

## Psycho-collocational expressives in Burmese

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Alice Vittrant

### 1 **Introduction**

Burmese, as part of the Mainland Southeast Asia linguistic area shares many linguistic features with other related and unrelated-related languages of the area. Since Henderson (1965) noticed striking similarities between Southeast Asian languages, Mainland Southeast Asia (henceforth MSEA) has been recognized as a *Sprachbund* (Migliazzia 1996; Matisoff 2001; Enfield 2005; Vittrant 2010) or a ‘zone of structural convergence’ (Bisang 2006). The features shared belong to different domains (cf., Bisang 1991, 1996; Clark 1989; Matisoff 1986b, 1991, for details). ‘Expressive’ is one of these features, at the crossroad of the phonetic, morphosyntactic, and semantic domains. This feature also illustrates the aesthetic components of the grammar of MSEA languages, being a productive and significant device to express emotion, feelings, and mental states in these languages. Two kinds of expressive are found in MSEA languages: elaborate expressions and psycho-collocations. The purpose of this paper is to present Burmese psycho-collocations, focusing on their forms, their syntactic behaviours, their similarities and differences with psycho-collocations in other languages of the area.

## 2 About expressives or how to express emotional phenomena

### 2.1 What is an expressive ?

Many languages of the world have a lexical category referred to as expressives (Fudge 1970), phonaesthetics (Henderson 1965<sup>1</sup>) or ideophones to refer to noise, animal cries, mental states, physical states, and actions. Expressives may be divided in sub-categories. For instance Antilla (1977) distinguished three classes of words: ‘onomatopoeic’ for words describing animal cries and noise, ‘descriptive’ for those referring to physical states and actions, and ‘affective’ for mental states words; whereas Diffloth (1972, 1976<sup>2</sup>, 2001) defines ideophones and onomatopoeic as sub-classes of ‘expressives’. Expressive is sometimes considered as a distinguished part-of-speech category. Most recently, Potts et. al (2009) have discussed expressives as a class of emotive morphemes, words, and constructions.

However they are labelled, expressive words have a tendency in a wide range of languages to be associated with structural and phonological peculiarities, although these are not sufficient conditions for defining this category cross-linguistically. For instance, Henderson (1965: 460) evokes secondary phonological pattern of ‘affective’ language whereas Mithun (1982)<sup>3</sup> notices that expressives are “particularly resistant to regular phonetic change.”

As for the syntactic patterns exhibited by expressives, Clark (1996: 535) and Goddard (2008: 89) point out the non-standard or reverse order of components in expressive compounds. Jaisser (1990: 160) reports on syntactic device for differentiating the locus of

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<sup>1</sup> Henderson (1965) labeled ‘phonaesthetic’ words for descriptive noises and sudden darting movement (instead of onomatopoeic).

<sup>2</sup> Diffloth (1976: 264): “Onomatopoeic forms are those displaying acoustic symbolism and having syntactic and morphological properties totally different from those of verbs and nouns. *Ideophones* are words displaying phonological symbolism of any kind (acoustic, articulatory, structural) and having distinct morphosyntactic properties; ideophones include onomatopoeic forms as a subclass. *Expressives* have the same morphosyntactic properties than ideophones, but their symbolism, if such exists, is not necessarily phonological; expressives contain ideophones as a subclass.”

<sup>3</sup> Expressive words found in related Iroquoian languages do not exhibit the expected sound correspondences for cognates.

emotion from a single organ in Hmong language, whereas Diffloth (1972, 1976) and Mithun (1982) noted unusual syntactic properties of these expressives<sup>4</sup>.

Expressives are regularly omitted in grammars, and generally neglected although they constitute a fundamental word class in many Asian languages. They are however extremely difficult to elicit in the field as noted by Diffloth (2001: 267)<sup>5</sup>. They indeed rarely appear in declarative and neutral speech as they represent an attempt by the speaker to transmit a sensation to the hearer as directly as language allows. This is why they may sometimes be considered interjections (see Headley 1977).

In this paper, expressives are considered to be idiomatic forms that display special phonological and structural properties with often a ‘direct’ or ‘unmediated’ relation to meaning.

## 2.2 *Expressives and body-part terms*

According to Wierzbicka (1999), who looks for universal parameters in the definition of emotions and their linguistics coding, all languages describe emotions, to a certain degree, via bodily symptoms (blush) or sensations (feeling hot as a reaction to an emotional situation).

Body is also central in decoding other people’s emotions: there is a range of physiological characteristics such as smiles, eyebrow shapes by which we judge if a person is happy, sad,

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<sup>4</sup> Diffloth (1972: 445) noticed unusual negative properties in negative sentences containing ideophones, a “morphology that is semantically and formally unlike anything found in nouns and verbs” (1976: 251); whereas, Mithun (1982: 50) wrote about Iroquoian languages: “Expressive terms are characterized by special syntactic, morphological [...] patterns. Their syntactic patterns are quite limited. They do not enter into the same kinds of grammatical constructions as other lexical items. Instead, they occur either as complete, independent utterances, or as the objects of a verb like *say*.”

<sup>5</sup> Diffloth (2001: 267): “*De façon plus générale, comment faire pour récolter les expressifs? Il serait toujours possible de oser une question du genre: ‘Y a-t-il un mot comme XXX? [...] On pourra aussi pêcher au hasard et demander à satiété: ‘Quel expressif, quel mot utiliseriez-vous si vous voulez transmettre la sensation x, l’impression y, z, etc.,’ en suggérant peut-être divers contextes. L’interrogé restera en général perplexe. [...] Il faut donc guetter les expressifs, les attraper au vol; mais dans le feu de l’action et de la discussion animée où ils naissent, qui aurait le culot d’interrompre tout le monde afin de pouvoir vérifier une voyelle, un sens, une intention?’*”

etc. The human body is moreover frequently used as metaphorical source domain across languages (Fedry 1976; Vandeloise 1986; Sweetser 1990). Therefore, body parts, either internal or external, may easily be conceptualised as the locus of emotions and mental states. As such, they are regularly invoked in the description of these processes. This is particularly true for East and Southeast languages as noted by Matisoff (1986a), Clark (1996), Wayland (1996), Yu (2002), Musgrave (2006), and Compton (2007 *inter al.*).

Example (1) contains an internal body part term and illustrates a mental state. Emotions are expressed with internal body part terms in examples (2), (3), and (4b) and with external body part terms in (4a) and (5).

