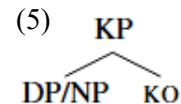


# Differential Object Marking in Burmese ditransitives

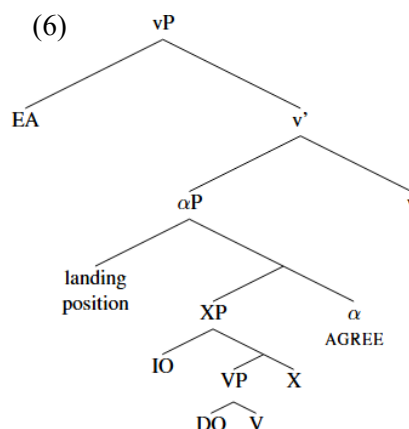
**Introduction:** This project investigates the nature of Differential Object Marking (DOM) in Burmese, the official language of Myanmar. Burmese is a strictly head-final language, has a nominative-accusative alignment, and shares many features with other East Asian languages like Japanese and Korean. In DOM languages, certain types of grammatical objects receive an overt marker, whereas others are left unmarked (e.g., Bossong, 1985, 1991 a.o.). Burmese is one of the DOM languages and the pattern contrasts KO marking and zero marking (Thurgood 1978; Wheatley 1982; Soe 1999, a.o.). My fieldwork data shows a pattern that follows an animacy scale: pronouns > names > human > animate > inanimate. In Burmese, the cutoff point on the scale is between names and human: pronouns and names require KO marking, while it is optional for all other NPs.

**Burmese DOM in ditransitives:** My fieldwork data suggests an interaction between the overtness of the KO marker and the word order in Burmese DOM ditransitive constructions. When the direct object (theme, DO) is inanimate and the indirect object (goal/recipient, IO) is animate, the word order is IO-DO (as in (1) and (2)). In these examples, the crucial contrast surfaces in the overtness of KO on IOs: pronouns and names must be overtly marked, but objects with lower animacy do not require an overt KO marker. When both objects are human referents, the word order switches to DO-IO (as in (3) and (4)). In these cases, the markers on DOs are required, and the KO's overtness on IOs depends on the animacy: it must mark a pronoun (4) but is optional for a human referent (3). DO is optionally marked with KO in IO-DO order.

- (1) CEO-kə {tɛma/mɪŋ/θuma/Zuzu}-KO prodze-aθi(-KO) ʃi-pyq-dɛ.  
CEO-SUBJ 1f/2/3f/Zuzu-OBJ project-new(-OBJ) explain-show-REAL  
'CEO explained the new projects to {me/you/her/Zuzu}.'
- (2) CEO-kə {θu-jé-louʔ.pʰə.kəi.beʔ-twe/θu-jé-tʃaʔ}(-KO) prodze-aθi(-KO) ʃi-pyq-dɛ.  
CEO-SUBJ 3-POSS-colleague-PL/3-POSS-cat(-OBJ) project-new(-OBJ) explain-show-REAL  
'CEO explained the new projects to {his colleagues/his cat}.'
- (3) ŋa-gə {mɪŋ/θu/Zuzu/ŋa-jé-sʰəyá}-KO ŋa-jé-θaŋɛ.dʒi(-KO) pyq-mɛ.  
1-SUBJ 2/3/Zuzu/1-POSS-teacher-OBJ 1-POSS-friend-OBJ show-FUT  
'I will be showing {you/him/Zuzu/my teacher} to my friend.'
- (4) ŋa-θamɪ-gə θu-θaŋɛ.dʒi-KO mɪŋ-KO pyq-dɛ.  
1-daughter-SUBJ 3-friend-OBJ 2-OBJ show-REAL  
'My daughter showed her friends to you.'

