

# BURMESE

## A Cultural Approach

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# Contents

Acknowledgments	x
A Note on the Authors	xi
Introduction	1
<b>Part One: Learning to Read and Write</b>	
Lesson 1: The Syllabary	7
A. The first two lines	8
B. The fourth and fifth lines	10
C. The sixth and seventh lines	10
D. Numbers 1 to 10	11
Lesson 1: Review	12
Lesson 2: Open Vowels	13
A. -ၵ -ါ	13
B. -ၶၷ -ါး	15
C. ၵ ၶ ၷ	17
D. ၵ ၶ ၷ	18
E. ၵ - ၶ - ၷ -	20
F. ၵ - ၶ - ၷ	22
G. ၵ - ၶ ၷ ၸ ၹ	23
H. ၵ ၶ	24
I. ၵ ၶ ၷ	26
Lesson 2: Review	28
Lesson 3: Glottal Stops and Nasals	29
A. -ကိ	29
B. -င	31
C. ၵ -ကိ	32
D. ၵ	34
E. -ိ	35
F. -ညိ	36

G. -ဝ်	37
H. -နံ	39
I. ဝံနံ	40
J. ညံနံ	41
K. -ဝ်	42
L. -မ်	44
M. ဝဝ်, ဝနံ, ဝပ်, and ဝမ်	45
N. ဝံ	46
Lesson 3: Review	48
Lesson 4: Consonant Clusters	49
A. ည and ညံ	49
B. ဝ	51
C. ည	52
Lesson 4: Review	55
Lesson 5: Miscellaneous Writing Matters	56
A. ဝံ	56
B. Pali syllables	57
C. Stacked syllables ဗျည်းဆင့်	58
D. ည	60
E. Names of the syllables ဗျည်း	61
F. Names of the diacritics သင်္ဂေတ	62
G. Special syllables အက္ခရာ	62
Lesson 5: Review	65
Appendix I: On Using the Dictionary	66
<b>Part Two: Dialogues</b>	
Lesson 6: Breakfast	71
Lesson 7: Greetings!	76
Lesson 8: It's Really Hot	80
Lesson 9: I Don't Go Out Much	83
Lesson 10: Going on a Trip	86
Review Lesson 1	89
Lesson 11: In the Palace Compound	91
Lesson 12: I've Come to Order Water	95
Lesson 13: Blood (Part 1)	99
Lesson 14: Blood (Part 2)	103
Lesson 15: A Visit to the Doctor	107
Review Lesson 2	112

Lesson 16: Kinship Connections	114
Lesson 17: Workers Wanted	119
Lesson 18: House for Rent	125
Lesson 19: A Wedding Invitation	130
Lesson 20: Roadside Phone	134
Review Lesson 3	138
Lesson 21: Let's Go Eat	140
Lesson 22: First Year at the University	146
Lesson 23: Lunch Break	152
Lesson 24: A Dinner Invitation	157
Lesson 25: Sold Out	161
Review Lesson 4	167
Lesson 26: Sayings at the Dinner Table	169
Lesson 27: No Longyi, No Entry	174
Lesson 28: Mimi, an Intemperate Sleeper	180
Lesson 29: Damn! Motorcycle Trouble	184
Lesson 30: Who Is an Educated Person?	189
Review Lesson 5	194
Lesson 31: Soccer Fans	196
Lesson 32: Traffic Police	201
Lesson 33: Hotel Reception	207
Lesson 34: Father and Son	211
Lesson 35: An Act of Compassion	215
Review Lesson 6	219
Lesson 36: Thadingyut Festival	221
Lesson 37: The Drunkard	223
Lesson 38: Women's Wives	225
Lesson 39: Gambling	227
Lesson 40: Husband and Wife	229
Appendix II: On Numbers	232
Appendix III: Months of the Year	235
Comprehensive Vocabulary List	237

# A Note on the Authors

**Ward Keeler** is a cultural anthropologist specializing in Burma and Indonesia who teaches at the University of Texas at Austin. He first met Allen Lyan in Mandalay during a fieldwork stint there in 2011 and 2012, when a mutual friend recommended Allen as a language tutor. Allen had not at that point taught Burmese to foreigners; he was instead a music and English-language teacher to children. However, he proved adept at writing engaging dialogues to use as practice materials. Those dialogues provided the initial impetus for writing an intermediate-level textbook, something that did not exist.

With that purpose in mind, Ward started writing notes explaining grammatical and cultural points as they came up in the dialogues. (He did so after the model of his earlier textbook, *Javanese: A Cultural Approach*.) Allen wrote the dialogues in Part Two and collaborated with Ward in writing drills. Ward eventually decided to complement these intermediate materials with a beginning-level text, one that would avoid all use of romanization in favor of the systematic introduction of all the sounds and symbols of the Burmese writing system.

**Allen Lyan** lived until the age of about twelve in a village in the Chin Hills, at which point his parents moved the family to Mandalay. He is, as a result, a fluent speaker of both one of the Chin languages and of Burmese. Fortunately, he speaks Burmese clearly—more so than some Burmese-speaking males—to the advantage of his foreign students. Ethnic Burmans will note in the recordings a few traces of his first language in his pronunciation of certain Burmese sounds. Since about one-third of the population of Burma speaks Burmese as their second language, developing some tolerance for variant pronunciations seems only appropriate, just as English speakers must learn to do—even if some people in both Burma and anglophone societies resist the notion.

# Introduction

Ward Keeler

This textbook is intended to be useful in three ways.

For people just starting their study of the Burmese language, it presents a rigorous and systematic introduction to the language. Because learning to read and write the Burmese script is essential to making good progress, we use no romanization system (see below). Relying on recordings (and their teachers), students learn to say what they can read and write all at the same time. (They must avoid the temptation to create their own romanization system, invariably a misleading practice that will disadvantage them in the long run.) As they master the script, they also learn basic features of Burmese grammar.

Students who have some knowledge of spoken Burmese but are not familiar with the script can use Part One: Learning to Read and Write, to master the skills of reading and writing that they need in order to make progress to an intermediate level. How rapidly they can move through Part One will depend on how much Burmese they already have acquired. But they must take care to master the script, especially because such mastery is necessary for attaining good control over Burmese pronunciation.

Finally, students who are ready for intermediate materials can proceed directly to Part Two: Dialogues, in which a number of conversations among Burmese speakers illustrate grammatical patterns, characteristic turns of phrase, and typical habits of social interaction. Although the first few lessons are elementary, they soon become more challenging, and so are appropriate for use as intermediate materials. The conversations take place among people of varying ages and social status, and their relationships differ in degrees of familiarity and formality.

Students usually start their study of the Burmese language using a romanized rendering of the words they learn. This is standard practice in the published textbook materials already available for anglophone students. Using romanization enables students to make quick progress initially. But it has unfortunate effects. First, it delays acquisition of the Burmese writing system, a necessary step in any student's learning. Anyone who has become used to a romanization system, furthermore, is likely to have a very hard time dismissing it from their mind in favor of Burmese writing even once they have studied the latter. Finally, learning to pronounce Burmese properly requires knowing how it is written, because the important matter of how initial consonant sounds are pronounced requires such knowledge. For all these reasons, and in order to emphasize the importance of gaining effective command of Burmese as it is spoken and written, this book rigorously avoids romanization.

As in learning to speak any language, whether learning sounds at the most elementary level or learning to reproduce whole utterances, students must constantly work on imitating the speech of native Burmese speakers. To this end, the written materials are complemented by audio materials. Students should make careful and constant use of them.

In notes appended to each dialogue in Part Two, students encounter brief explanations of grammatical matters as they arise. These explanations are fairly minimal. Exhaustive accounts of

grammatical points can lead to confusion, even discouragement, among learners. To obtain more thorough accounts, students are advised to take advantage of other resources addressing in greater detail the complexities of Burmese grammar.

Most notable among these are three: John Okell's *A Reference Grammar of Colloquial Burmese* (Oxford University Press, 1969); John Okell and Anna Allott's *Burmese (Myanmar) Dictionary of Grammatical Forms* (Routledge, 2001); and Mathias Jenny and San San Hnin Tun's *Burmese: A Comprehensive Grammar* (Routledge, 2016).

The most immediately useful for a student learning the language is the second out of the three, Okell and Allott's *Burmese (Myanmar) Dictionary of Grammatical Forms*, since it provides explanations for every important word or particle students are likely to encounter. Also essential for any anglophone student of Burmese is the *Myanmar-English Dictionary*, published by the Department of the Myanmar Language Commission of the Burmese government's Ministry of Education. There is as of this writing no truly adequate English-Burmese dictionary.

Burmese is a diglossic language, meaning that it exhibits both a formal or elevated register and a colloquial one. "Important" speech, as pronounced on formal occasions, as well as almost all written material, use the elevated form, while almost all everyday interaction is conducted in the colloquial form.<sup>1</sup> (Incidentally, the difference between "Burma" and "Myanmar" is the difference between the two English renderings of the colloquial and the elevated forms in Burmese of the name for the ethnic Burmans.) These lessons teach the colloquial, not the elevated, style.

Learning a language, especially one from a society very much unlike one's own, means learning not just a sound system and a set of grammatical rules. It also means learning ways to interact: what to say when, to whom, in what manner. In a place where hierarchical assumptions shape face-to-face encounters as thoroughly as they do in Burma, English speakers must become aware of how speech varies according to the identities and especially the relative status of the parties to any exchange. In studying the dialogues in this book, students learn to imitate conversations among people of many different sorts and stations: for example, a village man visiting Mandalay for the first time, a doctor advising a patient, teenagers going out on the town, and a smoker cajoling a cigar out of a seller. Even if most foreigners in Burma will find themselves engaging primarily in polite and relatively formal encounters, they still need to know the diverse speaking styles people around them are using among themselves.

Learning a foreign language, in sum, is not simply a linguistic exercise. It is also an anthropological endeavor. Learning the "grammar" of interaction in a particular milieu, among real people, at a particular time is what anthropologists do. It is for this reason that these lessons are entitled *a cultural approach*. They are intended to provide students of Burmese the wherewithal to conduct themselves appropriately in a range of contexts while embarking on the difficult but exciting adventure of learning to speak Burmese to Burmese speakers and thereby learning about Burma.

## On Tones

Burmese is a tonal language. This means that the same combination of sounds means altogether unrelated things when the pitch at which that combination is pronounced changes. Thus, the pitch of one syllable, relative to that of the syllables that precede and follow it, matters in the same way that consonant and vowel sounds matter in English (as they do, of course, in Burmese as well).

