Discrete particles in Burmese

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1 Introduction

'The grammar of Burmese is almost entirely a matter of the correct use of particles.'
Stewart (1955)

It is generally known that in learning Burmese, or in the endeavours of speakers of Burmese to acquire a better understanding of the way the Burmese language functions, one of the greatest difficulties seems to be the heavy use of lexical items such as နှိုင်း၊ ဘာလာ၊ နှင်းပုံ၊ နှင်းရှိ၊ usually referred to as particles. While their grammatical functions have been extensively described in recent reference grammars, such as Okell and Allott's (2001) Dictionary of grammatical forms and the Manuel de Birmane Vol. 2: Grammaire Birmane (Bernot et al. 2001), discourse studies on spoken Burmese are still very rare. Although the situation-dependent nature of these particles has been taken into account in the current literature, there is still a need for a more systematic description of Burmese discourse structures through the use of these particles. This study therefore is born of my intention to identify discourse functions that are typically associated with a set of particles in Burmese, as a step toward a systematic account of Burmese discourse structures.

Using a corpus-based approach, within the framework of discourse analysis, this study examines two particles နှင်းလာ and နှင်းပုံ in natural spoken and written Burmese data. My objective is to demonstrate that these particles serve important discourse functions that have not been included in reference grammars; that their semantic values are context-dependent; and, in addition to their being typically associated with the spoken style of Burmese, that their use may also be genre-specific. The corpora include eight texts from different genres of spoken Burmese, namely

1 dialogues in fiction;
2 pre-scripted speech in radio plays;
3 personal narratives, and

By texts in spoken style, I mean narratives or dialogues, whether they are delivered in a spoken or written medium. This study focuses on spoken style only and excludes expository prose style written texts.
personal interviews.

2 Particles in Burmese

Burmese particles are bound or semi-bound morphemes which are attached postpositionally to lexical units such as nouns and verbs, or larger syntactical units such as clauses or utterances. Some particles are obligatory for indicating grammatical relations between words, clauses or utterances, and therefore often receive grammatical labels such as subject marker, verb attribute marker, sentence-final particle, and so on. Hopple (2003) observes that 'particles have been classified according to their distribution within grammatical constructions, and there is a wide spectrum of particle function between highly semantic to wholly grammatical'. While it is true that Burmese particles 'carry almost all the grammatical information contained in a sentence' (Okell & Allott 2001), a large number of particles seem non-obligatory as they do not have any particular syntactical function, and they do not affect the propositional or conceptual meaning of utterances. Yet, these particles are neither semantically dispensable nor redundant in the discourse, as they convey important information regarding the speaker's attitude towards the message itself, the speech act itself, the speaker's interlocutor or the potential audience. A close examination of these particles in language-in-use reveals that Burmese particles have both syntactical and discourse functions: they often serve an affective function rather than a referential, denotative or cognitive function alone in a discourse, and their interpretation is usually interactionally accomplished. Particles are typically polysemic, and many of the particles do not have one to one equivalent in English, as their semantic values are often highly context-dependent.

For example, the context-dependent nature of particles can be illustrated with sentences that have been made up using the particle နားကြား, which is one of the most studied particles in Burmese linguistics. As can be seen in the examples below နားကြား is equivalent to English 'from' in (1); it is a subject marker, noun marker or marker of agent as it identifies the subject noun or agent of the sentence in (2); and it is a topic marker in (3), where it identifies the topic of the whole discourse, rather than the subject noun in one sentence alone.

(1) ကြားကြား နားကြား နားကြား
မော့လား ဗိုလ်ကျွန်း ပေါ်လာ
Mr Okell England.from return.come PERF
'Mr Okell is (now) back from England.'

(2) ကြားကြား နားကြား နားကြား
မော့လား ဗိုလ်ကျွန်း ပေါ်လာ
Mr Okell. SUBJ English.race POL
'Mr Okell is English.'

It is debatable whether some of the particles are syntactically obligatory or not, but this issue is beyond the scope of this study.

