

(In)definite Marking in Burmese

Lim Meghan Leilani Ai-Lin

An Honours Thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English Language

Department of English Language and Literature

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore

11 November 2019

SIGNED STATEMENT

This Honours Thesis represents my own work and due acknowledgement is given whenever information is derived from other sources. No part of this Honours Thesis has been or is being concurrently submitted for any other qualification at any other university.



LIM MEGHAN LEILANI AI-LIN
11 NOVEMBER 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This honours thesis would not be anywhere without my supervisor Michael Yoshitaka Erlewine. I would like to thank him for his unwavering support, patience, and enthusiasm throughout this journey. For all the time he has spent taking my half-formed ideas and guiding towards better ones, I am truly thankful. Most of all, I am grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow under his guidance.

None of this would have been made possible without my Burmese consultants. Thank you to Aunty Cho, Phyo, and Wine for your endless patience and for not saying anything whenever I clumsily stumble over your beautiful language. I am so grateful for all the time and energy that all of you have so selflessly poured into this project.

To all my fellow linguistics friends, you all inspire me every single day. Thank you to Win, for being just about as confused about everything as I am throughout all three and a half years. The camaraderie really helped. Thank you to Amy, for setting the standards so high. You truly make me want to do better. Also, for that one time you turned to me in class and said “Hey, would you ever consider doing Burmese for your HT?”. Thank you to Nadine, who has truly been a rock from the first day we met. I would have missed so many deadlines without you. Thank you to Keely, who not only read my draft in comic sans uncomplainingly but has been an immense comfort to have around this past year.

Your advice has been so important to me and I truly do not know where I would be without it.

Most importantly, I am thankful to my family and friends. To my mom and dad, thank you for the unconditional love and support as I've moved from one thing to the next. To my siblings, thank you for the flow of snacks. To Audrey, Karyee, Dhanya, and Bird, thank you for standing by me.

And thank you, to every person along the way made me feel like I was good enough.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Abbreviations	vii
Abstract	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Noun phrase structure in Burmese	3
1.1.1 Demonstrative pronoun	4
1.1.2 Numeral ‘one’	5
1.1.3 Case marking	6
1.2 Word order	7
Chapter 2 Definiteness	9
2.1 Theories of definiteness	11
2.2 Types of definiteness	13
2.3 Definiteness beyond English	17

Chapter 3	Definiteness in Burmese	21
3.1	Methodology	21
3.2	Data	23
3.2.1	Bare noun	24
3.2.2	Demonstrative	30
3.2.3	Numeral ‘one’	34
3.2.3.1	Indefinites	34
3.2.3.2	Definites	38
3.2.4	Differential object marking	41
Chapter 4	Discussion	42
4.1	Common ground	42
4.2	Deixis, demonstratives, and definiteness	45
4.3	Typology of definiteness marking	46
Chapter 5	Future research	48
5.1	Definiteness and tense	49
Chapter 6	Conclusion	52
References		54

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	accusative
CL	classifier
CONT	continuous tense
DEM	demonstrative
FUT	future tense
NOM	nominative
PAST	past tense
PL	plural
V	verb marker

ABSTRACT

Given the lack of definite articles, this thesis investigates and describes how (in)definiteness is marked in Burmese noun phrases in the object position. Definiteness is reflected through the use of demonstratives, numerals and the bare noun. Indefinite noun phrases are marked with the numeral ‘one’ while definite noun phrases are expressed with the bare noun. Burmese also systematically distinguishes anaphoric definites through an optional demonstrative that can attach to the noun phrase. This distinction of anaphoric definites is seen cross-linguistically. However, Burmese stands apart in its ability to mark both anaphoric definites and other definites with the bare noun. I propose that this is due to Burmese being in the early stages of grammaticalising the demonstrative into a definite article.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This honours thesis investigates the expression of definiteness in Burmese. According to WALS (2019), Burmese is one of 198 languages that do not have any kind of definite or indefinite article. As such, (in)definiteness is reflected in other ways using demonstratives, numerals, or the lack thereof.

Looking at (1) and (2), it is tempting to conclude that *edi* corresponds to a definite marker like the English *the* while the numeral ‘one’ corresponds to an indefinite marker, as the English *a/an*.

(1) Hlahla-ga kwei **dar**-kaung gu mien-kei-dei
Hlahla-NOM dog one-CL(animal) ACC saw-PAST-V
Hlahla saw a dog.

(2) Hlahla-ga **edi** kwei gu mien-kei-dei
Hlahla-NOM DEM dog ACC saw-PAST-V
Hlahla saw the dog.

(1) and (2) are minimally contrastive, with the only difference being in the modifiers on the object. (1) takes the prenominal modifier *edi* while (2) takes the postnominal modifier *dar kaung*, the numeral ‘one’ with a classifier. This difference results in different readings with regards to the definiteness of the argument and would be consistent with the hypothesis that *edi* corresponds to the definite article and the numeral ‘one’ *dar kaung* corresponds to the indefinite article. However, consider the following data in (3):

(3) Sansan-ga edi yone dar-kaung (gu) weh-nei-dei
Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit one-CL ACC buy-CONT-V
Sansan is buying the rabbit

Interestingly, (3) demonstrates that both *edi* and the numeral ‘one’ *dar kaung* can cooccur in the same clause together, resulting in a definite reading. The ability to have both modifiers indicates that how definiteness is marked in Burmese is more complicated. As such, this thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How does Burmese mark definite and indefinite noun phrases without a definite article?
- How does Burmese pattern in accordance to current theories of definiteness?
- Does how Burmese marks definiteness align with other languages without definite determiners?

In this thesis, I demonstrate that definite noun phrases are expressed using the bare noun, with optional accusative marking. The numeral ‘one’ is required to express an indefinite noun phrase. Additionally, the demonstrative can be used for anaphoric definites and definites that are contextually salient. The numeral ‘one’ can optionally occur with the demonstrative on the aforementioned definites.

1.1. Noun phrase structure in Burmese

Romeo (2008:31) describes the Burmese noun phrase as a head noun with optional prenominal and postnominal modifiers.

Prenominal modifiers include demonstrative (3a), interrogatives (3b), and adjectives (3c). Postnominal modifiers include numerals with classifiers (4a), non-numeral quantifiers (4b), plural markers (4c), and specific adjectives (4d).

(3) Prenominal Modifiers

- a. Edi hpa
 DEM frog
 That frog

- b. Hbe hpa (lei)?
 Which frog QUES
 Which frog?

- c. shei-*(daw) hpa
 long.ADJ frog
 Long frog

(4) Postnominal Modifiers:

- a. Hpa dar-kaung
 frog one-CL
 One frog

- b. Hpa ar cho
 frog some
 Some frogs

- c. Hpa mya
frog PL
Frogs.
- d. Hpa shei-(*daw)
frog long
Long frog

While most modifiers can only occur either prenominal or postnominal, there are adjectives that can occur in both prenominal (3c) and postnominal (4d) position with different morphology. Specifically, when the adjective is found in the prenominal position, it requires the adjectival marker *daw* as seen in (3a). However, the adjectival marker *daw* is ungrammatical when the adjective is postnominal in (4d).

1.1.1. Demonstrative pronoun

Burmese demonstratives encode a two-way contrast for proximity to the speaker. Proximal referents are reserved for referents that are next to the speaker and within reach. These referents take the demonstrative *di* as seen in examples (6) and (8). Distal referents are any referent out of reach, but typically still within sight, and take the demonstrative *edi* as seen in (5) and (7). However, *edi* can also be used for proximal referents while distal referents can only take *di*. Both demonstratives are used deictically when combined with physically pointing at the referent. Number is not marked on the demonstrative as seen in (7) and (8).