---

1. English, too, has both formal and informal registers. We tend to use multisyllabic words of Norman French (ultimately Latin) origin in the elevated style (e.g., to regard), and monosyllabic words of Old English (ultimately Germanic) origin in colloquial speech (e.g., to look at). But the distinction is less clear in English than in Burmese. In the latter, basic, high-frequency lexical items differentiate formal and colloquial styles quite starkly.

To an English speaker, changes in pitch seem only marginally significant. We use intonation in order to distinguish a question from a statement, for example, or to signal the emotional tenor of a remark. So intonation communicates connotations—supplementary meanings—without affecting the denotation—the explicit meaning—of the words we use.

In Burmese, however, intonation affects denotation. What a combination of sounds means depends on the pitch at which it is pronounced relative to the pitch of the syllables that precede and follow it. This point may be fairly easy to grasp intellectually but it takes someone who does not speak a tonal language a great deal of effort to master it in practice.

First, a student of Burmese must learn the tone of any given syllable, and make sure to include the right tone as well as the right consonant and vowel sounds in saying it. Furthermore, an English speaker has to learn not to use intonation to try to convey connotations in the way English enables speakers to do.

For example, to emphasize the contrast between two items in a pair, an English speaker will raise the pitch of the second item named. In the phrase, "This shirt is clean; that one isn't," the word "that" will be emphasized by raising the pitch at which it is pronounced. This is what one must *not* do when speaking Burmese.

The reason is that raising the pitch of a word in Burmese makes it mean something completely different. Reading aloud the last sentence in the preceding paragraph, an English speaker will appreciate that the word "not," because it is italicized, must be emphasized—that is, in speaking, its pitch must be raised. But if English were a tonal language, raising the pitch would change "not" from meaning the negation of the verb to something else entirely: let's say, "bucket." So, with its pitch raised, the sentence would mean, "This is what one must bucket do when speaking Burmese." A listener would be hard pressed to guess what the speaker was driving at.

I sometimes feel as though Burmese speakers who fail to understand me because I have made a mistake as to the tone of a word I have used are being unjustifiably, even stubbornly, uncomprehending. But I am failing at such moments to bear in mind how important tone is to the whole sound system of Burmese. By the same token, it is difficult for a speaker of a tonal language to understand why English speakers are so oblivious to this dimension of a word's or a syllable's meaning.

The point is that every language uses a certain number of distinctions among sounds to convey meaning. Native speakers of English know that the first-person pronoun, "I," can be pronounced in a number of ways, depending on the regional and class origins of the speaker, without causing any confusion. In the United States, Northerners find the way that Southerners say "I" curiously close to "Ah," but can still grasp what Southerners are saying without any trouble. If a foreigner pronounced "I" like "Ee," however, an English speaker might well be stumped. The distinction between the sounds "i" and "ee" in English matters too importantly for someone to understand a foreigner who confuses them in speech. Changing the pitch of a syllable in Burmese relative to the syllables that surround it transgresses the distinctions among sounds just as importantly as mixing up "i" and "ee" in English.

A conventional way of mocking East Asians in the United States is to joke about their failure to distinguish between the sounds "l" and "r" when they speak English. That they fail to attend to a distinction English speakers make much of reflects the fact that in such languages as Chinese, Japanese, or Thai the distinction does not matter. To use the vocabulary of linguistics, the difference in sound, a *phonetic* difference, is not a significant one, is not a *phonemic* one. Pitch, in tonal languages, is phonemic: it matters.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Once when I asked a Japanese man whether a mutual friend's name was Mr. Arai or Mr. Alai, he responded "Yes."—Because the phonetic difference I, as an English speaker, thought so important is not a phonemic one in Japanese, so not one *they* think important. For the record, when, a few moments later, Mr. Arai introduced me to his son, Ryuji, everyone had trouble suppressing their laughter at my inability to come anywhere close to pronouncing his name correctly.

Like any other element of a foreign language, gaining mastery of tones requires determined and consistent practice. Listening to one's own efforts to imitate the speech of a native speaker can drive home the difference between correct and incorrect tones. Best of all, if it can be arranged, is to record one's own efforts and play them immediately alongside recordings of a native speaker saying the same phrase.

Burmese speakers, like speakers of any language, employ phrasal intonation: there is an overall shape to the intonation of utterances, and this too must be imitated by students. However, phrasal intonation is somewhat more restricted in Burmese than in English. Many connotations that English speakers convey by means of intonation are conveyed in Burmese by the use of particles that indicate such information as the speaker's surprise, irritation, and so on.

Repetition eventually makes tones as familiar as other elements of Burmese. At a certain point, having heard and pronounced a word with the correct tone enough times makes it fairly automatic, requiring little conscious attention. To get to that point, a student must simply keep the matter of tones constantly in mind.

## **Part One: Learning to Read and Write**

# Lesson 1: The Syllabary

An essential task for any student of the Burmese language is to learn the Burmese syllabary (leaving aside a few less frequently encountered symbols to be learned later). A syllabary differs from an alphabet in that every symbol in a syllabary represents a combination of both a consonant and at least one vowel sound. Burmese is a tonal language and as a result each symbol of its syllabary represents a combination of a consonant, a vowel sound, and a tone.

The Burmese syllabary contains thirty-three symbols, each of which is called a ဗျည်း.<sup>1</sup> Each ဗျည်း has its own name, just as the letters of the roman alphabet have a name, and each of them implies specific sounds, as does each letter in an alphabet. In some instances, a ဗျည်း implies a number of different possible sounds, as may a letter in an alphabet. But unlike the letters in an alphabet, each ဗျည်း implies not one sound but a set of them, a combination of a consonant sound, a vowel sound, and a tone.

If it stands alone, a ဗျည်း represents the combination of one consonant sound plus the “a” sound as pronounced in the first tone. This short, high tone ends with a slight glottal occlusion—a slight tensing of the larynx—which John Okell calls the “creaked” tone.

The same consonant combines with other vowel sounds and tones (and sometimes other consonants) when diacritical marks are placed before, after, above, and/or below the ဗျည်း. These diacritics will be introduced systematically in the remaining lessons in Part One. This first lesson, however, is devoted to mastering the ဗျည်း alone, with no other diacritics.

It is recommended, although not necessary, for students to learn to repeat the names of the ဗျည်း as accurately as possible, as well as learn to pronounce the sounds of each syllable: in other words, to learn how to spell in Burmese. So, for the first symbol, a student is well advised to learn to say both က ကြီး (the name of the ဗျည်း) and က (the sound it implies). (This is similar to learning the name of the letter “A” in English and the sound “a” as that letter is usually pronounced when it appears in a word.) Learning to write the names of the syllables will come later, once all the diacritics as well as the syllables have been mastered.

Learning to write each ဗျည်း with the correct strokes is essential. Several videos demonstrating the direction of the strokes are available on YouTube. In line with the policy we adopt, scrupulously avoiding all romanization, we recommend the following one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqB02frEka>

---

1. The pronunciation of this word, and other words aside from those included in each lesson that a student learns to read and write, should be learned by imitating one’s teacher or by imitating the recording.

Here is the complete Burmese syllabary:

က	ခ	ဂ	ဃ	င
စ	ဆ	ဇ	ဈ	ည
ဋ	ဌ	ဍ	ဎ	ဏ
တ	ထ	ဒ	ဓ	န
ပ	ဖ	ဗ	ဘ	မ
ယ	ရ	လ	ဝ	
သ	ဟ	ဠ	အ	

Learning to recognize, name, and write all of these ဗျည်း is a major undertaking, and it will take some time. It will constitute the content of this entire lesson. Practicing the ဗျည်း will require much more time and attention. Doing this is crucial to all progress in learning Burmese, however, so it is worth putting in the time at the outset. Although it may appear overwhelming at first, practicing by listening to the recording, by repeating what you hear, and by writing the symbols oneself, will gradually imprint all of these symbols on one's memory. Take it in the spirit of a challenge and a game.

## A. The first two lines [◀101.mp3]

In this first section, you must learn to read, write, and pronounce the first two lines of the syllabary:

က	ခ	ဂ	ဃ	င <sup>2</sup>
စ	ဆ	ဇ	ဈ	ည

Imitate your teacher, or the recording, to learn the names of these syllables and the sounds they imply.

### Notes

Here are some further notes to help you grasp what it is you are working with.

### The nature of a syllabary

The Burmese syllabary derives from South Asian syllabaries. Like them, it arranges symbols according to the place of articulation (where in the mouth they are formed). The place of articulation of the consonant sound of each syllable is the same for each line across (except for the last eight symbols, which we will get to in Section C below). So the first line includes all the syllables that start with a velar consonant sound (those that are produced with the tongue pressed against the soft palate); the second line all the sibilant ones; the third and fourth lines the alveolar ones (with the tip of the tongue touching behind the upper front teeth); and the fifth all the labial ones (produced by pressing both lips together). The columns are also arranged systematically: the first column contains syllables starting with unaspirated stops (the larynx is closed until the vowel sound starts); the second column aspirated ones (the larynx is open from the start); the third and fourth start with voiced stops (the larynx vibrates from the start of the sound); and the last column consists of nasals. The last eight symbols, appearing in the sixth and seventh lines, indicate other initial sounds that do not fall into

2. English speakers often have trouble pronouncing this sound in initial position. The key is to pronounce it further forward in the mouth than when pronouncing "ng," as in English "singing."

the above categories, plus at the very end a symbol for syllables starting with vowel sounds, with no initial consonant.

### Aspirated and unaspirated stops

The difference between aspirated and unaspirated stops is phonemic in Burmese. This means that a student needs to be able to hear the difference between, and produce, sounds that English does not distinguish. A monolingual speaker of English or German uses aspirated stops almost exclusively; a monolingual speaker of French or Spanish uses unaspirated ones almost exclusively. Aspirated stops are sounds such as “t” or “p” or “k,” which are accompanied with a breath of air (“aspiration”); unaspirated stops are the same sounds without any such accompanying breath of air.

To learn to make the difference, put two fingers on your Adam’s apple (this is your larynx). Say “uh-oh,” and notice how the larynx rises at the end of the first syllable and then relaxes. (You can appreciate what is happening more clearly if you say “uh-” and then pause, keeping the larynx in the same position, high and tensed.) To pronounce an aspirated stop, as in the English “t” sound, keep the larynx in the low, relaxed position as you say “tuh.” To pronounce an unaspirated stop, say “uh-” as in “uh-oh,” but keep the larynx in the taut, high position, and then say “tuh.” This may take a native speaker of English some practice (since English uses only aspirated stops in initial positions), but it will eventually become automatic.

