SOME REMARKS ON COMBINATORY POSITION OF CLASSFIERS IN THE NOUN PHRASE OF HMONG LANGUAGE

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For a long time now, research on "Classifiers" in isolating languages has captured the special attention of many linguists. The nature of classifiers is still questionable, especially in noun-phrases, and there is disagreement regarding evaluation quality when classifying them in different categories. In this paper, I used the term "Classifiers" as a mark in order to describe the combinatory position in Noun-phrases, without ambitions to discuss them theoretically, and with hopes of providing some more data to light on arguments about combinatory position of an important language in this region i.e., Hmong language.

1. Until now, the research on Hmong language's noun-phrases in Vietnam has not been in proportion to its level of use. The most subtatial research conducted so far has been that by Nguyen Nang Tan (in 1973) into the pattern of noun phrases in Hmong languages in Vietnam. In his full pattern, the author illuminated the location of "Subordinated nouns = -N1 (positions minus the first nouns in the right)" followed by head-nouns and could be preceded immediately by some other classifiers such as "quantifiers, numerals, nouns refered to = -N2 " as follows:

Possessor		Attributing to numerals and types			Head	To refer to property	To refer to orgirin	In order to demonstrate
-N4	Pre.	-N3	-N2	-N1	Head-noun	+N1	+N2	+N3

In her article, the syntactic function of the classifiers in the noun-phrases in some typical structures was studied by Annie Jaisser (in 1987). Here, I represented the combinatory possibilities of classifiers in the occurrence of noun-phrases.

2. In structure Classifiers (Cl) - Nouns (N).

In isolating languages, it's quite normal to meet the combination of Cl and N. Of course, Hmong language is not exception. The classifiers themselves made nouns separated and , concrete, so they could come into operation in phrases and contrast with common nouns which owned general-nominal meanings:

1a. "Nhux nyei cuz,   -Buffalos are afraid of heat K "Buffalo" refered to general meaning)

Nênhl lâul hluz cxang"- Horses are horrified of tigers (Hmong idiom)

1b. Zouv Vu zus tâu iz tul nhux

Mr Vu raises a buffalo K (a concrete buffalo).

Different classifiers combine with different corresponding nouns. There are over seventy classifiers in Hmong language and they can be divided into groups, each one can be combined with coreponding nouns. Here we use some typical examples to consider as following:

- The group of classifiers combined with nouns which refer to things, such as: luz, đeiv, trăngz, txux, faoz..... In which luz (combined with most nouns denoting to things; *luz dangz* (a gutter); *luz couv* (a dosser)...) ; đeiv(grouped with nouns denoting to things which have a thin-face; *deiv ntour* (a paper) *deiv duôz shangv* (a map)...); trăngz (combined with nouns refering to

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materials for production-tools, weapons; *trăngz vôngv* (a plough); *trăngz faov* (a gun)...) and txux (combined with nouns for things which last for a long time. *trux hluô* (a rope); *txux cêr(a road)...*).

- Classifier tul which can be combined with nouns for animals or humans; *tul paok* (a puma); *tul thaor khơr* (a beggar) ...

In Hmong language, as in others in this region, the classifiers can not only combine with a single category of nouns but also multiple categories in some cases (although rare). For instance: We could produce trăngz trơk (a razor), and tul trơk as well, etc.

3. Some combinatory positions of classifiers in noun-phrases.

3.1. The structure Numeral-Classifier- Hn(Head-noun) in noun-phrases is the most-frequent pattern. The numerals which can group with classifiers are usually numbers for counting such as iz (one), aoz (two), pêz (three), etc.

1. iz tul đeik đêr lul tiv tax têz. K iz tul đeik đêr (A malayan bear came back to the burnt-over land)

2. Tuôz shaor huôv zơrv cuv chơrv haz tâu aoz luz nkhăngk keiz jông gâux tsis. K   aoz luz nkhăngk keiz.

(Just a moment later, Cu (old man) had made a very beautiful chicken -cage.)

3.2. In the structure Qualifier-Classifier-(Head-noun) in noun-phrases, the series of quanlifiers is not large, but almost all of them are quite frequent when they are performing in noun-phrases. In Hmong language, the quanlifiers are Cxuô (every), Têx(every,all),Chaor (some) Tuôz (each), Nax (all, every) and so on, but they are quite rare in structures which consist of classifiers. They are attributed to the general property of this class. There is only one exception which could appear in structures, that is Têx. For example:

1. Têx zangv saz xangr cxuv (The wrong ideas)

3.3. The structure Noun (refered to numeral) - Classifier-(Head-noun): This language has many nouns for numerals such as Puô (hundred), Châuv (ten) , Cxinhz, Cxaz (thousand) etc. , which also could combine with head-nouns in structures which comprised classifiers- in this case -the numerals often accompanied nouns refering to numbers. e.g.,

iz puô đeiv txax (One hundred dong)

