

Mon verbs

Transitivity

The Mon language has three different kinds of verbs: intransitive, transitive, and ditransitive.

Intransitives

Intransitive verbs are those that can be used without an object. The word order for intransitive sentences is SV (PP).

1. Nye^h toⁱt mo'ng.
he sleep prog.

'He slept.' or 'He is sleeping.'

2. Nye^h kway mo'ng padua ka' klo pakaw.
he walk prog. in prep [park]

'He is walking in the park.'

Transitives

Transitive verbs are used with an object. The basic word order for transitive sentences in Mon is SVO. Examples follow:

3. Nye^h sayn hoa⁷.
He built house

'He built the house.'

4. Nye^h pale hoa⁷.
He fix house

'He fixed the house.'

Exceptionally, sentences with the verb *nùm* 'to have, to exist' show apparent SOV order. See the section on copular and possessive sentences for more information

5. 7ua kla' num.
I dog have *or*

Kla' 7ua num.
dog I have

'I have a dog.'

Some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive.

6. 7ua dun praw⁷.
I cooked quickly



'I cooked quickly.'

7. 7ua dun pu'ng praw7.
I cooked rice quickly

"I cooked the rice quickly.'

8. 7ua no'ngka loit.
I study book

'I study.'

9. 7ua no'ngka loit inglowi.
I study book English

'I study English.'

Verbs of Motion

Certain verbs of motion are followed by the verb *7a* 'go' when they take an object

10. 7ua krip.
I run

'I run.'

11. 7ua krip 7a phya.
I run go store

'I run to the store.'

12. 7ua ti7 7a phya.
I drive go store

'I drive to the store.'

13. 7ua 7a phya.
I go store

'I go to the store.'

Ditransitives

Ditransitive verbs take two objects which are an indirect object and a direct object, as shown in the following examples.

14. Nyeh ka' 7ua parang tua.
He give I gift com

'He gave me a gift.'

Compare these two following sentences. They show that two different orders are possible in

some ditransitives.

The word order for first sentence is S V DO IO and second one is S V IO DO (IO=indirect object, DO=direct object). These sentences are similar to dative shift in English.

15. 7ua ka' kaw ka' mi che'n 7ua.
I give flower to mother friend I

'I gave flowers to my girlfriend.'
16. 7ua ka' mi che'n 7ua kaw.
I give mother friend I flowers

'I gave my friend flowers.'
17. Nyeh læa tapa7 pa'm ka' kon nay kamalayn.
He tell show story to child Pl.

'He told the children a story.'

However, this sentence is also same as 'He told a story to the children.'

The passive

Mon makes the passive voice with using the special verb *tè'h tu'ng* 'suffer' before the main verb. Passive makes the transitive verbs intransitives.

The passive voice sentences are as follows:

18. Mèa nyeh pye nyeh.
Father he scold he

'His father scolded him.'
19. Nyeh [tè'h tu'ng] pye ka' mèa nyeh.
he [suffer] scold prep father he

'He was scolded by his father.'
20. Kla' kit [kon nay].
dog bite [child]

'The dog bites the child.'
21. [Kon nay] [tè'h tu'ng] kit ka' kla'.
[child] [suffer] bite prep dog.

'The boy is bitten by the dog.'
22. John che'n Mary.
John love Mary

'John loves Mary.'

23. Mary [tè'h tu'ng] che'n ka' John.
Mary [suffer] love prep John

'Mary is loved by John.'

However, in Mon the passive sentence *Mary tè'h tu'ng che'n ka' John.* is hardly used. This is probably because the use of the passive implies a negative effect on the subject.

Causative verbs

The causatives express the idea of causing someone to perform the relevant action. English uses the verbs like *make, get, let, have,* and *cause* to express causation.

It seems that Mon makes the causative verbs in two ways. One general way is to use the verb *cika* 'make' before the main verb and the other way is put a causative prefix like *pa-* before the verb. The latter way is only applied for a small number of verbs like 'eat,' 'sleep,' etc.

Some verbs also show an irregular (suppletive) relationship between the non-causative and the causative. For example, *che* 'see' and *tapah* 'to show'.

Causatives of intransitive verbs

24. [Tè7] klu'ng phèa.
[Younger sis.] come school

'She comes to school.'

25. Min cika ka' [tè7] klu'ng.
Min make prep [younger sister] come

'Min makes her come.'

26. 7acha me'n [kon kway phè] kamalayn.
teacher wait [student] plur

'The teacher waits for the students.'

27. [Kon kway phèa] kamalayn cika ka' 7acha me'n
[student] plur make prep teacher wait

'The students make the teacher wait.'

28. [Kon nay] toyt mo'ng padua kare'an.
[child] sleep prog. in cradle

'The child sleeps on the bed.'

