

The syntactic position of numerative complex in Indonesian

Ivan Netkachev

NRU HSE

In Indonesian (Malayic < Malayo-Polynesian < Austronesian) constructions with cardinal numerals, a numerative complex (NC, a combination of a numeral and a classifier) may either precede or follow the noun:

- (1) **NC-N order**
[dua ekor] kucing
two CLF.ANIMAL cat
“two cats”
- (2) **N-NC order**
kucing [dua ekor]
cat two CLF.ANIMAL
“two cats”

NC-N order is the default one. In this paper we consider the semantic and functional differences between the two orders in Standard Indonesian and compare them with the structures involving quantifier float.

Conklin (1981:215-18) claims that the N-NC order has to be used whenever NC is in focus. However, a question-based test for focus (Foley 1999) shows that NC may be focalized when NC-N order is employed, too:

- (3) Q: {How many bears did you kill?}
- (4) A: kali ini saya membunuh TIGA (EKOR) beruang
time DEM I kill three CLF.ANIMAL bear
“This time I killed three bears.”
- (5) A': kali ini saya membunuh beruang TIGA EKOR
time DEM I kill bear three CLF.ANIMAL
“This time I killed three bears.”

Hopper (1986:317) argues that in the 19th century Malay, the N-NC order is used when the nominal is definite. In our data, on the contrary, N-NC order mostly occurs with non-specific nominals (though it also occurs with specific ones). When the N is non-specific, the N-NC order is considered preferable by our consultants, but the standard NC-N order is also possible:

- (6) **Imperative + non-specific N, N-NC is preferable**
beli ayam tiga (ekor)
buy chicken three CLF.ANIMAL
“Buy three chickens.”
- (7) **Opaque context: questions, N-NC is preferable**
baik / sudah-kah kamu membeli bunga 20 buah?
well YAMM-INTER you buy flower 20 CLF.THING
“Well, have you bought 20 flowers?”
- (8) **Definite N, NC-N preferable**
beli dua ekor ayam (yang tadi)

buy two CLF.ANIMAL chicken REL mentioned.before
 “Buy the two chicken.” {“chicken that we have seen in the market this morning”}

Note, however, that both constituent orders were accepted in these contexts.

Lander 2009 suggests that in Western Indonesian languages prenominal NCs may function as determiners. Hence they can be heads of the nominal expressions they occur in; Lander’s hypothesis agrees with the fact that Indonesian is a right-branching language. Our suggestion is that postposed NCs (unlike preposed ones) cannot have a determiner-like function and affect the reference of the nominal – that is why they are preferable when the reference is not established. We also propose that the N-NC pattern may be also related to the quantifier float construction, as illustrated in (9), yet this requires further investigation of the properties of the quantifier float in Indonesian (but see Jenks 2013 for some discussion).

- (9) [N teman] datang ke pesta [NCse-puluh orang] saja
 friend come to party one-ten CLF.HUMAN only
 “Only ten friends (of mine) came to the party.”

References

- Conklin, N. F. 1981. *The Semantics and Syntax in Numeral Classification in Tai and Austronesian*. PhD thesis. Michigan: University of Michigan.
- Foley, W.A. 1999. Information structure. In K. Brown & J. Miller (eds), *Concise encyclopedia of grammatical categories*, 200-209. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Hopper, P. 1986. Some Discourse Functions of Classifiers in Malay. In C. G. Craig (ed.), *Noun Classes and Categorization: Proceedings of a Symposium on Categorization and Noun Classification*, 309-325. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jenks, P. 2013. Accounting for a Generalization about Quantifier Float and Word Order in Classifier Languages. Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (SEALS23). Bangkok, May 29-31, 2013.
- Lander, Yu. 2009. Western Indonesian prenominal modifiers and compositional obligatoriness. In V. B. Kasevich, V. F. Vydrin, Yu. A. Lander & M. Kh. Shakhbieva (eds), *VIII Meždunarodnaja konferencija po jazykam Dal’nego Vostoka, Jugo-Vostočnoj Azii i Zapadnoj Afriki (Moskva, 22-24 sentjabrja 2009 g.): tezis i doklady*, 242-257. Moscow: Kluch-C.