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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. 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 “I” 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.

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 ဗ်ည္း. Each ဗ်ည္း 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 ဗ်ည္း implies a number of different possible sounds, as may a letter in an alphabet. But unlike the letters in an alphabet, each ဗ်ည္း 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 ဗ်ည္း 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 ဗ်ည္း. These diacritics will be introduced systematically in the remaining lessons in Part One. This first lesson, however, is devoted to mastering the ဗ်ည္း alone, with no other diacritics.

It is recommended, although not necessary, for students to learn to repeat the names of the ဗ်ည္း 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 ႀကီး (the name of the ဗ်ည္း) 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 ဗ်ည္း 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:

Learning to recognize, name, and write all of these syllables is a major undertaking, and it will take some time. It will constitute the content of this entire lesson. Practicing the syllables 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

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

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


Useful classroom phrases

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. နားေထာင္။
Say it. ေျပာပါ။
Write it down. ေရးပါ။

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.
B. The fourth and fifth lines

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.

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

Vocabulary

∞ - to stand up, to get up
-= to lift

Spelling practice

1. ၃ 2. ∞ 3. ၀ 4. ၁ 5. ပ
11. ဗ 12. ပ 13. ၀ 14. ∞ 15. ဝ
16. မ 17. ∞ 18. ဝ 19. ဝ 20. ဝ

Useful classroom phrases 2

Are you ready? အဆင္သင့္ ျဖစ္ၿပီလား။
Yes, (I'm) ready. ျဖစ္ၿပီ။
Are you done? ျဖစ္ၿပီးၿပီလား။
Yes, I'm done. ျဖစ္ၿပီ။
Good. ေကာင္းတယ္။

C. The sixth and seventh lines

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.
Lesson 1: The Syllabary

Vocabulary

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

Spelling practice

1. က  2. လ  3. က  4. လ  5. က
6. ခ  7. ဖ  8. သ  9. သ  10. ဠ
11. ထ  12. င  13. ရ  14. ဂ  15. ပ
16. ဒ  17. ဗ  18. ဘ  19. ဆ  20. ဟ
21. စ  22. ဝ  23. ဈ  24. အ  25. မ
26. ည  27. ဃ  28. ဓ

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. ၁
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 ထ
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
Diacritics are marks placed above, below, before, or following a ဗ်ည္း 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 သေကၤတ.

A. –ာ – ါ

The first diacritic to learn, –ာ, 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

– ာ     –  ါ

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  ာ would make it look a lot like ဆ. To avoid confusion, the alternate form of  ာ is used.

ခ ခါ

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

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

This alternate form of –ာ is labeled ေမာက္ခ် 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

ဌ  I (familiar, used with intimates and subordinates)
ဌ  letter
ဌ-  to be hungry
ဌ  that
ဌ-  to hurt
ဌ-  a politeness particle
ဌ-  to be present, to accompany
ဌ  what?
ဌ-  to be hard, tough, firm
ဌ-  to come
ဌ  thing
ဌ  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.)

11. ဌ  12. ဌ

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 ဗ်ည္း (e.g., ဗ and ဃ), write it both ways. Once you have gone through the recording a few times, check what you have written against the following key.


Numbers 11–21

11. ဗ
12. ဗ
13. ဗ

Burmese
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

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:

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

- ကား 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
1. Dictation

1. ကား လာမယ္ ေနာ္။
2. ပူသလား၊ ေအးသလား မသိဘူး။
3. မစီးပါနဲ႔။
4. ဒီဓား ေလးလို႔ ယူမလာဘူး။
5. နံလို႔ စားလို႔ 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.

1. အကို လာမေခၚဘူး။
2. ထီးပါလား။
3. နံတယ္၊ မစားပါနဲ႔။
4. အေအး ခံသလား။
5. အမက သူနဲ႔ အတူတူ လာမယ္။
6. အေဖ နဲ႔ အေမ ေစ်းကိုို လာတယ္။
7. ကိုးနာရီ ထိုးမယ္။
8. ဆားလိုလို႔ ေပါ့တယ္။
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 ဗ်ည္း, 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 ဗ်ည္း to students in this text.

