CLASSIFIERS IN MAL (THIN)

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The purpose of this paper is to present data on classifiers in the Ban Sakat Klang dialect of Mal.[1]

Classifiers, i.e. numeral classifiers (see Jones 1970, T'sou 1976, Allen 1977), are those morphemes which identify units, usually by reference to the shape of the object or objects concerned, when a number is present. Some nouns in Mal are countable, some are uncountable. All countable nouns are obligatorily associated with a classifier if a number is used in counting them — for example,

ʔən   ʔui   ʔɔɔi   phɛʔ   lɛʔ
 I   have   pot   three   CL

I have three pots.

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[1]Mal, also known as Thin or Lua', is a Mon-Khmer language of northern Thailand and Laos. A member of the Khmuic subgroup, it is closely related to Khmuʔ, Palaung and Lawa. In Thailand Mal-speakers inhabit Pua, Chiang Klang and Thung Chang districts of Nan province, while in Laos they are found in Sayaboury province (see Filbeck 1976). For the data used in this paper I am indebted to Toi Rokphrai of Ban Sakat Klang in Pua District. To David Thomas I wish to express my appreciation for his suggestions and other help in the preparation of my paper.

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?ən   ?ui   khwan thiat    phoon   lɔŋ
 I    have         child    four   CL
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I have four children.

Uncountable nouns include such lexical items as saa 'rice', phuai 'water', and kək 'curry'. When used with numbers these can take only the receptacle classifiers (see 1.3).

1. *Types of classifiers.*

There are three types of classifiers in Mal: regular classifiers, self-classifiers, and receptacle classifiers.

1.1. *Regular classifiers.*

Regular classifiers constitute a set of morphemes whose only function is to classify nouns. They include simple unit classifiers, group classifiers, and action classifiers.

simple unit classifiers

phah 'sheet', with: kɔi 'trousers', but 'blouse', tɔŋ 'loin-cloth', bɛi 'mat', ta? khooi 'mattress', kua 'cloth', ?uu 'sarong', cuu cɛh 'rag'.

phia 'side', with: mat 'eye', sap 'arm', thi 'hand', thu mɔɔi 'ear', thɔŋ thii 'wrist', cəŋ 'foot', bɔɔm 'cheek', thaŋ 'earring', panai seem 'wing'.

taa 'place', with: sɛɛ 'farm', sa? 'forest', sop khwaŋ 'market', duup sɔɔi 'spirit house'.

mɔ? 'item', with: gup 'spoon', pa 'knife', phɨy 'bow', ?iaŋ 'bone', thaak 'tongue', thɔɔn 'bracelet', ŋaih 'comb', gɨɨ 'upper shelf', gaa 'lower shelf'.

naŋ 'body', with animals and spirits: siŋ 'pig', wai 'tiger', sua? 'dog', seem 'bird', leeŋ 'crab', mai 'snake', phɔm 'land leech', khun 'earthworm', kam cɔ? 'dragonfly', lɔh 'tadpole', lɔɔk 'toad', khaa 'fish', sɔɔi 'ghost', phii huŋ

'rainbow'.

lɛʔ, with fruits and round objects: lui 'gourd', phɛʔ maaw 'coconut', muh 'areca nut', phɛʔ mɨɨn 'red roselle', phɛʔ ŋəi 'inflorescence', phɛʔ phan phan 'top', phɛʔ nai 'cow bell', ka lɔk 'teacup', ʔuŋ 'small pot', ʔɔɔm 'bottle', ʔɛɛŋ 'flowerpot', ʔɔɔi 'pot', ʔɔɔi khaŋ 'pan', dɛh 'cup', tɔŋ 'egg', ya 'bag', ŋeʔ 'sun', thuaʔ 'moon', yɨm 'heart', phaŋ 'flat basket', puŋ 'closely woven bamboo basket', noʔ 'chopping block', kui 'mortar', gɛh 'pestle'.

lah, with: laŋ ʔai 'flower', thih 'mushroom', thih thui 'kind of edible mushroom'.

laŋ, with: thu ʔuaŋ 'leaf', thu 'betel'.

lɔŋ 'person', with terms for human beings: pham 'man (in general)', pham pəi 'corpse', gɨɨ 'friend', khwan thiat 'child', hum 'young man', mɔɔn 'young woman'.

sən, with long objects: thai 'rope', sook kɨʔ 'hair', sook seem 'feather', lam ʔuaŋ 'tree', gaŋ 'post', ŋai kiŋ 'needle', pɨt 'pencil', lɔɔŋ 'road', pɨn 'dart', ñan 'grass', siaŋ 'tooth', lam kao 'small bamboo', lam ŋaoʔ 'rice stalk', ñuam 'strip of bamboo'.

ñɔt 'drop', with: mia 'raindrop'.

group classifiers

yɨn 'disordered pile', with: phaʔ ʔoih 'firewood'.

gɛk 'ordered pile', with: phaʔ ʔoih 'firewood'.

kɔɔŋ 'bundle', with: phaʔ ʔoih 'firewood'.

