Myanmar Language Varieties in the Speech Community

Ni Ni Aung[1]

Abstract

This paper analyzes the creative usages of Myanmar spoken language in social life. Language diversities employed in the community of Yangon City territory are defined and presented as the study scope from the point of view of Sociolinguistics. Its aim is to share the knowledge of Myanmar spoken language with the learners since this research reflects the arising of language diversities resulting from the use of the language without limitations, as well as proliferation of Myanmar new words.

Keywords: Speech Relevance, Variety Speech, Speech Style, Speech Code

Introduction

The present research is a study of language change within the social community based on the wide definition of the Myanmar Language and creation of new words from the socio linguistics approach. As there are differences in the speeches used within the general populace such as those of the educated class and the social class which livelihoods are as vendors, and car divers, there are also differences in the style, pronunciation and grammatical usage of a single person in his speech in a meeting or with friends, or family.

Varied language features which change according to dependency are varieties adapted to the dictates of the age. In the social variables that independently change, linguistic variables are studied from the point of sociolinguistics approach, depending on job, education, income, age, and sex.

Literature Review

Dr. Aung Myint Oo (2003) presented the diversities of usage from the point of view of different usages in Myanmar social environment by dividing 15 sectors such as region, age, social status, and working place status in his book named "Introduction to Sociolinguistics".

In the above mentioned book with version in (2005), varieties of language are presented as follows.

(1) Standard language
(2) Social speech varieties
(3) Regional speech varieties
(4) Functional speech varieties

So, in order to know about varieties of language in social context, it is presented and analyzed the varieties of language in different social classes by collecting around from Yangon Metropolis which is regarded as the study area.

Aim

It is aimed to raise awareness about the proliferation of Myanmar words by coining of new words, and the mutual effectiveness in conformity with community and language.

Research Methodology

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[1] Daw, Lecturer, Department of Myanmar, Mandalay University of Foreign Languages

It is found that usage diversity in Myanmar Language depends on the differences such as social affairs, economic affairs, educational status, and age. Thus the researcher discussed Myanmar usage diversities related with social affairs employed by social classes in Yangon Metropolis. Descriptive and evaluative methods are used in doing this research.

Research Questions

(1) Why do the usages diverse in Myanmar Language depending on the different communities?
(2) What advantages can be obtained from diversed usages in Myanmar Language?
(3) Does it make adaption between language and community by virtue of diversed usages?

Findings and Discussion

1.   Variety of Speech

Though a single kind of language is used within the same language group, depending on the social, economic, religious and educational factors, jargons are used. Terms that are appropriate to the social class one has to deal with are sought, coined and used. By this way, new words appear in the Myanmar Language. These variant words appear more in popular urban business society than rural areas.

Within a society, there are words related with technology among people in the same industry. Within the bus drivers community there are jargons. In reporting to the driver that the passenger is still in the act of alighting from the car, the ticket-collector calls out "စဉ်းနီတုံး၊ စဉ်းနီတုံး" (Chopping block, Sinn Ni done-a sound similar) instead of "ဆင်းနေတုံး" (Getting off- Sinn Nay done). If the passenger has kids tagging along, when getting on or getting off the bus, referring to these children, he bellows "လိုက်ပွဲပါတယ်" (with additional dish) or "သံယောဇဉ်တွေ" (with attachments). If a man and a woman is to get down, he shouts "ဘယ်၊ ညာ" (left, right). A taxi with a Taxi panel set on it is known as a "ဆိုင်းဘုတ်" (signboard), buses with wide bodies are known as "ဗိုက်ပူ" (bulgy stomach), "ချက်ကြီး" (big navel), the traffic police is known as "ဘဲဥ" (duck egg), "ကျီးကန်း" (crow). Those words are jargons that workers of the bus transportation Industry use. Among them are words unpleasant as well as new words that make one laugh and forget the drudgery of life.