The transcription of Burmese follows the conventions used elsewhere in this volume.
Mr Okell is English. Although he is English, he can speak Burmese well. (He) has also lived in Burma for a long time.

These examples suggest that in order to make an accurate interpretation of the semantic value of particles, we need to go beyond the sentence level, and study their functions at a discourse level. This study attempts to demonstrate that, besides the syntactic functions described in reference grammars, some particles may serve important discourse functions, and therefore may be categorised as discourse markers.

### 3 Discourse markers

Discourse is ‘language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication’, and it refers to ‘larger units of language such as paragraphs, conversations, and interviews’ (Richards et al. 1993). *Discourse marker* is a general term that refers to lexical items used in discourse such as English *well, but, oh, y'know, like*, German *doch, halt, ja, eben;* French *donc, alors, eh bien, bon;* Turkish *yani, i te, ey, ya* (Ozbek 1995) or Norwegian *vel, vissti, nok, da* (Jucker 1993). The concept is a fuzzy one, as there is no consensus on the choice of term: *discourse markers* are also known as ‘discourse particles’ (Schourup 1985), ‘discourse connectives’ (Blakemore 1988), ‘pragmatic markers’ (Fraser 1996), ‘interactional particles’ (Maynard 1993), or ‘particles of rapport’ (Uyeno 1971) in the existing literature on discourse studies. However, this diversity of terminology simply reflects the wide range of linguistic approaches adopted by different researchers to describe lexical items that serve various kinds of discourse functions, and therefore the choice of label is only a definitional issue that does not affect the content of the present study. The term ‘discourse marker’ (henceforth DM) is chosen here, suggesting a broad category which subsumes many discourse functions, including ‘discourse connectors, intimacy signals, topic-switchers, hesitation markers, fillers, and attitude markers, hedging devices’, and so on (Jucker & Ziv 1998).

Particles in Burmese may be considered discourse markers because they share common features of discourse markers that have often been discussed in the current literature. Among them, I will cite a few that may be applicable to my description of Burmese particles as discourse. Discourse markers are syntactically detachable (Schiffrin 2001), yet their distribution is not random, and they are not freely interchangeable (Wierzbicka 1986). Discourse markers cannot be studied in the absence of context, as they pertain primarily to language-in-use, rather than to language structure (Wierzbicka 1986), and their more
specific interpretation is negotiated by the context (Fraser 1990). Discourse markers convey procedural meaning rather than conceptual or propositional meaning: they do not affect determination of truth conditionality, nor do they contribute to propositional content (Fraser 1990; Jucker 1993; Ochs 1973). Discourse markers have an affective or emotive (rather than a referential or denotative) function (Jucker 1993; Maynard 1993).

4 The data corpus

The corpus for this study, profiled in (4), consists of some 20,000 syllables of natural spoken Burmese, which is drawn from four different genres. All the spoken data were collected randomly over the last few years, were recorded by various individuals. The data in written form are drawn from various publications. Further descriptions of the data are listed in Appendix A.

This is a small corpus, so it is not possible to report findings in conclusive detail. Prosodic features are excluded from the transcription and analysis. In general, the analysis suggests that certain discourse features are associated with the use of particles ကိုက်လို ဗူနာကုန်း and ကိုက်လို ကုန်း in different types of discourse. This finding may improve our understanding of discourse-marking particles of spoken Burmese in general. The objective of this study is simply to identify possible discourse features of the particles, as suggested by actual data, that may extend beyond their description in existing grammars. The analysis of the data is both quantitative as well as qualitative.

