English in Myanmar: Usage of English Adjective Phrases by Burmese and Rohingya Bloggers

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Abstract

Myanmar is unique in that it was a country colonised by Britain, but its current post-colonial linguistic situation suggests that it is in Kachru's Expanding Circle rather than the Outer Circle. The lack of stable use of English, however, does not mean there is neither an underlying system nor a set of discernible characteristics to describe the variety. This paper is an attempt to describe a structural aspect of the English used by Myanmarese speakers. It presents an investigation of English adjective phrases used by the Burmese and the Rohingya, two ethnic groups in Myanmar whose mother tongues belong to different language families. Adjective phrases from forty blog articles were analysed in order to identify their forms and functions, as well as similarities and differences between the two groups. Findings indicate that adjective phrases with adverb modifiers were the most frequently used form by both Burmese and Rohingya speakers. There is evidence to show that the forms and functions of the adjective phrases were influenced by the speakers' first languages. Other factors such as educational background and register may have also played a role.

Introduction

Situated in Southeast Asia and bordered by Thailand, Laos, China, Bangladesh and India, Myanmar has been exposed to different peoples and colonial powers

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throughout its history. Ancestries and languages in this country are variously mixed; Chinese, Tartar, Persian, Arab, Japanese, Malay and Indian elements are present not only in people's appearance but also in the ways they speak (Buchanan 220). Languages in Myanmar have in fact been influenced by those spoken in the East and West. For example, Rohingya, Maramagyi and Dinet languages are believed to have Persian, Arabic, Hindi and English origins while Shan, Kachin, Kayin and Chin are said to be influenced by Tartar and Chinese. As for Burmese, it is claimed to have Hindi, Chinese and other Asian language influences (Buchanan 221). In the case of Rohingya, Maramagyi and Dinet languages, they are similar to the Southern dialect of Chittagonian language of Bangladesh because the speakers live along the border of Myanmar and Bangladesh, and there have been interactions between these ethnic groups for generations. Although Chittagonian is regarded as a non-standard dialect of Bengali, these two languages are not mutually intelligible. Nevertheless, being under the Indo-Aryan language group, similar words and usages could be found in the languages (*Chittagonian: A Language of Bangladesh*).

Due to its history of colonisation by Britain, Myanmar should be placed in Kachru's Outer Circle (94). However, placing it there would not be reflective of the status of English in the country at present. Using Schneider's Dynamic Model to describe English in Myanmar would be equally problematic (Schneider 9, 243) as its diffusion is very limited. It should be noted that Myanmar is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which has chosen English as its working language (Kirkpatrick 121; Kirkpatrick and Deterding 383). However, its membership suggests that the use of English is increased only among select officials and economic players. It can be deduced that, in terms of world Englishes, Myanmar is more appropriately placed in the Expanding Circle.

Although limited in use nationwide, English *is* consistently used by a handful of Myanmarese people. Many of them can be found on the Internet, a medium for which English has become a major language (Graddol 19). Recognising the ethnic and linguistic diversity of its population, this study asks if there are variation patterns that can be attributed to the speakers' first languages (L1s). For an exploration of a variety that is understudied such as this, it is a fair question to ask given that it represents a common concern in world Englishes (WE) research (Sharma 170; Zhiming 237) and it answers to Mesthrie and Bhatt's important call to bridge the gap between WE and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (xii).

The paper develops in the following stages. First, the history and current status of English in Myanmar is briefly described. Then, an overview of adjective phrases is provided, followed by a brief review of the influences of L1 on the usage of those phrases. Subsequently, we provide a description of the methodology and discussion of results, and end the paper with a conclusion.

English in Myanmar

English was brought to Myanmar by the British and was used as the official language during the British rule, deployed especially for governance, law and education (Fen 94). English language and literature occupied a significant place in the country during this period. There were English speaking classes in Myanmar for royal members, scholars and government employees, leading to an elite group who spoke English fluently during the British era (1885-1948). The post-colonial Myanmar government, however, emphasised the use of Burmese for nearly all school subjects. There was a ban on English-medium instruction at all levels from 1964 (Holliday 50); the teaching of English in schools was banned altogether from 1966 to 1980. After this period, students started to learn English from Grade Five but the method of teaching involved only reading and writing (Lwin 8), which invariably resulted in limited speaking skills. The second education reform, introduced in 1980, had a considerable focus on English and encouraged its learning from the pre-school level. However, the teaching method was largely Grammar-Translation which relied heavily on the native language (Sein 99). In 1996, the country became involved in tourism and began trading with other Asian countries. The use of English was naturally required by these sectors and this resulted in the setting up of private language centres. They offered English language programmes using a variety of teaching methods which were often aided by language learning technology. Currently English is taught from Primary 1 (Kirkpatrick 126).

