

The Pragmatic Functions Of Numeral Classifiers In Modern Malay Written Corpus

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Abstract

Numeral classifiers are primarily used to provide semantic information about the physical and functional properties of objects, the cognitive categories of objects in a particular culture, and the perceptions of the speakers within a particular speech community towards the objects. Numeral classifiers of Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese and Thai have been found to perform pragmatic functions as well. To identify if Malay does use numeral classifiers to perform a number of pragmatic functions, we analysed a 73,000-word modern Malay corpus targeted at both adult and young audience. Results indicate that in the modern Malay corpus, the Malay numeral classifiers perform several pragmatic functions in various contexts: they function as anaphoric and cataphoric references, as indicators of definiteness and indefiniteness, and as foregrounding mechanisms in modern Malay discourse. Using twelve instances of numeral classifier usage and omission in the modern Malay corpus, this study proposes that the absence of numeral classifiers in texts is not likely to be due to language users' ignorance of the need to use a numeral classifier or of the correct form of numeral classifiers. On the contrary, the absence of numeral classifiers in the corpus exhibits the Malay language users' knowledge of the pragmatic functions of Malay numeral classifiers.

Keywords: Malay, numeral classifiers, referentiality, definiteness, pragmatic functions.

Introduction

Numeral classifiers are a linguistic device that overtly manifests human conceptual categorization (Allan, 1977; Craig, 1986). Numeral classifiers explicitly classify nouns

by denoting “some salient perceived or inputted characteristic” of the entity in question in the manner in which their respective language users perceive them (Allan, 1977, p.285). This syntactic-semantic category is common in most Sino-Tibetan, Austronesian, some Indo-European, Uralic, Mayan and Arawakian languages (Adams & Conklin, 1973; Aikhenvald, 2003; Allan, 1977; Craig, 1986; Croft, 1994; Goral, 1978; Kiyomi, 1992). Regionally, numeral classifier systems are common in the languages of East, Southeast and South Asia, Oceania, and South America and are also found in scattered pockets across North and Central America (Aikhenvald, 2003).

Syntactically, numeral classifiers, which most often occur as free morphemes in the same noun phrase as the noun that they qualify, are placed contiguously to numerals and expressions of quantity in a noun phrase. They can be in the form of “Num CL N”, or “N Num CL”, but not “Num N CL”. Numeral Classifier (henceforth Num Cl); Noun (henceforth N) Semantically, numeral classifiers occur in numeral classifier languages primarily to provide information about the physical and functional properties of objects, the cognitive categories of objects in a particular culture, and the perceptions of the speakers towards the objects (Dixon, 1986). Apart from the above-mentioned semantic motivations, numeral classifiers are used in numeral classifier languages to provide pragmatic information about the relationships between sentences, and the contexts and situations where they occur, both in written and spoken discourse (Craig, 1986; Downing, 1986; Hopper, 1986; Li, 2000; Sun, 1988).

The Malay numeral classifier system is a fundamental part of the Malay language identity because it reflects Malay conceptual categorization (Salehuddin, 2009). Because of this, the choice of numeral classifiers is maintained and consistent for each type of noun, for example, the noun, ‘children’, co-occurs with the numeral classifier *orang* [animate: human] whereas the noun, ‘buffalos’, co-occurs with the numeral classifier *ekor* [animate: animal]. Structurally, Malay numeral classifiers are usually preceded by a numeral, which, semantically functions like quantifying determiners (see Salehuddin, Tan Kim Hua & Marlyna Maros, 2006) and followed by a head noun. However, in isolated cases, instead of appearing to the left of the head noun, numeral classifiers can be used to the right of the noun, following a numeral (Salehuddin & Winskel, 2008).