- (5) Sansan-ga **edi** yone-gu weh-meī
 Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit-ACC buy-FUT.V
 Sansan is buying that rabbit.
- (6) Sansan-ga **di** yone-gu weh-meī
 Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit-ACC buy-FUT.V
 Sansan is buying this rabbit.
- (7) Sansan-ga **edi** yone -dui-gu weh-meī
 Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit-PL-ACC buy-FUT.V
 Sansan is buying those rabbits.
- (8) Sansan-ga **di** yone-dui-gu weh-meī
 Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit-PL-ACC buy-FUT.V
 Sansan is buying these rabbits.

I discuss the semantics of demonstratives in more detail later in section 3.2.2.

1.1.2. Numeral ‘one’

Burmese has a comprehensive classifier system structured largely around physical properties and animacy of the noun phrase. The relevant classifiers in this paper are the classifiers for animals *kaung* (9a), people *yaut* (9b), round things *lou* (9c), and the default classifier *ku* that can be used for inanimate objects (9c). Numerals necessarily occur immediately before a classifier and cannot occur bare, as seen in all the examples in (9).

- (9) a. kwi dar-*(kaung)
 Dog one-CL(animal)
 One dog.

- b. Yaujalei dar-*(yaut)
 Boy one-CL(person)
 One boy.
- c. La dar-*(lou)/dar-*(ku)
 Moon one-CL(round)/one-CL(inanimate)
 One moon.

1.1.3. Case marking

Burmese has morphological case marking on subjects and object. The nominative marker *ga* occurs on the subjects *Maumau*, a proper noun, in (10), and *panot* ‘vase’ in (11). Burmese has nominative-accusative alignment. The subjects in both the transitive (10) and intransitive (11) take the same case marker *ga*. The object of the transitive takes a different case marker, *gu*.

- (10) Maumau-ga panot-gu kweh-kei-dei
 Maumau-NOM vase-ACC broke-PAST-V
 Maumau broke the vase.

- (11) Panot-ga gweh-kei-dei
 Vase-NOM broke-PAST-V
 The vase broke.

In many languages, the case marking on objects tracks their definiteness. This is called Differential Object Marking (DOM). As we will see, accusative marking is variable in Burmese. As such, DOM motivated by definiteness was explored over the course of investigation through the elicitation of simple transitive sentences. However, there was no evidence that the presence or absence

of accusative case tracks definiteness in Burmese. This will be elaborated on in section 3.2.5.

1.2. Word order

Burmese is a head-final language with default SOV word order. However, in transitive sentences with only two arguments, the object and subject can be switched with no change in meaning. (12) is an example of the canonical SOV word order and (13) is an example of the scrambled OSV word order.

(12) Maumau-*(ga)hpa-(gu) sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM frog-ACC look-CONT-V
MauMau is looking for the frog.

(13) Hpa-*(gu) Maumau-(ga) sha-nei-dei
Frog-ACC Maumau-NOM look-CONT-V
MauMau is looking for the frog.

While scrambling is allowed in Burmese, this affects the obligatoriness of the case markers. While in the canonical SOV order in (12), the accusative marker *gu* is optional while the nominative marker *ga* is obligatory. On the other hand, in the non-canonical OSV order in (13), the nominative marker *ga* becomes optional while the accusative marker *gu* becomes obligatory.

This ability to scramble arguments persists in ditransitive sentences and can result in more complex permutations. These will not be relevant for the scope of this thesis. For the scope of this thesis, I will only be looking at the canonical

word order to avoid any possible confounding effects of scrambling. As such, only the default SOV structure of Burmese will be considered.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINITENESS

This section will outline how past literature has defined definiteness and differentiated it from indefiniteness. Section 2.1 will cover prominent theories of definiteness developed, largely, through the study of English. This then forms the basis for section 2.2 where I detail different types of definiteness. Section 2.3 then looks at data from other languages to explore the cross-linguistic variation of definite expression. In this thesis, I will be concentrating on how definiteness is expressed on singular noun phrases.

Definiteness is a property of noun phrases that reflects the state of their referent in the discourse. In English, whether a noun phrase is definite or indefinite can be easily determined by articles. *the* is the definite article and *a/an* is the indefinite article. As such, noun phrases that begin with *the* (eg. *the frog, the honours thesis, the number on this page*) would be a prototypical definite noun phrase and noun phrases that begin with *a* (eg. *a rabbit, a word*) would be a prototypical indefinite noun phrase (Lyons, 1999).

However, unlike English, many languages lack a definite article. This is especially common in numeral classifier languages such as Mandarin, Cantonese, and Yi (Jiang, 2017; Jenks, 2018). Instead, definiteness is marked through other nominal expressions, as will be explored in section 2.3

Aissen (2000: 7) defines definiteness as “the extent to which the value assigned to discourse referents introduced by the noun phrase is fixed”. As such, a

definite noun phrase would have a fixed value assigned to its discourse referent. Some examples of English definite are given in (14), exemplifying Hawkins (1978 as cited in Schwarz, 2009: 535) four major classes of definites: anaphoric use, immediate situation, larger situation, and bridging. These categories will be further expanded in section 2.2.

(14) a. **Anaphoric Use**

John bought a book and a magazine. The book was expensive

b. **Immediate situation**

the desk (uttered in a room with exactly one desk)

c. **Larger situation**

the prime minister (uttered in the UK)

d. **Bridging**

John bought a book. The author is French.

We saw a church. The tower was crooked.

(Hawkins, 1978 as cited in Schwarz, 2009: 535)

In contrast, an indefinite noun lacks a unique, real world referent (de Vries, 2012). Indefinite nouns can be specific or non-specific. Unlike definiteness, specificity is not dependent on the real world existence of the referent (Frawley, 1992). It instead distinguishes a speaker's intent to refer to a unique, identifiable individual that is perceived to possess some noteworthy property (Fodor & Sag, 1982). An example of a non-specific indefinite is *a doctor* in (15). It is non-

specific as there is no intent to refer to a particular referent. A specific indefinite on the other hand would be *a doctor* in (16).

(15) Marty is looking for a doctor. Any will do.

(16) Marty talked to a doctor last week.

Typically, a specific indefinite consists of a referent that the speaker is aware of, but the hearer is not (Vries, 2012). As such, a specific indefinite's discourse referent is more fixed than a non-specific indefinite's discourse referent.

2.1. Theories of definiteness

The two most prominent theories of definiteness are *uniqueness* and *familiarity* (Schwarz, 2013). Broadly, uniqueness theorists argue that the felicitous use of the definite noun phrase must be uniquely identifiable to the hearer while familiarity theorists argue that definiteness has to do with the referent of the noun phrase being familiar within the discourse (Birner & Ward, 1994). While both approaches can independently account for many aspects of definiteness, there is debate as to whether either theory can fully capture the intricacies of definiteness (Birner & Ward, 1994). A longstanding division in past literature is regarding which theory more accurately captures the underlying characterisation of all definites. However, Jenks (2015) and Schwarz (2013) suggest that both theories must be used in conjunction with each other to fully account for the expression of definiteness, as can be seen in non-English languages. This notion will be expanded in section 2.3.

Uniqueness has its roots in philosophical literature, specifically Russell's (1905) introduction of "denoting phrases" which was later expanded by Christophersen (1939). Based on Russell's work, definites and indefinites can be distinguished by uniqueness – the existence of a single entity that meets the descriptive content of the noun phrase (Abbott, 2006). According to Schwarz (2009:536), this approach "builds on the intuitive insight that we use definite descriptions to refer to things that have a role or property that is unique". This is restricted to a relative contextual domain that allows the referent to be picked out with appropriate description.