(4) The text corpus

text | genre | syllables
---|---|---
1 ပြည် - ရာဇူးရာ ကားပြည် | written, fictional dialogue | 2,432
Thu Kha – His Side is my Side
2 ကျွန်ုပ်မှာက်နေတယ် - ကျွန်ုပ်မှာက်နေတယ် | written, fictional dialogue | 827
Nu Nu Yiy (Innwa) – You’re Just Like the People
3 ကိုက်လို - ကိုက်လို | written, fictional dialogue | 1,761
Ma Sanda – The Cycle of Rebirth
4 ကျွန်ုပ်မှာက်နေတယ် - ကျွန်ုပ်မှာက်နေတယ် | scripted, spoken radio-play dialogue | 1,855
Daddy’s getting married
5 ကျွန်ုပ်မှာက်နေတယ် - ကျွန်ုပ်မှာက်နေတယ် | scripted, spoken radio-play dialogue | 2,711
Home-grown Ko Ko
6 Two friends - one recounting a feature film to the other | spoken narrative | 4,435
7 Four family members – recounting the plot of | spoken narrative | 4,480

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4 It is difficult to apply the notion of ‘word’ to Burmese, which uses a syllabic script in which ‘word’ divisions are largely optional and a matter of personal preference. I am therefore quantifying the texts in the Burmese corpus by ‘syllable-count’ rather than ‘word-count’. While corpus-analysis in many other languages has been commonly done through the use of computerised concordancing tools, since it was impossible to use these tools on Burmese text (because of the syllable-division problem), syllables were counted by hand and the particles to be examined were isolated manually.
4.1 နိဂုံမျက်

The particle နိဂုံမျက် ကိုလ် has been variously described as a suffix meaning 'also, as well, too, in addition' (MLC 1993, Okell and Allott 2001). It is also used to link parallel noun phrases with the meaning 'not only . . . but also' or 'both. . . and' as in (5)–(7):

(5) စာပေရေးအောင်မြင်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးမှုများ၊ စာပေရေးအောင်မြင်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးမှုများကို နိဂုံမျက်စာပေရေးကို နိဂုံမျက်စာပေရေးကို နိဂုံမျက်စာပေရေးကို
speech.talk.also.good

‘(He’s) not only good at speaking but also at writing.’ (MLC 1993)

(6) ကျူးကျော်လ်စား ကျူးကျော်စား ကျူးကျော်စား ကျူးကျော်စား
kaphi.lè tea?,tè laphe?jè.lè tea?,tè
coffee.also like.REAL tea.also like.REAL

‘I like both tea and coffee.’

(7) Yangon.in.also NEG.get.NEG, Mandalay.in.also NEG.get.NEG
Yangon.in.also NEG.get.NEG, Mandalay.in.also NEG.get.NEG

‘We couldn’t get any either in Yangon or in Mandalay.’

(Okell and Allott, 2001)

Okell and Allott’s (2001) Dictionary includes a separate entry for နိဂုံမျက် ကိုလ် preceded by the noun-marking particle က, glossing the whole နိဂုံမျက် ကိုလ် as ‘as for’. While နိဂုံမျက် ကိုလ် emphasises the topic of the sentence, the နိဂုံမျက် component can sometimes retain the meaning ‘also’ as in (8), where သွား သီဟီ သီဟီ သီဟီ is the verbal adjective ‘be cold.’

(8) နိဂုံမျက် ကိုလ် ၏ ၏ ၏ ၏
pa?wundin mju.dwe.shain.nè.dè, tehán.gā.lè tehán.dè
surroundings mist.PL.hang.CONT.REAL, cold.kā.lè cold.REAL

‘It was misty, and cold as well.’

With these meanings, နိဂုံမျက် ကိုလ် occurs very frequently in the corpus, shown in (9). A close examination of the data indicates that နိဂုံမျက် ကိုလ် also occurs with a discourse-marking function, when marking pronouns or kinship terms used as pronouns.
(9) Occurrence of ကြည့်: ကြည့် in the corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>text</th>
<th>No. of occurrences</th>
<th>as DM syllables</th>
<th>No. of DM per 1000 syllables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>2432</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2711</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4435</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>4480</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2369</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When ကြည့်: ကြည့် occurs in this collocation, it is usually in response to the utterance in the previous turn. The speaker seems to be expressing some kind of self-justification, self-defence or reproach, as illustrated and contextualised in examples (10)-(12). More examples from the data may be found in Appendix B.