Num	CL	N
<i>tiga</i>	<i>orang</i>	<i>kanak-kanak</i>
three	CL	child
‘three children’		

Num	CL	N
<i>empat</i>	<i>ekor</i>	<i>kucing</i>
four	CL	cat -pl
‘four cats’		

N	Num	CL
<i>anak</i>	<i>dua</i>	<i>orang</i>
child	two	CL
‘children: two’		

N	Num	CL
<i>kerbau balar</i>	<i>tujuh</i>	<i>ekor</i>
buffalo albino	seven	CL
‘albino buffalos: seven’		

However, many average language users today argue that the use of this syntactic-semantic category of Malay may seem redundant as they appear to “echo” the semantic features of the head noun (Hopper, 1986, p.310). As a result, the omission of Malay

numeral classifiers has become widespread in modern Malay discourse. For example, rather than saying “tiga orang kanak-kanak” or “empat ekor arnab” as presented above, Malay speakers today are more inclined to say “tiga kanak-kanak” or “empat arnab” respectively (Salehuddin & Winskel, 2009). What is not reassuring is that the omission is done arbitrarily, usually for reasons of word economy (cf. Grice’s *Maxim of Quantity*, (Grice, 1989)). Moreover, it may result in Malay language users being oblivious of the need to use a numeral classifier and of the correct forms of numeral classifiers.

The numeral classifiers in Vietnamese, Thai and Japanese have been used as a means of anaphoric reference to refer to objects in various locations (Downing, 1986). Downing argues that “the numeral-classifier pair may be used anaphorically, serving like a true pronoun, to carry the identity of individuals who have already been mentioned earlier in the text” (Downing, 1986, p.349). She quotes instances from Nguyen (1957, p.130) for Vietnamese and Conklin (1981, p.76) for Thai to show the use of numeral classifiers *quyên* (Vietnamese) and *tua1* (Thai) as anaphoric reference before illustrating the use of Japanese *hutari* for the same function.

Tôi có hai quyên sách, một quyên mỏng, một quyên dày.

I have two NumCl book one NumCl thin one NumCl thick
'I have two books, **one** thin and **one** thick'

(Nguyen, 1957, p. 130)

Khun1 hen5 pet4 kii4 tua1 /hok2 tua1
You see **duck** how many **BODY** six **BODY**
How many ducks did you see?' "Six"

(Conklin, 1981, p. 76)

Syuuiti-wa Singo-no musuko dakeredomo, Kikuko-ga
Syuuiti-TOP Singo-GEN son COPbut Kikuko-NOM
kono yoo-ni site made Syuuiti-to musubarete
to this extent Syuuiti-COM be bound
inakereba naranai hodo, hutari-wa risoo-no
if not unacceptable extent 2-person-TOP ideal
huuhu nano ka, Singo-wa utagai dasu to kagiri-ga
coupleCOP Q Singo-TOP doubt QUOT limit-NOM
nakatta. (F)
not exist-PST

“Even though **Syuuiti** was his son, **Singo** couldn’t help wondering whether **they** were such an ideal couple that **Kikuko** should be linked to **Syuuiti** to this extent”

(Downing, 1986, p.349)

In Mandarin Chinese, numeral classifiers are used in discourse to indicate the thematic status and to foreground nouns (Li, 2000; Sun, 1988). For example, Li (2000) shows

numeral classifiers *ge* and *zuo* are used in the Mandarin Chinese texts to foreground objects (for example, monsters and mountain).

Chuanshuo zai hen gu de shihou, you yi-ge jiao Youdu
Legend say be very old MOD time, there-be one-CL called Youdu
De defang zhongnian bu jian taiyang, dao chu yipian qihei.
MOD place all year not see sun, everywhere all pitch dark
Zai nar you yi-zuo da hei shan, shan shang zhu
In there there-be one-CL big dark mountain mountain top live
zhe xuduo kepa de guaishou Neixie guaishou jingchang xia
PRT many scary MOD monster. Those monsters often descend
shan weihai renmen. You yi-ge juren jiao Kuafu, ta
mountain endanger people there-be one-CL giant named Kuafu, he
yong guaizhang he guaishou bodou le jiu tian jiu ye
use cane with monster fight PRT 9 day 9 night
zhongyu ba ta da si le.
finally BA them beat dead PRT

‘Once upon a time, in a place called Youdu, people lived in darkness all year round. There was a big black mountain where many terrible beasts lived. The beasts often went out to harm people. There was a giant called Kuafu. He fought with the beasts with a stick for nine days and nine nights. Finally, he killed them all...’

(Li, 2000, pp.1121-1122)

In classical Malay, the presence and absence of numeral classifiers can indicate the foregrounding-backgrounding functions of objects and the degree of definiteness-indefiniteness of objects in a particular discourse (Hopper, 1986). Hopper identifies in the following excerpt the use of Malay numeral classifiers as a foregrounding strategy in *Hikayat Abdullah*¹.