### Vocabulary

The vocabulary included in this and later lessons consists only of words that a student who is learning the syllabary can write in light of how many of those symbols he or she has already learned.

က-	to dance
ခ	fee, cost
စ-	to begin
-ဆ	-fold (as in “threefold”)
ည	night
-က	topic marker

### Spelling practice<sup>3</sup>

1. ဝ 2. ဆ 3. က 4. ည 5. စ 6. ခ 7. ယ 8. စျ 9. ဇ

### Useful classroom phrases 1

The following phrases are helpful for teachers and students to use in the classroom. Students are not yet in a position to read the phrases in Burmese and should concern themselves at this point only in learning to recognize them aurally.

Listen.	နားထောင်။
Say it.	ပြောပါ။
Write it down.	ရေးပါ။

3. Some teachers and their students may choose to skip over spelling lessons at this point, preferring to focus only on the sounds that all of the symbols indicate. If so, they can ignore the spelling practice contained in each lesson. However, putting in the time to learn to spell early on is rewarded in the long term.

Got it?	ရပြီလား။
Got it.	ရပြီ။
Not yet.	မရသေးဘူး။

## B. The fourth and fifth lines [102.mp3]

The third line of the syllabary contains letters from the sacred language of Buddhism, Pali. Those letters appear in only a few words in Burmese, so we are skipping over them for now. (We will come back to them in a later lesson.) For the time being, we are going on to the fourth and fifth lines of the syllabary.

တ	ထ	ဒ	ဓ	န
ဝ	ဖ	ဗ	ဘ	မ

Once again, students must learn the names of these syllables, as well as how they sound and how to write them.

### Vocabulary

ထ-	to stand up, to get up
မ-	to lift

### Spelling practice

1. ဈ	2. တ	3. ဖ	4. ဗ	5. န
6. ဓ	7. ဇ	8. ဘ	9. က	10. ဆ
11. ဒ	12. ည	13. စ	14. ထ	15. မ
16. ဝ	17. ဃ	18. ဂ	19. ဓ	20. င

### Useful classroom phrases 2

Are you ready?	အဆင်သင့် ဖြစ်ပြီလား။
Yes, (I'm) ready.	ဖြစ်ပြီ။
Are you done?	ပြီးပြီလား။
Yes, I'm done.	ပြီးပြီ။
Good.	ကောင်းတယ်။

## C. The sixth and seventh lines [103.mp3]

The last two lines of the syllabary do not line up in columns the way the others do. This is because these eight symbols do not constitute "stops." (The columns in the previous lines were all arranged according to the type of stop characteristic of all of that column's constituent members' consonant sounds.) The air is not stopped at any point as one pronounces these sounds. The air flow is simply shaped in one way or another by changes in the way the tongue and lips are positioned.

ယ	ရ	လ	ဝ
သ	ဟ	ဠ	အ

### Vocabulary

ရ-	can, may
လ	moon; month
ဝ-	to be plump; to be sated with food
ဟ	expression of surprise

### Spelling practice

- |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. တ  | 2. လ  | 3. က  | 4. န  | 5. ယ  |
| 6. ခ  | 7. ဖ  | 8. သ  | 9. ဇ  | 10. ဠ |
| 11. ဝ | 12. င | 13. ရ | 14. ဝ | 15. ဟ |
| 16. ဒ | 17. ဝ | 18. ဘ | 19. ဆ | 20. ဟ |
| 21. စ | 22. ဝ | 23. ဈ | 24. အ | 25. ဝ |
| 26. ည | 27. ယ | 28. ဝ |       |       |

## D. Numbers 1 to 10

Like the classroom phrases presented in Parts A and B above, numbers are useful words whose writing is beyond what you know at this point. So, they should be learned aurally for now. The way each is spelled will become clear as progress is made through all the diacritics. However, students may want to go ahead and learn how to write Burmese numerals. They and the international forms for writing numerals are both commonplace in Burma today.

Recordings of all the numbers can be found in Appendix II: On Numbers.

1. ဝ
2. ၂
3. ၃
4. ၄
5. ၅
6. ၆
7. ၇ (see note below)
8. ၈
9. ၉
10. ၁၀

The number seven has two spoken forms, their use dependent on context. The first—a two-syllable form—is used linked to a noun or counter (to be explained later) in a phrase. The second—a monosyllabic form—is used when counting in a series.

# Lesson 1: Review [104.mp3]

## 1. Dictation

၁။ ည

၂။ ဝ

၃။ ဝ

၄။ က

၅။ မ

2. Translate the above words into English.

3. Translate the following words into Burmese.

Oh!

month

-fold

to get up

to begin

# Lesson 2: Open Vowels

Diacritics are marks placed above, below, before, or following a ဗျည်း in order to alter the vowel, tone, or other sound feature of a syllable. In this lesson diacritics indicating open vowel sounds (linked to three different tones) will be taken up. In Burmese, diacritics are called သင်္ကေတ.

## A. -၁ -ါ [201.mp3]

The first diacritic to learn, -၁, indicates the same vowel sound as in the previous section, but with low tone. “Low tone” must be understood to mean only that the tone is neither raised nor “creaked” (that is, pronounced with a slight glottal occlusion). A better descriptor might be neutral or an unmarked tone. You do not need to drop your voice; you just need to make sure that your pitch is not raised relative to other surrounding syllables that are of similar low (or neutral or unmarked) tone and that your pitch is lower than nearby syllables that are high or creaked.

Compare the two syllables က and ကာ. They differ only in tone—and the difference is crucial.

က            ကာ

## -၁    -ါ

In the case of certain syllables, the addition of this diacritic in its usual form would lead to confusion. For example, in the case of ခ, adding the ၁ would make it look a lot like ဆ. To avoid confusion, the alternate form ofါ is used.

ခ            ခါ

Here follow the ဗျည်း you have learned with this first diacritic, -၁, appended. Note carefully those ဗျည်း—there are six of them—that take the alternate form.

ကာ	ခါ	ဂါ	ယာ	ငါ
စာ	ဆာ	ဇာ	ဈာ	ညာ
တာ	ထာ	ဒါ	ဓာ	နာ
ပါ	ဖာ	ဗာ	ဘာ	မာ
ယာ	ရာ	လာ	ဝါ	
သာ	တာ	ဠာ	အာ	

This alternate form of -၁ is labeled မောက်ချ in Burmese. However, few Burmese speakers actually use this term. We do so in the recordings for this text to help students to remember when its use is

needed. But when Burmese spell aloud, they use the label for the more usual form, even when the alternative form is required.

## Vocabulary

ငါ	I (familiar, used with intimates and subordinates)
စာ	letter
ဆာ-	to be hungry
ဒါ	that
နာ-	to hurt
ဝါ	a politeness particle
ဝါ-	to be present, to accompany
ဘာ	what?
မာ-	to be hard, tough, firm
လာ-	to come
ဟာ	thing
ခါ	time, instance

## Spelling practice

Listen to your teacher or the recording and write out the syllables as they are spelled. At first, the recording will appear to go quite fast. Practicing the exercises several times over will enable you to increase your fluency, and the speed will become less challenging, although you may still have to push the pause button pretty often as you do the exercise. After you have gone through this exercise a few times, check what you have written against the following key. (You can follow the same procedure for all the spelling practices in the lessons that follow.)

1. ဝါ    2. ဆာ    3. လာ    4. စာ    5. ဘာ    6. ဘာ    7. ဒါ    8. မာ    9. နာ    10. ဝါ  
11. ခါ    12. ကာ

## Dictation

The following exercise is intended to enable you to check your ability to distinguish between the two kinds of syllables you have learned so far. Listen to the recording and write the sound you hear. In cases in which the same sound can be written with two different ဗျည်း (e.g., ဝ and ယ), write it both ways. Once you have gone through the recording a few times, check what you have written against the following key.

1. ဝ ယ    2. ဘာ    3. န    4. ဖ    5. က    6. စာ    7. လာ    8. ဗ ဘ    9. မာ    10. ဆာ  
11. ခ    12. ခါ    13. ဒါ စာ    14. ထ    15. နာ    16. ရ ယ    17. ဝါ    18. ည    19. ဖာ    20. က  
21. ဇ ဝျ    22. င    23. စ    24. စာ    25. ဘာ    26. ဖ    27. ငါ    28. ညာ

## Numbers 11–21

11. သ  
12. ဝှ  
13. ဝှ

14. ဘ၄
15. ဘ၅
16. ဘ၆
17. ဘ၇
18. ဘ၈
19. ဘ၉
20. ၂၀
21. ၂၁

In learning these numbers, be careful to note and imitate the way that the first syllable resembles the word for 10 but differs from it in that the tone is raised.

### Numbers drill

၁၀ ၅ ၂၁ ဘ၃ ၃၀ ၂၄ ၈ ၉ ၁၁ ဘ၆

### B. – ဘး – ဂး [၂202.mp3]

ကး

The third tone is higher in pitch than the low tone seen in Section A, above. And unlike the first tone, seen in Lesson 1, it is not creaked. (It does not end in a slight vocal occlusion.) It is often called a “high, falling” tone, although in normal speech syllables are pronounced too quickly to display much of a fall in pitch.

To review the three types of syllables you have learned so far, they are:

က      ကာ      ကး

Except for unstressed syllables that include only the shwa sound (similar to “uh” in English), Burmese syllables exhibit one of these three tones or end in a nasal or a glottal stop (to be taken up later). Fortunately, the Burmese writing system usually, although not quite always, indicates the tone of a syllable. (The exceptions are often words of Pali origin.)

### Vocabulary

ကး	car, bus
ခါး-	bitter
ငါး	fish
စား-	to eat
ဆား	salt
ထား-	to put, place
ဓား	knife, sword
နား	ear
ယား-	to itch
လား	interrogative particle (for yes or no questions)
အား-	to be free, available
သား	son

# Lesson 2: Review [4210.mp3]

## 1. Dictation

- ၁။ ကား လာမယ် နော်။
- ၂။ ပူသလား၊ အေးသလား မသိဘူး။
- ၃။ မစီးပါနဲ့။
- ၄။ ဒီစား လေးလို့ ယူမလာဘူး။
- ၅။ နံလို့ စားလို့ မရဘူး။

## 2. Translate the above phrases into English.

## 3. Translate the following phrases into Burmese:

- 1. Older Brother didn't come by.
- 2. Do you have an umbrella with you?
- 3. It smells bad. Don't eat it.
- 4. Can you stand the cold?
- 5. Older Sister will come together with him.
- 6. Father and Mother are coming to the market.
- 7. It will strike 9:00.
- 8. It has little taste because it lacks salt.

