

## **A Study on Grammatical Use of Particles in Myanmar Spoken Discourse**

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### **Abstract**

According to Myanmar Language Commission, when the grammatical uses of spoken discourse are studied there are eight parts of speech. The particles are one of the parts of speech. They are used to modify the nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, and play an important role in the spoken discourse. They are also common in the everyday conversation in Myanmar language. The present paper explains how the particles can be used properly in spoken grammar. By so doing, the foreign learners of Myanmar Language would be able to speak and write Myanmar accurately. It analyzes the meanings and usages of some particular particles in detail and points out how to use them systematically.

**Keywords:** spoken discourse, grammar, parts of speech, nouns, pronouns, verbs, particles

### **Introduction**

The history of language studies has chiefly been concerned with spoken and written discourses. These two discourses are related to one another but spoken discourse is thought to be observed before the study of written discourse. Both of them are important in the social communication, and there are similarities and differences between their uses. The spoken discourse is changeable according to the times and circumstances of the situation in which the language is used, and this distinguishes the spoken discourse from the written one.

The spoken discourse is used in everyday conversations and so it has a wide range of usages. Based on its uses in daily communication, the written discourse was evolved. It is obvious that the spoken and written discourses are different in nature. The most significant difference is in the grammatical usages. Through the analytical study of the written grammar and spoken grammar, the nature of Myanmar spoken discourse can be highlighted, and this can be beneficial to the learners of Myanmar language.

This paper presents the usefulness of the grammatical usages found in spoken discourse based on the study of the everyday conversation in Myanmar, and how these grammatical usages can modify the related parts of speech in context.

The scope of this study is everyday spoken discourse and the use of particles is presented in terms of Myanmar grammatical rules. The particles are crucial in Myanmar spoken discourse and they modify the other parts of speech in Myanmar spoken language. Here the use of particles in relation to nouns and verbs are examined in five main categories. They are\_

1. The Use of Particle ‘တောင့်’ in Myanmar
2. The Use of Particle ‘ဝဲ’ in Myanmar
3. The Use of Particle ‘မ’ in Myanmar
4. The Use of Particle ‘ရယ်’ in Myanmar
5. The Use of Particle ‘ဘာ’ in Myanmar

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Among the different grammatical uses, the use of particles in spoken language in Myanmar society can help the foreign learners of Myanmar language understand the target language more effectively. As this study focuses on the use of spoken discourse in Myanmar language speaking society it helps Myanmar teachers a lot in teaching of Myanmar language to foreign learners.

### **Literature Review**

The study of the grammatical use of the particles in Myanmar spoken language is based on the common spoken language in the society. Dr Mg Mg Lay (2017) had conducted a study on the daily spoken language, namely “Grammar in Spoken Language”. Grammar is the essence of both spoken and written language.

According to Dr. Khin Aye (Mg Khin Min, Danuphyu) (2014), it is suggested as follows in his article: “Language is different from literature. People first learn to speak and then learn to write. All people in the community are able to speak except the deaf and dumb. However, there are still many illiterates in the world. If a person wants to learn Myanmar, they need to learn how to speak first. The grammatical structure of a language is the system that many people have used and accepted as the years pass by.”

It is language that people use in their daily life. Speech is the basic foundation of a language. Spoken language and written language play an important role in communication. Dr. Aung Myint Oo (2015) has highlighted in “Language Knowledge” that spoken language, with the help of the articulators, consists of tone and pitch and expresses the feeling of the speaker.

As the three scholars have studied before, this study explores the grammatical uses of particles found in daily conversational language in the society based on the Myanmar Grammar published by Myanmar Language Commission and daily spoken language in Myanmar society.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is based on the conversational language in the society. Although Myanmar people tend to speak in different tones of voice, the way they use the spoken grammar is nearly the same. In the case of foreign learners of Myanmar language, it is found out that they are not able to use the spoken grammar in Myanmar language properly. Therefore, the study of grammatical use of particles in Myanmar spoken language can be of great help to the foreign learners of Myanmar language and literature to be able to use the spoken grammar appropriately in the right context. Grammatical analysis method is used in this research and it is presented by using descriptive method.

### **Hypothesis**

1. How can the particles be used properly in Myanmar spoken grammar?
  - When the grammatical use of particles in the spoken language changes, the intended meaning is changed. The present study focuses on five most common particles; namely ‘တောင်’ ‘ပဲ’, ‘မဲ’, ‘ရယ်’ and ‘သာ’.
2. Who can benefit from this study on grammatical use of particles in Myanmar spoken discourse?
  - As the grammatical use of particles in Myanmar spoken language is under study, it is beneficial for the foreign language learners who are studying Myanmar language as a second language to be able to speak in Myanmar accurately.