Maka se-belah arah ka-tepi sungai itu ada empat lima BUAH pondok kecil, serta ada tanaman-nya enam tujuh BATANG pokok kelapa; dan lagi ada sa-BUAH rumah sedikit besar (138)

‘‘And on the side leading toward the river there were four or five <CL> small huts, and in addition six or seven <CL> coconut trees in cultivation; furthermore there was a <CL> somewhat larger house...’’

(Hopper, 1986, pp.311-312)

Hopper identified the use of numeral classifiers *buah* and *batang* as a foregrounding element in the text as the text was later followed by the following sentence: ‘‘Mr. Farquhar walked all around the Esplanade and the Orang Laut came and looked at him...’’ (Given that the Esplanade was described earlier by Abdullah as the place which had four or five small huts and six or seven coconut trees).

¹ Hopper’s (Hopper, 1986) data was taken from the Autobiography of Abdullah bin Abdul Qadir ‘‘Munshi’’ (*Hikayat Abdullah*) (Abdullah (Abd’Allah bin Abdul Qadir ‘‘Munshi’’), 1923), composed in 1846.

On the other hand, Hopper highlights that the absence of numeral classifiers in the following excerpt from *Hikayat Abdullah* suggests that the nouns mentioned in the extract are merely “incidental” and “props” to the settings as they were not developed further in the text (Hopper, 1986, p.313).

Maka ada ringgit hendak membeli, tiada dapat; ada-lah dua tiga <0> pondok kechil-kechil bersama-sama dekat rumah Temenggong, sakalian itu memakan tarok kayu, dan ikan kering, dan sago rending, terkadang-kadang mendapat beras. Maka ada pula di-hujung Kampong Gelam dua tiga <0> pondok-pondok orang laut... (141)

“They had money to buy food, but there was nothing to buy. All there was were two or three <0> small huts close together near the Temenggong’s house, and their occupants ate the sprouts of trees and dried fish and sago, and occasionally they got some rice. At the far end of Kampong Gelam there were two or three <0> huts belonging to the Orang Laut (“Sea Gypsies”)...

(Hopper, 1986, p.312)

Hopper (1986) later illustrates that Malay numeral classifiers were also used in *Hikayat Abdullah* to create the sense of definiteness of the objects in question. Conversely, the absence of numeral classifiers creates the sense of indefiniteness of the objects mentioned in the discourse.

Maka ku-dapati ada di-tengah rumah ada sa-ORANG orang Pelekat yang bernama Abdul Satar tengah makan (44)

“and I discovered that there was a <CL> man from Pelekat by the name of Abdul [sic] Satar in the middle of the room engaged in eating”

Maka bapa-ku di-jadikan-nya <0> nakhoda dalam sa-buah perahu terlalu besar (5)

“and they made my father <0> captain of a very big ship”

(Hopper, 1986, p.314)

These previous numeral classifier studies show that apart from performing semantic functions, numeral classifiers can perform several pragmatic functions both in written and spoken discourse.

Apart from the above-mentioned literature on the pragmatics of Malay numeral classifiers, there have been relatively few analyses of the pragmatic functions of numeral classifiers in modern Malay corpus. This paper demonstrates that Malay numeral classifiers may be used or omitted in modern Malay discourse to function as anaphoric and cataphoric references, as indicators of definiteness and indefiniteness, and as foregrounding mechanisms in modern Malay discourse and argues why Malay numeral classifiers should be retained in modern Malay discourse. This paper does not aim to show the frequency of usage as a corpus linguistics paper would; instead it aims to demonstrate the possible numeral classifier functions that have been observed in modern Malay discourse.

