

第 4 章

On the markings of subjects with high topicality in pure colloquial Burmese

Atsuhiko KATO ♦ Osaka University of Foreign Studies

1. Introduction

There are chiefly three kinds of markings for the subject noun in colloquial Burmese: they are (1) the postnominal particle *hà*, (2) the postnominal particle *kâ* (pronounced *gâ* except after the glottal stop), and (3) no marking (only the no marking of the subject is expediently shown by # after it in the present paper).¹ Among these, *hà* is often thought to have something to do with ‘topic’, and *kâ* is often considered to be a case marker.

It is also often said by Japanese students that *hà* and *kâ* have functions which resemble the Japanese postnominal particles *wa* and *ga* respectively. Certainly, when one translates Burmese sentences into Japanese, it is very often the case that *hà* can be translated into *wa*, and *kâ* can be translated into *ga*. For instance, *hà* in the following sentence can be translated into Japanese *wa*:

- (1) $\theta\grave{u}$ $h\grave{a}$ $d\grave{i}$ $te?ka\theta\grave{o}$ $g\grave{a}$ $c\acute{a}u\grave{n}\acute{o}d\acute{a}$ $b\grave{a}$
 he HA this university SRC student POL

¹ Sawada (1995a:176) considers the element with the following various features to be a ‘subject’ in Burmese. In this paper I follow Sawada’s definition:

(i) It can occur with no marking in free positions preceding the verbal predicate. (ii) Topic marker *-ha_* can be attached to it. (iii) In the environment of Causative with *-sei_*, *-kou_* is attached to it. (iv) It can be the antecedent for reflexive expressions. (v) Some verb modifiers are used to add further information about nothing but them: e.g. *-nain_* (the possibility for them) ‘may, can’, *-chin_* (their desire) ‘want to’, *-ya_* (the inevitability for them) ‘must, can’, *-hya_* (their pitifulness).

'Kare wa kono daigaku no gakusei da.

(=He is a student at this university.)'

On the other hand, *kā* in the following sentence can be translated into *ga*:

- (2) dī hín gā ?akáunzún bà
this dish KA best POL

'Kono ryoori ga iciban ii. (=This dish is the best.)'

However, it is not always so. For example, Japanese *wa* has the use of 'contrast', but in Burmese it is only *kā* that can have the meaning of contrast.

Thus, in the next example, it is suitable to use *kā* as shown in (a):

- (3) a. θù gā ce?θá sá dè ;
he KA poultry eat REA
dàbèmmē canò gā wε?θá sá dè
but I KA pork eat REA

'Kare wa toriniku o tabeta. Sikasi watasi wa butaniku o tabeta.

(=He ate poultry, but I ate pork.)'

- b. ?θù hà ce?θá sá dè ;
he HA poultry eat REA
dàbèmmē canò hà wε?θá sá dè
but I HA pork eat REA

Moreover, Japanese *wa* can be freely attached to non-subjects, but it is difficult to say that *hà* can be attached to non-subjects. Based on his survey using a questionnaire, Kato (1996) drew the conclusion that *hà* is higher in acceptability than *kā* when attached to a non-subject. He says (a) below is higher in acceptability than (b):

- (4) a. dī wu?thū hà shayàzòjì yé dè
this novel HA Zawgyi write REA
'Zawgyi wrote this novel.'
b. dī wu?thū gā shayàzòjì yé dè
this novel KA Zawgyi write REA

But it is not easy to assert that such a sentence is perfectly right as a Burmese

sentence, because there are also speakers that do not accept a sentence with a non-subject marked by *hà*.

Next, let us take a look at the problem of 'style' of Burmese. There are two styles in Burmese: the colloquial style and the literary style. Yabu (1992: 593) says, "口語は、日常の口頭言語としての文体であり、文語は、改まった書記言語としての文体である (the *koogo* [=colloquial language] is the style of oral language in daily life, and the *bungo* [=literary language] is the style of formal written language)". One of the most remarkable differences between the colloquial style and the literary style is the use of different sets of particles. For instance, sentence (a) below in the colloquial style corresponds to sentence (b) of the literary style:

- (5) a. japàn nàingàn hmà tù nê thamín sá dè
Japan country LOC chopsticks INST rice eat REA
'They eat rice with chopsticks in Japan.'
b. japàn nàingàn dwìn tù phyîn thamín sá òi
Japan country LOC chopsticks INST rice eat REA
'They eat rice with chopsticks in Japan.'

Burmese texts in the colloquial style are often strongly influenced by the literary style. It is, so to speak, an intermediate style of the literary style and the colloquial style. Such an intermediate style is often seen in texts written using the colloquial style. Sawada (1995c) calls it "*mikake no koogotai* (見かけの口語体 [=apparent colloquial style])". Such texts are basically of colloquial style, but they sometimes include particles of the literary style, and nouns and verbs which belong to the literary style are also used at times. Thus, as Sawada says, when we use materials in *mikake no koogotai* for our analysis, it is necessary to always think about the possibility that we may reach a conclusion which may not be true for the true colloquial style.

The object of this paper is to consider the actual markings of subjects that are high in 'topicality' in the 'pure' colloquial style of Burmese. In conclusion, we will see that *hà* is rarely used in the pure colloquial style, and that the

marking of subjects that are high in topicality is basically ‘no marking’.

2. Preceding studies on *hà* and *kâ*

First I will summarize representative opinions on the functions of *hà* and *kâ*.

Thurgood (1978) points out that both *hà* and *kâ* denote a subject intrasententially and a topic intersententially. He also argues that *hà* marks “the continuation of an already established topic” (p.255) and gives the following example (p.257):

(6) A: ?эгáñ bè hmà lé
 living room where LOC QUE

B: ?эгáñ (hà) ?au?tha? hmà cì dè
 living room HA downstairs LOC exist REA

‘Where is the living room?’ ‘The living room is downstairs.’

(= Cornyn and Roop 1968 : 223)

As for *kâ*, he argues that it is used to mark a “new topic” (p.255) including a “contrastive topic”. For example, ‘Bill’ in “It was Bill who ate the radishes.” is a contrastive topic, and the underlined ‘it’ in “The police finally recovered our stolen car; it had only minor damage done to it.” is a new topic (p.258).

Wheatley (1982) does not draw a conclusion as to the function of *hà*, but he points out that *hà* occurs frequently in “periods of high drama” (p.190). As for *kâ*, he points out its use to mark a contrasted subject as is shown in the example below (p.169):

(7) kòthàbé gâ nè dè ; kòtou?phyó gâ cí dè
 Ko Tha Bay KA small REA Ko Toke Hpyo KA big REA

‘Ko Tha Bay was the younger and Ko Toke Hpyo was the older.’