Despite this lack of widespread growth of English, a closer inspection of Myanmar society shows that there are pockets of sustained use of the language in certain segments of the population. Firstly, in spite of its foreign language status, an influx of international companies, nongovernmental organisations and tourists into Myanmar, as well as economic reforms (Sein 99, Paw 103), called for increased English usage. As a result, there are now significant numbers of educated urban residents who speak English as a second language (CKS 15). There are also a number of older citizens who underwent an education system that allowed them to become highly proficient in the language. The Burmese bloggers in this current study are a case in point. In addition, given the country's socio-political situation, there is a significant community of activists in each ethnic group who use only English to communicate with the outside world, usually through the Internet as evidenced by the considerable number of available blogs (Appendix). English is also the lingua franca among those who cannot speak Burmese. Usage of vocabulary items such as "stage show" for concert and "platform" for pavement can be traced back to colonial times and seen as evidence of limited nativisation (Lwin 11). It can then be deduced that the English language spoken in Myanmar is a variety in its own right and it definitely possesses its own features which may systematically vary from other more well-known varieties.

Adjectives Phrases

Adjectives show properties of nouns and are very productive in English. Adjectives are categorised semantically into twelve groups: dimension (e.g. *wide*), age (e.g. *young*), value (e.g. *bad*), colour (e.g. *green*), physical properties (e.g. *light*), human propensity (e.g. *delighted*), speed (e.g. *fast*), quantification (e.g. *probable*), qualification (e.g. *some*), cardinal number (e.g. *first*), difficulty (e.g. *tough*) and similarity (e.g. *unlike*) (Dixon 84). Syntactically, adjectives can be categorised as attributive or predicative. Attributive adjectives modify nouns directly (e.g. *The black car sped down the avenue*), while predicative adjectives are either the complement of a copula (e.g. *The car is black*) or a secondary predicate (e.g. *She painted the wall black*) (Hofher and Matushansky 331).

An adjective phrase (AdjP) is a phrase which is headed by an adjective. In such a phrase, an adjective can occur in an initial, medium or final position. There are two types of AdjPs: those with complements and those with modifiers. AdjPs with complements are mostly prepositional phrases (e.g. *kind to children*) or subordinate clauses (e.g. *glad it was over*). Most modifiers of AdjPs are adverbs although there are also determinatives, prepositional phrases and noun phrases. AdjPs may also be postpositive and function as external modifiers (Huddleston and Pullum 118).

In Burmese, there are four types of adjectives which are as follows: qualification (e.g. *chawthaw mainkalay* – beautiful girl); quantification (e.g. *mainkalay amyar gyi* – many girls); questioning (e.g. *bae mainkalay* – which girl); and referring (e.g. *di mainkalay* – this girl). They are all attributive. They become verbs in the predicate position when the attached affixes are removed. Adjectives are formed in Burmese by affixation on nouns or verbs. There are no AdjPs with complements in Burmese (Department of Burmese 30). Judson categorises Burmese adjectives into three: pronominal (*e.g. chaw thaw mainkalay* – beautiful girl); verbal (e.g. *lyinmyanthaw myin* – fast horse); and numeral adjectives (e.g. *myin na kaung* – two horses) (22). Pronominal adjectives are formed by attaching affixes to nouns while verbal adjectives are formed by attaching affixes to verbs. Wheatley argues that most of parts of speech such as adjectives and nouns of Burmese are formed by prefixation or suffixation of verbs. Verbs are basic units in Burmese, not derived from other parts of speech and perform most descriptive functions including those that are normally performed by adjectives in other languages (Wheatley 835).

There are more properties of adjectives in Rohingya than in Burmese. Based on Dixon's categorisation, its types of adjectives are as follows: qualification (e.g. *saiyee hortha* – true word); quantification (e.g. *beshi manush* – many people); dimension (e.g. *gura botl* – small bottle); age (e.g. *bura manush* – old man); value (e.g. *balah manush* – good man); colour (e.g. *laal humbol* – red blanket); physical property (e.g. *fatl humbol* – light blanket); feeling (e.g. *khushiarsaythay myalafwa* –

happy girl); ease/difficulty (e.g. *asán hum* – easy job/*doroh hum* – difficult job); similarity/difference (e.g. *ekkudhoilla* – similar/*forok* – different), and numerals (e.g. *agwa botl* – one bottle) (84). According to Basu, there are adjectives in Rohingya that are both attributive and predicative. Like Burmese, an AdjP is comprised of an adjective as the head and modifiers which are, in this case, mostly adverbs. However, Rohingya has AdjPs with complements too (23). A comparison of the structures of AdjPs in the two languages is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Attributive and predicative AdjPs in Burmese and Rohingya