The problems start with the addition of diacritics: all the marks that change the vowels and tones of the ဗ်ည္း. The diacritics, သေကၤတ, 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 devowelled ဗ်ည္း.

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] ာ  ား, 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
[0] & \quad \text{–} & \quad \text{–}\text{"} \\
\circ & \quad \circ & \quad \circ\text{"} \\
\tilde{\circ} & \quad \tilde{\circ} & \quad \tilde{\circ}\text{"}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\circ & \quad \circ & \quad \circ\text{\text{"}} \\
\text{"} & \quad \text{"} & \quad \text{"}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{"} & \quad \text{"} & \quad \text{"}
\end{align*}
\]
But it is further complicated because the low tone version of this vowel is spelled with a devowelized က်စ္, namely ကၢ. Syllables ending in devowelized က်စ္ come after all the open vowels have been listed in the dictionary. Therefore, က် comes much later, far separated from နု and ဇီ. Following နု and ဇီ comes the series စ္, က္, and ည္း.

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

Following these comes the last open vowel: ိုးိုးိုး. Words appear in the dictionary according to the order of the initial က်စ္. Within each က်စ္, 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, ကြ comes first, followed by ကြီး, which comes before ကြီးး, which precedes ကြီးးး, and so on. The diacritics have been introduced in this order in Lesson 2.

Once all the syllables formed from a က်စ္ 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 က်စ္ that has been “killed” (devowelized) by means of the added diacritic ိုးိုးိုး (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 က်စ္. When, as with က်စ္, other diacritics can be combined with that က်စ္, then these are listed in the order in which those diacritics appear. In other words, in the case of က်စ္, the first words to appear are those that contain only က်စ္ and no other diacritics. For example, က်စ္ appears first. Then, just as ကြီး precedes ကြီးး, so ကြီးးး precedes က်စ္းး. The order in which these က်စ္ killed with a က်စ္းး appear is therefore as follows:

- က်စ္ က်စ္း က်စ္းး
- က်စ္း က်စ္းး က်စ္းးး
- က်စ္းး က်စ္းးး က်စ္းးးး

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

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

- င်စ္ င်စ္း င်စ္းး
- င်စ္း င်စ္းး င်စ္းးး
- င်စ္းး င်စ္းးး င်စ္းးးး

The next က်စ္ to be devowelized is ၃, so the next words listed for any က်စ္ are those ending in ၃စ္. Although ၃ does not usually combine with any other diacritics, the high-frequency word က်စ္၃, discussed as an example of a word with stacked syllables in Lesson 5, Section C, does appear: it comes after က်စ္ and က်စ္းး. These two words precede က်စ္၃ because they contain only the က်စ္ and ၃ without any other diacritics, whereas က်စ္၃ has the additional diacritic ၃.

And so it goes through all the က်စ္ 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 က်စ္ 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 က်စ္ that can take such sounds. Since these diacritics are adaptations of က်စ္, namely, က်, က််, က်း, and က်းး, they come in the same order as those က်စ္ 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, က်း is spelled က်စ္းးးးးး.
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

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.

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

သင္– to study
ခန္း chapter
စာ letter, literature
သင္ခန္းစာ lesson
နံပါတ္ number (from the English “number”) 1 one
စား– to eat
စားပြဲ a table
ထိုး– to serve, wait upon
စားပြဲထိုး a waiter
ထိုင္– to sit
ပါ particle indicating respect
ဘာ what?
သုံး– to use
သုံးေဆင္– to consume food or drink (elevated)
–မ– reduced form of final verbal particle မယ္, 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– reduced form of final verbal particle တယ္, used in questions
မုန္႔ဟင္းခါး a kind of noodle soup often eaten for breakfast
မုန္႔ဟင္းဂါး coconut milk
ေခါက္ဆြဲ noodles
နဲ႔ with, and
ဘယ္ which, where
ဘယ္လို in what way, how
အလြတ္ 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. စားပြဲထိုး  ၊ဇ*ဗြဲဒိုး၊ 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 (ပေစာက္ and ထဆင္ထူး), yet they are pronounced as voiced ones (ဗထက္ခ်ိဳက္ and ဒေထြး). 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 (–က္, –စ္, –တ္, or –ပ္). 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.