(1) HMONG from Jaisser (1990: 167)

a. nkag **siab**

crawl **liver**

‘to understand (lit. to crawl into the liver)’

b. txiav **siab**

cut **liver**

‘to decide, make a decision’

(2) WOLOF from Becher (2003) [*cited by Verhoeven (2007:92)*]

Sama **xol** dafa tang

POSS.1.SG **heart** SUBJ.3.SG be hot

‘I am angry. (lit. : ‘my heart is hot’)

(3) KAMBERA from Klamer (2002: 369)

mbaha - naya - ka na **eti** - na na maramba

be.wet - 3SG.SUBJ - PERF ART **liver** - 3SG.POSS ART king

‘The king is pleased.’ (lit. : The king’s liver is wet.)

(4) CHINESE from Yu (2002)

a. hui – **tu**      tu – **lian**

gray/dusty – **head** earthy – **face**

‘(dial) dejected; despondent, depressed’

b. **gan - chang**      yu -    duan

**liver – intestines**      about.to split

‘be heartbroken; be deeply grieved’

(5) BURMESE<sup>6</sup>

a. ခြေနိုင်လက်နိုင် ။

c<sup>h</sup>e<sup>2</sup> - naiN<sup>2</sup>-    lɛʔ - naiN<sup>2</sup>

**foot** CAN      **hand** CAN

‘within one’s means or capacity’

b. လက်လွယ် ။

lɛʔ -    lwe<sup>2</sup>

**hand** free

‘generous, open-handed’

(6) THAI from Matisoff (1986a: 41, 45)

a. dii    nýa    dii    caj

good    **flesh**    good **heart, breath**

‘glad, delighted’

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<sup>6</sup> About Burmese transcription: my phonemic transcription roughly follows Bernot’s (1980) proposal, with some minor changes for tones and diphthongs. Tones are indicated by superscript numbers at the end of the syllable: [1] stands for brief, high and creaky tone; [2] stands for long, low and breathy tone; [3] stands for long, clear, high-falling tone. The fourth tone corresponds to a glottal stop. Atonal (and unmarked) syllables may appear in disyllabic words with [ə] as the main vowel. Capital letters stand for stops that can be realized as voiced or unvoiced depending on the phonological (and morphosyntactic) context. Most of the grammatical morphemes start with a capital letter, given that they are usually (but not always) syntactically closely related to the preceding morpheme.

- b. caj                    hǎaj    caj    khwâm  
**heart, breath** vanish *id.*    overturn  
‘get scared out of one’s wits’

### 1.3 Expressives in Asia: elaborate expressions and psycho-collocations

In many Asian languages, expressives appear with a specific form, intermediate in structure between ordinary compound and reduplication. Known as ‘elaborate expressions,’ a term coined by Mary Haas (1964) talking about Thai literary four-syllables expressions, this type of construction is typical of East and Southeast Asian languages. Matisoff (1973: 81) describe them as a “compound containing four (usually monosyllabic) elements, of which either the first and third or the second and fourth are identical (A-B-A-C or A-B-C-B) [and that] characteristically convey a rather formal or elegant impression.”

The two non-reduplicated elements of the quadrisyllabic expression are usually referred to as an ‘elaborate couplet,’ i.e. pair of phonologically different but roughly synonymous or antonymic morphemes that conventionally appear together. The same couplet may appear in a large number of different expressives, simply by varying the reduplicated element. Examples (7) and (8) from Burmese provide illustrations.

- (7a)    မနီး    မဝေး ။  
mə - ni<sup>3</sup>-      mə - wɛ<sup>3</sup>  
NEG close    NEG far  
‘not so far, (to be) at a good distance’





- b.     ntxhais – um             ntxhais – tswv  
       girl    official         girl    lord  
  
       ‘princess’

However, the psycho-collocation is another kind of expressive found regularly in Asian languages, containing body-part or organ terms and expressing emotional states and other mental activities. As psycho-collocations are at the core of this chapter, the next sections will be dedicated to this second kind of expressive. Section 2 presents the phenomenon and its important place in Asian languages and §3 is dedicated to the phenomenon in Burmese, bringing out/showing its peculiarities in this language.

## **2     About psycho-collocations**

### *2.1   Defining psycho-collocation*

The ‘psycho-collocation’ areal feature, described for a number of MSEA languages (Matisoff 1986b; Jaisser 1990; Oey 1990; Clark 1996; VanBik 1997), refers to a collocation, i.e. a conventionalized combination of words that may become idiomatic to differing degrees. These polymorphemic expressions make an explicit reference to body parts or organs as the locus of emotions or psychological states. The term ‘psycho-collocation’ was coined by Matisoff (1986a) to describe expressions that involve metaphorical uses of high frequency adjectives (or verbs) explicitly collocated with person part terms to refer to psychological phenomenon.

*Psycho-collocation [is] a polymorphemic expression referring as a whole to a mental process, quality, or state, one of whose constituents is a psycho-noun, i.e. a noun with*

*explicit psychological reference (translatable by English words like heart, mind, spirit, soul, temper, nature, disposition, mood). The rest of the psy[cho]-collocation contains morphemes (usually action verbs or adjectives) that complete the meaning. This element we call the psycho-mate (Matisoff, 1986a: 7).*

Psycho-collocations may be classified from several points of view; (1) semantic, (2) morphological, or (3) syntactic. The following features may be used to distinguish different sub-types of psycho-collocations:

- (1) - the particular kind of mental activity that the collocation refers to (cf. Matisoff 1986a: 7ff),
  - the physical or metaphorical states (Clark 1990),
  - the type of psycho-noun : body-part or abstract noun (VanBik 1997);
- (2) - the part of speech of the psycho-noun, i.e. common noun or nominalized verb (VanBik 1997);
- (3) - the syntactic status of the psycho-noun, i.e. subject or object of the predicate (Matisoff 1986b: 11), (Goddard 2008: 89),
  - the compositionality or non-compositionality of the expressions (Bickel 1997: 141ff),
  - the status of the expression : compound or incorporation (Clark 1990).

## 2.2 *Psycho-collocation in Asian languages*

Metaphorical expressions involving body-part or organs are found in many of the world's languages. In the major European languages (French, English among others) typically treat the expression of mental activities or emotional states as a covert class: nothing in the words '*espérer*'/hope, or '*furieux*'/angry, or '*heureux*'/happy tell us they refer to psychological or mental phenomenon (Eng.: 'Take **heart**; to one's **heart**'s content; big-**hearted**, French: '*sans*

*cœur*' (heartless); *écœuré* (be disgusted, be sicken); *cœur d'artichaut* (s.o. who falls in love with every girl/boy he/she meets); '*avoir les foies* [liver]' (to be scared to death).

