

NUMERAL CLASSIFIERS IN TAI LUE (XISHUANGBANNA)

Audra Phillips
Payap University
phildra@gmail.com

William J. Hanna
SIL International
william_hanna@sil.org

Abstract

The Tai Lue language has a complex numeral classifier system in common with other Southeast Asian languages. Using data from a 344,000-word corpus of Tai Lue texts, this paper catalogues Tai Lue numeral classifiers and the constructions in which they occur. Like Standard Thai and Lao, the general inanimate classifier *an'* and the animal classifier *too'* can substitute for specific classifiers, including classifiers for humans, when they host a demonstrative, adjective, or relative clause. Moreover, the human classifier, *p^{huu}3*, occurs almost exclusively in these descriptive constructions.

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1 Introduction

Numeral classifiers are defined as forms that occur with numerals (Burling 1965; Craig 1992; Aikhenvald 2000). However, not every form that occurs with a numeral is considered to be a true classifier. Saul (1964) distinguishes *inherent natural units* from *non-inherent imposed units*, both of which occur with a numeral. An inherent natural unit refers to an inherent quality of the noun referent, while a non-inherent imposed unit refers to a measurement of the noun referent. Pe (1965: 166) distinguishes three categories: classifiers, quantifiers, and repeaters. A classifier refers to “an attribute of a specific object”, as in Thai *pàakkaa sǎŋ dāam* ‘pen, two CL.long.object’ (Singnoi 2008: 84). A quantifier is a measure word that also occurs with a numeral, as in Thai, *dinsǎŋ sǎŋ klǎŋ* ‘pencil, two CL.box’ (Singnoi 2008: 85). Finally, a repeater is a classifying form that is a repeat of the noun head, as in Thai (*khon*) *hāa khon* ‘person, five CL.person’ (Singnoi 2008: 82).

For some researchers, only members of Pe’s (1965) classifier category are considered to be true classifiers. These true classifiers classify a noun by an inherent property, such as animacy (Greenberg 1972; Becker 1975; Adams 1989; Croft 1994; Bisang 1999; Enfield 2007). Thus, *measure terms*, such as *klǎŋ* ‘CL.box’ are not considered to be classifiers, even though they also occur with a numeral. In contrast, other researchers distinguish subsets of classifiers (Saul 1964; Saul & Wilson 1980; Aikhenvald 2000; Grinevald 2000; Matisoff 2003; Gerner & 馬嘉思 2006). For example, Grinevald (2000: 58) characterizes classifier subsets as follows: “In languages with true classifiers, classifiers and measure terms typically belong to the same syntactic category but are considered separately, as sortal and mensural classifiers.” This is the approach that we take in this paper.

Cross-linguistic studies of sortal classifiers have found that the inherent properties of nouns most likely to be reflected in classifiers include animacy, dimensionality, and function (Adams & Conklin 1973; Croft 1994; Bisang 1999). Classifiers that reflect the animacy of the noun can be further distinguished by social status (Becker 1975). Moreover, dimensionality can be further refined by properties such as size, as reported

for Thai (Adams & Conklin 1973: 6). Within Kam-Tai languages, of which Tai Lue is a member, sortal classifiers typically reflect animacy, dimensionality, and functionality distinctions (Conklin 1981; DeLancey 1986; Gerner & 馬嘉思 2006).

In contrast, mensural classifiers impose external measurements. These measurements include standard measures, such as kilometres, litres, feet, and inches, or temporary measures, such as spoonful, basketful, or handful (Adams & Conklin 1973). Mensural classifier constructions may also be used to quantify action, occurring in conjunction with verb phrases (Lu 2012: 226ff.).

In addition to occurrence with a numeral or quantifying word, classifiers also occur with demonstratives, adjectives or stative verbs, and relative clauses. Greenberg (1972: 6) and Li & Thompson (1989: 105) report that a classifier is required with a demonstrative in Mandarin, a Sino-Tibetan language. Classifiers also occur with demonstratives in Vietnamese, an Austroasiatic language (Adams 1989: 10). A classifier is also required with a demonstrative in Kam-Tai languages. In Nùng, a Central Kam-Tai language, classifiers are reported to be able to serve as a substitute for a noun if they occur with a demonstrative, possessive, or adjective (Saul & Wilson 1980), while Lu (2012: 216) states that “In many Kam-Tai languages especially the central and northern variants, the head of a noun phrase is not a noun but a classifier.”

Even though classifiers are reported to occur with demonstratives, adjectives, or relative clauses in Sino-Tibetan, Austroasiatic, and Kam-Tai languages, a neutralization of contrast between classifiers in these descriptive, non-enumerating constructions has only been documented for Thai (Carpenter 1986) and Lao (Enfield 2007). In Thai, the expected classifier can be replaced by the general classifier *an* ‘CL.thing’ or the animal classifier *tua* ‘CL.animal’. In Lao, the classifiers that replace the expected classifier in these contexts include *qan3* ‘CL.small.thing’, which is cognate with Thai อัน */an/*, and *too3* ‘CL.body’, which is cognate with Thai ตัว */tua/*. In addition, a third classifier, *phuø* ‘CL.human’, occurs exclusively in descriptive constructions in Lao.

Enfield (2007: 141) suggests that the reason for this neutralization of contrast is because “greater semantic specificity” is not required, since a demonstrative is used to pick out an entity in a narrative or conversation. Carpenter (1986: 20ff), in her discussion of the pragmatic uses of Thai classifiers, describes three ways in which classifiers are used to individuate a thing from a group. In the first pragmatic context, a thing can be distinguished from everything else. Typically, this is accomplished by using the Thai general classifier, อัน */an/*, as shown in (1) and (2), from Carpenter (1986: 21).

- (1) เอาอันนี้ไหม
aw an ni may
 take CL.thing this Q
 ‘Do you want this?’
- (2) อันนี้เรียกว่ามะม่วง
an ni riak waa mamuang
 CL.thing this call say mango
 ‘This is called a mango.’

In (1) and (2), *an* is used with the demonstrative *ni* ‘this’ to pick out a mango from other things.

Humans can also be referenced in this way, as illustrated in (3).

- (3) อันนี้เป็นฝรั่ง
an ni pen farang
 CL.thing this is foreigner
 ‘This is a foreigner.’

In (3), a *farang* ‘foreigner’ is picked out from everything else using the classifier *an* with the demonstrative *nii* ‘this’. In (1), (2), and (3), the specific classifiers, ลูก /*lûuk*/ ‘CL.round’ and คน /*khon*/ ‘CL.ordinary’ that would have occurred if a numeral were present, are replaced by *an*, which represents a neutralization of contrast between classifiers in these non-enumerating constructions.

In the second pragmatic context, the animal classifier ตัว /*tua*/ distinguishes physical things from other physical things. This typically occurs when a physical attribute is discussed, as illustrated in (4), from Carpenter (1986: 22).

- (4) รู้จักไหม โน้นตัวอ้วน ผมหยาวๆ
rúuteàk may nóon tua úan phǒm jaawjaaw
 know Q there CL.animal fat hair longlong
 ‘Do you know her? There! The fat one. With long hair.’ (a secretary, indicating a professor)

In (4), a professor is referenced by the classifier *tua* in conjunction with the adjective *úan* ‘fat’ as a means of distinguishing the professor from other physical things.

Carpenter (1986: 22) argues that *tua* in (4) is referring to the person, not their body, as in (5).

- (5) เป็นตัวเล็กๆ เหมือนคนไทย
pen tua lekkek mian khon thai
 is CL.animal small same person Thai
 ‘She’s a little one, just like a Thai person.’

In (5), a foreigner is referenced by the classifier and adjective combination, *tua lekkek* ‘small one’. Carpenter (1986: 22) notes that if the speaker had been talking about the person’s body, the verb มี /*mii*/ ‘have’ would have been used instead of *pen* ‘is’.

In the third pragmatic context, an individual from a category is contrasted with other members of the same category, as illustrated in (6), from Carpenter (1986: 21).

- (6) a. จะเอาลูกไหน
tea² aw lûuk nǎy
 will take CL.round where?
 ‘Which one do you want?’
 b. จะเอาลูกนี้
tea² aw lûuk nii
 will take CL.round this
 ‘I’ll take this one.’

In (6), the interlocutors are distinguishing a piece of fruit in a pile of the same fruit. In this case, the numeral classifier *lûuk* ‘CL.round’ occurs with the proximal demonstrative *nii*. Note that the use of a specific classifier would be the expected use as opposed to the neutralization of contrast between classifiers in (1) – (5).

Carpenter (1986: 23) summarizes the uses of classifiers as a series of minimal distinctions, which are laid out in Table 1.

Table 1: *Obligatory minimal classifier distinctions in Thai (based on Carpenter (1986: 23))*

	Deixis	Physical adjectives	Enumeration
	thing	animate vs. inanimate, except for some adjectives	human, animal, thing
อัน /an/	X		
ตัว /tua/		X	
Specific classifier			X

In Table 1, /an/ ‘CL.thing’ is used deictically to distinguish something from everything else in conjunction with a demonstrative, while /tua/ ‘CL.animal’ is used to distinguish physical things from other physical things, typically in conjunction with an adjective. Finally, a specific classifier is used for enumeration and to distinguish a member of a group from other members of the same group.

Returning to Lao, Enfield (2007) argues for a distinct class of modifier classifiers that are distinguished by the fact that they occur with demonstratives, adjectives, the post-classifier numeral *nìng* ‘one’, and relative clauses. He comments that “any numeral classifier (including repeaters and mensural classifiers) can appear in a modifier classifier function, but in practice many distinctions are neutralized, with only a small number of numeral classifiers being used in these contexts” (Enfield 2007: 137). The first argument for this special class of classifiers is that they precede their modifier instead of following it, as is the case in enumerating constructions. This results in the phonological reduction of the modifier classifier since stress tends to occur on the final syllable of a phrase or compound word (Enfield 2007: 139). Another argument for a modifier classifier class is the fact that the human classifier, *phuø* ‘CL.human’, only occurs in descriptive constructions in Lao. Finally, the function of classifiers is different between enumerating and descriptive constructions. However, when Fedden and Corbett (2017) examined the Lao classifier data, they came to the conclusion that the so-called modifier classifiers are part of the numeral classifier system, not a separate set. They state that “the use of the smaller set of forms is predictable given the larger set forms; this fact prompts us to conclude that Lao has a single integrated system of classifiers” (Fedden & Corbett 2017: 177). In this paper, we show that Tai Lue also evidences a neutralization of contrast between classifiers with demonstratives, the post-classifier *nunj*⁵ ‘one’, adjectives, and relative clauses, utilizing the same three classifiers as Lao.

The Tai Lue language is a Southwestern Tai language, along with Standard Thai and Lao. Approximately 300,000 Tai Lue people live mostly in Xishuangbanna (Sipsongpanna) Dai Autonomous Prefecture, in Yunnan province of China, their ancient homeland. Tai Lue people also reside in four other countries: Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Tai Lue language spoken in these five countries varies considerably, influenced by contact with national languages and education systems. Hanna (1991) describes the numeral classifiers of the Tai Lue of Chiang Kham, Thailand, whereas this paper describes the classifier system of the Tai Lue language of Xishuangbanna.¹ Burusphat (2007a; 2007b) includes Tai Lue of Xishuangbanna in surveys of general and animate classifiers, respectively, in Tai-Kadai languages.

The Tai Lue have a 700-year-old tradition of writing, which includes religious texts and *khap* poetry. Much of the traditional literature has been republished in China in recent decades, along with modern books, including agricultural and medical handbooks, history, and translated novels. The data for this paper comes from a 344,000-word corpus of Tai Lue texts, which were collected by the second author. It includes *khap* poetry, modern fiction, autobiography, newspaper articles, correspondence, advice about childbirth, electricity, raising pigs, and raising lotuses, proverbs, recipes, and children’s reading primers.²

This account of Tai Lue numeral classifiers starts with a description of the simple noun phrase structure (§2), followed by a description of sortal (§3) and other classifier subtypes (§4). Constructions in which classifiers occur are then examined (§5). This is followed by a description of the neutralization of contrast

¹ The classifiers of Tai Lue speakers in China differ significantly from the Lue who have migrated to Thailand. Lue people there have a classifier system that is influenced by Thai or Northern Thai. They use the standard numeral classifier *kun*⁴ for counting people, as well as the forms *caaj*⁴ ‘CL.male’ and *jin*¹ ‘CL.female’. They do not use the low-status classifier *kɔɔ*⁶.

