Anti-classifier contexts

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Numeral classifiers

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   một chiếc xe đạp, *hai quyển sách*
2. Mensural classifiers (danh từ đơn vị)
   ba mươi gam/cân đường, *một ly/lít sữa*

Cheng and Sybesma (1999)

[S]ortal classifiers "name the unit in which the entity denoted by the noun naturally occurs" [...]
mensural classifiers "*create* a unit of measure."

Watanabe (2006)

Mensural classifiers = measure words = nouns, occurring in the pseudo-partitive construction
three cups of coffee

What do classifiers do?: Popular view

Quine (1968); Krifka (1995); Chierchia (1998, 2010); Borer (2005); Wilhelm (2008), ...

- Common nouns in classifier langauges are mass-like.
- Hence, they cannot be directly modified by numerals.
- Classifiers make nouns countable.

(1) Tiếng Nhật

a. hon ni *(satu)
book two CLF
'hai quyển sách'
cf. *two books*

b. mizu ni *(hai)
water two cup
'hai cốc nước'
cf. *two *(cups) of water*

(2) Tiếng Trung (Mandarin)

a. liang *(ben) shu
two CLF book
'hai quyển sách'
cf. *two books*

b. liang *(bei) shui
two cup water
'hai cốc nước'
cf. *two *(cups) of water*

Terms for classifiers

- Terms for classifiers in non-English languages reflect the popular view that classifiers have to do with counting. (except in Vietnamese?)

Ngôn ngữ	General	Technical
Anh	*counter*	*classifier*
Nhật	助数詞 *josuusi* (= word helping numbers)	類別詞 *ruibetusi* (= word for class categorization)
Việt	*loại từ* (類詞), *danh từ chỉ loại* (名詞指類)	
Trung	量詞 liàngcí (= word for quantities)	
Mã Lai	*penjodoh bilangan* (= partner for numbers)	

Problem: Optional classifier languages

- Classifiers are optional in many languages.
- Common nouns in these languages can be modified directly by numerals.
- Classifiers do not seem to exist to enable counting.

(3) Tiếng Mã Lai

a. dua buah buku
two CLF book

b. dua buku
two book
'hai quyển sách'

(4) Tiếng Ba Tư (Hamedani 2011:153)

a. bist tâ sarbâz
twenty CLF soldier

b. bist sarbâz
twenty soldier
'hai mươi người lính'

Typology of classifier languages

- WALS (World Atlas of Language Structures) (Gil 2005)

Obligatory	78
Optional	62
No classifier	260
Total	400

- Vietnamese is categorised as an obligatory classifier language.

(5) hai con chó

Gil (2005) on Vietnamese

The distinction between optional and obligatory numeral classifiers is further complicated by the existence of specific contexts and special styles of speech in which the distribution of numeral classifiers diverges from the norm. For example, grammar books of Vietnamese usually claim that numeral classifiers are obligatory in the numeral-plus-noun environment, and speakers of Vietnamese will typically judge the absence of a numeral classifier in such constructions to be ungrammatical. Accordingly, [...] Vietnamese is characterized as a language [...] with obligatory numeral classifiers. Nevertheless, there is at least one common context in which numeral classifiers are frequently absent, that associated with food stalls and restaurants.

(6) [Five people placing their order]
ba gà hai bò

More classifier optionality in Vietnamese

Nguyễn Đình Hoà

Time nouns (*danh từ thời gian*) and some abstract nouns (*danh từ trừu tượng*) are “non-classified nouns” (Nguyễn 1997).

