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**Guidelines for description of mainland Southeast Asian languages**

Each author who contributed to the volume was provided with a suggested plan covering the following comprehensive overview of the linguistic features which form the basis for considering Mainland South-East Asia to be a linguistic area. From the outset, we hoped that chapters with similarly organised content would make for better comparison between languages and allow common linguistic features to appear more prominently.

Enfield (2005) is a useful summary of the linguistic features of the Mainland Sout-East Asian linguistic area, as is Matisoff (1986b).

Much of the data upon which Matisoff and Enfield base their accounts was presented in an earlier comparative typological survey by Eugénie Henderson (1965) which catalogues a wide range of linguistic features in 59 languages including languages of mainland Southeast Asia and further afield in the region. Henderson includes all the languages represented in this volume, with the exception Min Chinese and Khumi, though she does include other Chinese languages (Cantonese, Mandarin and Hakka) and other Chin languages (Tiddim and Lushai).

Henderson notes: ‘In the course of investigations extending over many years into the present phonological and grammatical structure of a variety of languages in the South East Asian mainland, my attention has, however, inescapably been drawn to a number of features which suggest themselves as characteristic of the area.’

## 1 Phonology

The common phonological features observed in languages of the MSEA area are complex vowel systems (such as diphthongs, a large number of contrasting vowel qualities, contrastive vowel length), tone or register (or mixed) systems,

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particular syllabification patterns (restricted set of final consonants, restrictions on syllable initial consonant clusters, ‘minor’ and ‘major’ syllables (Henderson 1965: 401–402, Enfield 2005: 186 ff).

Henderson catalogues a number of phonological features in her typological survey, and she notes the following ways in which these shared phonological features may be correlated and associated with some grammatical functions (p. 406). She, for instance, reports correlations between pitch, phonation and the morphological use of the tone for languages such as Burmese, Southern Vietnamese and Boro (p. 412).

## 1.1 Suprasegmental phonology: tone and register

Henderson (1965) also notes correlations between the presence or absence of tone, initial and final consonant patterns, vowel quality and phonation type, all phenomena that have become well known from studies on tonogenesis<sup>1</sup>.

*“In the beginning was the Sino-Tibetan monosyllable, arrayed in its full consonantal and vocalic splendor. And the syllable was without tone and devoid of pitch. And monotony was on the face and the mora. And the Spirit of Change hovered over the segments flanking the syllabic nucleus. And Change said: ‘Let the consonant guarding the vowel to the left and the right contribute some of the phonetic features to the vowel in the name of selfless intersegmental love, even if the consonants thereby be themselves diminished and lose some of their own substance. For their decay or loss will be the sacrifice through which Tone will be brought into the worlds, that linguists in some future time may rejoice. And it was so. And the Language saw it was good, and gradually began to exploit tonal differences for distinguishing utterances [...] And the tones were fruitful and multiplied, and diffused from tongue to tongue in the Babel of Southeast Asia.” Matisoff (1973: 73)*

In many languages of the area, contrastive pitches (tone) and phonation types (register) must be examined together. For instance, in Northern Vietnamese the *hói* tone is realized with breathy phonation whereas *ngã* and *nặng* tones are re-

<sup>1</sup> The interaction of initials, syllable-types, and tones in Asian languages and within the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family has been described by Haudricourt 1961, Matisoff 1973, 1990, Bradley 1978, Brunelle & Kirby 2015 *inter alia*. To summarize, diachronic sources for lexical tones in Asian languages are essentially final and initial consonants, with some vocalic phonemes loss (Michaud 2011).

alized with creaky phonation, sometimes described as glottalization (see Do-Hurinville & Dao, this volume). The Mong Leng tone system also shows the interaction of pitch and phonation.

**Table 1:** MongLeng Tone system

Adapted from Mortensen (2004) and Mortensen (this volume)

(1) tib	[ti55]	‘to pile’	/(M)H/	very high rising
tij	[ti52]	‘older brother’	/HL/	high falling
tiv	[ti35]	‘to endure’	/MH/	(high) rising
tig	[tʰi21]	‘to turn’	/MLh/	low falling breathy
ti	[ti44]	‘close’	/M/	high-mid level, ‘chanted voice quality’
tis	[ti22]	‘wing’	/L/	low-mid level
tim	[tiʔ21]	‘because’	/MLʔ/	low falling creaky, sometimes with final stop

The Burmese tone system is another good illustration of a system which mixed tonal and phonation type feature.