Câuv vangv tuz traos (One hundred thousand soldiers)

3.4. The structure Particle implying grouping (temporary termed Gm (grouping-marker) — Q (Quantifier) - Classifier - (Head - Noun): As could be seen the grouping-markers and quanlifiers themselves had high general meaning. Thus it is normal to produce grouping-markers such as: iz huôv, sơr đơl, iz têl (all),etc., which could be combined with attributibutive head-nouns. Furthermore, in structures of grouping-markers and quanlifiers or quantifiers-classifiers, there is also a further classifier which contains emphatic meaning expressed by the speaker. Compare:

1a. Têx tul nhux nor (These buffalos) Quanlifiers-Classifiers-Hn

1b. iz huôv puôs nhux nor (All of These buffalos) Gm-Zero-Hn..

1c. iz huôv têx tul nhux nor (All of These buffalos)Gm-Q-Cl-Hn...

(emphasized)

3.5. In the structure particle refering to Possession (word or structure) - Cl- Hn, this language, differentiates the location of possession in which there is a word denoting possession (including personal pronouns, common and proper nouns) and structure of possession (including prepositions Li or Lê). They are always on the left of the head-noun, and can combine directly with head-nouns. When head-nouns are proper, the classifiers can be absent in this structure (as mentioned in 1b above):

1a. Caox luz yao yaz nor (This new clothes is yours)

1b. Pao li nhux   (A buffalo of Mr, Pao)

In some cases, it is also not necessary to have Cl and the particle can combined directly with Hn refering to soleness and uniqueness (as in 1c following):

1c. Caox nav môngl kreir tưs? (Where did your mother go?)

3.6. The structure Classifier-Subordinator (as attributive of head-noun)-Hn(head-noun), in Hmong language, is quite special for noun-phrases because some of them have attributives preceded by their head-nouns and followed by classifiers. They can be subdivided into two smaller categories:

1a. iz luz hli (a month)   K   Luz iz hli (January)

1b. Tul đêr (a dog)   K   Tul txir đêr (he-dog)

Here, it can be seen in case 1a, that the classifier precedes numerals in order to delimit nouns in closed-nominal structures. In this language, some attributives of head-nouns are immediately followed by classifiers and restrict their head nouns which frequently occur with, refered to inherent properties of things due to determination of native-speakers.

4. In Hmong language, there is also particle nav occuring in the left of the head-noun in structures starting with classifiers.

1a. caox li luz nav chêr đruôs thêv (Your house is too bad)

1b. Tul nav gâux caox lao sưz fêv (That girl is too ugly)

Nav is usually understood in respects as following:

1c. aoz nav tuz jông gâux tsis K (*mother*)

1d. Tul nav nhux K Cow   (*female*)

When we compare (1a,b) with (1c,d), we can recognize that

nav in case 1a,b which did not contain it is inherent meanings as in case (1d,c). Here, it does not have any actual lexical meaning (or we can say it is an empty word). It is just exposed through the combinatory positions and meaning of whole sequence. It aims to supplement a whole sequence semanticlly.

In the two examples above (1a,b), if nav is removed, the meaning of the whole sequence will not be retarded. If it is nav itself affects the semantic nuance of the sequences which it lies in. In this position, nav is considered as an emphasized marker with bad implication expressing the speaker's unrespectation. Due to this characteristic, nav is often viewed as corresponding to the indexical marker cái in Vietnamese language but it is always followed by Head-nouns and preceded by classifiers (It is obligatory to have classifiers in this structure).

When nav has a lexical meaning (reference to female animals), it does not come parellel with the indexical marker nav (temporaly called this term). We can say: Tul <u>nav</u> nav đêr caox nzâus thêv (That he-dog is too thin). When there are two navs in one sequence, indexicals will be deleted.

In addition to nav, there is also nhik which can appear in the same structures and be considered as a factor affecting the semantic nuance of the whole sequence. The meaning of nhik is slightly different from that of nav. It refers to contrastion with respectiveness (expressing the speaker's attitude). For example:

Tul *nhik* nhuôs pêz luz hli fangv ndaol (This 3 month -baby is too stout).

The combinatory scope of nhik , however, is relatively narrow. Although it is also obligatory to have nhik in noun-phrases in the same way as nav, it just accompanies nouns refering to animals, and humans.

In most noun-phrases, the combinatory position of classifiers is immediately to the left of head-nouns or head-noun-blocks (including head-nouns and their attributives). In addition, they can be separated from head-nouns by adding other special grammatical units (for the case of indexical).

The combinatory position of classifiers in noun-phrases in Hmong language is quite diverse. They occur in differrent contexts and in each one they have different semantic functions, and one of them is emphatic decreased attitude of the speaker.

In short, the existence of classifiers in phrases, for the most part, is stipulated by a series of other units in differrent grammatical positions such as: numeral, determiner, possessing-marker or clause accompanied with classifiers in order to supplement to the specific propertics of head-nouns.

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