Key:

## 2.

- 1. A car is coming, right?
- 2. I don't know if it is hot or cold.
- 3. Don't ride it.
- 4. He didn't bring this knife because it is heavy.
- 5. You can't eat it because it smells bad.

## 3.

- ၁။ အကို လာမခေါ်ဘူး။
- ၂။ ထီးပါလား။
- ၃။ နံတယ်၊ မစားပါနဲ့။
- ၄။ အအေး ခံသလား။
- ၅။ အမက သူနဲ့ အတူတူ လာမယ်။
- ၆။ အဖေ နဲ့ အမေ ဈေးကို လာတယ်။
- ၇။ ကိုးနာရီ ထိုးမယ်။
- ၈။ ဆားလိုလို့ ပေါ့တယ်။

# Appendix I: On Using the Dictionary

It is in the nature of a syllabary to generate problems as to the order in which words appear in a dictionary since, unlike an alphabet that moves steadily in one direction or the other, a syllabary has a central symbol and then diacritics arranged around it. It is never obvious in what order such an assemblage of symbols should be set out.

The Myanmar Language Commission's *Myanmar-English Dictionary* is at present the standard for such dictionaries, and it is an essential tool for any student of Burmese. Its contents are listed for the most part in a reasonably well-ordered system. Nevertheless, it diverges from the order in which Burmese learn their writing system and from the way sounds have been introduced in the above lessons in one important respect.

The order of central symbols, the ဗျည်း, in the dictionary is straightforward: it follows the same order in which they are listed in any chart of the syllabary as it is learned by Burmese school children, and as has been used to introduce the ဗျည်း to students in this text.

The problems start with the addition of diacritics: all the marks that change the vowels and tones of the ဗျည်း. The diacritics, သင်္ကေတ, in Lessons 2 through 4, are introduced in much the same order as in the Myanmar Language Commission dictionary. Syllables ending in open vowels come first, before syllables ending in glottal stops or nasals—that is, with devowelized ဗျည်း.

However, there is a discrepancy between the way most Burmese think the order of the tones for any given vowel or nasal and the order in which many of them appear in the dictionary. The way that Burmese think about tones is in accordance with the first series they learn, namely, [0] ဘ ဘး, and that is the way that they have been introduced for every open vowel and every nasal in the above lessons. However, the MLC dictionary orders words according to the number of strokes it takes to write a vowel sound and tone combination, not the order of tones. So, the first three vowel sounds do indeed appear in the same order as the tones, namely, creaked, low, and then high falling:

[0]	— ဘ	— ဘး
၀	၀	၀း
၀	၀	၀း

But the three tones for the next vowel appear in a different order because the one that requires the fewest strokes is low:

၀—	၀း	၀
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For the next one, the order changes again, because of the number of strokes required:

၀	၀
---	---

But it is further complicated because the low tone version of this vowel is spelled with a devowelized ဗျည်း, namely ယ်. Syllables ending in devowelized ဗျည်း come after all the open vowels have been listed in the dictionary. Therefore, ယ် comes much later, far separated from ယ် and ယ်.

Following ယ် and ယ် comes the series ဝေ - ဝ, ဝေ - ဝ, and ဝေ - ဝ်.

Then comes another complication. As mentioned in Lesson 2, Section H, Burmese linguists treat ဝ as an open vowel. Therefore, the MLC dictionary lists words with ဝ and ဝ next, although this makes no intuitive sense.

Following these comes the last open vowel: ဝိ ဝိ ဝိ.

So, words appear in the dictionary according to the order of the initial ဗျည်း. Within each ဗျည်း, words are listed according to the series of open vowels listed as described above, not according to the usual order of tones but rather according to the number of strokes with which they are written.

For example, က comes first, followed by ကာ, which appears before ကား, which precedes ကီလို့, which precedes ကော, and so on. The diacritics have been introduced in this order in Lesson 2.

Once all the syllables formed from a ဗျည်း plus an open vowel have been listed, then come the syllables ending in a glottal stop or a nasal—that is, those that end with a ဗျည်း that has been “killed” (devowelized) by means of the added diacritic ရှေ့ထိုး (or by the use of stacked syllables, as discussed in Lesson 5, Section C). These are introduced in the order of the syllables as they appeared as open syllables in Lessons 1 and 2. Thus, the first such syllable to be listed is one ending with -က်. When, as with ကကြီး, other diacritics can be combined with that ဗျည်း, then these are listed in the order in which those diacritics appear. In other words, in the case of -က်, the first words to appear are those that contain only -က် and no other diacritics. For example, ကက် appears first. Then, just as ကော precedes ကို, so ကောက် precedes ကိုက်. The order in which these ဗျည်း killed with a ရှေ့ထိုး appear is therefore as follows:

-က်            ဝေ - ဝက်        ဝိက်

This is the order in which these symbols were introduced in Lesson 3.

The next ဗျည်း that regularly takes ရှေ့ထိုး is င, and so the next words that appear in the dictionary are those that end in -င. Since -င can also take other diacritics, they appear in the order in which those diacritics appear, namely:

င            င်            ငး  
ဝေ - ဝင်    ဝေ - ဝင်    ဝေ - ဝင်း  
ဝိင်        ဝိင်        ဝိင်း

The next ဗျည်း to be devowelized is ဝ, so the next words listed for any ဗျည်း are those ending in -ဝ်. Although -ဝ် does not usually combine with any other diacritics, the high-frequency word ကိစ္စ, discussed as an example of a word with stacked syllables in Lesson 5, Section C, does appear: it comes after ကပ် and ကစ္စည်း. These two words precede ကိစ္စ because they contain only the ဗျည်း က and -ဝ် without any other diacritics, whereas ကိစ္စ has the additional diacritic ဝ်.

And so it goes through all the ဗျည်း that can be devowelized, first alone and then with any other diacritics they can take. Lesson 3 goes through all of the syllables that end with devowelized ဗျည်း in the same order as they appear in the syllabary, and as they appear in the Myanmar Language Commission dictionary.

Finally, those diacritics that generate consonant clusters, namely, ျ, ြ, ွ, and ှ, appear with any ဗျည်း that can take such sounds. Since these diacritics are adaptations of ဗျည်း, namely, ယ, ရ, ဝ, and ဟ, they come in the same order as those ဗျည်း come in the syllabary. Keeping this in mind makes it easier to recall the order in which they appear, provided one has memorized the syllabary well. Furthermore, when any of these diacritics co-occur, they, too, are named in the order in which they appear in the syllabary. So, ရွှေ is spelled သဝေထိုး ရကောက် ဝဆွဲ ဟထိုး.

The truth be told, few Burmese speakers are proficient users of dictionaries and they often search about for a word rather aimlessly until they come upon it. However, they have recourse to the dictionary much less often than foreign learners of the language. Those of us who must rely on dictionaries to build our vocabularies and check our spelling can save immense amounts of time over the long run if we make the initial investment to learn the syllabary and the diacritics effectively and in order early in our study of the language.

It is true that many students of Burmese will turn to dictionaries that they download on to their mobile phones. This obviates the need to know the order of words as they appear in a dictionary that sits on a desk. But there are particular pleasures, as well as benefits, to having a dictionary at hand that you can browse in. Mastering this skill may seem rather old school, but it is still worth pursuing.

## **Part Two: Dialogues**

# Lesson 6: Breakfast

သင်ခန်းစာ နံပါတ် (၆) မနက်စာ

## Dialogue [601.mp3]

Listen to the following conversation several times. Then start imitating as much of it as you can before looking at the text. Next, look at the text to get a better sense of what it is about. Finally, look at the English translation to identify specific words and phrases.

Once you have a good sense of what each phrase means, you should repeat it enough times to be able to say it fairly fluently from memory, using the translation as a prompt. Be careful to check your pronunciation against the recording assiduously. Be particularly careful to monitor the pitch of your voice so that you can be sure you are maintaining the correct tones throughout. You should also attend carefully to which initial consonant sounds become voiced when they follow open vowels and nasals.

A middle-aged man enters a tea shop and is greeted by a waiter, a much younger man, who shows him a table and takes his order.

- ၁။ စားပွဲထိုး      ထိုင်ပါဦး။  
ဘာ သုံးဆောင်မလဲ။
- ၂။ စားသုံးသူ      ဘာ ရသလဲ။
- ၃။ စားပွဲထိုး      မုန့်ဟင်းခါး ရတယ်၊ အုန်းနို့ခေါက်ဆွဲ ရတယ်။
- ၄။ စားသုံးသူ      မုန့်ဟင်းခါး စားမယ်။
- ၅။ စားပွဲထိုး      ဘယ်လို စားမလဲ၊  
အလွတ်လား၊ အစုံလား။
- ၆။ စားသုံးသူ      အစုံ။

## Translation

1. Waiter: Please be seated. What would you like to have?
2. Customer: What's available?
3. Waiter: Fish head soup noodles or coconut soup noodles.
4. Customer: I'll have fish head noodle soup.
5. Waiter: Plain or with all the fixings?
6. Customer: With the fixings.