² The Tai Lue corpus is in a Fieldworks database and is available upon request.

between classifiers in descriptive constructions (§6). The paper concludes with a summary of the findings and directions for future research (§7).

2 The Tai Lue simple noun phrase

The Tai Lue simple noun phrase can be diagrammed as in (7).

(7) N + (Modifier) + (Quantifier) + (Classifier)

In (7), the noun head can be optionally followed by a modifier (noun or adjective), a quantifier (numeral or quantifying word), and a classifier.

A noun head modified by a classifier phrase is illustrated in (8).

(8) *p^haam⁴* *səŋ¹* *kun⁴* *lak⁵* *xam⁴* *kan¹*
Brahmin **two** **CL.ordinary** steal gold each.other
 ‘Two Brahmins stole gold from each other.’³

In (8), the noun head, *p^haam⁴* ‘Brahmin’, along with the quantifier + classifier combination, *səŋ¹ kun⁴* ‘two CL.ordinary’, indicates that it was two Brahmins that stole gold from each other. In Tai Lue, classifiers can occur without a quantifier, but the quantifiers that occur with classifiers cannot occur without a classifier. A classifier with a quantifier is often called a classifier phrase, since they function as a unit in the grammar.

Several quantifying words also fill the quantifier position in Tai Lue grammar, which is illustrated in (9).

(9) *hɔɔ⁴bin¹* *pɔj²* *maak²tæk²* *saj²* *baan³xoŋ²* *laaj¹* *tii⁵*
 aeroplane release bomb onto **village** **many** **CL.place**
 ‘Aeroplanes dropped bombs on many villages.’

In (9), the quantifying word, *laaj¹* ‘many’, occurs preceding the classifier *tii⁵* ‘CL.place’. The classifier phrase quantifies the noun head *baan³xoŋ²* ‘village’. Other quantifying words include *laaŋ⁴* ‘some’, *sæn⁴* ‘some’, *taŋ⁴* ‘whole’, *cuu⁵* ‘every, each’, and *sak²* ‘not even one’.

The question word *kii²* ‘how.many’ also fills the quantifier position in a classifier phrase, as illustrated in (10).

(10) *daaw¹* *juu²* *naj⁴* *mɔŋ⁴faa⁶* *nan* *mii⁴* *kii²* *noj²*
star stay in sky that have **how.many** **CL.round.thing**
 ‘How many stars are in the sky?’

In (10), the sortal classifier for round things *noj²* is preceded by *kii²* ‘how.many’. This classifier phrase is used to ask how many stars are in the sky.

A noun phrase with a noun modifier is illustrated in (11).

³ Tones are marked with superscript numbers. The shape of the tones varies from region to region but are approximately like this: Tone 1 (proto A1-3) high; Tone 2 (B1-3) high rising; Tone 3 (C1-3) low rising; Tone 4 (A4) low falling; Tone 5 (B4) mid; Tone 6 (C4) low falling creaky. The phonemic transcription used here is close to IPA. /c/ represents an alveolo-palatal affricate [tɕ] before front vowels /i, e, æ/ and an alveolo-dental affricate [ts] before back and rounded vowels. See Li (1964), Hartmann (1984), Lamchiagdase (1984) and Hanna (2012) for further description of Tai Lue phonology. See Chaimano (2009) for more on Tai Lue tone variation.

- (11) *tuʔ⁵pʰa⁵ tʰaj⁴ saw⁴ tun¹ cak² maa⁴ ʔæw²lɔɔ⁵pʰɔɔ²tɔŋ⁴*
monk Thai twenty CL.honoured IRR come tour
 ‘Twenty Thai monks will come on a tour.’

In (11), the noun head *tuʔ⁵pʰa⁵* ‘monk’ is modified by the noun *tʰaj⁴* ‘Thai’, which specifies the nationality of the monks. The classifier is *tun¹*, which is the classifier for monks and other honoured people. It is preceded by the numeral *saw⁴* ‘twenty’. The classifier phrase follows both the noun head and its noun modifier.

Noun heads can also be modified by an adjective, as illustrated in (12).

- (12) *baan³ paa²nɔɔ² mii⁴ mææ⁵maaj³ num² kun⁴ nuŋ⁵*
 village PaaNoo have **widow young CL.ordinary one**
 ‘In PaaNoo village, there was a young widow.’

In (12), the noun head, *mææ⁵maaj³* ‘widow’, is modified by the adjective, *num²* ‘young’. The classifier phrase, *kun⁴ nuŋ⁵* ‘CL.ordinary one’, in which the numeral follows the classifier, indicates indefinite reference to a single young widow. This construction is discussed further in §5.

The classifier phrase is sometimes separated from the rest of the noun phrase by verbal material, as illustrated in (13).

- (13) *mɔɔ⁴ luŋ⁴ hɔɔ⁴bin¹ maa⁴ jɪŋ⁴saaw¹ xaw³ maa⁴ sɔŋ¹ kun⁴*
 when descend aeroplane come **young.woman** enter come **two CL.ordinary**
 ‘When we got off the aeroplane two young women came up to us.’

In (13), the head noun is *jɪŋ⁴saaw¹* ‘young woman’ and the classifier phrase is *sɔŋ¹ kun⁴* ‘two CL.ordinary’, which occurs at the end of the sentence. The speaker could have chosen to say this sentence with the classifier phrase directly following the noun head, but in this instance, it is separated from the noun phrase by the verbs *xaw³ maa⁴* ‘enter come’. The classifier *kun⁴* is one type of sortal classifier, which are considered in the next section.

3 Sortal classifiers

Like other Kam-Tai languages, Tai Lue sortal classifiers individuate nouns based on their animacy, dimensionality, or functionality (Gerner & 馬嘉思 2006). In the account to follow, animate classifiers are considered in §3.1, followed by inanimate classifiers in §3.2.

3.1 Classifiers for animate entities

Tai Lue sortal classifiers for animate entities include several classifiers for humans, as well as a classifier for animals, and several classifiers for flora. Human classifiers are covered first (§3.1.1), followed by non-human classifiers (§3.1.2). The section ends with a summary of animate classifiers (§3.1.3).

3.1.1 Human classifiers

Within the corpus, four classifiers refer to humans based on social status. In addition, gender, age, and relationship nouns can occur with a quantifier, functioning as classifiers, to provide additional information about the noun referent. All these human classifiers are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: *Tai Lue human classifiers*

Social status classifiers	Meaning
<i>tun</i> ¹	high status (honoured)
<i>kun</i> ⁴ , <i>p^huu</i> ³	ordinary status
<i>kɔɔ</i> ⁶	low status
Gender, age, and relationship classifiers	
<i>caaj</i> ⁴ , <i>jiŋ</i> ⁴	male, female
<i>naaŋ</i> ⁴ , <i>saaw</i> ¹	married woman, unmarried woman
<i>t^haw</i> ³	old person
<i>sew</i> ²	friend
<i>xɔj</i> ¹ , <i>paj</i> ⁶	male in-law, female in-law

In the discussion to follow, social status classifiers are considered first (§3.1.1.1), followed by gender, age, and relationship classifiers (§3.1.1.2).

3.1.1.1 Social status classifiers

The Tai Lue social status classifiers distinguish high, ordinary, and low status humans. The discussion begins with the classifier for high status individuals, followed by ordinary and lower status humans.

*tun*¹

The classifier *tun*¹ is used for honoured or royal people, which recognises a difference of power and distance between the speaker and the noun referent. *tun*¹ is used 157 times in the corpus, reflecting the fact that kings and gods are a common subject matter in Tai Lue folktales. It is used for kings or people of a royal family (78 tokens), for gods (48), for officials (18), for monks and hermits (10) and for rich people (3). This is illustrated in(14).

- (14) *baw*² *pit⁵calanaa⁴* *dii*¹ *kɔ* *lot*⁵ *xaa*³ *caw³lasii¹* *cet*² *tun*¹
 not careful good LNK so kill **hermit** **seven** **CL.honoured**
 ‘Through carelessness, he accidentally killed seven hermits.’

In (14), the classifier *tun*¹ ‘CL.honoured’ follows the numeral *cet*² ‘seven’. This classifier phrase quantifies the high-status noun referent *caw³lasii¹* ‘hermit’.

Royalty are not always referred to with the classifier *tun*¹. Some authors or speakers use *tun*¹ consistently, while others will use it only when first introducing a king to the scene, with occasional usage thereafter.

*kun*⁴

The classifier *kun*⁴ is a common classifier used for people, appearing 659 times in the corpus. It is illustrated in (15).

- (15) *han*¹ *pɔɔ⁵kaa⁶* *sɔŋ*¹ *kun*⁴ *xaw*³ *baan*³ *maa*⁴
 see **merchant** **two** **CL.ordinary** enter village come
 ‘He saw two merchants coming into the village.’

In (15), *pɔɔ⁵kaa⁶* ‘merchant’ is quantified by the classifier phrase *sɔŋ¹ kun⁴* ‘two CL.ordinary’.
 Children can also be classified by *kun*⁴, as demonstrated by(16).

- (16) *pɔɔ*⁵ *p^huu³xaa³* *mii*⁴ *luk*⁵ *hok*² *kun*⁴
 father 1SG.DEFER have **child** **six** **CL.ordinary**
 ‘My father had six children.’

In (16), *luk⁵* ‘child’ is quantified by the classifier phrase *hok² kun⁴* ‘six CL.ordinary’.
Students can also be classified by *kun⁴*, as shown by (17).

- (17) *luk⁵hen⁴* *tang⁴laaj¹* *ɔaw¹* *pɪi³* *maa⁴* *cuu⁵* *kun⁴* *lææ²*
student all take pen come every **CL.ordinary** Q.yet
 ‘Have all you students brought your pens?’

Like (13), the classifier phrase in (17), *cuu⁵ kun⁴* ‘every CL.ordinary’, occurs after the predicate, which separates it from its noun head, *luk⁵hen⁴* ‘student’.

p^huu³

p^huu³ does not normally occur with quantifiers in the corpus, except for one example, which is presented in (18).

- (18) *mii⁴* *p^huu³kok²kaw⁶* *laaj¹* *p^huu³* *maa⁴* *p^hɔm⁵*
 have **department.head** many **CL.ordinary** come together
 ‘There were several department heads who got together.’

In (18), the noun head *p^huu³kok²kaw⁶* ‘department head’ is modified by the classifier phrase *laaj¹ p^huu³* ‘many CL.ordinary’. This use of *p^huu³* is unique in the corpus, possibly influenced by the appearance of *p^huu³* in the compound word *p^huu³kok²kaw⁶* ‘department head’ immediately preceding it. Other than this example, *p^huu³* occurs only in descriptive constructions, which are discussed in §5.

kɔɔ⁶

The classifier *kɔɔ⁶* is used for lower status humans or human-like inanimates, appearing 271 times in the corpus. It is typically used with children, women, dolls, or people in trouble. The use of the classifier to classify children is illustrated in (19).

- (19) *luk⁵ɔn²* *nɔj⁶* *sɔŋ¹* *kɔɔ⁶* *din³* *faj⁴* *pɔɔ²kɔɔt²* *kaan¹faj⁴maj³*
child **little** **two** **CL.low** play fire happen fire
p^haam¹ *feet²* *maj⁶*
 shelter store wood

‘Two little children were playing with fire and a fire started in a wood storage shelter.’

In (19), the noun head, *luk⁵ɔn²* ‘child’, is modified by the adjective *nɔj⁶* ‘little’ and the classifier phrase *sɔŋ¹ kɔɔ⁶* ‘two CL.low’.

Poor people are also classified by *kɔɔ⁶*, as illustrated in (20).

- (20) *mɔɔ⁵kɔn²* *mii⁴* *p^huu³tok⁵kun⁴p^haan¹* *saam¹* *kɔɔ⁶*
 long.ago have **poor.person** **three** **CL.low**
 ‘Long ago there were three poor people.’

The construction in (20) asserts the existence of *p^huu³tok⁵kun⁴p^haan¹* ‘poor.person’ who are quantified by the low-status classifier *kɔɔ⁶* and the numeral *saam¹* ‘three’.

A doll is a small, human-like object that can be classified by *kɔɔ*⁶, as illustrated in (21).

- (21) *ɔaw¹ din¹daak² paaj⁴lan¹ wat⁵ han³ pan³ ɔikun⁴ kɔɔ⁶ nuŋ⁵*
 take clay behind monastery there mould **doll** **CL.low** **one**
 ‘He got clay from behind the monastery and moulded it into a doll.’

