

A Structural Study of a Nominal Phrase in Dawei Dialect Spoken in Dawei District of Tanintharyi Region in Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

This article delineates three main objectives: firstly, to scrutinize noun phrases within the nominal structure of the Dawei dialect; secondly, to analyze pronoun phrases within the same structure; and thirdly, to outline the composition of compound nominal phrases within the dialect. Employing qualitative research methodology, the study primarily relied on documentary evidence and interviews with native Dawei speakers. The data collection spanned between 2019 and 2021, involving meetings and interviews in the Dawei district of the Tanintharyi region, Myanmar. All data were meticulously recorded using Fieldworks Language Explorer software.

Key findings emerged from this research. Firstly, a noun phrase in the Dawei dialect is characterized by a head accompanied by optional modifiers, encompassing words, phrases, or clauses. Secondly, a pronoun phrase in the dialect features a pronoun head, often followed by numerals. Lastly, a series of nominal phrases, comprising two or more units, constitutes a nominal phrase compound. These phrases exhibit interconnectivity within the dialect's structure. The examination underscores the diversity of phrase forms within the contemporary Dawei dialect, delineating distinct structures and methodologies.

Ultimately, the paper underscores the structural analysis approach in the study of nominal phrases within the Dawei dialect.

Keywords: structural study; nominal phrase; noun phrase; pronoun phrase; nominal phrase compound.

Introduction

This article is concerned with the structural study of a nominal phrase in Dawei dialect spoken in Dawei district of Tanintharyi region in Myanmar. In Dawei dialect, such phrase is a unit of grammar. A phrase may consist of one word or more than one word. Normal phrases in Dawei dialect are divided into three types: noun phrases, pronoun phrases and nominal phrase compound.

Of them the noun phrase is a noun alone or a noun being preceded by the determiner. Indeed, a noun phrase of a nominal phrase in Dawei dialect is a set that consists of its head and optional modifiers containing words, phrases, or clauses. It is supported with the examples in each of the types. A pronoun phrase in Dawei dialect contains a head of pronoun. The numerals occur after a head of a pronoun phrase. Also they are supported with the example in each of the types. A sequence of two or more nominal phrases that together form a structure that itself acts like a nominal phrase is called nominal phrase compound. They are supported with the example in each of the types too.

They all were studied in the structural study of a modern grammatical way against the traditional way. It is however found that a head noun is denoted by mentioned above all phrases in various kinds of positions like the gum-kino tree, which was decorated by its beautiful flowers on its various kinds of branches. In this way such phrases are decorating Dawei dialect with the kinds of verbal actions.

This approach highlights the creative potential and by implication, responsibility of the grammatical study of phrases of Dawei dialect in structural approach. It is hereby found that different structures and different methods of them indicate different kinds of phrases in Dawei dialect in modern age. Moreover, this indicates many suggestions of how to do concerning Dawei dialect in Linguistics. The researcher hopes that this research will be beneficial by realizing the structural study of the nominal phrases of Dawei language.

Objectives of Research

- 1) To study noun phrases of a nominal phrase in Dawei dialect.
- 2) To understand pronoun phrases of a nominal phrase in Dawei dialect.
- 3) To structure nominal phrase compounds of a nominal phrase in Dawei dialect.

Research Methodology

Being a qualitative research focusing on documentary evidences and interviews with informants, this research design consists of syntactical approach. Research method is employed in this work of a grammatical study. It can be seen to elicit linguistic data by interview the people from Dawei who use this language in their daily lives. The qualitative research is that means these few random speakers represent the whole group. The method of this research is divided into a series of steps which are described as follows.

Research design

The research design is concerned with a structural study of Dawei dialect spoken in Dawei district Tanintharyi region Myanmar in linguistic approach. The researcher systematically studied the books containing many sources to select the nominal phrases in Dawei dialect. Furthermore, during 2017 and 2020, the researcher went and met Dawei native speakers in Dawei district for interview. The priority of the practical discussion, revision and collection about Dawei dialect are asked in linguistics approach.

