

Classifier Constructions in English and Kurdish

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Abstract:

Greenberg (1972) in a study based on a sample of about 100 languages with numeral classifiers, attempted to determine the conditions under which anon- classifier language might become a classifier language. Later Hale and Shresthachrya (1973) made their attempts to seek whether Newari is considered as a classifier language or not. The purpose of this study is to analyze the Kurdish classifier system based on the Greenberg (1972) whether Kurdish is a classifier language or not, the paper also compares classifier constructions in English and Kurdish, with the aim of addressing the research questions: what linguistic devices are used in Kurdish and English for classification? How different or similar are classifiers in Kurdish and English as non-classifier language. Classifiers in Kurdish have not been studied extensively and there are not any references available on classifiers of Kurdish in English. Therefore, by considering the classifier system of Kurdish, this study makes attempt to provide an introductory source of analytical research of grammar in Kurdish.

Keywords: classifier, non- classifier, counting system, Kurdish.

1. Introduction

Languages across the world can be divided into classifier and non-classifier languages in terms of counting system. Count nouns can be quantified directly by a determiner while non-count nouns must take a classifier when they are quantified. Many linguists (Lyons 1977, Quirk et al 1985, Biber 1999 and Flowerdew and Forest 2015) consider classifier as a subclass of nouns in English grammar . Quirk (1985:242-51) and Murcia Freeman (1999:326) refer to it as a partitive noun, while Biber et al (1999:225-7) divide classifier into collective nouns ,unit nouns ,quantifying nouns and species noun . In English and in other languages, nouns may vary with respect to the property of countability. Nouns of high countability denote objects which are typically associated with a characteristic shape. In contrast, nouns of low countability denote objects in terms of masses without unitary structure or characteristic shape. Countability bears a number of grammatical consequences, one of which is the way in which nouns may occur in construction with numerals. Nouns of high countability generally occur in direct construction with numerals. In contrast, nouns of low countability typically do not occur in direct construction with numerals; instead, an additional item must be present. Thus while non-classifier languages have two kinds of common nouns, count nouns and mass nouns, classifier languages have only one of the two kinds, mass nouns (Allan 1980). In English a classifier is used when individuating masses but it is not obligatory, moreover, mass nouns are used as count nouns, as in

Three coffees please (cups of coffee) bêzhemet sê kup(kup qawe)

Three cups of coffee sê kup qawe

Moreover ,the syntactic form of classifier expression in English is

(Det) N1 [_{pp}of (Det)N2]

A bunch of bananas

Where 'of' cannot be replaced by another preposition, nor can it be paraphrased as a compound which reverses the order of the two nouns, where N1 is the syntactic head and 'of' forms a prepositional phrases with the following NP(Lehrer 1986:110). It has been suggested (Greenberg 1972, Allan 1977 and Lehrer 1986) that languages like English are non-classifier languages, whereas no study has been conducted on Kurdish language.

2. Implicational Universals

The paper adopts Greenberg's (1972) implicational universals, to seek the 'characteristics' of universal language and to determine whether Kurdish has the characteristics of classifier language or not.

A .Non-unit counters : if a language has non-unit counters ,it will be considered as a classifier language ,yet languages can have non-unit counters and not be classifier languages such as English and Kurdish which have non-unit counters and are non-classifier languages(see appendix A for Kurdish Alphabet Letters in IPA):

a herd of cattle	fanêk mef / fane mefêk
a bunch of grapes	hêşuyek tirê / hêşwe tirêyek
a bit of sweets	Parçeyek paqlawe /parçe paqlaweyek
a row of beans	dêrawêk fasolya / dêrawe fasolyeyek

The examples given above do not prove that Kurdish is a classifier language. They only indicate that Kurdish possesses basis of true classifiers. The Kurdish examples are well matched by similar counters in English, which is a non-classifier language. In Kurdish both forms are possible, here the allomorphs/ yek/ and /êk/, are modifiers of the qualifier where they have been moved to the final positions of the nouns by an optional T-rule.

B -Quasi-unit-counters; according to Greenberg's' implicational universals, a classifier language will have quasi unit counters. Yet a language can have quasi unit counters and not be a classifier language. He distinguishes two kinds of quasi -unit counters :those which lack wholeness and internal structure and those which function as particulates and have wholeness and internal structure .To illustrate the difference between the two, Greenberg(p.13) states if one cuts a piece of meat in two, one has two pieces of meat ,but if one cuts a dog in two ,one still has one dog ,a dead one .English and Kurdish have both kinds .Consider the following :

A piece of meat parçe goştêk /parçeyek goşt
 *A piece of dog *parçe segêk / *parçeyek seg

Greenberg further illustrated another kind of borderline case by certain English phrases:

A drop of water dilope awêk / dilopêk aw
 A grain of sand mişte limêk / miştêk
 A blade of grass çile giyayek / çilêk giya

These particulates as he might call them, are never used in actual counting because of their smallness and lack of individuality. Their universe of numeration is limited to quantifiers ,such as one ,a ,and none .Kurdish also has Quasi-unit counters of this type. Thus ,the examples given above don't prove that Kurdish is a classifier language in that they are similar to English examples , which is a non- classifier language .

