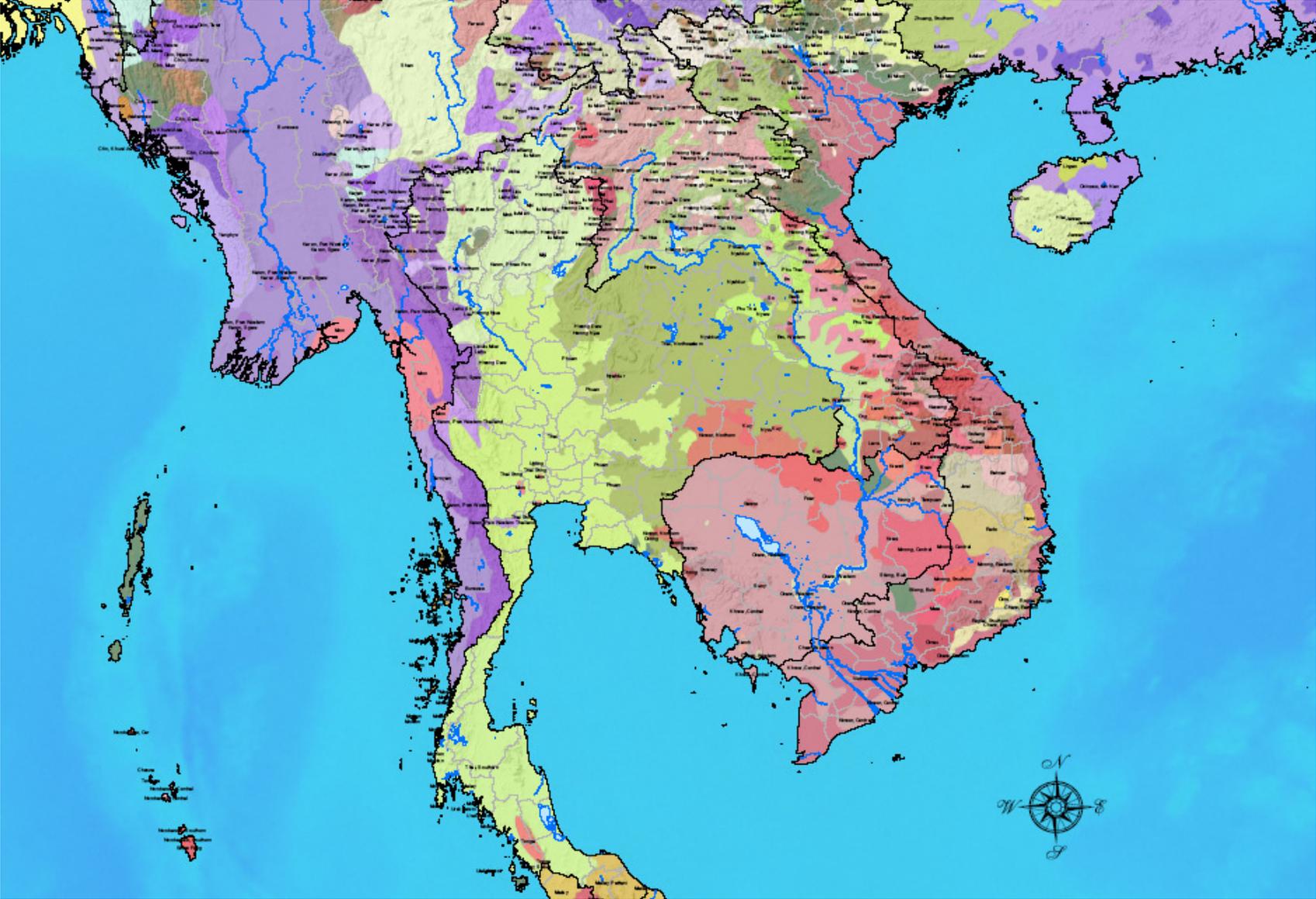
Eng *state* ~ Fr *état* < Lat

### ***Diffused grammaticalization***

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

*kèh* 'say' as COMPLEMETIZER 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 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:

<b>B</b>	<b>OM</b>	<b>SM</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>katow</i> /gəɔ/	<i>kindar</i>	<i>kəɔ</i>	‘wife of official’
<i>kantoʔ</i> /gəɔʔ/	<i>kindoʔ</i>	<i>kəɔʔ</i>	‘pay respect’
<i>tow</i> /ɔ/	<i>thar</i>	<i>thə</i>	‘gold’ > ROYAL SUFFIX ??

