

## A Morphological Analysis of Myanmar Modifiers

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### Abstract

This paper specifically studies the systems of Myanmar modifiers focusing on morphological theories. This analytical study is based on the morphological level. The significant feature of the Myanmar language is that it is a tonal language. Moreover it is a type of monosyllabic and agglutinative language which has a syntactic structure of a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) pattern. Morphology is a branch of grammar and it deals with the internal structure of the potential complex words of a language. Morphology in Myanmar is primarily the system of derivation and affixation. This paper mainly focuses on the derivational system. The aim of this paper is to analyse the modifiers on the basis of their structures and to classify the systems of the Myanmar modifiers focusing on the morphological theories. In this paper, the data were collected from colloquial Myanmar and the Myanmar Dictionary. Most of the modifiers in Myanmar have figurative power so that they can make a speaker's feeling more meaningful and at the same time, they can give imply meaning. Four modifier patterns; rhyme, chime, zero substitution and substitution, are mainly analyzed in this paper. Moreover, sub-patterns based on the derivational morphology and compounding which is a favourite way of coining new technical vocabulary are also categorized. Derivational process generally acts on verbs, turning them into nouns or noun-like expressions that can often function as either nominal or adverbials. In this study, it can be found that verbs are turned into adverbs and can function as adverbials. In compounding, some compounds cannot be substituted (zero substitution) with other words in a certain position, i.e. in A+B pattern, neither A nor B is substituted with C as in A+C or C+B. So it can be found that agglutination is very prominent in such compound processes generally on noun+verb compounds, which can function as adverbials. In addition, it is significant that in some derivations and compound words in Myanmar, rhyming and chiming are intermeshed and have strong agglutinative type that others cannot be substituted between them. In this paper, collective data and findings are illustrated with explanations. This study may be of some help to the Myanmar language teachers in teaching Myanmar as a foreign language. It can also help the foreign students studying the Myanmar language.

## **Introduction**

Morphology in Myanmar is primarily derivational morphology and compounding.(Julian K. Wheatley 2009). The process or result of forming a new word by adding an affix to a root is called derivation. Derivation can be said by means of affixation and reduplication. Compounding is a process or result of forming a new word by compounding the more than one free morpheme. There is also need to distinguish between the process of forming compound verbs and complex verbs in Myanmar. To produce adverbs by affixation, it is not much but adding the meaningless word (sometimes, rhyme and chime are intermeshed) like to the root is more common in forming a new adverb. Producing adverbs by means of reduplication is mostly found in Myanmar. Both full reduplication and partial reduplication are common in forming the derivative adverbs in Myanmar. Productivity is important in forming a new word. Aronoff (1976) expressed that ‘ Morphological productivity is one of the central mysteries of word-formation.’ Naturally, a normal speaker has ability to create and generate new words or new vocabularies. In addition, language productivity can help language creativity. When analyzing the morphological process of modifiers in Myanmar, the productivity in morphology is therefore needed to detect.

## **Literature Review**

The morphology of a language deals primarily with the internal structure of the potential complex words of a language. They are morphological structure of the language. (Mark Aronoff and Frank Anshen (2001),‘Morphology and lexicon: Lexicalization and Productivity’ from ‘*The Handbook of Morphology*’). In the Myanmar language, there are a lot to be analysed. Francis Katamba (1993) stated that the more general a word-formation process is, the more productive it will be assumed to be. Tun Myint,U (1995) said that in Myanmar, in some words, any other morphemes or affixes cannot be inserted within these words because there is internal stability. Moreover, in some words, it cannot be inserted any morphemes or affixes within these words but also cannot be changed the order of morphemes. In Myanmar, when more than two verbs are combined, it becomes a compound noun (Khin Aye: *The New Light of Myanmar*, 2019). Moreover, Aronoff (1976) expressed that ‘ Morphological productivity is one of the central mysteries of word-formation.’

## **Method**

This paper specifically studies the systems of Myanmar modifiers focusing on morphological theories. This analytical study is based on the morphological level. This paper mainly focuses on the derivational system. The aim of this paper is to analyse the modifiers on the basis of their structures and to classify the systems of the Myanmar modifiers focusing on the morphological theories. In this paper, the data were collected from colloquial Myanmar and the Myanmar Dictionary. In this paper, collective data and findings are illustrated with explanations. Descriptive method is used to analyse the modifiers on the basis of their structures and to classify them.

## **Data Analysis**

Firstly the data were mainly collected from the Myanmar Dictionary but not all the modifiers were not shown in this discussion section, just the examples were collected and described. Then the data were analysed according to their functions and process with focusing on the morphological theories. Several morphemes or words were divided into their component parts, i.e. roots, affixes, reduplicated parts. In affixation, items were identified and represented grammatical function and meaning. Moreover, another morphological process in Myanmar, which is called reduplication system, was also described to analyse the modifiers.

