

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN MYANMAR LITERARY WORKS IN ENGLISH¹

Tin Moe Yi²

บทคัดย่อ

แบบฉบับของเพศสภาพมีอยู่ในทุกประเทศในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ ในเมียนมาแม้ว่า หญิง และชายจะมีสิทธิเท่าเทียมกันตาม(กฎหมาย)ประเพณีดั้งเดิม แต่ในบางสถานการณ์ก็ยังไม่เท่าเทียมกัน อย่างไรก็ตาม การศึกษากันทางเพศไม่ใช่ลักษณะเด่นในสังคม และการตระหนักและการเข้าใจถึงเรื่องนี้จะเป็นไปไม่ได้หากไม่ศึกษาวรรณกรรมซึ่งเป็นกระจกสะท้อนวัฒนธรรมและสังคมของ เมียนมา ดังนั้นเพื่อที่จะศึกษาว่าแบบฉบับของเพศสภาพในสังคมเมียนมาเป็นอย่างไร บทความนี้จึงเลือกที่จะวิเคราะห์เรื่องสั้นซึ่งสะท้อนวัฒนธรรมที่แท้จริงของเมียนมาและเลือกใช้ ทฤษฎีวิัจฉากรรมและประเภทของคำ เป็นเครื่องมือในการศึกษาวิเคราะห์แบบฉบับของชายและหญิงในเรื่องสั้นของเมียนมาและใช้ทั้งวิธีการเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผลการวิเคราะห์พบว่า ไม่มีความ

แตกต่างระหว่างชายและหญิง แม้ปริมาณและชนิดของวัจนกรรมจะแตกต่างกันไปบ้างตามเนื้อหาของเรื่องสั้นแต่ละเรื่อง แต่มีการใช้วัจนกรรมแบบชี้แนะและแบบยืนยันมากที่สุดเพื่อแสดงแบบฉบับของทั้งชายและหญิง ในด้านประเภทของคำเป็นที่สังเกตได้ว่ามีการใช้ คำกริยาแบบรายงาน คำวิเศษณ์ และคำคุณศัพท์พรรณนา แสดงลักษณะด้านลบของตัวละครชายมากกว่าเมื่อพรรณนาตัวละครหญิง แสดงว่าผู้ชายมีภาพลักษณ์ ทางลบ มากกว่าผู้หญิง นอกจากนั้นการที่ภาษาในเรื่องสั้นมีคำเพศชายเป็นประธานของประโยคมากกว่าเพศหญิง น่าจะสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าผู้ชายเป็นผู้นำและผู้หญิงเป็นผู้ตามในสังคมเมียนมา

Abstract

Gender representation is significant in every country in South East Asia. In Myanmar, an Asian country, men and women have equal rights under Myanmar customary law, but there is still inequality in some situations. However, gender discrimination is not a prominent social feature; and awareness and understanding of this feature cannot be reached without a course to literary work, which is a reflection of Myanmar culture and Myanmar society. Therefore, to see how gender is represented in Myanmar society, short stories which reflect Myanmar real culture are chosen to be analyzed in this study. That is why, speech acts and some specific linguistic features are investigated and analyzed on the topic of how men and women are represented and portrayed in

¹ รูปแทนของเพศสภาพในวรรณกรรมเมียนมาที่เขียนเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ

²(ทิน เมอ ยี) Ph.D., lecturer at Mandalay University, The Republic of Union of Myanmar

Myanmar short stories. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are conducted for analyzing the data; descriptive statistical analysis is used for quantitative method and sociolinguistic explanation is presented for qualitative method. Through speech act theory, it is found that there is no difference between males and females in using directives and assertive speech acts. In terms of linguistic features, it is found that reporting verbs, adverbs and adjectives used to portray male characters are described negatively rather than the features used for portraying the female characters. This seems to suggest that males have more negative images than females. Moreover, that the subjects of sentences in the data refer to males more than females is likely to imply that males are leaders and females followers in Myanmar society.

Introduction

According to the Department for International Development [DFID] Myanmar operational plan (2011), the Human Rights Education Institute of Myanmar (HREIM) has taken steps to increase gender equality among Myanmar people by raising the awareness of gender equality in the social context. The Myanmar operational plan (2011) shows that men are expected to take care and lead the family rather than women, due to Myanmar tradition and culture. However, at the same time, women have the right to do what they wish in the family affairs. Minn (2014) points out that although women do not participate in all family affairs, they can act as advisors to their husbands to be consulted about making

important decisions. In education, all Myanmar students irrespective of gender have equal rights to enroll in school. However, in the labor force, girls do not get jobs as easily as boys and girls have a lesser chance at good jobs although the number of educated girls is higher than that of boys ("Interim country partnership strategy, Myanmar," 2012-2014). In Buddhism, which is the main religion in Myanmar, nuns and women are not permitted to offer gold leaves to Buddha images and to pagodas. If they want to do, they must ask men. According to Belak (2002) women are prohibited by Myanmar tradition and culture to take part in some ceremonies and to go in some parts of a temple and a monastery.

Communities in Myanmar are attempting to develop social standards, based on gender as seen in other Asian countries. The Social Institute and Gender Index (SIGI, 2015) notes that under a Myanmar government report in 2007, both men and women are granted equal inheritance rights according to Myanmar customary law.³ However, discriminatory inheritance still exists in some areas in Myanmar. For example, in some rural areas of Shan State, if the husband dies, his property is given to all of his relatives while his wife gets nothing. Even in a divorce, the wife loses all property held jointly. Also in the Chin State, when the father, the head of the family, dies, the right to get the

³ Customary law concerns the laws, practices and customs of indigenous peoples and local communities (World Intellectual Property Organization [WIPO], 2013)

inheritance is transferred to the eldest son, or in some areas, to the youngest son for various traditional reasons. The daughters remain totally out of the line of succession.

