Grammatical Features
based largely on Goddard (2005) Chapter 4.

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Outline

Outline

What Are Classifiers?

- Classifiers categorize nouns based on salient properties.
- Found in noun phrases (NPs) with modifiers like quantifiers.
- Essential for grammaticality when quantifiers (e.g., numerals) are present.
- Classifiers categorize by physical, social, or functional traits.
- Used with numerals, vague quantifiers like "some", or even alone.

The Role of Classifiers in NPs

- Classifier slot required for quantifier NPs.
- Used with vague quantifiers like "many" and "some."
- Classifiers can appear with or without a noun.
- Classifier systems categorize referents based on properties like shape or function.
- In certain NPs, the classifier is mandatory for grammaticality.

Classifier Phrases

- Classifier and quantifier form a grammatical sub-phrase.
- Quantifier and classifier appear adjacent to each other.
- Can sometimes occur alone without a noun.
- These classifier phrases are common across East and Southeast Asian languages.
- Example languages include Thai, Malaysian, and Mandarin.

Examples: Thai and Malaysian

- Thai and Malaysian demonstrate similar classifier behaviors.
- Classifiers are used next to quantifiers.
- Classifier-quantifier pairs can occur without a noun in responses.
- Questions often require classifiers in these languages.

(1) *Mǎa kìi   tua?*
     dog   how.many   CL:animal

    'How many dogs?'

(2) *(Mǎa) sǎam tua.*
     dog   three   CL:animal

    'Three (dogs).'

Examples: Malaysian

- Similar behavior with quantifiers and classifiers in Malaysian.
- Classifiers appear adjacent to quantifiers.
- Noun can be omitted in responses.

(3) *Berapa   ekor   anjing?*
     how.many CL:animal dog

   'How many dogs?'

(4) *Tiga   ekor   (anjing).*
     three CL:animal dog

   'Three (dogs).'

Sortal Classifiers

- **sortal** classifiers are the prototypical numeral classifiers
- they pick out salient features of the noun they classify
  kinds, that is, semantic classes
  shape (or size)
- **general** classifiers are used as follows:
  - for the residue of nouns
    yume-o 1-tu mita "I saw a dream"
  - as a default when no particular feature is salient
    hon-o chōdo 1-tu katta "I bought exactly one book"
  - for underspecified referents
    nantoka-ga 1-tu hoshii "I want one thingamajig"

(Bond and Paik, 2011)

Measure (Mensural) vs. Sortal Classifier Constructions

- Measure constructions quantify "mass" substances (e.g., water, butter).
- Sortal constructions categorize countable items.
- Measure constructions refer to shape-based or container units.
- Sortal categorize objects based on properties like function or shape.
- Sortal systems apply broadly, while measure constructions are limited.

Examples of Measure Constructions

- Measure constructions often use shape-based units.
- Examples: "two cups of water," "two grains of sand."
- Unit counter constructions group items (e.g., "two pairs of shoes").
- Measure constructions differ from classifiers structurally.

(5) 二   杯   の 水
     ni   hai   no mizu
     two CL.cup   of water

     two cups of water

Unit Counter (Group) Constructions

- Used for collective or group items (e.g., "two pairs of shoes").
- Unit counters single out items from a larger set.
- Structurally similar to classifiers but serve different purposes.
- Examples include: "two pieces of furniture," "two bunches of bananas."
- Not so common in Japanese
- Very common in English and Thai

Repeater Constructions

- Nouns can act as their own classifier in repeater constructions.
- Common when no specific classifier exists.
- Often seen in languages like Thai and Lao.
- Repeater constructions fill the classifier slot with the noun itself.

(6) *Mii*   *taw*   *dòòk-maj*   *cak*   *taw?*
     there.is vase   flower   how.many vase

   'How many vases are there?'

Specialized Classifiers

- Some languages, like Korean and Khmer, have specialized classifiers.
- These may be used for royalty, teachers, or monks.
- Classifiers categorize people by social status in some languages.