In restaurants too, workers have their variant language. At the restaurant, an additional rice plate being ordered is referred as "လိုက်ပွဲ" - additional dish. In marriage, when the wife brings along her whole family- brother, sister and father and mother to stay together, it is referred as "additional dishes have been brought along". That is why "လိုက်ပွဲ" has the meaning of being additional. When two people share one food it is referred as "ဝမ်းတူးရိုက်" (eating one meal by two persons). Sweet tea is referred as "ကျောက်ပန်းတောင်း" (kyouk pa daung-a region in Upper Myanmar where jiggery is produced). Strong coffee is referred as "ချစ်ကောင်း" (Chit Kaung), in reference to the vocalist Chit Kaung who became popular with the song "ကော်ဖီခါးခါး" (Bitter Coffee). A ready-made coffee sachet is called "ပလိန်း" (Plain). Bread and fried chicken egg are known as "ပုကြက်ပေါင်"

(Chicken Bread). Noodle and bean vermicelli fried with chicken or pork is referred as "ၾကက္ေခါက္၊ ဝက္ေခါက္၊ ၾကက္ၾကာ၊ ဝက္ၾကာ". Workers have created such jargons that have made understanding easier for them. Such creations make it easier for the worker to understand as well as lessen mistakes.

There are also variations that are spoken in the business merchant and commercial world. In the commercial world, when one is willing to sell a thing urgently for the need of money it is referred to as "ဗိုက္နာ" (stomach pain). When something was bought at rate which is lower than the normal one, it is referred to as "ေအာက္ေဈး" (Under price). Things that are bought cheaply are known as "ေပါေခ်ာင္ေကာင္း" (Cheap Easy Fine). Loot bought cheaply and sold is referred to as "သူခိုးေဈး" (price set by thieves). Selling low quality goods to someone who does not understand the merchandise is "အခ်ဥ္ဖမ္း" (fleecing). Substitution low quality goods for high quality goods and selling it is known as "အင္ထု" (falsification). Selling whole sale is known as "လက္ကားေရာင္း". Selling retail is known as "လက္လီေရာင္း"And because of such business jargon, those within that business community are more intimate and form a separated kind of class that has more influenced on the business.

There are also word variants in the educational field. In the following quotation "တပည့္ေတြကို ဝမ္းစာျပည့္ေအာင္ျဖည့္၊ ကိုယ္ခံအားေကာင္းေအာင္လုပ္၊ အခံေကာင္းေအာင္လုပ္လို႔ ဆရာႀကီး ေဒါက္တာခင္ေအးက ဆုံးမခဲ့တယ္" , which may literally be translated as "Dr Khin Aye gave advice to his students to furnish their professional knowledge, strengthen their stamina, and improve their defense power", "ဝမ္းစာျပည့္ေအာင္ျဖည့္သည္၊ ပညာရပ္ျပည့္ဝေအာင္ျဖည့္ရန္ ကိုယ္ခံအား ေကာင္းေအာင္လုပ္" means to make them have more reading power and "အခံေကာင္း ေအာင္လုပ္" means to make them get much knowledge. His piece of advice can be understood by those who are attending the University level and familiar with campus talk. That is why there will be no problem for a staff at University like Dagon or Western or Eastern University to comprehend such kinds of words as in H1, H2, H3, Q1, Q2, lecturers, and assignment.

Besides, those social groups such as scientists, doctors, industrialists and grass-root laborer social class have their specific terminology. Intelligentsia and professionals have their own speech and symbols that those not from their social community find it hard to comprehend. For example, in university community, the professor is referred to in abbreviation such as P, the Associate Professor as AP, the lecturer as L, and the assistant lecturer as AL.

In the social community, while there are people who make good livelihoods, there are those who live by committing crimes. Among those criminals, there are jargons that only they can understand. For example, a heroin addict is called as "တုတ္" (Stick), a marijuana user is referred to as "မူတ္", using w-tablets is said to be "ပဲေလွာ္စား" meaning munching roasted peas, w-tablet is referred to as "ေဘာ္လုံး" (ball), marijuana is called as "မာရွဴး", liquor is known as "ရုပ္ကီ" and a drunkard is known as a "ရုပ္ကီဘဲ". To drink liquor is referred to as "ရုပ္ကီကစ္မယ္", to drink on the sly is "ခြက္ပုန္းခုပ္". In gambling, there are words such as "ခြဲ၊ ႏွစ္လုံးတိုက္၊ သုံးလုံးတိုက္၊ ဒဲ့ထိုး၊ တြတ္၊ ထိပ္စည္း၊ ပတ္လည္၊ ေနာက္ပိတ္၊ အပူး၊ နကၡတ္၊

ပါဝါ၊ စီးရီးဆွဲ၊ အပြန်အလှန်" which are secret symbolistic words only the users are familiar with. Outsiders who do not know their jargons or those who do not know the right usage would not be able to make a bet.

