# How do measure terms in non-classifier Indo-European languages resemble classifiers?

*Agnieszka Anuszka Bukowska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)*

Measure terms in non-classifier languages are typically regarded as lexical classificatory devices distinct from grammatical systems of nominal classification, i.e., gender and classifiers. In this paper I compare selected properties of numeral classifiers in Japanese and measure terms in three Indo-European languages, i.e., Polish, English and German, in order to demonstrate that measure terms share a number of characteristics with classifiers despite the prevailing opinion that they constitute a separate type.

Measure terms differ from classifiers mainly with regard to the degree of grammaticalization. The degree of obligatoriness of measure terms in the context of quantification of uncountable nouns is significantly lower than in the case of classifiers. Further, as corpus evidence suggests, in nonclassifier languages non-prototypical measure term constructions that enable the classification of virtually anything the speaker wishes to classify are possible (cf. Lehrer 1985), whereas classifier systems offer only limited possibilities of reclassification. Anaphoric use demonstrates yet another difference, showing the general tendency of classifier systems to offer greater possibilities of treating non-identical items as members of the same set. However, when a measure term is used in Indo-European, a constraint on anaphora similar as in Japanese may apply.

Despite the above mentioned differences, measure terms resemble classifiers both synchronically and diachronically. The properties of classifiers suggested by Dixon (1982) in his comparison of gender and classifiers also characterize measure terms. For Lehrer (1985) English measure terms bear such a strong resemblance to classifiers that she refers to them as classifiers, whereas Lehmann (2000) interprets German Mann and Stück as classifiers. In my paper I show that semantic changes that were involved in the formation of classifiers are also involved when a given item is used as a measure term and that lexical items serving as measure terms in Polish, English and German resemble the source elements of classifiers. Bearing in mind the potentially unidirectional nature of grammaticalization, I claim that the only possible change concerning measure terms in these languages is a shift towards a true classifier system.

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