According to Than Shwe, it is acknowledged that the Dawei dialect was historically influenced by numerous Burmese monarchs who reigned over the region for an extended period. Consequently, the local inhabitants were compelled to abandon their indigenous writing systems in favor of adopting Burmese scripts over the course of many centuries. Nevertheless, contemporary observations reveal that a significant portion of the population currently utilizes Burmese scripts to transcribe the Dawei dialect in their everyday communications. Therefore, the forthcoming discourse aims to elucidate the features of the Dawei dialect in both the Burmese and English languages.

Data Collection

Data collection consists of two parts: data and fieldwork. Among them the data of the study contain primary and secondary sources. Focusing group discussion and useful books, newspapers, magazines and so on, this data especially consists of syntactical structures of Dawei dialect; Myanmar (Burmese) Texts and related books with qualified academics. All the sources are based on English and Burmese scripts related to Dawei Dialect.

To find out the data, the researcher looked for the nominal phrases in Dawei dialect used in the book. The steps took by the researcher are:

- 1) Reading the whole contents of the books.

- 2) Looking for the nominal phrases in Dawei dialect that are used in the books.
- 3) Investigating, selecting and underlining the nominal phrases on the books.
- 4) Categorizing each nominal phrases into their types and their syntactical functions in linguistic approaches.
- 5) Constructing, combining and adding the nominal phrases to the data on the computer systematically.

Particularly active points of the overall outline of this research on Dawei dialect were methodically built and collected. In this way all data from documentary evidences and interviews were recorded into a computer program called Fieldworks Language Explore.

Results of Research

Myanmar called the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and also known as Burma, is a sovereign state in South East Asia bordered by Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand.¹ The country's 2014 census revealed a much lower population than expected, with 135 ethnics Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Burmese, Rakhaine, Dawei, Myeik, ec.² In Myanmar ethnic groups, there are eight kinds of ethnic groups: Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Burmese, Rakhine, and Shan.³ Actually Dawei is one ethnic people from the Burmese ethnic group and a representative word of city.

Dawei is a city on the north bank of the Dawei River in south-eastern Myanmar and capital of Tanintharyi Region, about 614.3 km (381.7 mi) south of Yangon. Population (2004 estimate) is 139,900. It is at between 13.17 °N and 14.15°N, and 97.46°E and 99.18°E. It is 5,415 square miles in size. It is way from west border (Phu Nam Ron) of Thailand for about 130km; south and east border of Mon state for about 44 miles; north border of Myeik or Beik province. Actually it is a port at the head of the Dawei River estuary, 30 km (18.6 mi) from the Andaman Sea or Kappali Sea.

After independence of Myanmar in 1948, Dawei of the city became part of the Tanintharyi Division, which included today's Mon State. In 1974, Mon State was carved out of

¹ Sar Bay Beik Man Society, *Essence of Myanmar Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, (Yangon: Photo Litho, 2012), p. 147.

² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³ Educational Affairs, *Text Book of the Basic Educational School, Grade-4*, (Yangon: Educational Press, 1985), p. 1.

Tanintharyi and Dawei became the capital of the truncated Division. In 1989, the city's English name was changed from Tavoy to Dawei. Thus, Dawei province is touching the areas of Mon State in the north, Myeik in the south, Thailand in the east and the Andaman Sea of Indian Ocean in the west.

