SYNTAX OF VERBS OF MOTION IN BURMESE

Sergey Ivanovich Lizogub
Scientific Associate
Institute of Oriental Studies
Rozhdestvenka str. 12, Moscow, USSR

The purpose of this paper is to give a description of some semantic, structural and syntactic features of verbs of motion in Burmese. The verbs belonging to this group denote change of position in space of an object that is expressed in grammatical subject (contrary to verbs of locomotion).

Below we are going to discuss the verbs and verbal compounds that can be used as verb heads of final verbal syntagma (for the definition of a verbal syntagma see [1, p. 285]). For the time being we’ll use the term verb of motion both for simple verbs and compounds.

SEMANTICS

Verbs of motion in Burmese can be subdivided into several semantic groups:

Verbs, denoting orientated movement.
These verbs describe movement, orientated in space (movement up and down, into and out of), such as te? - 'to ascend' / hsin: - 'to descend', win - 'to enter' / htwe? - 'to emerge from'; movement, orientated in regard to some point on its trajectory, like pyan - 'to return', yau? - to arrive, lai? - 'to follow'; movement, orientated in regard to a point of reference (mainly the speaker) - la - 'to come', thwa: - 'to go'.

Verbs, denoting manner of movement.
These verbs are mainly not orientated. They describe different modes of movement of certain objects - si: - 'to flow (of liquid)', cwa. myan - 'to proceed (of respected persons)', or peculiarities of movement, for example, in the water or in the air - pyan - 'to fly', myo: - 'to drift', or the mode of movement - pyei: - 'to run', hkoun - 'to jump', ngou? - 'to dive'.

Verbs, denoting movement in general:
hlou? sha: - 'to move', ywei. - 'to move from one's place'.

In this paper we used the transcription similar to that used in [1] and [2], except that the neutral vowel is marked a. The voiced consonants are underlined.
Verbs, denoting change of position without movement: \textit{yein} - 'to lean', \textit{lu}: \textit{lun} - 'to roll'.

**Structure**

We must admit that there is no clear-cut borderline between compound words and word combinations, consisting of loosely linked elements in Burmese. In case of verbal syntagma phonetic changes such as voicing and weakening usually occur in auxiliary elements but not in the verb head and thus cannot be used to determine word boundaries. The insertion of the sentence-medial particle \textit{ywei}.[\textit{writ.}] / \textit{pyi}:[\textit{colloq.}], proposed by J. Okell [3, p. 31], is optional and does not affect syntactic features of the verb syntagma. The position of the negative prefix \textit{ma}- is generally unpredictable and in many cases different speakers of Burmese are not unanimous on this point. Only in certain cases its position can affect the meaning of the phrase, for example (1)\textit{hkoun (2)ku}:- (1) to jump (2) to cross over (1+2) to jump over, negative form - (1)\textit{ma (2)hkoun (3)ku}: (1) neg. (2) to jump (3) to cross over (1+2+3) not to jump over, but (1)\textit{hkoun (2)ma (3)ku}:- (1+2+3) to jump but not cross over.

From now on we will call a sequence of verbal elements a verbal complex if it denotes one action and a verbal chain in case of two or more successive actions. Both verbal complexes and verbal chains can function as verb head of the verbal syntagma, but syntactically verbal complexes constitute one unit and verbal chain - several.

**Verbal complexes**

We find the following types of verbal complexes:

a) complexes consisting of synonymous elements, such as (1)\textit{hcou} (2)\textit{kwey}. -(1) to turn (2) to turn, to bend, (1)\textit{hsai}? (2)\textit{yau}? -(1) to arrive (2) to arrive, (1)\textit{hpya}? (2)\textit{than}: (3)\textit{ku}:- (1) to cross (2) to cross (3) to cross over;

b) complexes with elements though not strictly synonymous, but still having some significant similarity of meaning, such as (1)\textit{co (2)hlwa}:- (1) to step over (2) to leap over (both elements express the idea of overcoming an obstacle), or (1)\textit{lwin. (2)myo}:- (1) to be flown away (2) to float down, to drift (both contain the idea of being moved by some natural force - water or air);

c) complexes with elements having in common only the general idea of movement, for example (1)\textit{hkoun (2)ku}:- (1) to jump (2) to cross or (1)\textit{hkoun (2)ou}? -(1) to jump (2) to cover (1+2) to jump upon (smb).
Complexes of this type usually accumulate the meanings of all their elements.