(7) 何　　名　　　　　　様　　です　か
　　 nan　 mei　　　　　　 sama　desu　ka
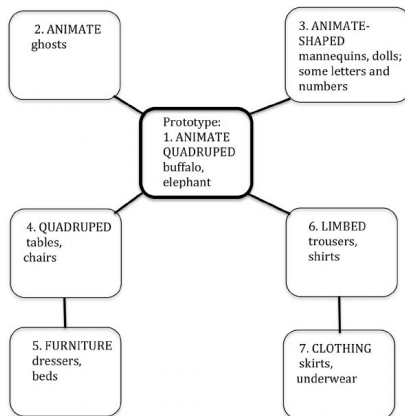　　 what　CL.people.HON　HON　 is　　Q

　　 How many people?

(8) 三　　人　　　　　です
　　 san　 nin　　　　　 desu
　　 three　CL.people　 is

　　 Three

Prototype and Extensions in Classifiers

- Classifiers often exhibit polysemy (multiple related meanings).
- A central, or "prototype," meaning extends to other related uses.
- Example: Thai *tua* applies to animals but extends to furniture and clothing.

2. ANIMATE
ghosts

3. ANIMATE-SHAPED
mannequins, dolls;
some letters and
numbers

Prototype:
1. ANIMATE
QUADRUPED
buffalo,
elephant

4. QUADRUPED
tables,
chairs

6. LIMBED
trousers,
shirts

5. FURNITURE
dressers,
beds

7. CLOTHING
skirts,
underwear

Classifiers can indirectly count

(9)   *2-tsū-no*   *denshimēru (Japanese)*
      2-tong-ui   imayl   (Korean)
      2-CL.message-of email

      2 pieces of email

(10) *3-tsū-no*   *tegami (Japanese)*
      3-tong-ui   phyenci (Korean)
      3-CL.message-of letter

      3 letters

(11) *3-mai-no*   *tegami*
      3-chang-ui   phyenci
      3-CL.flat-of letter

      {a 3 page letter/*3 letters}

Conclusion

- Classifiers categorize nouns based on physical, social, or functional traits.
- Found widely in East and Southeast Asian languages.
- Classifier systems vary from general to highly specialized.
- Classifiers are essential to noun phrase structure in these languages.

Outline

Aspect in East and Southeast Asian Languages

- Many East and Southeast Asian languages lack tense marking.
- Verbs are often marked for aspect instead of tense.
- Aspect marking can occur through suffixes, auxiliary verbs, or particles.
- Aspect focuses on the time structure of an event, not its time reference.
- Aspect can indicate whether an action is ongoing, completed, or habitual.

What is Aspect?

- Aspect refers to the temporal structure of events.
- Different from tense, which indicates time reference (past, present, future).
- Example: English progressive aspect shows ongoing action (e.g. "is talking").
- Many East and Southeast Asian languages mark aspect using various strategies.
- Common aspect categories include perfective, imperfective, progressive, and habitual.

Perfective vs. Imperfective Aspect

- Perfective aspect presents an event in its entirety.
- Imperfective aspect highlights the internal structure of an event.
- Imperfective can indicate ongoing (progressive), repeated (iterative), or habitual actions.
- Example: English progressive *You are talking* is imperfective.
- Perfective focuses on completion, while imperfective focuses on duration or repetition.

Types of Imperfective Aspect

Progressive	Ongoing action	*She is running*
Iterative	Repeated actions	*The light is flashing*
Durative	Actions that take time	*He was sitting*
Habitual	Regularly occurring actions	*She runs every morning*

Imperfective aspects provide detailed temporal structure.

Aspect in Sinitic Languages: Overview

- Aspect in Mandarin and Cantonese is marked using suffixes and particles.
- Different markers for perfective, progressive, continuous, and experiential aspects.
- Aspect marking is independent of tense (past, present, future).