	Burmese		Rohingya	
Attributive	*chaw thaw*	*mainkalay*	*shundor*	*myalafwa*
	beautiful	girl	beautiful	girl
	(adjective)	(noun)	(adjective)	(noun)
Predicative	*mainkalay*	*chaw the*	*myalafwa*	*shundor*
	(noun)	(verb)	(noun)	(adjective)

It can be seen that Rohingya has attributive and predicative adjectives while Burmese has only attributive ones. In a predicative structure, a verb is used instead.

First Language Influence on Usage of English Adjective Phrases
L1 or cross-linguistic influence is a result of "the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously... acquired" (Odlin 27).

Nicoladis compared English language production of bilingual children who were exposed to both English and French in their early childhood and monolinguals who spoke only French from childhood. The participants were two to five year olds and were administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (Dunn and Dunn 2), which assessed the ability to use adjective-noun strings. Bilingual children were found to produce adjectives in a reverse order unlike their monolingual counterparts. Structural overlapping and ambiguity were found to influence the adjective-noun strings of the French-English bilingual children (Nicoladis 16). In another study, Blackwell demonstrated the importance of syntactic diversity and age of acquisition of English adjectives (535). Data were collected from CHILDES (MacWhinney 7) which included authentic child languages in the form of conversational interaction. The results showed that syntactic position highly influenced acquisition of adjectives while frequency of input and age were weakly correlated with it.

In the present study, English AdjP forms and functions (see previous section) produced by the Burmese and the Rohingya are compared. The study also adopts the categories of AdjPs proposed by Huddleston and Pullum (118) and Dixon (84).

Methodology

The research questions that have guided this investigation are as follows:

1. What are the forms of AdjPs used by Rohingya and Burmese users of English and how are they similar or different?
2. What are the functions of AdjPs used by Rohingya and Burmese users of English and how are they similar or different?
3. What is the evidence of L1 influence on the use of English AdjPs by the Burmese and the Rohingya?

Due to difficulties in obtaining relevant data in Myanmar, the study made use of the English that was available on blogs. As mentioned above, the fact that Myammarese bloggers use English to blog is another main reason why this register was chosen. Blogs provide excellent data source because of their authentic, current and accessible nature. The articles were published from 2013 onwards, shortly after the occurrence of renewed political instability in Myanmar. The blogs had several types of articles such as news, opinions, interviews and book reviews. Ten blogs each from the Burmese and Rohingya groups were identified (Appendix) and two analytical articles from each blog (40 articles written by 40 bloggers altogether) were analysed. As one of the purposes of this study is to investigate the form of AdjPs, analytical articles are considered to be very much suitable as they are well-structured and sufficiently long. Each article has over 2000 words and a total of approximately 80,000 words formed the final corpus for analysis.

The bloggers' backgrounds are as follows:

Table 2: Bloggers' demographics

Blogger	Gender		Age			Education Level			Profession			Place of Residence			
	M	F	30–40	41–50	51–60	BA	MA	Ph.D	Uni. Prof.	Journalist	Human rights activist	M	B	UK	MY
Burmese	20		9	10	1	12	6	2	2	18		18		1	1
Rohingya	20		7	10	3	20					20		2		18

M= Myanmar; B= Bangladesh; UK= United Kingdom; MY = Malaysia

Table 2 shows that all bloggers are males between 30 to 50 years old with various levels of tertiary education. All 20 Rohingya bloggers are first degree holders. 12 Burmese bloggers possess first degrees, six have Master's degrees and two are PhD holders. The majority of Burmese bloggers are journalists and all Rohingya bloggers are human rights activists. At the time of the study, the latter lived in Malaysia and Bangladesh while the Burmese bloggers resided in Myanmar.

Data were firstly analysed for forms of AdjPs based on the categories proposed by Huddleston and Pullum (118) while Dixon's (2) categories of adjective functions were subsequently used to identify their functions.

Results and Discussion
Forms of Adjective Phrases Used by Rohingya and Burmese Users of English

Table 3 presents the frequency of AdjPs with complements and with modifiers of the two groups.