(= Okell 1969 : 318)

He also considers *kâ* to be related to topics, and says, “[it is used] to shift attention away from the old referent, to ensure that the audience that there is a shift in the argument, a new direction in the narrative, it may be necessary

to do something more. The function of /-ká/ may be to signal such a break; not necessarily a complete shift of topic – though that may be –, but at least a shift to a particular aspect of the topic under consideration.”(p.176). Unlike Japanese researchers, he points out that *kâ* is similar to Japanese *wa* in that both have something to do with contrasted subjects and topics (p.177). And he also asserts that *kâ* may be used only to denote the agent of a clause (pp.179-181).

Sawada (1995a) states that *kâ* has the function of “disambiguation” and the function to mark a “selected subject” (pp.180-183). He shows two cases of disambiguation. One case is the equational sentence where *kâ* delimits the subject noun and the predicate noun, as is shown below (p.180):

(8) θú nànmè gâ kòwínphè dè
 his name KA Ko Win Pe hearsay

‘His name is Ko Win Pe.’ (= Okell 1969 : 317)

The other case is the sentence including a subordinate clause where *kâ* marks the subject of the main clause, as is shown below (p.181):

(9) nà gâ [ní pìnbán hmà só lô] pyó dà bà
 I KA you tired N.IRR anxious because speak REA POL

‘I said so because I was anxious that you would be tired.’

(= Ohno 1983 : 146)

But he says that since *kâ* is not necessary in either case, the function of disambiguation is somewhat weak. Besides this function, he argues that *kâ* “is required when selecting as Subject some member(s) in a previously established domain” (p.182) based on the use of *kâ* as in the example below:

(10) A: myànmàhín nê japànhín bè hà
 Burmese dishes and Japanese dishes which thing
 sa? θa lé
 hot REA QUE

B: myànmàhín gâ sa? tè
 Burmese dishes KA hot REA

‘Which are the hot one, Burmese dishes or Japanese dishes?’

‘Burmese dishes are.’

Myint Soe (1999) examines the discussions of Thurgood and Wheatley using actual texts, and shows that non-contrastive subjects are marked with *hà* or zero-anaphora and that contrastive subjects are marked with *kâ* (pp.94-116).

3. Environments where *hà*, *kâ*, and # occur

Kato (1996) tries to reveal the characteristics of *hà* comparing them with those of *kâ*. The most important characteristics of *hà* among those shown in this paper are that *hà* occurs more frequently in the sentence initial position than *kâ*, and that *hà* occurs less frequently inside subordinate clauses than *kâ*. These two conclusions were drawn from the results of a survey which examined the environments where *hà* and *kâ* occur in texts written with the colloquial style. These texts will be called ‘material A’ in the present paper. (For the detail of these texts, refer to the end of the paper).

There are two problems which remain unsolved in Kato’s (1996) paper. One is the problem that the pure colloquial style was not treated. Although the texts treated are of colloquial style, they are ‘written’. Therefore, the style of these texts might be *mikake no koogotai*, as described by Sawada (1995c). This problem will be discussed later in 6.

Another problem is that subjects with no marking were not taken into consideration. Thus, I have carried out an additional survey of the frequency of subjects with no marking occurring in the sentence-initial position and occurring inside subordinate clauses using the same texts as Kato’s (1996). Before showing the results of the survey, I will define ‘sentence-initial position’ and ‘inside a subordinate clause’.

A subject occurring in the ‘sentence-initial position’ is a subject which occurs as the first element of a main clause. Even if a subject of a subordinate clause apparently occurs in the sentence-initial position, it is not considered a subject in the sentence-initial position. Below are examples of subjects

occurring in the sentence-initial position.

- (11) dì lù hà thū yé ?ayù?ashâ gò ma sūnpè bú
this person HA his POSS opinion KO NEG discard NEG

‘This person did not discard his opinion.’ (khìnmàunpò, p.101)

- (12) ʔúθùdò gâ ðà phóunjí ?atwè? shúngàn thwè? tè
priest KA only monk for mendicancy go out REA

‘Only the priest went about for alms for the monk’s sake.’

(lùdù?úhlâ, p.19)

- (13) thú # cîn nèjâ tayá dwè gò ðà
He train used to law PL KO only

she? cîn nè dè

continue train PROG REA

‘He kept doing only the religious service that he was always doing.’

(lùdù?úhlâ, p.19)

On the other hand, the underlined nouns below are examples of subjects which are not elements in the sentence-initial position.

- (14) dì ní nè bé myamàsàpè hà
this way INST (emphasis) Burmese literature HA

khi?θi? thé gò wìn yau? là gè dè
new era inside KO enter arrive come KHE REA

‘Burmese literature went into a new era in this way.’

(myamàzà, p.205)

- (15) dàjâun lùgè myá gò táinpyì gâ ?á thá dè
thus youth PL KO country KA rely REA

‘This is why the country relies on the young people.’

(khìnmàunpò, p.24)

- (16) [mín # pwínbwínlínlín pyó] dà shayà # chícú dè
you frankly speak N.REA teacher praise REA

‘I praise your speaking frankly.’ (khìnmàunpò, p.27)

Elements which can occur before subjects are various, for example, non-subject

nouns, subordinate clauses, etc. However, when a conjunction-like element such as *dà jâun* 'this is why', *dà bêmê* 'but', *dà nê* 'thus' and so on appears at the beginning of a sentence, the following element is considered sentence-initial.

Next, a subject that occurs 'inside a subordinate clause' indicates a subject that occurs in a subordinate clause other than a quotation. Quotations are not considered to be subordinate clauses because they are different from other subordinate clauses in that all kinds of utterances can appear as a quotation. (A quotation might include two or more sentences).

By the way, there is a problem that needs to be addressed when we decide whether a subject is inside a subordinate clause: that is, whether the subject of a sentence as below is inside the subordinate clause introduced by the particle *pí* (*bí*) or not:

- (17) *θù # zé θwá bí shàn wè dè*
he market go after rice buy REA

'He went to the market and bought rice.'

For the solution of this problem, we will look at which verb the particle denoting plurality *câ* (*jâ*) is attached to when the subject becomes plural. See the next sentence:

- (18) *θù dō # zé θwá bí shàn wè jâ dè*
he PL market go after rice buy PL REA

'They went to the market and bought rice.'

The particle of plurality is usually attached to the verb of the main clause. Thus, we consider that the subject noun of such a case is not the element inside the subordinate clause but the element of the main clause.