Method

This study was designed to examine whether there are similarities in the pragmatic functions of numeral classifiers in the modern Malay corpus in comparison to previous studies on other languages and on classical Malay as indicated earlier. The data for this study was a 73,000-word modern day published corpus written by expert Malay language users, which includes a one-day publication of *Utusan Malaysia Online* (Dec 4, 2007), 227 Malay folk stories from the web page of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, and thirteen in-class activity packages made available by *Berita Harian Online*. Based on previous literature, the following research questions were formulated:

1. In Vietnamese, Thai and Japanese, numeral classifiers have been used in texts to perform anaphoric functions (Downing, 1986). In Malay, the most common form of anaphora found in written and spoken discourse is via the use of pronouns (Abdullah Hassan, 1993; Nik Safiah Karim, 1995). For example, in the sentences “*Adik suka melukis. Dia selalu melukis wajah ayahnya*”, the pronoun “*Dia*” is used as an anaphoric reference to the noun phrase “*Adik*”, while the pronoun “*nya*” refers to “*dia*”.
 - a) Are Malay numeral classifiers also used anaphorically in modern Malay corpus?
 - b) If they are, how are they manifested in modern Malay texts?
 - c) Are there other ways in which Malay numeral classifiers may be used as references in modern Malay texts?

2. In Mandarin Chinese, numeral classifiers are used to indicate the thematic status of nouns and to foreground objects (Li, 2000; Sun, 1988). In addition, in classical Malay texts, numeral classifiers are used to perform definite and indefinite functions (Hopper, 1986). In modern Malay, definiteness is usually manifested in the language’s “*kata penentu*” (words that determine) i.e. “*itu*” and “*ini*” (Abdullah Hassan, 1993), which are translatable into English as the demonstrative determiners “this”, “that”, “these”, “those” and the definite article “the” (Nik Safiah Karim, 1995). This, according to Li (2000), conforms with Givón’s “quantity principle” of iconicity (Givón, 1991) that more coding material will be used for more important information. For example, in the sentence “*Nilai rumah-rumah tinggi sekarang*”, (“The value of houses is high now”), the notion carried by the word “*rumah-rumah*” (houses) is one with a generic sense, i.e., the person who utters the sentence has no specific house in focus. However, with the presence of the demonstrative “*itu*” as a demonstrative determiner to the noun phrase “*rumah-rumah*” in “*Nilai rumah-rumah itu tinggi sekarang*” (“The value of **those** houses is high now”), the “generic” or “indefinite” sense of the houses felt earlier has now changed to very specific houses.
 - a) Are the same functions of numeral classifiers observed in a modern Malay corpus?
 - b) If they are, how are they manifested in the modern Malay texts?
 - c) Can the same function be expressed differently using a numeral classifier?

Results

Referentiality in Malay numeral classifiers

Anaphoric reference

Analysis of the modern Malay corpus shows that, as in Vietnamese, Thai and Japanese, Malay numeral classifiers are used as anaphoric references in modern Malay texts. In addition to what was discussed in Downing (1986), our analysis shows variation in the distance between the numeral classifier and the noun that the numeral classifier classifies. Malay numeral classifiers have been used in modern Malay corpus as an anaphoric reference to a noun within the boundary of the noun phrase. To illustrate, in (1), the noun phrase “*kekuatan kakitangan hampir 15,000 orang kakitangan*” has been reduced to only “*kekuatan kakitangan hampir 15,000 orang*” using the numeral classifier *orang* [animate: human] as the anaphoric reference to word “*kakitangan*” found earlier within the same noun phrase.

- (1) Dengan kekuatan kakitangan hampir 15,000 orang saya percaya mereka
With strength staff about 15,000 NumCL I believe they
perlu diberi suntikan semangat supaya dapat mengubah persepsi,
have to be given booster motivation so can change perception,
kelakuan seterusnya mengaplikasikan apa yang dipelajari untuk
behaviour hence apply what that learned to
membimbing orang lain
guide people other

‘With about 15,000 staff, I believe, my staff’s motivation will have to be boosted so that their perception and behaviour will change and hence apply what is learned to guide others’.