## Findings and Discussion

The present paper intends to help the foreign learners of Myanmar language to be able to use spoken grammar properly and consequently to be able to speak Myanmar accurately. The particles ‘တောင်’, ‘ဝဲ’, ‘မ’, ‘ရယ်’ and ‘သာ’ means ‘*even, also, not, and, only*’ in English. The particle ‘မ’ in ‘တောင်’, ‘ဝဲ’, ‘မ’, ‘ရယ်’ and ‘သာ’ intensifies the meaning of a verb. The particle ‘ရယ်’ modifies nouns. The particles ‘တောင်’, ‘ဝဲ’, and ‘သာ’ are the words that highlight their respective nouns and verbs.

### 1. The Grammatical Use of Particles in Myanmar Spoken Discourse

Spoken discourse is crucial in all language studies since it has made its debut long before the written form was invented. All the able-children with well-developed IQ acquire how to speak first than how to write in their mother tongue. Therefore, in his article on language study, Dr. Aung Myint Oo quoted the words of the American linguist Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949) – “Writing was not language, but merely a way of recording languages by means of visible marks. Spoken language was the primary medium for all human communication.”

There are many grammatical usages in Myanmar spoken language, and the use of particles was presented here. The particles modify nouns, pronouns, adjective, verbs and adverbs. There are three types of particles in Myanmar language. They are \_

1. Particles that modify nouns
2. Particles that modify verbs and
3. Particles that modify phrases

In the present study, only five particles namely “တောင်၊ဝဲ၊မ၊ရယ်၊သာ” are studied in terms of the way they modify the nouns and verbs.

#### 1.1 The Particle “တောင်”

In the Myanmar Dictionary, the particle “တောင်” is defined as a part of speech which modifies the spoken phrases. It has most frequent use in daily spoken context.

e.g., သူတောင် မလာသေးဘူး။

-He is not coming yet.

ရေတောင် မချိုးရသေးဘူး။

-I haven't taken a shower yet.

မီးတောင် ပျက်သွားပြီ။

-The light went out.

Here in the examples given, the related pronouns and nouns which are modified by the particle “တောင်” become more meaningful. It is obvious that the actions are in progress.

The particle “တောင်” in Myanmar language can also be used in the context of modifying the verbs.

e.g စားတောင် နေပြီ။

-He is already eating.

အိပ်တောင်နေပြီ။

-She has already slept.

သွားတောင် မသွားသေးဘူး။

-They haven't gone yet.

In these examples, the use of particle “တောင်” makes the verbs more meaningful. It expresses the actions in progress or already finished actions. Therefore, it can be suggested that when the particle “တောင်” is used with nouns, pronouns, and verbs, its uses can identify the actions and make the functions of the parts of speech in context more meaningful. When “တောင်” is used with “မ” in “သွားတောင် မသွားရသေးဘူး”, it means "not yet".

## 1.2 The Particle “ဝဲ”

The particle “ဝဲ” in Myanmar spoken discourse means the part of speech which modifies the nouns, pronouns, adjective, verbs or adverbs. It is used to limit the meaning of the verb in the context.

e.g အလှပြင်နေတယ်။

-She is always beautifying herself.

သီချင်းဝဲဆိုနေတယ်။

-You are always singing.

Face book ဝဲပွတ်နေ။

-He is always using facebook.

In the examples mentioned above, the particle “ဝဲ” modifies the nouns အလှ၊ သီချင်း၊ Face book when used in spoken language, the particle “ဝဲ” reflects the tone of dislike and command. It is also used together with verbs to modify the verbs.

e.g ရောက်ဝဲရောက်နေတယ်။

-He is always there.

စားဝဲစားနိုင်တယ်။

-You are always eating.

ပြောဝဲပြောနိုင်တယ်။

-She is always talking.

သွားဝဲသွားနိုင်တယ်။

-They are always travelling.

Here in the above sentences, the particle “ဝဲ” identifies the exaggerated nature of the verbs in context. It indicates that actions are continuous or in progress.

If the particle is placed between two verbs, it refers to the action that is exaggerated and continuous.

### 1.3 The Particle “မ”

The particle “မ” refers to the negation of the verbs. It is described as the negative particle and it has frequent use in everyday conversation in Myanmar.

e.g., ကော်ဖီမသောက်ရသေးဘူး။

- I haven't drunk the coffee.

ဒီနေ့ကျောင်း မတက်ဘူး။

-I won't attend the class today.

စာတမ်းဖတ်ပွဲမပြီးသေးဘူး။

-The seminar has not finished yet.

In these examples, the particle “မ” can be used with one-word verbs as well as with verbs resulted from the combination of two verbs.

e.g., မလှုပ်ရှားပဲနေရင် ဝလာလိမ့်မယ်။

-You will gain weight if you do not work out.