On the other hand, Asian and MSEA languages tend to treat the expression of emotional and mental states or processes much more like an overt class. When describing physical and emotional feelings, i.e. psychological phenomena, Southeast Asian languages (and to a certain extent East Asian languages<sup>7</sup>) commonly use a distinctive construction consisting of a body-part term and a stative/adjective verb; a construction that has been labelled a 'psycho-collocation'<sup>8</sup> by Matisoff (1986a). Although these 'body part-adjective' expressions may be seen as part of an universal metaphorical tendency — closely related to French expressions such as '*avoir le sang chaud*'/'hot-blooded,' *avoir le cœur gros*'/'fat-hearted' —, there seems to be a qualitative difference in the extremes to which MSEA<sup>9</sup> languages carry this tendency: most of these languages cannot express mental activities, emotion, or character features without referring to a body part, as noted by VanBik (1998: 227) about Lai, a Tibeto-Burman language of Burma: "Psycho-collocations are essential in the daily use of Lai. It is impossible to discuss the life of the mind without them."

This construction is widespread in all languages of the area whatever the linguistic family they belong to. It is therefore found in Sino-Tibetan languages (ST), Tai-Kadai languages (TK), Hmong-Mien languages (HM), Austro-Asiatic languages (AA) and Austronesian (AN) languages, as shown by examples (9) through (13). This construction is

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<sup>7</sup> See for instance Yoon 2003 on uses of *maum* ('heart, mind') in Korean as in 마음이 가다 (*maumi kata*: lit. *maum* goes): 'tend to be attracted'.

<sup>8</sup> Psycho-collocations constructions are also known as 'experiential collocation' (Verhoeven 2007), or compositional and non-compositional collocations (Bickel 1997).

<sup>9</sup> This is particularly true for languages of Mainland Southeast Asia, and under discussion for the insular languages, such as those of the Western Malayo-Polynesian grouping. While Oey (1990) illustrates the phenomenon for Malay, Musgrave (2006) reports about two constructions types for emotions predicates in the area. According to the latter author, Western Malayo-Polynesian (Indonesian, Balinese) typically uses simple predicates to denote emotional states, whereas Eastern Indonesian languages use complex predicates involving body-part terms. However, Donahue (2004: 223) demonstrates the pervasiveness of the construction in Western Malayo-Polynesian languages.

also known as one of the numerous features shared by languages of the MSEA Sprachbund. However it does exist in SEA languages of the islands such as Bahasa Indonesia, Malay (Oey 1990, Goddard 2008, Siahaan 2008), and in languages belonging to the Papuan linguistic family (cf. Klamer 2002; Musgrave 2006; Gaby 2008).

(10) Sino-Tibetan

a. LAI (VanBik 1998: 213)

ka luŋ na tliŋ

1SG.POSS-**heart** -3SG.OBJ-complete

‘I am satisfied.’

b. BURMESE

ဝမ်းသာတယ် ။

waN<sup>3</sup> θa<sup>2</sup>-Tɛ<sup>2</sup>

**belly**-pleasant-REAL

‘(I) am pleased.’

c. BELHARE (Bickel 1997: 143)

a-niũa ta-he

1SG.POSS-**mind** activate-PT

‘I am pleased.’ (lit.) : My heart is complete.

(11) Tai-Kadai

a. THAI (from Jenny to appear)

thùk - cay

correct - **heart**

‘please, satisfy’

b. SHAN<sup>10</sup>

t<sup>h</sup>uk<sup>2</sup> tsau

be suitable - **mind**

‘be pleased, be pleased with, like’

(12) Austro-Asiatic

a. MON (from Jenny to appear)

cɔt - klɛʔ

**heart** - short’

‘short tempered’

b. WA (from Watkins to appear)

ʔaɰ - r<sup>h</sup>ɔm

**heart** - salty

‘angry’

(13) Hmong-Mien

a. HMONG from Jaisser (1990: 159, 163)

tus        kwv mas    siab    ncjag

CLF        younger brother    top

‘Youngest brother, you are honest.’ (lit.) : Younger brother, (your) liver is straight.

b. siab - luv

liver - straight

‘impatient, short tempered’

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<sup>10</sup> From the online version of Dr. J.N. Cushing's Shan-English Dictionary (1881, Rangoon) <http://sealang.net/shan/>.

(14) Austronesian

a. MALAY from Donahue (2004:223)

saya hati senang

1SG **liver** content

‘I am content’.

b. NIAS from Laiya 1985 (cited by Donahue 2004)

a-fõkhõ tõdõ nia khõ-gu

STAT-sick **liver** 3SG.GEN DAT-1SG.GEN

‘He is jealous of me.’

To sum up, whatever language is studied, psycho-collocation constructions are always peculiar in terms of their structure, conveying either figurative or metaphorical meanings. However, studies of the phenomenon bring out two opposite properties of these psycho-collocations: there is cross-cultural or universal status of the metaphors involved in these psycho-collocations while there are also culture-specific ways of combining psycho-nouns and psycho-mates, i.e. body-part terms and predicates.

The conceptualisation of body-parts or organs as the locus of emotional and mental activities reveals different cultural models, derived sometimes from cultural tradition or ethnic religious beliefs (Siahaan 2008: 48): every language has its favorite location for psychological states and feelings, either the heart as in English and Thai (see example 11a), the liver as in Malay and Hmong (see examples (14a) and 13), or the guts or the stomach as in Vietnamese (see example 15).

(15) VIETNAMESE (from Clark 1996: 538)

Nàng đau lòng lắm

3SG sick intestines/guts very

‘She’s heart-broken.’

So what about Burmese? What are the body-part terms found in Burmese psycho-collocations? What is the favourite locus of emotions and feelings for Burmese speakers? What about the syntactic behaviour of these polymorphemic expressions? These are all issues that will be addressed in next section.

### 3 Psycho-collocations in Burmese

Spoken in Burma by nearly 50 million speakers (Wheatley 2003: 195), Burmese is a member of the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family, but also clearly a Southeast Asian language, sharing many features with languages spoken in the MSEA area (Vittrant 2010): tonal system, tendency to monosyllabicity, classifier device, serial verbs constructions, etc... and of course expressives. Elaborate quadrisyllabic expressions and psycho-collocations are therefore found in Burmese, the latter type of expression being the only means expressing emotions, psychological states in this language, unlike what is found in Vietnamese (Clark 1990: 537) or Indonesian (Musgrave 2006).

In this section, I will first present the body-terms used to express emotions and psychological states in Burmese within the context of what is found in other Asian languages. Then, I will focus on the preferred body-part term of Burmese psycho-collocation, that is to say *ခေ* *sei?*, tracing back its origin and examining the predicates it combines with. Then I will end by observing some of the peculiarities of Burmese psycho-collocations.

### 3.1 *The organs and body-part terms in expressive constructions*

Looking at organs and body-terms in Burmese polymorphemic expressions reveals an impressive list, containing either elaborate and quadrisyllabic expressions and psycho-collocations.