(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

Although a few might argue that “*orang*” in (1) and the preceding instances could actually be a head noun (which is homophonous to the numeral classifier) and thus claim that it is the numeral classifier, rather than the head noun that is dropped in such instances, the authors are more inclined to assert their point that the use of “*orang*” in these instances are as numeral classifiers functioning as references. This is because of two reasons. Firstly, if “*orang*” were the head nouns in these contexts, the use of the word “*manusia*” and “*insan*”, which are synonymous to the noun “*orang*” would be possible in place of the word “*orang*”. However, such a substitution is not possible in any of these instances. For example, “**15,000 manusia*” in (1) appears unnatural to native speakers of Malay. Secondly, in any piece of discourse, participants in any situations / contexts are likely to be identified rather than being left unexplained. For example, in “*Berdasarkan Jadual 2.10, didapati seramai 976,014 orang pelajar di Semenanjung Malaysia yang belajar di sekolah menengah dalam tingkatan 1 hingga tingkatan 6...*” (loosely translated as “From Table 2.10, 976,014 students in the Peninsular Malaysia who are studying in secondary schools from Form1 to Form 6...”) (Zainal Abidin Mohd. Said,

1998)² the head noun *pelajar* (student) is identified here although from the context, the participants can be deduced from the word “*belajar*” (study). It is unlikely, with reference to the above context for one not to identify who the 976,014 were and merely mentioned them as “people”, unless they have identified who these people were or would want to identify them later.

Malay numeral classifiers have also been used as an anaphoric reference beyond the boundary of a noun phrase in modern Malay texts. For example, in (2), the noun phrase “*Afdlin*”, who, in the sentence was described as a director (“*pengarah*”), is referred to via the numeral classifier *orang* [animate: human] in “*seorang*”. The use of the numeral classifier *orang* has enabled the word “*pengarah*” in the succeeding noun phrase “*seorang pengarah yang sangat berkaliber*” to be omitted from the sentence to only “*seorang yang sangat berkaliber*”.

- (2) Pertama kali berada di bawah arahan Afdlin, kata Farid, dia mensifatkan
First time being under direction Afdlin, said Farid, he described
Afdlin sebagai seorang yang sangat berkaliber
Afdlin as one NumCL that very promising.

‘On his first time working with director Afdlin, Farid described Afdlin as a very promising director’.

(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

Malay numeral classifiers have also been observed to function as an anaphoric reference to a noun mentioned earlier in a preceding sentence. In (3), the numeral classifier *ekor* [animate, animal] was used in the second sentence as a reference to “*kambing boer*” (boer goat) identified in the earlier sentence. The use of the numeral classifier *ekor* has enabled the writer to reduce the succeeding noun phrase from “*5 juta hingga 10 juta ekor kambing boer*” to just “*5 juta hingga 10 juta ekor*”.

- (3) Sasaran kita apabila ladang itu dibangunkan sepenuhnya, kita boleh
Target our when farm the developed fully, we can
menghasilkan 100,000 ekor kambing boer pada satu-satu masa. Tapi itu
produce 100,000 NumCL goat boer at any one time. But that
pun tak mencukupi kerana jika mengikut bilangan penduduk, kita
also not enough because if follow number population we
memerlukan antara 5 juta hingga 10 juta ekor pada satu-satu
need between 5 million up till 10 million NumCL at any one
masa, katanya.

² Data is from a 2.6-million word corpus obtained from a research group (i.e., Zaharani Ahmad, Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin, Imran Ho Abdullah, Idris Aman, Hazidi Abdul Hamid, and Harishon Radzi) working on a corpus-based description of Malay Grammar under the Ministry of Science and Technology, Malaysia. Data consisted of texts from academic and non-academic books and magazines.

time, he said

'We forecast that when the farm is fully developed, we can produce 100,000 boer goats at any one time. But even that is not enough as based on our population, we need between 5 million and 10 million boer goats at any one time, he said.'
(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

Cataphoric reference

Cataphoric reference, i.e. a reference that refers to another word or phrase that will be used later in the same text (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1985), is predominantly found in the form of pronouns in the Malay corpus. In the sentence “*Saya harapkan awak*’, *kata Ali kepada Abu*”, (“I am relying on you’, Ali told Ahmad”) the pronoun “*saya*” (“I”) refers forward to “*Ali*” while the pronoun “*awak*” (“you”), refers to “*Abu*”. This study shows that, in addition to the anaphoric function that Downing (1986) mentioned and identified in other numeral classifier languages, numeral classifiers are also used in Malay texts as a cataphoric reference, and the distance between the numeral classifiers and the nouns that they refer to also varies. For example, in (4), “*seorang*” is used as a reference to the noun “*lelaki*” (“men”) within the same noun phrase “*salah seorang daripada lelaki terbabit*”. The use of the *orang* [animate: human] numeral classifier in the noun phrase has enabled the word “*lelaki*” to be omitted from the deep structure “*salah seorang lelaki daripada lelaki terbabit*”. The use of numeral classifiers as cataphoric reference within the same noun phrase is common in the surface structure of modern Malay when the noun phrase is translatable into the English structure as “one of the N”. In such a case, “one” is most of the time manifested in modern Malay as “*salah se- Num Cl*”.

