

Morpho-syntax governs the embeddability of Utterance Honorifics: Evidence from Burmese

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1. Introduction *Utterance Honorifics* (henceforth, UH) is a grammatical device which gives an honorific character to the entire speech act associated with the sentence, indicating that the speaker is being respectful to the addressee (McCready 2019, Chapter 4). In the literature, UHs are generally considered to be a main clause phenomenon (e.g., Miyagawa 2012; Portner et al 2019). This view is true for some languages like Korean or Thai, however, it is challenged by the fact that some other languages such as Magahi or Japanese can embed UHs relatively freely (e.g., Alok and Baker 2018; Yamada 2019). In this research, we conducted fieldwork on UH embedding in Burmese, aiming to provide cross-linguistic data to the debate. In this talk, we argue that embeddability of Burmese UH depends on the syntactic size of the embedded clause.

2. Data observation Burmese is a nominative-accusative language which has morphological case markers. The canonical word order is SOV, but a scrambled word order OSV is also possible. Root clause in Burmese requires a verb syntagma (see Allot 1965) at the end of a sentence. The UH marking *pa* occurs between the aspect marker and the verb syntagma when the speaker/writer addresses a person in a socially higher status, as shown in (1).

- (1) Susu-ga dʒawn-go twa ne **pa** de
Susu-NOM school-ACC go PROG UH AFF.NFUT
(i) ‘Susu is going to school.’
(ii) The speaker respects the addressee.

We found that the UH marker *pa* occurs under some embedding contexts relatively freely. For example, *pa* can appear under a complement clause of attitude verbs (2a) and adjunct clauses (2b). On the other hand, relative clauses cannot host *pa* as shown in (3). It should be noted that the matrix predicate needs to be UH marked to have embedded *pa*.

- (2) a. [_{CP} Susu-ga dine dʒawn-go twa **pa** de soda]-go ŋa-ga ti? **pa** de.
Susu-NOM today school-ACC go UH AFF.NFUT that-ACC I-NOM know UH AFF.NFUT
‘I know that Susu goes to school today.’
b. [_{CP} Mandale-go twale **pa** me solejʔē/sojē], pejadʒi-go twa te? **pa** de.
Mandalay-ACC visit UH FUT if/when, peyaji-ACC go should UH AFF.NFUT
‘If/When you visit Mandalay, you should go to Peyaji-temple.’
- (3) [_{CP} mjē pej ke (***pa**) (*de) de?] tajaʔ-go ŋa amandage tʃaj **pa** de
you give JUNC UH AFF.NFUT RC mango-ACC I truly enjoy UH AFF.NFUT
‘I truly enjoyed the mango that you gave me.’

The embedding of *pa* is not an embedded root clause phenomenon as it cannot be explained by some semantic/pragmatic attributes of subordinators (i.e., the contrast between central and peripheral adverbial clauses (Haegeman 2006) does not work to separate *pa*-hosting embedding contexts from non-*pa*-hosting embedding contexts). For instance, (4), which is functionally equivalent to (2b), cannot host *pa*.

- (4) [_{CP} Mandale-go twale (***pa**) (*me) doaka], pejadʒi-go twa te? pa de.
Mandalay-ACC visit UH FUT RC.time, peyaji-ACC go should UH AFF.NFUT
Lit: ‘For the time when you visit Mandalay, you should go to Peyaji-temple’
‘When you visit Mandalay, you should go to Peyaji-temple.’

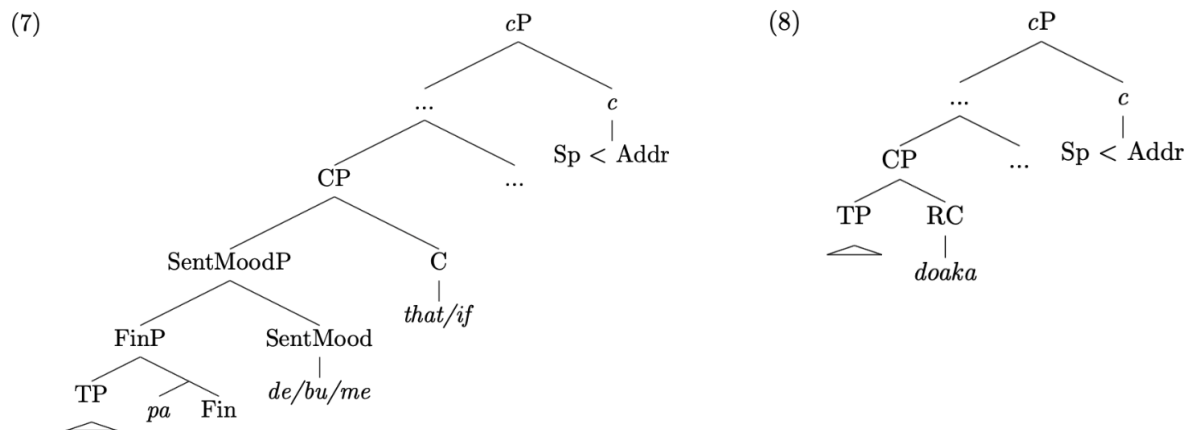
Jenny and San San (2016) reported that *doaka* in (4) forms a relative clause. According to our informant, no verb syntagma can appear on the left of *doaka* same as (3). Thus, the contrast between (2) and (4) suggests that the subordinators which take a clause with a verb syntagma can host an UH marking, while the one which cannot select a clause with a verb syntagma cannot host *pa*. Taking this generalization into account, we opt for a morpho-syntactic account to explain the difference in embeddability of *pa*.

3. Proposal Following the view that the Speech Act layers for UH markings are basically restricted to root clause (Portner et, al 2019; Tomioka and Ishii 2022), we hypothesize (5) and (6) for Burmese.

- (5) a. The verb syntagma is a morphological instantiation of SentMood head by Portner et, al (2019).
- b. Burmese UH is realized at a lower position than SentMoodP (possibly, at Fin) via node-sprouting (Embick 1997; a similar idea was proposed by Yamada 2019).

(6) Node Sprouting Rule: $\text{Fin} \rightarrow [\text{FinP} [\text{UH}] \text{Fin}] / [\text{cP} \dots \text{c} \text{Sp} < \text{Addr}]$

We argue that subordinators which select SentMoodP (e.g., if-clause) can embed *pa* because it is realized at Fin head via Node Sprouting (6) as shown in (7). In contrast, relative clauses cannot host *pa* because they select a bare TP as in (8). Since there is no position to morphologically realize *pa*, it cannot occur under relative clauses. In short, the embeddability of Burmese UH stems from its morphological realization taking place at a lower position than *c*-head.



Importantly, our proposal contributes to explaining the cross-linguistic variations in the embeddability of UH markings. For example, Portner et, al (2019) observed that Korean UH marker *supnita* cannot be embedded under any subordinate clause, and claimed that *supnita* is an instantiation of *c*-head which is restricted to root clauses. On the other hand, Yamada (2019) and Tomioka and Ishii (2022) argued that Japanese UH *mas* can be subordinated under relative clauses because *mas* sits below TP. Along with their analyses, we claim that where to realize UH marking determines the embeddability of UH in that language.

4. Conclusion In this talk, we showed that embeddability of Burmese UH depends on the syntactic size of the embedded clause. Our analysis leads to the conclusion that embedded clauses do not behave homogeneously, even within a single language. We suggest that this within-language variation could be used as a lens to understanding why there is cross-linguistic variation in embeddability of UHs.

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