Table 3: Frequency of adjective phrases in blog articles by groups

	AdjPs with complements		AdjPs with modifiers		Total
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
Burmese	49	42.98	61	43.26	110 (43.14%)
Rohingya	65	57.01	80	56.74	145 (56.86%)
Total	114	44.70	141	55.30	255 (100%)

A total of 255 AdjPs were identified and of that total, the Rohingya produced 56.86% (145 tokens) while the Burmese produced 43.14% (110 tokens). 44.70% (114) were AdjPs with complements while 55.30% (141) were those with modifiers. 57.01% (65) of AdjPs with complements were used by the Rohingya while 42.98% (49) were used by the Burmese. The Rohingya used 56.74% (80) of AdjPs with modifiers while the Burmese used only 43.26% (61). It can be concluded that more AdjPs were used by the Rohingya than by the Burmese and more AdjPs with modifiers were used than those with complements. In addition, the Rohingya used a higher number of AdjPs in each category than their Burmese counterparts.

Results based on further observation on the two categories of AdjPs and the choice of complements and modifiers are as follows:

Table 4: Types of adjective phrases by groups

Categories	Types	Rohingya		Burmese	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
AdjPs with complements	subordinate clause	28	19.31	11	10.00
	prepositional phrase	37	25.52	38	34.55
AdjPs with modifiers	Adverb	74	51.03	54	49.09
	Determinative	4	2.76	2	1.82
	noun phrase	0	0	0	0
	prepositional phrase	2	1.38	5	4.54
Total		145	100	110	100

Table 4 shows that some AdjPs were employed frequently while others were used in a limited manner or not at all. In the case of the Rohingya, the highest usage (51.03%) was for AdjPs with adverb modifiers, followed by AdjPs with prepositional phrase complements (25.52%) and subordinate clause complements (19.31%). The use of AdjPs with determinative modifiers was minimal (2.76%) and fewer for those with prepositional phrase modifier (1.38%). No AdjPs with noun phrase modifiers were used. As for the Burmese, the highest frequency was by AdjPs with adverb modifiers (49.09%) while AdjPs with prepositional phrase complements was in the second place (34.55%). This was followed by AdjPs with subordinate clause complements (10.00%) and those with prepositional phrase modifiers (4.54%). There were two AdjPs with determiner modifiers (1.82%) and like the Rohingya, AdjPs with noun phrase modifiers and determiners were not used at all by the Burmese.

The most frequent AdjPs used by the Rohingya were those with adverb modifiers. This was higher than their Burmese counterparts although this type of AdjPs was also the most frequent for the latter. One possible reason for the high occurrence of adverb modifiers was the subject matter of the blogs from which the data was obtained. Bloggers needed the structure to describe situations and events accurately and vividly. Similarly, AdjPs with prepositional complements was the second most frequent type used by both groups. Prepositional complements are obligatory for some adjectives (e.g. *fond of jokes*), while others are used to show the meaning more clearly (e.g. *keen on the idea*) (Huddleston and Pullum 120). In this study, AdjPs with prepositional complement were used widely with different prepositions such as *to*, *of*, *for*, *from* and *in* as evident in the following examples. (Note: BP: Burmese Participant; RP: Rohingya Participant)

> RP4: easy *for the audience*
> RP5: interested *to bring up*
> BP3: synonymous *with sea pirates*
> BP11: bound *to our freedom*

The Rohingya's use of AdjPs with subordinate clause complements is much higher than that by the Burmese who used a higher number of AdjPs with prepositional phrases. The following are examples of AdjPs with subordinate-clause complements and prepositional phrase modifiers.

> RP3: best *as he could* (subordinate-clause complement)
> BP3: interesting *to watch* (subordinate-clause complement)
> BP3: glorified *as nationalism* (prepositional phrase modifier)
> BP3: dangerous *in the extreme* (prepositional phrase modifier)

AdjPs with determinatives were used, but just under 5% by the Burmese and the Rohingya. In addition, both groups did not use AdjPs with noun phrase modifiers at all. These phrases could be seen very rarely in Standard English itself (Huddleston and Pullum 120), therefore, it is not surprising that the participants used few of these phrases.

It can be seen that the Rohingya's use of AdjPs is substantially higher than their Burmese counterparts. Although the two groups seem to use the types of adjective phrase with roughly similar frequencies, some patterns of variation between them can be observed.

Modifiers
Both the Rohingya and the Burmese used AdjPs with adverb modifiers and AdjPs with prepositional complements more than the other types. However, when the types of adverb modifiers of each group were analysed, some differences could be seen. Specifically, the Burmese used a higher variety of adverb modifiers than the Rohingya, illustrated as follows.

> RP 5: *particularly* important, *socially* conscious, *seriously* sick
> RP 11: *extremely* hard, *repeatedly* tortured
> BP 9: *explicitly* incorporated, *very* good, *less* consistent
> BP 12: *usually successful*, *well* trained, *so* wide, *unintentionally* bite, far
> enough and *less* developed

The excerpts indicate that the Rohingya largely used adverb modifiers with *–ly*, derived from adjectives themselves, while the Burmese used a wider choice of adverbs such as *usually, well, far,* etc.