(10) မယ်တောင်းခေါ်ပါ။ သမီးဘာ့လိုက်ကို သောစာကြောင်းများ ပြောခဲ့ပါ။

mother.ကြည့် say.just. if anger.only.EMPH
‘Oh Mother, you’re always angry when you speak!’

Text 1: son to mother in defense to her reproach that he has given too much priority to his own wife and her family.

(11) မယ်တောင်းခေါ်ပါ။ သမီးဘာ့လိုက်ကို သောစာကြောင်းများ ပြောခဲ့ပါ။

oh! daddy.ကြည့် this.age.big.arrive.only-when marriage.do.IRR.QUOT
‘Oh, Daddy, so you’re only getting married at this old age?’

Text 4: daughter to father who has just announced that he is going to get married in order to be better looked after.

(12) ကြည့်တွေကြည့်တွေသော သမီးဘာ့လိုက်ကို သောစာကြောင်းများ ပြောခဲ့ပါ။

[For goodness' sake.] Thweh, just send May Moe (in your place).

(From Text 5: Khin Hnaung is telling Thweh, reproachfully, and in an attempt to protect her, that Thweh does not need to accompany her boss, a male foreigner, to a dinner, but instead could very well send another employee, May Moe.)

As can be seen from the frequency of discourse-marking ကြည့်: ကြည့် in (9) and the contexts described in (10)-(12), ကြည့်: ကြည့် occurs with the discourse meaning of ‘self-justification’, ‘self-defence’ or ‘reproach’, with a higher frequency in dialogues between close friends or family members than in narratives and in personal interviews, perhaps because conflicts are not typically a part of narratives and interviews, where the motivation for speech is straightforwardly to impart or exchange information. The interlocutor may
interrupt when there is a need for information to be checked, or, at times, simply to establish good listenership.

The conclusion to be drawn from these data is that the use of ကလေး with this particular discourse meaning may be genre-specific. Among the five texts of fiction (namely Texts 1–5), of which three are in written mode and two in spoken mode, variation in the frequency suggests that the use of ကလေး with this discourse function is context-dependent. Where there is no apparent reason for conflict between the two interlocutors, (e.g. in Text 2, which consists mainly of narrative with very little dialogue), this discourse function is not required. Furthermore, Text 3 has the fewest tokens of ကလေး with this discourse function because the dialogues in this text consist mainly of the giving and seeking of information or suggestions, except for the part where the husband and the wife enter into a disagreement as in (13). Here, the wife reproaches her husband for suggesting that they should start consuming the Nescoffee (a Burmese brand of instant coffee) that they have just received as a gift; she is inclined to think that they should offer such a precious item as a gift to the doctor who is taking care of her mother, instead of drinking it for their own pleasure. Her reproach is provoked by her husband’s lack of understanding and inability to foresee advantages they could gain from such an opportunity.

(13) ကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကကCc
kokok.ကလေး kʰʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔʔagger.REAL.EMPH
‘[For goodness’ sake], Ko Ko, now you’re being difficult.’ (Text 3)

Texts 1, 4 and 5, all with relatively frequent use of discourse-marking ကလေး, consist of reproaches by individuals, and the subsequent defensive utterances of those being reproached. For example, in Text 1 a daughter and son respond to their mother’s reproach for each of them giving favours to their in-laws, and a husband reproaches his wife for practising double standards with their son and daughter. In Text 4, a father and his siblings either justify their own actions or blame each other for not taking care of their aging father. In Text 5, a girl reproaches her friend for not being modern enough in her clothing and behaviour.