At the time of English colonial government Dawei city was called "Tavoy" and Dawei ethnic people were called "Tavoyans". Tavoyan is the less well-known name in Myanmar. Therefore, Tavoy and Tavoyan are representative ancient name of Dawe. Dawei is a well-known name. Even if these ancient cities were in Dawei differently, they all were called Dawei due to Dawei ethnic people speaking Dawei dialect.⁴

In antiquity, the populace of a certain region, fortunate in their possession of distinct scripts separate from Burmese orthography, left behind ancient lead-coins as tangible evidence of their scriptural heritage. Regrettably, the annals of time witnessed their assimilation into the dominion of Burmese kings, resulting in the gradual abandonment of their indigenous scripts in favor of Burmese orthography over successive centuries. Consequently, the inscriptions on these ancient lead-coins, once decipherable, now confound contemporary scholars. Remarkably, contemporary records reveal the prevalent usage of the Dawei dialect transcribed in Burmese script among this populace in their daily discourse. In light of these historical and linguistic nuances, the forthcoming discussion will delineate the Dawei dialect in both Burmese and English for scholarly examination.

Dr. Preecha Kanetnog (2014) interpreted, "Linguistics is the science that describes and classifies languages. The linguist identifies and describes the units and patterns of the sound system, the words and morphemes, and the phrases and sentences, that are the structures of a language. In this article, the role of phrase of Dawei dialect is therefore discussed in the linguistics approaches.

According to Leech (2004), it is understood that the phrase is a part of a grammatical hierarchy. Contained one word or more than one word, fallen between clause and word and lacked the subject-predicate structure typical of clauses, phrase is a single element of structure typically. It can structurally be found that, in all of the phrases, there are kinds of a head: main noun, main verb and optional modifiers.

⁴ Yatanar, Documentary Note of Dawei, (Yangon: Shwe Naing Ngan, 2007), p. 12.

Also, in Dawei dialect, there are two kinds of main phrase: major phrases and minor phrases. The major phrases are divided into two types: a nominal phrase and a verb phrase. The minor phrases are divided into four types: a numeral phrase, an adverb phrase, a prepositional phrase and a temporal phrase. This article is presented with those phrases: the major phrases and minor phrases. In each of the types, the structural method of the phrases is also supported with examples.

Nominal Phrases

In major phrases of Dawei dialect, there are two types of phrases: nominal phrases and verb phrases. Of them nominal phrase is a phrase consisting of a noun or an indefinite pronoun. Nominal phrases were studied in three kinds of type: noun phrases, pronoun phrases and nominal phrase compound.

Noun phrases

Dr. Preecha Kanetnog (2016) said, “The noun phrase may be a noun alone or a noun being preceded by the determiner”.⁵ This is right. In Dawei dialect, it is found that there is such noun phrase. Furthermore, it is also found that the structure of a noun phrase consists of its head and optional modifiers containing words, phrases, or clauses. In modifiers and clauses, there are many types:

- 1) Adjectival modifiers
- 2) Nominal modifiers
- 3) Genitive modifiers
- 4) Demonstrative modifiers
- 5) Numeral phrase modifiers
- 6) Prepositional phrase modifiers
- 7) Relative clauses.

1) Adjectival Modifiers (Adj + HN)

Among them, adjectival modifiers consist of a head noun modified by an adjective that occurs before the head noun. There is a formula: (Adj + HN). Example is as follow.

မိ
နီ ဝေရာ့

⁵ Preecha Kanetnog, *Morphology and Syntax*, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, 2016), p. 115.

_ni² _yũ²
 red colour
 Red colour

Sometimes adjectival modifiers consist of a head noun modified by an adjective that occurs after the head noun. There is a formula: (HN + Adj). Example is as follow.

လူ ချစ်
 _lu² `gũ³
 man good
 Good man

2) Nominal Modifiers (N + HN)

Nominal modifiers consist of a head noun modified by a noun. Before the head noun, the modifying noun is placed as follow.

အင်္ဂလိပ် အိမ်
 `ã³g³li¹ _i²
 English house
 English house

3) Genitive Modifiers (Gen + HN)

Genitive modifiers consist of a head noun may be modified by genitives. Before a head noun, nouns and pronouns occur indeed. There is a formula: (Gen + HN). Example is as follow.