In (21), the noun head, *ɔikun*⁴ ‘doll’, is modified by the classifier *kɔɔ*⁶ ‘CL.low’, which is followed by the numeral *nuŋ*⁵ ‘one’.

Some other Tai languages have a form that is cognate with the Lue classifier *kɔɔ*⁶. Luo’s (1999) Dehong Tai dictionary lists *kɔ*⁶ as a “classifier for human beings.” The Rachapat (2009) Tai Yai dictionary does not carefully distinguish classifiers from nouns, but it lists *kɔ*⁶ as meaning ‘person’ and ‘friend’. In Khamti, the standard classifier for counting people is *koo*¹ (Inglis 2007: 4).⁴ Ordinary human referents can also be classified by gender, age, or relationship terms, which is discussed next.

3.1.1.2 Gender, age, or relationship classifiers

An alternative to *kun*⁴, the classifier for ordinary people, is to use a gender, age, or relationship term as a classifier. Seven such terms are found in the Tai Lue corpus, which are discussed in turn.

caaj⁴ and jiy⁴

The nouns *caaj*⁴ ‘man’ and *jiy*⁴ ‘woman’ can be used as classifiers to distinguish gender. *caaj*⁴ ‘CL.male’ and *jiy*⁴ ‘CL.female’ occur 41 and 13 times in the corpus, respectively. The male gender classifier is illustrated in (22).

- (22) *xaw¹ piinɔŋ⁶ cet² caaj⁴ daj³jin⁴ nok*
 3PL **sibling** **seven** **CL.male** hear bird
 ‘The seven brothers heard the birds.’

In (22), *caaj*⁴ ‘CL.male’, which follows the numeral *cet*² ‘seven’, functions as a classifier of the noun head *piinɔŋ*⁶ ‘sibling’. The classifier indicates that these siblings are male.

Female gender can be indicated in the same way, as illustrated by (23).

- (23) *p^hajaa⁴caw³ mɔŋ⁴ walanasii¹ mii⁴ luk⁵jiy⁴ cet² jiy⁴*
 king city Varanasi have **daughter** **seven** **CL.female**
 ‘The king of Varanasi city had seven daughters.’

In (23), *jiy*⁴ ‘CL.female’ is used as a classifier for *luk⁵jiy⁴* ‘daughter’. The marital status of women can also be indicated when marital status nouns act as classifiers.

naay⁴ and saaw¹

The nouns *naay*⁴ ‘married.female’ and *saaw*¹ ‘unmarried.female’ are used as classifiers for women. *naay*⁴ has connotations of respectability and virtue. *saaw*¹ refers to an unmarried and typically younger woman. In the corpus, *naay*⁴ is used seven times as a classifier and *saaw*¹ is used four times. This is illustrated in (24) and (25).

- (24) *dɔɔk²boo¹ pan⁴ kɔɔ¹ nan pin¹ naay⁴naat⁵ pan⁴ naay⁴*
 lotus 1000 CL.plant that be **beautiful.woman** **1000** **CL.married.female**
 ‘The 1000 lotus flowers represent 1000 beautiful women.’

⁴ Other Tai languages apparently do not have a cognate for *kɔɔ*⁶. For Lao see Kerr (1992), for Thai see Thiengburanathum (1992), for Northern Thai see Wacharasastr (1997), and for Tai Dam see Baccam et al. (1989).

In (24), the noun head, *naay⁴naat⁵* ‘beautiful.woman’ is classified by the classifier phrase *pan⁴ naay⁴* ‘1000 CL.married.female’. In this example, the classifier indicates that these beautiful women are all married.

An example with unmarried women is provided in (25).

- (25) *p^hajaa⁴ p^hum⁴ mii⁴ luk⁵ cet² saaw¹*
 lord Brahma have **child** **seven** **CL.unmarried.female**
 ‘Lord Brahma had seven daughters.’

In (25), the use of *saaw¹* as a classifier introduces these children as unmarried daughters of marriageable age. This distinction is crucial to the ongoing development of the plot.

t^haw³

The noun *t^haw³* ‘old person’ appears as a classifier of old people 12 times in the corpus. This is illustrated in (26).

- (26) *tææ²kən² mii⁴ caa²son¹ sɔŋ¹ t^haw³ p^hoo¹mee⁴*
 long.ago have **gardener** **two** **CL.old.person** husband.wife
 ‘Long ago there were two elderly gardeners, husband and wife.’

In (26), the use of *t^haw³* as a classifier adds the information that the gardener couple are elderly. Nouns referring to in-laws may also serve as classifiers.

xɔj¹

The noun *xɔj¹* ‘male in-law’ refers to any male related by marriage who is younger than one’s father (daughter’s husband, sister’s husband, or spouse’s brother). The noun *paj⁶* ‘female in-law’ has a comparable set of meanings and can also be used as a classifier, but it does not occur as a classifier in the corpus. *xɔj¹* appears 11 times in the corpus as a classifier, which is illustrated in (27).

- (27) *p^hajaa⁴caw³ hɔŋ⁶ ɔaw¹ luk⁵xɔj¹ hok² xɔj¹ maa⁴*
 king summon get **son-in-law** **six** **CL.male.in-law** come
 ‘The king summoned his six sons-in-law to come.’

In (27), *xɔj¹* is used as a classifier for the king’s sons-in-law. The last relationship noun that can be used as a classifier refers to close friends or partners.

sew²

The noun *sew²* ‘close friend’ or ‘partner’ can also be used as a classifier when counting friends. It appears 14 times in the corpus as a classifier, which is demonstrated in (28).

- (28) *xaw¹ sɔŋ¹ sew² kɔ fɔk² xap² cuu⁵ muuu⁴ cuu⁵ wan⁴*
3PL **two** **CL.friend** LNK practice sing every CL.day every CL.day
 ‘The two friends practiced singing every day.’

In the context of (28), it is already known that these people are friends, and this information is reinforced by using *sew²* as the classifier, which occurs after the numeral *sɔŋ¹* ‘two’. The nominal head in this example is the third plural pronoun *xaw¹*. Non-human animates, both flora and fauna, have their own classifiers.

3.1.2 Non-human classifiers

Several classifiers are used to refer to non-human animates. *too'* is the classifier for counting animals, while several classifiers are used for flora. The animal classifier is shown in (29).

- (29) *xaw'* *lej'* **maa'** *loŋ'* *waj'* *səŋ'* *too'*
 3PL raise **dog** **big** away **two** **CL.animal**
 'They raised two big dogs.'

In (29), the noun head, *maa'* 'dog', is classified by the classifier, *too'* 'CL.animal'. The classifier phrase occurs separately from the noun head and its modifier *loŋ'* 'big'.

An example of the classification of plants is illustrated in (30).

- (30) *juu'* *him'* *lak'* *naj'* *puuk'* **maak²xut⁵** *sii'* *kəw'*
 at side stake each plant **dragon.fruit** **four** **CL.plant**
 'At the side of each stake, plant four dragon fruit plants.'

In (30), the noun head, *maak²xut⁵* 'dragon fruit', is classified by the classifier, *kəw'* 'CL.plant'. Other classifiers for flora include *tun³* 'CL.tree' and *dəwək²* 'CL.flower'.

3.1.3 Summary of animate classifiers

To summarize, human referents are typically classified by one of three human classifiers, which are distinguished by status. In addition, gender, age, and relationship nouns functioning as classifiers can be used to quantify human referents. The classifier *too'* is used to classify animals, while the classifier *kəw'* is used to classify plants. Other flora classifiers include *tun³* 'CL.tree' and *dəwək²* 'CL.flowers'. Inanimates are classified by their shape or function.

3.2 Classifiers for inanimate entities

Tai Lue sortal classifiers for inanimate entities generally classify by dimension or function, although two classifiers for outlines have been identified. Within dimensionality, classifiers may be further differentiated by consistency. Classifiers for saliently one-dimensional (long) entities are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Tai Lue one-dimensional classifiers*

Classifier	Associated shape	Frequency
<i>sin³</i>	flexible long things (river/stream/canal, road/path, rope/thread, hair, feather, vine, wire, noodle, rainbow, sunbeam)	71
<i>lam⁴</i>	tree trunks, vehicles (car, boat, train, bus)	45
<i>lim³</i>	rigid long things (gold bar, bridge, pillar/house beam, stick/club, arrow, tooth, needle/pin, wire, bamboo tie, book, box, flute, match)	43
<i>saaj¹</i>	lines (breath of wind, wire, lightning, falling rain, root, sunbeam, umbilical cord)	18
<i>baŋ³</i>	one-ended tubes (sticky rice container, gun)	4
<i>lət²</i>	double-ended tubes (pipe, straw, blow tube)	--

In Table 3, one-dimensional items can be rigid (*lim³*), flexible (*sin³*), or without clear boundaries (*saaj¹*). They can also classify more substantial long things (*lam⁴*), as well as tubes open at one end (*baŋ³*) and tubes open at both ends (*lət²*).

Two-dimensional entities are saliently flat. A selection of classifiers for flat inanimates are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: *Tai Lue two-dimensional classifiers*

Classifier	Associated shape	Frequency
<i>bin</i> ³	sheets (picture, piece of paper/page/document, leaf, postage stamp, banknote, mushroom, newspaper, envelope, ID card)	55
<i>p^hun</i> ¹	flexible sheets (letter, shirt/coat, skirt/sarong, clothing, piece of cloth, diaper, envelope, flake of rock, leaflet, mat)	53
<i>p^hæn</i> ²	plates, sheets (rice cake, leaves, bedsheet, gold leaf, cloud, lotion on face, magnifying glass, mark, piece, pill, shrapnel)	22

In Table 4, two-dimensional classifiers are distinguished by flexibility and relative thickness.

Three-dimensional entities are saliently round or spherical. Several classifiers for round inanimates are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: *Tai Lue three-dimensional classifiers*

Classifier	Associated shape	Frequency
<i>noj</i> ²	fruits and vegetables (pepper, peach, coconut, gourd, fruit, melon, apple, grape, mango, papaya, starfruit, pineapple, cabbage, cucumber, grain, orange, pear, strawberry, watermelon) Other saliently spherical items (book, star, rock/stone, egg, lake/pond, pot/jar, chair, pinecone, sun bag, eye, mirror, mountain/hill, jewel, loaf of bread, seashell, machine, ring, basket, bomb, cave, hat, jug, knapsack, leaf, plate/bowl, pocket, world, ball, balloon, bell, bottle, breed of rice, car, circle, cotton boll, cupboard, drum, dumpling, hair whorl, lamp, lump, moon, mouth, organization, song, tube)	120
<i>luk</i> ⁵	balls (gem, egg, rock/stone, hair whorl, mountain, fruit, lake, abscess)	50
<i>met</i> ⁵	grains (rice, beans, tears, raindrops)	35
<i>hoo</i> ¹	heads (heads, root vegetables, machines)	31
<i>køn</i> ³	lumps (candy, stone, sugarcane, hailstone, rice ball, fireball, mango, paper ball, feces)	24

In Table 5, the most common three-dimensional classifier in the corpus is *noj*². Three-dimensional classifiers are distinguished by size, with *met*⁵ ‘CL.grain’ the smallest.

Besides classifiers based on dimensionality, Tai Lue has classifiers that classify outlines of inanimate entities, which are listed in Table 6.

Table 6: *Tai Lue outline classifiers*

Classifier	Outline	Frequency
<i>paak</i> ²	mouths (mouth/cheek, doorway, entrance, voice); ends (wire, rope, tree trunk, horn)	34
<i>køn</i> ³	cylinders (bottles, torches, cameras)	10
<i>bøk</i> ²	barrels (guns, flashlights, fireworks)	1

The last group of sortal classifiers for inanimate entities are those that classify nouns by function, as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7: *Tai Lue function classifiers*

Classifier	Associated function	Frequency
<i>lan</i> ¹	buildings (house, bridge, school, treasury/storehouse, monastery, wind/watermill, palanquin, cart, chicken coop, palace, sala)	68
<i>kan</i> ⁴	things with handles or operated by hand (sword, flag, vehicle, spoon)	33
<i>t^hen</i> ²	blades (sword, knife, axe, spear, scissors)	28

In addition to sortal classifiers, the Tai Lue classifier inventory includes general classifiers, repeaters, and mensural classifiers.

4 Other classifier subtypes

In addition to sortal classifiers, Tai Lue also has general classifiers (§4.1), repeaters (§4.2), and mensural classifiers (§4.3). This section ends with a summary of these classifier types (§4.4). The discussion begins with general classifiers.