29. 7ua pa-toyt pie' [kon nay] padua ka' kare'an toa rà
I cause-sleep down [child] in prep cradle com aff

'I laid the child down to sleep on the bed.'

Causatives of transitive verbs

30. Nyeh cu loit.
he write book

' He writes a letter.'

31. 7ua cika (ka') nyeh cu loit.
I make to he write book

'I make him write a letter.'

32. Min che loit.
Min saw book

' Min saw the book.'

33. 7ua tapah loit ka' Min.
I show book to Min

' I showed Min the book.'

34. 7ua tapah Min loit.
I show Min book

' I showed Min's book to someone.'

The verb *cia7* has two different causatives, with slightly different meanings. The morphological causative *pacia7* means 'feed', while the syntactic causative *cika cia7* means 'force to eat'.

35. [Kon nay] cia7 pyun.
[child] eat meat

' The boy ate meat.'

The word order is SVO.

36. Nyeh pacia7 pyun ka' [kon nay].
he feed meat prep [child]

' He fed the boy meat.'

37. Nyeh cika ka' [kon nay] cia7 pyun.
he make prep [child] eat meat

' He forced the boy to eat meat.'

Causatives of ditransitive verbs

38. 7ua cika (ka') John cu loit ka' Min.
I make Prep John write book Prep Min

' I made John write a letter to Min.'

39. 7ua cika (ka') kla' kit kon nay.
I make Prep. dog bite child

'I made the dog bite the child.'

Phonemes

The phonemes of Mon are shown in the following chart:

	Labial	Dental	Alveo-palatal	Velar	Glottal
Voiceless	p	t	c	k	ʔ
Voiceless aspirated	ph	th	ch	kh	
Implosive	b	d			
Nasal	m	n	ny	ng	
Fricatives		s	(sh)		h
Liquids and Glides	w	r, l	y		

Explanation of our orthography - Phonetic Equivalents

Consonants

m - Bilabial nasal.

n - Dental-alveolar nasal.

ng - Velar nasal.

ny - Alveo-palatal nasal.

p - Bilabial stop. There seems to be no difference between the voiced and voiceless.

b - Implosive p/b.

ph - p with aspiration.

t - Dental-alveolar stop. There seems to be no difference between the voiced and voiceless.

d - Implosive t/d.

th - Aspirated t.

k - Velar stop. There seems to be no difference between the voiced and voiceless.

kh - Aspirated k.

ʔ - Glottal stop.

c - Alveo-palatal affricate. There seems to be no difference between the voiced and voiceless.

ch - Aspirated c.

s - Dental-alveolar fricative.

sh - Voiceless alveo-palatal fricative. (Apparently only in loans from Burmese)

h - Laryngeal fricative.

l - Dental-alveolar lateral approximate.

r - Dental-alveolar central flap.

Plain Vowels

	-bk	+bk
	-rnd	-rnd : +rnd
+hi +tns-->	i	: u
-lo		:
-hi +tns-->	e	u'* : o
-lo -tns-->	e'	a' : o'
-hi		:

+lo -tns--> | | a :

* Pronounced more central than other mid-vowels.

The Orthography of Vowels

Because of the limited ability of web browsers to display special characters, several vowels are written with digraphs. Follow this link for a table of IPA values for all the digraphs used here.

<e> and <o> represent open e and open o respectively, as in the English words *let* and *caught*.

<a> represents the phonetic character "inverted a", as in British English *hard*.

<u> is the most general representation of schwa, but there are two exceptions:

For the sake of aesthetics, schwa is written as **a** in the following situations:

1. /u/ is written <a> in the context C__CV(C)
Thus **tu'kay** ('sky') becomes <**takay**> under this rule.
2. /u/ is written <a> in the context V__
Under this rule, **mòu'** ('one') becomes <**mòaa**>.

Minimal pairs

The following words show minimal pairs for various combinations of vowels and syllable final consonants. You can click on the words below to download a sound file and hear the words.

[Note: You have to set up your browser ahead of time to play sounds (generally in the Helper Applications menu). Some browsers, like Netscape 3.0, already have an application that will play the sounds. These sound files range from 18K to 40K, and the speed at which they download and play will be dependent on the speed of your connection and your computer.]

/V/ vs. /Vh/ vs. /V7/

The distinction between words ending with Ø, /h/, and glottal stop is subtle and somewhat difficult for English speakers to hear:

kla'	'dog'
kla'7	'to cross'
kla'h	'to understand'

Diphthongs

Predictable On-Glides

[u'i], [u'e], [u'u], [u'o], or simply u'V.

To see the accompanying rule, refer to "Established Phonological Rules." These will be written **i**, **e**, **u**, and **o** respectively.