The uniqueness approach easily explains the use of definite articles in English noun phrases such as *the moon*, *the president of Myanmar*, and *the title of this paper*. Each of these noun phrases are unique in their given context, despite never having been mentioned in the previous linguistic discourse.

A notable alternative to the Uniqueness approach is Heim (1982) who instead distinguishes between indefinites from definites by postulating that definites have familiarity presuppositions. Roberts (2003:294) describes familiarity as "determined by whether there is already information about a corresponding discourse referent in the local context of interpretation". The local context can refer to the linguistic context, in which case there is "strong familiarity" as seen in (17).

(17) Sansan was looking at a dog and rabbit. Sansan bought the rabbit.

In (17), the definite article in *the rabbit* is only licensed by the indefinite *a rabbit* in the previous clause. This is explained by the familiarity approach but is challenging for uniqueness theory as there does not need to be a unique rabbit in this scenario (Jenks, 2018). This contrasts with when the entity is entailed in the context, even non-linguistically resulting in weak familiarity. Therefore, strong familiarity can be thought of as a special case of weak familiarity (Roberts, 2003).

Heim's (1982) view of non-linguistic, contextual entailment being able to licence familiarity builds off the notion of *common ground* proposed by Stalnaker (1974). Common ground refers to the contextual information that the speaker and hearer share. Entities in the common ground do not need explicit introduction and are treated as established between the discourse participants, allowing familiarity and hence definiteness (Roberts, 2003).

2.2. Types of definiteness

The types of definiteness that are investigated in this thesis are expanded from those proposed by Hawkins (1978) in section 2.1. There are three broad categories: Anaphoric, Situational, and Bridging. The types of definites discussed in this section will then inform the framework of data collection in section 3.

(18) Anaphoric definite:

Sansan looked at a dog and a rabbit. Sansan is buying the rabbit.

The anaphoric definite supports strong familiarity as described by Roberts (2003). It would require that the definite noun has a previous linguistic referent. Thus, in (18), the frog that is being looked for in the second clause is clearly

understood to refer to the escaped frog in the previous clause. Anaphoric definites can be challenging to describe under the uniqueness theory of definiteness.

Next, we consider situational definites in (19).

(19) **Situational definite**

a. **Immediate situation:**

Sansan is buying the rabbit (in a store with one rabbit)

b. **Larger situation:**

Sansan is looking for the Queen. (uttered in Britain)

c. **Global situation:**

Maumau is looking for the moon.

I will be looking at situational definites on three levels: immediate larger, and global. These definites can be analysed through the familiarity approach and the unique approach. With regards to the familiarity approach, situational definites would fall under weak familiarity as they are available in the context or through shared global knowledge with no previous mention necessary. In accordance with the uniqueness approach, “there must be one and only one individual in the model which truthfully instantiates the existential statement” (Roberts, 2003: 289). That is, if we allow ourselves to restrict our attention to individuals in the relevant situation, there is a unique referent for each description in their respective situation.

The immediate situation involves a referent that is unique to the current situation that the interlocutors inhabit in the moment of the utterance. Hence, in a

store that only has a single rabbit such as in (19a), *the rabbit* necessarily refers to that single, unique entity. This is compatible with the existence of other rabbits in the world, outside of the immediate situation (the store).

A larger situation does not need to refer to entities that are immediately available, but rather part of the larger physical or conceptual context that the interlocutors share. In (19b), *the Queen* does not need to be immediate present, but is a unique entity when the utterance is in or related to Britain.

Lastly, the global situation refers to referents that are globally unique entities, such as *the moon* in (19c). While the uniqueness of the referent is limited to the global context, the contextual binding of global situation definites is less obvious than immediate situation and larger situation definites given that most humans live on Earth.

(20) **Bridging**

a. **Part-whole relationship:**

Maumau's frog was torn up by a cat. Maumau is looking for the head.

b. **Producer-product relationship:**

Maumau's cat is pregnant. Maumau is looking for the father.

Maumau has kittens. Maumau is looking for the father.

Clarke (1975) describes how definite descriptions can have a referent that is implicitly related to a previously mentioned entity. This relation can be through shared world knowledge or lexical knowledge. This implicit relationship is

referred to as *bridging*. Clark (1975) differentiates between two types of bridging: indirect reference by association and indirect reference by characterisation. These resemble the part-whole relationship in and the product-producer relationship in proposed by Schwarz (2013) respectively. In a part-whole relationship as seen in (20a), it would be understood by the hearer that *the head* would refer to the head of the previously mentioned frog. In a producer-product relationship, as seen in (20b), *the father* would be the producer of *the kittens* and *the pregnancy*.

Schwarz (2009) notes that bridging has properties of both an anaphoric definite and situational definite. They could be considered anaphoric but with an indirect linguistic antecedent. For example, in (20a) *frog* is not a direct antecedent for *the head*, but there is a salient relationship between the two nouns. On the other hand, bridging could be understood as unique in the situation highlighted by the linguistic antecedent. In (20b), *father* is only unique in the situation where Maumau's cat is pregnant.

The inherent difference between the two bridging relationships is described by Schwarz (2009). In the part-whole relationship, there is a containment relationship where, in a situation where the whole exists – in this case a frog – the existence of the part would be necessitated – in this case, its head. This is not the case for the producer-product relationship where a situation with the product (kittens) does not necessarily contain the producer (the father).

2.3. Definiteness beyond English

When considering definiteness in English, it is difficult to ascertain whether the familiarity approach or the uniqueness approach is more suitable in characterising definites, given that English does not morphosyntactically distinguish between them. However, looking beyond English, there is evidence that languages naturally distinguish between anaphoric definites and unique definites. As such, considering both approaches concurrently becomes important when conceptualising definiteness in natural language.

Most classifier languages lack overt article determiners to mark definiteness. Instead, they utilise other strategies to differentiate definites from indefinites (Jiang, 2017). In Mandarin, the bare noun can be definite while in Cantonese, the numeral classifier must be present to indicate a definite noun phrase (Jenks, 2018). Jenks (2018) notes that the distinctions in Mandarin and Cantonese are typologically reflected in other numeral classifier languages. Languages like Min and Japanese pattern like Mandarin while Vietnamese, Thai, and Bangla pattern similar to Cantonese (Jiang, 2017). There are also numeral classifier languages that have an overt definite marker. In Yi, this is achieved through a separate definite article (Jiang, 2017).

In examples (21) to (23), Jenks (2018) demonstrates the distinction between the expression of familiar definites and situational definites in Mandarin.

(21) **Mandarin: Anaphoric Definite**

[There are a boy and a girl sitting in the classroom]

Wo zuotian yu-dao *(na-ge) nansheng

I yesterday meet-PAST DEM-CL boy

I met the boy yesterday.

(Jenks, 2018: 510)

(22) **Mandarin: Immediate Situation Definite**

Hufei he-wan-le (*na ge) tang

Hufei drink-finish-LE DEM-CL soup

Hufei finished the soup.

(Jenks, 2018: 507)

(23) **Mandarin: Larger Situation Definite**

(*Na-ge) Taiwan-zongtong hen shengqi

DEM-CL Taiwan-president very angry

The president of Taiwan is very angry.

(Jenks, 2018: 507)

In (21), the object *nansheng* ‘boy’ must be realised with the demonstrative due to its linguistic antecedent. Anaphoric objects in Mandarin routinely require the demonstrative to indicate the referents definiteness. In contrast, the object in (22) *tang* ‘soup’ cannot take the demonstrative to indicate an immediate situation definite. It must be expressed with the bare noun. (23) shows the same pattern for larger situation definites. For definites licensed by contextual uniqueness, realisation with the demonstrative would be infelicitous.

Aside from numeral classifier languages, the same distinction between familiar definites and situational definites can be observed in Fering and German.

