

(Myanmar)

BURMESE

An Introduction to
the Spoken Language **Book 1**



John Okell

with U Saw Tun and Daw Khin Mya Swe

Parallel with this course

Burmese—An Introduction to the Spoken Language, Book 2

Burmese—An Introduction to the Script

Burmese—An Introduction to the Literary Style

(Myanmar)

BURMESE

An Introduction to the Spoken Language

BOOK 1

John Okell

With assistance from U Saw Tun
and Daw Khin Mya Swe



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Front Cover Photo—Kalaga or Burmese tapestry representing a court scene.

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Many of the ideas, and some actual material, contained in this course were used in my *First steps in Burmese*, a short text and tape course published by the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1989. I am grateful to the School for allowing me to use some of that material again in the present course.

I would also like to acknowledge the part played by my colleague at SOAS, Mrs. Anna Allott, who heroically shouldered a heavy load of teaching and other duties for part of the time I had arranged to be away; and the contribution of my wife Sue, who generously and without complaint took on more than her share of the care of the house and family so that I could make progress with writing.

Many friends and colleagues have contributed to the course, directly or indirectly. U Saw Tun, a long-standing friend and a teacher of Burmese to foreigners, most recently at NIU, helped construct dialogues and check that they were natural and authentic. Daw Khin Mya Swe, an old friend, has also checked portions of the draft. Others who have given much helpful advice include Daw San San Me, a librarian at SOAS; Dr. Khin Maung Win, during his year of study in London; Than Than Win, who was then a student at NIU; U Oung Myint Tun, and Daw Kyi Kyi Me, of the BBC in London. All of these have patiently and generously, and on many occasions, answered my questions on matters of usage and pronunciation.

The recordings were made at SOAS under the supervision of the Technician Jahan Latif, and the speakers were —

U Aung Khin	Dr. Daw Khin Hla Thi	Ma Thuza
U Aung Naing	Daw Khin Mya Swe	Ma Tin May Aye
Dr. Ba Maw	Ma Khin Nan Oo	U Tun Min
Ma Kay Thwe	Dr. Nay Tun	Wa Wa Tin
U Khin	Daw San San Me	Daw Yi Yi Mya
	Saw Yu Win	

I am grateful to them all for their willing cooperation and perseverance: the second and third hours in a stuffy recording studio with pernicky microphones demand a high degree of concentration and discipline.

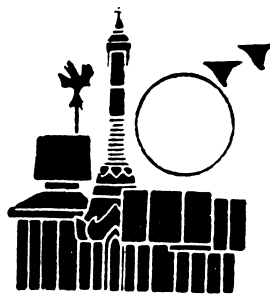
Prototype versions of the course were used by the beginners' classes at SOAS in the four years from 1990-91 to 1993-94, and at the SEASSIs held at Cornell University in 1990 and at the University of Washington in 1992. Members of all these classes made many helpful comments, as well as finding numerous typing errors, and I would like to thank them for being so tolerant and constructive.

The photograph used for the cover is of a persnickety wooden doorway in the Shwe Inbin Monastery in Mandalay. It was taken by Dr. Elizabeth Moore of SOAS, and the design of the cover was implemented by Alfred Birnbaum, who was attending my class at the time. The photographs used in the text were taken on my visit to Burma in 1991. The remaining illustrations are from books, magazines and other material published in Burma.

My greatest debt is to many friends in Burma, who not only answered my questions about their language and customs with immense patience and goodwill, but also made me welcome in their homes and daily lives, and went to staggering lengths to ensure that my needs were met in generous measure. To them all I extend my heartfelt thanks.

illustrations

I am responsible for typesetting the text, which includes three home-made fonts, and for editing the tapes. Professionals would have been more skilled but also more costly, so readers are asked to be indulgent when my lack of expertise shows through.



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Change of publisher

Publication of all four volumes of *Burmese: An Introduction*, first published in 1994, has been transferred to the Northern Illinois University Press and the books are now re-issued with minor revisions.

Change of audio format

At the time of initial publication, the audio component of *Burmese: An Introduction* was issued on cassette tapes. Now that digital recordings are more widely used than tapes, the audio material has been converted to digital. Two advantages of this change are, first, that digital files are less bulky to store and transport than cassette tapes and, second, that it is far easier to find a particular section in the audio.

Neither the printed text nor the audio files have been changed to reflect the transfer from tape to digital. So when you read or hear a reference to a particular tape, please understand it as referring to the corresponding track in the audio files.

Changes in Burma since the publication of this course

Sixteen years have passed since the first publication of this course. During that time several aspects of life in Burma have changed.

First and most obvious are price levels:

- A cup of tea that cost K4 in 1993 now costs K150, and costs may well rise further. So, when practicing prices in the exercises, bear in mind that most prices need to be multiplied by 30 or 40 to correspond with the cost of living today.

Second, some institutions that appear in the course have been renamed, relocated, or discontinued. For example:

- Tourist Burma has been renamed Myanmar Travel and Tours.
- The National Museum has moved from Pansodan to Pyay Road.
- The Diplomatic Store is no longer operating.

If you search in Burma for places mentioned in the course, remember that they may no longer be there.

Third, digital cameras have largely replaced film cameras, and most telephones now have keys to press rather than dials to turn. References in the Lessons to film and dialing should be understood as reflecting technology at the time of writing.

Apart from such obvious physical changes in the life of the country, the language of the course is still the language that you will hear and read in Burma today.

Errata lists

While using the course over the years, teachers, colleagues, and students have helpfully pointed out some errors and inconsistencies in the text. These have been listed and are to be found, with their corrections, on a page at the end of each volume.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Scope of the four volumes

This volume is one of a set of four:

1. *Burmese: An Introduction to the Spoken Language, Book 1*
2. *Burmese: An Introduction to the Spoken Language, Book 2*
3. *Burmese: An Introduction to the Script*
4. *Burmese: An Introduction to the Literary Style*

The spoken language

Among those I have met, the great majority of people interested in learning Burmese are people who are planning to go to Burma, or are already there, and want to be able to speak to Burmans in their own language. That is why this course takes the spoken language as its starting point, and why the spoken language volumes focus on early encounters with Burmese speakers in Burma or abroad.

It does not follow that the course is irrelevant to the needs of learners with other plans. They will gain from it a solid grounding in the grammar and sound system of Burmese, which will be useful to them whatever they intend to talk or read about. After all, choosing a Shan bag in a shop in Rangoon needs just as much grammar as studying approaches to Buddhist meditation, and much of the vocabulary of everyday life crops up in conversations about even quite specialized topics.

The literary style

The Burmese language has two different "styles": a "colloquial" style for speaking (and for writing personal letters) and a "literary" style for writing books, newspaper reports, official correspondence and so on. In novels, Burmese authors use the literary style for their narrative and descriptive passages, and the colloquial style for the dialogue. The spoken language volumes therefore teach you the colloquial style.