In addition, there is also inequality between males and females according to the custom and social tradition. Public policy in Myanmar, conservative cultural beliefs, and practices influence the ability of men and women to exercise equal rights. For example, although both men and women have the opportunity to attain higher positions, men occupy most of these positions, and their decisions are given more weight than those of women in higher positions. Minn (2014) argues that although Myanmar women are able to solve many problems, they are prevented from showing their abilities as it is accepted that decisions made by men are better than those made by women. However, there are practical equal rights between men and women in social situations. Therefore, Legal Issue on the Myanmar Journal (2011) states that Myanmar women do not feel discriminated against and are satisfied as they have freedom, independence and rights equal to men.

As mentioned before, a given socio-cultural code determines gender roles and the ways in which they are perceived in a society. To see whether there is balance or imbalance between men and women in Myanmar society and whether females are generally seen as inferior to males, one must explore a particular type of literary work to see how men and women appear in Myanmar society. Of course, literary

works generally reflect many different aspects of society and culture. Therefore, by investigating a selection of literary works, namely short stories, this study is conducted to explore characteristics and representations of gender in Myanmar socio-cultural contexts. The selective data includes a set of 23 short stories written originally in English by Khin Myo Chit⁴ (Chit, 2004 and Daw, 2005) and a collection of 25 short stories written originally in Myanmar translated into English by Ma Thanegi's ⁵ (Thanegi, 2009).

Linguistic devices are very important to create what kind of characters and how the authors describe the linguistic devices to represent males and females through their literary works. Short stories are written in English making the stories worthy of exploring, in terms of the linguistic devices, including speech acts, which are used to express gender characteristics and the respective gender roles in a foreign language. The speech acts can reveal that what kinds of speech acts are mostly employed by males or females to identify which gender has more power. Moreover some linguistic features such as reporting verbs, adverbs collocated with reporting

⁴ 'Daw' is put in front of the name of a woman. It is similar to 'Mrs' in English but in Myanmar, 'Daw' can be used in front of married and unmarried women

⁵ 'Ma' is put in front of a girl's name, similar to 'Miss' in English. In Myanmar, 'Ma' is used in front of a young girl's name whether she is married or not.

verbs and adjective of quality are analyzed to reveal how male and female characters are depicted by the authors whether positive or negative behavior, in short stories which reflect Myanmar society. These linguistic devices reveal the different gender representation to some extent. The reason to choose a total of 48 short stories (so large corpus) are that a collection 23-short stories is written by one female author that can be biased and so another collection of 25 short stories written by different authors are added in order to get the reliable data.

Many studies have been conducted on gender representation and linguistic devices. Some of the related studies mentioned how the scholars analyzed their studies. Boonkongsan (2013) investigated the use of refusal strategies performed in English between Filipinos and Thais. She found in her study that both groups employed more indirect speech acts than direct speech acts through Discourse Completion Test. When Nygren (2006) examines the linguistic features in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. He analyzes whether linguistic features such as reporting verbs, adverbs of manner and adjectives contribute to the depiction of heroic and villainous characters. In this research, I found that the choice of particular verbs and adverbs contributed only indirectly to the depiction of the characters. Without the context, it is difficult to know whether the character is a hero or a villain simply by considering the verbs and adverbs used

in their speech. However, the choice of a particular adjective indicated clearly whether a character is a hero or a villain. Therefore, the context is more important than the use of linguistic features in contributing to the portrayal of the characters in the works of fiction. Ottosson and Cheng (2012) investigated gender representation in the movies "Sex and the City 1 and 2," films which may have had an influence in Western culture. Through discourse analysis, the scholars examined whether the characters in the movies follow or challenge patriarchal privilege. In these movies, different types of gender representation can be found and most of the main characters are women. It is believed that the images of gender representation in movies and how these images affect the perception of what a man or a woman is can be discerned by using content analysis and discourse analysis. The results suggest that the characters still generally follow patriarchal privilege although some characters occasionally challenge them.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate gender representation in order to see how gender is represented in Myanmar short stories, and to present a sociolinguistic explanation of gender in Myanmar society. More importantly, the study investigates the representation of gender through speech acts and some linguistic features. The linguistic evidence, including speech acts, is explained through sociolinguistic concepts to determine how

male and female characters are portrayed in the short stories written by Myanmar authors during the colonial period⁶ and the post-colonial period⁷. The objectives are as follows.

To investigate the differences and similarities in the use of speech acts by males and females;

To evaluate the importance of using linguistic devices to create and portray characters in short stories as either positive or negative, dominant or subordinate;

The following are research questions related to the objectives of this study:

How are male and female characters portrayed in the short stories in terms of Searle's (1979) principle of speech acts?

What linguistic devices are used by the authors to present or portray male and female characters in short stories, and what possible gender-related implications do the authors convey through such devices?

How do reporting verbs contribute to the description of characters in the short stories?

How do adverbials support the description of males and females?

How does the use of adjectives of quality contribute to the description of characters in positive or negative terms?

How do reference terms (third person singular pronouns, nouns, and noun phrases) identify the tendency to have males or females as subjects or direct objects?

The present study can be expected to increase an awareness of how gender is related to the language used in literary works. From this study, it can be known how literature is related to social works and how language use affects society. Therefore, it is hoped that the present study will benefit not only language teachers but also literature teachers by shedding light on the varied relationship between language and literature. This study also allows scholars from the outside world to learn about Myanmar culture and society, especially how Myanmar short stories represent Myanmar society. This is a new trend where the speech acts and linguistic devices found in Myanmar short stories written in English are analyzed in order to evaluate Myanmar society.

Concerning the methodology, in this study, quantitative and qualitative methods are used. Through speech act theory and some linguistic devices, the data are analyzed to determine how characters are represented in selected literary works by the chosen authors.

By using quantitative methods, frequencies of speech acts and linguistic features found in short stories are counted

⁶ Colonial period-1928 to 1948 under British rule

⁷ Post-colonial period – after 1948 (Myanmar independence from Britain)

and recorded. To be reliable, the data were collected three times, once every four months, and the findings recorded using Excel software. Descriptive statistical analysis is used to calculate percentages from the collected data. As for qualitative methods, through close and critical reading of all short stories, the data relating to speech acts and linguistic devices are explained and discussed. The explanation is based on sociolinguistic concepts.