Schwarz (2013) notes that Fering has separate forms of the definite article. Which article the noun takes is dependent on whether it is an anaphoric definite – in which case it takes the strong article *di* – or a situational definite – in which case it takes the weak article *a*. This dichotomy can be seen in (24) and (25).

(24) **Fering: Larger Situation Definite**

Ik skal deel tu **a** /***di** koopmaan
 I must down to the_{weak} /the_{strong} grocer
 I have to go down to the grocer.

(Ebert, 1971 as cited in Schwarz, 2013: 538)

(25) **Fering: Anaphoric Definite**

[Oki has bought a horse.]
 ***A** /**Di** hingst haaltet
 the_{weak} /the_{strong} horse limps
 The horse limps.

(Ebert, 1971 as cited in Schwarz, 2013: 538)

(24) demonstrates that only the weak-article definite *a* can be used in the larger situation context in Fering. This is consistent with all the other situational definites in Fering whereby the weak-article definite refers to a referent that is unique within its relevant context. (25), on the other hand, demonstrates that only the strong-article definite *di* can be used for an anaphoric definite.

Both the Mandarin and Fering data demonstrate that there are languages that distinguish anaphoric definites from situation definites morphosyntactically. This split seems to indicate that, in order to attain a comprehensive view of how

natural languages underlyingly characterise definites, both approaches need to be considered concurrently. *Familiarity* explains the expression of definiteness in anaphoric definites while the *uniqueness* explains the expression of definiteness in situational definites.

CHAPTER 4

DEFINITENESS IN BURMESE

In this section, I demonstrate that Burmese systematically uses bare nouns for definites and the numeral classifier for indefinites. Additionally, the demonstrative *edi* can be used for referents that are particularly salient in the discourse.

3.1. Methodology

One on one sessions were conducted with multiple Burmese speakers to obtain the data used in this thesis. Elicitation sessions consisted of obtaining translations and grammaticality judgements for negative data. Given that the expression of definiteness and specificity is one that relies on prior knowledge on the part of the hearer, translation of a sentence in isolation would have been insufficient in the investigation. For example, without a context (26a), can refer to either a specific doctor or a nonspecific doctor. Additionally, (26b) would be insufficient in capturing the different types of definites that were outlined in section 2.2. In order to obtain more accurate data, more information about the discourse context would need to be provided to the consultant.

- (26) a. Marty is looking for a doctor.
b. Marty is looking for the doctor.

Hence, due to the ambiguous nature of definiteness, the methodology adopted is one that is advocated by Mathewson (2004) whereby each elicited

sentence was paired with a realistic discourse context explained in English to the consultant. As such, the data here will be presented as follows:

(27) *Context: You and Sansan go to the pet store because Sansan wants to buy a new pet. While at the store, Sansan's mother calls and asks what the two of you are doing at the pet store. You tell her:*

[Sansan was looking at a dog and a rabbit.]

Sansan-ga (edi) yone (gu) weh-nei-dei
Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit ACC buy-CONT-V
Sansan is buying the rabbit.

In italics is the given context. Consultants were given explicit instructions not to translate the contexts, but to keep them in mind when providing a translation or judgement. Where relevant, the clause within the square brackets was also translated by the consultant. The actual translations of the preceding Burmese utterances are omitted in this paper for clarity.

To account for intraspeaker variation as much as possible, all the data in this thesis was checked over multiple sessions, and over multiple contexts to ensure as much consistency as possible.

For the purposes of this thesis, the scope of definite marking that will be investigated is limited to the following criterion:

- Nouns investigated are limited to R-expressions in the object position.
- Objects are restricted to singular noun phrases.
- The verb form is limited to the present perfect form, though other tenses will be discussed in section 5.1.

3.2. Data

The data will be separated into four main sections according to how the nominal expression can be realised. The possible permutations are the bare noun in section 3.2.1, contexts supporting optional demonstratives in section 3.2.2, contexts regarding the numeral ‘one’ in section 3.2.3.1, the optional selection of the numeral classifier when cooccurring with the definite in section and contexts supporting the cooccurrence of the numeral ‘one’ and with the demonstrative in section 3.2.3.2. The optionality of the accusative marker *gu* will be discussed in section 3.2.5.

The types of definites that will be examined are those outlined in section 2.2. Table 1 gives a summary of the types of definites as well as the use of the relevant modifiers.

	Bare N	DEM + N	N + dar CL	DEM + N + dar CL
Non-specific Indefinite	★	★	✓	★
Specific Indefinite (contextual)	★	★	✓	★
Specific Indefinite (Cataphora)	★	★	✓	★
Anaphoric Definite	✓	✓	★	✓
Immediate Situation Definite	✓	★	★	★
Larger Situation Definite	✓	★	★	★
Global Situation Definite	✓	★	★	★
Bridging (part-whole)	✓	★	★	★
Bridging (producer-product)	✓	★	★	★

Table 1. Summary of data

3.2.1. Bare nouns

In Burmese, the bare noun is the unmarked construction of the definite noun phrase. As such, it can be used in the following contexts: situational definites, anaphoric definites, and with bridging. Within the current data set, the bare noun coincides with the use of the definite article *the* in English. In this section, I discuss situations when only the bare noun is judged as appropriate.

The first environment that will be examined is the immediate situation definite in (28). The uniqueness of the object *yone* ‘rabbit’ is only restricted to the immediate situation where all the interlocutors are aware that only a single rabbit exists in the store, granting it definite status in this shared context.

(28) **Immediate Situation Definite: “The rabbit”.**

Context: You run into Maumau and Sansan at the pet store. You, Maumau, and Sansan know that there is only one rabbit in the store. You ask Maumau what they are doing there. Maumau says:

Sansan-ga (*edi) yone (*dar kaung) (gu) weh-nei-dei
 Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit one-CL ACC buy-CONT-V

Sansan is buying the rabbit

In (28), *yone* ‘the rabbit’ can only be expressed with the bare noun. Expression with the demonstrative, the numeral ‘one’, or both the demonstrative and the numeral ‘one’ is infelicitous in an immediate situation context.

In the larger situation definite in (29). The uniqueness of the object *darmada* ‘president’ is dependent on the larger context, namely the interlocutors being in Myanmar where there is crucially only one president. Larger situation definites can exclusively be expressed with a bare noun phrase.

(29) **Larger Situation Definite: “The President”.**

Context: You see Hlahla and Maumau at a government press conference in Myanmar. You ask them what they are doing there.

Hlahla says:

Maumau-ga (*edi) darmarda (*dar-yaut) (gu) sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM DEM president one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
Maumau is looking for the president.

The construction of (29) can be clearly contrasted with (30) where the object *dudarmarda* ‘vice-president’ is no longer unique to the situation, given that Myanmar has two vice-presidents.

(30) *Context: You see Hlahla and Maumau at a government press conference in Myanmar. You ask them what they are doing there.*

Hlahla says:

Maumau-ga (*edi) dudarmarda (dar-yaut) (gu) sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM DEM vice president one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
Maumau is looking for the vice president.

In (30), both the numeral ‘one’ *dar yaut* and the accusative case *gu* can be used independently of each other, at the same time, or not at all, allowing 4 acceptable clause constructions. As seen in (30), a noun phrase that is not unique in the larger situation licenses the use of the numeral ‘one’ with the classifier for people *dar yaut*. This suggests that the numeral ‘one’ marks indefiniteness in some capacity, as will be explored in section 3.2.3.

Global situation definites pattern similarly to immediate and larger situation unique definites in only allowing the bare noun phrase construction. (31) and (32) are examples of global situation definites. Global situation definites are not unique by specific conversational context, but general world knowledge (Jenks, 2018). In (31), the noun *nei* ‘sun’ cannot take the demonstrative or the numeral. The same can be seen for *poyehanmeinji* ‘pope’ in (32).