4.1 General classifiers

Burusphat (2007a: 138–139) identifies *ʔan* as a general classifier in Tai Lue (Dai), which is used to classify small entities and newly-introduced entities. *ʔan* is not commonly used with quantifiers (39 out of 2360 tokens in the corpus). It is used exclusively with small material objects that are inanimate in enumeration constructions. An overview of the entities classified by *ʔan* from the Tai Lue corpus are listed in Table 8.

Table 8: *Entities classified by ʔan¹ that occur with quantifiers in the corpus*

Category	Entities
Tools	basket, bracelet, button, eraser, magnifying glass, pencil, photocopier, ring, ruler, saddle
Shapes	square, rectangle, triangle
Other items	bread, braids, bud, camel hump, earth, letter of alphabet, lump, “parts” of things, picture, pit, “thing”, spire, stick, trumpet

The entities that are classified by *ʔan* in descriptive constructions are more varied. This is examined further in §6.

Burusphat (2007a) also identifies *noj*², a classifier for fruits, as another general classifier in Tai Lue (Dai). However, when speakers were asked about this classifier, they showed a fist and said that it means ‘round things’.

To summarize, Tai Lue has one general classifier, *ʔan*¹, that can be used to refer to entities, including newly introduced and abstract entities. Instead of utilizing a general classifier to classify an object, a repeater can be used.

4.2 Repeaters

Aikhenvald (2000: 361) defines repeaters as nouns that are used in the classifier position “to classify the same noun, or semantically related nouns.” In Tai Lue, one of the most common repeaters is the classifier for ordinary people, *kun*⁴, which is also a noun for people. This repeater is illustrated in (31).

- (31) *tek*² *kun*⁴ *paj*¹ *pin*¹ *læn*² *pææt*²*sip*² *kun*⁴
 catch person go be soldier eighty CL.ordinary
 ‘They drafted eighty people to be soldiers.’

In (31), *kun*⁴ is part of the classifier phrase that quantifies *kun*⁴ ‘person’. The classifier follows the numeral *pææt*²*sip*² ‘80’. The classifier phrase occurs at the end of the clause separated from its noun head.

For inanimate entities, many nouns that are hard to fit into the shape-based or function classes are used as their own classifier, as illustrated in (32).

- (32) *mii*⁴ *cuuu*⁵ *sɔŋ*¹ *cuuu*⁵ *baw*²*daaj*¹
 have **name** **two** **CL.name** only
 ‘They have only two names.’

In (32), the noun *cuuu*⁵ ‘name’ serves as its own classifier following the quantifier *sɔŋ*¹ ‘two’. Other repeaters found in the corpus are listed in Table 10.

Table 10: *Tai Lue repeaters*

Classifier	Meaning	Frequency
<i>wan</i> ⁴	‘day’	901
<i>mɔŋ</i> ⁴	‘city’ (city, town, civilized place)	99
<i>xaaw</i> ⁵	‘story’ (story, lesson, poem/song)	63
<i>baan</i> ³	‘village’	61
<i>muu</i> ⁴	‘acre’	42
<i>p^haa⁴saa¹</i>	‘nationalities’	32
<i>ʔatit</i> ⁵	‘week’	24
<i>p^hateet</i> ⁵	‘nation’	22
<i>huu</i> ⁴	‘hole’	15
<i>xaap</i> ⁵	‘meal’	14
<i>naa</i> ³	‘face’ (face, page)	14
<i>tin</i> ¹	‘foot’	13
<i>kaap</i> ²	‘petal’	11

The classifiers listed in Table 10 are only a sample of repeaters in the corpus. The last class of classifiers to be considered are mensural classifiers, which impose a measurement on their noun head.

4.3 Mensural classifiers

In contrast to sortal classifiers, which individuate a noun based on an inherent property of the referent, mensural classifiers impose a measurement on a noun referent (Saul 1964). Mensural classifiers include standard measures (§4.3.1), non-standard or temporary measures (§4.3.2), as well as collective and partitive measures (§4.3.3) (Gerner & 馬嘉思 2006). The section ends with a summary of mensural classifiers (§4.3.4).

4.3.1 Standard measure classifiers

Standard measure classifiers include locally and internationally recognized measures, such as length, weight, volume, and time (Gerner & 馬嘉思 2006: 289). A length measure is illustrated in (33).

- (33) *kaaj*² *xaam*³ *nɔŋ*¹ *nam*⁶*mæe*⁵ *kwaan*³ *saam*¹*sip*² *mii*¹ *paaj*¹
framework cross above river wide **thirty** **CL.metre** more
 ‘The structure that crosses the river is over 30 metres wide.’

In (33), the classifier phrase, *saam*¹*sip*² *mii*¹ ‘thirty CL.metres’, indicates that the *kaaj*² ‘framework’ that crossed the river was thirty metres wide.

A weight mensural classifier is illustrated in (34).

- (34) *ʔaw*¹ *p^hak*²*pɔɔt*² *hæŋ*³ *hok*²*sip*² *xɔŋ*⁴ *tum*³ *xun*³ *kin*¹
 take **watercress** **dry** **sixty** **CL.gram** boil concentrated eat
 ‘Boil down sixty grams of dried watercress until it is thick and drink it.’

In (34), the noun head *p^hak²pɔɔt²* ‘watercress’ is modified by the adjective *hæŋ³* ‘dry’. The classifier phrase, *hok²sip²xɔɔ⁴* ‘sixty CL.gram’, indicates the weight of the watercress.

A time mensural classifier is illustrated in (35).

- (35) *paj¹ hen⁴ mɔŋ⁴sææ¹ daj³ nuŋ⁵ dɔn¹*
 go study Kunming get **one CL.month**

‘I went to study in Kunming for one month.’

In (35), the classifier phrase, *nuŋ⁵ dɔn¹* ‘one CL.month’, indicates that the period of study was for one month. Other time classifiers include *ɔatit⁵* ‘CL.week’, *but²* ‘CL.moment’, *jaam⁴* ‘CL.time’, *xuun⁴* ‘CL.night’, *pii¹* ‘CL.year’, *coo⁵* ‘CL.generation’, *hɔɔp⁵* ‘CL.cycles’, *kam⁴* ‘CL.words, brief events’, *xaaw⁴* ‘CL.moment’. Non-standard or temporary mensural classifiers are also possible.

4.3.2 Non-standard or temporary measures

Non-standard measures are more language-specific and come from containers or other salient configurations in the culture (Adams & Conklin 1973; Gerner & 馬嘉思 2006). A selection of non-standard or temporary measure classifiers are listed in Table 11.

Table 11: *Tai Lue non-standard or temporary measure classifiers*

Classifier	Measure	Frequency
<i>tii⁵</i>	places (place, city/town, jungle/forest/grove, garden/park, river/ditch, pond/lake, shop/business/factory)	253
<i>ɔit²</i>	bits of material and non-material things, bits of time and space	135
<i>t^haan³</i>	level (level of government hierarchy, rank, region/area, level of quality)	60
<i>baat²</i>	steps	33
<i>cæn⁶</i>	spoonful (in recipes, medicine)	29
<i>waa⁴</i>	arm-span (the length of one’s spread arms)	26
<i>kuu⁵</i>	pairs (chromosomes, shoes, birds, eyes, married couples, earrings, hands, teats)	25
<i>sɔɔk²</i>	cubit (the length from fingertip to elbow)	17
<i>haap²</i>	loads (rice, radishes, cabbage, salt, sand, thatch, water)	17
<i>cæn⁶</i>	rows (soldiers, cashier windows, birds, plants, teeth)	10
<i>jot⁵</i>	league (the distance one can walk in an hour)	9
<i>kam¹</i>	handful (spices, seedlings, chopsticks)	9
<i>niv⁶</i>	fingerwidth (thickness of meat)	7
<i>xuunp⁵</i>	handspan (height of horses)	4
<i>baat²</i>	a weight for weighing gold, approx 15g	3
<i>kɔk²</i>	‘cupful’ (in recipes, medicine)	2

The use of the classifier for government ranks is illustrated in (36).

- (36) *taŋ³ hoo¹baan³hoo¹xoŋ¹ t^huŋ¹ naaj⁴ suŋ¹ mi⁴ sip² t^haan³*
 from village.head to lord high have **ten CL.level**
 ‘From the village head up to the highest lord, there are ten ranks.’

In (36), the classifier phrase, *sip² t^haan³* ‘ten CL.level’, indicates that the traditional Lue hierarchical system includes ten levels or ranks.

The quantification of a mass noun referent is illustrated in (37).

- (37) *cak² ɔaw¹ xaw³ huuu³ muŋ⁴ kaw³sip² haap²*
 IRR take **rice** give 2SG **ninety CL.load**
 ‘I will give you ninety loads of rice.’

In (37), the noun head *xaw³* ‘rice’ is modified by the classifier phrase, *kaw³sip² haap²* ‘ninety CL.load’, indicating the volume of the rice. A *haap²* is as much as one can carry on both ends of a stick over one’s shoulder. In addition to standard and non-standard measure classifiers, collective and partitive classifiers are also included in the set of Tai Lue mensural classifiers.

4.3.3 Collective and partitive classifiers

Collective classifiers are used to indicate groups of entities, human and non-human, while partitive classifiers are used for parts of entities. A collective classifier is illustrated in (38).

- (38) *joo⁴t^haa⁴* *saam¹* *muu²* *ɲam⁴* *xaw³* *dæn¹din¹* *p^hatet⁵*
soldier **three** **CL.group** attack enter border nation
 ‘Three groups of soldiers attacked across the borders of the nation.’

In (38), the noun head *joo⁴t^haa⁴* ‘soldiers’ is modified by the classifier phrase, *saam¹ muu²* ‘three CL.group’, which indicates how many soldiers were involved in the attack. *muu²* is used predominantly for people, but sometimes also for groups of animals and occasionally for inanimate things.

The noun *hɲn⁴* ‘house’ can also be used to classify the people of a household, not the building itself. The classifier for a building would be *lan¹*. *hɲn⁴* is illustrated in (39).

- (39) *sat^hii¹* *sɔŋ¹* *hɲn⁴* *ni* *baw²* *mii⁴* *luk⁵* *kɲɲt²* *maa⁴* *tɲɲ⁵*
merchant **two** **CL.household** this not have child born come not.yet
 ‘These two merchant households didn’t yet have any children.’

In (39), the noun head *sat^hii¹* ‘merchant’ is modified by the classifier phrase, *sɔŋ¹ hɲn⁴* ‘two CL.household’, which indicates that two households of merchants did not yet have children.

Other collective classifiers in the corpus are listed in Table 12.

Table 12: *Tai Lue collective classifiers*

Classifier	Meaning	Frequency
<i>cɲɲ⁶</i>	kinds (things, methods, diseases, colours, food, taxes, animals, fish, people, skills)	487
<i>fɲŋ¹</i>	groups (people, documents, situations, animals, foods, things, medicines, places, flowers, seeds, gods)	193
<i>muu²</i>	organized groups (people, animals)	186
<i>jaaŋ²</i>	kinds (non-material things, colour, disease, food, shape/style)	154
<i>cɔŋ⁵</i>	situations (activity/event/situation, kinds of things, method/strategy, place/times, topic/issue, story, lesson, part of something)	102
<i>cum⁴</i>	groups (people, bees/camels/fish, boats, criteria, flowers, islands, lessons, places, things)	45
<i>cuu⁴</i>	groups (lessons, people, words, dots)	43
<i>cɲɲ⁶jaaŋ²</i>	kinds (things, fish, flowers, pictures, rice, advertisements, birds, colours)	32
<i>cɲɲ⁶cɔŋ⁵</i>	kinds (things, cupboards/furniture, love, methods, disease, flowers, news, pesticides, skills, stories)	24

In contrast to collective classifiers, partitive classifiers refer to a part of the entity they classify, as illustrated in (40).

- (40) *ɲaw¹* *xɲŋ¹* *nuuŋ⁵* *tɲn²* *p^hik⁵* *sɔŋ¹* *noj²*
 take **ginger** **one** **CL.piece** pepper two CL.round.thing
 ‘Take a piece of ginger, and two peppers.’

In (40), the noun head *xij¹* ‘ginger’ is modified by the classifier phrase, *nun⁵ ton²* ‘one CL.piece’. This indicates that one piece of ginger is to be used in the recipe.

Other partitive classifiers in the corpus are listed in Table 13.