Learners who would like to be able to read the literary style are advised to acquire a grounding in the colloquial style first. It is hard to learn to read a language if you don't know what it sounds like. When you have a grasp of the material presented in *An Introduction to the Spoken Language, Book 1*, you will be equipped to move on to *Burmese: An Introduction to the Literary Style*.

Learning Burmese script

It is possible to write Burmese words in the roman script, but there is no standard system for doing so, and all systems that have been tried suffer from serious defects. The best plan for beginning students of Burmese is to learn to read the script as quickly as they can. The volume called *Burmese: An Introduction to the Script* is intended to meet this need.

There is inevitably an initial phase during which the learner needs to practise speaking Burmese but doesn't yet know enough script to be able to read or make notes. All the written material in the first half of *An Introduction to the Spoken Language* is presented in both script and a romanization, so that you can read the examples and notes before you know the script, but you can start using the script as soon as you are ready. We hope that you will have learned to read the script by the time you reach the end of *Book 1*, if not before, so at that point we stop using the romanization for the notes and vocabulary, but, as a concession to stragglers, we do provide romanized versions of the new words and sample dialogues.

Time required

The following figures are estimates, and your experience may be quite different. I anticipate that most students will need to spend the equivalent of five to six weeks full time on the script and *Spoken Language Book 1* together, followed by a further five to six weeks on the literary style and *Spoken Language Book 2* together — and you'll probably find the literary style runs on beyond that estimate. This is based on a 40-hour working week, including both class and homework time. If you only have 20 hours a week to spend on Burmese, then you can expect to take twice as long to get through all four components of the course.

Words of advice

Confidence

When you are in Burma and using phrases from this course you may from time to time come across a Burman who says "Oh. Don't say it that way. Burmese people never use that phrase." Be grateful, and use the alternative he offers, but don't lose confidence in what you know. The chances are that you will soon meet another Burman who regularly uses your original phrase himself, and even thinks your new alternative sounds unnatural. Such experiences only go to show that there are Burmese — as there are speakers of all languages — who are eager to be helpful but are not very observant about the way other people speak.

Going further

If you have enjoyed learning some Burmese and would like to learn some more, you could follow up some of the text books and courses listed in Appendix 2 at the end of this book. Some of the learning aids in the list are only in the planning stage at the time of writing this introduction, but by the time you read this, some of them may have seen the light of day.

Bon voyage

You must be keen to learn some Burmese, otherwise you wouldn't have read this far. You need have no fear that the effort will be wasted. You will be able to communicate with people in Burma instead of being thrown back on helpless smirks and gestures. And you will immediately endear yourself to the Burmese: most Burmese are delighted to meet a foreigner who has taken the trouble to learn a bit of their language. We wish you a happy stay in Burma: a land of much natural beauty and of many lively and generous people.

PART 1: GROUNDWORK

INTRODUCTION

1 “Groundwork” and “Dialogues”

Some language learners hope to pick up enough of a language from the first few lessons of a course to be able to get around in the country without too much difficulty. Speakers of English can manage this with languages related to English, like French, German and Italian; but when you are faced with an unrelated language like Burmese, where none of the words reminds you of English words, where the sound system includes distinctions unknown in the European languages (such as aspirate versus plain consonants, and high versus low syllable tone), and where the shape of the sentence differs radically from anything you regard as normal and natural, the phrase-book approach is very hard work. Despite heroic application to memorizing, you still find your hard-won phrases keep slipping out of your grasp.

It is for this reason that *Burmese: An Introduction to the Spoken Language* (hereafter abbreviated to *BISL*) is divided into Part 1 “Groundwork” and Part 2 “Dialogues.” The Groundwork section familiarizes you with the unfamiliar sounds and structures of the language, and provides you with some relevant basic vocabulary. It covers questions and answers with *what, where, which, who, how much*, and so on; verb sentences with the Burmese equivalents of *does, did, will, not, want to, have to, please, don't*, and so on; numbers and prices; names of places and people in Burma; addresses, phone numbers, time-telling, and so on. With this foundation behind you, learning the language you need for survival (shops, taxis, cafés) and first conversations (Where are you from? How long have you been here?), which is the content of Part 2, is a much less frustrating task.

2 Lesson structure

New material in the Groundwork section is presented in small doses. A typical Lesson introduces no more than half a dozen new points to learn, and takes up between five and ten minutes on the tape. The idea is to enable you to proceed at your own pace: each learner (or class) can take as many of the short lessons at one time as they have stamina for.

The typical Lesson consists of —

(a) in the text:

- some information (such as a map, or a list of names* and phone numbers)
- a list of new words and structures
- some example sentences

- under the heading “Models for the exercises,” the first exchange in each exercise (typically Question/Answer/Confirmation of answer), so that you know where to listen and where to speak
- and (where appropriate) notes on grammar or related vocabulary that are too detailed to present on the tape

(b) on the tape:

- an introduction to the new material, followed by
- a set of exercises, usually three or four for each Lesson.

* Sets of personal names for the Exercises and Dialogues are taken from the telephone directory, or in some cases they belong to people known to the author. The intention in choosing them in this way is to expose the learner a wide spread of authentic names. It should be clearly understood that all characters in the Exercises and Dialogues are entirely fictional. A list in *BISL* stating that U Hla Myint doesn't eat pork, or that Daw Thein Shin lives in/on Bogyoke Road, or that Kyi Kyi Myint has eight children, and so on, has no validity for any real person bearing such a name. It is there solely to provide material for practice in using the language.

Each Exercise typically takes this form:

1. Speaker 1 says (in Burmese): *What's the phone number of the Strand Hotel?*
2. The learner (after consulting the list printed in the text) says: *81533.*
3. Speaker 2 then repeats the answer to confirm it: *81533.*

In Part 2 most of the practice is in the form of dialogues, where you ask for information or help, and discuss prices and so on. You will find more detail in the Introduction to Part 2.

3 Material supplementary to the Lessons

Pronunciation practice

Burmese makes important distinctions between several pairs of sounds which English treats as variations of the same sound. For example, in Burmese you can say —

thoun-nyá “zero” and
thoùn-nyá “three nights”

The only difference between the two phrases is in the pitch of the first syllable, and to many English speakers, at first hearing anyway, thoun sounds much the same as thoùn. To the Burmese ear they are entirely different sounds — they make the two words as far apart as a *shortfall* and a *short fall* in English. So it is vital, as you go through this course, to reproduce the sounds of the Burmese words and phrases as faithfully as you can — including the stress and pitch patterns. The more often you hear the unfamiliar distinctions the more obvious they will appear.