(31) **Global Situation Definite: ‘The Sun.’**

Context: You run into Hlahla and Aung on a hill at the break of dawn. You ask them what they are doing. Hlahla says:

Aung-ga (*edi) nei (*dar-lou) (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Aung-NOM DEM sun one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
 Aung is looking for the sun.

(32) **Global Situation Definite: ‘The Pope.’**

Context: You meet Hlahla and Aung at the airport. They are flying off to Europe. You ask Hlahla what they are doing. Hlahla tells you:

Aung-ga (*edi) poyehanmeinji (*dar-ku) (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Aung-NOM DEM pope one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
 Aung is looking for the pope.

Situational definites in (28), (29), (31), and (32) are licenced by pragmatic context and general knowledge rather than a prior mention in the conversation. As such, they are uniform both semantically and in how definiteness is marked. Namely, situational definites can only be expressed with the bare noun.

The second category of definites that necessitate the use of a bare noun is definiteness licensed through bridging. (33) shows part-whole bridging and (34) shows product-producer bridging.

(33) **Part-whole Bridging: ‘The head’**

Context: Maumau had a pet frog, but the cat attacked it ripped it to pieces.

[Maumau’s frog got ripped up.]

Maumau-ga (*edi) kaung (*dar-lou) (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Maumau-NOM DEM head one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
 Maumau is looking for the head.

(34) **Product-Producer Bridging: ‘The father’**

Context: Maumau’s cat escaped his house and came back pregnant. It gave birth and now MM has kittens.

[Maumau has some kittens.]

Maumau-ga (*edi) jiaung-arhpe (*dar-kaung) (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Maumau-NOM DEM cat-father one-CL ACC look-
 CONT-V
 Maumau is looking for the father.

(33) demonstrates a part-whole relationship where *kaung* ‘head’ is a known part of a frog. The existence of a frog necessitates the existence of a head. While *kaung* ‘head’ in itself is not unique, it is unique in the context of Maumau’s frog. This allows *kaung* ‘head’ to be expressed with the bare noun. (34) demonstrates a producer-product relationship where *arhpe* ‘father’ is a known

producer of the kittens. Like (33), it is unique only in the context where Maumau’s cat is pregnant. Both (33) and (34) rely on general world knowledge for the bridging relationship.

Like larger situation and global situation definites, bridging definites can only be expressed with a bare noun phrase, disallowing the demonstrative and numeral ‘one’. Despite the distinction between the containment relationship of the two bridging relationships outlined in section 2.4, both types of bridging pattern the same way in Burmese.

Considering that Bridging shares properties with both situational and anaphoric definites, it’s interesting to note that they pattern similarly to situational definites. Frog in (33) and kittens in (34) could be conceived as an indirect antecedent, linked implicitly through semantics or general knowledge, making *kaung* ‘head’ in (33) and *arhpe* ‘father’ in (34) similar to an anaphoric definite. However, considering that Bridging definites in Burmese can only be expressed with the bare noun, the previous clause seems to function as a context whereby the object in the second clause – *kaung* ‘head’ in (33) and *arhpe* ‘father’ in (34) – becomes definite. This suggests that, in Burmese, the indirect reference of bridging is conceptualised as a contextual restriction rather than a linguistic antecedent.

3.2.2. Demonstrative

The demonstrative *edi* is the unmarked demonstrative form that may be used with certain definites. While the proximal demonstrative *di* can also be used with these definites, it requires the referent's proximity to the discourse participants. Levinson (2004) suggests that, in English, *that* is semantically unmarked for distance, and only interpreted as distal when in contrast with the proximal *this*. This proposal seems to apply to Burmese as well. As such, this thesis will focus solely on the “distal” demonstrative *edi*.

While bridging definites and situational definites must be constructed as a bare noun, *edi* can optionally be used in two broad contexts: 1. When the object as a linguistic antecedent and 2. When the object is salient in the immediate context. Overarchingly, the demonstrative can be used when the referent is clearly accessible to the discourse participants, whether physically or linguistically. This is regardless of the hearer's prior knowledge of the existence of a unique referent.

The first definite able to take the demonstrative that will be examined is the anaphoric definite. With an anaphoric definite, interlocutors necessarily have shared information about the referent through its explicit mention in the previous linguistic context. This can be seen in (35).

(35) **Anaphoric definite: ‘the rabbit’**

Context: You and Sansan go to the pet store because Sansan wants to buy a new pet. While at the store, Sansan’s mother calls and asks what the two of you are doing at the pet store. You tell her:

[Sansan was looking at a dog and a rabbit.]

Sansan-ga (edi) yone (gu) weh nei dei

Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit ACC buy-CONT-V

Sansan is buying the rabbit.

While the hearer, Sansan’s mother, did not have any prior knowledge of ‘the rabbit’, the linguistic antecedent ‘a rabbit’ allows the referent to be definite. Additionally, the hearer is not physically present with the speaker, which suggests that the optionality of the demonstrative *edi* can occur outside of the shared context. Unlike Mandarin, where the demonstrative is mandatory for anaphoric definites in the non-subject position, the demonstrative is optional and the anaphoric definite is felicitous even with a bare noun.

The demonstrative can also be used for definites that typically do not license it as long as they are also anaphoric. This can be seen in examples (36) and (37). The object *kaung* ‘head’ in (36) is definite through bridging. As seen in section 3.2.1, bridging definites do not license the use of the demonstrative. The same can be said for the object *nei* ‘sun’ in example (37). However, the demonstrative can be used in both (36) and (37).

(36) **Anaphoric Bridging Definite: ‘The head’.**

Context: Maumau had a pet frog, but the cat attacked it ripped it to pieces.

[Maumau’s frog got ripped up. The head is missing.]

Maumau-ga (**edi**) kaung (gu) sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM DEM head ACC look-CONT-V
Maumau is looking for the head.

(37) **Anaphoric Global Definite: ‘The sun.’**

Context: You run into HH and SS on a hill at the break of dawn. You ask them what they are doing. Hlahla says:

[The sun is rising.]

Aung-ga (**edi**) nei (gu) sha-nei-dei
Aung-NOM DEM sun ACC look-CONT-V
Aung is looking for the sun.

The ability to use the demonstrative in examples (36) and (37) demonstrates that the demonstrative *edi* consistently encodes anaphoricity regardless of the original status of the antecedent.

It is worthwhile to note that the demonstrative can also be used in contexts where the referent is contextually salient to the speaker and the hearer. In Burmese, this can refer to a situation where the reference exists with the shared visual experience of the interlocutors such as in example (38).

(38) *Context: You run into Mau Mau and Sansan at the pet store. You see that there is only one rabbit in the pet store. You ask MM what Sansan is doing. Mau mau says:*

Sansan-ga (edi) yone (gu) weh-nei-dei
SanSan-NOM DEM rabbit ACC buy-CONT-V
Sansan is buying the/that rabbit.

The crucial difference between (38) and the immediate situation definite in (28) is the hearer's ability to see the rabbit that is being referred to. As a result, (38) can be constructed with an optional demonstrative *edi*. While it is established that the demonstrative can be used deictically when in conjunction with physically pointing at the referent, as seen in section 1.1.1, example (38) can take the demonstrative without physical pointing.

To summarise, the demonstrative is licensed when the definite has a linguistic antecedent, as seen in examples (35) to (37), or deictic reference through contextual salience, such as in example (38). Heim (1982:309) defines a deictic reference as having "attain[ed] familiarity by being pointed at, perceptually prominent, or otherwise salient". Conversely, this explains why the demonstrative *edi* cannot occur on situational definites and bridging definites as we saw in the previous section. The use of a demonstrative is only warranted when a certain threshold of saliency of the referent for the hearer is reached. Shared knowledge from larger and global situation definites is insufficient in making the referent salient enough to the interlocutors. Additionally, the indirect relationship between a referent and its antecedent in bridging also seems insufficient in licensing the demonstrative.