Both the Rohingya and the Burmese used fewer AdjPs with prepositional phrases and determinative modifiers. There were only two participants who used AdjPs with prepositional phrase modifiers:

> RP5: cautious *to excess*
> BP1: dangerous *in the extreme*

There were two instances of AdjPs with determinatives as well.

> RP5: *some* extensive
> BP1: *the* heaven-born

The educational background of bloggers could also be one of the factors influencing their usage. One Burmese participant who used these AdjPs was a professor who had several English publications. Similarly, a Rohingya blogger who used these phrases was also highly experienced in blog-writing. It can be

deduced that education and extent of English use are possible contributing factors to the usage of AdjP types.

Complements

AdjPs with prepositional phrase complements were the second most frequently used form by both the Rohingya and the Burmese. The Rohingya used more prepositions such as *to*, *from*, *of*, *in* and *about* while the Burmese tended to use more prepositional phrases with *to*, *with*, *for*, *in* and *throughout*. Examples from the blogs are as follows:

> RP3: accessible *from the Bay of Bengal*, related *to the scripts*
> RP9: insincere *about reform*, ready *to govern*
> BP1: influential *in shaping*, minimal *after the humiliation and liable for prosecution*
> BP8: synonymous *with sea pirates*, embedded *in the town*

The Rohingya used different prepositions and conjunctions for AdjPs with subordinate complements while the Burmese used only *to* as part of the complement. The following examples demonstrate use of AdjPs with subordinate complements by the Rohingya and use of AdjPs with only the preposition *to* by the Burmese.

> RP2 necessary *to uncover the truth*
> RP6 best *as he could*
> BP2 ready *to do anything*, shameful *to admit*
> BP4 imperative *to keep this issue alive*

In conclusion, although the Rohingya and the Burmese users of English prefer AdjPs with adverb modifiers, prepositional phrase complements and subordinate clause complements were used more than other forms. In this respect, the Burmese used more types of adverb modifiers while the Rohingya employed more types of complements with different prepositions.

Functions of Adjective Phrases Used by Rohingya and Burmese Users of English

The AdjPs were analysed using Dixon's adjective categories (84). As previously stated, there were altogether 255 AdjPs, out of which 145 were used by the Rohingya and 110 by the Burmese. Table 5 provides the frequencies.

Table 5: Adjective phrase functions by groups

	Core Functions		Peripheral Functions		Functions of Large Adjective Classes		Total
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency
Burmese	6	5.45	35	31.82	69	62.73	110
Rohingya	0	0	60	41.38	85	58.62	145
Total							255

Both groups used AdjPs with the functions of large adjective classes most frequently with the Burmese at 62.73% (69) and the Rohingya at 58.62% (86). These were followed by peripheral functions with 31.82% (35) by the Burmese and 41.38% (60) by the Rohingya. Only 5.45% (6) AdjPs used by the Burmese were for core functions while none of the Rohingya participants used AdjPs with the same function.

Table 6 illustrates the frequencies of specific AdjP functions used by the Rohingya and the Burmese.

Table 6: Adjective phrase function types by groups

	Types	Rohingya		Burmese	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Core Semantic Functions	dimension	0	0	2	1.81
	age	0	0	0	0
	value	0	0	4	3.63
	colour	0	0	0	0
Peripheral Semantic Functions	physical property	16	11.03	3	2.73
	human propensity	44	30.34	32	29.09
	speed	0	0	0	0
Semantic Functions of large adjective classes	difficulty	9	6.21	2	1.81
	similarity	1	0.69	1	0.90
	qualification	67	46.21	64	58.18
	quantification	1	0.69	1	0.91
	position	7	4.83	1	0.91
	cardinal number	0	0	0	0
Total		145	100	110	100

As it was for forms, the distributions of types of functions by the two groups are similar. Certain types were not used at all by the two groups. In the case of the Rohingya, AdjPs showing qualification were the most frequently used (46.21%), followed by those describing human propensity (30.34%), difficulty (6.21%) and position (4.83%). Similarity and quantification were used once each (0.69%). No AdjPs were used for core functions such as dimension, age, colour and value. This was also true for AdjPs with cardinal numbers. Similarly, the Burmese also used AdjPs expressing qualification more than those with other functions (58.18%). 29.09% of the AdjPs showed human propensity, 3.63% described value while only 2.73% was used for physical property. There were only two occurrences each (1.81%) for dimension and difficulty, and only one each (0.91%) for similarity, quantification and position.