C. Measure constructions: non- classifier languages such as English also have measure constructions .Measure constructions often occur with mass nouns, a central characteristics of mass nouns is that they normally do not occur with number but needs intervening measure, Kurdish also has measure constructions though it makes no distinction between mass and count nouns :

One cup of coffee yek kup qawe
 Two gallons of water du gaŀon aw
 Three bottles of milk sê butŀ Ńr

Such examples do not prove that Kurdish is a classifier language in that they resemble English ones which is a non-classifier language.

3. Characteristics of classifiers:

Kurdish language may be considered a classifiers or not depending on Greenberg (1972)and Hale and Shresthachrya(1973)

a. Overt expressions of unit counting

English language with its grammatical distinction between mass and countable nouns, makes it possible to count certain nouns by ones .Consider the following nouns :

Table mêz
 Window pençere
 House xanu
 Person kes
 Book ktêb

It is possible to count nouns directly with numbers in English and Kurdish respectively. One is 'yek' and two is 'du'. Thus both languages are similar typologically

One house yek xanu
 One person yek kes

B .Impose a semantic classification upon head nouns .Consider the following:

A cup of water kupêk aw
 A gallon of water gaŀonêk aw
 A liter of water lîtrêk aw
 A bottle of water butŀêk aw

The above classifiers indicate that they don't generally impose a semantic classification upon the same head nouns. Thus the classifiers 'cup/ kup', 'gallon/gaŀon' 'liter/lîtr' and 'bottle/butŀ' generally occur with the same noun heads ,hence both English and Kurdish are similar typologically.

C- function as individualizers of a head which is indeterminate for number. In classifier languages, the classified noun is always singular noun .This characteristics is quite common among classifier languages (Greenberg1972:26), Similar to these is Kurdish language ,where neither the plural nor the numeral classifier construction is obligatory with nouns .Kurdish does not have obligatory marking of the plural nouns, namely the classified noun itself is namely singular. In fact the plural is hardly occur apart from definite nouns .Thus in English the plural or the numeral classifier construction is obligatory with countable nouns as in

A heard of animals fane mefêk

While kurdish patterns as atypical classifier language in this regard ,here it contrasts typologically with English

Quantifier +Noun_{sing}+Determiner çend kesanê (some people)
 Noun_{pl}+Determiner kesanêk

D: No reality outsider of the numeral expression

In classifier language the classifiers have no meaning a part from the construction and have no independent reference to the non-linguistic word.However in non classifier languages such as English ,the classifiers have meanings a part from the constructions ,e.g.

(Glass / gallon/ liter) of water

Where (glass, gallon, liter) have meanings, similar to English, Kurdish classifiers also have meaning (Perdax/lîtr/ gaŀon)êk aw

Hence both languages are similar typologically, these characteristics can be concluded that Kurdish just like English is a non-classifier language and that it has nothing apart from one true classifiers .English and Kurdish do not have classifiers ,however, they have an overt linguistic classifier categorization device, moreover ,after a close examination ,English and Kurdish are found to possess words that are very similar to classifier language Like English, Kurdish classifier is not obligatory ,for counting people or animals ,classifiers are used in most cases ,while for counting things the classifier is optional ,consider the following :

Common Examples	classifiers
For counting people	kes /nefer ten people de kes /nefer
For counting animals	ser five sheep pênc 5 ser mef
For counting things	dane three chocolates sê dana nuqîl
i.	[Number]+Quantifier +Determiner+[î+ Modifier] +N _{sing} çend kesanê çwar mencef mast
ii.	Quantifier +Cizafe+Noun _{sing} +Determiner Çend mencele mastêk
iii.	Number _{pl} +Determiner+ êk kesanêk

The cardinal number can be followed by a classifier which is also followed by the singular noun in the absolute state.
[D1+ (N [D2]) N2] (Kim2010:12)

Hence in Kurdish ,the classifier often lies between the determiner (cardinal number) and the singular noun ,for example
Two cups of tea. Du kup çâ

4. Categories of classification

Allan (1977) and Lehrer (1986) list categories of classifiers in English:

1. unit counter
2. fractional classifiers
3. Numeral set classifiers
4. Collective classifiers
5. Varietal (species) classifiers
6. Measure classifiers
7. arrangement classifiers

1. Unit classifiers typically co-occur with mass nouns in spite of their occurrences with countable nouns as in:

a piece of cake	parçe kêkêk
A bar of raisins	paketêk kişmîş
A bit of sweets	tozêk şîrînî
a portion of chips	miştêk çipis

Likewise in Kurdish ,unit counters always occur with singular count or mass nouns .In other words it will not have obligatory marking of the plural on nouns ,namely the classified noun itself is normally singular.

tozêk şîrînî
parçe kêkêk

Other English and Kurdish unit classifiers are ball, loaf, cube ,slice, string ,top, tîke ,parçe ,kert and fiste respectively.

2. Fractional classifiers typically occur with mass nouns in English but with mass and countable nouns in Kurdish.

three quarters of the cake	sê çarekî kêkeke
quarters of the rice)	sê çarekî birnceke (* three

While number set classifiers like, ten, dozen ,hundred and thousand combine with plural nouns in English and singular(countable /uncountable) nouns in Kurdish

A dozen of pens	derzenêk qeîem
Many hundreds of people	sedan kes
juice)	derzenêk şerbet(*a dozen of

3. Collective classifiers group single entities together so as to provide a collective reference for separate entities (Biber et al 1999:250).The items referred to collective can be people ,animals, or inanimate entities .Collective classifiers typically

co-occur with plural count nouns in English while it combines with singular noun in Kurdish.

A herd of animals fanêk mef / fane mefêk
(a bunch of grass) Besteyek giya

Lehrer (1986:122)states that varietal classifiers are special category of classifiers in that they denote a quantity and their co-occurrence with singular nouns after 'of' differs from that of other classifiers ,the most typical varietal classifiers in English are sort, kind type .Varietal classifiers occur with both mass and count nouns depending on singular and plural classifiers respectively:

A nasty kind of a person
Nasty kinds of people

Unlike English ,Kurdish varietal classifiers is always singular and typically occur with singular noun

Sê cor şerbet
Sê cor qeîem

4. Measure classifiers are referred to as fixed and irregular measures and exact and inexact measures by (Allan 1077 and Lehrer 1986) respectively , the former forms a small closed,while the latter is limitless :

Two pounds of potatoes du kîlo patate
Two cups of tea du kup çâ

Measure classifiers combine with mass nouns more frequently than plural countable nouns .In Kurdish the two types of measure classifiers occur with singular nouns

du kîlo patate du kup çâ

Arrangement classifiers are similar to collective classifiers in that they also refer to a group and usually co-occur with plural countable nouns .The difference is that collective classifiers focus on the collective aspect of the items in a group, whereas arrangement classifiers focus on the constellation aspect (shape) how the entities are arranged in a group, among arrangement classifiers are stack ,row, line, cap and pile .In Kurdish ,arrangement classifiers always occur with singular noun :

Two rows of beans du dêraw fasolya
Three piles of books sê destê kitêb

5. A Contrastive Analysis of Classifiers in English and Kurdish

Judging from various characteristics of classifiers and non-classifier languages. English and Kurdish are definitely non-classifiers languages, because they are only required for mass nouns i.e. they are optional for count nouns .Whereas in Kurdish they are optional for both countable and mass nouns .Moreover, English is a language that makes a morphological distinction between singular and plural nouns or between mass and count nouns at all,whereas Kurdish makes a slight difference between them.

English and Kurdish have the same seven categories of classifiers, in spite of the quantitative similarities in the types and tokens of classifiers used,English and Kurdish differ much qualitatively in their use of classifiers ,of the seven categories of classifiers ,the most noticeable difference lies in that they only required for non-count nouns in English whereas in Kurdish they are optional for both countable and mass nouns .Other categories of classifiers are qualitatively more similar than different in the two languages ,they have full lexical meanings and can find their counterparts in the other languages ,except that such English classifiers are not restricted to singular forms .

There are a number of syntactic differences in the use of classifiers in English and Kurdish .First ,English classifiers as a special group of nouns have singular and plural forms .while their counterparts in Kurdish do not .Second ,classifiers take a considerably greater variety of modifiers in English and Kurdish.