3.2.3. Numeral ‘one’

The numeral ‘one’ in Burmese can occur in two environments. Firstly, it is mandatory when there is a lack of a unique referent that the speaker and hearer can identify. In other words, the numeral ‘one’ is required for singular indefinites. This is regardless of their specificity as we will see. The second environment it can occur in is with the definite noun phrase, but only when cooccurring with the demonstrative *edi*. In this section, I propose that the numeral ‘one’ functions as an indication to discourse participants that that there are multiple referents that the noun phrase description may refer to outside of the given context with definites.

3.2.3.1 Indefinites

The first context where a numeral ‘one’ can occur is on a non-specific indefinite noun phrase such as (39). In the non-specific indefinite, the noun phrase in question lacks a unique real word referent, and neither the speaker nor the hearer has a particular referent in mind.

(39) **Non-specific Indefinite: ‘A frog’ .**

Context: Maumau decides that he wants a pet frog and goes into the forest to find one to take home. Maumau’s mother asks you what Maumau is doing. You say:

Maumau-ga	hpa	*(dar-kaung)	(gu)	sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM	frog	one-CL	ACC	look-CONT-V

MM is looking for a frog

In (39), there are multiple frogs that *hpa* ‘frog’ could refer to. As such, the numeral ‘one’ is required to achieve an indefinite reading. Without the numeral

‘one’ and classifier *dar kaung*, the indefinite reading of this sentence would be infelicitous and there would instead be the implication that there was a unique frog that was being looked for.

The specific indefinite refers to a referent that is newly introduced or reintroduced into the discourse with an indefinite (de Vries, 2012) and which has a unique referent in the mind of the speaker. The referent can be ensured to be specific through context as seen in (40) or through cataphora in (41).

(40) **Specific Indefinite (context): ‘A frog’ .**

Context: MM has a pet frog. The frog escaped its cage and jumped out the window. MM goes into the forest to look for it. MM’s mother doesn’t know that the frog escaped. She asks you where MM is. You say:

Maumau-ga hpa *(**dar-kaung**) (gu) sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM frog one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
Maumau is looking for a frog.

In (40), within the given context, while the speaker is aware of the unique frog being looked for, the hearer is assumed to not yet share this knowledge with the speaker. As such, there is a mismatch between the knowledge state of the speaker and the hearer (as perceived by the speaker). Since the hearer is assumed not to have a unique referent in mind, the indefinite construction *hpa dar kaung* is used.

(41) **Specific Indefinite (cataphora): ‘A rabbit’.**

Context: You and Sansan go to the SPCA because they called to tell her they found her lost pet. The receptionist asks how she can help you. You do not know if it's the same person who called you. You say:

Sansan-ga yone *(**dar-kaung**) (gu) sha-nei-dei
Sansan-NOM rabbit one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
Sansan is looking for a rabbit.
[It's name is Ayeaye]

The same pattern can be observed in (41). While there is a specific referent mentioned, it comes after the indefinite descriptor. When *Sansan is looking for a rabbit* is uttered, the rabbit may still be conceptualised as a nonspecific referent for the hearer who is assumed to be unaware of a unique referent.

In both these contexts, *a frog* in (40) and *a rabbit* in (41) refer to a specific entity, despite the indefinite construction with *dar kaung*. In both contexts, the referent is known to the speaker but not yet to the hearer. Notably, when the speaker assumes the hearer to have knowledge of the entity, a bare noun definite must be used. This can be seen in (42)

(42) *Context: MM has a pet frog. The frog escaped its cage and jumped out the window. MM goes into the forest to look for it. MM's mother knows that the frog escaped. She asks you where MM is. You say:*

Maumau-ga (*edi) hpa (***dar-kaung**) (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Maumau-NOM DEM frog one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
 Maumau is looking for a frog.

The minimal change between (40) and (42) lies in whether the speaker assumes that the hearer has knowledge of the specific frog. While (40) specified a lack of knowledge of the escaped frog, resulting in the numeral 'one' being mandatory, (42) specified that the hearer was aware of the escaped frog. This results in the numeral 'one' becoming ungrammatical in (42). In other words, the only felicitous construction for this context is the bare noun which has been shown to indicate definiteness in section 3.2.1. These examples highlight the importance of the hearer's perceived knowledge state when a speaker is choosing the form of a noun phrase.

These examples suggest that, not only is the indefinite nature of the noun phrase an important consideration, it is specifically necessary when there is no clear referent to the hearer, regardless of the speaker's current knowledge, as demonstrated by the contrast between examples (40) and (42). However, this description must be refined when we consider its ability to cooccur with the demonstrative.

3.2.3.2. Definites

Interestingly, the numeral ‘one’ can attach to a definite noun phrase with a demonstrative. While the previous section demonstrates the numeral ‘one’s function as an apparent marker of indefiniteness, its cooccurrence with demonstrative noun phrases suggests that it can also indicate that the referent is only unique within the relevant context. For starters, this can be seen with the prototypical anaphoric definite such as (43).

(43) **Anaphoric Definite: ‘That one rabbit’**

Context: You and Sansan go to the pet store because Sansan wants to buy a new pet. While at the store, Sansan’s mother calls and asks what the two of you are doing at the pet store. You tell her:

[Sansan was looking at a dog and a rabbit.]

Sansan-ga *(edi) yone dar-kaung (gu) weh-nei-dei
Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit one-CL ACC buy-CONT-V

Sansan is buying the (single/one) rabbit.

While the demonstrative *edi* is typically optional for anaphoric definites, as seen in section 3.2.2, when the numeral ‘one’ is used, the demonstrative becomes obligatory.

Although *yone* ‘rabbit’ is unique in the anaphoric context in (39), the numeral ‘one’ can optionally be added as an indication that, outside of the given linguistic antecedent, there are other referents that could also fit the description of the noun phrase. Without the demonstrative, *yone dar kaung* ‘one rabbit’ would be parsed as an indefinite noun phrase instead. The demonstrative is then needed

to specify that *yone dar kaung* refers to the same rabbit as mentioned previously, rather than any other rabbit.

The numeral ‘one’ can also be used on anaphoric bridging definites, as demonstrated in (44), and anaphoric situational definites, as demonstrated in (45).

(44) **Anaphoric Bridging Definite: ‘The head’.**

Context: Maumau had a pet frog, but the cat attacked it ripped it to pieces.

[Maumau’s frog got ripped up. The head is missing.]

Maumau-ga *(**edi**) kaung **dar-lou** (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Maumau-NOM DEM head one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
 Maumau is looking for the (one/single) head

In example (44) *kaung* ‘head’ is unique through part-whole bridging. Similarly to (43), the numeral ‘one’ can be added to express that, outside of the context of Maumau’s frog, there is more than one head that could be looked for. However, the demonstrative *edi* indicates that, in (44), *kaung* ‘head’ refers to a the definite head that belong’s to Maumau’s frog.

(45) **Anaphoric Global Definite: ‘The sun.’**

Context: You run into HH and SS on a hill at the break of dawn. You ask them what they are doing. Hlahla says:

[The sun is rising.]

Aung-ga *(**edi**) nei **dar-lou** (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Aung-NOM DEM sun one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
 Aung is looking for the (one/single) sun.

Although it is not as obvious with global situation definites, the referent *nei* ‘sun’ is not necessarily unique outside of the context of Earth. As such, the numeral ‘one’ can be optionally added when cooccurring with the demonstrative to indicate that, outside of the global situation, there may be more suns.