Aspect Type	Mandarin		Cantonese	
Perfective	V-le	了	V-jo2	咗
Progressive	zai-V	在	V-gan2	緊
Continuous	V-zhe	着	V-jyuh6	住
Experiential	V-guo	过	V-gwo3	過
Delimitative	V-yī-V	一	V-haa5	吓
Habitual			V-hoi1	開

Table: Aspect markers in Mandarin and Cantonese

- Perfective *le* indicates a completed action.
- Used in various contexts: past, future, or conditional events.
- Example: Conditional use of *le* in a future event.

(12) *Tā kāi-le   mén, nǐ   jiu   jìn-qu.*
      3sg open-perf door 2sg then enter-go

      (Once) she opens the door, you go in.

- Perfective *le* can mark completion in different contexts.
- Can occur with specific objects, durations, or numbers of actions.
- Example: Perfective aspect with a stative verb (tall) and quantifier (a little).

(13)   *Nǐ gǎo-le yīdiǎn.*
     2sg tall-perf a.little

     You've got taller (a little).

Examples of Imperfective Aspects

(14) *Wòhng síujé góng-gán dihnwá.*
      Wong   miss talk-prog telephone

      Miss Wong is talking on the phone.

(15) *Léih hái Hēunggóng jyuh-gwo géi   loih a?*
      you in Hong   Kong   live-exp how long

      How long did you live in Hong Kong?

Cantonese: Habitual Aspect

- Habitual aspect *hōi* marks regular or customary actions.
- Example: Habitual actions in present or past tense.

(16) *Kéuih jouh-hōi   jūngdím   ge.*
      she   work-hab part.time prt

        'She normally works part-time.'

(17) *Kéuih yíhchìhn jā-hōi   Bēnsí ge.*
      she   before   drive-hab Benz   prt

        'She used to drive a Mercedes.'

Delimitative Aspect in Cantonese

- Delimitative *háh* indicates doing something "for a while."
- Often rendered as "have a V" in English.
- Example: "Have a look" or "have a walk."

(18)   *Tái-háh.*
       look-del

       Have a look.

(19)   *Yāusīk-háh.*
       rest-del

       Have a rest.

Aspect Marking in Malaysian

- Aspect in Malaysian is marked by separate words before the verb.
- *Sudah* (perfective) and *sedang* (progressive) are common markers.
- Perfective *sudah* indicates completion, used for past or future events.
- *Sedang* marks ongoing action, similar to the progressive in other languages.

Examples of Malaysian Aspect

(20) *Saya pun sudah beritahu juga semalam.*
      I   focus perf tell   also yesterday

      I already told (you) yesterday.

(21) *Bila saya masuk, dia sedang membaca.*
      when I   enter   he prog   read

      When I came in, he was reading.

Use in Singlish

- This is carried over into Singapore Colloquial English (Singlish)
  - **habitual**: *always*
  - **perfect**: *already*
  - **progressive**: *still*

(22) Eat <u>already</u>? "Have you eaten"

(23) Eat before class "I ate before class"

(24) He <u>always</u> late one. "He is habitually late"

(25) Your phone <u>still</u> spoil ah? "Your phone is still broken?"

Conclusion on Aspect in East and Southeast Asian Languages

- Aspect marking is diverse across languages, with a variety of methods.
- Suffixes, particles, and separate words are used to indicate aspect.
- Common aspect categories include perfective, progressive, habitual, and delimitative.
- Each language has unique strategies for expressing temporal structure.

Outline

Introduction to Serial Verb Constructions

- Serial verb constructions (SVCs) involve two or more verbs in a single clause.
- No conjunctions are used between the verbs.
- All verbs share the same grammatical subject.
- Common in East and Southeast Asian languages.
- Serial verb constructions serve various grammatical functions.

Loose vs. Tight Serialization

- **Loose serialization**: Verbs are loosely connected, depicting sequences of events.
- **Tight serialization**: Verbs are tightly connected, representing a single event.
- In loose serialization, verbs may have independent arguments.
- Tight serialization often involves motion or posture verbs.
- Cultural factors can affect acceptability of tight serialization.