## Vocabulary

သင်-	to study
ခန်း	chapter
စာ	letter, literature
သင်ခန်းစာ	lesson
နံပါတ် ၊ နံနံဗတ်၊	number (from the English "number")
၁ တစ်	1, one
စား-	to eat
စားပွဲ ၊ ဇာ*ပွဲ၊	a table
ထိုး-	to serve, wait upon
စားပွဲထိုး ၊ ဇာပွဲဒိုး၊	a waiter
ထိုင်-	to sit
ဝါ	particle indicating respect
ဦး ၊ အုန်း၊	polite particle urging another person's action
ဘာ	what?
သုံး-	to use
သုံးဆောင်-	to consume food or drink (elevated)
-မ- ၊ မ*၊	reduced form of final verbal particle မယ်, used in questions
-လဲ	interrogative particle, appended to questions seeking answers other than yes or no
သူ	he, she, the person who
စားသုံးသူ	customer, consumer
ရ-	to get, obtain
-သ- ၊ သ*၊	reduced form of final verbal particle တယ်, used in questions
မုန့်ဟင်းခါး ၊ မုန့်ဟင်းဂါး၊	a kind of noodle soup often eaten for breakfast
အုန်း	coconut
နို့	milk
အုန်းနို့	coconut milk
ခေါက်ဆွဲ	noodles
နဲ့	with, and
ဘယ်	which, where
ဘယ်လို	in what way, how
အလွတ်	empty, loose, plain
အစုံ	complete, with nothing missing
-လား	interrogative particle appended to questions seeking a yes or no answer

## Notes

The notes in this and the following lessons, keyed to the number of the utterance in the dialogue in which the relevant phrase appears, provide information about a number of different matters important to learning Burmese: explanations of grammatical points, notes about pronunciation, usages

of specific phrases, guides to politesse, and more general remarks about the way that interaction usually proceeds in Burmese contexts. Some of the latter topics will become more salient the more time a student spends in Burmese company. But they are intended to demonstrate that learning a language is not simply a matter of learning a new grammar and a new vocabulary. Rather, it is all that plus learning a new way of interacting, with new conventions of sentiment and expression.

1. စားပွဲထိုး ၊ ဇ\*ပွဲထိုး။ The pronunciation of this word differs from its spelling. The first syllable replaces the high, falling tone implied by -ာ with a shwa (indicated by an asterisk in the version rewritten to show a word's pronunciation when it differs from how it appears). This happens fairly frequently to the first syllable of compound nouns, but such cases need to be learned individually. More importantly, the second and third syllables are written with unvoiced initial stops (ပစောက် and ထဆင်ထူး), yet they are pronounced as voiced ones (ပထက်ချိုက် and ဒထွေး). This tendency for unvoiced initial stops in a word or phrase to become voiced is pervasive in Burmese. It does not happen after a syllable that ends in a glottal stop (-က်, -စ်, -တ်, or -ိ). It may happen after any syllable ending in a vowel, or a nasal. Unfortunately, when such voicing takes place is not completely rule-bound, although certain patterns appear frequently and usually provide a fairly good guide. These will be discussed in later lessons. For the moment, a student should mimic the recording scrupulously, noting where voicing occurs, and also memorize the spelling of words. Bear in mind that since English is vastly more confusing to spell and pronounce than Burmese, no native speaker of English is in any position to complain about irregularities in Burmese orthography.

ထိုင်ပါ။ Burmese verbs take a final verbal particle in almost all contexts. One consistent exception is when they are used in the imperative, and it is for that reason that no final verbal particle follows the verb ထိုင် here. Only the polite particle -ပါ follows the verb: it is not a final verbal particle, simply a particle that indicates respect for one's addressee. The waiter is in effect giving the customer a command, something his or her relative standing does not really permit. But by adding the polite particle ပါ, the waiter softens the effect of the statement, making it more of an invitation.

ဦး။ Appended to a polite imperative, as here, this particle encourages the listener to go ahead and do what the verb implies. On its spelling, see Lesson 5, Section G.

သုံးဆောင်- This word is an elevated way to speak of eating or drinking to guests, substituting for the standard verbs စား- ("to eat") and သောက်- ("to drink"). People do not use the word with reference to themselves, only honored others.

ဘာ သုံးဆောင်မလဲ။ The verb final particle -မယ် indicates action that has not been completed. In a question, it is reduced to -မ-, with the vowel sound becoming a shwa. At times, such as here, the use of -မယ် resembles the use of the future tense in English: the waiter is asking the customer what he will eat. However, it is because the action is neither habitual nor completed yet that the particle -မယ် is called for. Burmese does not have tenses, so speaking in terms of tense is often misleading, as will be discussed in greater depth in later lessons.

-လဲ။ Questions are indicated in Burmese by the use of interrogative particles, the most important of which are -လဲ and -လား. The latter is used when a question looks for a yes-or-no answer; the former for all other sorts of questions. Speakers of languages who are not used to having to make such a distinction when they ask a question have to practice this quite a bit before it becomes automatic.

2. ဘာ ရသလဲ။ In contrast to the final verb particle -မယ်, the final verb particle -တယ် is used in statements that indicate present, past, or habitual action. In questions, it is reduced to သ ၊ သ\* (with the vowel pronounced as a shwa). Here, the customer is asking what is available. Since this is an ongoing, present condition, -တယ် is the appropriate particle for him to use, and since he is asking a question, he uses -သ-.

When, as here, -သ- follows a syllable that does not end in a glottal stop, it is voiced.

3. မုန့်ဟင်းခါး ရတယ် As noted above, the particle –တယ် is used following a verb in colloquial Burmese to indicate present, habitual, or completed action. Since fish head soup is actually available, the waiter uses the final verbal particle –တယ်.

The elevated style, used in formal speech and in writing, substitutes other forms, equivalent in meaning but different in pronunciation and spelling, for this and all other particles. The materials in this book are concerned with the informal style, not the elevated one, so with only a few exceptions (such as in the title of each lesson), only the particles of colloquial Burmese appear. Students wishing to learn the elevated style, which is the style most used in writing Burmese, should make use of John Okell's *Burmese: An Introduction to the Literary Style* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), and John Okell and Anna Allott's *Burmese/Myanmar Dictionary of Grammatical Forms* (Curzon, 2001).

မုန့်ဟင်းခါး ရတယ်၊ အုန်းနို့ခေါက်ဆွဲ ရတယ်။ Whereas an English speaker would probably repeat only the contrasting items, in this case, the two different kinds of food, Burmese speakers often repeat an entire verbal phrase to indicate “both x and y.”

4. မုန့်ဟင်းခါး စားမယ်။ In this utterance, the customer names the dish he wishes to eat, မုန့်ဟင်းခါး, and then provides the verb and verbal particle, စားမယ်, for which the dish serves as the direct object. This order, naming the object, which is then followed by a verb or verb phrase, is the standard one in Burmese, and it is one that speakers of Western languages find challenging. In fact, every utterance in this lesson follows the pattern. When an utterance starts with the question, “What . . . ,” an English speaker finds nothing strange. But the same pattern applies to all utterances that include an object as well as a verb in Burmese, whether they are questions or assertions.

5. အလွတ်လား၊ အစုံလား။ Although a word for “or” could be inserted between these two phrases, the parallel construction suffices to give the sense of a choice between the first or the second possibility.

## Drills

Students will find a series of exercises at the end of each lesson. They are intended in part to provide refreshers for vocabulary. Their more important purpose, however, is to provide students practice with the many grammatical structures that are a main focus of these lessons. The number of exercises at the end of each lesson varies, in fact, in line with the number of structures introduced in a given lesson.

Many of the drills will prove challenging. The speed at which they are spoken, for example, will be daunting at first. Students with audio programs that allow for slowing the speed of playback can make use of that function to good effect. Students may still wish to press the “pause” button often to give themselves time to formulate their responses.

It is worth running through each drill a number of times over, thereby developing both aural acuity and accuracy in producing the sounds of Burmese (paying close attention, always, to tone). And students will become that much more familiar with the basic structures that make fluent communication in Burmese possible.

### Substitution drills [602.mp3]

Substitution drills give students a chance to review vocabulary and useful grammatical constructions, and, once again, to practice their pronunciation, especially with respect to tones.

People unfamiliar with tonal languages will be inclined to use the same tone for the words substituted in each drill, as would be the case for substituting words in parallel constructions in their native language. But when speaking a tonal language, this habit must be broken in order to make sure that the tone of the substituted word is respected. So, in the first substitution below, for example, the

difference in tone between စား- and မှာ- must be kept in mind when the substitution is made. This takes a good deal of vigilance on a student's part.

Note on vocabulary: Some effort has been made to use high-frequency vocabulary in the drills in this and the following lessons. Nevertheless, total vocabulary control has not been exercised, in order to enable students to expand their vocabulary beyond the words contained in the dialogues. All words appear in the glossary at the end of the book, so that any unfamiliar words can be checked there. In addition, students will occasionally have to note variations in word order, such as when negating a phrase requires inserting မ- between two words in the prompt.

1. Example:

ထိုင်ပါဦး။ စား

စားပါဦး။ etc.

(စား ၊ လာ ၊ သွား ၊ ပြော ၊ ယူ ၊ ပေး ၊ ရိုက် ၊ ထ ၊ ထိုင်)

2. ဘာ (ရ) သလဲ ။

(ဝယ် ၊ ထင် ၊ ရှိ ၊ ရေး ၊ ယူ ၊ ရ)

3. (မုန့်ဟင်းခါး) စားမယ်။

(လက်ဖက်သုပ် ၊ ခေါက်ဆွဲ ၊ ပန်းသီး ၊ နံပြား ၊ ငါးဟင်း ၊ မုန့်ဟင်းခါး)

Response drills [4603.mp3]

In response drills, a student does not simply repeat the same phrase, substituting words or phrases. Instead, a student provides a response. This may consist of formulating an appropriate response to a question. Or it may involve, more challengingly, reformulating a sentence in order to assimilate a new grammatical element. So, for example, if a prompt consists of an interrogative particle, a student may have to convert an assertion into a question. Other prompts may require a change in aspect or the introduction of a whole different topic.

Some response drills in the following lessons will be relatively straightforward. However, many of them will, as here, pose considerable challenges, and will probably not be easily dealt with on the first try. (On occasion, it is impossible to allow for only one correct answer. At such times, students will learn by trial and error what the preferred response is.) As a result, response drills must often be repeated several times over to become clearly understood and effectively accomplished. Some students will find them more exasperating than helpful. But they are worth doing and repeating. Repetition is an excellent way to develop fluency.

We do not wish to discourage students in making these drills so demanding. Rather, by asking students to transform utterances in a number of different ways, we hope to expand their fluency. Think of these drills like the New York Times crossword puzzles: often apparently impossible at first attempts but, with practice and dedication, amenable to eventual solution—and entertaining when taken on as challenging mental puzzles.

(မုန့်ဟင်းခါး) စားမယ်။

- ၁။ မုန့်ဟင်းခါး) စားမယ်။ (မုန့်)
- ၂။ မုန့်စားမယ်။ (ဘာ)
- ၃။ ဘာ စားမလဲ ။ (ရှိ)
- ၄။ ဘာ ရှိမလဲ။ (တယ်)
- ၅။ ရှိတယ်။ (မုန့်)
- ၆။ မုန့် ရှိတယ်။ (လား)
- ၇။ မုန့် ရှိသလား ။ (စားပါ)
- ၈။ မုန့် စားပါ ။

# Lesson 12: I've Come to Order Water

သင်ခန်းစာ နံပါတ် (၁၂) ရေဘူး လာမှာတာပါ။

A young man enters a shop to order water to be delivered to his family's apartment.

