

# The Role of Spoken and Written Languages in Myanmar Language

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## Abstract

This paper presents the differences in criteria of spoken and written languages in Myanmar Language. Myanmar language differs according to the attitude, knowledge and social contexts of the speaker. The differences in spoken language and written language have been mentioned in this paper. To carry out the study, books concerning with Myanmar Language and Literature, currently changing and developing data and findings from the Internet were used as the research tools. Comparative and experimental methods were used for the research. The aim of the study is to know clearly the strengths and weaknesses of spoken and written languages of Myanmar and it is believed to be supportive for the improvement of the Myanmar Language.

Keywords – literature, written, spoken, strengths, weaknesses

## Introduction

Language and literature are the most important parts in the history of a country. They show the history and stability of that country. Only if the country is developed, the language and literature of it can be improved and stable in the long run. That is why, each and every citizen tries to make their language and literature spread and improved from all aspects. Literature reflects the interactions and communications among the nations, implementations for cultures and building the country from all angles. Language also reflects the literature of an era.

Likewise, Myanmar people have also made the same efforts for their language and literature. Only then, they would be able to take pride in Myanmar forever. As the language and literature are the media of social communication, the differences and connections between them will always be there. Myanmar language was prior to literature. People had to try to improve Myanmar literature from all aspects. Languages have been used since ancient times and the currents of languages are changing variously throughout the period. Examining those changes will be beneficial to the scholars of language and literature.

## Aim and Objective

The aim of this study is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of spoken language and written language. It is also intended to improve Myanmar literature. Studying and examining those will be beneficial to the researchers and language learners.

## Research questions

1. In which ways are the spoken language and written language different?
2. Which is more important, spoken language or written language?

## Literature Review

Spoken and written languages, which are social-communicative media, play the most important role and experts have been learning languages until now. Starting from Venerable KyawAung San Htar, scholars have been learning them up to now. Myanmar linguists and language learners study about languages from the linguistic books written in English.

There are direct translations of those studies and also neutralized works in Myanmar. Those are helpful for the language learning. Changes in keeping with the times were mainly

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studied from the books concerning with language learning written by Dr. Khin Aye (1979), a study on language by Dr. Ko Lay (2008), beauty of language and literature (articles) by Dr. Nu NuKy (2008), Grammar in speech (articles) by Dr. MaungMaung Lay (2020) and the lectures on features of writing by Dr. AungMyintOo (2007).

Moreover, current usages of writing and speaking were also studied. From those studies, the formation and correct usage of words of the language were studied.

### Findings

#### Spoken language

Spoken language is an important medium in social and communicative affairs. Experts assume that language has appeared since the time when people use their body language for their existence. Spoken language is the symbols of speech which are formed systematically according to the races.

Spoken language has an impact on attitude, knowledge and social contexts of the speaker. It uses phonic substance and it is old. One advantage of spoken language is that it can be used according to the time and circumstance of a situation. Another advantage is that the speaker can speak with rising or falling or level tones and with stress or unstress depending on his or her mood. Spoken language cannot be influenced by written language. The change in meaning of vocabulary in spoken language is faster than that of written language.

In spoken language, people speak by adding complements uttering based on the situation and mood of the speaker. Differences in tones between ancient time and modern age using different dialects, slangs, proverbs and sayings can also be found in the study of spoken language.

In speaking Myanmar language, people add the complements like –

ဟုတ်တယ်မဟုတ်လား /Hou' temahou' la:/Is it true, isn't it?

It is clear that မဟုတ်လား /mahou' la:/is added to get clearer meaning.

And also, based on the situation between the speaker and the listener, speech can be uttered. For example,

ဟိုဟာလေးပေးပါဦး /Houha lei: pei: baoun:/ Give that one, please.

ဒါလေးသုံးဆောင်ပါဦးနော် /Da lei: thoun: hsaunbaoun: no/ Please have this.

Moreover, another strength is that the speaker can speak with rising or falling or level tones and with stress or unstress depending on his or her mood. In some cases, grammar is not taken into consideration.

Comparing to the written language, the variation of the vocabulary in spoken language is faster. The usage has been altered between ancient times and modern age. For instance,

ကူဖော်လောင်ဖက် /kubolaun be' / from ပူဖော်လောင်ဖက် /Pubolaunbe'/which means “a companion and a help”

ခွေးကတက် /Khwei: gade'/ from ခွေးခုံတက် /Khwei: khounte'/ which means recessed platform at the top of the front stairs.

And even the same word can have different meanings. The word “son” can be used for both genders in Bagan dynasty. For example, the phrase “thank you” is used to express gratitude to someone nowadays, but in the era of Nyaung Yan, it was a phrase said to someone who owed a debt of gratitude to the speaker.

Since the beginning of the first civilization, it was found that languages have been used appropriately to convey the meaning. Here, the ornamentations of the languages were created and used according to the situation. In creating such features, people used slangs, dialects, proverbs and sayings.

Still another strength of spoken language is being able to create many new words. For examples, the words “ခေ့, ကိိ, မမ” /Khei:/, /Kwi:/, /MwaMwa/ become widely-used words because of the creation of youths today. If the people like and accept those words, they will exist in the language, but if the people dislike them, they will be automatically disappeared from the spoken language. And then, they will be left in the literature.

### **Written language**

The rule of writing in Myanmar language is based on tones. Writing is the systematically-organized symbols of speech. Various forms of words were made for the different mood and situations of speech. The first consonant of a word can be used separately in writing. And also, consonants and consonant clusters are combined in writing.

Superscripted devowelizer arc ( <sup>^</sup> ) is a distinctive symbol in literary writing of Myanmar and it has been used since the Bagan era. One strength of written language is that words can be portrayed by colours, pictures and symbols. It can be said that written language is more formal than spoken language. The emotion and colour of the tones can be described by questions, interjections, capital or small letters and punctuations. The symbols like (-), “ ”, and [ ] can be found in written language of Myanmar due to the influence of foreign literature. Written language has its specific standards and features. Moreover, it can be said that e-mail writing and message (SMS), which use written language, have kept abreast with spoken language.

Difference between spoken language and written language is that meaning can be different in terms of spelling in written language. However, it is not the same way in spoken language. Written language has no space limitation. It can stand and last longer. That is why, homophones, homographs, euphemisms and loanwords can be found in written language. It is also found that the use and changes of those words are relating not only with written language but also with spoken language.

### **Discussion**

When comparing spoken language and written language, it is found that they are relating to each other. Although spoken language came into existence earlier than written language, the development of both is the same. However, written language is more stable. Meaning can be known by seeing the symbols. In spoken language, people need to be aware of and avoid extreme use of foreign culture in speech as it can make their own language and literature vanished.

### **Conclusion**

Although it is easy to be proficient in spoken language, it is hard to be skillful at writing when comparing. Language can be used to communicate and to let others know one's feelings and ideas. Using language and literature helps solve social problems and facilitates

communication not only among the ethnic groups but also among the nations. In the present time, both spoken language and written language are performing the same way. E-mail writing and SMS are in written language which is based on spoken language. Moreover, the written language found in telephones and video chat also comes from spoken language. Although it can be generally said that spoken language and written language are identical, written language is more important to keep records in the long run. Written language is the record of an era as well as the move of spoken language plays an important role. The development of ethnicity, religion, literature, traditions, cultures, customs and norms mainly depends on spoken and written languages. That is why, scholars and experts of different times have been learning written language and spoken language until now. To conclude, this paper states the findings and attempts of the scholars of Myanmar literature for the Myanmar language and literature.

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Practical Interviews

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