Below are examples of subjects which appear inside subordinate clauses:²

² Kato (1996) shows that the frequency of *hà* is different depending on the kinds of dependent clauses. Actually, *hà* rarely occurs in a nominalized clause like (19) or in an adnominal clause like (20).

- (19) [*ʔéðì ʔouʔkhé* *hà ðì ʔouʔkhé lauʔ cî*] *dà gò*
that brick HA this brick about be N.REA KO
ðadîyâ bí yì mî dà bà
remember after laugh (unconscious) REA POL
'I laughed because I remembered the size of that brick was like this brick.' (lùdûʔúhlâ, p.88)
- (20) [*baritîcâ dô* *hà myamà nàinṅàn gò nauʔshóun ʔacèin*
British PL HA Burma country KO last time
θéin yù laiʔ] *tê ʔachèin hmà hmâ ʔashâzâʔayàʔayà*
deprive take (vigor) R.REA time LOC not till various things
pyáunléhmû dwè # phyiʔ là dō dà bà
change PL occur come (culminant) REA POL
'Various changes (in Burmese literature) began to occur for the first time when British finally plundered of the land of Burma.' (myamàzà, p.200)
- (21) [*ðì lùṅè dwè # nílán sheʔ pyâ*] *yìn nauʔ*
this youth PL method continue show if future
lùṅè dwè # tō là ʔóun hmà bé
youth PL excellent come (accumulation) IRR (emphasis)
'If these young people keep showing methods, young people in the future will become more excellent.' (khìnmàunṅò, p.34)
- (22) [*lùjî dwè gâ saniʔdajâ hmaʔθá lêlà θìn pyâ jâ*]
adult PL KA systematically remember learn teach show PL
lô lùṅè dwè # ʔaθîṅàn # yînceʔ là dè
because youth PL knowledge mature come REA
'The younger people gain wisdom because the adults learn and teach systematically.' (khìnmàunṅò, p.34)

The results of the survey are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below. These tables are revisions of Kato (1996), including data from the current survey.

Table 1 shows the frequencies that subjects with *hà*, *kâ* and # occurred in

the sentence-initial position:

Table 1: Sentence-initial position?

	Yes	No	Total
hà	154 (64.4%)	85 (35.6%)	239 (100.0%)
kâ	86 (44.1%)	109 (55.9%)	195 (100.0%)
#	28 (14.4%)	167 (85.6%)	195 (100.0%)
Total	268 (42.6%)	361 (57.4%)	629 (100.0%)

A statistical test shows that there is a significant relation between the markings of subjects and whether or not the subjects are in the sentence-initial position ($\chi^2 = 110.38$, $df=2$, $p<0.001$). And the occurrence ratio of subjects with *hà* in the sentence-initial position is 64.4% (95% confidence interval [CI], 58.0-70.5%), that of *kâ* is 44.1% (95% CI, 37.0-51.3%), and that of # is 14.4% (95% CI, 9.8-20.1%). Thus, we can say that the ratios of occurrence in the sentence-initial position are high in the order of *hà* > *kâ* > #.

Next, Table 2 shows the frequencies that subjects with *hà*, *kâ* and # occurred inside subordinate clauses:

Table 2: Inside of subordinate clauses?

	Yes	No	Total
hà	27 (11.3%)	212 (88.7%)	239 (100.0%)
kâ	55 (28.2%)	140 (71.8%)	195 (100.0%)
#	100 (51.3%)	95 (48.7%)	195 (100.0%)
Total	182 (28.9%)	447 (71.1%)	629 (100.0%)

A statistical test shows that there is a significant relation between the markings of subjects and whether or not the subjects are inside subordinate clauses ($\chi^2 = 83.57$, $df=2$, $p<0.001$). And the occurrence ratio of subjects with *hà* inside subordinate clauses is 11.3% (95% CI, 7.6-16.0%), that of *kâ* is 28.2% (95% CI, 22.0-35.1%), and that of # is 51.3% (95% CI, 44.0-58.5%). Thus, contrary to the above, we can say that the ratios of occurrence inside subordinate clauses are high in the order of # > *kâ* > *hà*.³

³ Minami (1993) makes similar observations on Japanese *wa*. He says that Japanese *wa* denoting a topic does not easily occur in certain subordinate clauses (p.116).

In this survey, which also takes # into account, statistically significant relations between the markings of subjects and the occurrence ratios in each environment are observed. And this survey shows no differences from the result of Kato's (1996) survey in that (1) subjects with *hà* occur most frequently in the sentence-initial position, and (2) subjects with *hà* occur least frequently inside subordinate clauses.

4. *hà* and 'topicality'

When thinking about the functions of *hà*, we should not overlook the fact pointed out by Kato (1996, 98) that when *hà* is attached to a subject, if the sentence lacks nouns which are necessary for interpreting the event⁴ that the verb represents (i.e. argument nouns), the sentence is not fully acceptable. For example, since *yai?* 'to hit' is a verb which requires a patient, if the sentence lacks a noun which denotes the patient, acceptability of the sentence is low, as is seen in (23)-(25):

(23) ?ma?hlâ hà yai? tè

Ma Hla HA hit REA

(Ma Hla hit [someone].)

(24) ?ma?hlâ hà pyínbyínhàndàn yai? tè

Ma Hla HA violently hit REA

(Ma Hla violently hit [someone].)

(25) ?ma?hlâ hà manêgâ yai? tè

Ma Hla HA yesterday hit REA

(Ma Hla hit [someone] yesterday.)

(26) ma?hlâ hà ma?wín gò yai? tè

Ma Hla HA Ma Win KO hit REA

'Ma Hla hit Ma Win.'

⁴ By the term 'event' I mean all the situations including continuable and momentary actions, changes of states, and states.

(27) ma?hlâ hà ma?wín gò pyínbyínhàndàn yai? tè

Ma Hla HA Ma Win KO violently hit REA

‘Ma Hla violently hit Ma Win.’

In the next example also, since the verb *ta?* requires a patient, when the sentence lacks a noun which denotes the patient, acceptability of the sentence is low:

(28) ?ma?hlâ hà ta? tè

Ma Hla HA capable REA

(Ma Hla is capable [of doing something].)

(29) ma?hlâ hà japànzagá ta? tè

Ma Hla HA Japanese capable REA

‘Ma Hla can speak Japanese.’

In the next example, since the verb *ní* is one which requires a noun denoting ‘reference point for nearness’, when the sentence lacks such a noun, it is low in acceptability:

(30) ?bagó hà ní dè

Pegu HA near REA

(Pegu is near [somewhere].)

(31) bagó hà yàngòun nê ní dè

Pegu HA Rangoon with near REA

‘Pegu is near Rangoon.’