The proposal that the numeral ‘one’ can only occur when the referent is no longer unique outside of the relevant context is supported by its inability to occur with a proper name, as seen in (46). Aissen (2000) distinguishes proper names from other definite noun phrases as their referent is fixed by convention. Definite noun phrases on the other hand have a familiarity or uniqueness requirement subject to context or previous discourse. As such, the referent of a proper name is more restricted than that of a definite noun phrase.

(46) **Proper Name Definite: ‘Sentosa’**

Context: You see Sansan looking at a map. You as Hlahla what Sansan is doing. Hlahla says:

[Sansan wants to go to Sentosa.]

Sansan-ga (edi) Sentosa (*dar-ku) (gu) sha-nei-dei
 Sansan-NOM DEM rabbit one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
 Sansan is looking for Sentosa.

Although the demonstrative *edi* is allowed due to Sentosa being an anaphoric definite in (46), the numeral ‘one’ is still ungrammatical as there are no other referents that *Sentosa* could refer to outside of the given context.

3.2.4. Differential object marking

In examples (27) to (46), the optionality of the accusative case marker *gu* was also investigated. For all the noun phrases in the canonical SOV word order, there was no contrastive difference between inserting the accusative case and removing the accusative case. As such, there is no evidence that (in)definiteness affects the use of accusative case (DOM) in Burmese.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

In this section, I propose that how definites and indefinites are marked in Burmese is affected by the notion of *Common Ground* proposed by Stalnaker (2002) and co-opted into the familiarity theory of definites by Heim (1982). Past research has distinguished anaphoric definites from the other types of definites discussed. As reviewed in section 2.3, this can be seen in the ability to use a demonstrative noun only with anaphoric definites in Mandarin (Jenks, 2018) and the environmental distinction between when weak and strong articles can occur in Fering (Schwarz, 2013). Burmese shows the same line of distinction through the optional use of the demonstrative being only allowed on anaphoric definites.

4.1. Common ground

There is a clear distinction between how definite noun phrases and indefinite noun phrases are constructed in Burmese. All the definite noun phrases can be expressed with the bare noun which, by itself, cannot take the numeral one. Indefinites on the other hand obligatorily take the numeral one.

The deciding factor in whether a noun phrase is expressed with the bare noun or with the numeral ‘one’ is whether the referent of the noun phrase exists in the interlocutors’ common ground. As mentioned in section 2.1, this refers to the shared, contextual information between the speaker and hearer and is a tenet to the familiarity theory of definiteness (Roberts, 2003). Common ground began as a

theory of presupposition. By presupposing something, it is taken as background information among the discourse participants, and hence does not need explicit mention. Stalnaker (2002:704) describes common ground as “the mutually recognised shared information in a situation in which an act of trying to communicate takes place”. Awareness of what is subsumed under common ground between speaker and hearer then affects not only the information that must be made available, but also the means the speaker uses to make it available. In Burmese, this is reflected in whether the noun is bare or has the numeral ‘one’ attached.

A speaker’s perception of a hearer’s knowledge is important in differentiating whether a noun is definite or indefinite. If the speaker assumes that a hearer is aware of an entity, the definite construction is used. This is particularly notable in the specific indefinite context where, as previously noted, the only difference between (40) and (42) lie in the speaker’s perception of whether the hearer knows that there is a frog that escaped.

(40) **Specific Indefinite (context)**

MM has a pet frog. The frog escaped its cage and jumped out the window. MM goes into the forest to look for it. MM's mother doesn't know that the frog escaped. She asks you where MM is. You say:

Maumau-ga hpa *(dar-kaung) (gu) sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM frog one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
Maumau is looking for a frog.

(42) *MM has a pet frog. The frog escaped its cage and jumped out the window. MM goes into the forest to look for it. MM's mother knows that the frog escaped. She asks you where MM is. You say:*

Maumau-ga (*edi) hpa (*dar-kaung) (gu) sha-nei-dei
Maumau-NOM DEM frog one-CL ACC look-CONT-V
Maumau is looking for a frog.

In (42), the frog is taken to exist within the common ground of the speaker and the hearer, allowing the felicitous expression of a definite noun construction. However, (40) demonstrates that, when the speaker cannot presuppose the hearer is aware of the existence of the unique, escaped frog, the numeral 'one' must be used for an indefinite noun phrase construction.

In all the definite examples examined in section 3, the ability to use the definite construction hinged on the hearer's (perceived) knowledge of the entity, and hence its existence in the common ground. This accounts for the consistent bare noun construction of situational definites, anaphoric definites, and bridging

definites. How the speaker and the hearer are aware of the entity, be it linguistic, contextual, or through world knowledge was irrelevant.

4.2 Deixis, demonstratives, and definiteness

Deixis, demonstratives and definiteness are intrinsically linked concepts. Lyons (1977, as cited in von Heusinger (2013)) hypothesises that all definite noun phrases contain a deictic element. This is backed up by the fact that, when considering Indo-European languages that have a definite article, the form of the article has always developed out of the demonstrative pronoun. Greenberg (1978) additionally observes that demonstratives are often grammaticalised to form the definite article which then tends to show up in anaphoric definites first.

Deixis refers to “a class of linguistic elements that indicate elements of the situation and/or discourse context, including speech participants and the time and location of the current speech event” (Diessel, 2012: 1). Kaplan (1989:483) explained deictic expressions through formal semantics and defines them as a linguistic sign with a “direct reference”. Their interpretation is determined by immediate aspects of the speech situation and hence require specialised treatment. In Burmese, this can be seen through the optional use of the demonstrative *edi* as can be seen in section 3.2.2.

Heim (1982) states that anaphoric noun phrases and deictic noun phrases are intrinsically similar as they both require the referent be familiar to the audience. This is in line with Greenberg’s observation, and would account for

why anaphoric definites can be realised with the demonstrative *edi* while situational definites can only be realised with the bare noun.

4.3. Typology of definiteness marking

Jenks (2018) describes three types of definiteness marking that occur cross linguistically, based on how they mark unique definites and anaphoric definites. Firstly, *Bipartite* languages have a separate article for each type of definite. An example of this would be the weak and strong articles in Fering, as described by Schwarz (2013). Secondly, there are *Marked Anaphoric* languages whereby languages express the unique definite with a bare noun, but mark anaphoric definites with, for example, the obligatory demonstrative in Mandarin. Lastly, there are *Generally Marked* languages where the same form is used for both anaphoric and unique definites.

Interestingly, Burmese does not fall into any of the attested types of definites. Jenks (2018) notes that it is unclear whether there are languages whereby the bare noun is can be used for unique definites and anaphoric definites. However, Burmese seems to fall into this category. Jenks (2018) noted that this category would be analysed as a generally marked language with a null definite determiner. While the anaphoric definite in Burmese can optionally take the demonstrative, this is still anomalous to the marked anaphoric category where languages obligatorily select a demonstrative.

Jenks (2018) hypothesises that, since the anaphoric definite article is grammaticalised before the unique definite article, marked anaphoric languages

are simply in a transitional state of the grammaticalisation of the demonstrative into a definite article. Given that hypothesis, I would then propose that Burmese may be earlier in the process of this syntactic shift resulting in the demonstrative only being optional, rather than obligatory for anaphoric definites. However, a historical analysis would be required to ascertain if a shift towards using the demonstrative in anaphoric definites had occurred.

CHAPTER 5

FURTHER RESEARCH

In this thesis, I investigated how definiteness patterns with Burmese objects in the canonical SOV word order. As such, there are still many considerations that warrant investigation that were not within the scope of this thesis. Hence, this section highlights other aspects of definiteness worth considering as well as presents preliminary data regarding how tense affects definiteness in Burmese.