Example of Loose Serialization (Lao)

- Loose serialization in Lao:

(26) *Dèèng paj^3 talaat^5 sùù^4 khùang^1 maa^2 hùan^2 lèèw^4.*
      Deng go market buy stuff   come house perf

Deng went to the market, bought some stuff, (and) came home.

- Verbs describe sequential actions.
- Perfective aspect marker applies to the entire sequence.

Example of Tight Serialization (Thai)

- Tight serialization in Thai:

(27) *Dèk wîng pay síi khanŏm.*
child run go buy candy

The child ran (and) bought candy.

- Verbs depict a single unitary event.
- Verbs share the same subject and object.

Cultural Factors in Tight Serialization

- Cultural norms influence acceptability of verb combinations.
- Example: Playing musical instruments in Lao.

(28) $nang^1$ tii^3 $lanaat^4$.
         sit   beat lanaat

         Play the lanaat sitting.

(29) $nòòn^2$ tii^3 $lanaat^4$.
         lie   beat lanaat

         Play the lanaat lying down.

- Playing the lanaat lying down is culturally unexpected.
- Context can make such constructions acceptable.

Serial Verbs and Directional Verbs (Thai)

- Verbs like 'go' and 'come' often indicate direction in serial verb constructions.
- These directional verbs function similarly to adverbs.
- Example from Thai:

(30) *Khǎw klàp   maa   lɛ́ɛ́w.*
      3sg   return hither(come) perf

   'She came back already.'

(31) *Khǎw klàp   pay   lɛ́ɛ́w.*
      3sg   return away(go)   perf

   'She went back already.'

Three-Verb Serialization in Lao

- Serial verb constructions can include three verbs.
- First verb: manner of motion.
- Second verb: absolute direction (e.g., 'up', 'down').
- Third verb: direction relative to the speaker (e.g., 'come', 'go').

(32) *Laaw2 ñaang1 khùn5 maa2.*
    3sg   walk   go.up   come

    'She walked up here.'

Verb-Prepositions in Serial Constructions

- Certain verbs take on grammatical functions similar to prepositions.
- Verbs like 'give', 'use', 'go' mark arguments such as beneficiaries or instruments.
- Example from Lao: haj5 'give' functions as 'for'.

(33) *Laaw2 nùng1 khaw5 haj5   khòòj5.*
      3sg   steam rice   give(=for) 1sg

      He steamed some rice for me.

Comitative Use of Serial Verbs (Lao)

- Comitative 'with' often expressed using a serial verb construction.
- Example from Lao:

(34) *Khan2 haw2 juu1 nam2* *mèè1-thaw5.*
      if   we   live accompany(=with) mother-old

   If we live with your mother.'

- Verb 'accompany' acts like a preposition meaning 'with'.

Serial Verbs in Vietnamese and Hmong

- Verb serialization marks locutionary topics in some languages.
- Example from Vietnamese: 'arrive' used for topics.

(35) *Chmng tình@c d-Tn anh   lu«n.*
     pl   1(excl.) recall arrive(=about) brother

    'We often speak about you.'

Serial Verbs form a cline in Japanese

- Some serial verbs are completely lexicalized
  - 取り締まる *torishimaru* "manage (lit: take-squeeze)"
- Some serial verbs are almost aspectual (like English particle verbs)
  - 食べあげる *tabe-ageru* "eat up (lit: eat rise)"
  - 歩きだす *aruki-dasu* "begin to walk/walk out (lit: walk leave)"
- Some serial verbs are completely syntactic
  - 食べおわる *tabe-owaru* "finish eating (lit: eat finish)"
  - 歩きはじめる *aruki-hajimeru* "start walking (lit: walk start)"
- ! Arguments can be transferred (in certani cases)
  - 大阪を食べ歩く *osaka-wo tabe-aruku* "stroll around Osaka eating (lit: Osaka walk eat)"
  - 寿司を食べ歩く *sushi-wo tabe-aruku* "stroll around eating sushi (lit: sushi walk eat)"

(Hashimoto and Bond, 2005)

Summary of Serial Verb Constructions

- Serial verb constructions involve multiple verbs sharing a subject.
- They are common in East and Southeast Asian languages.
- They can express sequences, direction, beneficiary roles, and more.
- Loose serialization refers to sequences of events.
- Tight serialization depicts a single, unified event.