Apart from the abovementioned expressions, in social community, there are language variants that depend on age differences. Even within a family there are expressions that youths use but elders cannot understand. The reason is that new generation coin new words or they use an old word with new meaning.

In saying, "သူ့မျက်ဝန်းနဲ့တစ်ချက်ဝေ့အကြည့်မှာငါတကယ်ကြွေသွားတယ်". (At her one glance, I have fallen into love with her). "ကြွေ" means one was falling into love. [1] In the Myanmar dictionary, "ကြွေ" is defined as falling from a place. Here the word used to refer to a lifeless object is used for a living thing.

The word "ခိုက်" that has the meaning of hitting, crashing[2] is also used to describe preference on someone. That usage can be seen in

"သူ့ကိုရေရေလည်လည် ခိုက်သွားပြီကွာ"

"I am falling in love with her so much"

"အရမ်းခိုက်တယ်၊ အရမ်းမိုက်တယ်"

"So cool, so sexy"

"ဘုံကြီးပျက်တဲ့ဒေဝီနတ်မျိုးနွယ်"

"A falling heavenly angle from the sky"

"ခိုက်" and "ကြွေ" are the expressions which have the same meaning.

"မိုက်" from the expressions of "မင်းကတော့မမိုက်ပါဘူးကွာ" , "သူ့စတိုင်ကမိုက်တယ်", "ဒီဆောင်းတွင်းမှာ ဒီဖိုင်းလေးမိုက်တဲ့ ကေကေအိုဦးထွတ်ဆောင်းပါလား", "မိုက်" means "like" and "smart". The original meaning is "no light", "dark", and "behaving without reasoning". [3] It is found that there is a difference between original meaning and the usage among today's youths.

In the expression 'ဘာမှလည်းမသိဘူး၊ တော်တော်ပိန်း(ဖိန်း)တာပဲ" , "ပိန်း", means "dumb, without intelligence" which is the same as "သူ့ကိုသွားရှင်းမပြနဲ့၊ နားဝေးတယ်၊ ဒုတယ်၊ ဒီကောင်ငဒုဘဲ". In Myanmar dictionary, "ပိန်း"means "heavy darkness in the whole space" [4] which is used as "Verb" although original is "Adjective". In the statements

"လန်းချင်ရင်ဆောင်းကွယ်၊ ဆောင်းရင်လန်းမယ်"

"ဂျယ်လီလေးစားလိုက်ရင်ပိုပြီးလန်းသွားမယ်"

"လန်း" means flattering mind which bear the meanings of "active, fresh, calm.[5]"လန်း" is also the slang today.

[1]မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့၊(၁၉၉၁)မြန်မာအဘိဓါန်၊ရန်ကုန်၊မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့ဦးစီးဌာန။ စာ၊ ၄၁
[2]Ibid., p. 51
[3]မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့၊(၁၉၉၁)မြန်မာအဘိဓါန်၊ရန်ကုန်၊မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့ဦးစီးဌာန။ စာ၊ ၂၇၄
[4] Ibid., p. 227
[5] Ibid., p. 343

2.   Variety of Speech Style

In social context, an individual may use different language forms depending on the social status. In fact, it is because of the difference on accents, sentence construction, words, sounds on location and person even though the topic is the same. Speech styles can be classified as follows:

1. Different speech style depending on situation
2. Different speech style depending on topic
3. Different speech style of individual
4. Different speech style depending on dialects.

According to the will of language users, different forms of speech are used to convey the same social matter. Symbol of speech is changed depending on the interlocutors, social status, and regions. For instance, although the same language is used, addressing certain topic on the stage in the occasions like wedding ceremony, Consecration, Congratulation ceremony, and Addressing speech have to be systematic and the lexical structures have also to be flexible, and so forth the topic. Lectures in the classroom can be reduced in its formality. Language can be used without constraints when dealing with family members, and friends.

Despite the same topic, relationship between interlocutors can be found out from the different forms of symbols of speech, and intonation.