Reduplication which means duplication of all part of the root was mostly found than affixation . In this paper full reduplication which is the repetition of the entire word and partial reduplication which copies the part of the word were also discussed.

Another morphological process in Myanmar, compounding, the combination of lexical items which are nouns, adjectives, or verbs also adverbs, were also analysed. This process produced a large number of words in Myanmar language. All the discussions on analyzing data are categorized section by section.

## **Zero substitution**

In Myanmar, generally, derivational processes act on verbs. These verbs are turned into nouns or noun-like expressions that can often function as their nominals or adverbials (Julian K. Wheatley 2009). The invention of verb is expanded through compounding or through the lexicalisation of verb+ complement constructions, in that situation; verbs retain most of the

syntactic properties of phrases. In contrast, adverbials in Myanmar are almost always derived (Julian K. Wheatley 2009).

In compounding, some compounds cannot be substituted (zero substitution) with other words in a certain position, i.e. in A+B pattern, neither A nor B is substituted with C as in A+C or C+B. So it can be found that agglutination is very prominent in such compound processes generally on noun+verb compounds, which can function as adverbials,

e.g. -s<sup>h</sup>ikã (blind elephant)+ tõtò (go into the forest) meaning carelessly. In this example, -s<sup>h</sup> or kã or tõt or tõt cannot be substituted or change the place.

Another example is that ú+mə(never)+kwè(breaking egg)+θaɪʔ+mə(never)+pjεʔ (destroyed nest), meaning in unity. Some compound verbs (noun + verb ) which mean that two things happen at the same time, cannot also be substituted with other nouns or verbs to these compounds,

e.g.jã +poũ (heap of gun powder)+mi:+tçá (fired), meaning very angrily.

Adverbs are formed through complex verbs which have contradict meaning.

çétò(move front) + nauʔ-ŋĩ (move back), means to and fro

Sometimes, the forming of adverbs in Myanmar is complex.

ə+çεʔ+tə+kwè+ə+tçò+nè which means shamefully

## **Substitution**

It can be found that agglutination is very prominent in such compound processes generally on noun+verb compounds, which can function as adverbials. In some adverbs, either N or V can be substituted with other N or V. But V can be substituted with other V which has similar meaning.

## **Section A**

Compounding is a favourite way of producing new words. In Myanmar, compound verbs are usually composed of pairs of verbs. Adverbs are also formed through these compound verbs. Some are composed of more than a pair which of each meaning is nearly synonymous.

-θā-jā(pleasant) +ŋĩ (pleasant)+pjau, in this word, the whole meaning is *gently*

## Section B

A noun+ verb compound verb is another way of producing new words. In some verbs, the meaning of two root words (noun and verb) is nearly synonymous. Adverbs are also formed by reduplicating the verb root of these compound verbs and adding to the noun root.

əçĩ (alive) +laʔlaʔ (freshly), the whole meaning is still alive

## Section C

Producing adverbs through a noun + adverb complex word is another way for productivity. The root word is (adverb).

əseĩ +ðeʔðeʔ , this word ðeʔ ðeʔ means only, the whole word means very new for someone

## Section D

As it is earlier said that compounding is a favourite way of producing new words. In Myanmar, compound verbs are usually composed of pairs of verbs. Adverbs are also formed through these compound verbs. Some are composed of more than a pair which of each meaning is related.

lūlāk<sup>h</sup>auʔ-pjã, in this word, the word, lūlā means move (up) and k<sup>h</sup>auʔ-pja means move back , the whole meaning is move up and down.

## Reduplication

### Section A

One of the functions of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar is to subordinate verbs. Manner adverbials are formed through complete reduplication of stative verbs (Julian K. Wheatley 2009). In some cases, rhyming is intermeshed and in some cases, there is chiming.

twèt<sup>wè</sup> + tət<sup>è</sup>, in this word, the word, twèt<sup>è</sup> means think, the whole meaning is *think deeply*.

lēlē + wēwē, the word, lēwē means sharp and the whole meaning is also sharp. Rhyme is composed.

## Section B

Another functions of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar is to verbs. Manner adverbials are formed through partial reduplication of verbs. In some cases, chime is intermeshed, e.g.

phjūjōjō, in this word, the word phjū means white and jō means not good condition, the whole meaning is faint

ɕɛʔjā jā, in this word, the word ɕɛʔ means ashamed and jā means do carelessly, the whole meaning is behave widely cause of shame

## Section C

Other functions of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar is to verbs which are semantically matched. Adverbials are formed through complete reduplication of verbs. In some cases, rhyme or chime is intermeshed.

pjòpjò + pjɛʔpjɛʔ, in this word, pjòpjɛʔ means brightly, the whole meaning is brightly or shine. Rhyme and chime are intermeshed.

jʊʔjʊʔ + tɕhūtɕhū, in this word, jʊʔ and tɕhū means outstanding, the whole meaning is bravely. Rhyme and chime are intermeshed.

