

# Why we should stop Zawgyi in its tracks. It harms others and ourselves. Use Unicode!

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မန်တီးရာ၊ ရန်ကုန် ၃၁/၀၈/၂၀၁၆

NYT article: Thomas Fuller 19 July 19 2015

*“Those Who Would Remake Myanmar Find That Words Fail Them”*

- ‘lost in translation’ between English and မြန်မာစာ
- English loan words multiplying

Is မြန်မာစာ no longer replenishing itself?

So what is the status of English?  
We need to clarify the situation

National Language – the language of national identity? National unity?

Official Language – the language of government and administration, courts, services, road signs

But what is the status of English in Myanmar?

Equal official language with မြန်မာစာ?

Second official language after မြန်မာစာ?

Official international language?

Official commercial language (internal and/or external)?

Default language when မြန်မာစာ fails?

Colonial legacy language?

Aspirational language of the future?

Language of cultural and commercial  
recolonisation?

Predatory parasite stifling မြန်မာစာ's growth?

some English related observations trends

English medium of instruction in private schools –  
parental pressure. မြန်မာစာ as a ‘foreign  
language’ subject only

မြန်မာစာ is perceived as ‘unlearnable’ by outsiders  
(Orientalism; colonialism)

advertising and branding in English

Higher Education in English (DASSK and Yangon  
University / Oxford)

NGO talk: English-Burmese soup; code mixing

# Branding





## Coca-Cola elsewhere...



## Coke in Myanmar:





## Old car number plates



## New car number plates



## Number plates in some neighbouring countries



## Multilingual signs





# Welsh roads signs





'I am not in the office at the moment. Send any work to be translated...'



# မြန်မာစာ font history

1980s Avalaser font for Macintosh (John Okell)

1990s 'legacy' fonts - WinResearcher, WinInnwa etc; Myanmar can only be reliably displayed in webpages as images

1995 Unicode codepoints for Burmese first proposed

2001 Myanmar1 Unicode font published - problems because ချ င် ဝ်  
ို 'derived' from ယ ရ ဝ ဟ etc, some non-standard characters –  
but was the **first stable font for the web**

2006 Zawgyi font designed, released 2007 - not following Unicode standards – massively popular

Dec 2007 Myanmar3 Unicode font released – too late!

## What you type and what the computer sees

|              |            |                         |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Avalaser     | မန္တလေးမှာ | m N † e l ; m Ꞥ a       |
| Wwin_Burmese | မန္တလေးမှာ | r e œ a v ; r S m       |
| WinInnwa     | မန္တလေးမှာ | r E Å a v ; r S m       |
| Myanmar1     | မန္တလေးမှာ | မ န ၿ တ လ ဝေ ဝး မ ၿ ဟ တ |
| Zawgyi       | မန္တလေးမှာ | မ ဝး ၿ ဝေ လ ဝး ဝွ တ     |
| Myanmar3     | မန္တလေးမှာ | မ န ဝွ တ လ ဝေ ဝး မ ို တ |

## What you type and what the computer sees

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|--------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Avalaser     | မန္တလေးမှာ | m N † e l ; m Ꞥ a       |
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| Myanmar1     | မန္တလေးမှာ | မ န ၵ တ လ ဝေ ဝး မ ၵ ဟ တ |
| Zawgyi       | မန္တလေးမှာ | မ ဝး ၵ ဝေ လ ဝး ဝွ တ     |
| Myanmar3     | မန္တလေးမှာ | မ န ဝွ တ လ ဝေ ဝး မ ိ တ  |

Unicode vs. Zawgyi  
(ဇော်ဂျီ the alchemist < Skt. yogī )

Why Zawgyi is popular:

- (1) Looks good
- (2) typing sequence is easy - left to right
- (3) widely used



# Zawgyi harm #1: Zawgyi treads on the toes of other languages in Burma

# Unicode

|        | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7 | 8 | 9 | A | B | C | D | E | F |
|--------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U+100x | က | ခ | ဂ | ဃ | င  | စ  | ဆ  | ဇ | ဈ | ည | ဉ | ဋ | ဌ | ဍ | ဎ | ဏ |
| U+101x | တ | ထ | ဒ | ဓ | န  | ပ  | ဖ  | ဗ | ဘ | မ | ယ | ရ | လ | ဝ | သ | ဟ |
| U+102x | ဌ | အ | ဏ | က | ဉ် | ဉ  | ဉီ | ဇ | ဉ | ဉ | ဉ | ၂ | ၁ | ၀ | ၀ | ၂ |
| U+103x | ၂ | ဇ | ၁ | ဇ | ၁  | ဉီ | ၀  | ၁ | ၁ | ၁ | ၁ | ၂ | ၂ | ၁ | ၁ | သ |
| U+104x | ၀ | ၁ | ၂ | ၃ | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  | ၇ | ၈ | ၉ | ၁ | ၂ | ၃ | ၄ | ၅ | ၆ |
| U+105x | ၇ | ၈ | ၉ | ၁ | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  | ၅ | ၆ | ၇ | ၈ | ၉ | ၁ | ၂ | ၃ | ၄ |
| U+106x | ၅ | ၆ | ၇ | ၈ | ၉  | ၁  | ၂  | ၃ | ၄ | ၅ | ၆ | ၇ | ၈ | ၉ | ၁ | ၂ |
| U+107x | ၃ | ၄ | ၅ | ၆ | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ၁ | ၂ | ၃ | ၄ | ၅ | ၆ | ၇ | ၈ | ၉ |
| U+108x | ၁ | ၂ | ၃ | ၄ | ၅  | ၆  | ၇  | ၈ | ၉ | ၁ | ၂ | ၃ | ၄ | ၅ | ၆ | ၇ |
| U+109x | ၀ | ၁ | ၂ | ၃ | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  | ၇ | ၈ | ၉ |   |   |   |   | ၁ | ၂ |

- Myanmar
- Shan
- Mon
- Sanskrit and Pali

- S'gaw Karen
- Western Pwo Karen
- Eastern Pwo Karen
- Geba Karen

- Kayah
- Rumai Palaung
- No character

- Myanmar
- No character for pseudo-Unicode
- No character

# Zawgyi

|        | 0  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | A | B  | C  | D  | E    | F  |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|------|----|
| U+100x | က  | ခ  | ဂ  | ဃ  | င  | စ  | ဆ  | ဇ  | ဈ  | ည  | ဋ | ဌ  | ဍ  | ဎ  | ဏ    | ဏ  |
| U+101x | တ  | ထ  | ဒ  | ဓ  | န  | ပ  | ဖ  | ဗ  | ဘ  | မ  | ယ | ရ  | လ  | ဝ  | သ    | ဟ  |
| U+102x | ဠ  | အ  | -- | ဣ  | ဤ  | ဥ  | ဦ  | ဧ  | -- | ဩ  | ဪ | ါ  | ာ  | ေ  | ေ    | ့  |
| U+103x | ူ  | ေ  | `  | ါ  | ါ  | -- | ့  | ့  | း  | ့  | ါ | ါ  | ဝ  | ါ  | --   | -- |
| U+104x | ဝ  | ဝ  | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ါ | ါ  | ၌  | ၍  | ၎င်း | ၏  |
| U+105x | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | ါ | -- | -- | -- | --   | -- |
| U+106x | က  | ခ  | ဂ  | ဃ  | င  | စ  | ဆ  | ဇ  | ဈ  | ည  | ဋ | ဌ  | ဍ  | ဎ  | ဏ    | ဏ  |
| U+107x | က  | တ  | တ  | ထ  | ထ  | ဒ  | ဓ  | န  | ပ  | ဖ  | ဗ | ဘ  | မ  | ါ  | ါ    | ါ  |
| U+108x | ါ  | ါ  | ါ  | ါ  | ါ  | လ  | သ  | ါ  | ါ  | ါ  | ါ | ါ  | ါ  | ါ  | ါ    | ါ  |
| U+109x | ရ  | ဣ  | ဤ  | တ  | ့  | ့  | ့  | ့  | -- | -- |   |    |    |    | --   | -- |

|                   |                   |               |                                 |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Myanmar           | S'gaw Karen       | Kayah         | Myanmar                         |
| Shan              | Western Pwo Karen | Rumai Palaung | No character for pseudo-Unicode |
| Mon               | Eastern Pwo Karen | No character  | No character                    |
| Sanskrit and Pali | Geba Karen        |               |                                 |