#### 3.1.1 *Body-parts terms in quadrisyllabic and elaborate expressive constructions*

As seen in previous section §3.1, body-part terms may be used in Burmese elaborate expressions (cf. example 0 and 0). Bernot 's Burmese-French dictionary (1978-1992) — *henceforth* BFDic — gives around 15 quadrisyllabic constructions containing the couplet 'foot ~ hand' (and 4 with the reverse order 'hand ~ foot'), most of them referring to mental or psychological states. Although some of them exhibit the expected structure ABAC or ABCB (cf. 0), others are just quadrisyllabic expression containing a couplet of body-part terms (cf. 17a). Apart the couplet <foot ~ hand>, the following combinations <mind ~ belly>, <mind ~ heart>, <mind ~ hand>, <mind ~ body (corpse)> are also common in Burmese expressive. Table 1 indicates the number of expressions found for each association in Bernot's Burmese-French dictionary<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> I do not claim that BFDic provides an exhausted list of this type of expressions. However, other dictionaries such as Burmese – English (1993) or Burmese-Burmese (1991) dictionaries published in Yangon (Myanmar) by the Department of the Myanmar Language Commission, give similar or shorter list of expressions for these couplets. Moreover, as shown by the couplet <mind/ heart>, some expressions are not listed at all in dictionaries. Therefore, the number of expressions given here for each couplet is only indicative.



• < mind ~ hand >, စိတ်လက်, sei? - lɛ?

(16a) စိတ်ပါလက်ပါ ။

sei? pa<sup>2</sup> lɛ? pa<sup>2</sup> sei?

**mind** be with, accompany **hand** *idem*

‘willingly’

(16b) စိတ်ပျက် လက်ပျက် ။

sei? pyɛ? lɛ? pyɛ?

**mind** be destroyed **hand** *idem*

‘in disappointment, dejectedly’

(17a) စိတ်ဖြေလက်ဖြောက် ။

sei? pye<sup>2</sup> lɛ? pyaɔ?

**mind** be relieved **hand** drop

‘for a change, a respite’

(17b) စိတ်လိုလက်ရ။

sei? lo<sup>2</sup> lɛ? ya<sup>1</sup>

**mind** be destroyed **hand** *idem*

‘willingly, voluntarily’

Table1: Frequency of body-part couplets in Burmese from BFDic

Couplet of	Body-terms	Number of tokens found	Illustration
<hand~foot>	လက်ခြေ /lɛʔ- C <sup>h</sup> e <sup>2</sup> /	18+4 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	Cf. examples 0 and 0
<mind ~ belly>	စိတ်ဝမ်း /seiʔ- waN <sup>3</sup> /	6 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	စိတ်ဝမ်းကွဲ seiʔ- waN <sup>3</sup> kwe <sup>3</sup> mind-belly-be broken become desunited
<mind ~ heart>	စိတ်နှလုံး /seiʔ- nəloN <sup>3</sup> /	7 expressions given by informants <sup>12</sup>	Cf. ex. 0
<mind ~ hand>	စိတ်လက် /seiʔ- lɛʔ/	10 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i>	Cf. ex. 0 and 0

<sup>12</sup> None of these expressions are listed in the BFDic, neither in the two dictionaries published in Yangon (Myanmar) by the Department of the Myanmar Language Commission. They have been elicited by Burmese informants.

<p>&lt;mind~body (corpse)&gt;</p>	<p>စိတ်ကိုယ် /seiʔ- ko<sup>2</sup>/</p> <p>5 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i></p>	<p>စိတ်နောက်ကိုယ်ပါ</p> <p>seiʔ naoʔ ko<sup>2</sup> pa<sup>2</sup></p> <p>mind- soon-body-accompany</p> <p>impulsively, rushly</p>
<p>&lt;mind~nature (corpse)&gt;</p>	<p>စိတ်သဘော /seiʔ- θəb<sup>3</sup>/</p> <p>2 expressions listed in <i>BFDic</i></p>	<p>စိတ်တူသဘောတူ</p> <p>seiʔ tu<sup>2</sup> θəb<sup>3</sup> tu<sup>2</sup></p> <p>mind- similar-nature-similar</p> <p>in agreement (adv.)</p>

Some of these elaborate expressions may be psycho-collocations. As noted by Matisoff (1986a), the structure of the psycho-collocation may be made complex by using compounding, reduplication of one component (either the psycho-noun or the psycho-mate) and elaborate couplets (with quasi-synonymous or related nouns).

• <Mind ~ heart>, စိတ်နှလုံး, seiʔ- n̥əloN<sup>3</sup>

(18a) စိတ်နှလုံး အေးချမ်းတယ်။

seiʔ- n̥əloN <sup>3</sup>	ʔe <sup>3</sup>	C <sup>h</sup> aN <sup>3</sup>	Tɛ <sup>2</sup>
mind- heart	be cool	be cold	REAL

‘(He) feels at peace.’ (lit.) : (his) mind and heart are cool.

(18b) စိတ်နှလုံးညှိုးနွမ်းတယ်။

seiʔ	-n̥əloN <sup>3</sup>	ɲo <sup>3</sup>	n̥waN <sup>3</sup>	Tɛ <sup>2</sup>
mind	-heart	wither	be outdated	REAL

‘(He) is sad [because of a love-story].’ (lit.) : (His) mind and heart are withered, outdated.

### 3.2.2 *Body-part terms in Burmese psycho-collocations*

A first study of Burmese psycho-collocations (Matisoff 1986a) lists the most common psycho-nouns used in this language, that is to say, some internal organs such as ‘heart,’ ‘liver,’ ‘belly,’ and some nouns with explicit psychological reference like ‘mind,’ ‘nature/ disposition,’ ‘consciousness.’ However, other organs and body-part terms may be part of a collocation with mental or emotional connotations, as shown by Table 2.

Table 2: List of Burmese psycho-nouns

<b>INTERNAL ORGANS</b>		
heart	နှလုံး	ɴɔloN <sup>3</sup>
liver	အသည်း	ʔəθɛ <sup>3</sup>
belly	ဝမ်း	waN <sup>3</sup>
intestines, guts	အူ	ʔu <sup>2</sup>
<b>EXTERNAL ORGANS / BODY PARTS</b>		
hand	လက်	lɛʔ
foot	ခြေ	c <sup>h</sup> e <sup>2</sup>
ear	နား	na <sup>3</sup>
nose	နှာ	ɴa <sup>2</sup>
eye	မျက်စိ	myɛʔ.si <sup>1</sup>
face (eye-nose)	မျက်နှာ	myɛʔ.ɴa <sup>2</sup>
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL REFERENCE</b>		
mind	စိတ်	seiʔ
nature	သဘော	θəbɔ <sup>3</sup>
consciousness	သတ	θədi <sup>1</sup>

For instance, the word ‘ear’ may be combined with motion verbs (i.e. ‘enter, turn, drop’) or stative verbs (i.e. ‘be far, be good, be hot, be clear, be heavy’) to convey psychological process as ‘understand’ or emotional state (cf. 19). As for the word ‘eye,’ its collocation with the verb ‘turn’ means ‘find someone confusing. Other examples are given in (20) and (21).

