

A Study on Prepositions in English and their Equivalentents in Myanmar

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Abstract

In Myanmar, English is the main foreign language used for international communication and taught in both Basic and Higher Education. So Myanmar learners must be proficient in using the English language. Having sound knowledge of English grammar is the important language skill and thus, English grammar is taught in all schools in Myanmar. In studying a foreign language, English, it is necessary to compare and contrast it with the mother tongue, Myanmar. Apparently, there are similarities as well as differences between two languages – Myanmar and English. Although English preposition is the small unit in English grammar, students find difficulty in using it. One of the causes of misusing prepositions is mother tongue interference as some English prepositions are similar and some are different in meaning to Myanmar particles. If students know these similarities and differences, it will be easier to use English prepositions. To support this point, the compare and contrast between English Prepositions and Myanmar particles are done by the researcher.

1. Introduction

In all schools and higher education institutions in Myanmar, English has been the one and only foreign language that has been taught as a compulsory subject. So Myanmar learners must be proficient in using the English language. Sound knowledge of English grammar plays a vital role to master a language and thus, English grammar is taught in all schools in Myanmar. Prepositions are the small words in English and they seem to be easy to use. But they are always problematic to the learners. Moreover, Myanmar language has some particles that are similar to English prepositions in meaning and thus it makes the Myanmar learners use wrong prepositions in English. So the researcher wants to point out the similarities and differences between two languages – English preposition and Myanmar particles.

2. English Preposition and Myanmar particles

According to Neufeldt (1988:1064), preposition is ‘a relation of a function word that connects a lexical word, usually a noun or pronoun or syntactic construction, to another element of the sentence, as to a verb, to a noun or to an adjective.’ Prepositions are used in various combinations like ‘verb + preposition, adjective + preposition, noun + preposition, and preposition + noun.’ (eccill@inet.polyu.edu.hk). According to Wikipedia, there are 84 one word, 23 two words, 14 three words and 33 complex prepositions, making a total of 154 prepositions. In this research, 25 common types of prepositions are analyzed.

According to Okell (1969:1), in Myanmar, the smallest analyzable units of meaning-morphemes – are divided into two classes.

- (a) particles – grammatical morphemes and
- (b) words – lexical morphemes

According to Okell (1969:1), particles are subdivided into formatives, markers and postpositions, and words are subdivided into verbs, nouns and interjections. Moreover, particles are not used alone: most of them are suffixes, i.e. they are attached to the ends of

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words. Others are prefixes, which are attached to the beginning of words; or processes, such as repeating a word, or adding a rhyming syllable.

Thus, it can be said that Myanmar equivalents for English prepositions can be marked as particles because they cannot be used alone and they come after the words like ‘noun’. e.g. **၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀** (pagoda at) **၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀** (bus by)

3. Prepositions in English and their Equivalents in Myanmar

Based on the examples given by Okell and Allott (2001), the Myanmar markers which are semantically equivalent to twenty-five different types of English prepositions are analyzed.

1. Preposition of Accompaniment

The Myanmar markers which are semantically equivalent to ‘Prepositions of Accompaniment’ ‘with, together with, along with’ in English are **၂၀၂၀၂၀** or **၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀** or **၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀** or **၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀** or **၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀**

Table 3. 1. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Accompaniment’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Examples
with, together with, along with	၂၀၂၀၂၀ ၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀ ၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀ ၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀ ၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀	Noun markers	၂၀၂၀၂၀ ၂၀၂၀၂၀ ၂၀၂၀၂၀ He lives <u>together with</u> his parents.

A point to note is that the Myanmar particle ‘**၂၀၂၀**’ or ‘**၂၀၂၀**’ does not always mean ‘with’ in some English sentences.

e.g.

၂၀၂၀၂၀ **၂၀၂၀၂၀** **၂၀၂၀၂၀** **၂၀၂၀၂၀** they want to meet the headmaster.

၂၀၂၀၂၀ **၂၀၂၀၂၀** **၂၀၂၀၂၀** **၂၀၂၀၂၀** A place about a mile from the sea.

၂၀၂၀၂၀ **၂၀၂၀၂၀** **၂၀၂၀၂၀** **၂၀၂၀၂၀** I go to school by bus.

Myanmar particle ‘**၂၀၂၀**’ or ‘**၂၀၂၀**’ is equivalent to ‘from’ ‘by’ or zero prepositions in the above example sentences.

2. Preposition of Apposition

‘Preposition of Apposition’ ‘of’ is usually omitted in the Myanmar language.

Table 3. 2. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Apposition’

English Preposition	Examples in English	Myanmar Equivalents
of	The city <u>of</u> New York	၂၀၂၀၂၀ , ၂၀၂၀၂၀ , ၂၀၂၀၂၀
	University <u>of</u> Yangon	၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀
	Department <u>of</u> English	၂၀၂၀၂၀၂၀

3. Preposition of Cause-Reason

‘Prepositions of Cause-Reason’ ‘for, for the sake of, because of, on account of, as a result/ consequence of, out of’ in English are equivalent to **anumi h** or **aomanumi h** or **twubanumi h** in Myanmar. In Myanmar, particles expressing cause or reason can also be used for both the material and psychological cause.

Table 3. 3. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Cause-Reason’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
for/ for the sake of/ because of/ on account of/ as a result/ consequence of/ out of	anumi h aomanumi h twubanumi h	Noun markers	ppab;’ Panumi h <u>As a result of</u> the ravages of war oltwanumi h <u>Because of</u> his ego

4. Preposition of Characterized by

‘Preposition of Characterized by’ is used to describe a person or thing by saying what their main qualities or features are. Example of this preposition is ‘of’. Its equivalents in Myanmar are **wh&ll** What is different from English is that in Myanmar, sometimes, ‘Preposition of Characterized by’ is not used.

Table 3. 4. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Characterized by’

English preposition	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
of	wh	verb attribute marker	qlljzwcsucll fmwvl A man <u>of</u> great determination
	&ll	Noun attribute marker	uav;ig;a, mu(&ll)tar A mother <u>of</u> five children
	zero		oylbrm; a man of science

5. Preposition of Comparison

‘Preposition of Comparison’ ‘like’ and ‘as’ are equivalent to as **ubll** or **vl** or **ves f** or **es f** or **twll f** in Myanmar.

Table 3. 5. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Comparison’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
Like/as	ubll ves f ves ftwll f? taeel t aeEs ll tjzpf	Noun markers	ysm; &nubll esom sweet as honey oylbrm; wpa, muftaeel <u>As</u> a man of science

6. Preposition of Containment

'Preposition of Containment' is used to express what something contains. Example of this preposition is 'of'. However, it is absent in Myanmar.

Table 3. 6. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Containment'

English preposition	Examples in English	Myanmar Equivalents
of	a glass <u>of</u> water	a&wptCuf

7. Preposition of Example

'Preposition of Example' 'like' and 'such as' in English are equivalent to **ub** or **v** in Myanmar.

Table 3. 7. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Example'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
Like/such as	ub v	Noun markers	Es tq py, ub vlye rsm; flowers <u>such as</u> roses, jasmine

8. Preposition of Having

'Prepositions of Having' 'of, with, without' in English are equivalent to **Es** or **e** or **&** in Myanmar.

Table 3.8. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Having'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
with	Es e \	Noun markers	rur f e M? A man <u>with</u> glasses
without	r- b r- wh	Subject clause markers	yUb qf & wh v? A man <u>without</u> money um; ryg b b r;? left <u>without</u> a car

9. Preposition of Instrument/ Agentive

'Preposition of Instrument/ Agentive,' 'with' and 'by' in English are equivalent to **Es** or **jz** or **e** in Myanmar. In Myanmar, instrument and agentive are the same, though they are sometimes different in English.

e.g. The ball was caught with/by his hand. (Agentive)

The window has been broken by a stone. (Instrument)

Table 3.9. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Instrument/ Agentive’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
by/ with	ES h̄or jzi h̄or eY	Noun markers	vujzi h̄e ES h̄or w, /on/ hold <u>by</u> hand

10. Preposition of Manner

‘Preposition of Manner’ ‘with, in a manner’ and ‘like’ in English are equivalent to ES h̄or jzi h̄or eY in Myanmar.

Table 3. 10. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Manner’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
with/ in a ... manner	ES h̄or jzi h̄or eY	Noun markers	ES h̄or sm; jzi h̄e ES h̄eY z h̄or tae aom? covered <u>with</u> snow
like	u b̄or v ES h̄or tjzp?	Noun markers	ri for u b̄or v d̄w on/ dress <u>like</u> an actress

11. Preposition of Material

‘Prepositions of Material’ ‘with, of, out of, from’ are equivalent to ES h̄or jzi h̄or eY r̄s or u or uae or uae h̄or or uae h̄or d̄awmh in Myanmar.

Table 3. 11. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Material’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
with/ of/ out/ of/ from	ES h̄or jzi h̄or eY r̄s or u? uae? uae h̄or? uae h̄or d̄awmh	Noun markers	' gu b̄or p̄om; jzi h̄e r̄ uae v̄y t̄m; on/ This is made <u>of</u> wood.

12. Preposition of Means

‘Prepositions of Means’ ‘by (means of),’ ‘on’ and ‘in’ in English are the equivalents to ES h̄or jzi h̄or eY or t̄m; jzi h̄or in Myanmar.

Table 3. 12. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Means’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
by(means of)/ on/ in	ES h̄or jzi h̄or eY t̄m; jzi h̄or	Noun markers	u m; jzi h̄e r̄ ES h̄or; on/ go <u>by</u> car

13. Preposition of Movement

According to Quirk et al. (1980), 'Prepositions of Movement' with verbs of motion express movement with reference to an axis or directional path. Their Myanmar equivalents are as follows:

Table 3. 13. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Movement'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
from.....to	uae-xd r\$xd	Noun marker	ajrmuf uae^r\$ awmi bxd <u>from</u> north <u>to</u> south
to/ towards	o! txd	Noun marker	' hae&mxid <u>towards</u> this place
into	twof? txl	Noun marker	pmoitef twof <u>into</u> the classroom
out of	tjyilbuif	location noun	pmoitef tjyilbuif <u>Out of</u> the classroom
up/down	tay:? atmuf	location noun	tay:^atmublypon/ throw <u>up</u> and <u>down</u>
around	ywDefusi? xlyg? tebtem;	location noun	t oftebtem; <u>around</u> the house
through	rswqih	location noun	iywifaygur swpqi h <u>through</u> the window
past/ by	ywDefusi? xlyg;	location noun	t ofywDefusi f <u>by</u> the house
as far as (up to)	xd xatmi? xubxd	Noun marker	, cxd <u>up to</u> now

14. Preposition of Place

Myanmar equivalents for English 'Preposition of Place' are as follows:

Table 3. 14. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Place'

English preposition	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
in	x! t x! ü? w! 0, ? rñ	location noun	pmoitef x! <u>in</u> the classroom &etubjrlwif atmi qef tm; upm; uof <u>at</u> Aung San stadium <u>in</u> Yangon

English preposition	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
at	ü? wü? 0, ? rñ	location noun	avqyfrñ at the airport
on	ay:? rñ? tay:wü? 0, f	location noun	pm;yay:wüf on the table
by/ next to/ beside	ab:? eab;	location noun	pm;yab; beside the table
under	atmuf	location noun	pm;yatmuf under the table
below	atmuf	location noun	pm;yatmuf Below the table
over	ay:? tay:? xuf	location noun	jrpay:u wwm; A bridge over the river
above	ay:? tay:? xuf	location noun	pm;yxuf eay:wüf on the wall above the table
across/ opposite	rsuEñsi f,qñ f	location noun	tñrsuEñsi f,qñ f across/ opposite the house
through	rsvpqñ h	location noun	iywifaygursvpqñ h through the window
to	oñ	location noun	aps,oñ to the market
into	twüf xboñ txboñ	location noun	½wüf ½xboñ into the cinema
towards	oñ txd	location noun	aps,oñ towards the market
onto	ay: rñ 0, f tay:wüf	location noun	um;acgñ rñay:oñ cewubñ f jump onto the roof of the car
from	rñ u	location noun	tñrñ u from my house

15. Preposition of Possession

‘Preposition of Possession’ shows that someone or something belonging to another person/ thing. Example of this preposition is ‘of.’ Its equivalents in Myanmar are \ or &U

Table 3. 15. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Possession’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
of	\ &U	Noun attribute marker	ur \ ^ &U li , tsi f a friend of mine/ my friend

However in Myanmar, the particles ‘\ ^ &U’ are sometimes absent.

e.g. (1) the house of grandma (grandma’s house)

t z h i ; \ ^ &U t t f or t z h i ; t t f

(2) the room of mother (mother’s room)

t a r \ ^ &U t c e f or t a r t c e f

In the Myanmar language, these two nouns t z h i ; and t t f in example (1) and t a r and t c e f in example (2) have different tones when spoken in the Myanmar language. According to Okell (1969), when noun (1) ends in a low tone, the final syllable may have an induced creaky tone.

16. Preposition of Purpose

Myanmar equivalents to ‘Prepositions of Purpose’ are i h i or t v h i h i or z h i or t z h i or z h i t w u f or z h i m t w u f or z h i e f t w u f or t w u f

Table 3. 16. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Purpose’

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
for/ for the purpose of	i h i ? t v h i h i ? z h i t z h i z h i t w u f z h i m t w u f z h i e f t w u f t w u f	noun marker and noun attribute marker	p m a r ; y h i t w u f for the exam t x i n p m p m ; z h i

17. Prepositions of Quantity

‘Prepositions of Quantity’ ‘of’ is not used in Myanmar.

Table 3. 17. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Preposition of Quantity’

English prepositions	Example in English	Myanmar Equivalents
of	some of the students	a u s m i f o m ; t c u
	two kilos of sugar	o m u m ; E s f u d h i

18. Prepositions of Reaction

'Prepositions of Reaction' 'at and to' have no equivalents in Myanmar.

Table 3. 18. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Reaction'

English prepositions	Example in English	Myanmar Equivalents
at/ to	shout at him	oUatmonf
	laugh at joke	juvUul&bnf

As seen in the above table, in English, the 'Prepositions of Reaction' can appear together with specific verbs. But in Myanmar, these kinds of phrases (e.g. 'verb + preposition' that indicate reaction) are absent.

19. 'Preposition of Recipient/ Goal/ Target'

'Preposition of Recipient/ Goal/ Target' are 'for, to, at' in English. Their Myanmar equivalents are as follows:

Table 3. 19. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Recipient/ Goal/ Target'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
to/ at	U tm;	noun marker and noun attribute marker	o/tm; ajymon/ speak to him
	i si? z? tv tz zltwutwuf z&mtwuf z&eftwuf	noun marker and noun attribute marker	ortz/enfu taumifq This is the best way for her.

According to the given examples, it can be said that in Myanmar, the particle is omitted sometimes. e.g. tprfta0;u&emuf or tprfta0;aemuf However, the preposition 'for' in English cannot be eliminated. e.g. late for the meeting, not late the meeting.

20. Preposition of Respect-Standard

In English, 'Preposition of Respect-Standard' 'at,' 'in' and 'for' are used with adjectives and verbs'. However, in Myanmar, there is no specific or direct equivalent to these prepositions.

Table 3. 20. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Respect-Standard'

English prepositions	Examples in English	Myanmar Equivalents
at/ in/ for	He is interested in computers.	oueyiwmpwDi pm; on/
	She is good at English.	ort *v/pmawmon/

21. Preposition of Separation

'Preposition of Separation' 'away from' or 'from' or 'off' are equivalent to $r\text{S}$ or U or Uae or $Uae\text{Nyi}$ or $Uae\text{Nyi}Dawmh$ in Myanmar.

Table 3. 21. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Separation'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
away from/ from/ off	$r\text{S}$ U $Uae?$ $Uae\text{Nyi}$ $Uae\text{Nyi}Dawmh$	noun marker	$aea\&mi\ jcnf\ u^{\wedge}r\text{S}\ Uae$ $um\ u\text{C}\ \text{fyg}/$ protect from the sun

22. Preposition of Source

The English 'Preposition of Source or Origin' 'from' is equivalent to $r\text{S}$ or U or $Uae\text{Nyi}$ or $Uae\text{Nyi}Dawmh$ in Myanmar.

Table 3. 22. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Source'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
from	$r\text{S}$ $U?$ $Uae\text{Nyi}?$ $ae\text{Nyi}Dawmh$	noun marker	$ysm; Uae\ ysm; \&n\ \&on/$ We got honey from bees.

23. Preposition of Subject Matter

In English, 'about', 'of' and 'on' are Prepositions of Subject Matter'

e.g. He spoke on butterflies. $vy\text{fym}\ t\text{a}\text{Lumi}\ \text{f}\ \text{ajymjyon}/$

He talks about his wife a lot. $olre;\text{r}\ t\text{a}\text{Lumi}\ \text{f}\ ol\text{v}\ \&ajymon/$

He thought of the problem. $jy\acute{o}\ em\ u\ \text{p}\ \text{of}\ \text{pm};\ \text{on}/$

In Myanmar, $t\text{a}\text{Lumi}\ \text{f}$, $U\text{H}$ is equivalent to 'Preposition of Subject Matter'.

Table 3. 23. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Subject Matter'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
About/ on/ of	$t\text{a}\text{Lumi}\ \text{f}$ $U\text{H}$	noun marker	$vy\text{fym}\ t\text{a}\text{Lumi}\ \text{f}\ \text{ajymjyon}/$ He spoke on butterflies.

24. Preposition of Time

Myanmar equivalents to English Prepositional Phrases of 'Time' are as follows:

Table 3. 24. Myanmar Equivalent of 'Preposition of Time'

English prepositions	Myanmar Equivalent	Type in Myanmar Grammar	Example
on	ü rñ wñf 0, f	noun marker	aomlUmaekwñf on Friday
in	ü rñ wñf 0, f	noun marker	'Ziñomvñf in December 1990 wñfazazmDg&Dvü in February in 1990
at	ü rñ wñf 0, f	noun marker	Eñem&wñf at 2' clock
since	uwnñf,u? uxñu? uwnu	noun marker	rEñuwnñf,u since last year
for	Mum	noun marker	EñEñMum for two years
ago	u	noun marker	Eñ&uñu two days ago
before	rwnñfD	noun marker	Mumoyaw;aeñrwnñfD before Thursday
from - to	uae-xñfñxd	noun marker	wñem&Uae av;em&Dxd from one to four
past	aunñf	noun marker	Oefacñiñunñf past midnight
to/ till/ until	oñ wññwññf xunñxd wññatmñf xd xñatmññf	noun marker	av;em&Dxd till four o' clock
by	ü rñ wñf 0, f	noun marker	av;em&ññ by 4 o' clock

25. Unnecessary Preposition

In English, certain words (e.g. nouns or adverbs or verbs) do not need prepositions (Websster.commmnet.edu). On the other hand, certain particles are used after such words in Myanmar. The differences can be seen as follows:

Table 3. 25. Myanmar Equivalent of ‘Unnecessary Preposition’

Examples in English	Myanmar Equivalent
Grandma is * <u>in</u> upstairs.	တစ်ဖက်တွင် တေးအိမ်ထဲမှာ, ဖ
Grandpa went * <u>to</u> home.	တစ်ဖက်ထဲမှာ, ဖ
They both went * <u>to</u> outside.	အပြင်ဘက်သို့, ဖ
She met * <u>up with</u> the new coach.	အပြင်ဘက်သို့, ဖ

4. Comparison between English Prepositions and Myanmar Markers

After analyzing the notion of prepositions in English and their equivalents in Myanmar, it is found that in Myanmar, nouns markers or noun attribute markers play the role of prepositions in English.

It is also an obvious fact that Myanmar particles and English prepositions are similar in that neither of them are independent elements in a sentence. Certain Myanmar noun markers or noun attribute markers are the same as prepositions in English. These are ‘Prepositions of Cause-Reason, Comparison, Example, Manner, Means, Movement, Place, Purpose, Subject Matter and Time.’

However, certain Myanmar noun markers or noun attribute markers are different from prepositions in English. These prepositions are ‘Prepositions of Apposition, Characterized by, Containment, Having, Quantity, Reaction, Respect-Standard and Recipient/ Goal/ Target.

Moreover, there are many differences between English prepositions and Myanmar markers. The first difference is their word order. Myanmar markers come mostly after the noun, whereas English prepositions come before the noun.

e.g.

English	Myanmar
<u>in</u> the class	ပရိသေ့အတွက်
at two o’ clock	အချက်အလက်

Secondly, in Myanmar, sometimes these noun markers or noun attribute markers are not necessary, where a preposition is needed in English.

e.g.

a glass <u>of</u> water.	အရည်အသွေး
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Thirdly, different types of particles or noun markers in Myanmar such as အရည်အသွေး can be used without the meaning being changed. However, in English the equivalent of those prepositions will take on different meanings.

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