

The classifier *Gij* in Northern Zhuang

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Zhuang, a Northern Tai language of southern China, has several different kinds of classifiers. One type is the prototypical classifier: words used with individual nouns which fall into a closed set of classes such as animals, plants, flat things and long things. Following Clark (1989:182), I call these words 'classifier nouns'. Other types indicate quantity, and I call these measure words. Measure words are either specific units of measure ('inch, acre, dollar, catty'), names of containers used as measure words ('box of, cup of'), or words for collective sets of things ('string of [beads], pair of, group of').

The word *gij* also fills the classifier slot in a noun phrase, but it does not behave like a typical measure word or classifier noun. Classifiers normally refer to individual tokens or amounts of concrete nouns. One type of noun phrase which requires the use of a classifier is an enumerated noun phrase, since the number of tokens is in focus.

1.a. haj **bonj** saw neix
 five cls.: book writing this
 'these five books'

1.b. *haj **saw** neix
 five writing this
 *'these five writings'

Another type of sentence which focuses of individual tokens is the distributive sentence, where each instance of one noun in a sentence relates to one instance of the second noun in the sentence.

2. **Boux** raemj go.
 cls.: person chop-down cls.: plant
 'Each person cut down one tree.'

The word *gij*, however, generally cannot co-occur with number words, or be used in distributive sentences. Chinese linguists call *gij* an 'indefinite unit measure word' (Wei 1986:15), reflecting the fact that when *gij* is used the exact number of

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the noun is not in focus. Since *gij* does not encode a focus on individual tokens of nouns, the question arises as to what its meaning and functions are. These will be addressed in the first half of this paper.

The second way in which *gij* does not behave like other classifiers is that it can be used in place of the normal classifier noun for concrete nouns of any class whatsoever. Normally a classifier can only be used with certain sets of nouns—those which have a certain shape or those which are animals, for example. It is a distinctive characteristic of *gij* that it can combine freely with any noun. In Chinese the term ‘comprehensive measure word’ (Wei 1985:29) is sometimes used for *gij* reflecting this fact. This characteristic of *gij* presents us with the question of what factors determine the choice of whether the normal classifier or *gij* is used in a particular noun phrase. This question will be addressed in the semantics and discourse sections of this paper.

1. Background

1.1 Noun phrase order

All the types of measure words, classifier nouns and *gij* can function as classifiers in a noun phrase. The fully expanded noun phrase is: quantifier, classifier, noun, descriptive attributes, deictic. This word order shows that Zhuang is a member of the northeast areal group as defined by Jones (1970:2-3).

1.2 Characteristics of classifiers

In Zhuang, classifiers behave very much like nouns in that they often occur as the only nominal in a noun phrase, and they can be directly modified by attributive adjectives and possessors, or, in the case of relative clauses, by a verb phrase.¹

3. Gou miz **song dah** sat lo.
 I exist two cls.: young-woman finish part.
 ‘I have two daughters, that’s all.’

4. **bonj** **mwngz**
 cls.: book you
 ‘your book’

5. **aen** **hoengz**
 cls. red
 ‘the red one’

¹Example sentences come variously from my own elicitation, folk stories I have collected, example sentences supplied by the Guangxi Language Commission for a dictionary we are compiling jointly, and published sources. References are given in the text for the later.

A noun may follow the classifier, but it is optional. When the referent has already been mentioned in the discourse, it is more usual for the classifier noun to occur alone without any other noun in the noun phrase.

Semantically, classifier nouns refer to individual, concrete instantiations of things. It is ungrammatical to use them in non-referential noun phrases or in noun phrases where general classes or types are being referred to instead of individual instances or tokens of things.

Non-referential noun phrase examples:

6.a. Meh lauxsae nwnq haemq rox son **saw**.
 cls.: woman teacher that relatively know teach writing
 'That teacher can teach pretty well.'

6.b. *Meh lauxsae nwnq son **bonj** **saw**.
 CL: woman teacher that teach CL: book writing

7.a. Haemhhaemh miz vunz bae dwk **giuz**.
 evening-evening have people go hit ball
 'Every night there are people who go to play ball.'

7.b. *Haemhhaemh miz vunz bae dwk **aen** **giuz**.
 evening-evening have people go hit cls. ball

General statements:

8.a. **Vunz** gongz gaenz cijndaej miz gwn, miz daenj.
 people poor industrious only-then have eat have wear.
 'Poor people must work hard in order to earn a living.'