## Dialogue [1201.mp3]

- ၁။ ဆိုင်ဝန်ထမ်း: ဘာကိစ္စရှိလဲ ညီလေး။
- ၂။ ကိုထွန်း: ကျွန်တော်တို့အိမ်အတွက် ရေဘူး လာမှာတာပါ။
- ၃။ ဆိုင်ဝန်ထမ်း: ဘယ်အထိ လိုက်ပို့ပေးရမလဲ။
- ၄။ ကိုထွန်း: ကံ့ကော်တိုက် (A1) ကိုပါ။
- ၅။ ဆိုင်ဝန်ထမ်း: အော်၊ သိပြီ။  
အခုတော့ မရသေးဘူး။  
ပို့မည့်သူ ပြန်မလာသေးလို့၊  
နောက်မှ ပို့ခိုင်းလိုက်မယ်၊  
ရလား။
- ၆။ ကိုထွန်း: ဟုတ်ကဲ့ ရပါတယ်။

## Translation

1. Store employee: What would you like, young man?
2. ကိုထွန်း: I've come to order water.
3. Store employee: Where should I have it delivered?
4. ကိုထွန်း: To Gangga A1 Building.
5. Store employee: Oh. I know the place. I can't do it just yet. Because the deliveryman isn't back yet. I'll tell him to deliver it later. Okay?
6. ကိုထွန်း: Yes, that's fine.

## Vocabulary

ကိစ္စ ကိတ်စ၊	issue, matter, problem
-တို့	a plural marker for people or things
အတွက်	on behalf of, for
ဘူး	container, bottle, jar, can
မှာ-	to order something, to put in an order
အထိ	until, to
ဘယ်အထိ	where to?
လိုက်-	to follow
ပို့-	to send
လိုက်ပို့-	to accompany someone; to deliver something
ကံ့ကော်၊ ကန့်ဂေါ်၊	a hardwood tree with white flowers
သိ-	to know
အခု	now
ပြန်လာ-	to come back, return
နောက်	after; later, next
-မှ	only once . . .
ခိုင်း-	to order someone to do something

## Notes

1. ဘာကိစ္စရှိလဲ The word ကိစ္စ can mean “matter, issue, problem, business.” It is used ubiquitously. In the present context, a literal translation might be, “What’s your business, young man?” But it does not sound as abrupt as that phrase suggests in English, unless it is pronounced very brusquely. “What are you here for?” or “What do you need?” give a better sense of its meaning here.

ညီလေး As in the preceding lesson, the use of this kinship term indicates that the speaker is male (since a female speaker would say instead မောင်လေး) and a fair bit older than his addressee.

2. ကျွန်တော်တို့ The suffix -တို့ is a plural marker for nouns and pronouns. It is the only plural marker used with pronouns, as it appears here. With nouns, the alternative plural marker for nouns (but not pronouns), -တွေ, appears more frequently.

ကျွန်တော်တို့ အိမ်အတွက် The post-position အတွက်, meaning “for, on behalf of,” can follow any noun or pronoun. It raises the tone of a low-tone pronoun, so one says သူ့အတွက်, and of ဘယ်သူ, meaning “who?” It may but does not have to raise the tone of names or kinship terms in the same fashion. But it does not raise the tone of other low-tone words, such as အိမ် here.

ရေဘူး လာမှာတာပါ The subject of the verb (ကျွန်တော်) is only implied, and the verb (မှာ-) is put in its nominalized form (မှာတာ). So, the answer to the question as to the young man’s business is a statement about the reason for his having come. The point is straightforward enough—he has come to order a new jug of water that they need at his house—but the construction is far from the way in which an English speaker is likely to conceive it. It is important for a student of Burmese to see how frequently nominalized constructions are used in Burmese speech, in contrast to English speech.

Note, too, the way that two principal verbs, လာ- and မှာ-, can be joined together without any linking word. Which of two principal verbs comes first depends entirely on the order in which the actions are undertaken. Since the agent must come to the office before ordering the water, it is clear that လာ- must precede မှာ- in his response.

3. ဘယ်အထိ The more common phrase for asking “Where (to)?” is ဘယ်ကို. But the store employee is speaking in the manner of a businessperson using a somewhat more formal phrase. The word အထိ (“until”) can refer to time or place:

ဘယ်အထိ လိုက်ပို့ရမလဲ။	Where should I deliver it?
ဘယ်နံနာရီအထိ စောင့်ရမလဲ။	Till what time will I have to wait?

လိုက်ပို့ပေးရမလဲ The verb ပေး- as a main verb means “to give.” But as an auxiliary verb it has a benefactive meaning, indicating that the action of the main verb is undertaken on someone else’s behalf. So here the speaker is asking where he should have the water delivered on behalf of the customer.

Note that even though -ပေး is used as an auxiliary verb here, it is not voiced. Many verbs do become voiced when they take on the function of auxiliary verbs, but not this one.

4. ကံ့ကော်တိုက် (A1) Burmese often use English letters and numbers in particularly modern-seeming contexts. So high-rise buildings often are divided up into towers identified by English letters and numbers. These are pronounced in accordance with Burmese phonology, unless a speaker has advanced English skills. One, for example, is pronounced ဝန်း. English “five” becomes ဖိုက်. An English speaker is well-advised to modify his or her pronunciation of numbers in English to make them understandable to a Burmese speaker. Insisting on pronouncing these words “correctly” is liable to impede communication.

5. သိပြီ။ The use of ပြီ here underlines the fact that the speaker is already familiar with the address the customer has just named.

အခုတော့ The addition of -တော့ here implies “as for [now],” with the connotation that things will change. Speakers often use the particle to soften any negative statement, or a statement likely to displease a listener.

ပို့မည့်သူ The form တဲ့ was encountered in Lesson 4, when ကိုသန့် said ပူတဲ့ဒဏ် မခံနိုင်ဘူး. Here, the equivalent form derived from -မယ် appears, identifying the person (သူ) who will deliver (ပို့မည့်) the water. Burmese makes it possible to identify a person very efficiently with this pattern, wherein a verb is followed by the final verbal particle -တယ် or -မယ် but with the tone raised, and then သူ, referring to the person who will carry out the action just named. The need in English to provide a relative clause (“who will deliver it”) seems longwinded in comparison.

ပြန်မလာသေးလို့ The expression ပြန်လာ- “to return” puts two verbs together, with ပြန်- in this case acting as an auxiliary that precedes the main verb. When negated, such a construction puts မ between ပြန်- and the main verb, as here.

ပြန်မလာသေးလို့ The negative construction မ . . . ဘူး drops ဘူး whenever it occurs in a dependent clause. In this case, a dependent clause ending in -လို့ provides the reason for what the speaker said just before.

ပြန်မလာသေးလို့ This is an example of the causative use of -လို့. It can be spotted as such (in contrast to other uses of -လို့) because of the absence of any final verbal particle in the clause to which -လို့ provides the final element.

ပြန်မလာသေးလို့ This utterance looks like a sentence fragment, consisting only of a dependent clause. But the main clause (“The reason is that . . .”) can be left understood. Clauses ending in -လို့, meaning “because,” often take this form.

နောက်မှ The particle -မှ can mean “only once X happens.” Here, after နောက်, it means “later,” with the implicit meaning, “only once he has returned.”

ပိုခိုင်းလိုက်မယ် ရလား The verb ခိုင်း- means “to ask or order someone to do” an action named by a preceding verb. No intervening word is necessary to link them, even though the agents—the person who gives the order and the person who carries out the action—differ.

# Review Lesson 2 [1504.mp3]

## 1. Dictation

- ၁။ သက်သာမှ သွားလို့ ရတယ်။
- ၂။ သူ့ရောက်တာ သုံးပတ် ရှိပြီ။
- ၃။ ဗိုက်နာသေးရင် ပြန်လာပြ။
- ၄။ ဆေးလူတာ အရမ်း ကောင်းတာပေါ့။
- ၅။ နောက်မှ ပြန်လာခေါ်မယ်။

2. Translate the above sentences into English.

3. Translate the following sentences into Burmese:

1. Can you go inside?
2. Of course it's cold.
3. Is this what's called New Town?
4. I've come to order books.
5. On whose behalf should I deliver them?
6. We'll discuss it later.
7. I'd like to look for all four of them.
8. I don't know whether it's hot or cold.
9. You'll only find it if you look for it.
10. Have you met them?
11. He does it twice a month.
12. How many are there?
13. It's been about two and a half years.
14. Is it blue or green?
15. He couldn't get there because it's far away.

Key:

2.

1. He can only go if he gets well.
2. He got here three weeks ago.
3. If your stomach still hurts, come back to see [the doctor] again.
4. Of course donating medicine is very good.
5. I'll come back again later to get you.

3.