ပုဂံ ဝါး
 `phaũ³gi³ `bi¹
 monk's alms bowl
 monk's alms bowl

4) Demonstrative Modifiers (Dem + HN)

Demonstrative modifiers consist of the head noun demonstrated by this and that. After the head noun, they may occur certainly. There is a formula: (Dem + HN). Examples are as follow.

အယု ဝေခနု
 _ε² _khe²·na[?]⁵
 this slipper
 This slipper

ဟို^၀ ဝေတံ
 ၊ho¹ _tũ²
 that mountain
 That mountain

5) Numeral Phrase Modifiers

In numeral phrase modifiers, there are two kinds of numeral phrase modifiers: cardinal numeral phrase modifiers and ordinal numeral phrase modifiers.

5.1) Cardinal Numeral Phrase Modifiers (Num P + HN)

Cardinal numeral phrase modifiers (Num P + HN) consist of a head noun following cardinal numeral phrase. Before the head noun, cardinal number such as one, two, three, so on, occurs. There is a formula: (Num P + HN). Examples are as follow.

ဝေရှုတ် ဝေထံ
 ၊je¹ ၊thu[?]⁵
 eight corners
 Eight corners
 ဝေလး ဝျံ^၀
 `le³ _dʒⁱ²
 four times
 Four times

5.2) Ordinal Numeral Phrase Modifiers (Num P + HN)

Ordinal numeral phrase modifiers contain a head noun modified by ordinal numbers such as the first, second, third, etc. Before the head noun, ordinal numeral phrase occurs really. There is a formula: (Num P + HN). Example is given as follow.

တတိယ စာအောက်
 ၊ta¹·ti¹·ja¹ _sa²·au[?]⁵
 third book

Third + book

6) Prepositional Phrase Modifiers (PP + HN)

Prepositional phrase modifiers consist of a head noun modified by a prepositional phrase. Before the head noun, prepositional phrase occurs. There is a formula: (PP + HN). Examples are shown below.

အိမ်မှာ	ခြူး
_i²`thE³_ma²	`khwi³
in the house	dog
Dog in the house	

သစ်ပင်ပေါ်မှာ	ငှက်
·thI⁵_pā²·tha⁷_ma²	·hŋa⁷
on the tree	bird
bird on the tree	

7) Relative Clauses (Rel Clause + HN)

Relative clauses consist of a head noun modified by a relative clause. Main clause occurs before a relative clause. Also such relative clause appears before the head noun without any relative marker or subordinator. The subject of the relative clause is embedded in the head noun to form a noun phrase. There is a formula: (M Clause + Rel Clause + HN). Examples are as follow.

သူ့ခိုဝ်းလူ	ထိုင်းမှာ နေဖူးဟီး	ဆရာဝန်လေ
`thu³·no¹·ŋa¹	`thaI³_ma²_ne²`phu³_ŋo²	shə⁴_ya²_wŋ²_le²
those	that have been in Thailand	are the doctors
Those are the doctors that have been in Thailand.		

အယွာဟွ	ငါ့ငယ်နား	လောကုလောကား	
_E²_ma²·ŋa¹	·ŋa¹_ŋE²`d3I³	·laŋ⁵·laŋ⁵`ma³	
this	that is my friend	is the worker	Pronoun
This is the worker that is my friend.			Phrase

Dr.

Attasith Boonsawasd presumed, “A pronoun phrase normally consists of a pronoun only. The

full pronoun phrase structure is used infrequently.”⁶ In the same way a pronoun phrase in Dawei dialect consists of a head of pronoun. The numerals occur after a head of a pronoun phrase. There is a formula: (HP + Num). Examples are given below.