To help with this process, each of the first ten Lessons in Part 1 has a supplementary Pronunciation Section. This allows you to take a closer look at some of the unfamiliar sounds of Burmese that you have met in the Lesson and make sure you are hearing and

saying them accurately. The recordings for the Pronunciation Sections are on a separate tape, so that you can use them independently of the main Lessons if you wish; and there is an overview of the sounds of Burmese, and the letters that are used to represent them in *BISL*, in an appendix to this book.

Review Lessons

At selected points along the way there is a Review Lesson, distinguished by an R after the Lesson number. Review Lessons serve two purposes. The first is the usual one: when you are working through the course for the first time, a Review Lesson serves to remind you of the material you have covered up to that point, and to revive skills that may be fading. The second use for Review Lessons arises when you want to brush up your command of Burmese after a break. In this situation you won't want to wade through all the explanations on the Lesson tapes: you just want to practise some questions and answers and dialogues. To enable you to do this, the Review Lessons are recorded on separate tapes. For brushing up purposes, these tapes are all you need.

Common Phrases Supplement

The question and answer format of Part 1 doesn't provide a natural place for phrases like "Hallo," "Goodbye," "Thank you," "Wait a minute." You certainly need such phrases for the dialogues in Part 2, and if you have a teacher you may wish to use some of them in class before you get to Part 2. A set of phrases is therefore presented and practised in the "Common Phrases Supplement."

The Common Phrases Supplement is self-contained: it doesn't assume any prior knowledge of the *BISL* material. The text is printed as a supplement in this book, and its oral exercises are on a separate tape, so you can start working on it as soon or as late as you like, and study it at your own pace — but make sure you know the phrases before you start work on the Dialogues. We recommend that you start work on the phrases when you have reached Lesson 11 in Part 1 (where the Pronunciation Sections end), and thereafter take them at a rate of about one to every two Part 1 Lessons. You will find a note in the Lessons reminding you how far on you should be in the Common Phrases Supplement if you are to finish it at the same time as the Lessons.

Classroom language

Classroom talk ("Is everyone here?", "Repeat after me," "That's right," and so on) is omitted from *BISL* on the grounds that it is not needed by the learner on his own (who would have no opportunity to practise it anyway), or by the recently arrived foreigner in Burma. Also classes vary greatly from one another in size, physical environment, age of students, style of teacher, and so on, so many phrases appropriate for one would be inappropriate for another.

The "Common phrases" supplement contains some material that can be useful in this context, but *BISL* leaves it to the teacher to introduce the classroom language appropriate to his or her situation.

4 How to use *BISL Part 1*

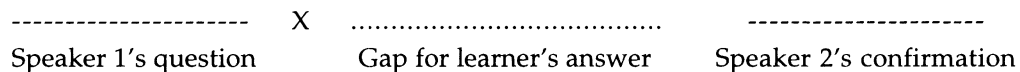
Equipment

A cassette tape player of some kind is essential. A pause button on the player is almost indispensable, for the occasions when you need a few seconds to decide what you are going to say. A "review" button also makes life easier when you want a quick repetition of some short phrase. (Otherwise you have to press "stop," press "rewind," press "stop" again, and then press "play." With a "review" button you can do all this with one touch.) Lastly, it is an advantage to have a machine that can record on one track and play on the other: you can then record your answers without risk of erasing the questions, and compare your recorded version with the versions of the Burmese speakers on the tape. However, a machine without these refinements also serves the purpose.

Strategies

This is not a course you can lie back and listen to with your eyes closed. It requires you not just to repeat what you hear, but to formulate your own answers; and to be able to do that you must be able to see the text while you listen to the tapes. Conversely, *BISL* won't help you much if you just peruse the text without listening to the tapes. You may increase your store of general knowledge by finding out a few disparate facts about the structure of Burmese, but without the spoken practice you won't be learning to use the language. Language teachers make much of the distinction between learning a language and learning *about* a language. *BISL* is constructed to help you do the first, not the second.

Don't hesitate to use the pause button (or clumsier alternatives) freely while you are working through the Exercises and Practice Dialogues. Quite often you will need to scan a list for an address before you can respond, or search out a place on a map, or do a bit of mental arithmetic. It is intended that you should stop the tape while you do so and only start it again when you have the information you need. Don't feel that you ought to be able to answer without a break: looking up the facts has to take time. The best place to stop the tape is marked X on this diagram:



Stopping the tape at this point (rather than later) means that when you start it going again you have the full length of the gap in which to speak your answer.

The quantity of drilling and repetition required in a language course inevitably varies from one learner to another. What this course includes is probably a minimum for most people. At some points you may feel that your memory of the material is weak. Don't let yourself get to the point of having to turn back the pages to look words up: wind back the tape instead, and do the exercises again until you are familiar with the ground covered.

5 Using Part 1 with a teacher

BISL is designed to be self-operating: learners can work through text and tapes on their own. When they do have an opportunity of working with a teacher, it is important that they should work through a section of the course on their own before coming to the classroom. Virtually all the learning goes on while you are working with the tapes.

So how can a teacher help? Firstly by providing encouragement and reassurance by practising in class the material the students have learned on their own, so that the students can check that they are getting the words, structures and pronunciation right.

Secondly the teacher can answer questions about the language that are not answered in the course, and provide further words and structures to suit the students' specific situation.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the teacher can make the course more fun by practising with real objects and real people in place of the fictions in the text: with real maps, town plans, and room plans; with real telephone directories, visiting cards, menus, money; and with the learners' own phone numbers, experiences, ages, families and so on.

Each Lesson in Part 1 includes a note suggesting activities for class.

One technique that works well in a small class (around 3 to 10 learners) is to have each learner ask the next one his address, phone number and so on. If all the learners make a note of the answers, you can get a further exercise — and a check on the accuracy of understanding of the first — by having the learners verify the answers with each other ("Is John's phone number 76113?" and so on).

Another useful activity is to provide one learner with a source of information (such as a phone directory), and the others with forms containing blanks, like this:

	name	address	phone
Mandalay University — Rector: Registrar: Prof of Zoology: and so on.			

The class then has to ask for the details they need to fill in the blanks. And when that's done, they can verify with each other what they have written down.



6 Lesson contents: Finder list for Part 1

What is ...?

Lesson 1. "What?" questions.

- Practice: What's that? — That's a hotel. ဒါ ဘာလဲ။ — ဒါ ဟိုတယ်ပါ။
 Vocabulary: ဒါ။ ဘာ။ -လဲ။ -ပါ။ Places: ဘုရား၊ ဈေး၊ ပြတိုက်၊ ဟိုတယ်၊ ပန်းခြံ။
 Reference: Rangoon map. Grammar notes.
 Pronunciation: a and à; p- and p'-; -o and -aw

Numbers

Lesson 2. Numbers 1-5.