It is clear that the Rohingya and the Burmese groups used certain functions of AdjPs more than others. Peripheral functions were the most frequently used while core functions were used the least. Specifically, qualification and human propensity were the most popular functions while no group used cardinal number and speed. In addition, similarity, difficulty, position and quantification were also infrequent.

The results indicate that both ethnic groups used different forms of AdjPs for each function and the Rohingya used AdjPs for more functions than the Burmese. In the following section, the findings are discussed by analysing how the functions are expressed through the different forms of AdjPs. The complements and modifiers used for AdjPs are shown in italics.

Core Semantic Functions
The four types of functions in this category are dimension, age, value and colour. Although the most common types of functions are included in this category, the Rohingya did not use these functions at all. The Burmese minimally used AdjPs for value and dimension. The following are examples of AdjPs with the function that describes value.

> BP2: good *to some extent*
> BP9: *usually* bad
> BP9: *excellent* in nature

Two AdjPs used for describing dimension by the Burmese are:

> BP2: *so* wide
> BP5: long *enough*

Most of the contents of the Burmese and Rohingya blogs do not include the description of object and people dimension and thus this function of AdjPs was absent. The study focuses on AdjPs and not on simple adjectives. Simple adjectives would have occurred with these types of functions more frequently (Dixon 84).

Peripheral Semantic Functions
This group contains the second most frequently used functions for both the Rohingya and the Burmese. Among the three sub-categories under this group, human propensity obtained the highest percentage compared to physical property and speed. Examples showing the human propensity function are as follows:

BP2: willing *to sacrifice them*
BP8: happy *to buy dollars*
RP3: aware *of isolated maritime movement*
RP5: interested *to bring up*

Both groups used this function widely and as the data was obtained from political blogs with the purpose of describing events and experiences of people, this type of writing may have encouraged the participants to describe human propensity more frequently. According to Dixon, the human propensity function describes human feelings in context (84). This description is consistent with the political articles analysed here for they contained phrases that were used to describe the feelings of the Rohingya, the Burmese and other victims of persecution. It should be noted that Buchanan contends that adjectives in the languages of Myanmar are used to portray the feelings of people in particular situations (220).

The following exemplify both the Burmese and the Rohingya use of AdjPs to show physical property.

BP2: large *enough for the total population*
BP6: heavy *to be carried*
RP3: *not smooth* for the vehicles
RP8: *totally* wet

However, the Rohingya used more AdjPs with this function. In the Burmese culture, describing physical properties, especially of people, is not encouraged. This may be one of the reasons for their different usage patterns. Educational background may also be one of the factors, as the Burmese who used AdjPs with this function are more educated and highly experienced individuals than others in their group. Finally, no AdjPs were found to describe speed.

Semantic Functions of Large Adjective Classes
Both the Rohingya and the Burmese use AdjPs to express these functions the most. The six functions are difficulty, similarity, qualification, quantification and cardinal number, with both groups describing qualification more than other types. Qualification was used in both the Burmese and Rohingya blogs to describe situations, events and conditions of people. The following exemplify qualification.

BP11: significant *for the people of this country*
BP2: impossible *to have any confidence*
RP9: eligible *to vote*
RP16: true *to each other*

In addition, the Rohingya used more of this function compared to the Burmese. This may be a result of the blog contents being mostly narratives of tragic conditions of the Rohingya in their villages where, according to Narine and Waller, they were persecuted and discriminated against by the government and extremist Buddhist monks (237, 357).

Other functions such as difficulty, similarity, position and quantification were not significantly used by the Burmese and the Rohingya. The following are the few available ones from the data.

BP2: difficult *to answer for two reasons* (difficulty)
BP7: *so* near (position)
BP2: synonymous *with sea pirates* (similarity)
RP4: *very* difficult (difficulty)
RP2: *very* far (position)
RP7: *culturally* diverse (difference)
RP14*: remarkably* similar (similarity)
RP17: *very* few (quantification)

Evidence of L1 Influence in the Use of English by the Burmese and the Rohingya

Forms of Adjective Phrases

The forms and frequencies of AdjPs suggest that there is some L1 influence on English AdjP usage by both groups. The frequencies of AdjPs having similar structures to those of the participants' mother tongues are shown in Table 7 below.

There are basically two main types in adjective phrase forms: modifiers and complements. Most of the adverb modifiers *are –ly* adverbs.