2.  ဘာ ရသလဲ။  In contrast to the final verb particle –မယ္, the final verb particle –တယ္ is used in statements that indicate present, past, or habitual action. In questions, it is reduced to သ ኋ (with the vowel pronounced as a shwa). Here, the customer is asking what is available. Since this is an ongoing, present condition, –တယ္ 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. မုန္႔ဟင္းခါး ရတယ္  As noted above, the particle –တယ္ 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 –တယ္.

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 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).

4. မုန္႔ဟင္းခါး စားမယ္။ 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."

5. အလြတ္လား၊ 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 မွာ– 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:

ထိုင္ပါဦး။  စား
စားပါဦး။  etc.
(စား ၊ လာ ၊ သြား ၊ေျပာ၊ ယူ ၊ ေပး ၊ ႐ိုက္ ၊ ထ ၊ ထိုင္)

2. ဘာ (ရ) သလဲ ዋ
(၀ယ္ ၊ ထင္ ၊ ရွိ ၊ ေရး ၊ ယူ ၊ ရ)

3. (မုန္႔ဟင္းခါး) စားမယ္။
(လက္ဖက္သုပ္ ၊ ေခါက္ဆြဲ ၊ ပန္းသီး ၊ နံျပား ၊ ငါးဟင္း ၊ မုန္႔ဟင္းခါး)

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.
Lesson 12: I’ve Come to Order Water

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

Dialogue [1201.mp3]

1. Store employee: What would you like, young man?
2. ကိုထြန္း   I’ve come to order water.
3. Store employee: Where should I have it delivered?
4. ကိုထြန္း   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. ကိုထြန္း   Yes, that’s fine.

Translation

1. Store employee: What would you like, young man?
2. ကိုထြန္း   I’ve come to order water.
3. Store employee: Where should I have it delivered?
4. ကိုထြန္း   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. ကိုထြန္း   Yes, that’s fine.
Vocabulary

ကိစၥ  ၊ကိတ္စ၊  issue, matter, problem
–တို႔    a plural marker for people or things
အတြက္   on behalf of, for
ပံ  container, bottle, jar, can
ရံ–    to order something, to put in an order
အထိ   until, to
ဘယ္အထိ  where to?
လိုက္–   to follow
ပို႔–    to send
လိုက္ပို႔–   to accompany someone; to deliver something
ကံ့ေကာ္ ၊ဂန္႔ေဂၚ၊ a hardwood tree with white flowers
သိ–    to know
အခု    now
ျပန္လာ–   to come back, return
ေနာက္   after; later, next
–မွ    only once . . .
ခိုင္း–   to order someone to do something

Notes

1. ကိစၥ The word ကိစၥ 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.

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

2. ကြၽန္ေတာ္တို႔ The suffix –တို႔ 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), –ေတြ, appears more frequently.

အိမ္အတြက္ The post-position အတြက္, meaning “for, on behalf of,” can follow any noun or pronoun. It raises the tone of a low-tone pronoun, so one says သူ႔အတြက္, and of ဘယ္သူ, 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 အိမ္ here.

ေရဘူး လာမွာတာပါ The subject of the verb (ကြၽန္ေတာ္) is only implied, and the verb (မွာ–) is put in its nominalized form (မွာတာ). 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 မွာ–, 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 မွာ– in his response.
Lesson 12: I’ve Come to Order Water

3. ဘယ္အထိ  The more common phrase for asking “Where (to)”? is တွေ့ရိုက်စည်. 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:

- ဘယ္အထိ လိုက္ပို႔ရမလဲ။ Where should I deliver it?
- ဘယ္ႏွနာရီအထိ ေစာင့္ရမလဲ။ Till what time will I have to wait?