- Practice: What is n° 1? — That's a museum. နံပါတ်(၁) ဘာလဲ။ — ဒါ ပြတိုက်ပါ။
 Vocabulary: နံပါတ်။ တစ်-နှစ်-သုံး-လေး-ငါး။
 Reference: Figures: ၁-၂-၃-၄-၅
 Pronunciation: -q; t- and t'-; n- and hn-

Lesson 3. "Yes/No" questions.

- Practice: Is that a pagoda? — Yes: it is/ No: it's a museum.
 ဒါ ဘုရားလား။ — ဟုတ်ကဲ့။ ဘုရားပါ။ /မဟုတ်ပါဘူး။ ပြတိုက်ပါ။
 Vocabulary: [sentence]-လား။ ဟုတ်ကဲ့။ မဟုတ်ပါဘူး။
 Reference: Grammar notes.
 Pronunciation: e and -eh; -q and the next consonant; -q and tone

Lesson 4. Numbers 6-10. Contrasted subject.

- Weakening in တစ်ဆယ် (tās'eh) and other numbers. တစ်ဆယ် ⇒ /တဆယ်/။
 Practice: Is n° 1 a hotel? နံပါတ်(၁)က ဟိုတယ်လား။
 Vocabulary: [subject]-က။ ခြောက်-ခုနစ်-ရှစ်-ကိုး-တစ်ဆယ်။
 Reference: Figures: ၆-၇-၈-၉-၁၀
 Pronunciation: k- and k'-; c- and c'-; à and á

Lesson 5. What [noun]?

- Practice: What market is it? — It's Bogyoke Market. ဘာဈေးလဲ။ — ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ဈေးပါ။
 Vocabulary: ဘာ-[noun]. Places in Rangoon: ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ပြတိုက် ၊ ရွှေတိဂုံဘုရား ၊ ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ပန်းခြံ ၊
 သမတဟိုတယ် ၊ ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ဈေး ၊ သိမ်ကြီးဈေး ၊ ဆူးလေဘုရား၊ မဟာဗန္ဓုလပန်းခြံ ၊
 အမျိုးသားပြတိုက်၊ စထရင်းဟိုတယ်။
 Reference: Grammar notes
 Pronunciation: -n; s- and s'-; à and á; th-

Lesson 6. Numbers 0 and short 7. Review of numbers 1-9-0. Checking questions.

- Practice: What's their phone number? — It's 71665.
 72665? — No: 71665.
 တယ်လီဖုန်းနံပါတ် ဘယ်လောက်လဲ။ — ၇၁၆၆၅-ပါ။
 ၇၂၆၆၅-လား။ — မဟုတ်ပါဘူး။ ၇၁၆၆၅-ပါ။
 Vocabulary: တယ်လီဖုန်း။ ဘယ်လောက်။ သုည။ ခွန်
 Reference: List of phone nos. Grammar notes.
 Pronunciation: un; ny-; -n and the next consonant

Lesson 7. This [noun].

- Practice: What road is this road? — It's Strand Road.
ဒီလမ်း ဘာလမ်းလဲ။ — ကမ်းနားလမ်းပါ။
- Vocabulary: ဒီ-[noun]. Rangoon roads: ဗိုလ်ချုပ်လမ်း၊ အနော်ရထာလမ်း၊ မဟာဗန္ဓုလလမ်း၊ ကုန်သည်လမ်း၊ ကမ်းနားလမ်း။
- Reference: Rangoon road names.
- Pronunciation: th- and dh-; my- and py-; a and à

Lesson 8. Numbers in round hundreds. Weakening for 1, 2, 7.

- တစ် => /တ/။ နှစ် => /န/။ ခုနှစ် => /ခွန်န/။
- Practice: တစ်ရာ၊ နှစ်ရာ၊ သုံးရာ စသည်။
- Vocabulary: -ရာ။ တစ်ထောင်။
- Reference: List of numbers.
- Pronunciation: -e and -eh; -o and -aw; round-up of plain and aspirate

Lesson 9. Sentences without -ပါ -ba/-pa "polite."

- Practice: What road is N° 500? — Strand Road.
နံပါတ် ၅၀၀ ဘာလမ်းလဲ။ — ကမ်းနားလမ်း။
- Vocabulary: Rangoon roads: ဗိုလ်အောင်ကျော်လမ်း၊ ပန်းဆိုးတန်း၊ ဆူးလေဘုရားလမ်း၊ ရွှေဘုံသာလမ်း၊ [ရွှေတိဂုန်]ဘုရားလမ်း။
- Reference: More Rangoon road names.
- Pronunciation: hm-; a and à and á

Lesson 10. Numbers in round thousands. Voicing for ထောင် -t'aun thousand and other words.

- သုံးထောင်၊ လေးထောင် => /သုံးဒေါင်၊ လေးဒေါင်/
- Practice: တစ်ထောင်၊ နှစ်ထောင်၊ သုံးထောင် စသည်။
- Vocabulary: -ထောင်
- Reference: List of numbers. Numbers over 10,000.
- Pronunciation: hl-; round-up of breathed nasals; round-up of tones

Where is ...?

Lesson 11. Which [noun]? In [place]. In which [place]?

- Practice: Which road is the Strand Hotel in? — In/On Strand Road.
စတရန်းဟိုတယ်က ဘယ်လမ်းမှာလဲ။ — ကမ်းနားလမ်းမှာ။
- Vocabulary: ဘယ်-[noun]။ [noun]-မှာ။ ဘယ်-[noun]-မှာလဲ။
- Reference: List of places and roads. Grammar notes.
What [noun] versus Which [noun]: ဘယ်-[noun] versus ဘာ-[noun]

Lesson 12. Numbers in round tens. Voicing for ဆယ် (-s'eh) ten. သုံးဆယ်၊ လေးဆယ် => /သုံးဇယ်၊

- လေးဇယ်/
- Practice: ၁၀၊ ၂၀၊ ၃၀ စသည်
- Vocabulary: -ဆယ်
- Reference: List of numbers.

Lesson 13. Names of some countries near Burma. Asking for a repeat.

- Practice: What country is n° 20? — Bangladesh.
 Could you please say that again? — Bangladesh.
 နံပါတ်(၂၀)က ဘာနိုင်ငံလဲ။ — ဘင်္ဂလားဒေ့ရှ်နိုင်ငံပါ။
 ထပ်ပြောပါအုံး။ — ဘင်္ဂလားဒေ့ရှ်နိုင်ငံ။
- Vocabulary: Country names: အိန္ဒိယနိုင်ငံ၊ ဘင်္ဂလားဒေ့ရှ်နိုင်ငံ၊ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၊ ထိုင်းနိုင်ငံ၊ မလေးရှားနိုင်ငံ၊
 ဗီယက်နမ်နိုင်ငံ၊ ဖိလစ်ပိုင်နိုင်ငံ၊ တရုတ်နိုင်ငံ၊ ဂျပန်နိုင်ငံ။
- Reference: Asia map. Names of other countries. Burma, Myanmar, Bamar.