- |         |                   |  |   |
|---------|-------------------|--|---|
| (19) a. | ear + turn        | နား လည်<br>na <sup>3</sup> + lɛ <sup>2</sup>             | <i>Understand, know, comprehend</i>   |
| b.      | ear + enter       | နား ဝင်<br>na <sup>3</sup> + wiN <sup>2</sup>            | <i>Accept, be convinced</i>   |
| c.      | ear + (be) hot    | နား ပူ<br>na <sup>3</sup> + pu <sup>2</sup>              | <i>Be distressingly noisy, be irritated by hearing something repeatedly, worry somebody for a favor</i> |
| (20) a. | eye + turn        | မျက်စိ လည်<br>myɛʔ si <sup>1</sup> + lɛ <sup>2</sup>     | <i>Find someone confusing</i>   |
| b.      | eye + (be) clear  | မျက်စိ ရှင်<br>myɛʔ si <sup>1</sup> + ʃiN <sup>2</sup>   | <i>Be sharp-eye</i>   |
| c.      | eye + (be) opened | မျက်စိ ပွင့်<br>myɛʔ si <sup>1</sup> + pwiN <sup>2</sup> | <i>Be sophisticated</i>   |

- (21) a. face + (be) dark      မျက်နှာ မည်း      *Dislike, disapproval*  
myεʔ.nǎ² + mε³
- b. face + destroy      မျက်နှာ ဖျက်      *Damage or mar the reputation of a person; soil a person's good name.*  
myεʔ.nǎ² + pʰyεʔ
- c. face + (be) opened      မျက်နှာ ပွင့်      *Be popular*  
myεʔ.nǎ² + pwiN²

### 3.2 Origin of the most productive body-part term in Burmese psycho-collocations

#### 3.2.1 Origin of the main psycho-nouns

Two origins could be reconstructed for Burmese nouns used in psycho-collocations. Most of them are inherited Tibeto-Burman terms as listed in Table 3, with cognates in languages that also make use of psycho-collocations such as Lai (Haka Chin). Examples (22) and (23) show Lai and Burmese cognate psycho-nouns for ‘heart’ and ‘ear’.

- (22) a. Lai (from VanBik 1998:217)

na      **nij**      ʔa      hɲal  
2SG.POSS \*heart 3SG. SUBJ know-I  
‘You are presumptuous.’

b. Burmese

မပြောချင်ဘူး ၊ ဒီကောင်နှလုံးနာလွန်းလို့။

mə pyə ChiN Pu di KaəN<sup>2</sup> nəloN<sup>3</sup> na<sup>2</sup> lwaN<sup>3</sup> lo<sup>1</sup>  
neg talk wish neg dem guy heart hurt in excess SUB.BECAUSE

‘(I) don’t want to talk (about that). Because (I) can’t stand this guy.’

(lit.) : I don’t want to talk. Because, this guy, heart is hurting in excess.

(23) a. Lai (from VanBik 1998:217)

ka hna ʔa ŋam  
1SG.POSS ear 3SG. SUBJ at home-I

‘I am content/ I am not worried (lit. ‘My ear is at home’).’

b. Burmese

တစ်ချိန်မှာ သူ ကြန်တော်ကို နားလည်လာမှာပါ ။

tə-chɛiN<sup>2</sup> Ma<sup>2</sup> θu<sup>2</sup> cənə<sup>2</sup> Ko<sup>2</sup> na<sup>3</sup>-lɛ<sup>2</sup> la<sup>2</sup> mə<sup>2</sup> Pa<sup>2</sup>  
one-time LOC 3SG 1SG (H.P) OBJ understand (ear.turn) AUX:inchoat IRR POL.

‘Once, he will begin to understand me.’



Table 3: Inherited Tibeto-Burman terms (from Matisoff 2003)

Burmese term	Matisoff Transliteration	<	Proto-Tibeto-Burman term
<heart> နှလုံး /n̥əlɔN³/	hnəlûm		*s-niŋ (cf. Benedict 1972:217)
<liver> အသည်း /ʔəθɛ³/	ʔəsâñ		*m-sin
<belly> ဝမ်း /waN³/	Wâm		*pʷam [stomach]
<hand> လက် /lɛʔ/	Lak		*lak
<eye> မျက် /myɛʔ/	Myak		*mik ~*myak
<ear> နား /na³/	Nâ		*g-na
<nose> နှာ /n̥a²/	Hna		*s-na

As noted in Table 3, Tibeto-Burman terms found in psycho-collocations refer to body-parts and organs. On the other hand, abstract and psychological nouns used as psycho-nouns such as ‘mind,’ ‘nature/ disposition’ or ‘attention/ consciousness’ (- သိစိတိ<sup>1</sup>), are not inherited; they are mainly loanwords from Pali as Table 4 demonstrates.

Table 4: Loanwords from Pali used as psycho-nouns

Burmese term	Transliteration	<	Pali	Meaning in Pali
< mind> သိစိ /sɛiʔ/	Cit		citta	<i>heart (psychologically), i. e. the centre &amp; focus of man's emotional nature</i>
<nature/ disposition> သဘော / θəbo <sup>3</sup> /	sabhô		sabhāva	<i>State of mind, nature, condition; character, disposition; truth, reality</i>
<attention/ consciousness> သိစိ /θəTi <sup>1</sup> /	satí		sati	<i>memory, recognition, consciousness</i>

### 3.2.1 ‘Mind’ versus ‘liver’: the Burmese choice

Contrary to the Hmong languages (Jaisser 1990) and the Austronesian languages (Siahaan 2008), in the Tibeto-Burman languages (see VanBik 1998, 2010 about Lai) the most productive psycho-noun used in psycho-collocations in Burmese is not ‘liver’ but the word သိစိ /sɛiʔ/ that could be translated by ‘mind, the seat of emotion or life’. သိစိ /sɛiʔ/ is indeed very productive. The

French-Burmese Dictionary gives nearly eighty psycho-collocations (sixty entries in Burmese-English Dictionary), whereas ‘heart’ နှလုံး နှလံN<sup>3</sup> is found in about thirty psycho-collocations and အသည်း /ʔəθɛ<sup>3</sup>/ “liver” barely in about fifteen. Moreover, as seen in previous section, it combines with many other body-part terms to produce elaborate expressions.