## Pali words that entered Burmese via Mon:

<b>B</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Pali</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>pūjow</i> /puzɔ/	<i>pūjau</i> /paocèə/	<i>pūjā</i>	‘worship’
<i>pud</i> /pouʔ/	<i>piud</i> /pɔt/	<i>pada</i>	‘verse’

## 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:

OM	Thai	SM	Gloss
<i>kwel</i>	<i>kwian</i>	<i>kwi</i>	‘cart’
<i>dek</i>	<i>dèk</i>	<i>doc</i>	‘inferior person’
<i>brāw</i>	<i>máʔ-phráaw</i>	<i>prèə</i>	‘coconut’
<i>blāy</i>	<i>(cháaŋ) phlaay</i>	<i>plày</i>	‘young man’
<i>nāy</i>	<i>naay</i>	<i>này</i>	‘master’
<i>glɔŋ</i> (LM)	<i>khlɔŋ</i>	<i>klòŋ</i>	‘way’

**cf. also *khanlɔŋ*, 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 *hma?* ~ *hmá*, additive marker *lɛ* ~ *lè*, etc.).

## Mon influence in Burmese:

### Sesquisyllabicity (also phrase level in southern dialects)

*bhurañ* > *bəyin* 'king'  
*sūkhiuh* > *θəkhò* 'thief'

### 'give' as PERMISSIVE marker (more common in southern dialects)

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

*ʔənaʊʔ 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 ʔè.ɲèin ko ʔəpyin thwεʔ 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.'

**(CB)**

**PERMISSIVE**

*ʔèin.dzi pè mə=sho né.*  
shirt GIVE NEG=wet PROH

**CAUSATIVE**

*ʔèin.dzi mə=sho se né.*  
shirt NEG=wet CAUS PROH

‘Don’t let the shirt get wet.’

**PERMISSIVE**

*θú ko pè mə=θwà phù.*  
3.ATTR OBJ GIVE NEG=go NEG

*θú ko mə=pè θwà phù.*  
3.ATTR OBJ NEG=GIVE go NEG

‘I didn’t let him go.’

**JUSSIVE**

*θú ko mə=θwà khàin phù.*  
3.ATTR OBJ NEG=go order NEG

‘I didn’t tell him to go.’

## Preverbal auxiliaries in Burmese

*da po (pì tó) kàun tɛ.*  
this.NML exceed (SEQ CHNG) good NFUT  
'This one is better.'

*θu shɛ? (pì tó) gəzà tɛ.*  
3 join (SEQ CHNG) play NFUT  
'He went on playing.'

*tɛənə ʔətɛhein θei? (pì tó) mə=ɛí phù.*  
1m time very (SEQ CHNG) NEG=exist NEG  
'I don't have much time.'

BUT

*θú ko pè (\*pì tó) 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  $\text{ပဲ}$  *pè* construction from Mawlamyine dialect Burmese, itself influenced by Mon, where  $\text{ကဲ}$  *ke* 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  $\text{ပဲ}$  *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  $\text{ပဲ}$  *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:

<b>Thai</b>	<i>hây</i>	‘give, let’
<b>Shan</b>	<i>hɛu</i>	‘let’ (‘give’ = <i>pě̃n</i> ; cf. Thai <i>pan</i> ‘share’)
<b>Khmer</b>	<i>ʔaoy</i>	‘give, let’ (already Old Khmer)
<b>Mon</b>	<i>kp</i>	‘give, let’ (already Old Mon)
<b>Semelai</b>	<i>jon</i>	‘give, allow’ (cf. Mon <i>cɹ̃n</i> ‘hand over’)
<b>Bahasa</b>	<i>beri</i>	‘give, (coll.) allow’

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

*medeya d̄a.ba: d̄i chí: tí tm̄ ma p̄a: che cho:.*

Metteya excellent(?) sight(?) get LOC presence NEG GIVE PRS OPT(?)

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

**Syntax of Pyu expression? Is *p̄a:* full verb or postverbal auxiliary?**

**Lahu** (Matisoff 1973: 247)

*nà pî*      ‘hurt so.’  
*šì pî*      ‘kill’  
*pè pî*      ‘bring to an end’

**Postverbal *pî*** as CAUSATIVE marker only with intransitive bases, otherwise BENEFACTIVE (like postverbal *pè* in Burmese).