Lesson 14. Numbers in hundreds and tens. Joining numbers with “and” or creaky tone.

- Practice: ၁၁၀၊ ၂၂၀၊ ၅၅၀ စသည်။
- Vocabulary: ရှစ်ဆယ်နဲ့ ရှစ် or ရှစ်ဆယ့် ရှစ်
- Reference: List of numbers.

Lesson 15. Names of some towns in countries near Burma.

- Practice: What town is n° 140? — New Delhi.
 နံပါတ်(၁၄၀)က ဘာမြို့လဲ။ — နယူးဒေလီပါ။
- Vocabulary: မြို့။ Town names: နယူးဒေလီ၊ ဒက္ကာ၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဘန်ကောက်၊ ကွာလာလမ်ပူ၊ ဟနိုင်း၊
 မနီလာ၊ ပီကင်း၊ တိုကျို။
- Reference: Rangoon/Yangon.

Lesson 16. Numbers in tens and units. No တစ် (tǎ) in 11-19. တစ်ဆယ့် တစ် ⇒ ဆယ့် တစ် and so on.

- Practice: ၁၉၊ ၂၈၊ ၃၇၊ စသည်။
- Vocabulary: -
- Reference: List of numbers.

Lesson 17. Informal names for countries.

- Practice: Which country is Manila in? — In the Philippines.
 မနီလာက ဘယ်နိုင်ငံမှာလဲ။ — ဖိလစ်ပိုင်မှာပါ။
- Vocabulary: ဗမာပြည်။ ယိုးဒယား။ စသည်
- Reference: -

Lesson 18. Numbers 1-9,999. Omitting တစ် (tǎ) in 1000-1999. တစ်ထောင်တစ်ရာ ⇒ ထောင်တစ်ရာ and so on.

- Practice: ၁-၉၉၉၉
- Vocabulary: ရှစ်ထောင် ခြောက်ရာ သုံးဆယ့် ငါး စသည်
- Reference: List of numbers.

Lesson 19. Names of some towns in Burma.

- Practice: What town is n° 16? — Myitkyina.
 နံပါတ်(၁၆)က ဘာမြို့လဲ။ — မြစ်ကြီးနားပါ။
- Vocabulary: Burma towns: မြစ်ကြီးနား၊ မေမြို့၊ မန္တလေး၊ စစ်ကိုင်း၊ ပုဂံ၊ သာစည်၊ တောင်ကြီး၊ ပြည်၊
 ရေနံချောင်း၊ သံတွဲ၊ ပဲခူး၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ မော်လမြိုင်။
- Reference: Burma map. Names of states, divisions, and similar. Traditional and revised roman spellings.

Lesson 20. Where and here.

- Practice: Where is Maymyo? — It's here. မေမြို့ဘယ်မှာလဲ။ — ဒီမှာပါ။
Vocabulary: ဘယ်မှာ။ ဒီမှာ။
Reference: Grammar notes.

Lesson 20R. Review of material in Lessons 1-20.

Overview of grammar, numbers and vocabulary for Lessons 1-20

Who is ... ?

Lesson 21. Burmese personal names.

- Practice: Who's that? — It's Tin Aye. ဒါ ဘယ်သူလဲ။ — တင်အေးပါ။
Vocabulary: ဘယ်သူ။
Reference: Grammar notes. Burmese naming practice.

Lesson 22. Names with the prefixes U and Daw.

- Practice: Who's that? — It's U Tin Aye. နံပါတ်(၄) ဘယ်သူလဲ။ — ဒါက ဦးတင်အေးပါ။
Vocabulary: ဦး-NAME။ ဒေါ်-NAME။
Reference: Other prefixes to Burmese names

Counting: prices

Lesson 23. Prices in dollars and pounds (unround numbers). Weakening and voicing in prices.

- နစ်ပေါင်၊ သုံးပေါင် ⇒ /နပေါင်၊ သုံးဘောင်/ စသည်။
Practice: သုံးဒေါ်လာ။ နှစ်ရာ ကိုးဆယ့် ရှစ်ပေါင်။ စသည်။
Vocabulary: ဒေါ်လာ။ ပေါင်။
Reference: Price lists.

Lesson 24. Names with the prefixes Ko and Ma.

- Practice: Who is n° 1? — N° 1 is Ko Khin Maung Aye.
နံပါတ်(၁) ဘယ်သူလဲ။ — နံပါတ်(၁)က ကိုခင်မောင်အေးပါ။
Vocabulary: ကို-NAME။ မ-NAME။
Reference: -

Lesson 25. Review of names and prefixes.

- Practice: Who is n° 1? — That's Bo Ni. — Ah. U Bo Ni.
နံပါတ်(၁) ဘယ်သူလဲ။ — ဒါက ဗိုလ်နီပါ။ — အာ။ ဦးဗိုလ်နီ။
Vocabulary: -
Reference: -

Lesson 26. Prices in pounds and pya.

- Practice: Round and unround numbers, and ten. ပေါင် နှစ်ဆယ်။ ပြား နှစ်ဆယ်။ ဆယ်ပေါင်။
ဆယ်ပြား။
Vocabulary: ပြား၊ ပဲနီ၊ ဆင့်။
Reference: Price lists

Verb sentences

Lesson 27. Verbs in Which? questions.

- Practice: Which road does he live in/on? — He lives in/on Bogyoke St.
ဘယ်လမ်းမှာ နေသလဲ။ — ဗိုလ်ချုပ်လမ်းမှာ နေပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: [place]-မှာ နေတယ်။
- Reference: Pronouns: “he” and “she” are dispensable.

Lesson 28. Prices in pounds combined with pence. Round and unround numbers.

- Practice: How much is n° 1? — It's six pounds 45 pence.
နံပါတ်(၁) ဘယ်လောက်လဲ။ — ခြောက်ပေါင် လေးဆယ့်ငါးပြား။
- Vocabulary: -
- Reference: Price lists

Lesson 29. Verbs in Yes/No questions.

- Practice: Does he live in Bogyoke St? — Yes, he does/ No, he doesn't.
ဗိုလ်ချုပ်လမ်းမှာ နေသလား။ — ဟုတ်ကဲ့။ နေပါတယ်။/ မနေပါဘူး။
- Vocabulary: [verb]-သလား။ — [verb]-ပါတယ်။/ မ-[verb]-ပါဘူး။
- Reference: Names and addresses. Grammar notes.

Counting: streets

Lesson 30. Counting: practice with numbered streets. Round and unround numbers.