- (4) Dadah ketamin dijumpai di atas katil dalam bilik rumah tersebut manakala
Drug catamin was found on bed in room house the while
syabu ditemui dalam dompet salah seorang daripada lelaki terbabit
shabu was found in wallet one Num CL of men involved.

'Catamin was found on the bed in the room of the house while shabu was found in the wallet of one of the men'

(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

Numeral classifiers have also been used in modern Malay texts to refer to a noun beyond the noun phrase boundary. To illustrate, in (5), “*orang*” in “*15 orang*” and “*3000 orang*” both occurred without a noun following the *orang* [animate: human] numeral classifier as in “*15 orang perusuh*” and “*3000 orang perusuh*”. Although the word “*perusuh*” is not evident in the text, the word can be implied from the text which concerned a “pro-democracy riot headed by a Buddhist monk” (“*satu rusuhan berdarah pro-demokrasi yang diketuai oleh sami Buddha*”) mentioned later in the sentence.

- (5) Sekurang-kurangnya 15 orang terbunuh dan lebih 3,000 orang ditahan
At least 15 Num CL killed and more 3,000 NumCL arrested

dalam satu rusuhan berdarah pro-demokrasi yang diketuai oleh
in one riot bloody pro-democratic that was headed by
sami Buddha pada September lalu.
monk Buddhist in September last.

*'At least 15 people were killed and more than 3,000 rioters were arrested in a
bloody pro-democratic riot that was headed by Buddhist monks last
September.'*

(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

Apart from using numeral classifiers as cataphoric references within the sentence boundary as shown in (4) and (5) above, our analysis also identified the use of numeral classifiers in modern Malay texts as a forward reference to a noun beyond the sentence boundary. For example, in (6), the numeral classifier *orang* [animate: human] in “*dua orang*” found in the first sentence were actually used as a cataphoric reference, referring forward to the noun “*pengguna jalan raya*” (“road users”), that was only mentioned later in the second sentence.

- (6) PORTLAND, Oregon 4 Dis. – Sekurang- kurangnya dua orang
PORTLAND, Oregon 4 Dec – At least two NumCL
dilaporkan terbunuh semalam selepas kawasan barat laut Amerika Syarikat
was reported killed yesterday after region north-west USA
(AS) dilanda angin ribut dan hujan lebat selama dua hari berturut- turut.
(US) hit wind storm and rain heavy for two days continuously
Kedua-dua mangsa dikatakan terbunuh dalam satu kemalangan jalan raya
Both victim was said killed in one accident road
besar di New Jersey akibat cuaca buruk.
massive in New Jersey because of weather bad.

*'PORTLAND, Oregon 4 Dec – At least two people were reported killed
yesterday after storm and heavy rain hit the north-west region of the USA
continuously for two days. Both victims were killed in a massive road accident
in New Jersey caused by the bad weather'*

(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

Definiteness in Malay numeral classifiers

Definiteness via Malay numeral classifiers

Analysis of the modern Malay corpus also shows that numeral classifiers have been used in texts as a signal that a particular noun is likely to be developed further – similar to what Hopper (1986) found in a classical Malay text and what Sun (1988) and Li (2000) found in Mandarin Chinese narratives. In addition to that, our analysis also found that the distance between the use of the numeral classifier as a foregrounding mechanism, i.e. a “signal” that a particular noun has the potential to be developed further, and the mentioning of the noun again as evidence that numeral classifiers were indeed used as “signals”, varies.

Our analysis found that in (7), the noun, “*pengkaji*”, was developed further within the same noun phrase “*seorang pengkaji dari Jepun*” via the proper noun “*Togari Yasuka*”. The use of the numeral classifier *orang* [animate: human] in the noun phrase, signals to readers the potentiality of the noun to be developed further. The name “*Togari Yasuka*” is not likely to be found in the text if the noun phrase were merely in the form of “*pengkaji dari Jepun*”.