Table 13: *Tai Lue partitive classifiers*

Classifier	Meaning	Frequency
<i>xon¹</i>	one item from a pair (hands, ears, shoes, chopsticks, horns)	98
<i>pun¹</i>	proportions (percentage, portion (of food, a book, medicine, fractions))	75
<i>pot²</i>	parts (part of a lesson, book), train car, period of time, distance (along a road, river), parts broken or separated (cloth, nation), fingertip, land	37
<i>ton²</i>	pieces (meat, ginger, time, plot of land)	22
<i>son²</i>	parts (e.g. split into three parts), times (pay a fine of three times the amount)	15

4.4 Summary of non-sortal classifiers

In the Tai Lue corpus, non-sortal classifiers include the general classifier, *ʔan¹*, which is used to classify a variety of entities, especially newly introduced and abstract entities. Repeaters are noun heads that function as their own classifier and for related entities. Finally, mensural classifiers impose a measurement on a noun head. They include standard and non-standard or temporary measurements, as well as collective and partitive classifiers. Now that the Tai Lue classifier types have been reviewed, we turn to a description of the constructions in which classifiers occur.

5 Classifier constructions

Classifiers are used, and sometimes required, in several grammatical constructions. The discussion begins with a review of the occurrence of a classifier with a numeral or a quantifying word (§5.1), followed by classifiers functioning as copula complements of *pin¹* ‘be’ (§5.2) and constructions in which a classifier is modified attributively (§5.3). The section ends with a summary of Tai Lue classifier constructions (§5.4).

5.1 Classifiers modified by numerals or quantifying words

As shown in §2, a classifier is required when a numeral occurs in a noun phrase. The numeral or quantifying word always precedes the classifier, which is the most common use of classifiers. Example (41) provides another illustration of a classifier with a numeral in a noun phrase.

- (41) *ʔaw¹ maak²hin¹ sii² noj² kɔɔ²pæŋ¹ saw¹*
 take **stone** **four** **CL.round.thing** build pillar
 ‘They took four stones and built a pillar.’

In (41), the classifier phrase consists of the three-dimensional sortal classifier, *noj²* ‘CL.round.thing’, which occurs following the numeral *sii²* ‘four’. The classifier phrase directly follows the noun head *maak²hin¹* ‘stone’ and indicates that four stones were used to build a pillar.

Quantifying words can also fill the quantifier slot in a noun phrase, as illustrated in (42).

- (42) *caw³mɿŋ⁴ cuu⁵ kun⁴ ʔaw¹ xoo⁴ maa⁴ t^haaj¹*
lord **every** **CL.ordinary** take thing come offer
 ‘Every lord brought things to offer (to the king).’

In (42), the *caw³mɿŋ⁴* ‘lord’ is enumerated by the classifier phrase *cuu⁵ kun⁴* ‘every CL.ordinary’.

5.2 Classifiers as copula complements of *pin¹* ‘be’

A classifier can function as the head of a copula complement of *pin¹* ‘be’. One function of this construction is to specify the arrangement of the copula subject referent, as illustrated in (43).

- (43) *tɔŋ⁴ paa¹ juu² bok² han³ pin¹ kɔŋ¹ waj⁶*
 see **fish** at land there **be** **CL.pile** away
 ‘They saw the fish on the dry land there in a pile.’

In (43), the arrangement of the copula subject *paa¹* ‘fish’, in a pile, is specified by the post-*pin¹* mensural classifier *kɔŋ¹* ‘CL.pile’.

This construction can also be used to indicate the arrangement that results after things are cut or broken, as illustrated in (44).

- (44) *ʔaw¹ sɔŋ⁴ pin¹ tɔn² tɔɔ⁵ sɔŋ¹ niw⁶*
 take slice **be** **CL.piece** equal two CL.finger
 ‘Slice (the pork) into pieces equal to two fingers (thick).’

In (44), the copula complement, which is headed by the mensural classifier *tɔn²* ‘CL.piece’, is used to indicate the desired result of slicing some pork, which is not overtly referenced in the copula subject position. The size of the pieces is further specified by the classifier phrase, *sɔŋ¹ niw⁶* ‘two CL.finger’.

Another related construction includes *pin¹* and a classifier in a four-syllable expression, which is illustrated in (45).

- (45) *tɔm⁶ kɔɔ¹maj⁶ pin¹ kɔŋ¹ xii³ nok⁵ naa¹ pin¹ cæn⁶ pin¹ cæn⁶*
 under tree be pile feces bird thick **be** **CL.layer** **be** **CL.layer**
 ‘Under the tree there were thick piles of bird droppings in layers.’

In (45), the elaborate expression with *pin¹* and *cæn⁶* ‘CL.layer’ indicates that the piles of bird droppings were arranged in layers.

A variation involves the use of two classifiers in an elaborate expression, as illustrated in (46).

- (46) *xoop²pii¹sip¹sɔŋ¹dɔn¹ mii⁴ kun⁴ taan² p^hateet⁵*
 all.year.long have **person** **other** **country**
pin¹ muu² pin¹ cum⁴ maa⁴ ʔæw²lɔɔ⁵p^hɔɔ²tɔŋ⁴
be **CL.group** **be** **CL.group** come tour
 ‘All year long there are people from overseas who come in groups to tour.’

In (46), the two collective classifiers, *muu²* and *cum⁴*, combine with *pin¹* ‘be’ in a four-syllable elaborate expression to indicate that groups of people came as tourists. For more information about Tai Lue elaborate expressions, see Hanna (2013).

5.3 Classifiers and attributive modification within the noun phrase

Depending on the descriptive construction, a classifier is required or optional. When the classifier is present, it functions as the host for the attributive modification which follows. Attributive modifiers include demonstratives (§5.3.1), the post-classifier numeral *nuuŋ⁵* ‘one’ (§5.3.2), adjectives (§5.3.3), relative clauses (§5.3.4), and nouns (§5.3.5).

5.3.1 Classifier modified by a demonstrative

When the demonstratives *nii⁶* ‘this’ and *nan⁶* ‘that’ are present in the noun phrase, they cannot occur directly with the head noun. They must occur hosted by a classifier, which is also the case in other Southwestern Tai languages ((Lao (Enfield 2007); Thai (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2009); (Lu 2012)), as illustrated in (47).

- (47) *xoo*¹ *ʔan*⁴ *ni*⁶ *peŋ*⁴ *kɔ* *peŋ*⁴ *man*³ *kɔ* *man*³
bridge CL.thing this level LNK level secure LNK secure
 ‘This bridge was very level and very secure.’

With a numeral, *xoo*¹ ‘bridge’ is normally classified by *lan*¹ ‘CL.building’. However, in (47), the classifier *ʔan*⁴ ‘CL.thing’ hosts *ni*⁶ ‘this’.

An example with the medial demonstrative is provided in (48).

- (48) *tuu*² *ɲɔ*⁵*naa*⁴ *p^huu*³ *nan*⁶ *tam*¹ *man*⁴
 accuse **farmer CL.human that** hit 3SG
 ‘He accused that farmer of hitting him.’

In (48), the human referent, *ɲɔ*⁵*naa*⁴ ‘farmer’, is modified by the classifier *p^huu*³ ‘CL.human’, which is modified by the demonstrative *nan*⁶ ‘that’.

5.3.2 Classifier modified by the post-classifier specifier *nuŋ*⁵ ‘one’

As with other members of the Southwestern Tai family (Lao (Enfield 2007); Thai (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2009), the Tai Lue numeral *nuŋ*⁵ ‘one’ has two senses. When it is used as a true numeral, it precedes the classifier, as other quantifiers do. However, more commonly, *nuŋ*⁵ functions as a post-classifier specifier with indefinite meaning. This is illustrated in (49).

- (49) *con*¹ *muu*² *nuŋ*⁵ *ʔaw*¹ *mɿɿ*⁴ *suŋ*² *waj*⁶
robber CL.group one take go hide away
 ‘A group of robbers had taken it and hidden it.’

In (49), the noun head *con*¹ ‘robber’ is modified by a classifier phrase with the mensural collective classifier, *muu*² and the post-classifier numeral *nuŋ*⁵ ‘one’. The classifier phrase indicates a newly introduced, thus indefinite, group of robbers.

Another example of a classifier modified by a post-classifier *nuŋ*⁵ is illustrated in (50).

- (50) *han*¹ *too*¹*xin*⁴ *pin*¹ *kun*⁴*p^hat*² *lat^haa*⁴ *p^huu*³ *nuŋ*⁵
 see self be **driver train CL.human one**
 ‘She imagined herself as a train driver.’

In (50), the noun compound, *kun*⁴*p^hat*² *lat^haa*⁴ ‘train driver’, is modified by the classifier *p^huu*³ ‘CL.human’, which is modified by the post-classifier numeral *nuŋ*⁵ ‘one’. This construction indicates indefinite reference to an imaginary train driver.

A further instance of post-classifier *nuŋ*⁵ is illustrated in (51).

- (51) *p^hoo*¹ *ni* *mak*⁵ *ka* *lin*³ *ka* *ʔæw*² *pin*¹ *ʔaaj*³*caaj*²*ŋɿn*⁴ *too*¹ *nuŋ*⁵
 husband this like only play only travel be **spendthrift CL.animal one**
 ‘Her husband, (he) just liked to play around. (He) was a spendthrift.’

In (51), the husband, who is referenced by the noun *ʔaaj*³*caaj*²*ŋɿn*⁴ ‘spendthrift’, is classified by the animal classifier *too*¹ instead of one of the human classifiers. This usage of *too*¹ is discussed in more detail in §6.

5.3.3 Classifier modified by an adjective

An adjective can directly modify a noun in a noun phrase. This is illustrated in (52).

- (52) *tuu⁴ waa⁵ pin¹ jaa¹ dii¹ kɔ faaw⁶ ʔaw¹ maa⁴ caj⁶jun² saj² too¹xij⁴*
 think COMP be **drug** **good** LNK quickly take come use put.on self
 ‘They thought it was a good medicine, so they quickly put it on themselves.’

In (52) the adjective *dii¹* ‘good’ directly modifies the noun *jaa¹* ‘drug’.

In addition, a classifier can intervene between an adjective and a noun head, as illustrated in (53).

- (53) *pin¹ xɔŋ¹kin¹ ʔan⁴ dii¹ nan cɛɛ⁶ nuŋ⁵*
 be **food** **CL.thing** **good** **that** **CL.kind** **one**
 ‘It is a good kind of food.’

In (53), the noun head of the copula complement, *xɔŋ¹kin¹* ‘food’ is modified by the classifier *ʔan⁴* ‘CL.thing’, which is modified by the adjective *dii¹* ‘good’ and the demonstrative *nan* ‘that’. This combination is then modified by the mensural classifier phrase, *cɛɛ⁶ nuŋ⁵* ‘one CL.kind’.

The distribution of a selection of adjectives in the corpus as noun modifiers, classifier modifiers, and predicates is tabulated in Table 14.

Table 14: *Adjective usage in the corpus*

	Noun modification	Classifier modification	Predicate adjective	Total
<i>dii¹</i> ‘good’	182	50	548	780
<i>loy¹</i> ‘big’	560	104	11	675
<i>xew¹</i> ‘green’	148	14	37	199
<i>maj²</i> ‘new’	146	41	3	190

Table 14 shows that adjectives are more likely to modify a noun directly as opposed to modifying a classifier. Also, *dii¹* ‘good’ is more likely to function as a predicate adjective as opposed to direct noun modification or classifier modification.

When an adjective modifies a classifier, it is usually due to the presence of several modifiers within the noun phrase, as illustrated in (54).

- (54) *nelamet⁵ pin¹ baaw²tʰɔn⁴ ʔan⁴ too¹dii¹ jij⁵ jæm⁶*
 change.form be **young.man** **CL.thing** **beautiful** **very** **smiling**
 ‘(The god Indra) changed himself into a beautiful, greatly smiling young man.’

In (54), the noun head *baaw²tʰɔn⁴* ‘young.man’ is described by two adjectives, *too¹dii¹* ‘beautiful’ and *jæm⁶* ‘smiling’, which is modified by the degree adverb *jij⁵* ‘very’. Together they modify the classifier *ʔan⁴* ‘CL.thing’ and the combination of classifier and adjective phrases modify the head noun.

The adjective may represent parenthetical information, as in (55).