There are two main parts in the analysis of how characters are described. The first one is the analysis of speech acts, and the second one is the analysis of some linguistic devices. Firstly, concerning speech acts, the study explores how the authors portray male and female characters in their literary works by examining whether the speech acts used are different or similar. Speech act theory, proposed by Searle's (1979) was used as a framework for data collection and analysis. It consists of five types of speech acts; namely, (1) Declaratives, (2) Assertives, (3) Expressives, (4) Directives and (5) Commissives.

- 1) Declaratives function to change the status of the person or object by performing the act successfully. A statement has a declarative point if the world is changed in a way specified by the propositional content of the utterance.
- 2) Assertives function to describe states or events. The speaker makes the words fit the world of

belief. These include descriptions, assertions, conclusions, predictions and insistence. They commit the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition; for example, suggesting, putting forward, swearing, boasting, and concluding.

- 3) With expressives, the speaker makes his/her words fit the world of feeling. These express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition; acts of this kind express the speaker's own feelings. Expressives cover thanking, apologizing, praising, welcoming and congratulating. They can also be statements of pleasure, pain, joy and sorrow.
- 4) Directives express the speaker's wishes or desires. These are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They cover: to direct, entreat, command, order, request, and question. If the speaker attempts to get the hearer to carry out an action, the utterance has a directive function.
- 5) Commissives express what the speaker intends. These are acts that commit the speaker to some future course of action. They include, for example, committing, promising, threatening, and refusing.

Secondly, linguistic features such as reporting verbs, adverbs of manner collocating with reporting verbs, adjectives of quality and reference terms are investigated to explore how they are used to represent gender in the selected short stories. The reporting verbs are analyzed to determine their role in portraying females and males either positively or negatively. Again, adverbs of manner collocating with reporting verbs are analyzed to determine whether a character's behavior is meant to be seen as either positive or negative. Another device, adjectives of quality, is also examined to see if a given character is depicted in a positive or negative way. Furthermore, nominal reference terms are analyzed to identify the tendency to place male and female characters in either a subject or object position and see which gender is represented in a leading role.

In analyzing the data in the short stories, the following categories are established,

- (a) Speech acts
- (b) Reporting verbs
- (c) Adverbs of manner collocating with reporting verbs
- (d) Adjectives of quality
- (e) Reference terms (third person singular pronouns, nouns and noun phrases)

Descriptive statistics are used for quantitative analysis, and the data found are explained qualitatively based on gender-related sociolinguistic concepts.

Stockdale (2006) points out that a difference of more than 5% in any category could indicate a significant difference between males and females.

Gender Differences Inferred from Different Uses of Speech Acts

In line with the aim of this study, firstly the frequency of speech acts employed by males and females found in the selected short stories was counted and analyzed. Some examples of the speech acts found in the short stories are discussed using the speech act theory proposed by Searle (1979).

Table (2) and Figure (1) indicate the data found in the short stories. The speech acts are analyzed to determine whether male and females characters are portrayed as equals, and to identify which speech acts are most commonly employed by males and females. In the short stories, assertives are most often used by both males and females. Therefore, it can be concluded that the characters in the short stories say what they believe, what they predict, what they insist, what they suggest and what they boast. There is no significant difference in the speech acts used by males and females in the short stories.

Table 1 Examples of Speech Acts Found in Short Stories

Speech Acts	Examples	interpretations
Declaratives	His parents named him "Aung"	The parents have the authority to name the boy and he is known by this name by the world. In a family, the parents are admired and regarded as on the same level as Buddha. The father is the head of the family, and the mother, too, is respected by all the family members. Therefore, the parents have the power to name their children as they wish in Myanmar society, and this utterance has a declarative function.
Assertives	Of course, you are grown up--- a great lady with education.	In this utterance, the speaker makes the words fit the world of belief. Here, the speaker represents the actual state of affairs of the world. The hearer in the story is really grown up and has become a mature person perceived by the speaker. So this utterance commits the speaker to describe the true situation of the hearer.
Expressives	Well, thanks for warning me.	This is an expression of the speaker's own feelings and shows how the speaker feels to the hearer.
Directives	Please put a vase of white roses on the side of your bed.	The speaker wants the hearer to move a vase on the hearer's side. It is the speaker's request to the hearer and the speaker really wants the hearer to

Gender Representation in Myanmar Literacy Works in English

		carry out what is requested. Here, the speaker tries to get the hearer to put the vase on another side, so the utterance has a directive function.
Commissives	“I’ll have you novitiate when the time comes---	The speaker promises what he will do for the hearer in the future. In this utterance, the speaker expresses what is intended for the hearer. The speaker commits to carrying out this action in the mentioned utterance at some future stage and so this utterance has a commissive function. That is the speaker (mother) is really going to novitiate the hearer (son) as she promises.

Table 2 Frequency of Speech Acts Employed by Males and Females in Short Stories

Speech Acts	Khin Myo Chit’s short stories		Ma Thanegi’s translated works	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Declaratives	3 (2%)	3 (2%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)
Assertives	78 (50%)	67 (48%)	111 (56%)	126 (58%)
Expressives	10 (6%)	9 (6%)	5 (2%)	13 (6%)
Directives	50 (31%)	52 (36%)	72 (36%)	66 (31%)
Commissives	17 (11%)	12 (8%)	12 (6%)	12 (5%)
Total	158 (100%)	143 (100%)	201 (100%)	217 (100%)