The word စိတ် /seiʔ/ (transliterated *cit*) comes from Pali *citta*, via Mon. Burmese has also borrowed many religious and political words (and concepts) from these two languages during Pagan period (11<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> centuries), with the influence of the Pali being more substantial than that of Mon.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, the same etymon is found as a psycho-noun in other Southeast Asian languages, such as Mon or Khmer. However the meaning of the word is both perceptibly and noticeably different in the three languages. Whereas Burmese dictionaries give ‘mind’ as first meaning for စိတ် /seiʔ/, both Mon /cət/, and Khmer /cət/ have ‘heart’ as main meaning (see definitions in (25)).

Notice that Southeast Asian cultures differ from Western ones, which clearly distinguish heart and mind (spirit) as illustrated by this French maxim: “Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas” (‘The heart has reasons that reason does not comprehend.’).

(24) KHMER, from Clark (1996: 553)

tɲaj	nih	kñom	sapbaay	<b>cət</b>	nah
day	DEM	1SG	happy	<b>heart</b>	very

‘Today, I’m very happy.’

---

<sup>13</sup> On Mon and Pali loanwords in Burmese, see Hla Pe (1961, 1967). On Burmese political vocabulary see Kasevitch (1994). See also Yanson (1994) and other articles in Gärtner and Lorenz (1994) on Mon and Pali influence on Burmese language.

(25)	<p>a. Definition of Burmese စိတ် /seiʔ/</p> <p><i>from Myanmar-English Dictionary by Myanmar-English Dictionary (1993), Myanmar Language Commission; republished 1996, Dunwoody Press</i></p>	<p>b. Definition of Khmer ‘cət’</p> <p><i>from Cambodian-English Dictionary by Robert K. Headley, Kylin Chhor, Lam Kheng Lim, Lim Hak Kheang, and Chen Chun (1977),</i></p> <p><a href="http://sealang.net/khmer/dictionary.htm">http://sealang.net/khmer/dictionary.htm</a></p>
	<p>1. n mind; thought; consciousness; heart</p> <p>2. n. desire; will; interest</p> <p>3. n. preoccupation</p>	<p><b>cət, cettaʔ :</b></p> <p>1. n heart (as the seat of emotions), feelings, emotions; mind, spirit, will (power); intention; thought, opinion; nature, disposition; is often paired with ‘liver’ to emphasize the totality of the emotion or trait).</p>

### 3.2.2. စိတ် seiʔ and its psychomates

What about the psychomates, i.e. the predicates used with စိတ် seiʔ? We found stative verbs (equivalent to adjectives in other languages) and action verbs in equal proportion. Stative verbs are often high-frequency verbs, associated with physical properties (hot, cold, big, small, dirty, clean, etc.)

One sub-class of active verbs regularly found with psycho-nouns is motion verbs. Example (26) illustrates the combination of စိတ် seiʔ ‘mind’ with the verb လှည့် leʔ ‘to rotate, go around,’ a verb that also combines with ‘ear,’ ‘eye’ (cf. 19, 20, 23).

Indeed, the same psycho-mate may appear with different psycho-nouns, with relatively/quite distinct meanings. For instance, စိတ် ဆိုး seiʔ shoʔ (‘mind + be bad’) and

သဘောဆိုး  $\theta\acute{a}b\acute{o}^3\ sho^3$  ('nature + be bad') mean respectively "be angry" and "be bad natured." See also example (27) where the stative verb ပေါက်  $pa\acute{o}?$  combines with စိတ်  $sei?$  'mind,' အူ  $\eta u^2$  'intestines' and သဘော  $\theta\acute{a}b\acute{o}^3$  'nature.'

(26) သူ့စိတ်(ပြန်)လည်လာပြီ ၊ အရင်လိုမစိမ်းကားတော့ဘူး ။

$\theta u^1$        $sei?$ - ( $pyaN^2$ )- $le^2$        $la^2$        $Pi^2\eta\acute{a}yiN^2.lo^2m\acute{o}$        $saiN^3.Ka^3$        $To^1$        $Phu^3$   
 3sg.GEN    mind (again)    rotate    INCHOAT    CRS hurry    NEG    be distant    ASP NEG

'(He) reverts to a former opinion. He did not hurry to be distant yet ???'

- |         |                                    |   |                                      |
|---------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| (27) a. | mind + be broken,<br>explode       | စိတ် ပေါက်<br>$sei?\ pa\acute{o}?$                        | <i>Become angry, lose one's head</i> |
| b.      | intestines + be broken,<br>explode | အူ ပေါက်<br>$\eta u^2\ pa\acute{o}?$                      | <i>Digress, ramble</i>               |
| c.      | nature + be broken,<br>explode     | သဘော ပေါက်<br>$\theta\acute{a}b\acute{o}^3\ pa\acute{o}?$ | <i>Realize, comprehend</i>           |

A last peculiarity about psycho-mates is the existence of psycho-collocations using both members of causative verb pairs. These pairs of verbs, realised with a consonantal or tonal alternation, reflect an earlier process of causativisation. Many Tibeto-Burman languages have preserved a few pairs of verbs, and Burmese still possesses a lot of them alongside a morphological process to form causatives.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Vittrant (1998) lists 83 pairs in Burmese, showing either aspiration or tonal alternations. Gyurme (1992: 258) gives a list of 96 pairs for literary Tibetan, specifying that it is not an exhaustive list.

(28) a. ကျမအသည်းကို မခွဲပါနဲ့။ ။

cəma<sup>1</sup> ʔəθɛ<sup>3</sup> ko<sup>2</sup> mə k<sup>h</sup>wɛ<sup>3</sup> Pa<sup>2</sup> nɛ<sup>1</sup>

1SG liver OBJ NEG be broken/split POL INJ

‘(Please), don’ break my heart.’

b. အသည်းကွဲတယ်

ʔəθɛ<sup>3</sup>-kwɛ<sup>3</sup> Tɛ<sup>2</sup>

‘(I) am heart-broken.’

c. အသည်းခွဲတယ်

ʔəθɛ<sup>3</sup>-k<sup>h</sup>wɛ<sup>3</sup> Tɛ<sup>2</sup>

‘(I) broke (his) heart.’

### 3.3 Structure and properties of Burmese psycho-collocations

Several issues emerge as we examine utterances containing psycho-collocations: firstly, the number and nature of the arguments; secondly, the syntactic functions of these arguments, and the way the language expresses the grammatical roles they fulfill; and thirdly, the relationship between stative verb and body-part term, and the possibility of noun incorporation into the verb.

#### 3.3.1 Nature and number of psycho-collocation’s arguments

Arguments of an emotional predicate containing a psycho-noun are various: simple nominal phrase (NP) as in (22) where the NP marked for its syntactic/pragmatic function (cf.(23), (29)a) as a nominalized clause (cf. 29b), subordinated clause (cf. 29c) or with no overt argument (cf. 18a).