Moreover, even if the verb of a sentence is one which does not require a non-subject noun, when the verb is a dynamic verb (i.e. verb denoting action or change of states), the sentence is low in acceptability if the predicate is composed only of the verb, as is shown in (32):

(32) ?kòwínnàin hà kâ dè

Ko Win Naing HA dance REA

(Ko Win Naing danced.)

Such a sentence becomes acceptable if there is an adverbial element such as a noun or an adverb showing manner, time, place and so on:

(33) kòwínnàin hà káungáun kâ dè

Ko Win Naing HA well dance REA

‘Ko Win Naing danced well.’

(34) kòwínnàin hà manêgâ kâ dè

Ko Win Naing HA yesterday dance REA

‘Ko Win Naing danced yesterday.’

(35) kòwínnàin hà ?èin hmà kâ dè

Ko Win Naing HA house LOC dance REA

‘Ko Win Naing danced at home.’

This problem – a sentence is not acceptable when the predicate is composed only of a verb – does not occur when the verb is a stative verb. In the case of a stative verb which does not require a non-subject noun, even if the predicate is composed only of the verb, the sentence with *hà* is acceptable:

(36) ma?hlâ hà hlâ dè

Ma Hla HA beautiful REA

‘Ma Hla is beautiful.’

Similarly, when the predicate of a sentence is a noun, the sentence is acceptable even if the predicate is composed only of the noun:

(37) ma?hlâ hà cáunòu (bà)

Ma Hla HA student POL

‘Ma Hla is a student.’

Unacceptability shown above is peculiar to subjects with *hà*. In other words, the problem that a sentence becomes unacceptable in the cases shown above does not occur with subjects with *kâ* and #:

(38) ma?hlâ gâ yai? tè

Ma Hla KA hit REA

‘Ma Hla hit [someone].’

(39) ma?hlâ # yai? tè

Ma Hla hit REA

‘Ma Hla hit [someone].’

(40) kòwínnàin gâ kâ dè
Ko Win Naing KA dance REA
'Ko Win Naing danced.'

(41) kòwínnàin # kâ dè
Ko Win Naing dance REA
'Ko Win Naing danced.'

Based on the observation above, it could be said that it is necessary for a sentence with *hà* to contain enough information to describe the character of the referent of the subject. 'Enough information' at least needs to contain information to interpret the event that the verb shows, that is, information as to who (what) the participants in the event are. This is why if a transitive-like sentence lacks a patient, it is unacceptable. Information about the participants is, however, only 'minimum': in the case of a verb which requires only one argument (i.e. subject), the sentence needs more information, which adverbial element(s) can give. The reason why a sentence with a stative verb without any adverbial elements is acceptable is that since a state can be a permanent character of an entity, it can be interpreted as enough information. In the case of a predicate noun also, the meaning can be a permanent character.⁵

Probably, 'marking a continued topic', which is one of the functions that have been pointed out for *hà*, is related to the aspect *hà* shown above. When one wants to give enough information to describe the character of an entity, it may be often the case that the entity has been presented at least once in the

⁵ There is also a similar interpretation on Japanese *wa*. Kikuchi (1995) says, "「は」構文は、述部が何らかの意味でXについての情報として機能する、という条件を満たしてこそ成り立つ (p.38). (*wa*-construction is feasible only when it meets the requirement that its predicate functions as information on X in a certain sense.)"

It must be noted that the discussion above applies only to declarative sentences. An interrogative sentence with *hà* that has an interrogative word such as *bà* in the predicate is acceptable even if there is not enough information about the referent of the subject.

(ex) cìnkànsìn shò dà hà bà lé
Shinkansen say N.REA HA what QUE 'What is Shinkansen?'

context.

In the present paper, the quantity of information that a speaker (writer) intends to provide in a sentence about the referent of a noun in the same sentence is called 'topicality'.⁶ We would say that acceptability becomes low if not enough information is provided about the referent of a noun with *hà* because it denotes the high topicality of the noun. In other words, because a speaker has already declared that he/she will give enough information by using *hà*, if such information is not offered, acceptability becomes low.

By the way, although it is apparent that the topicality of a subject is high if *hà* is attached to it, one cannot say that the topicality of a subject without *hà* is not high. See the following example:

(42) cэгá bèdìnpýìngà gò káungáun ta? tē
erstwhile fortune-telling KO well capable R. REA
pou?kò ta yau? cì dè ;
person 1 NC be REA
thù { hà / # } bèdìnpýìngà gò lù ta yau?
he HA fortune-telling KO person 1 NC
bè nè bè ?achèin hmà thè mè lô
which day which time LOC die IRR QUO
?ata? hó hnàin dē ?athī ta? tē
to add tell can R.REA till capable REA

'Once upon a time, there was a person who was able to foretell the future very well. He knew fortune-telling thoroughly so that he could tell which day and what time someone would die.' (One of Ludu U Hla's Mon tales)

This is the beginning of an old tale. So, the speaker (writer) must want to offer much information on characters. However, if *hà* underlined in the second sentence is changed into #, there is no problem at all. Therefore, it

⁶ Thus, 'topicality' defined in the present paper is determined at the sentence level, not at the text level.

can be said that the topicality of the noun *θù* is high even if *hà* is not attached. One cannot say that the topicality of a subject noun is not high because *hà* is not attached to it.

5. Relation between the environments where *hà* occurs and topicality

It seems that the environments where *hà* is likely to occur described in 3 originate from the high topicality of nouns to which *hà* is attached.

Let us consider first the characteristic 'occurring frequently in the sentence-initial position'. If the purpose of a sentence is to provide a certain amount of information on X, putting the element that refers to X in the sentence-initial position would be one of the effective means to inform the listener that the sentence is an explanation of X. This would be the reason why subjects with *hà* occur frequently in the sentence-initial position.

Actually, it seems that Burmese utilizes the sentence-initial position for such a purpose. In Burmese, the word order of nouns including a subject is relatively free. But that is true only when we look from the syntactic point of view. The word order of nouns is by no means free at the pragmatic level. Compare (a) and (b):

- (43) a. *θù # màunyìn màunma?mè mâwu?thû yé dè*
 he Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story write REA
 'He wrote Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story.'
- b. *màunyìn màunma?mè mâwu?thû θù # yé dè*
 Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story he write REA
 'He wrote Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story.'