Predictable Off-Glides

[ow], [o'w], [ey], [u'y]

Again, to see the supplemental rule, refer to "Established Phonological Rules." These will be written **o**, **o'**, **e**, **u'** respectively.

Phonemic Diphthongs

/iu'/, /eu'/, /uu'/, /ou'/, /o'u'/' and... /aw/, /ay/

Once again, please refer to "Established Phonological Rules" to see the corresponding rules.

A word about breathiness

Breathiness will be indicated by the grave accent. Breathiness has no strong effect on tone. When investigated, all words (breathy and non) had a falling tone, even in sentences. The following words show minimal pairs for breathiness

pu'ng	'rice'	<i>plain vowel</i>
pù'ng	'stomach, belly'	<i>breathy vowel</i>
klu'ng	'come'	<i>plain vowel</i>
klù'ng	'boat'	<i>breathy vowel</i>

The phonetics of breathiness

Mon has a two-way distinction between vowels of a sort usually called *register tone*. Vowels in the first register are generally

- more tense
- high in pitch
- pronounced with ordinary to constricted/creaky phonation.

Vowels in the second register are generally

- more lax
- low in pitch
- pronounced with breathy phonation.

There has been some debate in the literature about which of these features is the most fundamental. Linguists familiar with the language have typically described the phonation type difference as the primary one.

However, Lee (1983) did an acoustic analysis of Mon speech samples and concluded that pitch, not phonation type, was the most reliable phonetic cue to the distinction between first and second register.

These results were disputed by Diffloth (1985), who noted some problems with dialect mixture in the samples Lee analysed. Diffloth also questioned whether Lee's failure to find acoustic evidence for differences in phonation type was the result of using the wrong sort of phonetic analysis.

Thongkum (1987) performed a more extensive phonetic analysis of Mon, and concluded "the significant differences between the first register (tense) vowels and second register (lax) vowels are: 1.) power spectra [*an instrumental measurement relevant to phonation type; it consists of finding the difference in dB between the amplitude of the fundamental and the intensity of the second harmonic*], 2.) fundamental frequency, and 3.) vowel duration (only in checked syllables)[*2nd register (breathy) vowels are longer*]. It can be concluded that vowel length in checked syllables and phonation type are as significant as pitch differences."

Established Phonological Rules

For simplicity's sake, I will be demonstrating the effects of each rule one at a time in the examples given.

1.
$$\begin{array}{l} V \rightarrow [+nas] / \quad C \quad _ \\ \quad \quad \quad \{ [+nas] \} \\ \quad \quad \quad \{ [+low] \} \end{array}$$

Vowels will become nasalized when following a nasal consonant and **h**. Thus, /**ngo**a/ ('sun') becomes [**ngõ**a], and /**ho**a/ ('house') becomes [**hõ**a].

2.
$$\begin{array}{l} \emptyset \rightarrow _ \text{--syll} / \quad V \quad _ \\ > \\ \quad \text{--cons} \quad \text{--low} \\ \quad \text{βback} \quad \text{+tense} \\ \quad \quad \quad \text{βback} \end{array}$$

This rule determines the insertion of **w** or **y** after vowels-- the off-glides. Thus:

/wi/ ('to treat') becomes [wiy],
 /dun/ ('to cook') becomes [duwn],
 /ke/ ('clear') becomes [key],
 /kè/ ('to say') becomes [kè'y],
 /pròa/ ('rain') becomes [pròwa], and
 /mò'ng/ ('to exist/live') becomes [mò'wng].

3.
$$\begin{array}{l} \emptyset \rightarrow u' / \quad _ \quad V \\ \quad \quad \quad \text{--lo} \\ \quad \quad \quad \text{+tns} \end{array}$$

This determines the on-glides of **i**, **u**, **e**, **e'**, **o** and **o'**. A schwa is inserted before them. Thus:

/bi/ ('ocean') becomes [bu'i],
 /hui/ ('to mix/associate') becomes [hu'ui],
 /pè/ ('to look at') becomes [pu'è]
 /klè'ng/ ('canoe') becomes [klu'èng]
 /so/ ('hair') becomes [su'o], and

/to/ ('to be') becomes [tu'o'w].

4. u' --> I / c __ .

Under this rule, the schwa following **c** in an open syllable becomes **I** (features: V [-bk] [-rnd] [+hi] [-lo] [-tns]). Thus /cu'kaw/ ('you') becomes [cIkw]. Please note that this word will be transcribed <ca**kaw**> in the orthography.

5. e' --> æ / __ C #
[-cont]

Under this rule, **e'** becomes **æ** (features: V [-bk] [-rnd] [-hi] [+lo] [-tns]) when followed by a glottal stop, nasal, oral stop, or affricate. Thus, /me'n/ ('wood') becomes [mæɳ].

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