I have demonstrated the discourse function ‘self-justification’, ‘self-defence’ or ‘reproach’ associated with the use of ကလေး. There are other discourse meanings of ကလေး alone (without က) in different collocations. For example, while ကလေး is not typically used in narratives for the discourse function in question, the high frequency of ကလေး tokens in Text 7 suggests that this may be a prominent feature of spoken narrative. Notably, within the total of 120 tokens, ကလေး occurs consistently in the patterns in (14):

(14)  
VERB ကလေး VERB  
VERB₁ ကလေး VERB₁ VERB₂

In these structures, ကလေး serves as a discourse connector ‘and when verb happened…’, picking up the material from the last element in the narrative to introduce the next element, as in (15) and (16):
The selection of this structure over other common structures to express 'as/when VERB' such as VERB သက်သည်, or VERB သည် သည် may be determined by specific motives within the discourse to solicit more involvement from the listener, or by a wish to dramatise the story. On the other hand, it may be simply idiosyncratic. These questions may perhaps be answered by investigating larger corpora.

4.2 ကြည့်ပေါ်

The 'emphatic' particle ကြည့်ပေါ် is one of the most commonly used particles in spoken Burmese, and it appears with high frequency in all genres represented in the corpus, as shown in (9). ကြည့်ပေါ် is described in reference grammars as a 'particle suffixed to a verb as emphasis' (MLC 1994) and as a 'sentence-final phrase particle' with the meanings 'of course, by all means, naturally, obviously; presumably, no doubt, I suppose; you know, let's say, I mean' (Okell & Allott 2001:122). Given the high frequency of ကြည့်ပေါ် tokens in the data, it is not possible to list all its occurrences. Here in (17) some quantitative information about the data is provided; only selective examples drawn from the data will be included in the analysis.

(17) Occurrence of ကြည့်ပေါ် in the corpus

<table>
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<th>text</th>
<th>No. of occurrences</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2,369</td>
<td>23.64</td>
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</table>

The data reveal some important discourse features associated with the use of particle ကြည့်ပေါ် in spoken discourse, discussed below.

When ကြည့်ပေါ် is used in utterance-final position, typically followed in narratives in this corpus by one of the two discourse-marking 'concessive' particles နာစာ or လက်လက်, the speaker seems either to be checking the listener's comprehension, or soliciting the
interlocutor’s involvement in the narrative process. As examples (18)–(21) demonstrate, မိုးဗော် p2 may be translated into English as ‘you know’, ‘so, naturally’, ‘let’s say’, etc., depending on the context.

(18) တွေ့ရာနှင်းတွေ မှမိုးဗော်ပေများ
နှင်းတွေ မှမိုးဗော်ပေများ
that.sell.REAL NOM  NEG.be.NEG.p2.OK?
‘He was, like, I’m not selling them, you know?’
(From Text 6: Lwin Moe, the male protagonist, wanted to buy sugar-cane sticks, but was told that they were being distributed free of charge.)

(19) ကြည့်ပါ ကြည့်ပါပါ
လုံးများ
thereupon LwinMoe.SUBJ.also pleased.encouraged.p2.OK?
‘So then Lwin Moe was, like, really delighted, you know.’
(From Text 6: Lwin Moe has been told that he can eat as many oranges as he likes, when caught picking them from a plantation.)

(20) စတင်ပါ စတင်ပါပါ
ပါ ပါ
accident take place.REAL NOM.EMPH.OK?
‘So [let’s say] there was an accident, right?’
(From Text 7: The narrator is making an assumption about a protagonist who was injured, but doesn’t remember/understand exactly what happened.)

(21) ကိုဗော်စိုက်ပါ ကိုဗော်စိုက်ပါပါ
ကျွန်မှာမိုးဗော်ပေ
revenge.wreak.REAL ATR  intent.type.with.EMPH
‘It was done as a way of getting even, you know.’
(From Text 7: The male protagonist has tried to seduce the sister of his former fiancée’s husband, after the fiancée dissolved her engagement with him.)