**Table 2:** Description of the Burmese tone system (adapted from Bradley 1982: 160)

<i>Traditional Name</i>	<i>Pitch contour</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Phonation</i>	<i>Duration</i>
‘creaky’	high	short	creaky	less long
‘even’	low-growing	long	clear (or normal voice)	fairly long
‘heavy’	low (or middle)	long (the longer)	slightly breathy	very long
‘killed’ (with glottal constriction)	very high	very short	normal	short

## 1.2 Segmental phonemes: consonants and vowels

### 1.2.1 Consonants

We find in MSEA languages that certain patterns prevail in the inventory of initial consonants: the presence or absence of aspiration, patterns of voicing contrasts in consonants, including pre-glottalization and prenasalization, and the presence or absence of velar vs. uvular consonants. For instance, the Mon initial consonant inventory contains aspirated consonants beside plain stops, but no

phonemic voicing contrast; the implosives *d* and *b* are pronounced as fully voiced implosive or preglottalised stops.

**Table 3a:** Initial consonant in Mon  
Adapted from Jenny (this volume)

	k	kh	ŋ	
ɕ	c	ch	ɲ	hɲ
d̪	t	th	n	hn
ɓ	p	ph	m	hm
y	r	l	hl	w
hw	s	ʃ	h	ʔ

**Table 3b:** Possible clusters in Mon

ky	kr	kl	kw
khy	kh	khl	khw
py	pr	pl	
phy	phr	phl	

As for prenasalized consonants, the Mong Leng set of initial consonants includes plain and aspirated ones, contrasting also velar and uvular consonants.

**Table 4:** Mong Leng consonant onset – from Mortensen (this volume)

		labial	labial cluster	dental	dental cluster	dental	postalveolar	palatal	retroflex	velar	uvular	glottal
Oral	plain	p	pl	t	tl	ts	tʃ	c	tʂ	k	q	ʔ
	asp	p <sup>h</sup>	p <sup>h</sup> l	t <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup> l	ts <sup>h</sup>	tʃ <sup>h</sup>	c <sup>h</sup>	tʂ <sup>h</sup>	k <sup>h</sup>	q <sup>h</sup>	
prenasal	plain	<sup>n</sup> p	<sup>n</sup> pl	<sup>n</sup> t	<sup>n</sup> tl	<sup>n</sup> ts	<sup>n</sup> tʃ	<sup>n</sup> c	<sup>n</sup> tʂ	<sup>n</sup> k	<sup>n</sup> q	
	asp	<sup>n</sup> p <sup>h</sup>	<sup>n</sup> p <sup>h</sup> l	<sup>n</sup> t <sup>h</sup>	<sup>n</sup> t <sup>h</sup> l	<sup>n</sup> ts <sup>h</sup>	<sup>n</sup> tʃ <sup>h</sup>	<sup>n</sup> c <sup>h</sup>	<sup>n</sup> tʂ <sup>h</sup>	<sup>n</sup> k <sup>h</sup>	<sup>n</sup> q <sup>h</sup>	
nasal		m		n				ɲ		(ŋ)		
fricative	vless	f				s	ʃ	ç				h
	vcd						ʒ	ʝ				
lateral	vless			l								
	vcd			l								

In general, we find highly constrained patterns of initial consonant clusters. In Mon (Table 3b), initial clusters are allowed only with a velar or labial stop in first position and a liquid in second position. Whereas in Pwo-Karen, the C2 inventory is reduced to liquid consonants only (table 5).

**Table 5:** Possible combinations of C1 and C2 in Pwo-Karen – From Kato (this volume)

		C1																	
		p	θ	t	c	k	ʔ	ph	th	ch	kh	b	d	x	h	m	n	j	l
C2	w	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	l	+				+		+			+	+				+			
	r	+				+													
	j	+						+				+				+			+

Final consonants are also highly restricted and final consonant clusters are extremely rare in the area. In Pwo-Karen, only the uvular nasal /ŋ/ can only occur syllable-finally, whereas in Burmese the final consonants p, t, k are all realized as a glottal stop together with a change in the vowel quality (2) and the nasal final consonants m, n, ɲ, ŋ nasalize the vowel of the rhyme or become a homorganic consonant (3).