(29) a. ...သူ့အပေ သူ့အပေါ်မှာ စိတ်ကုန်သွားပြီ ။

... θu<sup>1</sup> ʔəphe<sup>2</sup> θu<sup>1</sup> ʔə-pa<sup>2</sup> ma<sup>2</sup> seiʔ -koN<sup>2</sup> θwa<sup>3</sup> Pi<sup>2</sup>  
3SG.GEN father 3SG.GEN NMLZ-above LOC **mind-run out** ASP.PRF CRS

‘His father is fed up with him [because....]’

b. ကျမ ဒီလို ခိုင်းတာ စိတ်မရှိပါနဲ့ ခင်ဗျား ။

cəma<sup>1</sup> di<sup>2</sup> lo<sup>2</sup> k<sup>h</sup>aiN<sup>3</sup>-Ta<sup>2</sup> seiʔ-mə -ji<sup>1</sup> Pa<sup>2</sup> ne<sup>1</sup> kəbya<sup>3</sup>  
1SG.FEM DEM. like order-NMLZ.REAL **mind-neg-happen** POL INJ 2SG.MASC.POL

‘Don’t be angry if I give you such orders.’

(lit.) : Don’t be angry [with the fact that] I order you like this.

c. သူ စာရေးဆရာဖြစ်ဖို့ စိတ်သန်နေတယ် ။

θu<sup>2</sup> sa<sup>2</sup>.ye<sup>3</sup>-s<sup>h</sup>əya<sup>2</sup> p<sup>h</sup>yiʔ pho<sup>1</sup> seiʔ -θaN<sup>2</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> Te<sup>2</sup>  
3SG writing-master be SUB:for **mind - be strong** IPFV REAL

‘He really wants to be a writer.’

Notice also that the number of arguments varies for these psycho-collocations; some are strictly intransitive where the expressive meaning ‘to be mixed up, confused’ စိတ် ရှုပ် /seiʔfoʔ/ (‘mind + be complex) can occur with a unique argument marked as a topic or a subject (/ka<sup>1</sup>/) and will not permit a NP marked as an object with ကို /ko<sup>2</sup>/ – that is to say a second argument, as shown by the examples in (30).

(30) a. သူ့ (က) စိတ်ရှုပ်နေတယ် ။


θu<sup>1</sup> (Ka<sup>1</sup>) sei<sup>?</sup> - fo<sup>?</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> Te<sup>2</sup>  
 3SG.GEN (K./TOP) **mind** - **be complex** INACC REAL

‘(As for him), he is confused.’

b. \*သူ့ကို စိတ်ရှုပ်နေတယ် ။

θu<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>2</sup> sei<sup>?</sup> - fo<sup>?</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> Te<sup>2</sup>  
 3SG.GEN OBJ **mind** - **be complex** INACC REAL

On the other hand, some expressives need two arguments, whether they are overt or not.

Sentences in (32) contain the expressive စိတ်  /sei<sup>?</sup> to<sup>2</sup>/ meaning ‘to be short-tempered, lose one patience’. In (32a), one argument (the source of the irritation) appears in the sentence and it is marked as an object. In (32b), although two participants are needed to fulfil the process of irritating, none of them is expressed. Whereas in (32c), the sentence contains a unique argument marked as the topic or subject of the expressive predicate: the sentence is ungrammatical with a stative reading. As shown by (32d), the intransitive reading requires another structure, a topic-comment structure, which is very common in Asian and Southeast Asian languages (Goddard 2005: 126ff). This kind of information structure is indeed reported by Matisoff for Lahu, which language exhibits sequences containing a noun followed by a ‘transhemistichial compound,’ i.e. a noun and a verb semantically tight: some sequence that are clearly related to constructions of the type: ‘NP<sub>TOPIC</sub> + N-V’ (see 31).



(31) Lahu, from Matisof (1973: 310)

áp-pòʔ	chi	í-kâʔ	nêʔ	ve
shirt	DEM	water	be wet	IND

‘As for this shirt, it is water-wet.’

(32) a. သို့ကို စိတ်တိုတယ် ။

θu <sup>1</sup>	Ko <sup>2</sup>	sɛiʔ	-to <sup>2</sup>	Tɛ <sup>2</sup>
3SG.GEN	OBJ	mind	- be short	REAL

‘He gets on (my) nerves.’

b. စိတ်တိုလာတယ် ။

sɛiʔ	-to <sup>2</sup>	la	Tɛ <sup>2</sup>
mind	- be short	INCHOAT	REAL

‘(You) get on my nerves more and more.’ or ‘(You)’re becoming really irritating.’

c. \*ဒီအသံက စိတ်တိုတယ် ။

di	ʔəθaN <sup>2</sup>	Ka <sup>1</sup>	sɛiʔ	-to <sup>2</sup>	Tɛ <sup>2</sup>
DEM	noise	TOP/S.	mind	- be short	REAL

(*intend* : this noise is irritating.)

d. ဒီအသံက စိတ်တိုစရာကောင်းတယ် ။

di	ʔəθaN <sup>2</sup>	Ka <sup>1</sup>	sɛiʔ	-to <sup>2</sup>	-Səya	kəN	Tɛ <sup>2</sup>
DEM	noise	TOP/S.	mind	- be short-	NMLZ	be good	REAL

‘This noise is irritating.’

(lit.): This noise, it is good in causing one feeling ‘short-tempered.’

### 3.3.2 *Functions of the psycho-collocation's arguments*

Psycho-collocation constructions raise two questions regarding grammatical relationships and functions among components of the sentences. One is the question of the relationship between the verb and the body-part term and the status of the latter as being incorporated into the verb. By incorporation we mean that the incorporated noun and the verb, which incorporates it, function as a single grammatical unit<sup>15</sup>. The second question deals with the relation of inalienability between the subject whole and the body part: what is the relationship between the body part used as a psycho-noun and the possessor of this body part?

Although psycho-nouns do not have argument status in sentences like (33) for instance — the two argument positions in (33) are already occupied by NPs marked syntactically as the main arguments by က /Ka<sup>1</sup>/ and ကို /Ko<sup>2</sup>/—, there are several reasons to hesitate considering psycho-collocations as having incorporated nouns as noticed by Clark (1995) for other Southeast Asian languages. Among these reasons, the probability of incorporation is ruled out by the existence of sentences like (34) and (35). In the former, the psycho-noun is treated as an argument, being syntactically marked, and therefore separated from the psycho-mate, whereas in the latter example, psycho-noun and verb are separated by negation. Then the typological nature of Burmese also argues against incorporation since this language has no morphological indication and few phonetic clues for incorporation: sandhi will occur only in the case of tight relationship, and only under specific phonetic conditions.