The context-dependent use of မိုးဗော် p2 and its collocational distribution in the discourse, suggests that there may be other discourse meanings associated with different collocations with မိုးဗော် p2. For example, it might be possible to distinguish between the meanings and discourse functions of မိုးဗော် p2,နော် and မိုးဗော် p2,လိုး. Using corpus analysis, we can try to determine if each collocation is likely to occur in certain types of contexts, or at certain points of discourse. This is an unexplored area of investigation for future research in Burmese discourse studies.

The particle မိုးဗော် p2 also appears with a high frequency in Text 8, the personal interview. It occurs either in utterance-final position, or after short phrases such as တွေ့ရာနှင်း နော် ‘really’, or co-occurs with words used when the speaker is hesitating, such as ချင်းခြင်း ‘that’, ချင်းခြင်း နော် ‘like that’, or ချင်းခြင်း ဟွေါး ‘that thing’. Naturally, people often express opinions during personal interviews, and မိုးဗော် p2 seems to have the effect of toning down claims or assumptions so as not to appear too assertive, as in (22). In (23), the interviewer
is trying not to appear too imposing in soliciting the interviewee’s opinions, displaying the modesty that is considered polite in Burmese culture.

As discussed above, ꜔�� ꜔ဠ typically occurs in phrases where the speaker is hesitating. (24) is a list of phrases in the corpus containing ꜔ဠ ꜔ဠ as a hesitation marker, filler, or hedging device.

(24) common phrases collocating with ꜔ဠ ꜔ဠ.

As discussed above, ꜔ဠ ꜔ဠ typically occurs in phrases where the speaker is hesitating. (24) is a list of phrases in the corpus containing ꜔ဠ ꜔ဠ as a hesitation marker, filler, or hedging device.

In addition, the varying frequency of ꜔ဠ ꜔ဠ tokens in the different genres of texts set out in (17) suggests that the use of ꜔ဠ ꜔ဠ is genre-specific. It occurs with a higher frequency in Texts 6–8, which comprise unplanned, spontaneous speech such as personal interviews and narratives. While dialogues in fiction or in scripted speech usually imitate naturally-occurring dialogues, they may still lack some of the features of spontaneous speech such as
hedging devices. This may explain why  goo ] pə is absent or less frequent in such texts. It should be noted, moreover, that goo ] pə may also be topic-sensitive: in Texts 1–5 the participants are reproaching each other, defending themselves, or exchanging information and consequently, there is not much need or room for modesty and consideration for others, another reason for the absence or lower frequency of goo ] pə.

The conclusion is that in spoken discourse goo ] pə is likely to have one of the following discourse functions: checking comprehension, soliciting involvement from the interlocutor, or toning down the presentation of an opinion or interpretation. In addition the use of goo ] pə may be genre-specific and topic-sensitive.

5 Conclusion

Adopting a corpus-based approach within the framework of discourse analysis, I have examined the discourse features of two particles, goo ] le and goo ] pə, in spoken and written colloquial Burmese. The collocation moo ] kal e after nouns or pronouns may express self-justification, self-defence or reproach by the speaker. The use of moo ] kal e seems to be specifically characteristic of dialogues in the corpus which involve conflict and disagreement between close friends or family members. The particle goo ] pə, on the other hand, may be used as a hedging device when a speaker is trying to tone down claims and interpretations to maintain modesty and humbleness, qualities highly valued in Burmese culture. The use of these particles in the present corpus is found to be context-dependent, topic-sensitive, and genre-specific.

With this study, I have sought to demonstrate that certain particles can express discourse meanings in Burmese, and therefore also be classified as discourse markers. Their discourse functions, however, are often overlooked when they are described in reference grammars. There is certainly a need for further study of discourse in Burmese.

Appendix A: Brief description of the content of the texts in the corpus

Text 1.