"Do this quickly to finish."

"Would you do this quickly to finish?"

The above mentioned two sentences describe the same topic. The former one has rising intonation, and latter has falling intonation. The intention means the "imperative". From the gap of intonation, and symbols of speech, social status gap is found between interlocutors. Moreover, in the catering ceremonies, if "သုံးဆောင်ပါ" (Please enjoy the meal) is used, the respect towards the recipients is obvious. "စားပါ" (Eat) shows the normal communication. "လွေးလိုက်စမ်းပါ" "ဆွဲလိုက်စမ်းပါ" (Eat heartily) means the friendly relationship, and "မျိုဟဲ့၊ ဆို့ဟဲ့" (Gobble the meal) means unsolicited willing. Likewise, "Passed away" is used as "အနိစ္စရောက်သွားရှာပြီ" "ဆုံးပြီ" (Dead) "ကွဲပြီ" (Gone). "Describing a man" is used as "ဒီပုဂ္ဂိုလ်" , "ဒီလူ" (this fellow) "ဒီကောင်" (this bastard) which is varied on the relationship between interlocutors, social status, location, and Idiolects.

Different Idiolect comes from the recipient who needs to use varied manners, or accents. For example, while talking with a kid who is just able to speak, it is needed to adjust the expressions to understand easily like "မန့်မန့်စား၊ ဖပ်ဖပ်စီး၊ ချိုချိုစို့၊ တားတား". When talking with a foreigner, to understand the meanings, speakers have to use short sentences, and slow and steady accent. It is also found that language usage and speech style are different when communication between monk and a lay man though it is used in the same language and same meaning as well. For example, the different words are used for "အိပ်သည်" (Sleep), "စားသည်" (Eat), "ဟုတ်ကဲ့" (Yes)as "ကျိန်းသည်" (Sleep), "ဘုန်းပေးသည်" (Eat), "တင်ပါ့" (Yes).

The region of the speaker can be known depending on the factor of behaviors, words, accent, and pronunciation in communication. If the utterance

"ရန်ကုန်မှာဘုံပြတ်တွေလည်းမရှိပါလား" is heard, the word "ဘုံပြတ်" shows that he was from Mawlamyaing. If a number 57 is said as "ငါးဆယ့်ခွင်", "ခွင်" shows that the speaker is from Myingyan or Pakkoku where "ခွန်" is used as "ခွင်". In the utterance "ကြေးပြားပေးပါလား" (Give me the coin), "ကြေးပြား" comes from the usage of money, currency where Myeik dwellers are used. Furthermore, "Ladyfinger" "ရုံးပတီသီး" is as "ချောတောင့်သီး", "Bamboo shoot" "မျှစ်" is as "ဝါးတုတ်" "Stick of bamboo", "စောင်" (garment of Myanmar Males) is as "ဒယော", "Blanket" "စောင်" is as "ပုဆိုး.", and "Soap" "ဆပ်ပြာ" is called "သူပုန်" which are the lexis of the residents who come from Myauk Oo, Kyauk Taw, and Sittwe. Thus, it is found that even an individual makes differences in speech style on the virtue of difference situation, and region in the language context.

3.   Code Mixing

Speech code mixing means the mingle use of other language's pieces while a language is practised basically. [1] Speech code mixing occurs from politics, economy, social duties and obligation, religion, and education, and it may also come from language users' social status, locations and Idiolect in the community. Speech code mixing is used by means of changing speech code in word level, phrase level, and sentence level in the language which is used in communication.

Since the past, Myanmar Language has been overwhelmed by Sanskrit (Pali) Language with the reason of religion. So, Sanskrit lexis is used together with Myanmar language. For example,

-"မင်းတော့ဒုက္ခရောက်တော့မှာဘဲ"

- You are going to fall into trouble.

- "သတ္တဝါတစ်ခု ကံတစ်ခုတဲ့၊ သမ္ဗေဝသတ္တာ ကမ္မသကာပါဘဲကွာ"

- Each creature has its fate.

-"နိဗ္ဗာန ပစ္စယောဟောတုလို့သာ သဘောထားလိုက်ပါတော့"

-Think as "Let it be."