Outline

What is a Subject?

- NP preceding the verb holds a privileged position.
- English examples:

(36) I̲ go

(37) He̲ goes.

(38) She̲ seems happy.

- Distinction of pronouns: *I* vs. *me*, *they* vs. *them*.
- Subject impacts verb agreement, e.g., -s in present tense.
- Subjects can be agents, patients, experiencers, etc.

- Subject agreement in European languages.
- Case marking systems indicate subject (nominative).
- Verbs agree with subjects in person and number.
- Passive constructions highlight subjects:

(39)   Maxine was elected.

- Traditional view: Subjects are universal in human languages.

Introduction to Topic

- Topics define what the sentence is "about."
- Topics often overlap with subjects in English.

(40)   Cats eat mice (topic = cats).

- In many Asian languages, topic and subject diverge.
- Topic prominence is perhaps more important than subject prominence in East Asian languages.

Topic Prominence: Thai

- Flexible word order: OSV, SOV common in Thai.
- Example of OSV:

> **Example**
>
> Pàakphanang khâaw raw kin ngâay.
> Pakphanang   rice   we   eat simple
>
> (In) Pakphanang, we ate simply.

- Thai is typically SVO but informal sentences deviate.
- Widespread subject ellipsis in informal contexts.
- Pragmatic ordering of sentences.

Topic Prominence: Mandarin

- Topics always appear sentence-initially.
- Example of topicalized object:

Example

Zhāngsān	wǒ	yǐjīng	jiàn-guo	le.
Zhangsan	I	already	see-exp	crs

Zhangsan, I've already seen (him).

- Subject ellipsis possible when context is clear.
- Time and locative phrases often function as topics.
- Example: *In Taipei, one can eat well.*

Topic vs. Subject in Mandarin

- Flexible topic-comment structure.
- Double-subject construction in Mandarin.
- Example:

> **Example**
>
> Xiàng   bízi   cháng.
> elephant nose long
>
> 'Elephants, (their) noses are long.'

- Topic sets the frame for comment on the subject.
- The topic-comment structure is common and unmarked.

Topic and Subject in Japanese

- *wa* marks topics, *ga* marks subjects.
- Example of *wa/ga* distinction:

(41) *hi   wa   nobor-u.*
      sun top rise-pres

      The sun rises (general)

(42) *hi   ga   nobor-u.*
      sun top rise-pres

      The sun is rising (specific)

- *wa* used in contrastive and generic statements.
- *ga* indicates a focus on the event as a whole.
- Adverbial topics: time/place phrases marked by *wa* (or unmarked)

Tagalog Trigger System

- Tagalog has a flexible trigger system.
- Trigger denotes definiteness and is marked on verbs.
- Example of Actor Trigger (AT):

> **Example**
>
> Mag-aalis   ang bata ng laruan sa kahon.
> at-will.take.out trig child pat toy   dir box
>
> 'The child will take a toy out of the box.'

- Verb affixes indicate the role of the trigger NP.
- The system challenges traditional subject/topic definitions.

Actor vs. Undergoer in Acehnese

- Acehnese verbs take person-marking prefixes or suffixes.
- Prefixes for actors, suffixes for undergoers.
- Example of Actor:

> **Example**
>
> Geu-jak.
>
> 3-go
>
> 'He/she goes.'

- Example of Undergoer:

> **Example**
>
> Lôn rhët-lôn.
>
> 1sg fall-1sg
>
> 'I fall.'