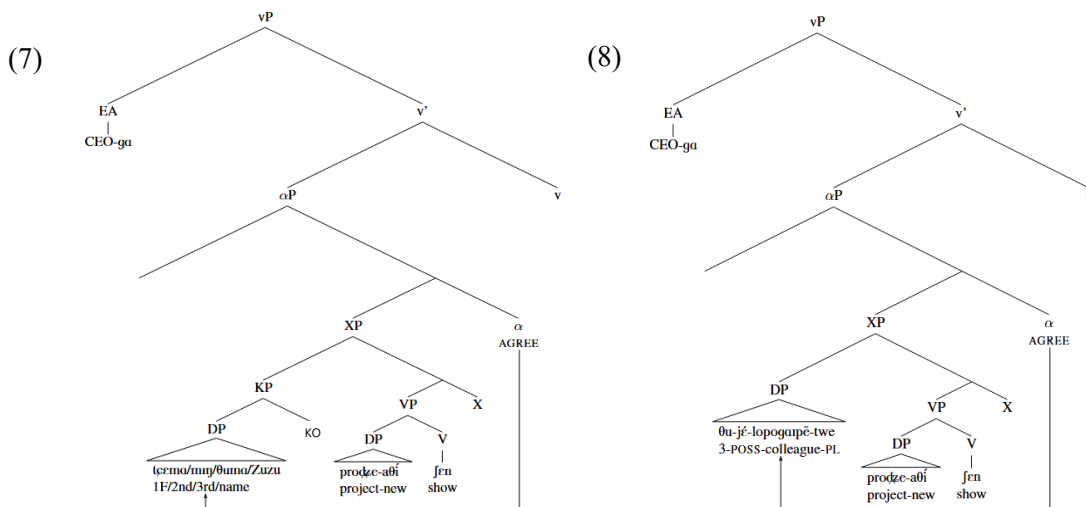


**Theoretical background and proposal:** DOM has been often analyzed by Movement analysis (Torrego 1998; Rodriguez-Mondonedo 2007, a.o.). In a simple transitive in Burmese, KO becomes obligatory whenever the object moves, and the obligatory markings in Burmese ditransitives can be accounted for via Movement. I propose only KO-marked DPs/NPs can move in Burmese, and KO appears on a NP/DP via Merge (as in (5)). KO Merges to a NP/DP in two environments: KO obligatorily Merges to a NP/DP with [+pronoun/name] feature and a NP/DP that must move to check its unvalued feature. I assume an  $\alpha$  projection between v and VP (as in (6)), and the  $\alpha$  head is responsible for checking a [+human] feature within what it c-commands. When IO is animate and DO is inanimate (c.f., (1) and (2)), the  $\alpha$  head checks the [+human] feature of IO. If IO comes with a [+pronoun/name] feature, KO obligatorily Merges, and if IO does not, KO can optionally Merge. When IO and DO are both human referents (c.f., (3) and (4)), two variables come into play. First, if DO or IO includes the [+pronoun/name] feature, KO obligatorily Merges. The  $\alpha$  head checks the [+human] feature within what it c-commands, and it Agrees with the closest NP/DP with the [+human], IO. Once  $\alpha$  head Agrees with IO, it cannot Agree with any [+human] under IO in the structure, and thus, DO must move to the Spec of  $\alpha$ , where  $\alpha$  can check the unchecked [+human] feature of DO. I suggest that only

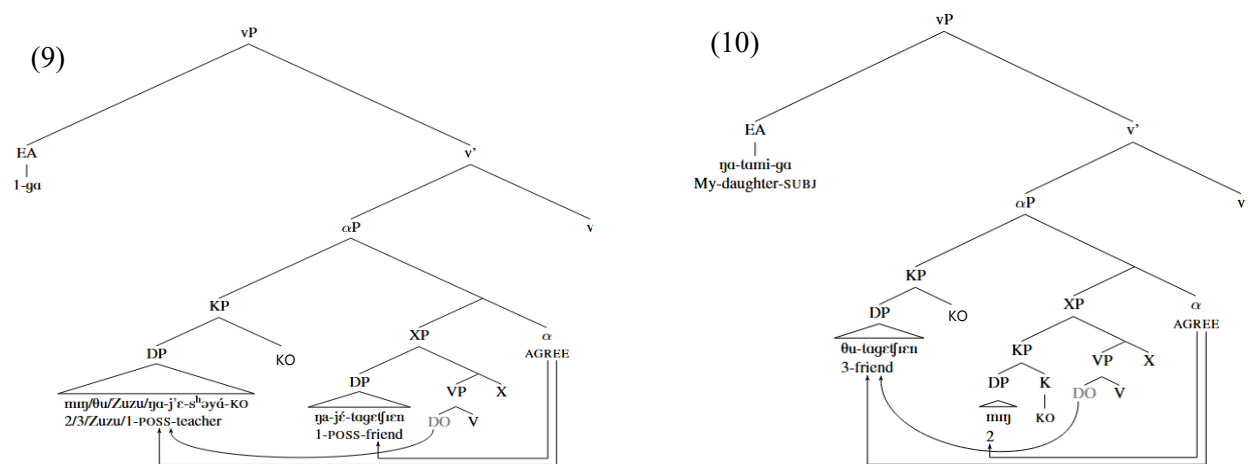


phases can move in Burmese; KP forms a phrase, but NP without K does not. This, in turn, means that DO that must move for feature checking must have KO Merged.

**Derivations:** (7) and (8) provide structures for (1) and (2), respectively. In both cases,  $\alpha$  checks for [+human] feature of the IOs, indicated with solid square lines. Due to IO's [+pronoun/name] feature in (1), KO obligatorily Merges (as in (7)). KO Merge is optional for [-pronoun/name] DPs.



(9) and (10) provide structures for (3) and (4), respectively. KO obligatorily Merges to DPs with [+pronoun/name] feature: pronouns and name DO in (9) and IO in (10).  $\alpha$  checks for [+human] feature within what it c-commands, indicated with solid square arrows. It can only Agree with the closest DPs, which are IOs in these examples. This leaves DO's [+human] features unchecked in situ. In order to complete the derivation, KO Merges to [+human] DOs in (9) and (10), and now, all [+human] DOs form a phase and are able to move to the Spec of  $\alpha$ , indicated with curved arrows. In Spec of  $\alpha$ ,  $\alpha$  can check DO's [+human] features. If KO does not Merge to [-pronoun/name] DP, *ga-jé-s<sup>h</sup>ayá* 'my teacher' in (9) for example, DP cannot move to Spec of  $\alpha$  because it is not a phase, which results in a failed derivation due to unchecked feature of DO.



**Conclusion:** Burmese DOM in ditransitives exhibits an *unexpected*, thus rather *undiscussed* pattern of DOM. The Movement analysis correctly captures the marking pattern, in combination with KO Merge. The proposed Movement has a potential to account for not only Burmese DOM in ditransitives, but also the obligatory KO in Burmese simple transitives: any moved objects must have KO Merged.

**References:** Bossong, Georg. 1985. Empirische universalienforschung: differentielle object markierung in den neuiranischen sprachen, vol. 14. Narr.