## Burmese

(2)	a. tp=	b. tt=	c. tk=	d. lp=	e. lt=	f. lk=
WB	<tap>	<tat>	<tak>	<lap>	<lat>	<lak>
Transc.	taʔ	taʔ	tɛʔ	laʔ	laʔ	leʔ
	fix, attach	be skilled	go up	be vacant	be fresh	hand

(3)	ဆင်း	[s <sup>h</sup> i:n <sup>52</sup> ]	/shiN <sup>3</sup> /	to go down, descend
	ဆင်းပါ	[s <sup>h</sup> i:m <sup>52</sup> ba <sup>22</sup> ]	/shiN <sup>3</sup> Pa <sup>2</sup> /	Please go down
	ဆင်းတာ	[s <sup>h</sup> i:n <sup>52</sup> da <sup>22</sup> ]	/shiN <sup>3</sup> Ta <sup>2</sup> /	(the fact) X go/went down
	ဆင်းခဲ့	[s <sup>h</sup> i:ŋ <sup>52</sup> ge <sup>55</sup> ]	/shiN <sup>3</sup> Khɛ <sup>1</sup> /	went down (+ change of situation)

To summarize, final consonants generally form a smaller set, with an absence or a neutralization of contrasts, although Mon-Khmer languages may show a higher and unusual number of contrastive and distinctive final consonants. For instance, Kri syllables show a three-way contrast for oral sonorant finals (cf. (4)a,b,c) and distinguishes between phonetically similar checked palatal stop final [č] and post-glottalized palatal glide [jʔ] (Enfield & Diffloth 2009: 18).

## Kri (Mon-khmer Language, Laos) – from Enfield and Diffloth (2009)

(4)	Voiced	Checked	Voiceless
a.	t <sup>ə</sup> ɰ:j tail	t <sup>ə</sup> ɰ:jʔ bowl	t <sup>ə</sup> ɰ:j̥ to follow, to chase
b.	camɑ:l shiny	ʔumɑ:lʔ to hunt	dɑl̥ to bounce
c.	kauəɾ stir	kauəɾʔ embrace	taɾ̥ to run out of workspace
d.	k <sup>h</sup> q:j tree sp.	k <sup>h</sup> q:jʔ 1SG.	k <sup>h</sup> q:j̥ to escape

- e. ɸɑ:c̣ mushroom ɸɑ:j̣² salt  
 f. ʔə:c̣ go kə:j̣² head hair  
 g. hɑ:c̣ slippery hɑ:j̣² To strip

### 1.2.2 On vowel systems

In the vowel systems of MSEA languages, languages have generally large inventories of contrasting vowel qualities as in Khmer (see Haiman this volume), in some cases including back unrounded vowels [u] and contrastive vowel length – as in Thai (table 1) –, in addition to characteristic diphthongs.

Vowel contrasts may correlate with tone and register systems as in Burmese where the creaky and killed tones despite their similarities in terms of duration, pitch and phonation type, are not easily confused thanks to the vowel realization (Watkins 2000: 144 ff).

**Table 6:** Phonetic realizations of the vowels /i/ and /ɔ/ according to tone in Burmese

	low tone	high tone	creaky tone	'killed' tone
/i/	[mi: <sup>22</sup> ]	[mi: <sup>52</sup> ]	[mj̣ <sup>55</sup> ]	[mj̣ʔ]
	(Name)	'fire'	'mother'	'river'

/ɔ/	[mɔ: <sup>22</sup> ]	[mɔ: <sup>52</sup> ]	[mɔ̣ <sup>55</sup> ]	[maʊʔ]
	'look up'	'tired'	'tilt up'	'haughty'

Table 7 provides a comparison of the vowel systems of some languages in and outside the MSEA area. Thai and Burmese show a 4-way distinction in vowel height, and are part of the MSEA *Sprachbund*. Arakanese – a Burmese dialect spoken in the western part of Burma, therefore on the edge of the MSEA *Sprachbund* – has fewer vowel-height distinctions than Standard (or Central) Burmese.

Interestingly, comparing Burmese dialects with other Tibeto-Burman languages such as Central Tibetan or Meitei shows that there are fewer vowel-height distinctions in the latter languages. Thus, apart from Kham dialects which have rich vowel systems and are spoken on the edge of the MSEA area, Amdo dialects and other Tibetic dialects such as Balti (5 vowels), Sherpa (7 vowels) and Ladhaki, have generally fewer vowels. Generally speaking, the further west these languages are spoken, the fewer vowels they have.

**Table 7:** Comparison of simple vowel systems

Thai (Lg Tai-Kadai) <sup>2</sup>			Burmese (Lg TB) <sup>3</sup>			Arakanese (Lg TB west of MSEA)			Standard Tibetan (Lg TB outside MSEA) <sup>4</sup>			Meithei <sup>5</sup> (Lg TB outside MSEA)		
i	ɯ	u	i		u	i		u	i / y		u	i		u
e	ɣ	o	e		o	e		o	e/ø		o	e		o
ɛ	ə	ɔ	ɛ		ɔ		ə	ɔ	ɛ				ə	
					ə			a			a			a
	a			a										

### 1.3 Syllable structure

In general, the languages of the MSEA have monosyllabic morphemes; additionally, sesquisyllabic syllable structures – i.e. a prevocalic consonant or consonant cluster considered as a half syllable (Henderson 1952: 170, Matisoff 1973: 86)– are a characteristic feature of many languages.