-hā-hā-pā-pā, in this word, -hā and -pā means smart, the whole meaning is smartly. Rhyme and chime are intermeshed.

## Section D

Manner adverbials are formed through reduplication of the root. The meaning is only on the root. The additional part is supports the root to be more meaningful. It is another function of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar.

ŋā ŋā tɛʔ, in this word, the root ŋā means *eager to do something*, after the process, it means eagerly/ willingly

## Section E

In the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, a word is added to the root. Then adverbials are formed through complete reduplication of a complex verb. The meaning is only on the monosyllabic root verb.

pūṅṅā+pūṅṅā, the root pū means worry, after adding ṅṅā and complete reduplication is completed, it means complainingly.

## Section F

In the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, an affix may be added between a noun+verb compound verb. Then adverbials are formed through complete reduplication of a verb. The meaning is only on the monosyllabic root verb. This process shows the progress of action verbs.

lētəshā'shā', in this word, lē means neck and shā' means stretch, after adding ə between them, the whole meaning is eagerly.

## Section G

In this productive derivational process, first, prefixation of verbs by the nominalization prefix /ə/ creates action nominals to both of the synonymous words. After that the roots of action nominals are reduplicated.

əkʷəkʷè +əpjàpjà , in this word əkʷè means separate and əpjà means vary, and the whole word means *distinctly*

## Affixation

### Section A

In the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, same prefix is added to the words but one of the words is meaningless. The meaning is only on the monosyllabic root. Without the other one, there may be less melodious meaning.

pəjǎ +pədā, in this word, the root word jǎ means *without care*, then after the process, it means *do carelessly*

məloũ +mələ̀, in this word, the root word *loũ* means *save*, after the process, it means *(save)with a guilty conscience*

## Section B

Adverbs are frequently formed by the addition of affix to both parts of a variety of minor syllable which are nearly synonymous. In some adverbs, chime is intermeshed. It is another function of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar.

təmé +təmjò , in this word, mé mjò means unconscious, when adding *tə* , it means (unconscious/ forget for a longtime)very long time. In this example, chime is used.

mələ̄ + məwē, in this word, lē wē means *sharp* but when adding *mə* it means *not sharply*

ə-lō̄ + ətçù, in this word, -lō̄ tçu means *extreme*, when adding *ə* , it means *extremely*

## Section C

In the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, the different prefix is added to the words which are nearly synonymous.

əpū +təpjĩ, in this word *pū pjĩ* means hot, the whole meaning is *rush/urgently*

In this process, the synonymous compound verbs are joined together to form adverbs. For example, koū and gã mean empty/ great effort (the addition of *jē* to the both part of a synonymous compound verbs), the word *jēkoũ+jēgã* means *with great effort* and sa? and -laũ mean *because of heat* (the addition of *pū* to the both part of a synonymous compound verbs ),the word *pūsa?+pū-laũ* means feeling hot, excited.

## Section D

In the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, different prefixes are added to the root and to the rhyme and chime syllable. For example, the word *pwĩ* means open, in the word

məpwĩ +təpwĩ, the meaning is *(mumble) in the vague manner*, and in the adverb, mətçə: + tətçə:, tçə: means hear and the whole meaning is *whether hearing or not*

məđí + təđí, đí means know, the whole meaning is *whether conscious or unconscious*



## Section E

In the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, different affixes are added to the root and to the rhyme and chime syllable. In this case, as the chime is also intermeshed in affixes, adverbs are more melodious to say,

e.g. *pjā* means rush, in this word *pjājī +pjājā*, it means *hastily*

*pjī* means *lazy* *pjī tí + pjī twè* means *lazily*

## Section F

Adverbs are also formed by the addition of same prefixes to both parts of words which are semantically contradict. In some adverbs, chime is intermeshed. It is another function of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar.

*məçè*(not early) +*məhnàũ* (not late), meaning, *not at the same time*

*ətç<sup>h</sup>ī* (up)+*ətç<sup>h</sup>á*(down), meaning, *(argue) heatedly*

*əjīməçí*( no starting point)+ *əphà məçí* (no target point), meaning, *out of context*

## Section G

In the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, noun+ verb compound verbs are joint together to form adverbs. Sometimes, a noun+verb compound verb is joint with another noun+verb compound verb which have meaningless rhyming and chiming syllable.