-"မင်းအပေါ်စေတနာ၊ မေတ္တာ ထားခဲ့သလောက် မင်းကတော့ ဥပေက္ခာ ပြုရက်နိုင် လွန်းတယ်"

-In spite of having affection and goodwill on you, you dare live with detachment.

And so forth, Sanskrit (Pali) words are mingled in Myanmar Language.

Exposure with English Language has been facing as political context since Myanmar community was colonized. Thus English words are used while Myanmar language is being used. For examples,

- ဒီနေ့ကတော့ Lucky dayဲ
- Today is a lucky day.
- Aerobic ကမလို့လား
- Will you do aerobic?

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[1] Language Research, 2013, p. 179

- whitening skinလိမ်းပါလား။
- Don't you apply whitening skin?
- သေချာအောင် confirm လုပ်ကြည့်ပါလား။
- Won't you confirm to be sure?
- Message လက်ခံထားလိုက်ပါ။
- Please receive the message.
- Shopping ထွက်မလို့လား။
- Are you going out shopping?

Speech code mixing can be occurred depending on the working context. For example,

-power point သုံးမှာလား။

- Will you use power point?

-Result out သွားပြီလား။

-Is the result announced?

-Library သွားမလို့လား။

-Will you go to the library?

- Answer paper သွားသိမ်းမလို့လား။

-Will you go to collect answer papers ?

-Question တွေ ဝေလိုက်တော့။

-Distribute the questions.

- ဒီနေ့ meeting ရှိလား။

-Is there any meeting today?

Moreover, language users' idiolect also makes code mixing. Because of the language users' idiolect, words, phrases, and sentences are used with need or without. For instance,

- ဒီလူ style ကအရမ်း smart ကျတယ်။
- This man's style is very smart.
- ဒါပေမဲ့ character မကောင်းဘူး။
- But, he has a bad character.
- idea ညံ့တယ်။ best friend သွားမလုပ်နဲ့။ coil ပူးသွားလိမ့်မယ်။
- His idea is not good. Don't make him your friend. Your affair will be messed up.

Necessity in language, changing of Era, and affairs which are not familiar with language user makes them coin new words, otherwise speech code mixing. If that word usages are prolonged, and repeated, it would be into the Myanmar language which would result in proliferation of new words. In communicating within the social context, communication can be done verbally or by other symbols. Within the social community, depending on ones' job, education, age, income, personality and regional differences, the language can be verified. New words are coined depending on the Era. Such verifications occur more in the metropolis which are major business regions than rural areas.

Language which is created by the necessity of social environment smooths the community. In social context, just one individual's speech style is different based on the situation and regional differences. Depending on the Era, code mixing was occurred due to the domination of foreign language on Myanmar language, particularly on sentence. Though it is better to coin new words according to the Era, more mixing of foreign language may change Myanmar language including syntax, and genuine Myanmar language.

Conclusion

This paper investigates the reciprocal effectiveness of language in social environment and community from the socio-linguistic point of view. Because of the advances in economy, education, and social situation, new language has been coined. Depending on the situation of the Era, both advantages and disadvantages can be arisen in Myanmar Language.

ကျမ်းကိုးစာရင်း

၁။ ကိုလေး၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ (၂၀၀၈)၊ လူမှုဘာသာဗေဒဝေါဟာရများအဖွင့်၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ လောကနတ်စာပေ။

၂။ မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့၊ (၁၉၉၁)၊ မြန်မာအဘိဓါန်၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ မြန်မာစာအဖွဲ့ဦးစီးဌာန။

၃။ အောင်မြင့်ဦး ဒေါက်တာ၊(၂၀၀၃)၊လူမှုဘာသာဗေဒမိတ်ဆက်၊ရန်ကုန်၊ရန်ကုန်တက္ကသိုလ်၊ မြန်မာစာဌာန။

၄။ အောင်မြင့်ဦး ဒေါက်တာ၊(၂၀၀၅)၊လူမှုဘာသာဗေဒသဘောတရား၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ရန်ကုန်တက္ကသိုလ်၊ပညာတန်ဆောင် ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

၅။ အောင်မြင့်ဦး၊ ဒေါက်တာ ၊(၂၀၁၅)၊ ဘာသာစကားသုတ၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ စုဝံစာပေ။