As stated by Mithun (1984: 948ff) in her discussion of noun incorporation, different types of noun incorporation exist and represent historical development of incorporation, the first type being a sort of lexical compounding and the last one being distinguished by possessor promotion.

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<sup>15</sup> On noun incorporation, see Mithun 1984 and Clark (1995: 541ff).

Different stages co-exist in Burmese. It should be noted, however that compounding is very productive in Burmese, and Type I of noun incorporation (defined as loose-bound simple juxtaposition type) in which the noun loses its syntactic status as an argument of the sentence, seems to be the most frequent. This peculiar syntactic behaviour is emphasised by Matisoff's (1973: 309ff) definition of transhemistichial compound that points out the existence of 'specifying nouns' (N<sub>spec</sub>) that "are neither subjects nor objects, but simply limiters of the unspecified generality of the naked verb."

(33) မိုးမိုးက သူ့ကို စိတ်ကုန်သွားပြီ ။  
 mo<sup>3</sup> mo<sup>3</sup> Ka<sup>1</sup> θu<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>2</sup> sei? - koN<sup>2</sup> θwa<sup>3</sup> Pi<sup>2</sup>  
 Moe Moe TOP/S. 3SG.GEN OBJ **mind** - **run out** ASP.PRF CRS  
 'Moe Moe can't stand him any longer.'

(34) a. စိတ်ကို တိုသွားတာဘဲ ။  
 sei?- Ko<sup>2</sup> -to<sup>2</sup> θwa<sup>3</sup> Ta<sup>2</sup> be<sup>2</sup>  
**mind** OBJ/FOCUS **be short** ASP.PRF REAL DM  
 '(He) REALLY gets on (my) nerves [when he says that].'

b. သူ့ကို လုပ်ချင်တာ အသဲကို ယားနေတာဘဲ ။  
 θu<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>2</sup> lo? C<sup>h</sup>iN<sup>2</sup> Ta<sup>2</sup> ʔəθɛ<sup>3</sup> Ko<sup>2</sup> -ya<sup>3</sup> ne<sup>2</sup> Ta<sup>2</sup> be<sup>2</sup>  
 3SG.GEN OBJ work wish NMZL.REAL **liver** OBJ/FOCUS **itch** PRF REAL DM  
 '(I) am dying to make something [hit] to him.'  
 (lit.) : (My) liver is itching to the fact (I) wish to make [something] to him.

- (35) ဝေဝေဝေမှာ တွေးမိတိုင် စိတ်မချမ်းသာ ...။  
 we<sup>2</sup> we<sup>1</sup> mə<sup>2</sup> twe<sup>3</sup> mi<sup>1</sup> TaiN<sup>2</sup> sei?- mə -c<sup>h</sup>aN<sup>3</sup> θa<sup>2</sup>  
 Wewe LOC consider NON-VOLITION each **mind** NEG be rich ...  
 ‘Each time WeWe thought about it, she was not in peace.’

3.3.2.1 *Possessor and body-part*

Psycho-collocations involve also the relationship between the body part used as a psycho-noun and the possessor of this body part. In other Southeast Asian languages such as Vietnamese, a body-part term may be treated as being possessed (see example 36a), but the possessor might also be promoted from its position of modifier of the possessee (body-part) to first argument of the sentence (36b).

VIETNAMESE (from Clark 1995: 544)

- (36) a. bụng tôi (bị) đau  
 stomach 1SG suffer sick  
 ‘My stomach aches’  
 b. Tôi (bị) đau bụng  
 1SG suffer sick stomach  
 ‘I ache/am sick in the stomach.’ (< ‘I stomach-ache’).

Although the two strategies coexist in Vietnamese where sentences with possessed body part or promoted subject (with body part compound with verb) are given as equivalent, it is not the case

in Burmese. None of my examples contains a body part term marked for possession, although it is difficult sometimes to distinguish possessor due to specific phonetic rules.<sup>16</sup>

#### **4 Conclusion**

This discussion of Burmese expressives aims to show the aesthetic qualities of constructions used to express emotional or mental process, trying also to reveal the place of aesthetics in Burmese grammar. Two kinds of expressives have been discussed and distinguished as for their functions, their forms and their semantics in this chapter. The first category of expressives, i.e. elaborate expressions, described more extensively by Wheatley in this volume, tend to be used as adverbial or sometimes nominal, whereas the second ones, psycho-collocations, are generally verbal predicates referring to mental and emotional process.

Regarding their forms, elaborate expressions and psycho-collocations differ in respect of their phonological pattern, their internal structure and number of syllables, although body-part terms are found in both categories of expressives. Elaborate expressions have a predilection for patterns involving rhyme, repetition and alliteration, which are not aspects of the construction of psycho-collocations.

As for their structure, elaborate expressions are generally four-syllables expressions, although three-syllable expressions do occur frequently in Burmese as also discussed by Wheatley in his contribution to this volume. They are also polymorphemic expressions that often combine, in special patterns (ABAC, ABCB), semantically related morphemes (synonymous, antonymous, generic/ specific, etc.). On the other hand, psycho-collocations are mostly bisyllabic

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<sup>16</sup> Syntactic dependency is often marked in Burmese by a short-high and creaky tone (tone 1) that replaces the original lexical tone of the last syllable of the word. However, this tone is noticeable only on syllables which original tone is low (tone 2). In other terms, if the possessor is expressed with a high-falling tone (tone 3) or high-creaky tone (tone 1), the modifier status of the possessor won't be marked.

(and bi-morphemic) expressions formed with a body-part or organ term and a verbal lexeme, either static or dynamic. Semantically, elaborated expressions may create nuanced meanings, imitative or evocative sounds (onomatopoeic), whereas psycho-collocations describe emotions, feelings, mental states or processes.

Among these idiomatic expressions that display special structural and phonological properties, we focus on the ones containing body-part or organ terms and expressing mental and physical states. My study of Burmese psycho-collocations shows that these expressions are numerous and part of everyday language. A general picture of the terms used as psycho-noun in Burmese reveals that the most common and productive term found in psycho-collocations is the word meaning ‘mind’ (စိတ် *sei?*) unlike what is frequently found in other Southeast Asian languages, such as Lai (VanBik 1998) or Hmong (Jaisser, 1990). In these two languages, the most frequent psycho-noun is the term for ‘liver’. However, as we examine the origin of the term စိတ် *sei?*, I found the same etymon in Khmer and Mon psycho-collocations.

This study of a particular type of expressive in Burmese, i.e. psycho-collocations, leads us to the conclusion that the aesthetic component is clearly visible in the sonorous and rhythmic quality of elaborated expressions, but less obvious in psycho-collocations. However, shouldn’t we consider either the poetic images generated by collocation of psycho-nouns and psychomates, as revealing the aesthetic of this language, as reflecting Burmese worldview?

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