- Practice: Where does U Sein Myint live? — He lives at 180, 84th St.
ဦးစိန်မြင့် ဘယ်မှာ နေသလဲ။ — အမှတ်-၁၈၀၊ ၈၄-လမ်းမှာ နေပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: အမှတ်-၃၄၊ ၇၅-လမ်း
- Reference: Names and addresses

Lesson 31. Who comes from where.

- Practice: What country does he come from? — He comes from India.
ဘယ်နိုင်ငံက လာသလဲ။ — အိန္ဒိယနိုင်ငံက လာပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: [country]-က လာ။
- Reference: Names and countries. Grammar notes.

Lesson 32. Prices in Burmese currency. Round, unround, and ten.

- Practice: How much is n° 1? — It's three kyats.
နံပါတ်(၁) ဘယ်လောက်လဲ။ — သုံးကျပ်ပါ။
- Vocabulary: ကျပ်။ ပြား။ ဗမာငွေ။
- Reference: Price list. Burmese currency notes.

Counting: telling the time

Lesson 33. Clock times (hours). Who came when.

- Practice: What time did she come? — She came at 3.00.
ဘယ်အချိန် လာသလဲ။ — ၆-နာရီမှာ လာပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: TIME-မှာ လာ။ အချိန်။ နာရီ။
- Reference: Names and times

Lesson 34. Going to [place]. Who went where.

- Practice: Which town did she go to? — She went to Maymyo.
ဘယ်မြို့ သွားသလဲ။ — မေမြို့ သွားပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: [place] သွား-။ More names of countries.
- Reference: Grammar notes. Names and destinations.

Lesson 35. More practice with going to.

- Practice: Where did she go? — She went to the library.
ဘယ် သွားသလဲ။ — စာကြည့်တိုက် သွားပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: ဘယ် သွား-။ Places: အိမ်သာ၊ စာကြည့်တိုက်၊ စားသောက်ခန်း၊ အပြင်၊ သံတမန်ကုန်တိုက်၊ ကုန်တိုက်။
- Reference: Names and destinations

Lesson 36. Asking people's names.

- Practice: What's your name? — It's Aung San.
နာမည် ဘယ်လို ခေါ်သလဲ။ — အောင်ဆန်းလို့ ခေါ်ပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: နာမည်။ ဘယ်လို။ ခေါ်-။ -လို့။
- Reference: List of names. Grammar notes.

Lesson 37. Clock times: hours and minutes. Where did he go and when?

- Practice: What time did Ma San San Hlaing go? — She went at 7.45.
မစံစံလှိုင် ဘယ်အချိန် သွားသလဲ။ — ၇-နာရီ ၄၅-မိနစ်မှာ သွားပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: မိနစ်။ -ခွဲ။
- Reference: Name, place, time

Lesson 38. Burmese currency: parts of a kyat.

- Practice: How much is this? — K1/50.
ဒါ ဘယ်လောက်လဲ။ — သုံးကျပ်ခွဲ။
- Vocabulary: -ခွဲ။
- Reference: Price list. Burmese coins.

Lesson 39. Paying a price. Who paid what.

- Practice: How much did you pay for that? — I paid K45.
အဲဒါ ဘယ်လောက် ပေးရသလဲ။ — ၄၅-ကျပ် ပေးရပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: PRICE ပေးရ-။ အဲဒါ။
- Reference: People and prices. Pronouns: "you" and "I" are dispensable.

Lesson 40. Asking for words.

- Practice: What's that called in Burmese? — It's called စာအိတ် (sa-eiq)
အဲဒါ ဗမာလို ဘယ်လို ခေါ်သလဲ။ — စာအိတ်လို့ ခေါ်ပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: ဗမာလို ခေါ်-။ Things: ဘောပင်၊ ပို့စကဒ်၊ ဖလင်၊ ဆယ်လိုတိပ်၊ တိပ်ရွှေ၊ ဘီစကွတ်၊ ကော်ဖီမှုန့်၊ မြေပုံ၊ နို့မှုန့်၊ စာအိတ်၊ စာရွက်။
- Reference: Things and prices. Grammar notes.

Lesson 41. Buying things. Who bought what.

- Practice: What did he buy? — He bought a map and some sellotape/Scotch tape.
 ဘာ ဝယ်သလဲ။ — မြေပုံနဲ့ ဆယ်လိုတိပ် ဝယ်ပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: [thing] ဝယ်-။ [thing-1]-နဲ့ [thing-2]
- Reference: Names and things

Lesson 41R. Review of material in Lessons 1-41

Lesson 42. Want to [verb].

- Practice: Where did he want to go? — He wanted to go to Peking.
 ဘယ် သွားချင်သလဲ။ — ပီကင်း သွားချင်ပါတယ်။
- Vocabulary: [verb]-ချင်-။
- Reference: People, places, times, things. Grammar notes.

Lesson 43. Practice with want to [verb]. More verbs: sit, open, close.

- Practice: Where do you want to sit? Do you want the fan on?
 ဘယ်မှာ ထိုင်ချင်သလဲ။ ပန်ကာ ဖွင့်ချင်သလား။
- Vocabulary: ထိုင်-။ ဖွင့်-။ ပိတ်-။ စားပွဲ။ ပြတင်းပေါက်၊ တံခါး၊ ပန်ကာ၊ မီး။
- Reference: Names and preferences

Lesson 44. Going to [verb].

- Practice: Where is he going to sit? — He's going to sit here.
 ဘယ်မှာ ထိုင်မလဲ။ — ဒီမှာ ထိုင်မယ်။
- Vocabulary: [verb]-မယ်။
- Reference: Grammar notes. Names and plans.