Author: Thukha Tha Mba
Title: His Side is my Side မှားယူသူကို မော်စစ်ပြောက်တယူမိ。
Text type: written, fictional dialogue
Protagonists: nagging mother, daughter, son, a rather submissive father.
Three sets of dialogues and a few short narratives.
Dialogue between mother and daughter: mother is telling her how she should look after her own family instead of her in-laws, and preaching that wife has a right to all the husband’s earnings.
Dialogue between Mother and Son: mother is yelling at him because he’s giving too much priorities to his in-laws.
Brief dialogue between Father and Mother: he points out the double-standard she's practising, and gets yelled at.
Text 2.
Author: Nu Nu Yi (Innwa) နိုင်ငံရေး နိုင်ငံရေး
Title: You're Just Like the People ပါတာဗိုင်း ဖှက်ပြောင်းပေး ချို့မ်းဗျာ ကြားနိုင် သည်မှာ?
Text type: written, fictional dialogue
Protagonists: a vendor of medicines and buyer who is also a medical doctor, both female, at the market
Very few brief dialogues: buyer asking for information about the medicine, and a large part of narrative mostly reflecting the thoughts of the vendor as she observes and admires the buyer but finally gets disillusioned.

Text 3. အမျိုးသားများ [fiction in written medium]
Author: Ma Sanda မှ စန္ဒာ
Title: The Cycle of Rebirth နောက်ပိုင်း နောက်ပိုင်း
Text type: written, fictional dialogue
Protagonists: four different families.
Five brief but very similar scenes, each with dialogue between husband and wife, or parents and children, and a monologue, mainly about a jar of Nescafe as a gift – where they get it from and who they will give it to. Protagonists mostly agree with each other's plans, except for the last one in which husband unsuccessfully expresses his desire to drink Nescafe. Contains a few brief narratives.

Text 4.
Title: Daddy's getting married မိုး မိုးသားများကြီးစွဲခြင်း ပြိုင်ပစ် နိုင်ငံတော်နိုင်ငံတော်
Text type: scripted, spoken radio-play dialogue
Protagonists: again father, young daughter living with him, older daughter and son, both married and previously living apart, but now have moved in with him.
Three dialogues and a few brief narratives.
Dialogue between father and young daughter: casual conversation about daily routines, father’s plan to have the son move in so that he won’t be left alone
Dialogue between older daughter and father: she informs him of the need to move in with him because of the high rent.
Dialogue between Father and all three children: Father announces his plan to remarry in order to be better looked after; children start objecting, justifying their unintentional lack of attention and blaming each other as the cause of the father's ridiculous plan. Then everything changes at the end for a happy ending.

Text 5.
Title: Home-grown Ko Ko ပြန်တွင် ၊ ကြီး ကြီး
Text type: scripted, spoken radio-play dialogue
Protagonists: two young women friends Thweh (T) and Khin Hnaung (KHn), and KHn’s mother.
Synopsis: T is modern and KHn is old-fashioned. T gets KHn a job at the company where she is working. T is frustrated with KHn’s style of clothing and behaviour and criticizes her. KHn worries about T’s audacious behaviour, and expresses her concerns. They get into a dispute, stop talking to each other, but their differences are reconciled in the end.
Different sets of dialogue between T and KHn; a brief dialogue between T and KHn’s mother.
Dialogues between T and KHn mainly revolving on the subject of T’s passion for everything foreign-made and KHn’s naïve fashion sense and social skills.
Dialogue between T and KHn’s mother at the beginning: general greeting, and casual conversation.

Text 6.
Text type: spoken narrative
Synopsis: A recounting the plot of a film to B. A rich man who hates money and luxury meets a girl. He finds out she’s rich and wants to have a fancy wedding, so he runs away. He is assaulted and put on a bus. He finds himself waking up in a bus in the countryside. He meets a girl and her family who look after him. He falls in love with this new life. Then the fiancée shows up, begging him to return to the city. The new girl is broken-hearted. But a happy ending ensues as usual.

