**Language use in Northern Myanmar – impact of bilingualism on language and identity**

Summary / Zusammenfassung

Exploratory cooperation project of the
Department of Comparative Linguistics, University of Zurich (Switzerland) and Department of Anthropology, Mandalay University (Myanmar):

“Language use in Northern Myanmar – impact of bilingualism on language and identity”

1. General purpose of the proposed cooperation and people involved

The proposed project follows two main aims. First, to promote the cooperation and collaboration between the University of Zurich and Mandalay University (Myanmar) after signing the MoU between the two institutions in November 2014 by exchanging and sharing expertise in the respective fields of the involved departments, namely the Department of Comparative Linguistics at the University of Zurich (UZH) and the Department of Anthropology at the Mandalay University (MU). Second, to integrate the research possibilities at the Mandalay University with a current SNF funded project at the University of Zurich by the main applicant (“The Greater Burma Zone”, 100012_150136), and explore possible cooperation for an SNF funded Sinergia project to begin in February 2016 (“Linguistic Morphology in Time and Space”, CRSSI1_160739), in which the main applicant is involved as project leader of a sub-project on Sino-Tibetan languages. The planned cooperation in 2016 is directly relevant for the former project by collecting linguistic and ethnological data from two languages in Northern Myanmar that will feed into the project. The relevance for the latter project is more indirect, exploring possibilities for future joint research in the area with members of the academic staff of MU and possibly other institutions in Myanmar.

The main applicant from UZH, Dr. Mathias Jenny, has been conducting linguistic fieldwork in Thailand and Myanmar for the last two decades and has been involved in teaching different under graduate and graduate courses at the University of Zurich and the INALCO (Paris) since 2001, including field methods and anthropological linguistics. He has widely published on different aspects of the languages of Southeast Asia since 2001 and is co-author of a comprehensive grammar of Burmese to be published in January 2016 by Routledge.

The main applicant from MU, Dr. Thidar Htwe Win, has been head of the Department of Anthropology at Mandalay University since 2011. She has been involved in teaching graduate and post-graduate courses in anthropology for over 20 years, and has conducted fieldwork with different ethnic groups in Myanmar. Her research has focused on social structures of ethnic societies in northern Myanmar (Lahvo, Akha, Wa, etc.), and also includes research in the link between people, land, and culture in other parts of Myanmar, as well as enculturation and socialization in Japanese culture. Her publications since 1997 cover a wide range of anthropological topics and reflect her research interests.

2. Background: research in Myanmar

Myanmar has only recently opened its doors to international cooperation, and academic exchange is still in its early stages. This makes it all the more important to promote the new possibilities and involve in joint research. The gain for international scholars in this kind of collaboration is the possibility to access hitherto inaccessible areas, languages, and peoples in Myanmar by making use of the existing infrastructure and network of Myanmar academic research, as well as gaining insight in the area from a more inside perspective. For the Myanmar side, the advantage of collaborating with international scholars is, apart from the obvious possibility to have access to international funding agencies, the lack of which has hindered research by Myanmar scholars for many years, to be involved in the international academic discussion and gain expertise from...
scholars working in related research fields.

In the past, international scholars were able to do linguistic fieldwork in Myanmar, though mostly only in selected areas, and official access to field sites was restricted by several obstacles. One had therefore to rely on older publications and publications by scholars from Myanmar, both of which are not easily available and accessible, the latter often being only in Burmese. With the possibility of cooperative research and fieldwork, these restrictions are removed and the quality of research and results can be dramatically increased by joining forces with local academics.

3. Planned activities

The planned exploratory collaboration involves two joint field trips in January and August 2016, as well as a one-month stay as visiting scholar/lecturer at Mandalay University by the main applicant from UZH in July/August 2016. The joint field trips will be undertaken by the main applicants from UZH and MU, together with two PhD students from the Department of Comparative Linguistics, UZH, and three advanced MA students from the Department of Anthropology, MU, and one additional member of the academic staff of MU. Details of the field trips and stay at MU will be outlined below.

1. Field trip 1: Jinghpaw (Sino-Tibetan, Kachin State), January 2016.

The first joint field trip is planned for 7 days in Jinghpaw communities near Myitkyina in Kachin State in the far north of Myanmar. The Jinghpaw are the main ethnic group of the Kachin peoples and the Jinghpaw language is part of the above mentioned project “The Greater Burma Zone”.

Basic linguistic data has been collected within this project, mostly in Yangon, that is, far away from the actual area where the language is spoken. The objective of this field trip is to collect data on the actual use of Jinghpaw and Burmese, possibly also other languages, in the everyday life of the speakers, assuming that most or all speakers are at least bilingual with Jinghpaw and Burmese. The main task of the linguistics PhD students and their supervisor from UZH will be to record natural conversation among Jinghpaw speakers, as well as using standard vocabulary lists to elicit lexical items generally believed to belong to the core lexicon as well as cultural items. It is expected that this will involve both Jinghpaw and Burmese material. The data will be transcribed and analyzed by the PhD students with the help of Jinghpaw speakers at the location and later in Yangon and/or Mandalay, who have already been involved in earlier research. The MA students from MU will be responsible for conducting interviews (probably in Burmese) with Jinghpaw speakers to find out about their self-assessment of language use and the impact of different

**Keywords / Suchbegriffe**

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**Project Leadership and Contacts / Projektleitung und Kontakte**

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**In Collaboration with / In Zusammenarbeit mit**

Prof. Thidar Htwe Win, Department of Anthropology, University of Mandalay, Myanmar

**Duration of Project / Projektdauer**

Jan 2016 to Dec 2016