The truth conditional meanings of (a) and (b) are the same. However, the roles of these two sentences in discourse are obviously different. (a) is a sentence used when the topicality of the subject *θù* is higher, while (b) is a sentence used when the topicality of the non-subject *màunyìn màunma?mè mâwu?thû* is higher. For instance, it is suitable to use (a) in the last sentence

of the following example, because the speaker wants to offer information on the writer named James Hla Kyaw here:

- (44) *zagámasa? jéinhlājò gò θī ða lá ;*
 by the way James Hla Kyaw KO know REA QUE
 nánmèjí sàyéshaya bé ;
 famous writer (emphasis)
 θù # màunyìn màunma?mè mâwu?thû yé dè
 he Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story write REA
 'By the way, do you know James Hla Kyaw? He is a famous
 writer. He wrote Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story.'

On the other hand, it is suitable to use (b) in the following example, because the speaker wants to offer information on the novel called Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma here:

- (45) *màunyìn màunma?mè mâwu?thû θī ða lá ;*
 Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story know REA QUE
 ?ayìnkhi?kâ jéinhlājò shò dè sàyéshaya cī dè ;
 in the former era James Hla Kyaw say R.REA writer be REA
 màunyìn màunma?mè mâwu?thû θù # yé dè
 Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story he write REA
 'Do you know Maung Yin Maung Ma May Ma Story? There was
 once a writer called James Hla Kyaw. The story, he wrote it.'

As these examples show, nouns with high topicality tend to be put in the sentence-initial position in Burmese. Subjects with *hà* occurring in the sentence-initial position with high frequency also would be a related phenomenon.

Conversely, if a sentence is an explanation of X, the noun which refers to X would not be put in a secondary position which is not an immediate constituent of the sentence. This seems to be the reason for low frequency of subjects with *hà* occurring inside subordinate clauses.

If *hà* occurs in subordinate clauses with low frequency, it would increase

the possibility of a subject with *hà* being an element of the main clause. Due to this tendency, *hà* may play a role of showing that a noun is the subject of the main clause. See the next sentence for instance:

- (46) a. myaʔthún gâ bamàpyì θwá hnàin yìn wúnθà mè
Myat Htun KA Burma go can if happy IRR
'Myat Htun will be happy if he (=Myat Htun) can go to Burma.'
or '[Someone] will be happy if Myat Htun can go to Burma.'
- b. myaʔthún hà bamàpyì θwá hnàin yìn wúnθà mè
Myat Htun HA Burma go can if happy IRR
'Myat Htun will be happy if he (=Myat Htun) can go to Burma.'

In (a), one cannot say whether it is Myat Htun who will be happy. But in (b), the possibility of 'Myattun will be happy' is high, since a noun with *hà* will be the element of the main clause with a high possibility.

From the discussion above, we could consider that 'occurring in the sentence-initial position' and 'not occurring inside subordinate clauses' reflect immediately the high topicality of nouns with *hà*.

6. Markings of subjects with high topicality in the pure colloquial style

The particle *hà* does not seem to appear frequently in conversation. Wheatley (1982: 189), Sawada (1995c) and Kato (1997) have already pointed this out. Sawada (1995c) implies that it is in *mikake no koogotai* that *hà* frequently appears. Actually, one could say that *hà* is used in conversation only to emphasize a noun. Probably the style of the texts of 'material A' is *mikake no koogotai* because *hà* occurs frequently.

Then, what is the actual use of *hà* in the pure colloquial style? I surveyed the Burmese tape drama < *ʔapàðáí myá yízá thá dō* > to examine the use of *hà* in conversation. The drama is about one hour long, of which the first twenty-eight minutes was used in this survey. This material will be called 'material B' in this paper. Since most of this material consists of conversation,

the style should be very close to that of Burmese daily conversation. What should be noted is the fact that *hà* never appears in the part used in this survey. In Table 3, the ratios of the markings of subjects in material B as well as those of the material A are shown:

Table 3: Markings of subjects in the material B and A

	<i>hà</i>	<i>kâ</i>	#	Total
Material B	0 (0.0%)	104 (48.4%)	111 (51.6%)	215 (100.0%)
Material A	239 (38.0%)	195 (31.0%)	195 (31.0%)	629 (100.0%)

As is shown, *hà*, which is attached to 38.0% subjects in material A, never appears in material B. This can be evidence that *hà* is not often used in pure colloquial Burmese. But subjects with high topicality must also appear in the pure colloquial language. Such subjects are marked with *hà* in *mikake no koogotai*. Then what about in the pure colloquial style?

The marking of subjects with high topicality in the pure colloquial style can be either *kâ* or # for the following reasons. First, in (42) above, which is a written sentence, one can use either *hà* or # for the marking of the subject. Thus, it is not strange at all that the marking of such a subject is # all the more if it is used in the pure oral language. Second, *kâ* is also candidate. As far as *mikake no koogotai* is concerned, it is indeed correct to say that not *kâ* but *hà* is used in the answering sentence of the example (6). In the pure colloquial style, however, *kâ* is often used in such a sentence. Therefore, the conversation below using *kâ* is quite ordinary in the daily language:

- (47) A: ʔégán bè hmà lé
living room where LOC QUE
B: ʔégán gâ ʔauʔtha? hmà cī dè
living room KA downstairs LOC exist REA
'Where is the living room?' 'The living room is downstairs.'

As is discussed above, the marking of subjects with high topicality in the pure colloquial style can be either *kâ* or #. Then, which is used more

frequently for subjects with high topicality? To examine this problem, I carried out a survey as follows:

- We can say that subjects to which *hà* can be attached are high in topicality. Therefore, if *kâ* or # marking of a subject can be replaced with *hà*, topicality of the subject would be high. Thus, I asked a native speaker of Burmese⁷ whether *kâ* and # attached to subjects in material B can be replaced with *hà*.

In the survey, I noted the following two points:

- When thinking whether *kâ* and # can be replaced with *hà*, contexts were taken into consideration. When *hà* was contextually improper, it was judged that *hà* was not able to be used.
- Since *hà* is a form which is often used in *mikake no koogotai*, using *hà* in conversation is at times unnatural. I decided to disregard this stylistic problem caused by using *hà*.

The result is shown below. 25.0% of *kâ* and 14.4% of # were replaceable with *hà*:

Table 4: Replaceable with *hà*?

	Yes	No	Total
<i>kâ</i>	26 (25.0%)	78 (75.0%)	104 (100.0%)
#	16 (14.4%)	95 (85.6%)	111 (100.0%)
Total	42 (19.5%)	173 (80.5%)	215 (100.0%)

A statistical test shows that there is no significant difference between the ratios of *kâ* and # replaceable with *hà* ($\chi^2=3.83$, $df=1$, $p>0.05$). Thus, we cannot say which of *kâ* and # is more used for subjects with high topicality in the pure colloquial style.