Table 7: Adjective phrases with modifiers by groups

	Types	Rohingya		Burmese	
AdjPs with modifiers	adverb	74	92.5%	54	88.5%
	determinative	4	5%	2	3.3%
	noun phrase	0	0%	0	0%
	prepositional phrase	2	2.5%	5	8.2%
	Total	80	100%	61	100%

It can be seen from the table that both Rohingya and Burmese users of English used adverbs more frequently than other types of modifiers (92.5% and 88.52% respectively). The following are examples from the data:

RPs: actually correct, extremely religious, consciously aware, inextricably

       bound, well trained
BPs: equally appalling, fundamentally pathetic, simply motivated, personally heroic, very cautious

In both Burmese and Rohingya, AdjPs with adverb modifiers are used extensively. Thurgood explains that languages in Myanmar use adjectives which are modified by adverbs so that the meaning is intensified and clear (685). There is some evidence in their English AdjP usage to show that it was influenced by their L1. For example, the AdjPs used by the Rohingya describe situations using adverb phrases such as *culturally diverse* and *politically sensitive*, while the Burmese describe them with *actually correct, usually successful, consciously aware* and *too delighted.* These examples demonstrate the tendency of English users with a Myanmarese background to depict events with detailed descriptions and a certain degree of seriousness. In Burmese and Rohingya languages, we can see the same intensification of meaning such as in *thay ma laoute aung kaung tai* ("deadly delicious" – interpreted as "extremely delicious") and *gom gori shundaw* ("exceptionally beautiful"). In addition, both groups of English users use *–ly* adverbs such as *ethically wrong* rather than adjectives without the *–ly* suffix such as *very critical.* In Rohingya and Burmese, adverbs are used to modify adjectives and are formed by adding *–swar* in the case of Burmese (e.g. *hla pa-swar* – beautifully) and *–gori* in the case of Rohingya (e.g. *shun daw-gori* – beautifully). It is apparent that all participants were influenced by their L1s as *–swar* and *–gori* have the same function as *–ly* in English (Department of Burmese 25).

    In the case of complements, both subordinate clause complements and prepositional phrase complements are used by the Rohingya and the Burmese.

Table 8: Adjective phrases with complements by groups

AdjPs with complements	Type	Rohingya		Burmese	
	subordinate clause	28	43.1%	11	22.4%
	prepositional phrase	37	56.9%	38	77.6%
Total		65	100%	49	100%

As shown above, subordinate clause and prepositional phrase complements were used by the Rohingya 43.1% and 56.9% respectively, while the Burmese used prepositional phrase complements considerably more (77.6%) than they did subordinate clause complements (22.4%). The following examples illustrate this:

    RPs: insincere *about reform* (prepositional phrase), accessible *from the Bay of Bengal* (prepositional phrase), crucial *to have room* (subordinate clause) ready *to govern* (subordinate clause)
    BPs: common *for the kings* (prepositional phrase), natural *for the people of this country* (prepositional phrase), back *to square one* (prepositional phrase),

active in sea-trade (prepositional phrase), difficult *to appreciate democracy* (subordinate clause)

This pattern of usage may also be related to their different L1s as subordinate clauses are used to complement only verbs in Burmese while both types complement adjectives in Rohingya (Thurgood 686).

Functions of Adjective Phrases
There is evidence of L1 influence on the functions of AdjPs as well. Among the three main functions of AdjPs proposed by Dixon (84), the core function is absent in both Rohingya and Burmese languages. The influence of L1 is apparent as no Rohingya participant used AdjPs expressing this function, and only a few such AdjPs were used by the Burmese.

Table 9: Adjective phrases with peripheral semantic functions by groups

	Types	Rohingya		Burmese	
Peripheral Semantic Functions	physical property	16	26.7%	3	8.6%
	human propensity	44	73.3%	32	91.4%
	Speed	0	0%	0	0%
Total		60	100%	35	100%

For peripheral semantic functions, both groups used adjectives to describe human propensity and physical property as can be seen in the following:

> RPs: particularly vulnerable (human propensity), very heartening (human propensity), fairly rounded shape (physical property)
> BPs: happy to buy dollars (human propensity), personally heroic (human propensity), considerably flat area (physical property)

Recall that neither group used AdjPs describing speed. This is probably because this dimension is expressed mainly through verbs in Burmese and Rohingya (Department of Burmese 41). This also provides some evidence of L1 influence on their AdjP usage patterns.

Both the Rohingya and the Burmese use AdjPs expressing qualification in the category of large adjective classes.