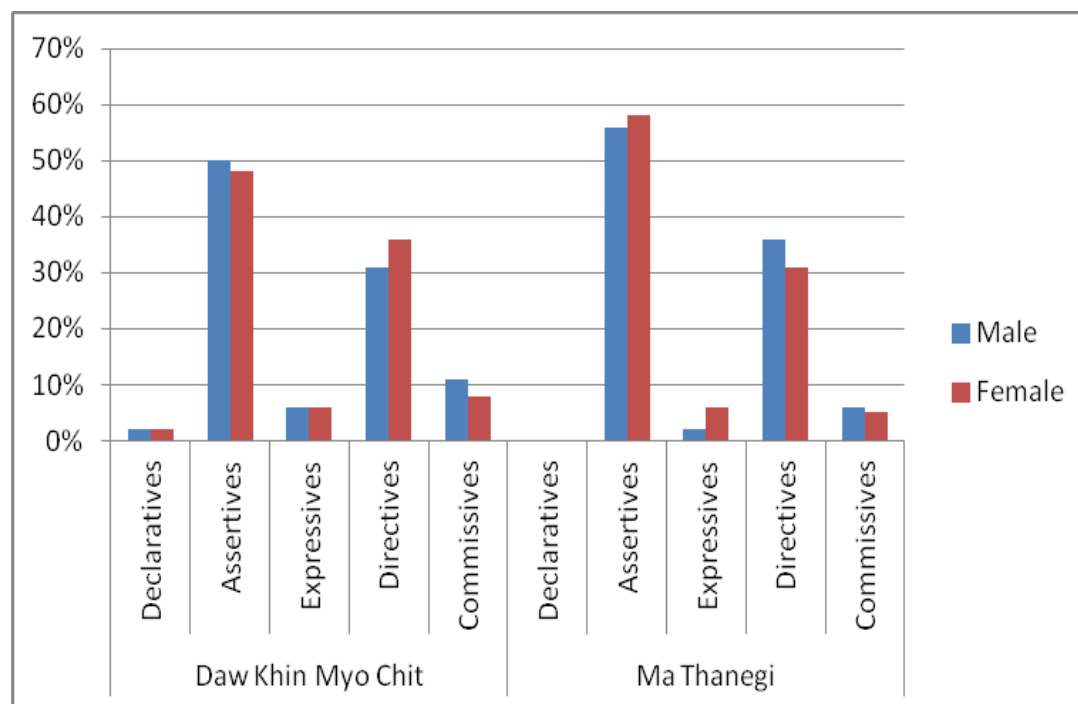


Figure 1 Speech Acts Employed by Males and Females in the Short Stories

Overall, in Daw Khin Myo Chit's short stories, no difference between males and females in their use of declaratives is observed. Therefore, it can be said that the characters, whether male or female, can change the status of the person or object by performing the act. For example, in the utterance "I'm Po Tay⁸, the ghost performer", the male speaker has the authority to change his name and everyone

⁸ 'Po Tay' is the name of a boy. 'Po' is used before the names of boys in rural parts of Myanmar

accepts that his name is Po Tay. Another example, "His parents, a puppet maker and his wife, named him Aung⁹" indicates that the parents, both father and mother, have the authority to name their son. After naming their son "Aung", the world accepts this name and everybody calls him 'Aung'. From the data collection, both men and women have the same authority to declare events. In the stories translated by Ma Thanegi, in the declaratives category, the

⁹ 'Aung,' is the name of the boy and means 'success'

data was too little to analyze. Therefore, it is safe to say that there is no difference between males and females. However, there is one example of the use of declaratives in a court, in which the male judge says: “the two to be locked-up for twenty-four hours”. In this utterance, the judge (speaker) has the authority to sentence the two men (hearers) and all the people accept the speaker’s decision.

In the use of assertive speech acts in Daw Khin Myo Chit’s short stories, there is the same frequency for both males and females because most of the characters in the short stories say what they believe. Assertives include conclusions, assertions, descriptions, predictions, insistence, suggestions, proposals, swearing and boasting. Some examples of assertives spoken by male characters in the stories are: “Perhaps she’ll be all right, when she goes to school next year (prediction),” “she is the likeness of the woman I once loved (assertion),” “Of course, you are grown up... a great lady with English education and all that...a *sayamagyi*¹⁰ (description).” Some examples employed by women are: “I’m not a maid nor widow (assertion),” “They’ll see you. Just stay there (insistence),” “So you’ve bought her a puppet doll. You’re spoiling her (conclusion)”. In Ma Thanegi’s selected short stories, although the number of assertive speech acts is higher than in Khin Myo Chit’s literary works, there is a balance between males and females in her works. Some examples employed by men in Ma Thanegi’s translated works are: “I never

gave my zatar¹¹ to Ba Win (assertion),” “I can teach reading and writing anytime (boasting)”. On the other hand, “The firewood is damp, it is not going to catch for some time (assertion),” “If you go on any longer like this this, you will lose all emotions (prediction),” “You should take a bath (suggestion),” “I’ve never ever quarreled in my life (assertion)” are examples employed by women. The overall result indicates that there is no difference between males and females in the short stories. In addition, it is observed that both men and women favor these assertive speech acts over the other types of speech acts.

In Daw Khin Myo Chit’s literary works, there is a balance between males and females in terms of expressive speech acts. Therefore, it can be said that both men and women express their own feelings although these feelings may be different. Some examples spoken by men from Khin Myo Chit’s stories are: “Welcome home, my boy. Now you know what harm wealth and power could do to man (welcoming),” “Well, thanks for warning me (thanking).” Some examples such as “Thank mother---but I’m not afraid of the dark --- (thanking),” “Sorry to upset you, Mai Sein¹² (apologizing)” are uttered by women. No difference is found

¹⁰ ‘sayarmagyi’ means ‘a great female teacher’

¹¹ Zatar – horoscope (record of one’s birth date and time with relative positions of the planets at the time of one’s birth usually written on palm-leaf) (Myanamr-English Dictionary)

¹² ‘Mai Sein’ is the name of a young woman. ‘Mai’ is used before the name of a woman in rural areas of Myanmar and is similar to ‘Miss’ in English

between males and females in Khin Myo Chit's literary works. However, in the stories translated by Ma Thanegi, the number of expressives used by males is lower than those used by females. Examples are: "Well thank goodness, he found it" and "I am so unhappy for you". The present study found that women use this speech act slightly more frequently than the men in her translated works. So this indicates that the female characters express their psychological feelings more easily than the men. However, the difference in this category is not significant.