Some authors define a sesquisyllable as any disyllabic word with a reduced number of contrasts in the initial syllable, while a more restrictive definition of sesquisyllables describes them as ‘one and half syllables’, comprising an initial minor syllable with a neutral vowel or a syllabic consonant. The examples in (5) are from Stieng.

Stieng (from Bon 2014: 87)

- (5) a. [gə.na:]      often reduced to      [gna:]      ‘together’  
 c. [mə.rac]      often reduced to      [mrac]      ‘chilly’  
 b. [trə.saj]      often reduced to      [təsaj]      ‘vein’  
 d. [kən.cian]      often reduced to      [ncian]      ‘ring’  
 e. [kə-ɔw]      reduced to      [k<sup>h</sup>ɔw]      ‘to show’

<sup>2</sup> From Jenny (this volume, chapter on Thai). Notice that Thai vowel system shows also a length distinction, leading to a larger set of vowels.

<sup>3</sup> From Vittrant (this volume, chapter on Burmese)

<sup>4</sup> From Tournadre (1996: 57)

<sup>5</sup> From Chelliah (1997: 21)

Many languages contrast major vs minor syllables in some way (Butler 2015); often minor syllables have greater restrictions on initial consonant clusters (Pittayaporn 2015), and may make use of a smaller subset of vowels. Henderson (1952) described Khmer as having a class of monosyllables with extended onsets which was distinct from a class of disyllables consisting of a ‘minor’ syllable followed by a major one, as shown in (6).

Khmer word structure (from Henderson 1952)

- |        |                       |                       |                 |
|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| (6) a. | simple monosyllable   | [de:k]                | ‘sleep’         |
| b.     | extended monosyllable | [p <sup>h</sup> de:k] | ‘to put to bed’ |
| c.     | minor disyllable      | [bɔn.de:k]            | ‘go to bed’     |

## 2 Morphology

### 2.1 Word structure

The generally monosyllabic morphemes of MSEA languages can rarely be extended with affixational morphology; derivational compounding prevails. One exception is the Mon-Khmer family where most languages make use of prefixes (or infixes) –although few of them are productive. Examples of Mon-Khmer affixational morphology are given in (7).

Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in the Indosphere<sup>6</sup> area have extensive suffixing as shown by Khumi sentence in (8).

- |        |  |             |        |               |
|--------|--|-------------|--------|---------------|
| (7) a. | Wa (Mon-Khmer) <sup>7</sup> : g- prefixation |             |        |               |
|        | lang   | > g-lang    | rau?   | > g-rau?      |
|        | ‘long’                                       | ‘this long’ | ‘deep’ | > ‘this deep’ |

<sup>6</sup> The labels *Indosphere* and *Sinosphere*, coined by Matisoff 1991, encapsulate the view that Tibeto-Burman languages could be divided into two types according to their grammatical features, a typological classification correlating with geography. Languages of the first type (complex morphology, extensive suffixing, polysyllabic words) are found mainly in South Asia, while languages of the second type (simpler morphology, verb serialization, prefixation, compounding, occasional onset clustering (sesquisyllabism)) are more commonly found in Mainland Southeast Asia.

<sup>7</sup> From Watkins, this volume



- b. Stiang (Mon-Khmer)<sup>8</sup>: nominalizing infix -n-  
 pu:s > p-ən-u:s cɛ:h > c-ən-ɛ:h par > p-ən-ar  
*sweep broom old old age fly' feather'*

Khumi (Tibeto-burman), from Peterson (2005 [2002])

- (8) kaay móey=loe phayloeyng=moe ang-ke-tlaw-noe-te-ba  
 1S eye=TOP ant=DEF 1/20-bite-LARGEO-NZR-EVID-EVAL

noe=piee-te

QUOT=say-EVID

“The ant bit me in the eye!” he said to her.

The following types of nominal compounding listed by Suriya (1988), are found in most languages of the area – as well as other types of compounds. Adjective compounds (for those languages that have a distinct syntactic adjective category) or verbal compounds are also common.