A structure without the use of numeral classifier was also evident in the 2.6-million word corpus. In “...*terdapat pengkaji yang hanya membataskan konsep kepada golongan pekerja makan gaji...*” (loosely translated as “... there are researchers who limit the concept to those who are not self-employed...” (Nordin Selat, 1997) (p.70), the noun “*pengkaji*” (researcher) was not preceded by any numeral classifier, and as predicted, was not identified later in the discourse and neither was the “*pengkaji*” developed further. In this case, the un-classified “*pengkaji*” carried a generic, indefinite sense.

- (7) Perkara ini didedahkan oleh seorang pengkaji dari Jepun,
Matter this made known by one NumCL researcher from Japan,
Togari Yasuka pada Kongres Sebudaya Serumpun yang diadakan
Togari Yasuka at congress one culture one region that held
di Kuala Lumpur, baru-baru ini
in Kuala Lumpur, recently this.

‘This matter was made known by a researcher from Japan, Togari Yasuka, at the “one culture one region” congress that was held in Kuala Lumpur recently.’
(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

Malay numeral classifiers are also used in texts to signal to the audience that a particular noun is likely to be developed further beyond the sentence – as shown in (8). In the first sentence, the numeral classifier *ekor* [animate: animal] was used in “*seekor ayam hutan jantan*” to imply that the “rooster” is likely to be developed further. Later in the second sentence, “*ayam hutan*” (now without the numeral classifier, but with the demonstrative determiner “*itu*”) occurred again as a developed topic.

- (8) Beberapa lama kemudian maka muncullah seekor ayam hutan jantan
A few long later thus appeared one NumCL chicken forest male
yang hinggap di tempat jemuran itu. Jelaslah kini; ayam hutan itulah
that perched at hanger that. Clearly now; chicken forest that
yang menghabiskan jemuran benih jagungnya.
that finishes seed corn his.

‘Not long after that, a rooster appeared, perching on the clothes hanger. It was now clear that it was that rooster that finished up his corn seeds.

(Tuah Ayam Jantan)

Indefiniteness in Malay numeral classifiers

The notion of “indefiniteness” that arises from the lack of potential for a particular noun to be developed in the classical Malay text mentioned in Hopper (1986) is also evident in

the modern Malay corpus. The absence of a numeral classifier prior to “*kampung*” and “*kota*” in (9) as well as “*basikal*” in (10) signals to the audience that the respective nouns are not likely to be developed in the text but are there in the text for backgrounding purposes (i.e. as props). In contrast, “*ibu miskin*” in (9) that is preceded by the numeral classifier *orang* [animate: human], was further developed in the same noun phrase as “*Mak Miskin*”, with *orang* creating a foregrounding effect to “*ibu miskin*”.

- (9) TERSEBUTLAH kisah seorang ibu miskin yang dikenali
Mentioned story one NumCL mother poor that was known
di kampung dan di kota sebagai Mak Miskin.
in village and in city as Mak Miskin.

‘There was a story about a poor mother who was known by the people in the village and in the city as Mak Miskin’

(Awang Lotong)

- (10) Dia mendapati Fariz sedang mengayuh basikal menuju ke arahnya
He found Fariz while cycle bicycle heading toward him.

‘He realized that Fariz was cycling towards him.’

(Jalur Sinar Merentang Kabus)

This study also reveals that, in addition to what Hopper (1986) has found in *Hikayat Abdullah*, the presence of Malay numeral classifiers in modern Malay texts may also be used to indicate the notion of indefiniteness of a noun in two different ways. To illustrate, in (11), “*seorang*” is used with the “generic” sense similar to the meaning that is conveyed by the English indefinite article “a”. In that sentence, although the person hoped to be a pilot, he made no specific indication as to the kind of pilot (i.e. flying a jet vis-à-vis a light aircraft) that he had in mind, and this was expressed via the word “*seorang*”.