- Acehnese highlights actor/undergoer, not subject/object.

Summary: Subject and Topic

- Subject prominence is common in European languages.
- Topic prominence is more evident in East Asian languages.
- Topic and subject do not always align.
- Languages like Tagalog and Acehnese challenge traditional subject concepts.
- Ongoing debates in linguistics about the universality of subjects.

Outline

Illocutionary Particles Overview

- Express speaker's immediate emotions, thoughts, desires.
- Common in Southeast Asian languages.
- Often sentence-final.
- Speech acts: requesting, questioning, persuading.
- Express emotional responses: surprise, doubt, hesitation.

Cantonese Sentence-Final Particles

- Cantonese has over 30 basic particles.
- More than 100 particle combinations.
- Particles add subtle nuances to meaning.
- Function like English intonation but more explicit.
- Rich particle usage typical of Southeast Asian languages.

Examples of Cantonese Particles

Particle		Meaning
呀	ā	lively statement, question
呀	áh	seeking confirmation
噉	ak	abrupt disagreement
啦	lā	requesting, seeking agreement
囉	lo	emphasizing current situation
咩	mē	expressing surprise
喎	wo	informative, noteworthy
嘑	bo	exclamatory
喇	la	current relevance, advice
咋	ja	cheeky, intimate

Examples of Cantonese Particles in Questions

- *áh*: surprise or disapproval.
- *há*: presupposing agreement.
- *mē̄*: surprise, often in rhetorical questions.

Example

Léih	gú		gam	yúhngyih	áh?
you	guess	so	easy		prt

'You think it's that easy, do you?'

Directive Particles

- *la*: emphasizes a point of current relevance.
- *lo*: invites agreement or cooperation.
- Example sentences:

Example

Taai chóuh la, ngóh fan   m̀h dóu.
too   noisy prt I   sleep not prt

I can't sleep, it's too noisy.

Example

Gám jauh dāk lo.
so   then okay prt

'That'll be all right, won't it?'

- Particles appear very frequently in Cantonese speech.
- Average occurrence: every 1.5 seconds in conversation.
- Similar usage in Thai, Lao, and Vietnamese.
- Less frequent in formal settings or written texts.
- Frequency decreases in scientific or historical writing.

Mandarin Sentence-Final Particles

- Mandarin has a smaller set of particles than Cantonese.
- Seven common particles in Mandarin.
- Example: *ma* (question), *ba* (suggestion), *ne* (emphasis).
- Particles are typical of informal, conversational settings.
- Estimated frequency: every six seconds in speech.

Examples of Mandarin Particles

Example

Nǐ   xǐhuan chī ma?
you like   eat prt

'Do you like to eat?'

Example

Wǒmen qù ba.
we   go prt

'Let's go.'

Example

Tā ne?
he prt

(43) You must go <u>lah</u>. "You must go, okay?"

(44) I already said <u>lor</u>. "I already told you, see?"

(45) We're about to go already. Your friend leh[1]?
"We're about to go already. What about your friend" (question)

(46) Eh, don't like that leh[3]. We need you here to play mahjong.
"Don't be like that. We need you here to play mahjong."
(persuasive)

These are also common in Singlish II

(47) This one easy <u>mah</u>. "This one is easy, you know?"

(48) You sure can do it <u>meh</u>? "Are you really sure you can do it?"

(49) Don't blame me <u>what</u>. "It's not my fault, you know?"

(50) She always like that <u>one</u>. "She's always like that, you know?"

(Chow et al., 2024)

Conclusion: Importance of Particles

- Particles convey subtle shades of meaning in speech.
- Express emotions, intentions, and social cues.
- Different languages utilize particles with varying frequencies.
- Illocutionary particles are an areal feature of Southeast Asia.
- Essential in mastering conversational fluency in these languages.

Conclusions

- SEA languages have many features not found in Indo-European languages
- They package up meaning in different ways

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