In the category of directives, in Khin Myo Chit's literary works, the number uttered by the females slightly surpassed the number spoken by the males. Most of the utterances employed by men are commands and orders, for example, "Come down at once (order)", "Hey, lone-ma-lay (lassie) do come down and have tea". This means that men are leaders in Myanmar society much more often than women. Sometimes they also make requests, examples of which are: "will you do me a favor by not calling my *minthami*¹³ 'this marionette'". The frequency of female utterances in this category of speech act is greater than for males. The women in the short stories direct and request more often, as in: "please don't do or say anything foolish", "why don't you come and sit here for a while and have a cup of green tea". However, it was found that women also use commands and orders in some cases. Sometimes, they ask for advice from hearers and at other times, they give advice. In the

stories translated by Ma Thanegi, the number of directives uttered by males is slightly higher than that of females. Female characters ask others to do what they want and they request, plead and ask for help such as "I'd like to borrow some for my daughter to copy the design", "Please! May I use your phone?" On the other hand, most of the directive speech acts employed by male characters are commands and orders. For example, "Go into the house, now get inside", "Take it away", "Just give me something to eat!" Men also use requests such as "Please go home, Daw Aye Thar, don't worry about him", "Please tell me, let me in on the secret". Although they do not use this speech act as much as the men, the women have to ask more and have to request more. Therefore, it can be inferred that men tend to be more forceful than women because they use more commands in their directive speech acts.

Regarding commissives in Khin Myo Chit's literary works, there is no difference between males and females. Some examples of this speech act uttered by women are: "I will make you a hearse", "I'll buy you new skirts and beads", and "I'll drive you home". In contrast, in Ma Thanegi's translated works, the number of such speech acts used by females is higher than by males. Examples employed by men are: "I'll get new ones" and "I will tell what I saw". Some examples employed by women are: "It's not taking free, I will pay her for it", "Of course I will---you will have to wait a bit for lunch". These results suggest that both men and women express actions they intend to carry out at some future stage.

¹³ 'Minthanmi' means princess or dancer in English

Speech Acts and Social Status in Myanmar Culture

From the results of this examination of selected Myanmar short stories through the prism of speech act theory by Searle (1979), it is inferred that there is a little difference between males and females in terms of the speech acts uttered. Assertive speech acts are employed by both men and women as the characters in the short stories use them to say what they believe in the action. The second most frequently used speech act employed by males and females is directives. However, most of the directives employed by men are “commands” while most employed by females are “requests”. The least speech act employed by both men and females is a declarative, the type of speech act that is common to people of all classes and gender. However, most of the characters in the short stories are middle and lower class people, so declaratives, which convey authority to certain extent, are less frequent than other speech acts. Minn (2014) points out that the higher the social level, the greater the gender inequality. As the stories are based on middle and lower-level people, there is little evidence of a significant difference between males and females in all the speech acts. The analysis of speech acts yields the same result for both men and women, and the quantity and type of the speech acts used by men and women

fluctuate because of the different themes and different authors of the short stories. From analyzing these short stories, it can be said that generally women and men have the same quality in speaking, but that males seem to have a little more power than females due to the more frequency of commands they use.

Gender Difference Inferred from Different Uses of Linguistic Devices

After the speech acts were analyzed, secondly, the frequency of linguistic devices used to depict male and female characters was counted and analyzed. The reporting verbs used to report males’ and females’ speech; adverbs collocating with reporting verbs, and adjectives used to depict characters in the short stories were all examined to determine whether they contributed to a positive or negative portrayal of the characters.

According to the collected data from Khin Myo Chit’s literary works and Ma Thanegi’s translated short stories, Khin Myo Chit uses more linguistic features in her short stories than Ma Thanegi does. The data found are discussed through a framework of sociolinguistic concepts.

Table 3 Frequency of Linguistic Features which Carry Positive and Negative Connotations

Gender	Khin Myo Chit's short stories						Ma Thaegi's translated works					
	Reporting		Adverb		Adjective		Reporting		Adverbs		Adjectives	
	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N	P	N
Male	16	32	13	13	45	27	17	24	7	11	12	15
	38%	71%	54%	68%	39%	69%	45%	52%	47%	65%	39%	71%
Female	26	13	11	6	69	12	21	22	8	6	19	6
	62%	29%	46%	32%	61%	31%	55%	48%	53%	35%	61%	23%