- (11) Menurutnya, beliau memang menyimpan cita-cita untuk menjadi
According to him, he really keep ambition to become
seorang juruterbang dan tidak menolak apabila ditawarkan oleh
one Num Cl pilot and not decline when offered by
Red Arrows kerana mahu merasai sendiri pengalaman itu
Red Arrows because want feel himself experience the

‘According to him, he has always wanted to be a pilot and did not reject the offer from Red Arrows to experience flying their plane’

(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

The “*menjadi seorang N*” (“... to become a N”) structure is a widely used in Malay corpus that out of a 2.6-million word corpus analysed by Salehuddin (2010), a total of 84 instances of such a structure was identified, for example, “*Ramlah bercita-cita hendak*

menjadi seorang pegawai penyelidik untuk mengkaji bukan sahaja tentang burung tetapi juga haiwan lain” (loosely translated as “Ramlah dreams of becoming a research officer to investigate not only about birds, but also other animals as well) (Osman Alaudin & Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, 1998).

In (12), the numeral classifier “*buah*” co-occurs with the prefix “*sese-*” in “*sesebuah*”, bearing the “generic” notion similar to the meaning that the English indefinite pronoun “any” denotes. The kind of “indefiniteness” that “any” bears will not be attained without the use of the “*sese + NumCL*” structure.

- (12) Menurut Pengarah ISM, Prof. Madya Dr. Mohamed Fadzil Che
According to Director ISM, Prof. Assoc. Dr. Mohamed Fadzil Che
Din, sains sosial merupakan bidang terpenting dalam proses
Din, science social is field most important in process
pembangunan sesebuah tamadun, bangsa dan negara
development one NumCL civilization, race and nation.

‘According to the Director of ISM, Associate Prof. Dr Mohamed Fadzil Che Din, social science is the most important field in the process of developing any civilization, race and nation.’

(Utusan Malaysia Online, 4 December 2007)

One might argue that the “*sese-NumCL*” form is widely used in modern Malay corpus. Out of a 2.6-million corpus analysed, a total of 710 instances of “*sesebuah*” and 1552 instances of “*seseorang*” was identified. For example, “*Dalam sesebuah karangan, penutup berfungsi sebagai kesimpulan kepada perbincangan yang dibuat*” (“In any essay, the conclusion concludes the discussion made earlier in the essay”) (Izani Daud, 1998).

Discussion

Our analysis shows that Malay numeral classifiers have been used in the modern Malay corpus to perform several pragmatic functions. Their presence helps readers to make anaphoric and cataphoric reference to nouns within the same noun phrase boundary, or beyond the noun phrase boundary, or even beyond the sentence boundary. The presence of numeral classifiers also helps trigger the sense of definiteness and foregrounding of objects within a text. Although Malay numeral classifiers are also omitted to create the sense of indefiniteness and backgrounding of objects within a text, this study shows that the sense of indefiniteness that a particular noun carries can also be achieved when numeral classifiers are used with its respective noun.

As can be observed from all twelve instances of numeral classifier usage and omission in the modern Malay corpus, this study proposes that the absence of numeral classifiers in

the text is not likely to be because of language users' ignorance of the need to use a numeral classifier or of the correct form of numeral classifiers. On the contrary, the absence of numeral classifiers in the corpus exhibits not only the knowledge of the correct syntactic and semantic functions of Malay numeral classifier, but also, the pragmatic functions of Malay numeral classifiers. This is because, despite the absence of numeral classifiers in some contexts which are motivated by the knowledge of the various pragmatic functions that numeral classifiers can perform, numeral classifiers are still observed in the same text but in different locations. Nevertheless, the omission of numeral classifiers in modern Malay corpus may appear to be arbitrary to average language users, and, to this group, the omission may seem to be evidence that numeral classifiers play only an insignificant role in Malay language. As a result, the average language user may randomly omit the numeral classifiers in the interest of word economy. What we have seen on the contrary is that the anaphoric and cataphoric functions that Malay numeral classifiers perform actually help language users to avoid repeating head nouns unnecessarily.

In conclusion Malay numeral classifiers are a fundamental part of the Malay speaker's identity because they reflect the categorization system involved in the Malay cognition. Thus, its incorrect usage and random omission by average language users should not be encouraged. It is argued that Malay numeral classifiers should not be neglected; rather, they should be taken as seriously as any other Malay linguistic category. This paper has provided reasons for the retainment of numeral classifiers in modern Malay discourse.

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