- (55) *caw³hay⁴ ʔan⁴ lɔɔ¹lææ¹ nan kɔ kut⁵ pan¹haa¹ saam¹ xɔɔ³ ʔɔɔk² maa⁴*
rich.man **CL.thing** **devious** that LNK think riddle three CL.point out come
 ‘As for the devious rich man, (he) thought up a three-point riddle.’

In (55), the *nan*-marked topic noun phrase consists of the noun head, *caw³hay⁴* ‘rich.man’, which is modified by the classifier + adjective combination, *ʔan⁴ lɔɔ¹lææ¹* ‘CL.thing devious’. It provides the additional information that the noun head referent is devious.

5.3.4 Classifier modified by a relative clause

In Tai Lue, relative clauses occur post-head with no preceding relativizer, as illustrated in (56).

- (56) *mɔn¹ faaj³* [saaw¹ jaam⁴wɔn⁴ pan² Ø nan]_{RC}
 like **cotton** young.woman spring spin cotton that
 ‘Like the cotton that the young women spin in the spring.’

In (56), the bolded head of the relative clause is *faaj³* ‘cotton’. The bracketed relative clause that follows consists of the clause *saaw¹ jaam⁴wɔn⁴ pan² Ø nan* ‘young woman spring spin (it) that’. Reference to *faaj³* ‘cotton’ within the relative clause is rendered by zero in the direct object position after the verb *pan²* ‘spin’. The beginning of the relative clause is not syntactically marked, although the form *nan* ‘that’ often occurs at the end.

A classifier can occur with a noun head preceding a relative clause, as illustrated in (57).

- (57) *coop² hoo⁴ too¹* [con¹ lak⁵ Ø nan]_{RC}
 find **cow CL.animal** thief steal cow that
 ‘(He) found the cow that the thief had stolen.’

In (57), the classifier *too¹* ‘CL.animal’ occurs directly following the head of the relative clause, *hoo⁴* ‘cow’. The external relative clause head is referenced by zero in the direct object position of the relative clause. Like the noun head, *too¹* is also external to the relative clause, since the subject position of the relative clause is filled by *con¹* ‘thief’. This means that the relative clause is headed by the classifier which appositionally modifies the noun head. A similar structure occurs in Lao (Enfield 2007: 143).

A subject common argument is illustrated in (58).

- (58) *ɔaw¹ naŋ³ tee⁴wadaa¹ tun¹* [Ø juu² tin¹ xaw¹]_{RC}
 take from **god CL.honoured** god stay foot mountain
 ‘(He) got it from the god who lives at the foot of the mountain.’

In (58), the external head of the relative clause is *tee⁴wadaa¹* ‘god’, along with the classifier *tun¹* ‘CL.honoured’. It is referenced by zero in the subject position of the subsequent relative clause.

The human classifier, *pʰuu³*, can also host a relative clause, as illustrated in (59).

- (59) *huu³ pin¹ Ø kun⁴* [Ø hen⁴ huu⁶]_{RC}
 give be one CL.ordinary one study know,
huu³ pin¹ Ø pʰuu³ [taan⁵ han¹ Ø]_{RC}
 give be **one CL.human** others see **one**
 ‘May you be a person of learning; may you be a person that others notice.’

In the second clause of (59), a relative clause appears without an overt noun head, which is represented as Ø. Therefore, human classifier *pʰuu³* functions as the external head of the relative clause that follows. Within the relative clause, the object argument is co-referential with the external head, which is represented by zero.

5.3.5 Classifier modified by a noun

Normally, a classifier follows a numeral or quantifying word, which together follow the noun head in a noun phrase. In this construction, a classifier is modified by a following noun, which is a common construction in the corpus. This is illustrated in (60).

- (60) *daj³jin⁴ kam⁴ [caaj⁴ kumaan⁴ tun¹ pii⁵ waan⁴caj¹*
 hear word **man child** CL.honoured **older.sibling** trust
huuu³ xaw¹ tæ²tæŋ²]_{CC}
 give 3PL deal.with

‘They heard the word (that) the young man, their older brother, was trusting them to deal with (it).’

In (60), the subject argument (bolded) of the complement clause consists of the compound noun *caaj⁴ kumaan⁴* ‘male child’. This noun is modified by the classifier, *tun¹*, which is modified by the noun *pii⁵* ‘older sibling’. The noun modifier provides the additional information that the young man is an older sibling.

The classifier, *too¹* ‘CL.animal’ also occurs in this construction, as illustrated in (61).

- (61) *xam⁴xan¹ too¹ nəŋ⁶ paj¹ tət⁵ hææ¹ pək⁵ maa⁴*
XamXan CL.animal **younger.sibling** go cast net return come
 ‘XamXan, his younger sibling, came home from cast fishing.’

In (61), the noun head is the proper noun, *xam⁴xan¹* ‘XamXan’, which is modified by the animal classifier *too¹*, which is hosting the noun modifier *nəŋ⁶* ‘younger.sibling’.

The noun head is not always present preceding a classifier modified by a noun, as illustrated in (62).

- (62) *Ø haa¹ jap⁵ too¹ liŋ⁴*
 3SG seek catch CL.animal **monkey**
 ‘(He) tried to catch the animal, a monkey.’

In (62), the classifier + noun combination, *too¹ liŋ⁴*, which refers to the monkey, appears in the direct object position of the clause after the predicate.

Enfield (2007) describes a similar construction in Lao, distinguishing the subtle meanings between constructions with and without a classifier. Enfield’s (2007: 144) examples are reproduced in (63) and (64).

- (63) *kuu³ hên³ pəø-duk² juu¹ naj² kakhuq²*
 1SG.B see CT.FISH-sp. be.at inside bucket
 ‘I saw (a) catfish in the bucket.’

- (64) *kuu³ hên³ too³ pəø-duk² juu¹ naj² kakhuq²*
 1SG.B see CLF.ANIM CT.FISH-sp. be.at inside bucket
 ‘I saw (a/the) catfish in the bucket.’

In (63), the noun, *pəø-duk²* ‘catfish’, fills the direct object slot, with no expectations on the number of catfishes. In contrast, the presence of the appositional animal classifier *too³*, in (63), gives the sense of a singular, definite referent.

When this construction is used with people, the noun refers to kinfolk, as already seen in (60) and (61). Kin terms are not possessed in Tai Lue as they are in English ‘my brother’. Thus, the classifier may serve to concretize the kin term into a person or people rather than a general class; ‘his brother’ rather than ‘brothers in general’. This is illustrated in (65).

- (65) *daŋ*² *naaŋ*⁴ *p^huu*³ *pⁱi*⁵ *nan* *saaj*¹ *p^haɔatit*⁵ *t^hɔŋ*² *cap*² *hoo*¹
 as.for woman CL.human older.sib that beam sun shine hit head
kɔ *hɔŋ^haj*³ *maak^snak*⁵
 LNK cry much

‘As for the older sister, whenever the sunbeams hit (her) head, (she) cried a lot.’

In (65), the noun head is *naaŋ*⁴ ‘woman’. It is modified by the human classifier *p^huu*³, which is modified by the noun *pⁱi*⁵ ‘older sibling’, which provides kinship information about the noun head referent. Together, the noun with the classifier and its noun modifier appear in the pre-clause topic position, which is marked by *nan* ‘that’.

Enfield (2007: 145) suggests that the classifier in this construction serves a unitizing function in Lao, which implies that the referent is singular. He also suggests that the presence of the classifier indicates definiteness. In Tai Lue, this construction does not necessarily serve a unitizing function, as illustrated by (66).

- (66) *p^huu*³ *pⁱi*⁵ *hok*⁶ *kun*⁴ *nan* *kɔ* *ɔaw*¹ *caw*³ *ɔaw*¹ *p^hoo*¹ *læw*⁶
 CL.human older.sib six CL.ordinary that LNK take lord take husband PRF

‘As for (her) six older sisters, (they) had already taken husbands.’

In (66), the classifier phrase that follows the classifier + noun combination, *p^huu*³ *pⁱi*⁵ ‘older sibling’, indicates that a known, and thus definite, group of six siblings are referenced.

5.4 Summary of Tai Lue classifier constructions

In this section, seven constructions in which a classifier can appear have been described. They include the most common construction in the corpus, a classifier with a preceding numeral or quantifying word, which is used to quantify the noun head referent. In the next construction, a classifier functioning as a copula complement of *pin*¹ ‘be’ was used to indicate a result or arrangement of the copula subject referent.

The remaining five constructions are descriptive constructions that involve classifiers that are either required or optional. In the first descriptive construction, a classifier is required to serve as the host of a demonstrative. Thus, a demonstrative cannot directly modify the noun and it is the classifier that is modified by the demonstrative, which then modifies the noun head. In the second descriptive construction, the classifier is modified by the post-classifier specifier *nuy*⁵ ‘one’, which conveys an indefinite meaning.

Although a noun head can be directly modified by an adjective, in some cases a classifier intervenes between a noun head and an adjective. It appears that one purpose of the adjective modification of a classifier instead of the noun head is that it facilitates multiple modifications of a noun head, although the reasons for direct adjectival modification of a noun head versus modification of an intervening classifier requires more investigation. In similar fashion, relative clauses can also directly modify a noun head or be hosted by an intervening classifier.

In the final descriptive construction, a classifier precedes a noun modifier, with or without a phrase-initial noun head. Enfield (2007: 145) suggests that this construction is used to indicate a singular, definite referent. However, in Tai Lue, this construction can be used to refer to plural, but definite, entities. It is in these five descriptive constructions that a neutralization of contrast between classifiers can occur.

6 Classifier distribution in constructions

While it is true that any classifier, sortal or mensural, can occur in the constructions discussed in §5, Tai Lue also exhibits a neutralization of contrast between classifiers in the descriptive or attributive constructions in §5.3, similar to both Thai and Lao (Carpenter 1986; Enfield 2007). This is tabulated in Table 15 in contrast to enumeration constructions.

Table 15: The distribution of a selection of classifiers by construction type in the corpus

	Enumeration		Description					Total
	Numeral + CL	Quantifier + CL	CL + demonstrative	CL + <i>nun</i> ⁵	CL + adjective	CL + relative clause	CL + noun	
<i>kun</i> ⁴ ‘ordinary’	422	111	8	70	28			639
<i>tun</i> ¹ ‘honoured’	10		11	20	30	49	37	157
<i>kɔɔ</i> ⁶ ‘low.status’	45	11	35	147	31	2		271
<i>too</i> ¹ ‘animals’	145	36	171	369	101	83	38	943
<i>too</i> ¹ ‘inanimates’	45	1						46
<i>ʔan</i> ¹ ‘thing’	23	10						34
<i>too</i> ¹ ‘humans’			58	28	129	190	92	497
<i>ʔan</i> ⁴ ‘thing’			43	24	228	787		1082
<i>ʔan</i> ⁴ ‘abstract entities’			201	12	150	598		961
<i>ʔan</i> ⁴ ‘humans’					47	322		369
<i>ʔan</i> ⁴ ‘animates’					15	163		178
<i>p^huu</i> ³ ‘human’		1	176	233	53	384	28	875

Table 15 lists the enumeration and description constructions in which the specific human classifiers *kun*⁴ ‘CL.ordinary’, *tun*¹ ‘CL.honoured’, and *kɔɔ*⁶ ‘CL.low’ occur in the corpus, along with the animal classifier *too*¹ ‘CL.animal’, the general classifier *ʔan*¹/*ʔan*⁴ ‘CL.thing’, and the human classifier *p^huu*³. (Concerning the two forms of /an/, see the footnote by the second author.⁵) The columns to the left tabulate instances of these classifiers in enumeration constructions. The columns to the right tabulate the occurrence of these classifiers in descriptive constructions. In the discussion to follow, we briefly consider the distribution of specific classifiers in descriptive classifier constructions, represented in the non-shaded rows in Table 15 (§6.1). We then consider the neutralization of contrast between classifiers, as represented in the shaded rows of Table 15 (§6.2)

6.1 Specific classifiers in descriptive constructions

As expected, the human classifier, *kun*⁴ ‘CL.person’, occurs in both quantificational and descriptive constructions. Occurrence of this classifier with a demonstrative is illustrated in (67).

- (67) *mɔɔ⁵ jaa² hen⁴ kun⁴ nan⁶ kɔ³ daj³ cep²*
 when end study CL.ordinary that LNK get hurt
 ‘When school got out, that person felt pain (I got revenge on him).’

In (67), the noun phrase, *kun*⁴ *nan*⁶ ‘that CL.ordinary.human’, in which the classifier acts as the head, refers to a person previously mentioned in the discourse. Therefore, an overt noun head is not necessary.

