

Indonesian Number Marking Mechanisms:
Evidence from Native Speaker Judgment Task
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ABSTRACT

It has been argued that bare nouns in Indonesian are “number neutral”, which means that they can be interpreted as either singular or plural (*buku* ‘a book’, or ‘books’) (Carson 2000, Chung, 2000, Sato 2008). To specifically mark plural, Indonesian uses reduplication (*buku-buku* ‘books’). Numeral modification with classifier can also apply (*5 buah buku* ‘five (cl) books’) (Sneddon 1996).

Previous analyses (Carson 2000, Sato 2008) argue for a unified analysis of both constructions, where the denotation of plurality through reduplication or numeral modification is obtained by merger of the functional projections Num(ber)P and Q(uality)P above the NP (Sato 2008). According to this analysis, both the reduplicant and classifier occupy the Num head, thus implying that the two constructions, reduplication and numeral modification, must be in complementary distribution. However, Dalrymple & Mofu (2009) suggest that although uncommon, it is not impossible for reduplication to co-occur with a classifier.

This study aims to straighten out the discrepancy on the matter. Evidence from native speakers’ acceptability judgment task shows that reduplication can appear in the numeral classifier construction. It also seems to be the case that the numeral and classifier create a constituent, which acts as the specifier of the noun. Using the framework of LFG (Lexical Functional Grammar) (Kaplan & Bresnan 1982, Bresnan 2001, Dalrymple 2001), I argue that reduplication and numeral modification are two different processes. Reduplication is a lexical process, whereas numeral modification happens at the phrasal level.

In my presentation I will provide a description of the phenomena and Sato’s analysis on them. I will present the results from the acceptability judgment task study, which show that Sato’s analysis cannot hold. Finally, I will propose my own analysis that accounts for all of the data and will conclude that reduplicated nominal constructions and numeral modification constructions do not share the same internal structure.

References

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