(7) Danh từ thời gian
hôm, ngày, tuần, tháng, năm, mùa, thế kỉ/thế kỷ, thờ kì/thờ kỷ, thời đại, kỉ nguyên/kỷ nguyên, đời, sáng, trưa, chiều, tối, đêm, hồi, lúc, khi, dạo, thuở

(8) Danh từ trừu tượng
tư tưởng, ý nghĩ, quan điểm, thái độ, phong cách, phương pháp, tinh thần, chủ trương, lập trường, lí tưởng/lý tưởng, ý thức hệ, nghĩa vụ, bổn phận, xã hội

(9) a. hai ngày
b. ba đêm
c. những ý nghĩ
d. hai quan điểm

My observations

1. Learning Vietnamese using a textbook by Masaaki Shimizu (Shimizu 2011)
2. Working on the Vietnamese component of the TUFS Asian Language Parallel Corpus (TALPCo; Nomoto et al. 2018, forthcoming)
   `https://github.com/matbahasa/TALPCo`

Shimizu's textbook

- Shimizu's textbook does not list a classifier for humans (Bài 12, p. 59).
- It presents direct numeral modification before introducting classifiers.

(11) Bài 11, p. 51

H: Anh đã có gia đình chưa vậy?
O: Có, tôi có hai con rồi.
H: Hai cháu nhà anh là cháu trai hay cháu gái?
O: Một con trai và một con gái.
H: Một hoàng tử, một công chúa là lý tưởng đấy, anh ạ.

Classifier optionality in other languages

- Classifier optionality is observed in similar contexts in other so-called obligatory classifier langauges.
- Anti-classifier contexts.
  1. Certain animate nouns
  2. Abstract nouns
  3. Large and non-specific nubers
  4. Lists
  5. Compounds

Anti-classifier context (1): Certain animte nouns

- In Korean, classifiers are optional for an extremely limited number of animate nouns (Kang 1994; Lee and Ramsey 2000):

  (12) *salam* 'người'
  haksayng 'sinh viên'
  kay 'chó'

- Vienamese examples from the textbook fall into this category?

Anti-classifier context (2): Abstract nouns

Classifiers are optional for some abstract nouns in Tai languages (Conklin 1981:364) and Japanese (Downing 1996:73).

(13) Tiếng Nhật

Risuto-ni aru hati gengo kara ni gengo sentakusi-nasai.
list-DAT be eight language from two language choose-IMP
'Choose two languages from the eight languages in the list.'

- Other nouns: *kamoku/kyooka* 'môn học', *tiiki* 'vùng', *genri* 'nguyên lý', *kadai* 'vấn đề'
- It is unclear which nouns allow classifier optionality. (Are these actually compounds?)

Nguyễn Đình Hoà's *danh từ trừu tượng* in Japanese

Danh từ	*nana tu-no …-ga* [7-CLF-LINK ...-NOM]	*nana-no …-ga* [7-LINK ...-NOM]
sisoo 'tư tưởng'	ok	?
kangae 'ý nghĩ'	ok	*
kanten 'quan điểm'	ok	?
taido 'thái độ'	ok	?
sutairu 'phong cách'	ok	?
hoohoo 'phương pháp'	ok	ok
seisin 'tinh thần'	ok	?
shuchoo 'chủ trương'	ok	?
tatiba 'lập trường'	ok	*
risoo 'lý tưởng'	ok	?
gimu 'nghĩa vụ'	ok	ok
shakai 'xã hội'	ok	*

Anti-classifier context (3): Large and non-specific numbers

Classifiers are optional with

- multiples of ten in Nung (Saul and Wilson 1980:27) and Burmese (Hla Pe 1965)

(14) Nung (Saul and Wilson 1980:27)

slám pảm (áhn) hơn
three hundred CLF house

'ba trăm căn nhà'

- large numbers such as 1000 in Thai (Aikhenvald 2000:100)
- vague-quantity expressions in Cantonese (Matthews and Yip 2011:111) (and also in Vietnamese?)

(15) hóu dō (jī) bāt
very many CLF pen
'nhiều bút'

Similar examples in Japanese

(16) a. {san *(ko)/ kyuu ?(ko)/ juu-go (ko)} -no gengo
three CLF nine CLF fifteen CLF -LINK language
'three/nine/fifteen languages'

b. ni san (nin)-no gakusei
two three CLF-LINK student
'two or three/a few students'

c. juu-suu (ko)-no sima
ten-some CLF-LINK island
'more than a dozen islands'

Anti-classifier context (4): Lists

(17) Gil (2005)
[Five people placing their order]
ba gà hai bò

(18) Tiếng Nhật

Kitte-o san (mai) to hagaki-o yon (mai) kudasai.
stamp-ACC three CLF and postcard-ACC four CLF give

'I'd like three stamps and four postcards.'