Then, what is the difference between # and *kâ* which are replaceable with *hà*? To consider this problem, we will look at examples of # and *kâ* that were judged to be replaceable with *hà*. Below are the examples of #:

⁷ U Tin Win, visiting professor at the Osaka University of Foreign Studies, 2001-2003.

- (48) canò dô # bājí gò ?úchā gē bà dè
I PL uncle KO give priority KHE POL REA
'We gave priority to Uncle.' (Material B, p.2)
- (49) canô phā gò kàin cī jìn dà tàunhmā
my trunk KO touch try to want to N.REA even if
thù # ma kàin yé dō bú lè
he NEG touch brave (culminant) NEG SFP
'Though he wanted to touch my baggage, he did not dare to touch it. (Material B, p.4)
- (50) khamyá # lùbāwā lai?tà
you mean (exclamation)
'How mean you are!' (Material B, p.6)
- (51) cīn shò dà # ?anà hmà myèbéloun gò
squirrel say N.REA Upper Burma LOC peanut KO
sá nè dē thī?pìn bō gā ?akàunlé lè
eat PROG R.REA tree above SRC animal SFP
'In the Upper Burma, Shin means an animal on the tree that eats peanuts.' (Material B, p.11)
- (52) dà # cīn dō tó ma hou? phú
this you PL countryside NEG be NEG
'This is not the country (where you live).' (Material B, p.11)
- (53) camā nānmè # nwémókhaìndāzìn bà
my name Nwe Moe Khine Dhazin POL
'My name is Nwe Moe Khine Dhazin. (Material B, p.19)

Next, below are the examples of *kâ*:

- (54) dīnē thúnbau? cōzō nè dē lù dwè
today take an active part famous PROG R.REA person PL
dé gā ?amyázū gā canò dô lò tódā dwè bà
inside SRC many KA I PL like countryman PL POL

'Many of the people who take active parts and become famous today are countrymen like us.' (Material B, p.1)

- (55) lù nà shò dà gâ jò # ma pau? phú hmou?lá
impostor say N.REA KA horn NEG grow NEG do they

'Impostors do not have horns, do they?' (Material B, p.1)

- (56) canò dô hna yau? kâ ?au?thù sán bô
I PL 2 NC KA woman of Lower Burma try in order to
?au? thwá jâ dà ma hou? pà bú
Lower Burma go PL N.REA NEG be POL NEG
'We two are not to go to Lower Burma to try women of Lower Burma.' (Material B, p.2)

- (57) yàngòun gâ lù dwè gâ lù dáin ?íngalei?sà gò
Rangoon SRC person PL KA everybody English KO
thamínzáyèđau? lau? tō ta? câ dè kwà
daily conversation as much as (contrast) capable PL REA SFP
'All the people in Rangoon are good at English daily conversation. (Material B, p.6)

- (58) còcò dô zòzò dô # cī yìn dō lè
Kyaw Kyaw PL Zaw Zaw PL be if (contrast) SFP
yàngòun gâ pòpídō lè lô káun hmà
Rangoon KA more travel to good IRR
'If it were Kyaw Kyaw and Zaw Zaw, it would be more pleasant to travel in Rangoon.' (Material B, p.10)

- (59) dàjāunmôlô cìn dô ?akò gâ
therefore you PL brother KA
zídínān thwè? nè dà gó
smell of jujube go out PROG REA SFP
'That is why you smell like jujubes.' (Material B, p.12)

- (60) khamyá dò yàngòunòu gâ dì chìn bà dè shò
you PL woman of Rangoon KA this sour POL REA say

dê zídí da zou? thé sou? nè jâ dè hmou?lá
R.REA jujube I suck only suck PROG PL REA don't you

'You the women of Rangoon always suck jujubes which, you said, are sour, don't you?' (Material B, p.13)

- (61) thù dô yàngòun gâ
he PL Rangoon KA
nau?phé thwá dà lé pai?shàn pé yâ
toilet go N.REA also money give must
yè thau? tà lé pai?shàn pé yâ
water drink N.REA also money give must

'They, people of Rangoon, have to pay money when they go to the toilet, and have to pay money when they drink water, too.' (Material B, p.15)

- (62) canò nànmè gâ ma?
my name KA Mass

'My name is Mass.' (Material B, p.20)

When the sentences with # and those with *kâ* are compared, in the case of *kâ*, it seems often the case that identifying the subject would be difficult without *kâ* because of the complexity of structure or length of the sentence. For example in (61), the element *nau?phé thwá dà lé pai?shàn pé yâ* contains the nominalized clause *nau?phé thwá dà*, and an element which has the same syntactic structure *yè thau? tà lé pai?shàn pé yâ* is juxtaposed with it. It would be difficult to identify the subject in such a complicated sentence. Thus it is probable that *kâ* is attached to subjects with high topicality in order to make it easier for the listener to identify them.

To examine this, I counted the number of subjects which can be difficult to identify if the marking is #, among the subjects with markings judged replaceable by *hà*. Sawada (1995a) enumerates the environments where *kâ* is used for disambiguation: they are 'equational sentence' and 'structure where a subordinate clause follows after the subject of the main clause'. Based on

this, I posited two conditions as those which make it difficult to identify a subject: ‘equational sentence’ and ‘sentence in which a form that introduces a subordinate clause occurs between the subject and the predicate’. Then, I counted the number of subjects that occur in these conditions. In an ‘equational sentence’, since juxtaposed nouns may be interpreted to be one noun phrase as a whole, it is difficult to identify the subject. And in a sentence ‘in which a form that introduces a subordinate clause occurs between the subject and the predicate’, since there is another predicate before the predicate of the main clause, it is difficult to identify the subject of the main clause. Among the examples shown above, (52)(53) and (62) are equational sentences. On the other hand, *dê* in (51), *bô* in (56), *lô* in (58), *shò* (this is a verb, but it introduces a quotation) and *dê* in (60), *dà* and *tà* in (61) are forms which introduce a subordinate clause, and the latter condition applies.

The result is shown below. ‘Yes’ means that a subject with *kâ* or # appears in sentences meeting either of the two conditions:

Table 5: In such conditions?

	Yes	No	Total
<i>kâ</i>	20 (76.9%)	6 (23.1%)	26 (100.0%)
#	6 (37.5%)	10 (62.5%)	16 (100.0%)
Total	25 (59.5%)	17 (40.5%)	42 (100.0%)

A statistical test shows that there is a significant difference ($\chi^2=6.53$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$). Thus, we can say that between # and *kâ* replaceable with *hà*, *kâ* is more frequently attached to subjects which are difficult to identify.

It is necessary to note that there are quite a few other conditions where subjects are difficult to identify in addition to the two conditions above. For example, in sentence (47), if there is no *kâ*, *?égán* ‘living room’ and *?au?tha?* ‘downstairs’ are juxtaposed, and as a result, one might take it for ‘the floor under the living room’.