ŋui 'lump (round object)', with: ŋuu lɛʔ 'stone', bot 'cloud'

ñum 'clump', with: gəə 'lemongrass'.

bɛɛk 'sheaf, bundle', with: ŋaoʔ 'rice stalk'

phaaŋ 'hand, cluster', only with: pʰɛʔ khwai 'banana'.

huaŋ 'bunch, stalk', with: pʰɛʔ khwai 'banana', ŋaoʔ 'rice, grain'.

dɔɔi 'handful', only with: hiaŋ 'tea leaf'.

thoop 'parcel', with: hiaŋ 'tea leaf'.

baa 'package', with: kua 'cloth'.

phuaŋ 'group', with: pham 'man', buoʔ 'cattle'.

thum 'bunch', with: khaa 'fish', laŋ ʔai 'flowers'.

phuŋ 'group of small insects', with: mot 'ant'.

action classifiers

doh 'time', with: yem 'to sweep', khai 'to sneeze', lɛʔ thɨ 'to breathe', hloʔ 'to bark', phok 'to strike (of lightning)', leʔ 'to fall (of rain)'.

kaih 'time', with: thɔi 'to forge', pɔɔk 'to cut', tɨk 'to pound', phən 'to shoot', yəih 'to shake', cah 'to call', khiah 'to laugh'.

1.2. *Self-classifiers.*[2]

Self-classifiers constitute a set of nouns capable of classifying themselves. These have also been called auto-classifiers or repeaters. Examples:

ʔən	ʔui	ciaŋ	ba	ciaŋ
I	have	house	one	CL (house)

I have one house.

ʔən	ʔui	dɛh	phoon	dɛh
I	have	bowl	four	CL (bowl)

I have four bowls.

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[2] See Adams, Becker and Conklin 1975.

This set includes: ciaŋ 'house', duup 'hut', gɔŋ 'hole', bɔh 'mountain', khwai 'stream', gət 'shadow', khyai 'nail', ñua 'finger', tah 'forehead', gap 'mouth', ŋɔk 'neck', phoi 'nest', ŋwai 'village', dɛh 'bowl', ŋe 'day', thuaʔ 'month', waaŋ 'year'.

Compound nouns use their first element as classifier. For example, dɔi cəŋ 'heel' : dɔi cəŋ ba dɔi 'one heel'; kəŋ khaak 'horn' : kəŋ khaak pyəi kəŋ 'two horns'; thuu lɔi 'tail' : thuu lɔi ba thuu 'one tail'; mɨ phɛʔ lak 'pumpkin-pine' : mɨ phɛʔ lak ba mɨ 'one pumpkin-pine'.

There are many compounds which designate parts of trees; these are likewise classified by their first element. For example, thuu ʔuaŋ 'leaf' : thuu ʔuaŋ sɛʔ thuu 'many leaves'. In the same way are classified wa ʔuaŋ 'branch'; kiak ʔuaŋ 'root'; ŋai ʔuaŋ 'stump'; gai ʔuaŋ 'stalk', and guh ʔuaŋ 'tree-top'.

1.3. *Receptacle classifiers.*

Receptacle classifiers are a set of nouns used as needed as units of measurement for other nouns. The members of this set designate any kind of container, but have no specific size. They are usually used with mass nouns. Examples:

phuai   ba   lui

water   one   CL (gourd)

one gourd of water.

phuai   ba   ka lɔk

water   one   CL (cup)

one cup of water.

saa   phoon   dɛh

rice   four   CL (bowl)

four bowls of rice

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kək    ba    ʔɔɔi
curry  one   CL (pot)
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one pot of curry.

Although I have attempted to identify standard measures, I have thus far been unable to elicit any. My informant has hitherto given me only forms borrowed from Thai, such as ba sɔɔk 'one sɔ̀ɔk (50 cm.)' and ba khɨp 'one khɨ̂p (25 cm.)'.

2. *Classifier constructions.*

Mal classifier constructions are of the "Southeast Asian" type,[3] that is to say, they follow the order noun + numeral + classifier. This noun-phrase pattern can be extended by the addition of demonstratives and adjectivals, so that the full noun phrase order is: (N) Noun + (Adj) Adjectival + (Nu) Numeral + (Cl) Classifier + (Dem) Demonstrative. Examples:

N	Adj	Nu	Cl	Dem
khaa	thiit	phoon	naŋ	nee
fish	small	four	CL	this

these four small fish.

N	Adj	Nu	Cl	Dem
pham	coʔ	ba	lɔŋ	ʔeen
man	sick	one	CL	that

that sick man.

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[3] Jones 1970 divides the languages of Southeast Asia and South China into two large groups distinguished by the structure of noun phrases involving classifiers. The difference is based on the position in the phrase of the head noun. One group employs the pattern numeral + classifier + noun (e.g., Chinese, Vietnamese); he terms this the "Chinese" type. The other group employs the pattern noun + numeral + classifier (e.g., Thai, Burmese); this he calls the "Southeast Asian" type.

3. *Comparisons.*

The Mal classifier system resembles that of the closely re-
lated Khmu? (Smalley 1956), Lawa la-oop,[4] and Palaung (Janzen
1976) in the following two ways.

All are of the "Southeast Asian" type:

	N	Nu	Cl
Mal	khaa	phoon	naŋ
	fish	four	CL
Khmu?	khee?	mooy	too
	rat	one	CL
Palaung	kaa	uu	too
	fish	one	CL
Lawa La-oop	kho?	ti?	ŋgoŋ
	wood	one	CL

And the full noun phrases in which classifiers occur
are also alike:

	N	Adj	Nu	Cl	Dem
Mal	khaa	thiit	phoon	naŋ	nee
	fish	small	four	CL	this
Khmu?	kɔɔn	cmrɔ?	cet	gon	
	child	male	seven	CL	
Palaung	lɛ		uu	too	
	pig		one	CL	
Palaung	plɛɛ	braaŋ			taai
	fruit	sour			that

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[4]My examples were kindly provided by Donald Schlatter in
May 1978.

Lawa La-oop	kho? wood	ra? big	ti? one	ŋgoŋ CL	se that

Data are unfortunately not yet available on other Khmuic and Palaungic languages, but these four languages agree in their patterning of classifiers.

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