Anti-classifier context (5): Compounds

In Japanese, direct numeral modification is possible and sometimes required in compounds.

(19) Compound

a. toppu nana daigaku
top seven university
'top seven universities'

b. *toppu nana tu daigaku
top seven CLF university

(20) Phrase

a. toppu(-no) nana tu-no daigaku
top-LINK seven CLF-LINK university
top seven university
'top seven universities'

b. *toppu-no nana-no daigaku
top-LINK seven-LINK university

Anti-classifier contexts in optional classifier languages

Asmah (1972:94)

In Malay and Iban, certain abstract nouns do not take classifiers, that is, they only occur in the 'Num NP' pattern.

Hypothesis

- Classifier languages differ in the degree/strengh of classifier requirement.
- The requirement is relaxed in anti-classifier contexts.
  - Obligatory $\rightarrow$ optional$\sim$absent
  - Optional $\rightarrow$ less likely to occur$\sim$absent

Accounting for anti-classifier contexts

- Anti-classifier contexts are in action in classifier langauges in general.
- Thus, they stem from the core of the syntax/semantics of classifiers.
- Not all of them follow from analyses assuming that classifiers enable counting.
  - Abstract nouns are expected to require classifiers more than concrete nouns, contrary to the reality.

The semantics of classifiers

Nomoto (2013)

- Clasifiers are not for counting.
- Common nouns in classifier languages are countable and not mass-like.
- Classifier semantics consists of two dimensions.
  1. Singular number (as at-issue content; primary)
  2. Classification function (as conventional impliature; secondary)

(21) a. quyển sách này
(i) 'this book' (ii) *'these books'
b. {cái/con/bức/tờ} sách này
(i) 'this book' (not * but odd) (ii) *'these books'

The denotation of classifiers

(22) $[\![\text{CL}]\!] =$ singular number ♦ classification function

(23) $[\![\text{CL}]\!] = \lambda P \lambda x[P(x) \wedge \neg \exists\, y \in P[y < x]]$ ♦ $\lambda P[P \subseteq$ CLASS$]$
where CLASS denotes conjoined properties that nouns with which the relevant classifier is used have.

Example (Tiếng Nhật)

(24) kuruma ni dai
xe hai CLF
'hai chiếc xe ô-tô'

(25) $[\![\text{dai}]\!] = \lambda P \lambda x[P(x) \wedge \neg\exists\, y \in P[y < x]] \blacklozenge \lambda P[P \subseteq \text{INANIMATE}_{34.81} \wedge P \subseteq \text{MECHANICAL}_{3.9} \wedge P \subseteq \text{PLACED ON THE GROUND}_{0.5} \wedge P \subseteq \text{DETACHED}_{1.3} \wedge P \subseteq \text{CARRYING THINGS}_{0.2}]$

- The contents of CLASS work as (violable) constraints with different numeric weights.
- They differ in importance.
- The values can be estimated by experimental and/or corpus study.

Varying degrees of acceptability

(26) a. iti dai-no kuruma
one CLF-LINK car
'a car'

b. ??iti dai-no honbako
one CLF-LINK bookcase
'a bookcase'

c. *iti dai-no neko
one CLF-LINK cat
'a cat'

Why are abstract nouns an anti-classifier context?

- The contents of CLASS usually concern concrete properties of objects.
- It is often unclear whether abstract nouns have such concrete properties.
- Thus, using any classifier will cause some degree of inappropriateness.
- Non-use of a classifier is preferred to inappropiate use of a classifier.
- Some languages tolerate non-use more than other languages.

Conclusion

- Classifier optionality is a cross-linguistically common feature of classifier languages.
- Anti-classifier contexts seem to resemble across languages.
- Many details remain unclear about the specifics of anti-classifier contexts.
- The popular view that classifiers are for counting is not compatible with classifier optionality.
- It sheds no light on anti-classifier contexts.

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