Moreover, sentence (57) in material B is an example which does not meet the conditions taken up here, but without *kâ* the subject would be difficult to

identify, since various elements are between the subject *yàngòun gâ lù dwè* ‘people of Yangon’ and the predicate verb *ta?* ‘be capable’. In all six instances of table 5 which do not meet the conditions, which include this sentence, certain nominals (including adverb-like nouns such as *?atô*) appear between the subjects and the predicates. In this sense, it is not an exaggeration to say that in all the examples of *kâ* that are replaceable with *hà*, the subjects are more or less difficult to identify.

Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that *kâ* which is replaceable with *hà* bears a function to make it easier to identify the subject in a sentence where it is difficult to identify. If this conclusion is right, the function of disambiguation that *kâ* has is quite important. I formerly stated that one of the functions of *kâ* is to denote the topic of a sentence (Kato 1998: 62). However, this is wrong: I mistakenly considered *kâ* attached to subjects with high topicality to be showing topics.

Now, the discussions above can be generalized as follows. In the pure colloquial style, such subjects as attached with *hà* in *mikake no koogotai* are marked either with *kâ* or #. Out of the two, *kâ* is used to show the subject in a sentence where it is difficult to identify. Therefore, the marking of a subject with high topicality is basically #. To be more exact, subject nouns which have high topicality do not receive any marking in daily conversation of Burmese.⁸

7. Conclusion

In written texts of Burmese, subjects with high topicality are usually attached with *hà*. But in the pure colloquial style, they are basically not marked with any particle. It looks as if *kâ* sometimes marks a subject with high topicality, but it is used to make it easier to identify the subject in a sentence where the subject is difficult to identify.

⁸ As I said in the beginning, # is an expedient notation for ‘no marking’. It should be noted that I am not contending that # has a function to mark a subject with high topicality.

<Material A>

The first chapter of /dàu?tà?àunkhìn /'s (1995)

/ lû?akhwîn?ayé shwénwégán / ('Essays on Human Rights'; referred to as /?àunkhìn /), pp.5-12, Bangkok: Burma Information Group and Radio Burma Group.

Three tales out of /lùdû?úhlâ /'s (1993)

/ cáunkàn ?aní hmâ myamá pòunbyìn myá / ('Burmese Folktales Concerning Monasteries'; referred to as /lùdû?úhlâ/), pp.19-25, pp.45-50, pp.79-82, Rangoon: Krii: pwaa: re: caa up tuik.

The last chapter of /pyìn?nàyé?kaθò myamá?àthànâ / (ed.) (1985)

/ myamá?à pòchâje? / ('Lectures on Burmese Literature'; referred to as /myamá?à /), pp.200-214, Rangoon: University of Education.

The first chapter of /dàu?tàkhìn?màun?nò /'s (1994)

/ ?anèzòun hnîn ?athe?mye?shóun / ('The Smallest but the Most Powerful'; referred to as /khìn?màun?nò /), pp.23-35, Rangoon: Nam nak khang: caa pe.

<Material B>

/ ?anà?áji myá yízá thá dó / ('When the Men from Upper Burma Have a Lover')

This is a tape drama which was published in Burma (in the 1980's?). Most parts are composed of natural conversations. The total time of the tape is about one hour, but the material for the present paper is the first half (twenty-eight minutes long) which was dictated in my seminar at the Osaka University of Foreign Studies in the academic year 2002. I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Junko SAKAGUCHI, one of the attendees of my seminar, who allowed me to use her copy of the dictation printed with her computer (pp.20).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Yabu Shiro, Sawada Hideo, Nakayama Hidetoshi, Shiohara Asako, Sasama Fumiko, Ebina Daisuke, Abe Yuko, and Okano Kenji for their helpful comments on the preliminary version of this paper. I would also like to thank the commentators and presenters who gave me helpful comments at the Contrastive Linguistics Symposium on Topics held by Masuoka Takashi in Kobe, in July 2003. My special thanks are due to U Tin Win for helping my survey.

References

- Cornyn, W. S. and D. H. Roop (1968) *Beginning Burmese*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Harada, Masaharu [原田正春] (1969) 「ビルマ語の助詞について —há ~ gâ を中心に—」『言語研究』55, pp.115-117.
- Kato, Atsuhiko [加藤昌彦] (1996) 「ビルマ語の助詞 -ha_ の特徴について」[On the characteristics of the Burmese particle -ha_]『東京大学言語学論集』[Tokyo University Linguistic Papers] 15, pp.167-201.
- Kato, Atsuhiko (1997) 「ビルマ語の -ha_ と日本語の「は」についての覚え書き」[A note on Burmese -ha_ and Japanese wa]『民博通信』[Minpakutsushin] 76, pp.90-105.
- Kato, Atsuhiko (1998) 『エクスペレス—ビルマ語』[Ekusupuresu—Birumago (An introduction to Burmese)] 白水社[Hakusuisha].
- Kikuchi, Yasuto [菊地康人] (1995) 「「は」構文の概観」益岡隆志・野田尚史・沼田善子 編『日本語の主題と取り立て』pp.37-69, くろしお出版.
- Kobayashi, Junko [小林純子] (1984) 「日本語の助詞「は」「が」とビルマ語の助詞 [ha] [ka.] の対照研究」『日本語教育』54, pp.89-98.
- Minami, Fujio [南不二男] (1993) 『現代日本語文法の輪郭』大修館書店.
- Myint Soe (1999) *A Grammar of Burmese*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Oregon.
- Okell, John (1969) *A Reference Grammar of Colloquial Burmese*. London:Oxford University Press.
- Ohno, Toru [大野徹] (1983) 『現代ビルマ語入門』泰流社.
- Sawada, Hideo [澤田英夫] (1995a) On the usages and functions of particles -kou_/-ka. in colloquial Burmese. In Yoshio Nishi, James A. Matisoff and Yasuhiko Nagano eds. *New Horizons in Tibeto-Burman Morphosyntax*, pp.153-187. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Sawada, Hideo (1995b) 『ビルマ語中綴文法テキスト』(unpublished).