- ၁။ ဝင်လို ရလား။
- ၂။ အေးတာပေါ့။
- ၃။ ဒါမြို့သစ် ဆိုတာလား။
- ၄။ စာအုပ်တွေ လာမှာတာပါ။
- ၅။ ဘယ်သူ့အတွက် လိုက်ပို့ပေးရမလဲ။
- ၆။ နောက်မှ ဆွေးနွေးမယ်။
- ၇။ လေးခုစလုံး ရှာချင်တယ်။
- ၈။ ပူလား၊ အေးလား မသိဘူး။
- ၉။ ရှာမှ တွေ့မယ်။
- ၁၀။ သူတို့နဲ့ တွေ့ဖူးသလား။
- ၁၁။ တစ်လနှစ်ခါ လုပ်တယ်။
- ၁၂။ ဘယ်လောက် ရှိသလဲ။
- ၁၃။ တစ်နှစ်ခွဲလောက် ရှိပြီ။
- ၁၄။ အပြာရောင်လား၊ အစိမ်းရောင်လား။
- ၁၅။ ဝေးလို့ မရောက်နိုင်ဘူး။

# Lesson 23: Lunch Break

သင်ခန်းစာ နံပါတ် (၂၃) ထမင်းစားနားချိန်

## Dialogue [2301.mp3]

- ၁။ သား ပြန်ရောက်ပါပြီ အမေ။
- ၂။ အမေ သား ဒီနေ့ကျောင်းသွားအပ်တာ အဆင်ပြေခဲ့လား။
- ၃။ သား အဆင်ပြေပါတယ်။ ဒါပေမဲ့ ထပ်သွားရမယ်။
- ၄။ အမေ ဟုတ်လား၊ ဘာဖြစ်လို့လဲ။
- ၅။ သား နေ့လည်နားချိန်ဖြစ်လို့ ငွေမသွင်းခဲ့ရဘူး။ နေ့လည်တစ်နာရီခွဲမှာ ပြန်လာခဲ့ပါတဲ့။
- ၆။ အမေ အင်း၊ သားသွားတာလည်း နောက်ကျတယ်နော်။ ရုံးက ဘယ်နှစ်နာရီ ဖွင့်တာလဲ။
- ၇။ သား မနက်ကိုးနာရီကနေ ဆယ့်နှစ်နာရီအထိတဲ့။ အဲ့ဒါမသိခဲ့လို့ နောက်ကျသွားတယ်။ ပြီးတော့ နေ့လယ်ပိုင်း (၁) နာရီခွဲကနေ ညနေ (၃) နာရီအထိ ဖွင့်တယ်။
- ၈။ အမေ ဒါဆို ထမင်းအမြန်စားပြီး သွားတော့လေ။

## Translation

1. Son: I'm back, Mom.
2. Mother: Did going to register at school today go okay?
3. Son: Yes. But I have to go back again.
4. Mother: Oh? Why is that?
5. Son: I couldn't pay the fees because it was the midday break. "Come back this afternoon at 1:30," they said.

6. Mother: You did go late, didn't you? What time is the office open?  
 7. Son: In the morning from nine till noon. I didn't know so I went late.  
 Then in the afternoon they're open from one-thirty till three.  
 8. Mother: In that case, eat quickly and get going, yeah?

## Vocabulary

ထပ်-	to repeat, do over again
နာရီ	hour; clock
တစ်နာရီ ၊ တ*နာရီ	one o'clock
ခွဲ-	to split
တစ်နာရီခွဲ	one-thirty
တစ်နာရီခွဲမှာ	at one-thirty
-တဲ့	a quotative particle, "[they] said"
ရုံး	office
ဖွင့်-	to open
မြန်-	to be quick
အမြန်	quickly

## Notes

- ပြန်- When this verb is a main verb, it means "to return." It can also be used to mean "back" or "again." In an instance like this one, both meanings apply.
- အမေ This usage is a little formal, more formal than မေမေ, a common alternative. But showing one's parents respect is much emphasized among Burmans. Respect is not thought opposed to intimacy; children can demonstrate respect and be thought for that very reason to be showing the great love they feel for their parents.
- အဆင်ပြေပါတဲ့။ It is more polite to say positive than negative things. So, the student begins by saying that things went fine. Then he elaborates, which is to say, explains that he will have to go back. (That people can speak a good deal more directly when the occasion arises will become clear in later lessons.)  
 ထပ်- This verb means "to repeat" or "to do over again." Placed before another main verb, it means "to do V over again." In negative statements, it precedes မ. For example, ထပ် မလုပ်ချင်ဘူး and ထပ်မပြောနဲ့.
- ပြန်လာခဲ့ပါတဲ့။ As noted in Lesson 20, Roadside Phone, appending the quotative particle တဲ့ affects the intonation of what precedes it, especially if it is a low-tone syllable, in quite a striking way: the syllable just before -တဲ့ is lengthened and pronounced with a distinctive rising intonation. (This change is a little less marked if it is a high or creaked tone syllable. It still occurs, though, as in no. 7 below.) This special intonation obtains no matter what the nature or meaning of the preceding syllable is.
- ဘယ်နာရီ This phrase asks specifically for a time of day, whereas the phrase ဘယ်အချိန် can be answered with a specific time or with reference to a more general part of the day.

ပြီးတော့ “Then,” “next,” or “after that”: this is another common phrase used when recounting events in a series.

(၁) နာရီခွဲ When numerals are included in a text otherwise consisting of words, they are usually placed between parentheses in this way.

-ကနေ This phrase means “starting from” and can refer to place or time.

ညနေ, literally “evening,” starts earlier in the day than most Westerners would expect, any time after “midday,” so after three o’clock or so.

အမြန် Derived from the verb မြန်-, this compound precedes a verb to modify it, as in “V quickly.”

သွားတော့ The addition of -တော့ here indicates a bit of urgency, as in “go ahead and go.”

### Telling time

“To strike the hour” is expressed in a similar phrase in Burmese as in English, since the verb used is ထိုး-, meaning “to strike.”

ten o’clock ဆယ်နာရီ ထိုးပြီ။

The half hour is expressed simply, as well:

10:30 ဆယ်နာရီခွဲ

using the verb ခွဲ-, meaning “to split.”

Minutes after the hour are expressed as follows:

10:08 ဆယ်နာရီ ထိုးပြီ ရှစ်မိနစ်

or, especially in younger people’s speech, ဆယ်နာရီ ရှစ်မိနစ်

As in other contexts, multiples of ten are tricky:

10:10 ဆယ်နာရီ ထိုးပြီ ဆယ်မိနစ်

10:20 ဆယ်နာရီ ထိုးပြီး မိနစ်နှစ်ဆယ်

After the half hour, it is possible simply to name the number of minutes, as above:

10:40 ဆယ်နာရီ မိနစ်လေးဆယ်

But more conservative speakers would instead refer to the following hour:

ဆယ့်တစ်နာရီ ထိုးဖို့ မိနစ်နှစ်ဆယ်

For a quarter till the hour, there is a special expression:

ဆယ့်တစ်နာရီ မတ်တင်း

derived from မတ်, meaning “a quarter,” and တင်း, meaning “to be less” (“eleven o’clock less a quarter”).

The fact of the matter is that Burmese tend to be fairly casual about time, so precise time-telling means relatively little. Often, time is referred to in vaguer ways:

(၁၀) နာရီ နောက်ပိုင်း: sometime after ten

(၁၀) နာရီ မတိုင်ခင်: sometime before ten

## Drills

### Substitution drills [2302.mp3]

1. ထပ်(သွား)ရမယ်။  
(လုပ်၊ ဖြည့်၊ သွားကြို၊ ယူသွား၊ ကူး၊ စာရေး၊ သွား)
2. (ပြန်လာခဲ့ပါ) တဲ့။  
(ယူလာမယ်၊ သေချာတယ်၊ မောတယ်၊ မြင့်တယ် နော်၊ လာမှာပါ၊ အဖွား အဖွား၊ ပြန်ယူလိုက်)
3. (ကျောင်းသွားအပ်တာ) အဆင်ပြေပါတယ်။  
(စက်ဘီး ပြင်တာ၊ နာရီဝယ်တာ၊ စာအုပ် ရှာတာ၊ ဈေးသွားဝယ်တာ၊ စာမေးပွဲ ဖြေတာ၊ အလုပ်လုပ်တာ၊ ကျောင်းသွားအပ်တာ)

### Response drills [2303.mp3]

1. Example:  
အဆင်မပြေဘူး။ (ဘာဖြစ်လို့)  
ဘာဖြစ်လို့ အဆင် မပြေတာလဲ။  
၁။ ရုံးက မဖွင့်ဘူး။ (ဘာဖြစ်လို့)  
ဘာဖြစ်လို့ မဖွင့်တာလဲ။  
၂။ ဝယ်လို့ မရဘူး။ (ဘာဖြစ်လို့)  
ဘာဖြစ်လို့ ဝယ်လို့ မရတာလဲ။  
၃။ မလိုက်နိုင်ဘူး။ (ဘာဖြစ်လို့)  
ဘာဖြစ်လို့ မလိုက်နိုင်တာလဲ။  
၄။ မဆိုချင်ဘူး။ (ဘာဖြစ်လို့)  
ဘာဖြစ်လို့ မဆိုချင်တာလဲ။  
၅။ မပြေးချင်ဘူး။ (ဘာဖြစ်လို့)  
ဘာဖြစ်လို့ မပြေးချင်တာလဲ။  
၆။ ဖွင့်လို့မရဘူး။ (ဘာဖြစ်လို့)  
ဘာဖြစ်လို့ ဖွင့်လို့ မရတာလဲ။
2. Example:  
ရုံးက တစ်နာရီခွဲ ဖွင့်တယ်။  
ဘယ်နှနာရီ ဖွင့်တာလဲ။  
၁။ ပြဇာတ်က ကိုးနာရီ စမယ်။  
ဘယ်နှနာရီ စမှာလဲ။  
၂။ သူ့မိတ်ဆွေ သုံးနာရီမတ်တင်း လာမယ်။  
ဘယ်နှနာရီ လာမလဲ။  
၃။ အမေ တစ်နာရီလောက် ဖုန်းဆက်မယ်။  
ဘယ်နှနာရီ ဖုန်းဆက်မလဲ။  
၄။ နေ့လည်စာ ဆယ်နှစ်နာရီ စားမယ်။  
ဘယ်နှနာရီ စားမလဲ။  
၅။ နောက်ဆယ်မိနစ် ပြီးရင် ထွက်မယ်။  
ဘယ်နှနာရီ ထွက်မလဲ။

- 3. နေ့လည်နားချိန် ဖြစ်လို့ ငွေမသွင်းခဲ့ရဘူး။
- ၁။ နေ့လည်နားချိန် ဖြစ်လို့ ငွေမသွင်းခဲ့ရဘူး။ (နည်းနည်းလောလို့)
- ၂။ နည်းနည်းလောလို့ ငွေမသွင်းခဲ့ရဘူး။ (ပိုက်ဆံ ယူမလာခဲ့ရဘူး)
- ၃။ နည်းနည်းလောလို့ ပိုက်ဆံ ယူမလာခဲ့ရဘူး။ (ရုံးပိတ်ရက်ဖြစ်လို့)
- ၄။ ရုံးပိတ်ရက်ဖြစ်လို့ ပိုက်ဆံယူမလာခဲ့ရဘူး။ (တွေ့လို့ မရဘူး)
- ၅။ ရုံးပိတ်ရက်ဖြစ်လို့ တွေ့လို့ မရဘူး။ (ဝန်ထမ်းတွေနဲ့)
- ၆။ ရုံးပိတ်ရက်ဖြစ်လို့ ဝန်ထမ်းတွေနဲ့ တွေ့လို့ မရဘူး။

# Appendix II: On Numbers [4101.mp3]

Counting using cardinal numbers is for the most part straightforward in Burmese. But there are a few points that need to be kept in mind. The following remarks summarize a good deal of information. Students are not expected to assimilate all of this information at one go but should come back to this summary repeatedly to develop mastery of counting in Burmese.