မစားသောက်ပဲနေမှတော့ ပိန်တော့မှာပေါ့။

-Without consuming any food and drinks, you will lose weight.

မင်းတို့အချင်းချင်းမချစ်ခင်ကြဘူး။

-You don't get along with each other.

In the above spoken discourse, verbs resulted from the combination of two verbs such as လှုပ်ရှား၊ စားသောက်၊ ချစ်ခင် follow the negative particle “မ” immediately. Therefore, verbs become more meaningful and highlight the negative connotation.

However, this negative particle cannot be used immediately before the verbs resulted from the combination of noun and verb. If the particle “မ” was placed before the verbs resulted from the combination of noun and verb, it would become as follows:

e.g., \*မ ထမင်းစား

\*မ ရေချိုး

\*မ ကျောင်းတက်

However, there is no such usage in Myanmar language. It doesn't comply with correct grammar. The negative particle must be placed before the verb if it is added to the verb resulted from the combination of noun and verb. For example,

- ထမင်း မစား
- ရေမချိုး
- ကျောင်းမတက်

In that case it is easier for the listeners to understand the meaning because it is the correct spoken grammar usage in Myanmar language. Besides, there are compound verbs that describe two actions. For example,

- ပြေးကြည့်
- လိုက်ပြ
- သွားစား

Such verbs describe two actions and the negative particle “မ” is placed right before the second verb. As a result, the meaning will become more exact. For example,

- ပြေးမကြည့်
- လိုက်မပြ
- သွားမစား

Here not only the function but also the negative sense of the second verb becomes obvious.

#### 1.4 The Particle ‘ရယ်’

The particle ‘ရယ်’ is defined as the word signalling the involvement in an action, as in the example ‘သူရယ် ငါရယ်’ and as the word that modifies the noun as in the example- ‘သားရယ်အိပ်ပါတော့’

The particle ‘ရယ့်’ modifies the nouns and pronouns, and it indicates that both modified noun and pronoun are involved in the action. For example,

‘သူရယ် ငါရယ်ဈေးသွားမယ်။’

-He and I will go to the market.

‘ကြက်သားရယ် ကန်စွန်းရွက်ရယ် ဝယ်ခဲ့တယ်။’

-I have bought chicken and watercress.

‘ဆရာမရယ် ကျွန်တော်ရယ် ဟောပြောပွဲတက်ခဲ့တယ်။’

-My teacher and I attended the literary talk.

‘မင်္ဂလာဆောင်ရယ် မွေးနေ့ရယ် သွားခဲ့တယ်။’

-I went to the wedding and the birthday party.

In these example sentences, ‘ရယ်’ particle modifies nouns and pronouns. The particle ‘ရယ်’ in ‘သူရယ် ငါရယ်’ and ‘ဆရာမရယ် ကျွန်တော်ရယ်’ indicate the sense of involvement of the two persons in the action. The use of particle ‘ရယ်’ in ‘မင်္ဂလာဆောင်ရယ် မွေးနေ့ရယ်’ and ‘ကြက်သားရယ် ကန်စွန်းရွက်ရယ်’ emphasizes the sense of engagement in the two events and two things affected by the action.

In addition, nouns become meaningful because of the particle ‘ရယ်’. For examples,

‘သားရယ်အိပ်ပါတော့။’

-Go to sleep, my son.

‘နှင်းဆီပန်းတွေရယ် မွှေးလိုက်တာ။’

-Roses are fragrant.

‘ဆောင်းတွင်းရယ်အေးလိုက်တာ။’

-The winter is cold.

The use of ‘ရယ်’ in ‘သားရယ်အိပ်ပါတော့။’ does not refer to other people, but his son. ‘နှင်းဆီပန်းတွေရယ်မွှေးလိုက်တာ။’ refers to the only roses, but not the other flowers. Likewise, ‘ဆောင်းတွင်းရယ်အေးလိုက်တာ။’ only means the winter, but not the other seasons. Therefore, the particle ‘ရယ်’ is placed after noun in order to modify the nouns.

### 1.5 The Particle ‘သာ’

The particle ‘သာ’ refers to a word that modifies the verb with the meaning of favourable condition, and with the meaning of limitation. Myanmar language has the particle ‘သာ’ showing favorable condition.

e.g., ‘ပိုက်ဆံသာရှိတာ ကပ်စေးနဲ့ကြီး။’

-However rich he is, he is stingy.

‘သွားသာသွားရတယ် တွေ့ပါ့မလားလို့။’

-Although I am going there, I’m afraid I will not meet him.

‘အိပ်သာအိပ်ရတယ် မပျော်ပါဘူး။’

- No matter how I tried to sleep, I couldn’t fall asleep.

‘မောင်းသာမောင်းရတယ် စိတ်ကမရဲဘူး။’

- Even though I am driving, I am not confident enough.