Note: P = Positive
N = Negative

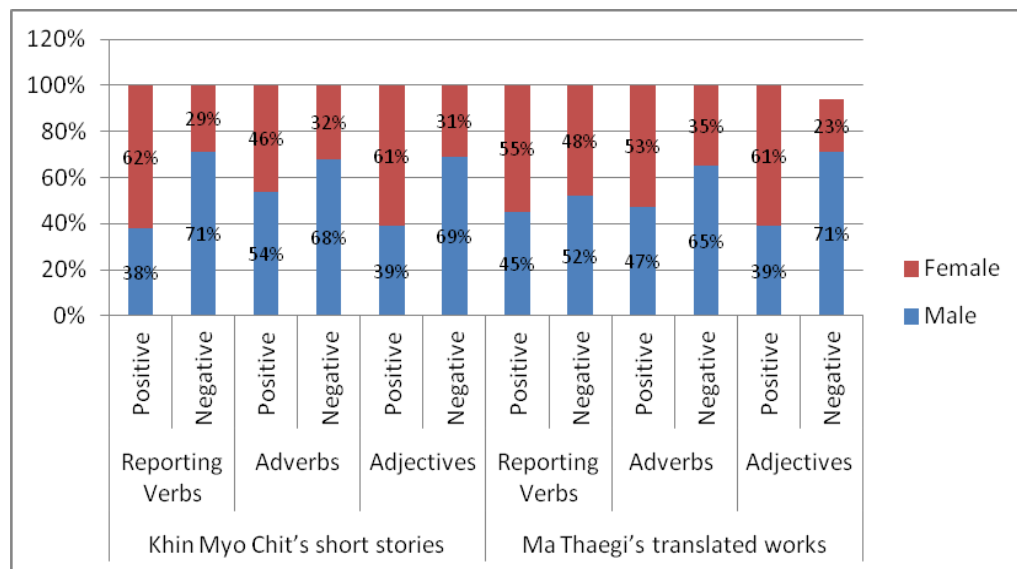


Figure 2 Linguistic Features which Classify Positive and Negative Connotation

Reporting Verbs

In Khin Myo Chit's stories, the number of reporting verbs used for males is higher than for females. Although there are many utterances used by the males and females, no reporting verbs are found in some utterances. Some examples of the reporting verbs used most often by the males are: "assured", "cry out", "shouted", "reply", "threw", "rang out", "cut in", "retorted", and "exploded". The use of these reporting verbs indicates that men are aggressive, assertive, unemotional, proud and selfish, all of which are traditional masculine traits. Verbs such as "encouraged", "laughed and said", "explained", or "admonished" show that men are also helpful from the use of certain verbs with a positive connotation¹⁴. On the other hand, men use a few reporting verbs such as "mutter", "moan", "mumbled", "smiled and said", "begged", and "puzzled", which are non-traditional. Therefore it can be said that, in some cases, men are also subordinate and emotional, and sometimes ask for advice and accept others' suggestions. Some examples of reporting verbs used for females are "astounded", "laughed and said", and "smiled and said," which have positive connotations, describe women as submissive or emotional, and are usually said in a polite way. Reporting verbs such as "blushed", "whisper", "murmured", "moaned", "excuse", and "muttered" describe women as fearful and ashamed. However, verbs such as "shout", "broke out", and "resorted," that are assigned to females

have negative connotations and portray an aggressive nature. In addition, the reported verbs "reeled", and "ruffled" show that women are troublesome. On the other hand, reporting verbs such as "said", "told", "went on", "asked", and "replied", are neutral and can be used for both the males and the females.

In Ma Thanegi's selected short stories, the results show that there is a balance between males and females in the reporting verbs. In the short stories, context is an important factor in analyzing the data. Some examples of the reporting verbs associated with males are: "shout", "thunder", "roared", "scream", "sprang out", "scolded", and "warned." The use of these reporting verbs in context indicates that men are aggressive, assertive, unemotional, proud and selfish, which are traditional masculine traits. On the other hand, men also use a few reporting verbs such as "smile", "cajoled", "smiled and answered", "whisper", and "mutter," which have a positive connotation. Reporting verbs like "groan", "complain", and "spoke with halting" are employed by males in non-traditional ways. Therefore, it can be said that in some cases, men are also subordinate and emotional depending on the context and situation.

Some examples of reporting verbs, which in context have a positive connotation and are used for females, include: "plead", "mutter", "made polite conversation", "quoted", "demure", "reported", and "cooled." In addition, they describe women as dependent, or submissive, although in a polite manner. The verbs "shivered" and "began to sob" show that women are fearful and weak, and the verbs "comfort", "tried to console", and

¹⁴ Connotation – an idea suggested by a word in addition to its main meaning (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

“urge” mean that women are helpful and nurturing. Sometimes, reported verbs such as “scolded”, “jeer”, “went on furious voice”, “screamed”, and “cry loud,” which have a negative connotation, indicate that they are aggressive in nature which is a challenge to feminine traits. On the other hand, reporting verbs such as “told”, “said”, “replied”, “called”, and “answered,” are neutral and are used for both men and women.

The use of these reporting verbs in the two collections of stories indicates that men are aggressive, assertive, unemotional, proud and selfish, which traditional masculine traits are. In some cases, men are also depicted as subordinate and emotional depending on the context and situation. For women, the reporting verbs indicate that they are submissive, ashamed, and emotional, which follow the stereotypes of femininity, although they are also sometimes aggressive, which challenges traditional feminine traits. It can be concluded that the reporting verbs used by males tend to signify aggression but those used by females are likely to imply being submissive and emotional.

Adverbs of Manner Collocating with Reporting Verbs

In considering the adverbs of manner which collocate with reporting verbs and which contribute to the description of the characters in Khin Myo Chit’s literary works, a significantly greater number of such adverbs are used to describe actions by males than by females. Some examples which refer to males with an emotional tone are “gloomily”, “woefully”, “excitedly”, and “anxiously”. As their emotions are depicted

as mostly angry, it can be assumed that males are easily angered and are, therefore, aggressive. In addition to the adverbs representing male actions which have a negative connotation, it should be noted that adverbs such as “happily”, “kindly”, “obediently”, and “gently”, represent men as kind-hearted, polite and brave, all of which convey a positive connotation. Examples of adverbs which refer to females are “carefully”, “soothingly”, “weakly”, “patiently”, “mildly”, and “honestly” indicating that women are submissive, nurturing, fearful, and ashamed, and as acceptable feminine traits, they represent a positive connotation. On the other hand, the adverbs “firmly”, “grimly”, “stupidly”, and “glumly” have a negative connotation and portray women as aggressive. But in the books under scrutiny, women are not shown to be as aggressive as men except in the use of a few adverbs describing women’s actions in context.

Also in the translated works by Ma Thanegi, the number of adverbs which refer to males is slightly greater than females. Some examples which refer to males are “directly”, “dourly”, “curtly”, “loudly”, and “angrily” which mean that men are angered easily and therefore aggressive. In addition, the adverbs convey a negative connotation. However, adverbs such as “unhappily”, “gravely”, and “nervously” indicate that men are emotional. Moreover, the adverbs “politely”, “lightly”, “jokingly”, “softly”, and “smoothly” indicate non-traditional utterances in that they speak politely, which has a positive connotation.