The verb ေပး– 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 –ေပး 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. ကံ့ေကာ္တိုက္  (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 ဝန္. English “five” becomes ဖိုက္. 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. သိပီ။  The use of ၿပိ here underlines the fact that the speaker is already familiar with the address the customer has just named.

အခုေတာ့ The addition of –ေတာ့ 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.

ပိုမည့္သူ The form တဲ့ was encountered in Lesson 4, when ကိုသန္႔ said ပူတဲ့ဒဏ္ မခံႏိုင္္ဘူး. Here, the equivalent form derived from –မယ္ appears, identifying the person (သူ) who will deliver (ပိုမည့္) 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 –မယ္ 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.

ျပန္မလာေသးလို႔  The expression ျပန္– “to return” puts two verbs together, with ျပန္– in this case acting as an auxiliary that precedes the main verb. When negated, such a construction puts မ between ျပန္– and the main verb, as here.

ျပန္မလာေသးလို႔  The negative construction မ . . . ဘူး drops ဘူး whenever it occurs in a dependent clause. In this case, a dependent clause ending in –လို႔ provides the reason for what the speaker said just before.

ေနာက္မွ The particle –မွ can mean “only once X happens.” Here, after ေနာက္, it means “later,” with the implicit meaning, “only once he has returned.”

ပို႔ခိုင္းလိုက္မယ္ ရလား  The verb ခိုင္း– 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

1. Dictation

1. Dictation

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.

1. ဝင်လိုက်ရလား။
2. အောက်လိုက်ပါ။
3. ဒါမျိုးသစ် ဆိုတာလား။
4. စာအုပ်လာမွာတာပါ။
5. ဘယ်သူကြိုက်လာပါနှင့် ပြောပြပါ။
6. နောက်မှာ ဆုံးသောက်မယ်။
7. လှုပ်ရာခိုင်းများ ရွေးချယ်ပါ။
8. ပူလား၊ နှိုပ်လား မသိဘူး။
9. ရွေးမွ ကြိုက်မယ်။
10. သူတို့နဲ့ကြိုက်ဖူးသလား။
11. တစ်လေးခါလုပ်တယ်။
12. ဘယ်လိုမရှိသလဲး။
13. တစ်လေးခြေလာက် ရှိၿပီ။
14. အောက်ရောင်လား၊ အစိမ်းရောင်လား။
15. မော်လိုက်ဘူး။
Lesson 23: Lunch Break

Dialogue [2301.mp3]

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.

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

ထပ္– to repeat, do over again
နာရီ hour; clock
တစ္နာရီ ဥဒီနာရီ one o’clock
ခြဲ– to split
တစ္နာရီခြဲ one-thirty
တစ္နာရီခြဲမွာ at one-thirty
–တဲ့ a quotative particle, “[they] said”
႐ုံး office
ဖြင့္– to open
ျမန္– to be quick
အျမန္ quickly

Notes

1. ျပန္– 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.
2. ေမ  This usage is a little formal, more formal than ေမေမ, 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.
3. အဆင္ေျပပါတယ္။ 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.)
4. ထပ္– 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, ထပ္္ မလုပ္ခ်င္ဘူး and ထပ္မေျပာနဲ႔.
5. ဘယ္ႏွနာရီ 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.
6. ဘယ္အခ်ိန္ This phrase asks specifically for a time of day, whereas the phrase ဘယ္ႏွနာရီ can be answered with a specific time or with reference to a more general part of the day.
“Then,” “next,” or “after that”: this is another common phrase used when recounting events in a series.

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

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

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

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

The addition of 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 , meaning “to strike.”

The half hour is expressed simply, as well:

using the verb , meaning “to split.”