**Table 8:** Compounding in three Southeast Asian languages

	Stiang <sup>9</sup>	Vietnamese	Yongning Na (Mosuo) <sup>10</sup>
N-N compounds with antonyms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [mej-moəm] ‘parents’ <i>father-mother</i></li> <li>• [dəəh-ŋa:j] ‘distance’ <i>close-far</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nắng mưa ‘bad weather’ <i>sunlight-rain</i></li> <li>• may rủi ‘chance’ <i>luck – misfortune</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• zɔ33-mu33 ‘child’ <i>son-daughter</i></li> <li>• k<sup>h</sup>u31.ts<sup>h</sup>u13-lɔ31-k<sup>h</sup>ɿ13 ‘limbs’ <i>foot – hand</i></li> </ul>
N-N compounds with quasi-synonyms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [miar-srej] ‘land’ <i>field-paddy</i></li> <li>• [ʔuŋ-mbul] ‘lamp’ <i>fire- bulb</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• miệng mồm ‘be very talkative’ <i>mouth-mouth</i></li> <li>• kiểu cách ‘affected’ <i>manner-way</i></li> </ul>	
N-N compounds comprising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [təəm-pa:s] ‘coton tree’ <i>trunk-coton</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cây cam ‘orange tree’ <i>tree-orange</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• si33-dzi33 ‘tree’ <i>wood-tree</i></li> </ul>

**8** From Bon (2014)

**9** Adapted from Bon (2014)

**10** Adapted from Lidz (2010)

	Stieng <sup>11</sup>	Vietnamese	Yongning Na (Mosuo) <sup>12</sup>
genericN + specificN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [təəm-pret] 'banana tree' <i>trunk-banana</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cây táo 'apple tree' <i>tree-apple</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nə31-lu33 'soybean' <i>soy-kernel</i></li> </ul>
V-V compounds / Adj-Adj compounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [bək-sɔ̃uəc] 'kindness' <i>white-black</i></li> <li>• [rək-sa:] 'earn one's living' <i>look.for-eat</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• béo mập 'be fat' <i>greasy-fat</i></li> <li>• bao bọc 'to enclose' <i>to cover-support</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lɔ31-yi33-zu31-yi33 'to work.' <i>to labor-to work</i></li> </ul>

## 2.2 Psycho-collocations

Psycho-collocations are a semantic field in which many MSEA languages can form distinctive compounds. These compounds typically pair a part of the body with a stative verb to express an emotion or feeling. They were termed 'psycho-collocations' by Matisoff (1986a).

The following authors have described psycho-collocations in particular languages: VanBik (1998) for Hakha Lai; Oey (1990) for Malay, Jaisser (1990) for White Hmong, Vittrant (2014) for Burmese.

Kelatan Malay, from Nomoto & Soh, this volume

- (9) a. besar hati      'glad, big heart'  
*big – liver*  
b. kepala besar    'proud'  
*head – big*  
c. besar mulut     'brag'  
*big-mouth*

Cham, from Brunelle & Phu, this volume

- (10) a. prɔ̃ŋ taj        'reckless, foolhardy'  
*large-liver*  
b. prɔ̃ŋ kɔʔ        'arrogant'  
*large-head*  
c. sam taj          'good hearted'  
*beautiful-liver*

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from Bon (2014)

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from Lidz (2010)



proximate meaning ‘rather X’, and Malay example, where reduplication plays many different functions according to the stem category.

**Table 9:** Reduplication in Bahasa Indonesia, some examples adapted from Grange 2006

Reduplication function	Syntactic category reduplicated	Simple form	reduplicated form
plural of nouns	N	pokok ‘tree’	pokok pokok ‘trees’
		anak ‘child’	anak anak ‘children’
plurality of action (iterativity, continuation)	V	datang ‘to come’	datang-datang ‘to come all (of them)’ <i>[several event of coming]</i>
		ber-lompat ‘to jump’	berlompat-lompat ‘to hop’
		mem-baca ‘read’	membaca-baca ‘to leaf through’
		ber-teriak ‘shout’	berteriak-teriak ‘shout several times’
formation of adverb	V (or V <sub>adj</sub> )	cepat ‘quick’	cepat cepat ‘quickly’
		betul ‘be true’	betul-betul ‘truly, really’
intensification	V (or V <sub>adj</sub> )	sakit ‘ill’	sakit- sakit ‘very ill’

### 3 Grammar and Syntax

In this section, we introduce a few basic facts about the noun phrase (§ 3.1) and the verb phrase (§ 3.2), and then move on to basic sentence structures (§ 3.3).

#### 3.1 Nominal domain

This section sets out to describe some of the main features of noun phrases (NP) in the language studied, giving the basic structure of the NP, and how demonstratives, definiteness and number are expressed.

##### 3.1.1 Basic structure of the NP

Figure 1 shows the basic structure of the Burmese NP. The big brackets represent the available ordered slots in the NP, while the small brackets represent optional items which may be expressed within each slot. In Burmese, which is a





















Mongleng (from Mortensen, this volume)

(36) a. Koj puas moog?

*kô pùà mṛṇ*

2SG QST go

‘Are you going?’

b. Koj moog tsi moog?