Brems (2003:300) distinguishes two major types of classifier modifiers in English, classifier intensifiers such as full, huge, great, small, little and evaluative quantifiers of N2 which are regularly relocated to precede classifiers, such relocation occurs with classifier modifiers in Kurdish
A late –night cup of coffee kupêkî direngeşew qawe

6. Conclusion

English and Kurdish are definitely non-classifiers languages, however, they have an overt linguistic classifier categorization device, yet they differ in a number of way for example, they display a some-language –specific syntactic difference. Like English, Kurdish classifier is not obligatory, for counting people or animals, classifiers are used in most cases, while for counting things the classifier is optional. In addition, based on Greenberg's (1972) framework, a syntactically and semantically analysis of classifiers in Kurdish has been done. It is hoped that by doing this analysis further researchers have a good source about classifiers in Kurdish. Next, this study analyzes the classifiers from just a syntactic and semantic point of view and does not consider the pragmatic and discourse of classifiers. Further studies can be done to take these aspects of classifiers into consideration. A contrastive analysis of classifiers, using this study as reference, between English and Kurdish can also be done to find out the transferring problems of Kurdish learners when they want to convert the Kurdish classifiers into English.

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Appendix A
Kurdish Alphabet Letters in IPA

Universal Kurdish	IPA
A, a	[a:]
B, b	[b]
C, c	[d̟ʒ]
Ç, ç	[tʃ]
D, d	[d]
E, e	[e]
Ê, ê	[e:]
F, f	[f]
G, g	[g]
H, h	[h]
I, i	N/A
Î, î	[i:]
J, j	[ʒ]
K, k	[k]
L, l	[l]
Ķ, ķ	[tʃ]
M, m	[m]
N, n	[n]
Ņ, ņ	[ɲ]
O, o	[o]
P, p	[p]
Q, q	[q]
R, r	[r]
Ř, ř	[r]
S, s	[s]
Ş, ş	[ʃ]
T, t	[t]
U, u	[u]
Û, û	[u:]
Ü, ü	[y:]
V, v	[v]
W, w	[w]
X, x	[x]
Y, y	[j]
Z, z	[z]

پۆلینکەر له زمانی کوردی و ئینگلیزیدا

پۆختە:

گرینبیرگ 1972 له تووژینهوهیهکدا که پشتی به سامپلیکی 100 زمانی بهستوه، له باره ی پۆلینکهری ژماره ییه وه ههول ددها ئه وه مه رج و تابه تمه ندیانه دیاری بکا که به هۆیه وه زمانه کان بۆ زمانی پۆلینکهری و ناپۆلینکهریه وه دابهش ده بن. پاش ئه وه هال و شریستاکرایا له 1973 دا ههولیاندا تووژینه وه له وه بکه ن که ئایا زمانی (نیواری) زمانیکی پۆلینکهره یان نا؟ ئه م تووژینه وه یه ش له ژیر رۆشنا یی بۆچونه که ی گرینبیرگ دا ههولده دا ئه وه بسه لمینی که زمانی کوردی زمانیکی پۆلینکهره یان پۆلینکهره. ههروه ها ههولێ رونه ونه وه و به راورد کردنی رۆنانی پۆلینکهر ددها له زمانی ئینگلیزی و کوردیدا له چوارچۆیه ی ئه و پرسیارانه ی له ئامانجی تووژینه وه که دا هاتوه: چ ده ربهرینیکی زمانی بۆ پۆلینکهر له کوردی و ئینگلیزیدا به کاردین؟ چ جیاوازی و لیکچونیک له م روه وه له نیوان زمانی کوردی و ئینگلیزیدا هه یه له کاتی که هه ردوکیان زمانیکی پۆلینکهرن؟

په یقین سه ره کی: پۆلینکهر، پۆلینکهر، سیسته می بژیری، به که ی نه بژیر، به که ی پۆلینکهر.

ترکیب المصنف الكوردية والإنجليزية

الملخص:

حاول غرينبرغ (1972) في دراسة على عينة من حوالي 100 لغة مع المصنفات العددية، تحديد الظروف التي قد تصبح - اللغة غير المصنف لغة المصنف. لاحقا حاولا هيل وشريستا أشاريا (1973) ما إذا كانت (Newari) لغة المصنف أو لا. كما يحاول البحث أن نلقي نظرة على. اللغة الكوردية في ضوء دراسة (Greenberg)، سواء الكوردية هي لغة المصنف أم لا، كما يقارن البحث الانشاءات المصنف في اللغة الإنجليزية والكوردية، وذلك بهدف التصدي لأسئلة البحث: ما الأجهزة اللغوية التي تستخدم في الكوردية والإنجليزية للتصنيف؟ وما مدى اختلاف أو تشابه المصنفات باللغة الكوردية والانكليزية كلغات غير المصنف.

الكلمات الدالة: مصنف، غير مصنف، نظام عد، عدادات غير وحدة، مصنفات الوحدة.