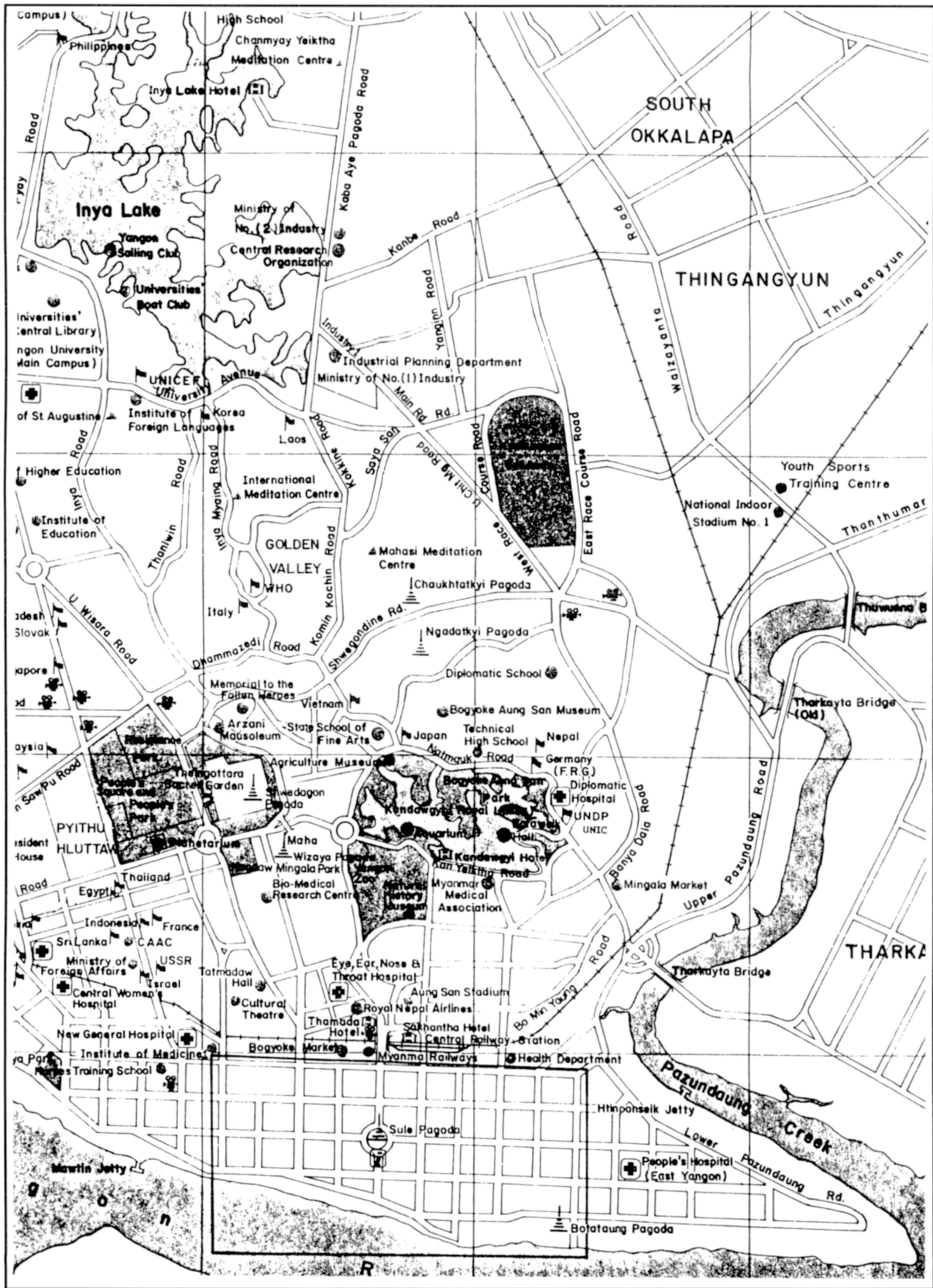
Lesson 45. Will have to [verb].

- Practice: Where is he going to have to live? — He'll have to live in Taunggyi.
 ဘယ်မှာ နေရမလဲ။ — တောင်ကြီးမှာ နေရမယ်။
- Vocabulary: [verb]-ရမယ်။
- Reference: Grammar notes. Names and obligations.

Lesson 46. Requests: Please [verb]/ Please don't [verb].

- Practice: Should I sit here? — Yes, please do/ No, please don't.
 ဒီမှာ ထိုင်ရမလား။ — ဟုတ်ကဲ့။ ထိုင်ပါ။/ မထိုင်ပါနဲ့။
- Vocabulary: [verb]-ပါ။/ မ-[verb]-ပါနဲ့။
- Reference: Grammar notes. Names and preferences.

Lesson 46R. Review of material in Lessons 1-46.



From a tourist map of Rangoon (Yangon).
The downtown section is shown separately.

THE LESSONS

To start using *BISL*, put the book where you can see the street plan of Rangoon, and start listening to Lesson 1 on the tape.

The tapes

The main function of the tapes is to introduce new words and structures to you and to give you opportunities to practise them. Many of the exercises ask questions for you to answer (like “What’s the phone number of the Strand Hotel?”), and one of the functions of the book is to give you the facts you need for your answers (like “81533”). So it is important to look at the book while you do the exercises on the tape. The book also gives you notes and explanations of points that are too detailed or lengthy to be delivered by word of mouth.

The tapes in this set are called “Lesson Tapes,” because they provide explanations and comments as well as exercises. This is all very well when you’re meeting the material for the first time. But when you’ve got some way through *BISL* and you want to review some of the material you’ve learned, you won’t need the explanations — at that stage they are unnecessary and even irritating. So what you can do is to use a different set of tapes — called “Review Tapes” — where you will find exercises for review unimpeded by explanation.

Having much leisure during this six weeks’ voyage I now set myself with great industry to acquire the language. ... By the time I reached Amerapoorah I had the gratification to find that I could express myself on common topics with some degree of fluency and correctness.

From: Henry Gouger: *A Personal Narrative of Two Years Imprisonment in Burmah*. London 1864. p. 22

Rangoon sites and streets: plan



M Museum **▲** Pagoda **●** Park **↳** Hotel **⌘** Market

Diphthongs in the roman transcription:
pronounce ei as in *vein*, ai as in *Thailand*, ou as in *though*, au as in *Sauerkraut*.

Rangoon sites and streets: key

Sites

<i>n</i> ^o	<i>symbol</i>	<i>script</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>pronunciation</i> — (1)	
				<i>script</i>	<i>roman</i>
1.	M	ပြတိုက်	museum	/ပျာဒိုက်/	pyá-daiq
2.	▲	ဘုရား	pagoda	/ဖယား/	p'âyà
3.	⊗	ပန်းခြံ	park	/ပန်းဂျန်/	pàn-jan
4.	🏨	ဟိုတယ်	hotel	as written	ho-teh
5.	🏪	ဈေး	market	as written	zè

Numbered sites

<i>n</i> ^o	<i>script</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>	<i>pronunciation in roman</i> ¹
1.	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ပြတိုက်	Bogyoke Museum	Bo-jouq Pyá-daiq
2.	ရွှေတိဂုံဘုရား	Shwedagon Pagoda	Shwe-dăgoun P'âyà
3.	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ပန်းခြံ	Bogyoke Park	Bo-jouq Pàn-jan
4.	သမ္မတဟိုတယ်	President Hotel	Thămădá Ho-teh
5.	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ဈေး	Bogyoke Market	Bo-jouq Zè
6.	သိမ်ကြီးဈေး	Thein-gyi Market	Thein-jì-zè
7.	ဆူးလေဘုရား	Sule Pagoda	S'ù-le P'âyà
8.	မဟာဗန္ဓုလပန်းခြံ	Maha Bandoola Park	Măha Ban-dú-lá Pàn-jan
9.	အမျိုးသားပြတိုက်	National Museum	Ămyò-thà Pyá-daiq
10.	စတရင်ဟိုတယ်	Strand Hotel	Săt'ărìn Ho-teh