Minutes after the hour are expressed as follows:

or, especially in younger people’s speech,  or

As in other contexts, multiples of ten are tricky:

or

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

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

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

derived from and , 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:
Drills

Substitution drills [2302.mp3]

1. ထပ္(သြား)ရမယ္။ (လုပ္ ၊ ျဖည့္ ၊ သြားႀကိဳ ၊ ယူသြား ၊ ကူး ၊ စာေရး)
2. (ပလိပဆင္) ῥို (မြန္ခဲ့ပါ) တဲ့။ (ယူလာမယ္ ၊ ေသခ်ာတယ္ ၊ ေမာတယ္ ၊ ျမင့္တယ္ ေနာ္ ၊ လာမွာပါ ၊ အဖြား ၊ ျပန္ယူလိုက္)
3. (ထိုင္းသြားတာ) အဆင္ေျပပါတယ္။ (စက္ဘီး ၊ ျပင္တာ ၊ နာရီဝယ္တာ ၊ စာအုပ္ ၊ ေဈ ၊ ေဈသြားဝယ္တာ ၊ စာေမးပြဲ ၊ အလုပ္လုပ္တာ ၊ ထိုင္းသြားတာ)

Response drills [2303.mp3]

1. Example:
   ၊ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔) ၊ ၊ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔) ၊ ၊ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔) ၊ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၁. ႐ုံးက မဖြင့္ဘူး။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၂. ဝယ္လို႔ မရဘူး။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၃. မလိုက္ႏိုင္ဘူ:။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၄. မဆိုခ်င္ဘူး။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၅. မေျပးခ်င္ဘူး။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၆. ဖြင့္လို႔မရဘူး။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)

2. Example:
   ၊ ျပဇာတ္က ကိုးနာရီ စမယ္။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၁။ ျပဇာတ္က ကိုးနာရီ စမွာလဲ။
   ၂။ သူ႔မိတ္ေဆြ သုံးနာရီမတ္တင္း လာမယ္။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၃။ အေမ တစ္နာရီေလာက္ ဖုန္းဆက္မယ္။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၄။ ေန႔လည္စာ ဆယ့္ႏွစ္နာရီ စားမယ္။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔)
   ၅။ ေနာက္ဆယ္မိနစ္ ၿပီးရင္ ထြက္မယ္။ (ဗားျဖစ္လို႔
3. ကြည့်ရှု့ရှင်းနောင် ကြည့်ရှင်း အသုံးပြုနိုင်သည်။

၁. ကြည့်ရှု့ရှင်းနောင် ကြည့်ရှင်း အသုံးပြုနိုင်သည်။ (နည်းနည်းေလာလိုသည်)

၂. နည်းနည်းေလာလိုသည် အသုံးပြုနိုင်သည်။ (ပိုက်ဆံ ယူမလာသည်)

၃. နည်းနည်းေလာလိုသည် ပိုက်ဆံ ယူမလာသည် (႐ုံးပိတ်ရကြောင်း)

၄. ႐ုံးပိတ်ရကြောင်း ပိုက်ဆံယူမလာသည်။ (ဗျင်လာ မရသည်)

၅. ႐ုံးပိတ်ရကြောင်း ဗျင်လာ မရသည် (ဝန်ထမ်းဗျင်လာ)

၆. ႐ုံးပိတ်ရကြောင်း ဝန်ထမ်းဗျင်လာ ဗျင်လာ မရသည်
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: ခုနစ္ (pronounced ၊ခြန္ႏွစ္၊) and ခြန္. When it stands in a phrase (such as when speaking of seven objects), “seven” is said ခုနစ္. 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 ခြန္. So, for example,