**Lai Chin** (Matisoff 2003:399, 615)

*tlaak-tèr* ‘cause to fall’, *kaŋʔ-tèr* ‘cause to burn’, *rilʔ-tèr* ‘cause to roll’  
(s. also Peterson 2003:418)

**Postverbal *-ter*** marks CAUSATIVE

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

► **Syntax different from Burmese: V + ‘give’ (like Burmese V + *se*)**

## Kayah Li **SVO**

(Solnit 1997:314)

*ʔa lɛ dá lū ʔíkwa tə=phre tə=phō ra.*  
3SG descend give 3OBV stick one=CL.HUM one=CL.BLOOM PTCL  
'He came down and gave each a stick.'

(Solnit 1997:65)

*vē dá 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 ñáʔlíʔ=phó lá ʔəʔ=phómýʔθəʔdá lɔ.*

king HIT give Nyali=little to 3SG=youngest.daughter CFP

‘The king had to give Nyali his youngest daughter.’

(Jones 1961:57)

*dyʔ ʔɔ dáʔ pyakəʔñó kəʔθíʔ.*

CAUS drink independently Karen medicine

‘Let them drink Karen medicine.’

(Jones 1961:53)

*təʔ.báʔ dyʔ lɛ diʔ (ʔɔ) təʔ=yɛ.*

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 piê â tsà-ciê.*

rupee two give 1SG give(?)-IMP

‘Give me two rupees!’

**Causative prefix *pê-* < *piê* ‘give’** (Giridhar 1980:66ff)

*krâ* → *pêkrâ* ‘cause to cry’

*vó* → *pêvó* ‘cause to go’

*šī* → *pêšī* ‘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)

*dɛh kɒ ʔuə hloə.*

3 give 1SG money

‘He gave me money.’

### 2. Preverbal CAUSATIVE marker

*dɛh kɒ ʔuə ʔa.*

3 GIVE 1SG go

‘He let me go.’

### 3. “DUMMY CAUSATIVE” (Enfield 2009:811)

*ʔuə məkɔʔ kɒ dɛh ʔa.*

1SG DES GIVE 3 go

‘I want him to go.’

# Spread of CAUSATIVE construction from Mon into Burmese ?

## (Mon)

*dɛh kɔ ʔuə pɔŋ.*  
 3 give 1SG rice  
 ‘He gave me rice.’

→

*ʔuə kɔʔ pɔŋ.*  
 1SG get rice  
 ‘I got some rice.’

*dɛh kɔ ʔuə ɛiəʔ.*  
 3 GIVE 1SG eat  
 ‘He let me eat.’

→

*ʔuə kɔʔ ɛiəʔ.*  
 1SG GET eat  
 ‘I got to eat.’

## (Burmese)

*θu tɕənɔ̃ ko thəmìn pè tɛ.*  
 3 1m.ATTR OBJ rice give NFUT →

*tɕənɔ̃ thəmìn yá tɛ.*  
 1m rice get NFUT

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→

*tɕənɔ̃ sà yá tɛ.*  
 1m 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 ʔa teh ʔuə lɛ ʔa.*  
2 go TOP>COND 1SG ADD go  
‘If you go I’ll go too.’

**Buemesese:** *mìn θwà yin tɛəno lè θwà mɛ.*

### Fronted interrogatives

*chəlɔʔ cao?*  
when return

‘When are you going back?’

**Burmese:** *bətó pyan mə=lè?*

### Complex adpositions

M: *dɔə kɔ hɔəʔ*  
LOC OBL house

B: *ʔein thè hma*  
house in LOC

cf. Shan: *ti néu hín*  
LOC in house

## More recent influences

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

Mon	Burmese	Gloss
<i>yè-kè</i>	<i>ye-gè</i>	‘ice’
<i>se-ỳx̀η</i>	<i>shè-youn</i>	‘hospital’

### including English loans

<i>ka-làη</i>	<i>làiη-kà</i>	‘bus’ (< <i>line-car</i> )
<i>phx̀η</i>	<i>phòun</i>	‘(tele)phone’

### and kinship terms

<i>ʔəkx</i>	<i>ʔako</i>	‘elder brother’
<i>ʔəmaʔ</i>	<i>ʔəmə</i>	‘elder sister’
<i>mè</i>	<i>ʔəme</i>	‘mother’
<i>paʔ</i>	<i>bá</i>	‘father’

## Mon in southern Burmese

### Non-standard use of secondary verbs

*sà* ‘eat’ < *εiəʔ* ‘eat > HABITUAL, INTENSIVE, SELF-INTEREST’  
*thí* ‘touch’ < *tèh* ‘touch > must, correctly’

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

*pyə̀ mə=taʔ (phù)*. for *mə=pyə̀ 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.

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