သူနဲ့သူတို့ / သော့နဲ့ယော့

`thu³·no¹ `θa³·ju⁵

them three

Three of them

နို့တို့ / အားလော့နဲ့

·no¹ `a³·la³

us all

All of us

နို့တို့ / ဝေးနဲ့ယော့

·no¹ ·hne¹·ju⁵

us both

Both of us

Nominal Phrase Compound

Dr. Attasith Boonsawasd interpreted, “A sequence of two or more nominal phrases that together form a structure that itself acts like a nominal phrase is called nominal phrase compound.”⁷ Also a sequence of two or more nominal phrases can be called nominal phrase compound in Dawei dialect. Such nominal phrase can be linked with the other nominal phrases. It is classified into two types: an additive compounding nominal phrase and an alternative compounding nominal phrase.

1. Additive Compounding Nominal Phrase

Of them, the lexical linker နှ /·na²/ and is added to link two nominal phrases only.

There is a formula: (Nom P + And + Nom P). Examples are as follow.

ငါ့ဖ နှ ငါ့မိတို့ ဝေ့ဗာ့ဟ့ယု

·ŋa¹·pha¹ ·na¹ ·ŋa¹·mi¹·ŋo² _b²·ŋe²

My father and my mother to see

⁶ Boonsawasd, Attasith, A Grammar of Bouyei, (Bangkok: Mahidol University, 2012), p. 154.

⁷ Ibid.

My father and my mother are seen.

The lexical linker နှ် /·na/ and is added linking nominal phrases. There is a formula:

(Nom P + And + Nom P+ And). Examples are as follow.

ငါ့ဖ	နှ်	ငါ့မိ	နှ်	အယုဒ္ဓိ	လာဂယုတ္တယု
·၇a ¹ ·pha ¹	·na ¹	·၇a ¹ ·mi ¹	·na ¹	_၉ ² _၄o ²	_la ² ·g၉ ¹ _၄၉ ²
My father	and	my mother	and	here	to come

My father and my mother come here.

On the other hand, the linker နှ် /·na/ ‘and’ is sometime deleted in some additive phrases as follow.

သူ့မိ	သူ့ဖ	သယံဇာတ	မုစား	လာဂယုတ္တမယု
·၈u ¹ ·mi ¹	·၈u ¹ ·pha ¹	_၉ ² _၄o ²	·၈u ¹ ·sa ³	_sa ³ ·g ¹ _m၉ ²
his mother	his father	here	to have a snack	will come

His mother and father will come here to have a snack.

ပီးဟွာ /`pi_၄a/ and အယွီးဟွာ /_၉`bi_၄a/ are added to link three or more nominal phrases.

There is a formula: (Nom. P + Nom. P + And + Nom. P). Examples are:

ငါ့အိသားလဟွ	ငါ့မိန်း	ငါ့သား	ပီးဟွာ	ငါ့မီး
·၇a ¹ _i ² `၈a ³ _le ² ·၄a ¹	·၇a ¹ `mya ³	·၇a ¹ `၈a ³	`pi ³ _၄a ²	·၇a ¹ `mi ³
My family members are	my wife	my son	and	my daughter

My family members are my wife, my son and my daughter.

လိဆန့လဟွ	ခြီး	ေ့နကော	အယွီးဟွာ	ကြမ့
·li ¹ _sa ² _le ² ·၄a ¹	`kwi ³	_kyũ ²	_၉ ² `bi ³ _၄a ²	·kwa ³ ? ⁵
The animals are	dog	cat	and	mouse

The animals are dog, cat and mouse.

2. Alternative Compounding Nominal Phrase

An alternative compounding nominal phrase consists of two phrases. မးဝဲနဟွာ /·hmu`w၉_ne_၄a/ meaning ‘or’, is added to link such phrases together. There is a formula: (Nom. P + Nom. P + or + Nom. P). Examples are as follow.

နတ္တ	အိ	မးဝဲနဟ္မာ	ကား	ရွှေတံတွယု
·naʔ ⁵ _ma ² _i ²		·hmu ¹ `wɛ ³ _ne ² _ɕa ²	`ka ³	·ɕe ¹ _ɕɛ ²
You	a house	or	a car	to have

You have a house or a car.