- ခုနစ္ နာရီ 7 o'clock
- ခုနစ္ခု 7 objects

but

- ငါး ေျခာက္ ခြန္ ရွစ္ 5, 6, 7, 8
- စာမ်က္ႏွာ နံပါတ္ ႏွစ္ဆယ့္ခြန္ 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>၀ တဆယ္</th>
<th>၂၀ ႏွစ္ဆယ္</th>
<th>၅၀ ငါးဆယ္</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>၁၁ ဆယ့္တစ္</th>
<th>၂၁ ႏွစ္ဆယ့တစ္</th>
<th>၇၇ ခုနစ္ဆယ့္ခြန္</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Appendix II: On Numbers [各界.mp3]
### Comprehensive Vocabulary List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>က-</td>
<td>to dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–က</td>
<td>topic marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ</td>
<td>ကြပါ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ– ကြပါ</td>
<td>to play (a game)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ– ကြပါ</td>
<td>a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–က</td>
<td>except for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>car, bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to help, assist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to overdo, to go beyond accepted limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>karma, store of merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to be lucky, fortunate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>soapstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>a hardwood tree with white flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–က</td>
<td>as for . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>term of direct address for one's older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>sticky rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to roast, grill, barbecue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–က</td>
<td>counter for fish and animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>female animal; intimate term of address for a close female friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to be good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ– ကြပါ</td>
<td>the sky, the heavens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>to hold something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ– ကြပါ</td>
<td>issue, matter, problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြပါ–</td>
<td>pond, tank</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ကန္ေတာ္ႀကီး royal lake
ကန္ႆောင္ to kick
ကုန္ to be used up; to end
ကုန္း bent, curved, arched; hunchbacked
ကိုယ္ torso; body
ကိုယ္တိုင္ in person, oneself
က် to fall; to cost
က်ီး a crow
က်ဴရွင္ tutoring
ေက်နပ္ to be satisfied
ေက်းဇူး gratitude, thanks
ေက်ာ္ to fry
ေက်ာင္း school
ေက်ာင္း ဆင္း to come home from school
ေက်ာင္းပ်င္း to be lazy about schoolwork
ေက်ာင္းလစ္ to skip school
ေက်ာင္းသားေရးရာ student affairs
က် to remain, to be left
က်ပ္ kyat, basic unit of Burmese currency
က်ာ္ to be tight; difficult
က်ာ္ to be wide; to be loud
–ၾက plural marker for verbs
ၾကာ to last a while
ၾကာသပေတးေန႔ Thursday
ၾကား to hear
ႀကိဳ to meet someone on their arrival
ႀကိဳးစား to make an effort, to strive
ႀကိမ္ a time, instance
ေၾက္း a bet, wager
ေၾကးဗ်းေတာင္ေတာင္ to be disoriented, confused, discombobulated
ၾက္ to look
ၾကည့္ to try
–ႀကိမ္ a time, instance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myanmar Word</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ကြာ  ၊ဂြါ</td>
<td>appellative used among intimates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဗြါ</td>
<td>to turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ေကြ႕</td>
<td>to bend, to curl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ေကြး</td>
<td>to be broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြဲ</td>
<td>an exclamation of impatience, derived from the English word &quot;coil&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ေကြၽး</td>
<td>to serve someone food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြန္ျပဴတာ</td>
<td>computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြၽတ္</td>
<td>to fall off, to fall out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြၽန္</td>
<td>slave, bondsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြၽန္ေတာ္  ၊ကြၽန္ေဒၚ</td>
<td>I (male speaker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြၽန္မ</td>
<td>I (female speaker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြၽန္</td>
<td>island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြၽမ္းက်င္  ၊ကြၽန္ေဂ်င္</td>
<td>to be accomplished at something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ခ</td>
<td>fee, cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ခ ေကြး ခ</td>
<td>a moment, a short while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ခဏ  ၊ခ*န</td>
<td>a trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ခရီး  ၊ခ*ရီး</td>
<td>travel plans, itinerary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ခရမ္းသီး  ၊ခ*ယန္း</td>
<td>aubergine, eggplant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ခ</td>
<td>bitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ပ</td>
<td>item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဗ်ာင်ည်း</td>
<td>seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဗ်ာင်း</td>
<td>pencil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ရ္–</td>
<td>particle indicating action done before moving to another location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အခ</td>
<td>to call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>း–</td>
<td>to suffer something, to undergo something; to put up with something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စ–</td>
<td>to steal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီးေခါ့</td>
<td>to run away together, to elope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီ–</td>
<td>to be difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဗ်ာင်ည်း</td>
<td>noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စ–</td>
<td>to be on close terms with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီး</td>
<td>polite apppellative (used by male speakers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီး</td>
<td>you (polite, used by male speakers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီး</td>
<td>roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဆိုး  ၊ဆိုး</td>
<td>head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီးေခါ့–</td>
<td>to evade responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီးး–</td>
<td>to tell someone to do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီး–</td>
<td>to cut; scratch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>စီ</td>
<td>to drop something; to fight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ခ်လန္ a traffic ticket; a receipt for any official payment
( for a bird or animal) to carry off
to be smooth; attractive
to be sweet
to cook
the Chin Hills
counter for long, thin objects
a cough
to cough
to be sour
exclusively, only
to hang up, to hook something to something
to make an appointment
counter for late items
to sew
a bush
to be dented, concave
a dog
(with reference to numbers) and a half
to split, to separate
phlegm, sputum
cup, bowl
permission, leave
ο