- Sawada, Hideo (1995c) 「現代ビルマ語の2つのスタイル —口語体と文語体」 [Two styles in modern Burmese—colloquial style and literary style] 近藤達夫編『言語文化を学ぶ人のために』世界思想社(in print).
- Thurgood, Graham (1978) Thematicization and aspects of the verbal morphology in Burmese: the principles of organization. *Berkley Linguistic Society* 4, pp.254-267.
- Wheatley, K. Julian (1982) *Burmese: A Grammatical Sketch*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of California, Berkley.
- Yabu, Shiro [藪司郎] (1992) 「ビルマ語」 [Burmese] 亀井孝・河野六郎・千野栄一 編『言語学大辞典』[*The Sanseido Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*] 3, pp.567-610, 三省堂 [Sanseido].
- Yabu, Shiro (1994) Case particles -ká and -kou in Burmese. In Hajime Kitamura, Tatsuo Nishida and Yasuhiko Nagano eds. *Current Issues in Sino-Tibetan Linguistics*, pp.730-736. Osaka: Organizing Committee, The 26th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics.

Abbreviations

HA	há	INST	instrument	IRR	irrealis	KA	kâ
KHE			the particle <i>khê</i> denoting movement of time or place				
KO			the particle <i>kô</i> marking a non-subject argument				
LOC	location	NC	numeral classifier	NEG	negation		
N.IRR	nominalization (irrealis)	N.REA	nominalization (realis)				
PL	plurality	POL	politeness	POSS	possession	PROG	progress
QUE	question	QUO	quotation	REA	realis		
R.REA	relativization (realis)	SFP	sentence final particle	SRC	source		

ビルマ語の純粋な口語における主題性の高い主語の標示について (日本語要約)

加藤昌彦 (大阪外国語大学)

口語体ビルマ語において、主語名詞の標示には主に、(1)助辞 *hà* が付く、(2)助辞 *kâ* が付く、(3)無標示(便宜的に # と表記する)、の3通りがある。このうち *hà* は「主題」に関わっているとされることが多く、*kâ* はしばしば格標識と見なされている。

助辞 *hà* と *kâ* はそれぞれ、日本語の「は」と「が」に似た機能を持つと言われることがある。確かに *hà* は「は」に、*kâ* は「が」に、それぞれ共通する特徴を持っており、そのためビルマ語の文章を日本語に訳すとき、*hà* は「は」で、*kâ* は「が」で、訳せることがかなり多い。例えば次のとおり。

- (1) òù hà dì tɛʔkaθò gâ cáunḍá bà
 彼 HA この大学 ABL 学生 POL
 「彼はこの大学の学生です」
- (2) dì hín gâ ʔakáunzòun bà
 この料理 KA 最良 POL
 「この料理が一番いい」

しかし違いもあるのであって、ビルマ語で「対照」を表すことができるのは *kâ* である。*hà* に対照を表す用法はない。また、日本語の「は」は主語以外の要素にも自由に付くが、*hà* は主語以外の要素に自由に付くとは言い難い。

ビルマ語には口語と文語という二つの文体があり、それぞれの文体では異なる助辞類を用いる。実は、口語体の形式であるはずの *hà* は日常会話ではあまり耳にしない。*hà* が頻繁に用いられるのは、澤田(1995c)が「見かけの口語体」と呼ぶ、文語体の影響を受けた口語体においてである。「見かけの口語体」は、口語体を用いて書かれた文章によく見られる。では、そのような文体で *hà* が付くような名詞句は、「純粋な口語体」ではいかなる標示を受けているのか。その疑問を解くことがこの論文の最大の目的である。

hàについてこれまで指摘されていなかったこととして、hàを用いた文においては主語名詞の表すものについて一定以上の情報が与えられなければならないという現象がある。例えば、主語のみを要求する動態動詞の場合、動詞を修飾する副詞的な要素が文中に存在していなければ、hàを用いた文の容認度は非常に低い。例を下に示す。

(3) ?kòwínnàin hà kâ dè

(人名) HA 踊る REA

(コー・ウィンナインは踊った)

次のように例えば káungáun「良く」という語句を文中に入れると、この文はとたんに落ち着きが良くなる。

(4) kòwínnàin hà káungáun kâ dè

(人名) HA 良く 踊る REA

「コー・ウィンナインは上手に踊った」

一般的に、主語名詞に hà が付いた文では、少なくとも動詞が意味的に要求するような名詞句が存在していないと容認度が低くなる。この基準を満たしていたとしても、上例のような主語のみを要求する動態動詞の場合には、さらに副詞的な要素が必要となる。小論では、ある名詞句の指示物に対して、同じ文の中で話し手が与えようと意図している情報の量を、その名詞句の主題性(topicality)と呼ぶ。すなわち、小論で言う「主題性」は、テキストのレベルではなく、文レベルで決定されるものである。そして、hàの役割の一つは、主語名詞の主題性の高さを表すことなのだと考えた。言い換えると、主語名詞の指示対象についてのある程度以上の情報をその文の中で提供することを hà は宣言しているのである。そのために、文中において、予想された量に満たない情報しか提供されないと、文の容認度が下がるのである。また、小論で示した、hàの付いた名詞句が文頭に現れやすく従属節内部に現れにくいという事実も、おそらく主題性の高さに連動した現象である。

さて、主題性の高い主語、すなわち、話し手がそれについての情報を提供しようとしている文の主語は、純粋な口語でも現れているはずである。hàがあまり現れない純粋な口語において、このような主語はどのような標示を受けているのだろうか。このことを調べるために、ビルマ(ミャンマー)で出

版されたテープ劇における主語の標示を調査した。

今回用いた資料の中では、主語の標示として hà は一度も用いられていなかった。すると、主題性の高い主語に付く標示は、kâである可能性と#である可能性がある。そこで、主題性が高いか否かの判断のために、kâおよび#を hà に交換できるか否かという調査を行った。hàに交換することができれば、その主語は主題性が高いと考えられる。

筆者は以前、kâが主題を表すことがあると述べたことがある(加藤 1998)。もしそれが事実であれば、hàに交換できる率はkâのほうが#よりも高いことが予想される。しかし、調査の結果、kâと#では、hàに交換できる率に差がなかった。つまり、純粋な口語で、主題性の高い主語の標示はkâである場合も#である場合もあるということである。では、kâの場合と#の場合ではどのような差があるのだろうか。

結論を述べると、hàに交換することが可能だと判断されたkâと#とでは、kâのほうが、主語を特定するのが容易でない文に現れていることが多かった。主語の特定が容易でない文としては、少なくとも「等式文」と「主語と述語の間に従属節を表す形式が現れている文」が挙げられる。この結果から、小論では、純粋な口語における主題性の高い主語には何も付かないのが基本であり、主語を特定するのが難しい文の場合に主語を明示するためkâが付くのだと結論づけた。

[注記] ビルマ人研究者を含む海外のビルマ語研究者の便宜のため小論の執筆には英語を用いた。英語の使用を快諾してくださった益岡隆志先生およびくろしお出版編集部に御礼を申し上げる。