သူ	မးဝဲနဟ္မာ	သူမိး	အယုဝို	လာလိုက္ကယု
_θu ²	·hmu ¹ `wɛ ³ _ne ² _ɕa ²	·θu ² `mya ³	_ɛ ² _ɕo ²	_la ² ·laIʔ ⁵ _mɛ ²
He	or	his wife	here	will come

He or his wife will come here.

Conclusion

Based on the extensive analysis of the topic and data, the researcher draws several essential conclusions from this study. The focus lies on nominal phrases, comprising noun phrases, pronoun phrases, and compound nominal phrases.

Regarding noun phrases, they can be categorized into several types:

- 1) Adjectival modifiers with a formula: (Adj + HN),
- 2) Nominal modifiers with a formula: (N + HN),
- 3) Genitive modifiers with a formula: (Gen + HN),
- 4) Demonstrative modifiers with a formula: (Dem + HN),
- 5) Numeral phrase modifiers with a formula: (Num P + HN),
- 6) Prepositional phrase modifiers (PP + HN) and
- 7) Relative clauses with a formula: (M Clause + Rel Clause + HN).

It's important to note that numeral phrase modifiers encompass two types: cardinal numeral phrase modifiers and ordinal numeral phrase modifiers.

- 1) Pronoun phrase is a simple pronoun in Dawei dialect.
- 2) Nominal pronoun compound also consists of two phrases: additive compounding nominal phrase with a formula: (Nom. P + Nom. P + or + Nom. P) and alternative compounding nominal phrase with a formula: (Nom. P + Nom. P + or + Nom. P).

The study concludes that the aforementioned nominal phrases in the Dawei dialect adhere to specific structural formulas. It emphasizes the necessity of expressing various roles and rules in grammatical perspectives, supported by examples from different angles. Several books, including "An Introduction to Linguistics," "Morphology and Syntax," and others, significantly contributed to the understanding and framing of phrases in this article. Recognizing the structural values of these phrases, as elucidated in the referenced books, is vital for comprehending and articulating Dawei dialect effectively. Although the data from these books provide broad accounts of nominal phrases, they offer valuable insights for further study. Additionally, phrases selected from field trips and informant interviews in Dawei provinces of the Tanintharyi region enrich the content of this article.

Suggestions for Research

In regard to nominal phrases in Dawei dialect, this research might be a good reference for students to study or research such phrases. It is acceptable for the learners to comprehend the types and functions of phrases in Dawei dialect.

The followings in this article may also be helpful suggestions.

- 1) Dawei learners having enough idea to learn Dawei dialect in any level, they should learn phrases in details.
- 2) The teachers of hotel and tourism respecting Dawei province in Myanmar should teach their students about not only Burmese language but also Dawei dialect in Myanmar.
- 3) Myanmar governments should observe good services for all students and upgrade the educational systems to learn Dawei dialect containing nominal phrases.
- 4) Myanmar governments should give chances for the teacher to teach students Dawei dialect to communicate Dawei native speakers.
- 5) Myanmar governments should establish language centers of Dawei people in the government educational and social system for the peaceful future Myanmar.
- 6) Myanmar government authorities and other Dawei leaders should cooperate together with mutual assistance for protection of Dawei dialect from violence and other enemies.

Furthermore, this research is the fruit of numerous different experiences and highlights many beneficial results. However, it does not cover all the points of nominal phrases in Dawei dialect. There is a need for further research of other interesting points about nominal phrases and how it may create more opportunities. Suggestions for research on the next challenges and best solutions for such phrases as follows:

- 1) A study of nominal phrases in Dawei dialect from other sources and data.
- 2) A study of other linguistic teachers of traditional grammar compared to modern grammar today.
- 3) A study of the other linguistic technological developments of Dawei dialect respecting nominal phrase for Dawei modern society.
- 4) A study of the opportunities and challenges of Dawei dialect for material and immaterial development.

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