# Zawgyi 'codepoints'

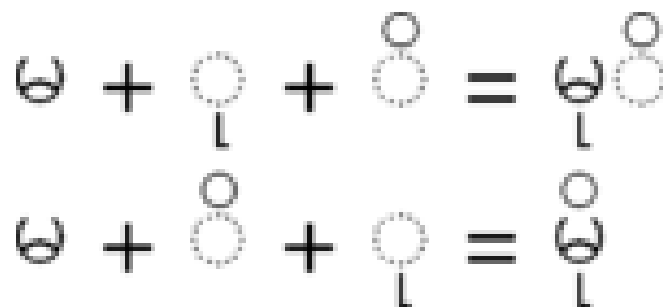
|        | 0  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | A  | B  | C  | D  | E  | F  |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| U+100x | က  | ခ  | ဂ  | ဃ  | င  | စ  | ဆ  | ဇ  | ဈ  | ည  | ည  | ဋ  | ဌ  | ဍ  | ဎ  | ဏ  |
| U+101x | တ  | ထ  | ဒ  | ဓ  | န  | ပ  | ဖ  | ဗ  | ဘ  | မ  | ယ  | ရ  | လ  | ဝ  | သ  | ဟ  |
| U+102x | ဠ  | အ  | -- | ဣ  | ဣ  | ဥ  | ဦ  | ဧ  | -- | ဩ  | ဩ  | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  |
| U+103x | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ၁  | ၂  | -- | ၃  | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ၁  | ၂  | -- |
| U+104x | ၀  | ၁  | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ၁  | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  |
| U+105x | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | ၇  | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| U+106x | က  | ခ  | ဂ  | ဃ  | င  | စ  | ဆ  | ဇ  | ဈ  | ည  | ည  | ဋ  | ဌ  | ဍ  | ဎ  | ဏ  |
| U+107x | က  | တ  | တ  | ထ  | ထ  | ဒ  | ဓ  | န  | ပ  | ဖ  | ဗ  | ဘ  | မ  | ယ  | ရ  | လ  |
| U+108x | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ၁  | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  | ၅  | ၆  | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ၁  | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  |
| U+109x | ၅  | ၆  | ၇  | ၈  | ၉  | ၁  | ၂  | ၃  | ၄  | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |

# Zawgyi harm #2: Zawgyi makes it impossible to keep electronic records in Burmese

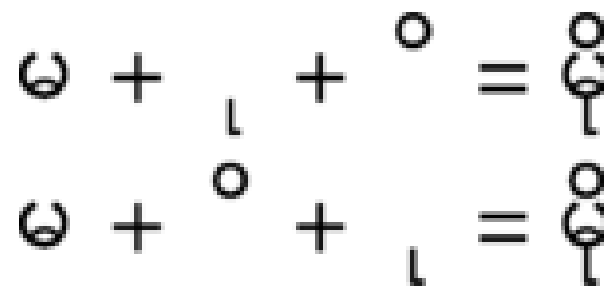


## Fixed order: consonants, vowel, tone

Unicode stores text in only **one** order and arranges it correctly on the surface.



Zawgyi can store text in several ways which may all appear correct on the surface.



## Good news!

The difference between Zawgyi and Unicode has nothing to do with keyboards or fonts.


It's (relatively) easy to convert Zawgyi content to Unicode.



Users should be able to type in the same way they are used to; the computer can do the rest.


the keyboard doesn't matter!



# Facebook in မြန်မာစာ





Justin



ရလဒ်

★ ထပ်တန်း ရလဒ်များ

လူများ


စာမျက်နှာများ

နေရာများ

အဖွဲ့များ

ပရိုဂရမ်များ


အစီအစဉ်များ



ကောလိပ် နှင့် တက္ကသိုလ်

နစ်သက်သူ 21,791 ယောက်

Mandalay University Recreation Center Shwe Bo Universi...




University of Medicine, Mandalay

စိတ်ဝင်စားမှု

နစ်သက်သူ 15,539 ယောက်

Mandalay University University of Medicine, Magwayနှင့် ot...



University of Traditional Medicine, M...