*kun*⁴ also occurs with a post-classifier *nun*⁵ ‘one’, as illustrated in (68).

⁵ My belief at this point is that the /an⁴/ is merely a spelling oddity. All the /an-s/ are the same word and the English transcription should reflect that. Lue people could just as well have chosen to spell /too/ or /tun/ with Tone 4 in the descriptive situations. They are unstressed in those environments and sound just as Tone-4-like as the /an/ does.

- (68) *luk⁵ʔɔn² taŋ⁴laaj¹ kun⁴ nuŋ⁵ kɔ baw² xaat²*
child all CL.ordinary one LNK not lack
 ‘All the children, not lacking even one.’

In (68), the construction, classifier + *nuŋ⁵* ‘one’, is used to indicate emphatically that not one of the children was left out. It is separated from its noun head, *luk⁵ʔɔn²* ‘child’, by the general quantifier *taŋ⁴laaj¹* ‘all’.

kun⁴ also occurs with an adjective (28 tokens), as illustrated in (69).

- (69) *man⁴ paj¹ ʔaw¹ p^hoo¹ ʔaaj³ kun⁴ tok⁵xata² juu² naj⁴ paa²maj⁶*
 3SG go take husband **man CL.ordinary poor** stay in jungle
 ‘She married a poor man from the jungle.’

In (69), *ʔaaj³* ‘man’ is described by the adjective *tok⁵xata²* ‘poor’, which is hosted by the classifier *kun⁴* ‘CL.ordinary’. It is significant that *kun⁴* never occurs with a relative clause in the corpus. Relative clauses for humans are common, but they are always hosted by the other human classifiers or *an⁴ too¹*, or *phuu³*. The classifier for ordinary humans also does not host a noun modifier in the corpus.

Like *kun⁴*, *tun¹* ‘CL.honoured’ occurs in descriptive constructions, as illustrated in (70).

- (70) *mɿɿ⁵ p^haja⁴p^hum⁴ tun¹ nii⁶ taaj¹ paj¹ læw⁶ p^haja⁴p^hum⁴ maj²*
 when **Brahma CL.honoured this** die go PRF Brahma new
maa⁴ tæŋ⁴
 come instead
 ‘When this Brahma died, a new Brahma came in his place.’

In (70), *p^haja⁴p^hum⁴* ‘Brahma’ is classified by the classifier, *tun¹*, which hosts the demonstrative *nii⁶* ‘this’.

The *tun¹* classifier can also occur with a post-classifier *nuŋ⁵* ‘one’, as illustrated in (71).

- (71) *mii⁴ p^hajaa⁴ tun¹ nuŋ⁵ mii⁴ luk⁵ saam¹ caaj⁴*
 have **king CL.honoured one** have **child three CL.male**
 ‘There was a king who had three sons.’

In (71), the classifier + *nuŋ⁵* ‘one’ construction is part of the assertion of the existence of a king. This is followed by a second existence clause which asserts the existence of three sons, with the noun phrase *luk⁵ saam¹ caaj⁴* ‘child, three CL.male’.

tun¹ can also be modified by an adjective, as illustrated in (72).

- (72) *bat²dew² ʔaa⁴ju² saŋ¹xalacaa⁴ tun¹ dii¹ pæcæt²sip²sii² pii¹*
 now age **senior.monk CL.honoured good** 84 year
taw³ hɔt⁵ læw⁶
 go reach PRF
 ‘Now, the age of the good monk has reached 84 years.’

In (72), the head of the possessor noun phrase is *saŋ¹xalacaa⁴*, a title for one of the senior levels of monkhood. This noun is classified by *tun¹*, which serves as the host of the adjective *dii¹* ‘good’.

Finally, *tun*¹ hosts a relative clause, as illustrated in (73).

- (73) *li⁴yi⁶faaŋ⁵ tun¹ [Ø xun³ maa⁴ pin¹ sœn² caaŋ⁴*
LiYiFang CL.honoured 3s ascend come be county supervisor
maj² nan]_{RC} *waa⁵ ...*
new that say ...
 ‘Li YiFang, who had become the new county supervisor, said...’

In (73), *li⁴yi⁶faaŋ⁵*, the name of a person, is classified by the *tun*¹, which hosts the relative clause that follows. Like both *kun*⁴ and *tun*¹, the low status human classifier, *kɔɔ*⁶, also occurs in both quantification and descriptive constructions. Occurrence with a demonstrative is illustrated in (74).

- (74) *ɔaw¹ ɔikun⁴ kɔɔ⁶ nii⁶ pɔɔk⁵ paj¹ hɔn⁴*
 take **doll CL.low.status this** return go home
 ‘Take this doll back home.’

In (74), *ɔikun*⁴ ‘doll’ is classified by *kɔɔ*⁶, which occurs with the demonstrative *nii*⁶ ‘this’. This construction identifies a particular doll.

Occurrence with post-classifier *nuuŋ*⁵ ‘one’ is illustrated in (75).

- (75) *xɔj³ tɔŋ⁴ kɔ pin¹ ɔipuu² t^haw³ hoo¹ ŋɔk² kɔɔ⁶ nuuŋ⁵*
 1SG.DEFER look LNK be **grandfather** old head grey.hair **CL.low.status one**
 ‘I looked, and it was an old man with grey hair.’

In (75), *ɔipuu*² ‘grandfather’ is classified by the low status classifier *kɔɔ*⁶, which is followed by the numeral *nuuŋ*⁵ ‘one’. The classifier phrase is separated from its noun head by the descriptive material *t^haw³ hoo¹ ŋɔk²* ‘old head grey.hair’. This construction introduces the grandfather as a new participant. The low-status classifier may be used because of the grandfather’s age or may indicate his low-status role in the plot of the story.

*kɔɔ*⁶ can also be modified by an adjective, as illustrated in (76).

- (76) *kɔɔ⁶ dew¹ man⁴ paaj⁵ ɔɔk² mɔɔ⁴ haa¹ ŋaan⁴ het⁵*
CL.low.status single 3SG leave out go seek work do
 ‘All alone she went out to look for employment.’

In (76), a noun phrase with *kɔɔ*⁶ ‘CL.low.status’ as its head, occurs with an adjective *dew*¹ ‘single’.

Finally, *kɔɔ*⁶ serves as the substitute head of a relative clause, as illustrated in (77).

- (77) *haam⁴ daj³ ɔæp² kɔɔ⁶ [Ø kin¹ law³]_{RC}*
 abandon get stay.with **CL.low.status 3p drink alcohol**
 ‘He abandoned (the thought of) staying with his drinking friends.’

In (77), *kɔɔ*⁶ ‘CL.low.status’ is used to refer to a man’s friends who are already known in the discourse. The classifier is modified by the relative clause that follows.

The classifier *too*¹ ‘CL.animal’ classifies animals in both quantificational and descriptive constructions, while the general classifier *ɔan*¹ ‘CL.thing’ only occurs in quantificational constructions while its unstressed variant, *ɔan*⁴, occurs in descriptive constructions. Both *ɔan*⁴ and *too*¹ can classify humans in descriptive constructions, replacing a specific human classifier. This represents a neutralization of contrast between classifiers in these constructions. Furthermore, *p^huu*³ ‘CL.human’ occurs almost exclusively in descriptive

constructions. This substitution of *too*¹, *ʔan*¹, and *p^huu*³ for specific classifiers in descriptive constructions is considered in detail in the next section.

6.2 *The neutralization of contrast between classifiers in descriptive constructions*

In descriptive constructions, Tai Lue exhibits a neutralization of contrast between classifiers. Like Lao (Enfield 2007), the three classifiers that can substitute for specific classifiers are the unstressed general classifier *ʔan*⁴ ‘CL.thing’, the animal classifier *too*¹ ‘CL.animal’, and the human classifier *p^huu*³ ‘CL.human’. For Thai, Carpenter (1986) only describes this phenomenon with the general classifier *อัน* /an/ and the animal classifier *ตัว* /tua/. When the first author asked a couple of Thai speakers about the human classifier *phuu* in descriptive constructions, the results were mixed. One speaker thought that *phuu* only occurred as a classifier in literary Thai, while the other speaker thought that *phuu* could occur as a classifier in spoken Thai. In the discussion to follow, *ʔan*⁴ is considered first (§6.2.1), followed by *too*¹ (§6.2.2), and then *p^huu*³ (§6.2.3). The section ends with a discussion of possible reasons for the neutralization of contrast (§6.2.4).

6.2.1 *The classifier ʔan⁴ as a substitute for specific classifiers*

Enfield (2007: 141) describes both *too*³ ‘body’ and *qan*³ ‘small.thing’ as phonologically reduced in Lao descriptive constructions. For Tai Lue *an*¹/*an*⁴, this difference is reflected in the Tai Lue orthography. Stressed *an*¹ occurs in enumeration constructions, while unstressed *an*⁴ occurs in descriptive constructions.

An example of *an*⁴ as a classifier for humans in a descriptive construction is shown in (78).

- (78) *ʔaw*¹ *naaŋ*⁴ *səŋ*¹ *kun*⁴ *ʔan*⁴ *t^haluŋ⁴kap^ha²* *mən*¹*kan*¹
bring woman two CL.ordinary CL.thing pregnant equally
‘He brought two women who were equally pregnant.’

In (78), *naaŋ*⁴ ‘woman’ is modified first by the enumerative classifier phrase *səŋ*¹ *kun*⁴ ‘two people’. The classifier, *ʔan*⁴, then hosts the adjective phrase *t^haluŋ⁴kap^ha²* *mən*¹*kan*¹ ‘equally pregnant’, which provides further information about the women.

*an*⁴ as the host of a relative clause is illustrated in (79).

- (79) *tun*³*maj*⁶ *nəj*⁶ *ʔan*⁴ [[*nok*⁵*cii*³*ceep*² *pæŋ*¹ *haŋ*⁴]_{CL1} [*saj*² Ø]_{CL2} *nan*]_{RC}
tree little CL.thing swift build nest put.in 3s that
kə *see*¹ *lum*⁴ *loŋ*¹ *pat*⁵ *hak*² *paj*¹
LNK endure wind big blow break go
‘The little tree in which the swift had built a nest was blown over by the big wind.’

In (79), *tun*³*maj*⁶ ‘tree’ is modified first by the adjective *nəj*⁶ ‘little’. It is then modified by the classifier, *ʔan*⁴, which hosts the relative clause *nok*⁵*cii*³*ceep*² *pæŋ*¹ *haŋ*⁴ *saj*² Ø *nan* ‘in which the swift had built a nest’. Note that the subject referent of the relative clause is *nok*⁵*cii*³*ceep*² ‘swift’, while the reference to the tree in the relative clause is zero in the direct object position of the second clause of an asyndetic coordinate clause construction.

*ʔan*⁴ can also be used to classify animals in descriptive constructions, as illustrated in (80).

- (80) *maa*¹ *ʔan*⁴ *samɣɣ*¹ *nan* *kə* *baw*² *caŋ*⁵ *xop*² *kun*⁴
dog CL.thing normal that LNK not likely bite person
‘As for normal dogs (i.e. not rabid), (they) are not likely to bite people.’

In the pre-clause position in (80), *maa*¹ ‘dog’ is modified by *ʔan*⁴, which is hosting the adjective *samɣɣ*¹ ‘normal’.

*ʔan*⁴, as a classifier of a non-human animate, hosts relative clauses, as illustrated in (81).

- (81) *wisaa⁴ leŋ⁶ muu¹ nɔj⁶ ʔan⁴ [Ø kin¹ num⁴ nan]_{RC} huuu³ man⁴ daj³dii¹*
 method raise **pig** **little** **CL.thing** **3seat** **milk** **that** give 3s prosper
 ‘Method for raising piglets that are nursing so they will prosper.’

In (81), *muu¹* ‘pig’ is modified first by the adjective *nɔj⁶* ‘little’. It is then modified by the classifier, *ʔan⁴*, which hosts the relative clause that follows.

In summary, the stressed form of *ʔan¹* is used to classify inanimate entities, both concrete and abstract in enumeration constructions. The unstressed variant, *ʔan⁴*, is used to classify inanimate and animate entities, including humans in descriptive constructions.

6.2.2 The classifier *too¹* as a substitute for specific classifiers

The classifier *too¹* is a common classifier in the corpus, appearing 1486 times in total. However, this classifier functions in two distinct patterns: 1) as a classifier for animals and inanimate things, both concrete and abstract (1048 tokens), it can appear in both enumeration and descriptive constructions, and 2) as a classifier for humans in descriptive constructions.