## The number 7

The number 7 has two forms: ခုနစ် (pronounced ခွန်နစ်) and ခွန်. When it stands in a phrase (such as when speaking of seven objects), "seven" is said ခုနစ်. When counting in a series (e.g., from 1 to 10, or from 70 to 80) or naming an item in such a series, it is said ခွန်. So, for example,

ခုနစ် နာရီ	7 o'clock
ခုနစ်ခု	7 objects

but

ငါး ခြောက် ခွန် ရှစ်	5, 6, 7, 8
စာမျက်နှာ နံပါတ် နှစ်ဆယ့်ခွန်	page 27

## Numbers with ten(s)

The basic numbers from 1 to 100 follow a simple pattern. The numbers from 1 to 9 remain for the most part stable as tens are added. However, the syllable indicating ten or tens changes tone according to whether the number is a simple multiple of ten or not.

Simple multiples of ten are low tone:

၁၀ တဆယ် ၂၀ နှစ်ဆယ် ဒုန\*ဆယ်၊ ၅၀ ငါးဆယ်

But when another digit is added, the tone is raised, as follows:

၁၁ ဆယ့်တစ် ၂၁ နှစ်ဆယ့်တစ် ဒုန\*ဆယ့်တစ်၊ ၇၇ ခုနစ်ဆယ့်ခွန် ခွန်န\*ဆယ့်ခွန်၊

# Comprehensive Vocabulary List

က-	to dance
-က	topic marker
ကကြီး	က
ကစား- က*အား၊	to play (a game)
ကလေး၊ ခ*လေး၊	a child
-က လွဲလို့	except for
ကား	car, bus
ကူညီ-	to help, assist
ကူး-	to cross
ကဲ-	to overdo, to go beyond accepted limits
ကံ	karma, store of merit
ကံကောင်း-	to be lucky, fortunate
ကံ့ကူ၊ ကန့်ဂူ၊	soapstone
ကံ့ကော်၊ ကန့်ဂေါ်၊	a hardwood tree with white flowers
-ကော	as for . . .
ကိုကို	term of direct address for one's older brother
ကိုး	nine
ကောက်ညှင်း	sticky rice
ကိုက်-	to bite
ကင်-	to roast, grill, barbecue
-ကောင်	counter for fish and animals
ကောင်မ	female animal; intimate term of address for a close female friend
ကောင်း-	to be good
ကောင်းကင်၊ ကောင်းဂင်၊	the sky, the heavens
ကိုင်-	to hold something
ကိစ္စ၊ ကိတ်စ၊	issue, matter, problem
ကတ်	card
ကုတ်အင်္ကျီ	coat
ကန်	pond, tank

ကန်တော်ကြီး	royal lake
ကန်တင်း	canteen
ကန်-	to kick
ကုန်-	to be used up; to end
ကုန်း-	bent, curved, arched; hunchbacked
ကုန်းဘောင်	Konbaung (a Burmese dynasty)
ကိုယ် ၊ကို၊	torso; body
ကိုယ်တိုင် ၊ကိုခိုင်၊	in person, oneself
ကျ-	to fall; to cost
ကျီး	a crow
ကျီးလန့်စာစား ၊ကျီးလန့်စာအား၊	in a state of disarray
ကျူရှင်	tutoring
ကျေနပ်-	to be satisfied
ကျေးဇူး	gratitude, thanks
ကျော်-	to fry
ကျက်-	to memorize, to learn by heart
ကျောင်း	school
ကျောင်းဆင်း-	to come home from school
ကျောင်းပျင်း-	to be lazy about schoolwork
ကျောင်းလစ်-	to skip school
ကျောင်းသားရေးရာ	student affairs
ကျန်-	to remain, to be left
ကျပ်	kyat, basic unit of Burmese currency
ကျပ်-	to be tight; difficult
ကျယ်-	to be wide; to be loud
-ကြ	plural marker for verbs
ကြာ-	to last a while
ကြာသပတေးနေ့ ၊ကျာသ*ပ*ဒေးနေ့၊	Thursday
ကြား-	to hear
ကြီး-	to be big
ကြေး-	a bet, wager
ကြို-	to meet someone on their arrival
ကြိုးစား- ၊ကျိုးစား၊	to make an effort, to strive
ကြက်	chicken
ကြက်သား	chicken meat
ကြိုက်-	to like
ကြောင်တောင်တောင်	to be disoriented, confused, discombobulated
ကြည့်-	to look
-ကြည့်	to try
-ကြိမ်	a time, instance

ကွာ ၊ဝှါ	appellative used among intimates
ကွေ့-	to turn
ကွေး-	to bend, to curl
ကွဲ-	to be broken
ကျိုင်	an exclamation of impatience, derived from the English word "coil"
ကျွေး-	to serve someone food
ကွန်ပျူတာ	computer
ကျွတ်-	to fall off, to fall out
ကျွန်	slave, bondsman
ကျွန်တော် ၊ကျွန်ဒေါ်	I (male speaker)
ကျွန်မ	I (female speaker)
ကျွန်း	island
ကျွမ်းကျင်- ၊ကျွန်းကျင်	to be accomplished at something
ခ	fee, cost
ခ ကွေး	ခ
ခဏ ၊ခ*န့	a moment, a short while
ခရီး ၊ခ*ရီး	a trip
ခရီးစဉ်	travel plans, itinerary
ခရမ်းသီး ၊ခ*ယန်း	aubergine, eggplant
ခါ	a time, instance
ခါး-	bitter
ခု	item
ခုနစ် ၊ခွန်နစ်	seven
ခဲတံ	pencil
-ခွဲ	particle indicating action done before moving to another location
ခေါ်-	to call
ခံ-	to suffer something, to undergo something; to put up with something
ခိုး-	to steal
ခိုးပြေး-	to run away together, to elope
ခက်-	to be difficult
ခေါက်ဆွဲ	noodles
ခင်-	to be on close terms with
ခင်ဗျာ	polite appellative (used by male speakers)
ခင်ဗျား	you (polite, used by male speakers)
ခေါင်မိုး	roof
ခေါင်း ၊ခေါင်း	head
ခေါင်းရှောင်-	to evade responsibility
ခိုင်း-	to tell someone to do something
ခုတ်-	to cut; scratch
ချ-	to drop something; to fight

ချာလန်	a traffic ticket; a receipt for any official payment
ချီ-	(for a bird or animal) to carry off
ချော-	to be smooth; attractive
ချို-	to be sweet
ချက်-	to cook
ချင်းတောင် ၊ ချင်းဒေါင်း	the Chin Hills
-ချောင်း	counter for long, thin objects
ချောင်းဆိုး ၊ ချောင်းဖိုး	a cough
ချောင်းဆိုး- ၊ ချောင်းဆိုး	to cough
ချဉ်-	to be sour
-ချည်း	exclusively, only
ချိတ်-	to hang up, to hook something to something
ချိန်းထား-	to make an appointment
ချပ်-	counter for late items
ချုပ်-	to sew
ချုံ	a bush
ခြောက်	six
မြိုက်-	to be dented, concave
ခွေး	a dog
-ခွဲ	(with reference to numbers) and a half
ခွဲ-	to split, to separate
ခွဲ	phlegm, sputum
ခွက်	cup, bowl
ခွင့်	permission, leave
ဂ ငယ်	ဂ
ဂရုစိုက်-	to pay attention, watch out for
ဂရိတ်	grade, school class
ဂိတာ	guitar
ဂိတ်	gate
ဂေါ်ဖီထုပ် ၊ ဂေါ်ဖီဒုတ်	cabbage
ဂျင်	ginger
ဂျုံ	wheat
ဃကြီး	ဃ
ငါ	I (familiar, used with intimates and subordinates)
ငါတို့ ၊ ငါတို့	we (familiar)
ငါး	fish
ငါး	five
ငုံ-	to hold in the mouth
ငယ်-	to be small, little
ငြီး- ၊ ငြီး	to feel tired of; to feel bored

လင်	husband (formal)
လင်မယား or လင်နှင့်မယား	husband and wife (formal)
လင်း-	to be bright; clear
လိင် ၊လိန်၊	gender, sex
လောင်း-	to throw liquid on something
လိုင်စင်	license
လိုင်းကား	a pick-up truck fitted out as a bus
လစ်-	to slip away; to be absent
လည်-	to visit
လည်း ၊လဲ၊	also, too
လန့်-	to be startled
လိပ်	turtle
လိပ်	counter for anything rolled up
လိပ်-	to roll something up
လိပ်စာ	address
လုပ်-	to do, to work
လမ်း	road, street
လမ်းပျောက်-	to lose one's way, to get lost
လမ်းလျှောက်-	to take a walk
လိမ်-	to be twisted
လိမ်ညာ-	to lie, deceive
လိမ့်	probably, possibly
လုံး-	to be round, rotund; a counter for large, round objects
လုံးချင်း ၊လုန်းဂျင်း၊	separate, free-standing, self-contained
လုံးချင်းတိုက်	freestanding building
လုံးဝ	completely, entirely, (in negative expressions) not at all
လယ်	middle, mid-
လွန်-	to exceed, go beyond
လွန်ခဲ့တဲ့- ၊လွန်တဲ့ဒဲ့၊	last, this past
-လွန်း	exceedingly, excessively
လွယ်-	to be easy
လွယ်-	to carry something slung over the shoulder
လွယ်အိတ်	a shoulder bag
လှ-	to be pretty
လှူ-	to donate
လျော့- ၊ယော့၊	to diminish; to be slack
လျှော့- ၊ယော့၊	to lower (a price), to reduce something
လျှောက်- ၊ယျှောက်၊	to apply for
လျှောက် V	to V irresponsibly, indiscriminately
ဝ-	to be plump; to be satiated with food

အုန်း	coconut
အုန်းနို့	coconut milk
အပ်-	to enroll; to entrust, turn something over, turn something in
အိပ်-	to sleep
အိပ်ရေးပျက်-	to lose sleep
အုပ်	counter for books
အုပ်စု	group, bloc
အိမ်	house
အိမ်သာ	toilet
အိမ်သား	husband (formal)
အိမ်စာ	homework
အိမ်ဖော် ၊ အိမ်ဖော်၊	a maid
ဦး ၊ အုန်း၊	polite particle urging another person's action