In such spoken discourses, ‘သာ’ is the modifier which means favorable condition and the ability to do actions. ‘သာ’ particle in the sentence ‘ပိုက်ဆံသာရှိတာ’ shows the favorable condition and modifies the noun. ‘သာ’ particle in ‘သွားသာသွား’ ‘အိပ်သာအိပ်’ ‘မောင်းသာမောင်း’ intensify the verbs with the connotation of the ability to do. Besides, the particle is also found in the spoken language which consists of the meaning of limitation. For example,

‘အတန်းထဲမှာမောင်မောင်သာ အတော်ဆုံး။’

-Only Maung Maung is the cleverest in the class.

‘အလုပ်သာလုပ်ပါ။’

-Just work.

‘စာသာကြိုးစား။’

-Just study your lesson.

The sentence ‘အတန်းထဲမှာ မောင်မောင်သာ အတော်ဆုံး။’ means that it is Mg Mg who is the top of the class unlike the other students. Similarly, the particle in the sentences ‘အလုပ်သာလုပ်။’ and ‘စာသာကြိုးစား။’ conveys the meaning limiting the interest. In spoken discourse, the particle ‘သာ’ is used to show the favourable condition and the ability to do actions, and limitations.

When the particles in the spoken discourse such as ‘တောင်’ ‘ပဲ’ ‘မ’ ‘ရယ်’ and ‘သာ’ are analysed, it is found out that all the particles function as a modifier even though their usage is different from one another. These common particles ‘တောင်’ ‘ပဲ’ ‘မ’ ‘ရယ်’ and ‘သာ’ in the spoken discourse do not have their own meanings, but they function as the modifier of nouns and verbs.

These common particles ‘တောင်’, ‘ပဲ’, ‘မ’, ‘ရယ်’ and ‘သာ’ can position before or after nouns, pronouns and verbs in order to modify them. They not only modify the parts of speech but also identify the actions, limitations, function of the two verbs combined, the favourable conditions, the ability to do the actions by the subject and the negation. Particles are common usage of everyday conversation, that being widely used in the community. Through this study the difference between spoken grammar and written grammar is also observed. Therefore, ‘တောင်’, ‘ပဲ’, ‘မ’, ‘ရယ်’ and ‘သာ’ in the spoken discourse are the effective particles that can modify the other parts of speech.

**Conclusion**

In the paper ‘A Study on Grammatical Use of Particles in Myanmar Spoken Discourse’, some particles are selected to be studied from eight parts of speech. In the study it is found out that particles in the spoken discourse intensify the meaning of nouns, pronouns, and verbs. Furthermore, other parts of speech used in spoken discourse will be studied. As a result, this study can help those who are studying Myanmar spoken language grammar.

Spoken grammar is the rule of spoken discourse. The features of Myanmar spoken language will be revealed through the systematic study of spoken grammar rules. Grammatical use of particles also comprises of the other particles such as ‘တော’, ‘တာ’, ‘တဲ့’, ‘တွေ’, and ‘နဲ့’ apart from the particles in question. These particles will be studied further. The study suggested that the research on the particles of ‘တော’, ‘တာ’, ‘တဲ့’, ‘တွေ’, and ‘နဲ့’, the use of prepositions and the conjunctions need to be conducted as further research areas. It is also hoped that this study can fill the gap needed for foreign students who are studying Myanmar spoken discourse.

**ကျမ်းကိုးစာရင်း**

- ၁. ခင်မင်မောင် (ခန့်ဖြူ)၊ (၂၀၀၅)၊ သက်တံ့ရောင်နံ့ ဘာသာစကား (ပထမအကြိမ်)၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ကြယ်နီစာပေတိုက်။
- ၂. ခင်မင်မောင် (ခန့်ဖြူ)၊ (၂၀၁၄)၊ ဘာသာအမြင် စာပေအမြင်(ဒုတိယအကြိမ်)၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ စိတ်ကူးချိုချိုစာပေ။
- ၃. မောင်မောင်လေး၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ (၂၀၀၇)၊ စာကားထဲကသဒ္ဒါ၊ မန္တလေး၊ လင်းသန့်စာပေ။
- ၄. မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့၊ (၂၀၀၅)၊ မြန်မာသဒ္ဒါ၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ တက္ကသိုလ်များပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
- ၅. မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့၊ (၂၀၀၈)၊ မြန်မာအဘိဓာန်၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ နေလင်းပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
- ၆. အောင်မြင်ဦး၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ (၂၀၁၀)၊ ဘာသာစကားသုတေသန (ပထမအကြိမ်)၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဓူဝံစာပေ။
- ၇. အောင်မြင်ဦး၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ (၂၀၁၅)၊ ဘာသာစကားသုတေသန၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဓူဝံစာအုပ်တိုက်။