Text 7.
Text type: spoken narrative
Synopsis: A recounting the plot of a film to B in the presence of two other people. Girl and Boy meet. Both have a passion for music, but since girl’s parents do not approve her passion for music nor for Boy, they decide to elope. Boy gets into a motorcycle accident and the whole plan is ruined. Girl leaves for the city, meets Boy 2, and they get married. Boy 2 has a sister, who has a passion for music. Sister meets Boy. Girl finds out, tries to stop Boy from taking revenge on her by using Boy 2’s sister, but in vain. Boy and Sister get married, but Boy gets drunk often, singing a song about a broken heart. Sister finds out, gets into a fight, goes to hospital. Then everybody meets, things are resolved, happy ending.

Text 8.
Text type: personal interview on confidential material.
Synopsis: A interviews B soliciting B’s opinions regarding a radio station. Both A and B are male native speakers of Burmese.
Appendix B

Sentences from the corpus containing discourse-marking တို့လေး with the possible function of 'self-justification', 'self-defence', or 'reproach'.

Note: In utterances marked [?], the discourse function of တို့လေး is probable but uncertain.

Text 1.

1. အောက် ပါသည်။ မုန်းဖွဲ့ပါ။ မိခင်၊ 为什么你要不停地问我难题吗？
   So, mother, why do you have to keep pestering me with difficult questions?

2. ခြင်းစကားလေးကို အခြေခံ။
   Oh mother, you're so difficult!

3. မိခင် မိုးသော နေရာကို ဖျင်ရန် မကြာခဏမရှိစေ။
   Oh mother, don't you come [as well]? If you come there'll be too many.

4. ခြင်းစကားလေးကို အခြေခံ။ မိခင် ပြော သည်ကို ပြောခိုင်မှန်ကန်ပါ။
   Oh mother, but I did pay attention to [what] you [said].

5. ခြင်းစကားလေးကို အခြေခံ။ မိခင် ပြော ခြင်းရှိစေတယ်။
   If you say anything, you just get all angry.

6. မိခင်သည် မိခင် မိုးသော နေရာကို ဖျင်ရန် မကြာခဏမရှိစေ။
   Yes of course. Even just now when Khin Khin Nyunt was here it was a case of keeping quiet about the wife's earnings, and the wife taking care of the husband's earnings.

Text 3.

1. မိခင်သည် မိုးသော နေရာကို ဖျင်ရန် မကြာခဏမရှိစေ။
   [Now] you're being difficult, Ko Ko.

2. ခြင်းစကားလေးကို အခြေခံ။ မိခင်သည် မိုးသော နေရာကို ဖျင်ရန် မကြာခဏမရှိစေ။ [?]
   Hmm. As soon as these coffee powder jars get here they're dirty all over.

3. ခြင်းစကားလေးကို အခြေခံ။ မိခင်သည် မိုးသော နေရာကို ဖျင်ရန် မကြာခဏမရှိစေ။
   Oh Ko Ko Lwin, it's just that Nescoffee has a well-known name.

Text 4.

1. ခြင်းစကားလေးကို အခြေခံ။ မိခင်သည် မိုးသော နေရာကို ဖျင်ရန် မကြာခဏမရှိစေ။
   Oh you [my daughter]! They all live [and eat] separately.
2. Hmm, so,[ Daddy,] now you've reached this advanced age you're planning to get married.

3. And you [little sister] really don't seem to care.

4. And,[ you,] since you've been working, you just haven't had the time to look after [him].

5. Dad, you know all about our [my wife and my] financial situation.

Text 5.

1. Can't you just wear something fashionable?

2. Hey, Khin Hnaung, you've got that big salary coming in now.

3. And your hair: all the time it's just in a big ponytail tied with an elastic band.

4. Oh Khin Hnaung, your handbag's all wrong!

5. Thweh, why don't you just tell May Moe to go instead of you?

6. Thweh, you just don't get it, do you? Just pull yourself together!

7. Oh Khin Hnaung, it was just like [they do it] in those movies.

8. Yes, Khin Hnaung, [as you know, after all] Ko Ko was born in this country and grew up here, so he's turned out to be a real, genuine Burmese guy.

9. Don't even try to ask how thick Ko Ko is! He needs constant pushing!
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