Examples of adverbs which refer to female utterances are: “kindly”, “softly”,

“thoughtfully”, and “innocently,” which have a positive connotation and convey politeness. On the other hand, adverbs such as “irately”, “coldly”, “urgently”, “anxiously”, and “seriously” have a negative connotation and indicate that women are sometimes aggressive and respond at once without thinking. However, in general, it can be said that most adverbs used to describe males carry a negative meaning, while those for females are more positive.

Adjectives of Quality

In analyzing the adjectives which contribute to the kind of characters and which adjectives represent males or females in Khin Myo Chit’s literary works, the number of adjectives of quality for the males is slightly higher than for the females. Adjectives which represent males include: “good”, “friendly”, “clever”, “venerable”, “modern”, “wise”, and “wonderful” which have positive connotations while the adjectives “ill-fated”, “bad”, “sneering”, “fair-skinned”, and “paternal” are non-traditional. And again “powerful”, “stumpy”, “rough”, “brawny”, “stalwart”, “great”, “intellectual”, “trusted”, “bold and manly”, and “respectable” show that men are physically strong, capable and independent. Male characters are also described as having physical and mental ability. The author generally uses adjectives that present male characters as strong. Some adjectives such as “cruel”, “lascivious”, and “damned” are negative terms referring to males.

On the other hand, adjectives which represent females are “kind-hearted”, “mature”, “beloved”, “noble”, “new”, and “good,” which have positive connotations.

The adjectives “attractive”, “beautiful”, “fair”, “pretty”, “golden”, and “colorful” indicate that females are described as physically attractive, a trait traditionally seen as feminine. The adjectives “shy”, “blushing”, “ashamed”, and “sorrowing” are also common feminine traits which indicate that women are emotional. Other adjectives such as “frail”, “sick”, “seductive”, “pensive”, and “indomitable” describe women as physically weak and submissive, but on the other hand, they are sometimes described as assertive. From the adjectives used, the reader is able to better understand the characters. Therefore, from analyzing the adjectives in the short stories, we can say that male characters tend to be portrayed as strong and smart but females as weak and attractive.

In the short stories translated by Ma Thangi, the number of adjectives which describe males is significantly higher than that used for females. Adjectives which represent males include “selfish”, “fussy”, “skinny”, “lanky”, “stocky”, and “monkish,” all of which present men as physically unattractive. However, the adjectives “manly”, “good-looking”, “lovely”, “pretty”, “best dressed”, and “cute” are also used by the authors to present males as physically attractive. As shown in the earlier analysis, the adjectives “confirmed”, “forgiving”, “good”, and “trusted” carry positive connotations and depict males as intellectual and good-hearted. However, the adjectives “uneducated”, “unofficial”, and “older” have negative connotations, leading the reader to understand the males as having no or only limited ability to lead their life. On the other hand, adjectives which represent the females include: “stingy”, “ungrateful”, “unhelpful”,

and “widowed,” which have negative connotations while “beautiful”, “nice”, “cheerful”, “pretty”, “sweetest”, “prettiest”, and “capable” are employed to describe females as physically attractive, which is usually considered a feminine trait. An analysis of the adjectives used to describe characters in the short stories shows that while both men and women are portrayed as having good and bad qualities, it is more likely that a male character is associated with strength and aggressiveness, but a female with attractiveness and weakness.

Gender Difference Inferred from Different Uses of Reference Terms

Reference terms (pronouns, nouns and noun phrases) were also analyzed to determine any tendency to place males and females in either subject or object position. It was found that the tendency to assign subject position to males is higher than for females. On the other hand, the tendency to assign females to object positions is higher. In terms of pronouns, only third person singular pronouns (*he, she, him* and *her*); in terms of nouns, males and females mentioned by name, career terms, or gender-specific nouns; and in terms of noun phrases, appositive noun phrases, gerund phrases and infinitive phrases were analyzed in both collections of short stories.

In the two books, the use of pronouns exceeds that of nouns and noun phrases. Third person singular pronouns “he, or she” used to identify the characters as having subject tendency and “him, or her” used to identify object tendency, were collected and analyzed. In analyzing nouns, names (e.g. U Po Sein, Daw Pan U, Ma

Thaw, Ko Latt, Po Tar¹⁵), career terms (e.g. headman, judge, caravan, astrologer, schoolmistress), kinship terms (e.g. father, mother, son, daughter, granny, niece, nephew, uncle), gender specific nouns (e.g. lady, man, young boy, the poor girl, woman), and neutral nouns (e.g. ghost, guardian, spirit) that refer to males and females were collected and analyzed. In analyzing noun phrases, appositive noun phrases (e.g., “She saw *the apparition, a shy young woman with downcast eyes*”, “*Daw Pan Oo, A bearer of the betel casket, a beautiful lacquer box decorated with music work*”), gerund noun phrases (e.g., “She saw her husband *entering the house*”, “The belles *carrying things to be offered to monks* at the monastery”) and infinitive noun phrases (e.g., “You have no right *to draw him* into the pit of loneliness”, “She extended her hand *to smooth her*”) were counted carefully and analyzed to identify the tendency to assign subject or object roles to males and females.