Table 10: Adjective phrases with semantic functions of large adjective classes by groups

	Types	Rohingya		Burmese	
Semantic Functions of Large Adjective Classes	difficulty	9	10.6%	2	3.0%
	similarity	1	1.2%	1	1.4%
	qualification	67	78.8%	64	92.8%
	quantification	1	1.2%	1	1.4%
	position	7	8.2%	1	1.4%
	cardinal number	0	0%	0	0%
Total		85	100%	69	100%

In the data, the Rohingya and the Burmese use AdjPs for qualification at 78% and 92% respectively. Some examples are:

> RP: deadly criminal, relatively recent, lawfully indigenous, ineligible to be Burma citizen
> BP: equally appalling, simply reconcilable, well prepared, accessible to their friends

In Burmese, qualification is one of four main functions of adjectives (Department of Burmese 33). Similarly, adjectives are used in poems, among others, to qualify characters, events and nature in Rohingya (Basu 22). This pattern also suggests L1 influence on their English AdjPs.

The most frequently used AdjPs were those with adverb modifier and prepositional phrase complements to express qualification and human propensity. In Burmese and Rohingya, AdjPs with these functions are very prominent (Thurgood 685; Department of Burmese 34) and it is likely that they have been reflected in their usage of English AdjPs too. In general, the evidence for L1 influence is reasonably apparent in the forms and functions of AdjPs used by both groups of bloggers.

Conclusion

The aim of the study has been to explore the forms and functions of English AdjPs used by the Rohingya and the Burmese, and compare the similarities and differences between these two groups. In the case of forms, both the Rohingya and the Burmese were found to use adverb modifiers, prepositional phrase complements and subordinate clause complements. The frequency of AdjPs used by the Rohingya is higher than that by the Burmese. AdjPs with adverb modifiers were the most frequently used form by both groups. However, when the results of the two groups were compared, the types of adverbs in the case of adverb modifiers and the types of prepositions in the case of complements were very different. The Burmese used more varieties of adverb modifiers than the Rohingya did. On the other hand, the Rohingya used different types of prepositional phrase complements while the Burmese used only one type of prepositional phrase complements, i.e. *to*. It is apparent that both groups were reasonably influenced by their L1. Overproduction and avoidance of the structures were also likely based on the structures of their mother tongues although this was not investigated in this study.

In the case of functions, AdjPs were used to express qualification and human propensity by both the Rohingya and the Burmese with comparable frequencies. Although similar functions were expressed, which may be a result of the register, forms of the AdjPs and word choices were different. In terms of qualification, the Rohingya used the AdjPs to describe feelings of despair with adverb

modifiers, prepositional phrase complements and subordinate complements while the Burmese used AdjPs with subordinate complements to show qualification.

Similarly, in the case of human propensity, the Rohingya used different forms of AdjPs while the Burmese used only AdjPs with subordinate clause complements and prepositional clause complements. As complements mostly appear in English at the end of sentences, which is a structural position similarly found in Burmese syntax, the Burmese speakers may have reflected this in their usage of English AdjPs.

There were some differences between the functions used by the Rohingya and those by the Burmese. The Rohingya did not use AdjPs with core function types while the Burmese used a very limited number of AdjPs to describe difficulty and position. This may also be due to L1 influence because Rohingya uses verbs for core functions while Burmese uses verbs for difficulty and position.

Other factors such as bloggers' educational background and register (of blog-writing) may have also influenced AdjP usage in this study. However, it can be maintained that L1 was more influential because the bloggers chose forms and functions which were similar to those of their native languages.

Further investigations on the forms and functions of English AdjPs by users in Myanmar can be extended to other ethnic groups. A more comprehensive understanding of the AdjP could be carried out through the use of verbal data. Due to the lack of research on the English language in Myanmar and the complex linguistic background of this country (Buchanan 219), future studies should follow up this initial and limited exploration with investigation of virtually any other linguistic aspects of this slowly emerging variety. With more findings, comparison with other varieties in the region will also be possible as well as appropriate.

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Appendix
Rohingya blogs
1. http://www.rohingyablogger.com/
2. http://brrcm.blogspot.co.uk/
3. http://rydfinfo.blogspot.co.uk/
4. http://www.thestateless.com/
5. http://www.kaladanpress.org/
6. http://www.rohingyatimes.org/
7. http://merhrom.wordpress.com/
8. http://thesail.wordpress.com/
9. http://saiful2009.webs.com/
10. http://www.rvision.com/

Burmese blogs
1. https://thesail.wordpress.com/
2. http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/
3. http://irrawaddyblog.com/
4. http://www.m-mediagroup.com/en
5. http://www.mizzima.com/

6. https://drkokogyi.wordpress.com/
7. http://www.maungzarni.net/
8. http://burmablog.net/
9. http://blog.burma-center.org/
10. http://mma-m.blogspot.com