*kô mṛṇ tḥi mṛṇ*

2SG go NEG go

‘Are you going?’

c. Koj moog lov?

*kô mṛṇ lṵ*

2SG go QST

‘You’re going, are you?’

MSEA languages have “a penchant for nominalizing whole sentences without embedding them into any larger unit, typically via a particle, which is also used in citation-form verbs, and which has a relative/genitive function in other constructions.” (Matisoff 1986b: 78).

In Thulung Rai, a language spoken by about a thousand people in Eastern Nepal (Lahaussais 2003), the morpheme < mu- > (and its allomorphs) is used with different functions including citation form, nominalizing and relativisation.

Thulung Rai (from Lahaussais, 2003)

(37) a. si-**mu**      b. po-**mu**

‘to die’

‘to eat’

(38) make    sinben-**mu**    hapa    much    kam bo-mu    basi

grain    plant-NMLZ    much    work    make-NMLZ    OBL

Planting seed requires a lot of work.

(39) go    khok-to-**m**                      dzam    brɔpa    bai-ra

isg    cook-1SG/3SG.PST-NMZL    rice    good    be-3SG.PST

The food I cooked was good.

Compare also the following examples. The particle ʘʘ /Tɛ²/ which marks the citation form of the verb in Burmese, has also a quotative function. See (40). As predicted by Matisoff 1986, it also appears in relative clauses, and in no-

minimized or completive clauses, with a slight different form (allomorph  $\text{oo}$  / $\text{Ta}^2$ /).

Burmese (from Vittrant, this volume, and Vittrant 2002)

- (40) အမ မသွားနိုင်ဘူး။ မသွားနဲ့တဲ့။ [A4/38]  
*ʔəma¹ mə= θmə³ naiN² =Phu³ mə= θə=³ =nɛ¹ Tɛ¹*  
 older.sister NEG go can NEG NEG go INJ.NEG QUOT  
 You (sister) cannot go (there). Don't go there, they said.

- (41) a. ကြည့်တဲ့ ဗွီဒီယိုအစွဲ။  
*ci¹ =Tɛ¹ bi²di²yo².ʔəkwe²*  
 watch REL.REALIS video-tape  
 (the) video-tape that (I) watch

- b. မညှလွန်းတဲ့သရက်သီး မစားနဲ့။  
*mɛ¹ lwoN³ =Tɛ² θəyɛ³.θə³ mə= sa³ =nɛ¹*  
 ripe be.in.excess REL.REALIS mango NEG eat INJ.  
 Don't eat mangos that are too ripe

- (42) အိမ်ထောင်ကျတာက ထောင်ကျတာထက် မဆိုးဘူးလား။  
*ʔeiN².thəN².ca¹ =Ta² =Ka¹ thəN².ca¹ =Ta² theʔ mə= sho³ =Phu³ la³*  
 be.married NMZL S. be.in.jail NMZL COMP NEG. bad NEG. QST  
 To be married isn't it worse than to be in jail?

## 4 Semantics and pragmatics

### 4.1 Common semantic domains

MSEA languages typically share conceptual frameworks relating to certain semantic domains, mentioned by Matisoff (1986b: 79).

Among them are certain terms relating to food. Broadly, food is divided into two categories:

'rice' and 'what-is-eaten-with-rice'.

- (43)
- |         |             |       |                  |         |
|---------|-------------|-------|------------------|---------|
|         | <i>Rice</i> |       | <i>With-rice</i> |         |
| Burmese | thəmiN³     | ထမင်း | hiN³             | ဟင်း    |
| Thai    | khâaw       | ข้าว  | kâp-khâaw        | กับข้าว |

Further, most languages have distinct terms for rice in various stages of its growth, production and preparation. The following table is adapted from L. Bernot (2000: 103).

**Table 11:** Words meaning rice

<b>English/French</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Yao (Hmong-Mien)</b>	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Burmese</b>	<b>Cham</b>	<b>Wa<sup>14</sup></b>
<i>Rice seedlings</i>	ma	yang	yang	pyo <sup>3</sup> ပျို <sup>3</sup>	ṛih	kla
<i>Paddy, rice in field</i>	lua	blau	dao	zəba <sup>3</sup> စပါး	ṭaj	–
<i>Unhusked rice</i>	thoc	tsu	gu	kaɔʔ ကောက်	ṭaj	ŋ <sup>h</sup> oʔ
<i>Husked rice</i>	gao	hmei	mi	s <sup>h</sup> āN <sup>2</sup> ဆန်	ṛrah/ṛjah	gaoʔ
<i>Cooked rice</i>	com	hnang	fan	thəmiN <sup>3</sup> ထမင်း	thěj.	ṛwup

Frequently, MSEA languages encode fine lexical distinctions in the following semantic domains:

- Verbs of cutting: according to the nature of the object being cut, the tool, the type of motion involved, the size of the resultant pieces, etc. (see Wa data from Watkins this volume),
- Verbs of carrying: according to the part of the body and the position used for carrying (hand, shoulder, back, arm(s), etc...)
- Verbs of drying: drying by fire, in the sun, etc.
- Verbs of pushing: according to the direction of the pushing (up, down, pressing, etc...)