Numbered streets

<i>n</i> ^o	<i>script</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>	<i>pronunciation in roman</i> ¹
100	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်လမ်း	Bogyoke Street	Bo-jouq Làn
200	အနော်ရထာလမ်း	Anawrahta Street	Ănaw-yăt'a Làn ²
300	မဟာဗန္ဓုလလမ်း	Maha Bandoola Street	Măha Ban-dú-lá Làn
400	ကုန်သည်လမ်း	Merchant Street	Koun-dheh Làn
500	ကမ်းနားလမ်း	Strand Road	Kàn-nà Làn
600	ဗိုလ်အောင်ကျော်လမ်း	Bo Aung Kyaw Street	Bo Aun Jaw Làn
700	ပန်းဆိုးတန်း	Pansodan Street	Pàn-s'ò-dàn or Pàn-zò-dàn
800	ဆူးလေဘုရားလမ်း	Sule Pagoda Road	S'ù-le P'âyà Làn
900	ရွှေဘုံသာလမ်း	Shwebontha Street	Shwe-boun-dha Làn
1000	[ရွှေတိဂုံ]ဘုရားလမ်း	Shwedagon Pagoda Rd	[Shwe-dăgoun] P'âyà Làn

1. On “pronunciation in roman” and “pronunciation in script” see Appendix 3.

2. Also pronounced Ănaw-răt'a Làn

Rangoon names with pronunciation represented in Burmese script

Sites

<i>n^o</i>	<i>script</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>	<i>pronunciation in script</i> ¹
1.	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ပြတိုက်	Bogyoke Museum	/ဗိုဂျုတ်ပျုဒိုက်/
2.	ရွှေတိဂုံဘုရား	Shwedagon Pagoda	/ရွှေဒဂုန်ဖယား/
3.	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ပန်းခြံ	Bogyoke Park	/ဗိုဂျုတ်ပန်းဂျန်/
4.	သမ္မတဟိုတယ်	President Hotel	/သမဒါဟိုတယ်/
5.	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ဈေး	Bogyoke Market	/ဗိုဂျုတ်ဇေး/
6.	သိမ်ကြီးဈေး	Thein-gyi Market	/သိန်ဂျီးဇေး/
7.	ဆူးလေဘုရား	Sule Pagoda	/ဆူးလေဖယား/
8.	မဟာဗန္ဓုလပန်းခြံ	Maha Bandoola Park	/မဟာဗန်ဒုလာပန်းဂျန်/
9.	အမျိုးသားပြတိုက်	National Museum	/အမျိုးသားပျုဒိုက်/
10.	စတင်ဟိုတယ်	Strand Hotel	as written

Streets

<i>n^o</i>	<i>script</i>	<i>English equivalent</i>	<i>pronunciation in script</i> ¹
100	ဗိုလ်ချုပ်လမ်း	Bogyoke Street	/ဗိုဂျုတ်လန်း/
200	အနော်ရထာလမ်း	Anawrahta Street	/အနော်ယထာလန်း/ ²
300	မဟာဗန္ဓုလလမ်း	Maha Bandoola Street	/မဟာဗန်ဒုလာလန်း/
400	ကုန်သည်လမ်း	Merchant Street	/ကုန်သွယ်လန်း/
500	ကမ်းနားလမ်း	Strand Road	as written
600	ဗိုလ်အောင်ကျော်လမ်း	Bo Aung Kyaw Street	/ဗိုအောင်ကျော်လန်း/
700	ပန်းဆိုးတန်း	Pansodan Street	/ပန်းဆိုးဒန်း/ or /ပန်းဇိုဒန်း/
800	ဆူးလေဘုရားလမ်း	Sule Pagoda Road	/ဆူးလေဖယားလန်း/
900	ရွှေဘုံသာလမ်း	Shwebontha Street	/ရွှေဘုံသာလန်း/
1000	[ရွှေတိဂုံ]ဘုရားလမ်း	Shwedagon Pagoda Rd	/[ရွှေဒဂုန်]ဘုရားလန်း/

1. On “pronunciation in roman” and “pronunciation in script” see Appendix 3. The paucity of “as written” entries shows how many mismatches there are between sound and script.
2. Also pronounced /အနော်ရထာလန်း/။



In the precincts of a pagoda
From the children's comic ရွှေသွေး

LESSON 1

“What?” questions.
What’s that? — That’s a hotel.

New words

<i>script</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>pronunciation</i> ¹
ပြတိုက် /ပြတိုက်/ ²	museum	pyá-daiq ³
ပြ- /ပြ/	to show, exhibit	pyá-
တိုက်	building	taiq ³
ဘုရား /ဖယား/	lord, pagoda, Buddha image	p’ăyà
ပန်းခြံ /ပန်းဂျန်/	park, garden	pàn-jan
ပန်း	flower	pàn
ခြံ /ချန်/	enclosure, garden	c’an
ဟိုတယ်	hotel [from English]	ho-teh
ဈေး /ဇေး/	market	zè
ဒါ	that thing, this thing	da
ဘာ	what?	ba
-လဲ	suffix: “question” ⁴	-lèh
-ပါ /-ဗာ or -ပါ/ ⁵	suffix: “polite” ⁶	-ba or -pa ⁵

- For notes on the roman transcription and its limitations see Appendix 3.
- Words between /.../ show the pronunciation written in Burmese script. It is shown only when the pronunciation of the word doesn’t match its spelling. Words without a /.../ entry are pronounced as written.
- Diphthongs in the roman transcription: pronounce ai as in *Thailand*. See also the Note on diphthongs below, and the reminder at the foot of the page.
- The suffix -လဲ (-lèh) in ဘာလဲ (ba-lèh) “What?” shows that the speaker is asking a question. It is as if the “?” were spoken aloud.
- This suffix is pronounced /-ပါ/ (-pa) after a glottal stop, for example in —
ဒါ ပြတိုက်ပါ /ဒါ ပြတိုက်ပါ/ Da pyá-daiq-pa That’s a museum.
but /-ဗာ/ (-ba) elsewhere; for example in —
ဒါ ဘုရားပါ /ဒါ ဖယားဗာ/ Da p’ăyà-ba That’s a pagoda.
At this stage the difference is not crucial. It is an example of a rule that is given full coverage in Lesson 10. When people are speaking fast, the voiced form /-ဗာ/ (-ba) often sounds like -va. Don’t be misled into thinking this is a new word. Burmese doesn’t have a V sound anyway: -va is just a variant of /-ဗာ/ (-ba).

Diphthongs in the roman transcription:
pronounce ei as in *vein*, ai as in *Thailand*, ou as in *though*, au as in *Sauerkraut*.