*lɛʔs<sup>h</sup>ouʔ* (hold)+*lɛʔ-kaĩ* (hold), meaning, *with evidence*

*lɛʔjɛ* (brave)+*zɛʔjè*, meaning, *brashly* and *audaciously*. In this example, meaningless chiming syllable is attached.

## Affixes II

### Section A

Adverbs are also formed by the addition of same suffixes to both parts of a variety of minor syllable. It is another function of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar, e.g. *seiʔ*(mind) +*tū*(same)+*ðəbɔ*(wish)+*tū*(same), meaning having same idea or having same decision

ò+pjiʔ(neglecting the house)+ēĩ+pjiʔ (neglecting the house), meaning *neglecting one's family*

bē(left)+ -pjā (again)+jā(right)+-pjā(again), *meaning both side*

## Section B

Adverbs are also formed by the addition of same affixes to both parts of words which are semantically contradict. It is another function of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar.

tɕ<sup>h</sup>ĩ-toũ (lift up)+ tɕ<sup>h</sup>á -toũ (put down), meaning that *cannot make a decision*

mi:zātəbɛʔ(holding a fire)+ jēhmouʔtəbɛʔ (water in a cup), meaning, *not sincere*

## Section C

Adverbs are also formed by the addition of rhyming and chiming syllabic words to the root. It is another function of the productive derivational processes in Myanmar. It is also the melodious one in Myanmar adverbial forming system.

mòto+maʔtaʔ (stand), meaning, *standing*

kòlò+kālǎ (against), meaning, *against*

pjā -tā -tā +nǎ tǎ tǎ (flirt), meaning, *shamelessly*

## Findings

This paper is discussed on the both side of meaning, pattern and function. After analysing the data, four modifier patterns; rhyme, chime, zero substitution and substitution, are mainly found in this paper. Moreover, sub-patterns based on the derivational morphology and compounding which is a favourite way of coining new technical vocabulary are also categorized. Derivational process generally acts on verbs, turning them into nouns or noun-like expressions that can often function as either nominal or adverbials. In this study, it can be found that verbs are turned into adverbs and can function as adverbials. In compounding, some compounds cannot be substituted (zero substitution) with other words in a certain position, i.e. in A+B pattern, neither A nor B is substituted with C as in A+C or C+B. So it can be found that agglutination is very prominent in such compound processes generally on noun+verb compounds, which can function as adverbials. In addition, it is significant that in some derivations and compound words in Myanmar, rhyming and chiming are intermeshed

and have strong agglutinative type that others cannot be substituted between them. Another interesting finding is that in some compounds which are named zero substitution compounds, the meanings are semantically related to animals. Moreover, some affix added derivational adverbs are coincidentally contradicted with reduplicated adverbs although the meaning of the root of them is same. In addition, in some affix added adverbs, the root meaning is same before the process but pragmatic meanings after the process are different because of the different addition words (affix). It is also still needed to analyse this paper from phonological point of view because in some cases the pronunciation of the word is not the same as the written form. It is the one of the weak point in this paper. Moreover, phonological irregularities of words in the written form or morpheme are a little harder to analyse. Because of the time constraint, the pronunciation of the written form is not discussed in this paper.

## **Conclusion**

It can be found that most of the modifiers in Myanmar have figurative power so that they can make a speaker's feeling more meaningful and at the same time, they can give the implied meaning. In this study, it can be found that verbs are turned into adverbs and can function as adverbials. In compounding, some compounds cannot be substituted (zero substitution) with other words in a certain position. So it can be found that agglutination is very prominent in such compound processes generally on noun+verb compounds, which can function as adverbials. In addition, it is significant that in some derivations and compound words in Myanmar, rhyming and chiming are intermeshed and have strong agglutinative type that others cannot be substituted between them. In this paper, collective data and findings are illustrated with explanations. There may be some different point of view from the linguists who have already done this field. It is because of the weak point of the author in focussing on previous works of other linguists and morphological theories. In conclusion, this study may be of some help to the Myanmar language teachers in teaching Myanmar as a foreign language. It can also help the foreign students studying the Myanmar language.

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In Myanmar

ခင်မင်၊မောင် (ခန့်ဖြူ)။ (၂၀၁၉)။ နှစ်လုံးတွဲများ(ဆောင်းပါးများ)။ The New Light of Myanmar ၊ ရန်ကုန်။

ထွန်းမြင့်(ဦး)။ (၁၉၉၅)။ ဘာသာဗေဒ ။ရန်ကုန်တက္ကသိုလ်။

မြန်မာအဘိဓာန်။(၂၀၀၈)။မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့၊ဦးစီးဌာန။ရန်ကုန်။