**Table 12:** Words encompassing a ‘carry’ meaning (adapted from this volume<sup>15</sup>)

<b>English</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Thai</b>	<b>Malay</b>	<b>Khumi</b>	<b>Wa</b>	<b>Khmer</b>
To carry (general) or to carry along	chở		membawa		kɔm ~ s.ဂၢၤ	ហាវ haa ដឹក dək បរ baa
To carry on back		แบก bæk	menggendong	pho <sup>3</sup>	gao	ប្រាស prɑkɑw
To carry on/across shoulder	vác	หาม hâp	menanggung, menjulang	t <sup>va</sup> 1, apu <sup>1</sup>	gu, kaŋ kao	លី lii ពុន pun

<sup>14</sup> See Brunelle & Phu on Cham, Watkins on Wa, this volume

<sup>15</sup> See Do-Hurinville & Dao, Jenny, Nomoto & Soh, Peterson and Watkins’s chapters for fine grained semantics of these terms. About Khmer, see Haiman’s chapter and Khmer dictionary online <[www.sealang.net](http://www.sealang.net)>.



English	Vietnamese	Thai	Malay	Khumi	Wa	Khmer
To carry on or between hands		ถือ <i>thǔw</i>	<i>menanai</i>		<i>yaok</i>	
To carry in one hand, or hanging from one hand		หิ้ว <i>hǐw</i>	<i>menjinjing</i>	<i>vă, süng<sup>3</sup></i>		កាន់ <i>kan</i> យ៉ូ <i>yuə</i> ទ្រូ <i>tro</i>
To carry on head	<i>đội</i>	เทิน <i>thxyn</i>	<i>menjunjung</i>	<i>atläng<sup>4</sup></i>	<i>cah</i>	ទូល <i>tuul</i>
To carry with/ in arms	<i>khuân</i>	หอบ <i>hǔwp</i>		<i>t'pâng<sup>4</sup></i>		កង <i>kaan</i> ត្រកង <i>trakaan</i>
To carry close to body/astride the waist/in one's arm/on the back	<i>ẵm (bế, bồng)</i>	อุ้ม <i>ʔũm</i>	<i>mengangkat, mendukung</i>	<i>pew<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>k<sup>h</sup>wp</i>	បី <i>bəy</i> ពាំ <i>pka</i>

Certain head nouns used in compounding are found across a range of MSEA languages, e.g. ‘ankle’ < ‘foot-eye’ in couple of languages. Further examples can be seen in Matisoff (1978) and (2004).

## 4.2 Pragmatics & discourse

### 4.2.1 Final particles

SEA languages generally deploy systems of sentence-final particles as the basic means of expressing the illocutionary force of an utterance: requesting, questioning, persuading, advising, reminding, instructing..., etc. Particles are also used to convey propositional attitudes, such as the emotions of the speaker: surprise, doubt, impatience, reluctance, hesitation, etc.).

For instance, the Cham sentence in (44)a is a declarative sentence. The same propositional content appears modified by different final particles in the following sentences, changing the illocutionary force. Burmese example (45) shows final particles conveying attitudes of the speaker. Other examples may be found in Goddard (2005: 144) and Fischer (2006).

Cham, from Brunelle & Phu, this volume

- (44) a. ɔa ka naw ɔac  
           *boy name go study*  
           Ka goes to school.

- Illocutionary force:  
> interrogative
- b.     $\text{çá}$      $\text{ka}$         $\text{naw}$     $\text{pác}$      $\text{lěj}$   
*boy name go study QST*  
 Does Ka goes to school?
- b.     $\text{çá}$      $\text{ka}$         $\text{naw}$     $\text{pác}$      $\text{mě?}$   
*boy name go study IMP*  
 Go to school Ka.
- b.     $\text{çá}$      $\text{ka}$         $\text{naw}$     $\text{pác}$      $\text{dǎ!}$   
*boy name go study EMP*  
 Ka went to school, I'm afraid!
- > imperative
- > emphasizer

Burmese, adapted from Hnin Tun (2006: 40)