It would be interesting to investigate if the same pattern of definite marking would be seen when the noun phrase is the subject of the clause, rather than just the object. Additionally, if animacy and other noun phrases outside of R-expressions would be marked the same way. Although the data in this thesis was checked across multiple sessions and contexts, it was elicited from a single speaker. As a result, the expression of definites are subject to how the consultant conceptualises the particular noun phrase. For example, while this consultant considers the sun a global unique with other suns outside of the global context, another might conceptualise 'sun' as a proper name. As such, it would be ideal to be able to obtain inter-speaker consistency across multiple consultants.

5.1 Definiteness and Tense

Preliminary data suggests that tense does not affect how definites are marked in Burmese. Table 2 provides a summary of data for four types of definites: the immediate situation definite, the larger situation definite, the anaphoric definite, and the bridging definite. The non-specific indefinite was also investigated. Each context was elicited in the past tense and future tense to explore if the object was marked in the same way as their present tense counterparts.

	Bare N	DEM + N	N + dar CL	DEM + N + dar CL
Non-specific Indefinite	★	★	✓	★
Anaphoric Definite	✓	✓	★	✓
Immediate Situation Definite	✓	✓	★	✓
Larger Situation Definite	✓	★	★	★
Bridging (part-whole)	✓	★	★	★

Table 2. Realisation of definite in past and future tense

(47) and (48) demonstrate how the data was elicited.

(47) **Larger Situation**

a. **Past Tense**

Context: Hlahla tells you that she and Maumau were at a government press conference in Myanmar yesterday. You ask them what they are doing there. Hlahla says:

Maumau-ga (*edi) darmada (*dar-yaut) (gu) sha-kei-dei

Maumau-NOM DEM president one-CL ACC look-PAST-V

Maumau looked for the president.

b. **Future Tense**

Context: Hlahla tells you that she and Maumau will be attending a government press conference in Myanmar tomorrow. You ask them what they are going to do there. Hlahla says:

Maumau-ga (*edi) darmada (*dar-yaut) (gu) sha-mei

Maumau-NOM DEM president one-CL ACC look-FUT.V

Maumau is looking for the president.

(47) demonstrates that larger situation definites can only be realised with the bare noun. The addition of the demonstrative and the numeral one would be ungrammatical. This is consistent with how it occurs in the present tense.

(48) **Non-specific Indefinite**

a. **Past Tense**

Context: Maumau decided that he wanted a pet frog. He went into the forest yesterday to find one but did not manage to find one he liked. Maumau's mother asks you what Maumau did yesterday.

You say:

Maumau-ga	hpa	*(dar-kaung)	gu	sha-kei-dei
Maumau-NOM	frog	one-CL	ACC	look-PAST-V

MM looked for a frog

b. **Future Tense**

Context: Maumau decides that he wants a pet frog and will go into the forest to find one. Maumau's mother asks you what Maumau is going to do tomorrow. You say:

Maumau-ga	hpa	*(dar-kaung)	gu	sha-mei
Maumau-NOM	frog	one-CL	ACC	look-FUT.V

MM is looking for a frog.

(48) demonstrates that the non-specific indefinite must be realised with the numeral one whether the verb is in past tense as in (48a) or future tense as in (48b). This is consistent with how it occurs in present tense, as seen in example (39).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Definite descriptions are an important aspect of natural language. Hence, it is particularly worthwhile to investigate how definiteness is marked in a language that lacks definite and indefinite articles. In this paper, I have shown that Burmese systematically marks definiteness with the bare noun phrase, and the indefinite with the numeral ‘one’. The demonstrative can also be used on deictic definite noun phrases. However, it would be simplistic to equivocate these constructions to definite and indefinite articles found in English, as exemplified with the analysis of data in section 3.

This thesis has also attempted to demonstrate how definiteness is conceptualised by Burmese speakers, particularly the speaker’s focus on the hearer’s perceived knowledge state, which was elaborated on using Stalnaker’s (2002) common ground theory. While it seems crucial in Burmese, the same consideration for common ground does not seem reflected in the current literature for definiteness in other languages.

When looking at other languages without definite articles, it is interesting to note that Burmese marks definiteness in way that seems syntactically unique due to its ability to use the bare noun construction to represent unique definites and anaphoric definites. This difference highlights the importance of investigating understudied languages in contributing to the overall theory of definiteness.

While there are still more questions to be asked, and more avenues to be explored with regards to definiteness in Burmese, this thesis investigates definiteness in Burmese at a level not yet described in current literature and forms the groundwork for more in depth research. It also contributes to current literature regarding theories of definiteness through the perspective of an understudied language.

REFERENCES

- Abbott, Barbara. 2006. Definite and indefinite. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*, 3, 392-399.
- Aissen, Judith. 2000. Differential Object Marking: Iconicity vs. Economy. Ms., University of California, Santa Cruz. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*.
- Birner, Betty, and Ward, Gregory. 1994. Uniqueness, familiarity, and the definite article in English. In *Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 93-102).
- Christophersen, Paul. 1939. The articles: A study of their theory and use in English.
- Clark, Herbert H. 1975. Bridging. In *Theoretical issues in natural language processing*.
- De Vries, Mark. 2012. The mysterious specific indefinite. *Theories of Everything*. 17, 420-426)
- Diessel, Holger. 2012. Deixis and demonstratives. *An international handbook of natural language meaning*, 3, 2407-2431.
- Fodor, Janet Dean, and Sag, Ivan A. 1982. Referential and quantificational indefinites. *Linguistics and philosophy*, 5(3), 355-398.
- Frawley, William. 1992. *Linguistic Semantics*. Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum.
- Greenberg, Joseph Harold. (1978). How does a language acquire gender markers. *Universals of human language*, 3, 47-82.
- Hawkins, John A. 1978. Definiteness and indefiniteness: A study in reference and grammatical prediction. *London: Croom Helm*.
- Heim, Irene. 1982. The semantics of definite and indefinite NPs. *University of Massachusetts at Amherst dissertation*.
- Jenks, Peter. 2015. Two kinds of definites in numeral classifier languages. In *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*. 25. 103-124.
- Jenks, Peter. 2018. Articulated definiteness without articles. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 49(3), 501-536.
- Jiang, Li Julie. 2015. Marking (in) definiteness in classifier languages. *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics*, 8, 417-449.

- Kaplan, David 1989. Demonstratives. In: J. Almog, J. Perry & H. Wettstein (eds.). *Themes from Kaplan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 481–564.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 2004. *Deixis and Pragmatics*. Handbook of Pragmatics.
- Lyons, Christopher. 1999. *Definiteness*. Cambridge University Press.
- Matthewson, Lisa. 2004. On the methodology of semantic fieldwork. *International journal of American linguistics*, 70(4), 369-415.
- Roberts, Craige. 2003. Uniqueness in definite noun phrases. *Linguistics and philosophy*, 26(3), 287-350.
- Romeo, Nicoletta. 2008. *Aspect in Burmese: Meaning and function*. 96. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1905. On denoting. *Mind*, 14(56), 479-493.
- Schwarz, Florian. 2009. Two types of definites in natural language: University of Massachusetts. *Amherst dissertation*.
- Schwarz, Florian. 2013. Two kinds of definites cross-linguistically. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 7(10), 534-559
- Stalnaker, R. 1974. Pragmatic Presuppositions. *Semantics and Philosophy*, eds.
- Stalnaker, R. 2002. Common ground. *Linguistics and philosophy*, 25(5), 701-721.
- Von Heusinger, Klaus. 2013. The salience theory of definiteness. In *Perspectives on linguistic pragmatics*. 349-374. Springer, Cham.
- World Atlas of Language Structure Online. (2019). *WALS Online - Feature 37A: Definite Articles*. [online] Available at: <https://wals.info/feature/37A#1/25/142> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2019].