The expected behaviour of *too¹* as a specific classifier of a noun referencing an animal is illustrated in (82).

- (82) *maa⁶ nam¹ too¹ loŋ¹ ni p^huu³daj¹ kɔ xaj⁵ daj³*
horse **beautiful** **CL.animal** **big** this anybody LNK want get
 ‘As for this big beautiful horse, everybody wanted to get (it).’

In (82), the topic noun phrase, *maa⁶ nam¹ too¹ loŋ¹* ‘big, beautiful horse’, includes two adjectives. The first adjective, *nam¹* ‘beautiful’, directly modifies the noun head, *maa⁶* ‘horse’, while the second adjective, *loŋ¹* ‘big’, modifies the classifier, *too¹* ‘CL.animal’. In this construction, the adjective-modified noun head construction and the classifier-modified construction are in an appositional relationship, which together reference and describe the horse that everybody wants.

too¹ as a classifier for both an animate and inanimate entities is illustrated in (83).

- (83) *nok⁵jaaŋ⁴ too¹ nan⁶ bin¹ luŋ⁴ too¹ nɔŋ¹paa¹*
heron **CL.animal** **that** fly down **CL.animal** **fishpond**
ʔan⁴ [Ø baw² mii⁴ nam⁶ nan]_{RC}
 CL.thing fishpond not have water that
 ‘That heron flew down to a fishpond that had no water.’

In (83), the first instance of *too¹* classifies *nok⁵jaaŋ⁴* ‘heron’, occurring with the demonstrative *nan⁶* ‘that’, which together identify a particular heron. The second instance of *too¹* is modified by the noun *nɔŋ¹paa¹* ‘fishpond’ in a classifier + noun construction. The specific classifier for a *nok⁵jaaŋ⁴* ‘heron’ is *too¹*, while the specific classifier for *nɔŋ¹paa¹* ‘fishpond’ is *noj²* or the repeater *nɔŋ¹*.

As a classifier for humans (433 tokens), *too¹* only occurs in descriptive constructions. Occurrence with a demonstrative is illustrated in (84).

- (84) *ʔaaj³ too¹ nii⁶ p^hum¹hoo¹ jaaw⁴ sam²nii⁶ pin¹ ʔaaj³ kæw³ lækaa⁴*
man **CL.animal** **this** hair long so.much be man Kaew surely
 ‘This boy has such long hair; it must surely be Aaj Kaew.’

In (84), children are playing a game while blindfolded. The classifier *too¹* ‘CL.animal’ classifies the boy who is being touched and hosts the demonstrative *nii⁶* ‘this’.

An example of *too'* modified by a post-classifier *nuŋ⁵* ‘one’ is shown in (85).

- (85) *mii⁴ pɔɔ⁵kaa⁶ too' nuŋ⁵ [Ø see¹ lɔɔ⁶t^hɔɔ⁶ haaj¹]_{RC}*
 have merchant CL.animal one 3s endure camel disappear
 ‘There was a merchant who lost his camel.’

In the copula complement of (85), the noun head *pɔɔ⁵kaa⁶* ‘merchant’ is modified by the classifier *too'* serving as the host of the post-classifier numeral *nuŋ⁵* ‘one’. A relative clause directly follows the classifier + specifier construction, which provides the information that the merchant had lost a camel. *too'* as the host of an adjective is illustrated in (86).

- (86) *luk²ʔɔn² too' pyj'tin' tew⁴ juu² xaŋ²saaj⁴*
 child CL.animal barefoot walk at beach
 ‘A barefoot child was walking on the beach.’

In (86), the noun head *luk²ʔɔn²* ‘child’ is modified by the classifier *too'* ‘CL.animal’, which is modified by the adjective *pyj'tin'* ‘barefoot’. *too'* as the host of a relative clause is illustrated in (87).

- (87) *sahaaj' too' [Ø tok² xaw³ naj⁴ t^haam⁶ nan]_{RC}*
 friend CL.animal 3s fall enter in water.jar that
kɔ daj³ p^hoot² læw⁶
 LNK get rescue PRF
 ‘The friend who had fallen into the water jar was saved.’

In (87), the noun head of the subject noun phrase is *sahaaj'* ‘friend’. It is classified by *too'*, which is serving as the host of the relative clause that follows. The relative clause identifies the friend as someone who had fallen into a water jar.

When an inanimate entity is anthropomorphized, it can be classified by *too'* in descriptive constructions, as in (88).

- (88) *cak²duut²nam⁶ too' [Ø maa⁴ maj² nan]_{RC} waa⁵*
 pump CL.animal 3s come new that say
kuu¹ pin¹ cak²duut²nam⁶ ʔaw¹ jaan¹ pæŋ¹
 1s be pump take plastic make

‘The pump that had just come said, “I am a pump made of plastic.”’

In (88), the noun head, *cak²duut²nam⁶* ‘pump’, is classified by *too'*, which is hosting the relative clause that follows. At this juncture in the story, two pumps are discussing the merits of metal versus plastic construction.

In sum, *too'* classifies animals and some inanimates in enumeration and descriptive constructions. In addition, *too'* can be used to classify humans in descriptive constructions.

6.2.3 The classifier *p^huu³* as a substitute for specific classifiers

Unlike *ʔan⁴* and *too'*, *p^huu³* ‘CL.human’ never appears in the corpus with a numeral and Tai Lue speakers reject this as impossible (although there is one instance of occurrence with a quantifying word in an enumeration construction, which is shown in (18)). An example of *p^huu³* with a demonstrative is illustrated in (89).

- (89) *caaj⁴ p^huu³ nan⁶ kin¹ ʔaaj¹hɔm¹ cin⁶ sam⁶*
man CL.human that eat aroma meat completely
 ‘That man is eating all the aroma of the meat!’

In (89), the classifier *p^huu³* substitutes for a human specific classifier. It serves as the host of the demonstrative *nan⁶* ‘that’. Together the classifier and demonstrative modify the noun head *caaj⁴* ‘man’.

The human classifier can also be modified by a post-classifier *nuy⁵* ‘one’, as illustrated in (90).

- (90) *haa¹ daj³ jij⁴ p^huu³ nuy⁵ maa⁴ pin¹ luk⁵paj⁶*
 seek get **woman CL.human one** come be daughter.in.law
 ‘She found a woman to come and be her daughter-in-law.’

The noun phrase in the object position of the first clause, in (90), consists of the noun head, *jij⁴* ‘woman’, the classifier *p^huu³*, and its modifier *nuy⁵* ‘one’. This construction expresses an indefinite reference to a new participant in the discourse.

p^huu³ with an adjective is illustrated in (91).

- (91) *xɔj³ baw² caj⁵ pin¹ luk⁵laan¹ caw³xasæ² hɔɔ¹xam⁴ p^huu³ jaj²*
 1s.DEFER not correct be descendant **king palace CL.human great**
 ‘I am not the descendant of a great king in a palace.’

In (91), the noun head, *caw³xasæ²* ‘king’, is modified by the noun *hɔɔ¹xam⁴* ‘palace’. This is followed by the *p^huu³*-hosted adjective *jaj²* ‘great’.

p^huu³ can also host a relative clause, as illustrated in (92).

- (92) *haa¹ p^huu³ [Ø cak² kææ³]_{RC} baw² daj³ sak² kun⁴*
 seek **CL.human** person IRR solve not get not.even.one CL.ordinary
 ‘He couldn’t find even one person who could solve it.’

In (92), *p^huu³* is serving as the head of the direct object noun phrase. It is modified by the relative clause, *cak² kææ³* ‘(person) would solve (it)’.

Finally, *p^huu³* can also take a noun modifier, as illustrated in (93).

- (93) *p^huu³ salaa²xoo⁵sɔɔ⁶ cak² xam⁴tɔŋ⁴ xaaw³kaan¹ laduu⁴ naj⁴ nitaan⁴*
CL.human scientist IRR observe report weather in story
 ‘The scientists will look at weather reports from historical sources.’

In (93), *p^huu³* is serving as a noun head substitute and is modified by the noun, *salaa²xoo⁵sɔɔ⁶* ‘scientist’, which provides more information about the human referenced in the subject position of the clause.

Briefly, the classifier *p^huu³* occurs almost exclusively in descriptive constructions as a classifier of human referents. Now that the neutralization of contrast between classifiers in descriptive constructions has been demonstrated, possible reasons for this pattern are considered.

6.2.4 Motivations for the neutralization of contrast between classifiers in Tai Lue descriptive constructions

It is important to note that the same classifiers are used to substitute for specific classifiers in the descriptive constructions of Thai, Lao, and Tai Lue. These classifiers are /an/ ‘CL.thing’ and /tua/ ‘CL.animal’. In addition, the human classifier /*p^huu*/ also substitutes for specific classifiers in both Lao and Tai Lue.

Carpenter (1986: 23) suggests that the choice of classifier in descriptive constructions is pragmatically motivated, depending on the way in which a speaker wants to differentiate an entity from other entities.

Thus, /an/ ‘CL.thing’ is used to distinguish an entity from everything else, /tua/ ‘CL.animal’ is used to distinguish a physical entity from other physical entities, and a specific classifier is used to distinguish an entity from other entities within the same category. In addition, for Lao, Enfield (2007: 141) notes that “specific information concerning shape or form is unnecessary for the basic task of picking up reference to something already active in the discourse or present in the speech situation.”

Furthermore, within the Tai Lue corpus, *too'* is more common with adjectives. Carpenter (1986: 23) also indicates that Thai *tua* is more compatible with adjective modifiers. Taking the observations for Thai, Lao, and Tai Lue together, it appears that discourse context, the type of descriptive construction, and the type of identification intended by the speaker all have a part to play in the choice of classifier.

7 Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Tai Lue, like other Kam-Tai languages, exhibits a large inventory of classifiers that occur with numerals. These classifiers include sortal classifiers, which individuate a noun based on the inherent qualities of the noun referent, including animacy, dimensionality, and function. Classifiers for human referents can be further divided by social status. In addition to sortal classifiers, Tai Lue has a large inventory of mensural classifiers, which impose a measurement on a noun referent. Mensural classifiers include both standard and temporary measurements. Time adverbials also take the form of classifier phrases. Finally, the Tai Lue classifier inventory includes the general classifier, *an'*, along with repeaters or auto-classifiers, in which the noun head also functions as a classifier for enumeration.

In addition to occurrence with a numeral or quantifying word, classifiers also figure in descriptive constructions, including with a demonstrative, a post-classifier numeral *nun⁵* ‘one’, an adjective, and a relative clause. In these constructions, the classifier serves as the host of the following modification instead of the noun head. A classifier can also function as the head of a noun phrase, hosting a noun modifier and as a copula complement of *pin'* ‘be’.

Finally, as has been reported for Thai (Carpenter 1986) and Lao (Enfield 2007), a neutralization of contrast between sortal classifiers can occur in descriptive constructions. In some yet to be determined, pragmatic contexts, the sortal classifiers *an'*, *too'*, and *phuu³* can substitute for specific classifiers. The possible pragmatic contexts include situations where the inherent qualities of the noun referent are not in focus. Rather, the individuation of a noun referent in descriptive constructions may only need to distinguish the noun referent from other concrete or abstract things, hence the neutralization of contrast to *an'*, *too'*, and *phuu³*.

It is striking that this neutralization of contrast in descriptive constructions involves the same three classifiers for Tai Lue and Lao, while the use of only /an/ ‘CL.thing’ and /tua/ ‘CL.animal’ to substitute for specific classifiers has been described for Thai. While this pattern has not been reported specifically for other Kam-Tai languages, it is possible that a pattern of neutralization of contrast will emerge given a deeper study of usage in written and conversational corpora. Furthermore, a usage study of classifiers in Thai, Lao, and Tai Lue, with attention to genre, would also yield more insight. As Carpenter (1986: 23) pointed out, “classifiers should be looked at as a dynamic system, rather than as static word lists.”

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Abbreviations

1	1st person
2	2nd person
CL	classifier
COMP	complementizer
CONT	continuative
DEFER	deferential
DUR	durative

EXIST	existential
FP	final particle
IMP	imperative
INCL	inclusive
INFER	inferior
IRR	irrealis
LNK	linking word
NP	noun phrase
NUM	numeral
OBJ	object
PL	plural
PRF	perfective
Q.WH	wh-question
RC	relative clause
SUPER	superior

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