¹⁵ ‘U’ is put before the name of the man similar to ‘Mr’ in English, ‘Ko’ is placed in front of the name of elder man and sometimes ‘Ko’ is used when wife calls her husband as a sign of ‘love’

Gender Representation in Myanmar Literacy Works in English

Table 4 Reference Terms in the Short Stories

Reference Terms	Subject				Object			
	Khin Myo Chit		Ma Thanegi		Khin Myo Chit		Ma Thanegi	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Pronouns	499 (32%)	475(31%)	238(30%)	223(28%)	125(24%)	173(32%)	102(26%)	101(26%)
Nouns	309(20%)	193(13%)	141(18%)	140(18%)	97(18%)	86(16%)	69(18%)	96(25%)
Noun Phrases	38 (3%)	20(1%)	28(4%)	19(2%)	23(4%)	32(6%)	11(3%)	6 (2%)
Total	846(55%)	688(45%)	407(52%)	382(48%)	245(46%)	291(54%)	182(47%)	203(53%)

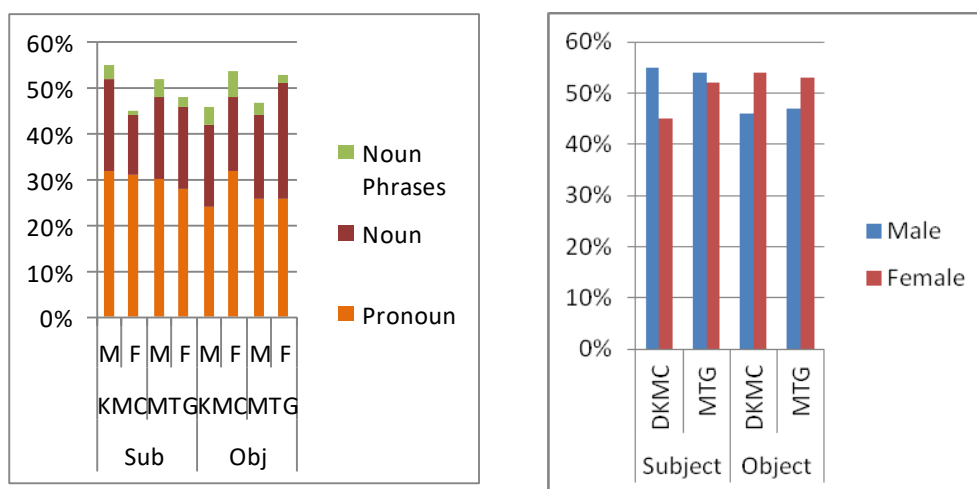


Figure 3 Frequency of Reference Terms which Identify Subject and Object

Linguistic Devices and Social Status in Myanmar Culture

In considering linguistic features, in terms of reporting verbs, it can be inferred that men's speech conveys the quality of aggression. On the other hand, most of the verbs used to report women's speech convey submission. In terms of adverbs collocating with the reporting verbs, there is a difference between males and females. More adverbs refer to males than to females. In portraying the behavior of characters, although the occurrences of adverbs with positive connotations are found to be associated with both men and women without difference, the adverbs used for men are expressed more negatively than for women. In terms of adjectives, the authors use more adjectives which refer to males than to females. In most cases, the authors use adjectives to portray men negatively more often than females. This seems to imply that men have more negative images than women in Myanmar society. In terms of reference terms, it is more common to find male characters in subject positions, while women are more often assigned to object positions. From this result, it can be interpreted that women are dependent on others.

Conclusion and Further Suggestions

Although of the two collections of short stories under investigation, one was written originally in English and the other in Burmese, the results of the present study found no difference in terms of the difference between males and females. The same result was found in the study of gender representation in Myanmar short stories through the linguistic evidence. An

examination of speech acts reveals that there is no difference between males and females in the types of speech acts. Both males and females employ assertive speech acts most frequently and declaratives least frequently. This seems to suggest that both gender groups are alike as representatives of common people in Myanmar society. However, the specific directives used by males are commands, suggesting that males are more powerful. Concerning certain linguistic features, i.e. verbs used to report men's speech, adverbs and adjectives used to portray male characters' behavior seem to suggest the qualities of aggression and physical strength. On the other hand, the linguistic features that refer to female characters seem to convey the qualities of submission and physical attractiveness. In addition, as female characters tend to occupy object positions, we can conclude that women are dependent and subordinate. They are represented as followers even though they are portrayed positively, while men are represented as leaders even though they are most often portrayed negatively.

This study is designed to show that linguistic features including speech acts which are found in a selection of Myanmar literary works in English are important for analyzing gender representation in Myanmar culture. Using speech acts and linguistic devices can shed light on how men and women are represented in literary works and how language is related to literature. This study suggests that language used in literature reflects the condition of a society. As suggestions for further studies, scholars who wish to investigate how males and females use language in society could analyze other literary works, using paralinguistic features

and discourse analysis. Moreover, other studies could be performed using a comparative analysis of gender representation in literary works written by Myanmar authors and by foreign authors.

References

- Belak, Brenda. 2002. *Gathering strength: Women from Burma on their rights*: Images Asia.
- Boonkongsaen, N. 2013. Fillipinos and Thais Saying "No" in English. *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities* 16.1: 23 - 40
- Chit, Khin M. 2004. *Her Infinite Variety and Other Stories*. Parami Bookshop, Yangon, Myanmar.
- Chit, Khin M. 2005. *13 Carat Diamond and Other Stories*: Parami Bookshop.
- DFID Myanmar operational plan 2011 - gender annex. 2011.
<www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67322/burma-2011-summary.pdf>
- Information about variable and data sources for 2014 SIGI. (SIGI (2015)).
<<http://www.genderindex.org/country/myanmar>>
- Interim country partnership strategy, Myanmar. 2012-2014. *Gender analysis*.
<<http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/icps-mya-2012-2014-ga.pdf>>
- Legal Issues on Myanmar Journal. 2011, August.
- Minn, Aung M. 2014. Interviewing with Executive Director U Aung Myo Minn from Equality Myanmar. *Kumudra Journal* 3.12.
- Nygren, Åsa. 2006. Essay on the Linguistic Features in JK Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.
- Ottosson, T. and Cheng, Xin. 2012. The representation of gender roles in the media: an analysis of gender discourse in Sex and the City movies.
- Searle, John. 1979. *Expression and meaning: studies in the theories of speech acts*. Cambridge.
- Stockdale, D. Ashlay. 2006. Gender representation in an EFL textbook. *Unpublished master's thesis*. University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.
- Thanegi, Ma. 2009. *Selected Myanmar short stories*. Yangon, Myanmar: UNITY Publishing House.
- Thein, Pansy. T. 2015. *Gender equality and cultural norms in Myanmar*. Paper presented at the International conference on Myanmar studies, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.