 to pay attention, watch out for
grade, school class
guitar
gate
cabbage
ginger
wheat

I (familiar, used with intimates and subordinates)
we (familiar)
fish
five
to hold in the mouth
to be small, little
to feel tired of; to feel bored
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>စက္</th>
<th>husband (formal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>လင္ ကျောင်း</td>
<td>husband and wife (formal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to be bright; clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္မယား</td>
<td>gender, sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ႏွင့္မယား</td>
<td>to throw liquid on something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္မယား</td>
<td>license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္းျမယား</td>
<td>a pick-up truck fitted out as a bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္း–</td>
<td>to slip away; to be absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လည္–</td>
<td>to visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လည္ဘာ</td>
<td>also, too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လည္–</td>
<td>to be startled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္</td>
<td>turtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>counter for anything rolled up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to roll something up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ဆီ</td>
<td>address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လဲ–</td>
<td>to do, to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္</td>
<td>road, street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျမယား</td>
<td>to lose one's way, to get lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျမယား</td>
<td>to take a walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to be twisted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျမယား</td>
<td>to lie, deceive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျ–</td>
<td>probably, possibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to be round, rotund; a counter for large, round objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျမယား</td>
<td>separate, free-standing, self-contained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျမယား</td>
<td>freestanding building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျ–</td>
<td>completely, entirely, (in negative expressions) not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျ–</td>
<td>middle, mid-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျ–</td>
<td>to exceed, go beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္ျမယား</td>
<td>last, this past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လဲ–</td>
<td>exceedingly, excessively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to be easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to carry something slung over the shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>a shoulder bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to be pretty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to donate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to diminish; to be slack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to lower (a price), to reduce something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to apply for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to V irresponsibly, indiscriminately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>လင္–</td>
<td>to be plump; to be sated with food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြက်ကျောင်း</td>
<td>coconut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ကြက်ကျောင်းကျောင်း</td>
<td>coconut milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အုန္း</td>
<td>to enroll; to entrust, turn something over, turn something in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အုန္းႏို႔</td>
<td>to sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အပ္–</td>
<td>to lose sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အပ္များ–</td>
<td>counter for books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အပ္စု</td>
<td>group, bloc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အိမ္</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အိမ္သာ</td>
<td>toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အိမ္သား</td>
<td>husband (formal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အိမ္စာ</td>
<td>homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အိမ္ေဖာ္  ኁာ့အိမ္ေဗာ္၊</td>
<td>a maid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဦး  ኁာ့အုန္း</td>
<td>polite particle urging another person’s action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>