d) complexes containing an element that has no meaning at all and/or is not used independently (at least at present time), like (1) h lou?(2) sha: - (1) to move (2)??? (1+2) to move. But despite the lack of independence such an element can combine with auxiliary morphemes as if they were meaningful, for example the negative form of h lou? sha: is either ma h lou? sha: or ma h lou? ma sha:. In the second case the negative prefix is placed before the last element as well.

One of formal features of verbal syntagma is a tendency to incorporate an even number of elements - two, four or (very seldom) six and more.

These features are characteristic not only of the verbs of motion, but also of other semantic groups of verbs. But there are some particularities, which characterise only (or mainly) syntagma, containing verbs of motion.

**Orientation**

One of such features is the use of verbs of orientated movement as components of verbal complexes containing, as a rule, verbs, describing the manner of movement, as their heads.

In such complexes elements, describing the manner of movement go first, then goes the element, which orients motion in space (te? - to ascend / h sin: - to descend, w in - to enter / h t we? - to emerge from) and than - the element, which orients motion in regard to the point of reference (1 a - to come / th wa: - to go), for example -(1) py ei: (2) w in (3) l a - (1) to run (2) to enter (3) to come (1+2+3) to run into (towards the speaker) or (1) s ou n (2) h sin g: (3) th wa: - (1) to go downstream (2) to descend (3) to go (1+2+3) to go downstream (away from the speaker).

**Verbal chains**

Some verbs, primarily the verbs of orientated movement, can be used as components of verbal chains (see above) - sequences of verbs, which form one verbal syntagma but describe several successive actions. The order of components in a verbal chain corresponds to the order of actions. Components of verbal chains, unlike the elements of verbal complexes, can have their own complements as in

(1) can (2) nga: (3) my a: (4) k ou (5) tan u: (6) my ou. (7) nya. (8) ne i (9) zei: (10) th ou. - (11) th wa: (12) ya un (13) mi
(1) to remain (2) fish (3) pl. (4) dir. obj. marker (5) Tamu (6) town (7) night (8) sun (7+8) late afternoon (9) market (10) dir. obj. marker (11) to go (12) to sell (13) fut.

‘(They will) go and sell the remaining fish to the evening market of Tamu’ [writ.].

In the example above the verb thwa: ‘to go’, being a component of a verbal chain, has a direction-complement tamu: myou. nya. neizi: thou. ‘to the evening market of Tamu’ and the verb yaun ‘to sell’ - has a direct object can nga: mya: kou ‘remaining fish’.

In some cases verbal chains are used idiomatically, mainly the chains containing the verbs win ‘to enter’, lai? ‘to follow’ and pyan ‘to return’ at the beginning of the chain. The verb win in combination with the verbs of speech means ‘to intervene’ as in (1) win (2) pyo: - (1) to enter (2) to say - ‘to intervene in somebody’s speech saying...’. The verb lai? ‘to follow’ can mean ‘to repeat somebody’s action’, for example (1) lai? (2) pyo: - (1) to follow (2) to say ‘to repeat somebody’s words saying...’. The verb pyan can precede practically any verb and means - ‘to repeat one’s own action’ as in (1) pyan (2) pyo: - ‘to repeat one’s own words, saying...’. In such idiomatic expressions only the second component can preserve its complement and the whole combination is undistinguishable from a verbal complex.

SYNTAX

Below we are going to deal with the elementary syntactic constructions (ESC’s), containing verbs of motion. An elementary syntactic construction is an utterance, all components of which are essential for its correct interpretation when such a construction is given outside of context. The elementary syntactic construction contains no optional elements [see 4,p.113].

The ESC’s discussed are composed of:

Subject (S), marked with a subject marker (thi [writ.] / ha [colloq.] or zero marker). The subject of the ESC’s concerned denotes a person or a thing that is moving or changing his/its position in space.

Predicate (V), being a verb or a verbal complex, in a sentence-final position.

Complements, such as: