

Introduction

This Pocket Dictionary is an indispensable companion for visitors to Burma/Myanmar and for anyone in the early stages of learning the Burmese language. It contains the 3,000 or so Burmese words that are most frequently encountered in colloquial, everyday speech.

For the sake of clarity, only the most common Burmese equivalents for each English word have been given. When an English word has more than one possible meaning, with different Burmese equivalents, each meaning is listed separately, with a clear explanatory gloss. The layout is clear and accessible, with none of the abbreviations and dense nests of entries typical of many small dictionaries.

Burmese is spoken by the majority of the 50 million people of Burma/Myanmar, either as a first or second language. It is also spoken by the Burmese diaspora which is found in many of the neighboring countries surrounding Burma/Myanmar, or which has sought refuge in other areas of the world in the last few decades.

The language of this dictionary is based on that spoken in Mandalay, which is the standard form of the language. There is some regional variation however, so pronunciation on the street may vary somewhat, depending on where you are and with whom you are speaking.

Written Burmese dates back to the twelfth century and is closely related to that used by the Mon. Some sound changes have occurred in the language since then, so there isn't a simple one-to-one correspondence between the symbols and the sounds. All the same, it is a fairly regular system, and a working knowledge of the Burmese alphabet shouldn't take too long to acquire. There are many benefits that accompany any effort invested in learning it.

Grammatically, Burmese does not have noun declensions or verbal inflections, so it has a more straightforward grammar than many European languages. It does however use many postpositions and auxiliary verbs that have important grammatical functions and associated shades of meaning. Time exploring these will increase your capacity to express yourself greatly.

An example of one of these auxiliaries is **teh/-deh**, which is attached to every verb entry in this dictionary. It is used when an

event or action has happened or is happening. It is also used when listing up verbs, such as in this dictionary. Auxiliaries change however when the verb is used as part of a discourse, and in accordance with the tense of the sentence they occur in.

Since Burmese grammar functions quite differently from English, you will quickly notice that many parts of speech for words in English (e.g. nouns, verbs etc) will be different in Burmese. For example, there is no separate grammatical category of adjectives in Burmese, so words that are adjectives in English will more often than not be verbs in Burmese. In the same way many verbs in English will often be equivalent to phrases in Burmese. This is quite normal between languages, as each has its own way of dividing up the world into categories. For more information about grammatical issues refer to Burmese language textbooks.

The system of transliterating Burmese in this dictionary is that used in the standard educational materials for the language. It is designed to keep the use of unfamiliar symbols to a minimum. Even so, some time should be spent reading the pronunciation section so that you can make all the distinctions necessary to pronounce the language correctly. All said and done however, don't let this stop you from just opening your mouth and speaking.

The Burmese-English section of this dictionary is alphabetized according to the English order of the romanized letters. Low tone is followed by high then falling tones, and aspirated consonants (**p'**, **t'**, **k'**, **c'**) follow unaspirated ones (**p**, **t**, **k**, **c**).

The following abbreviations are used in this dictionary:

<i>f</i>	female	<i>phr</i>	phrase
<i>m</i>	male	<i>pron</i>	pronoun
<i>v</i>	verb	<i>conj</i>	conjunction
<i>aux</i>	auxiliary	<i>adv</i>	adverb
<i>pp</i>	postposition/preposition	<i>adj</i>	adjective
<i>cnt</i>	counter	<i>n</i>	noun