- (45) a.     $\text{ဒီကိုလာနော်။}$                     Come here, OK?  
 $\text{di}^2=\text{Ko}^2$     $\text{la}^2$      $\text{nɔ}^2$     *The request is softer, soliciting the addressee's agreement.*
- b.     $\text{ဒီကိုလာလေ။}$                     Please, come here. Come along!  
 $\text{di}^2=\text{Ko}^2$     $\text{la}^2$      $\text{le}^2$     *The often the order while checking that the addressee is paying attention.*
- c.     $\text{ဒီကိုလာကွာ။}$                     Come on, won't you.  
 $\text{di}^2=\text{Ko}^2$     $\text{la}^2$      $\text{Kwa}^2$    *Compelling attention, signaling some exasperation.informal*
- d.     $\text{ဒီကိုလာမင်း။}$                     Get over here!  
 $\text{di}^2=\text{Ko}^2$     $\text{la}^2$      $\text{SaN}^3$    *A sharp, abrupt comment.*
- e.     $\text{ဒီကိုလာဆို။}$                     Come (I already called you, so please do come!)  
 $\text{di}^2=\text{Ko}^2$     $\text{la}^2$      $\text{Sho}^2$     *Reiterating a request, impatiently.*  
 DEM=DIR   come DM

#### 4.2.2 Politeness

In a number of languages, complex sets of pronouns are used to encode systems of honorifics and levels of politeness. Distinct lexical items may be used to express honorific, humilific, religious or royal contexts. Goddard (2005) gives an account of these phenomena.

Table 13 shows the Thai pronominal device, that encodes either gender distinction and social status of the speech-act participants.

**Table 13:** Thai pronominal device, from Jenny, this volume

1. PERS.		2. PERS.		3. PERS.	
กู <i>kuu</i>	intimate, impolite	มีง <i>muŋ</i>	intimate, impolite	มัน <i>man</i>	objects; hum ref. contemptuous
ข้า <i>khâa</i>	intimate	เอ็ง <i>ʔeŋ</i>	intimate	เขา <i>khăw</i>	neutral
ฉัน <i>chăn</i>	informal, intimate	แก <i>kae</i>	informal, contemptuous	เธอ <i>thœ</i>	female referents
ผม <i>phôm</i>	m. speaker, neutral	เธอ <i>thœ</i>	familiar, intimate	หล่อน <i>lœwn</i>	female referents
กระผม <i>krâʔphôm</i>	m. speaker, formal	คุณ <i>khun</i>	neutral, polite	ท่าน <i>thân</i>	formal
ดิฉัน <i>dîʔchăn</i>	f. speaker, formal	ท่าน <i>thân</i>	formal		
ข้าพเจ้า <i>khâaphacâaw</i>	formal	เจ้า <i>câaw</i>	literary		
เรา <i>raw</i>	plural				

**Table 14:** Khmer pronominal device, from Haiman, this volume

1. PERS.		2. PERS.		3. PERS.	
ខ្ញុំ <i>knjom</i>	speaker is acting humble or polite	អ្នក <i>neak</i>	addressee is younger or of lower status	គាត់ <i>koat</i>	referent is respected other
អញ (anj)	speaker is arrogant or on intimate terms with addressee	ឯង <i>aeng</i>	addressee is of much lower status	វា <i>via</i>	referent is unrespected other
អាត្មា <i>atma</i>	speaker is monk	លោក <i>lo:k</i>	addressee is older or of higher status	គេ <i>kee:</i>	referent may be any other
យើង <i>jeu:ng</i>	Neutral (Plural)	នាង <i>chan</i>	speaker and addressee are both monks	ទ្រង់ <i>truang</i>	referent is royalty

## 5 Summary

In conclusion, regarding the characteristics of Southeast languages, how typical or ordinary is the language examined?

Which of the shared features are present? Which are widespread; which are not found?

In general, how does the language in question match the norms of the MSEA linguistic area?

In these guidelines, we have described a number of grammatical features shared (to some extent/various degrees) by languages of Mainland Southeast Asia. These features are the ones which have to be investigated in an areally-orientated description of a language.

The pervasiveness of the features may vary according to language contact history and other linguistic and sociolinguistics factors (see Aikhenvald 2006). The language in question may have been in close contact with one or more languages of the area, resulting in a case of language convergence (such as Cham with Vietnamese, or Karen or Mon with Burmese).

The language may be spoken on the edge of the linguistic area, display fewer areal features (see Khumi or Mosuo Na), and even be considered part of a different linguistic area (South Asia), or between two linguistic areas (as for Tani: see Post 2015).

In summary, the notion of linguistic area does not rely exclusively on linguistic criteria. It requires language communities to have shared culture and history. Thus, each language description, although following the same guideline, will result in a different language sketch.

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