စိတ်ဝင်စားမှု

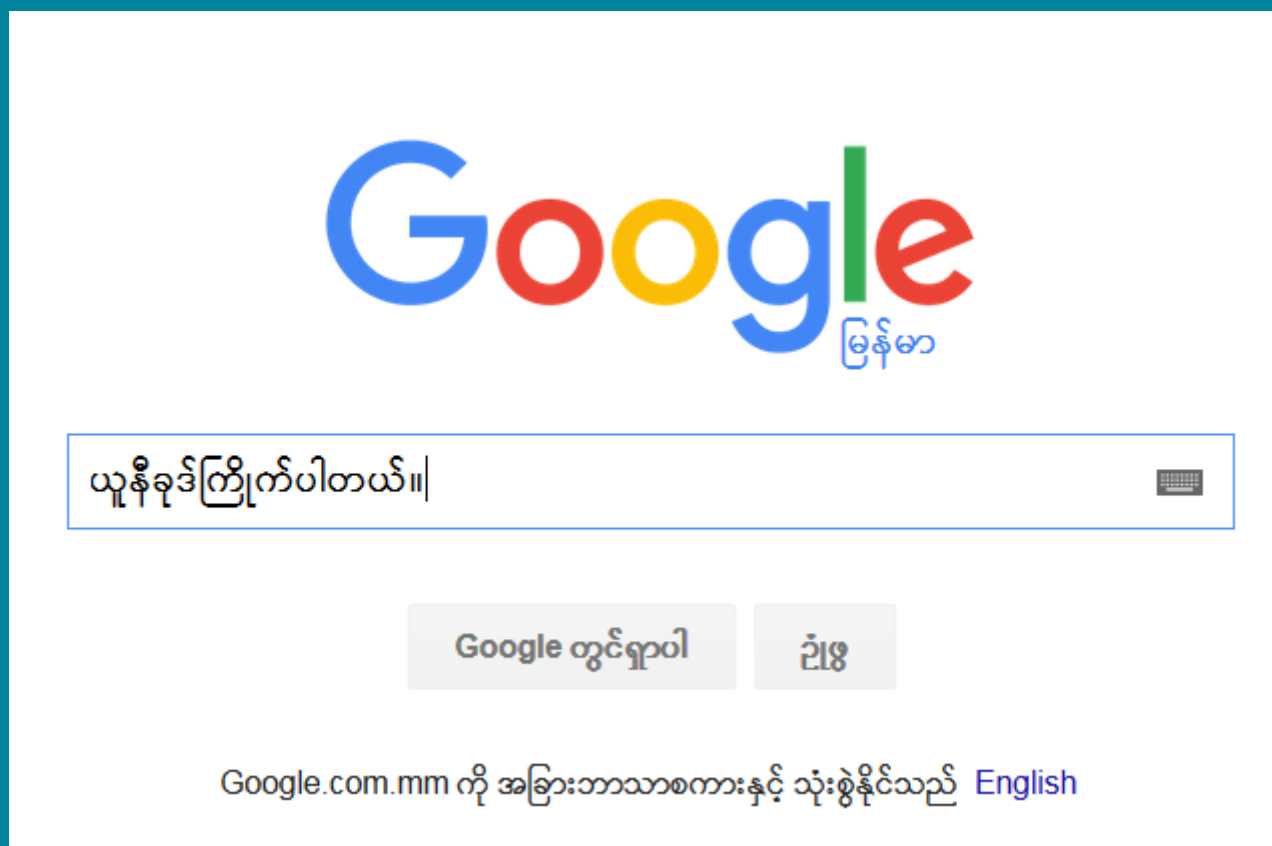
နစ်သက်သူ 972 ယောက်

👍 နှစ်သက်

👍 နှစ်သက်

👍 နှစ်သက်

## Google in မြန်မာစာ





# What support does မြန်မာစာ need?

- robust leadership on the Unicode question to promote the uptake of Unicode so မြန်မာစာ can be used for the storage and processing of electronic text, data and databases
- organisations,
- telecommunications,
- e-commerce,
- access to government services
- reduce dependence on English
- reduce loss in translation / transcription

## What support does မြန်မာစာ need?

legislation and **action** to regularise and clarify the relative status of English alongside မြန်မာစာ within a national language policy

- when laws, contracts, signs, notices, advertising are made public, what should be in မြန်မာစာ ?
- what minimum criteria should foreign organisations have to meet in မြန်မာစာ ?

## Why Zawgyi must be stopped!

- (1) Use of Zawgyi encroaches on the opportunities for other languages of Myanmar to develop in electronic form - Unicode does not!
- (2) Zawgyi does not conform to international computing standards - Unicode does!
- (3) Zawgyi cannot sort correctly: useless for storing data - Unicode can be used for anything!
- (4) Can store the same word in several different ways: useless for searching, processing, analysing text - Unicode can be used for anything

## Why reduce dependence on English?

English ability is a false indicator of merit: English is not being 'chosen'; it is the default. Will this serve Myanmar well in the future?

Myanmar needs talented people now to implement change of many kinds in the country, and cannot afford to write off those who happen to be able to speak but not think in English

ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါတယ်။