8.b. ***Boux** **vunz** gongz gaenz cijndaej miz gwn miz daenj
 cls.: person people poor industrious only-then have eat have wear
 *'Poor person must work hard in order to earn a living.'

On the other hand, classifier nouns must be used when individual instances of a noun are in focus, as they are in enumerated noun phrases. Individual tokens of a noun are also being referred to when a noun phrase is specific. Noun phrases which include a possessor, a demonstrative pronoun or a relative clause are clearly specific, and so they require a classifier noun. Any noun phrase which is semantically referential and specific must have a classifier noun.

2. Semantics of *Gij*

One function of *gij* is as a classifier of abstract nouns, and a second function is to refer to groups of things when they are viewed as a mass collection. Other semantic features are that *gij* is used when the noun is specific, and that it tends to signify inanimate things. For example, body parts such as ‘head’ and ‘stomach’ cannot be referred to with *gij* while they are still part of a living organism, but these nouns can take *gij* as a classifier when they are parts separated off of animals that have been butchered. Further ramifications of the tendency for *gij* to refer to inanimate things is discussed in the section on relative clause nominalizations.

2.1 *Gij* used with abstract nouns

Some nouns are abstract and cannot be enumerated or individuated. For example, the abstract nouns for feelings are in this category. Semantically, these abstract nouns do not have any individuated counterparts on analogy with *boux* ‘cls.: person’ and *vunz* ‘human beings’, or *go* ‘cls.: plant’ and *faex* ‘wood’. When an abstract noun occurs in a definite noun phrase, however, the classifier slot in the noun phrase is not left empty; the classifier slot is required to be filled whenever the noun phrase includes a possessor or a deictic. The word used in the classifier position in these noun phrases is the word *gij*, which can be roughly translated as ‘stuff’. One of the most basic functions of *gij*, then, is as the classifier of abstract nouns.

- 9.a. Gou lau aemq mbouj hwnj **gij** cwzyin **yienghneix.**
 I fear carry not raise cls. responsibility manner-this
 ‘I’m afraid [I] cannot carry this kind of responsibility.’

- 9.b. *Gou lau aemq mbouj hwnj **cwzyin** **yienghneix.**
 I fear carry not raise responsibility manner-this

- 10.a. Yawj **gij** **yienghceij** **de** caen anx.
 See cls. appearance he really haughty
 ‘His manner / appearance is really haughty.’

- 10.b. *Yawj **yienghceij** **de** caen anx.
 See appearance he really haughty

- 11.a. De gouq gvaq gou, gou mbouj lumz **gij** **aencingz** **de.**
 he save part. me, I not forget cls. kindness his
 ‘He saved me; I (will) not forget his kindness.’

- 11.b. *De gouq gvaq gou, gou mbouj lumz **aencingz** **de.**
 he save part. me, I not forget kindness his

2.2 *Gij* used as a classifier for collections of things

Gij can be used as the classifier for many different general nouns when the individual things are taken as a group, and viewed as one collection or a mass of things. This is true for things which lend themselves to being viewed as one undifferentiated mass, such as sand and water, as well as for things which are easily individuated and counted. When *gij* fills the classifier slot and the noun is one of this later type, then almost always a group or collection of those things is being referred to. The exact number of the individual things, however, is not at all in focus. Rather, the entire collection is taken as one undifferentiated mass, the exact number being irrelevant.

12. **Gij raemx neix** raemx haij, mbouj ndaej gw.
 cls. water this water sea not able eat
 'This water is seawater, (you) cannot drink it.'

13. Sou yawj, aen luij roengz raemx le, couh miz youz...
 You see, cls. coin descend water part., just have oil
 'Look! When this coin went into the water, oil...'

...fouz hwnjdaej. Cingqmingz **gij luij neix** couh dwg...
 float up-come. Prove cls. coin this just is
 ...floated up. (This) proves that these coins...

...daj ndaw bat uq youz laeq lwgnyez nwnq daej.
 from inside basin dirty oil cls.: child child that come.
 ...came from that boy's oily basin.'

14. "Ya! **Gij vaiz neix**, cungj ngah boux beix gou lo."
 Ah! cls. buffalo this all like cls.: person older-sibling my part.
 'Ah! These water buffalo, (they) all like my elder brother.'

Gij can be used to refer to just one thing, but it still implies that the speaker views the referent as a collection of things. For example, in the following exchange, speaker B is perturbed because speaker A thinks there is a lot of stuff on the table when there is really only one bowl; it is as if A is implying that B is lazy and not keeping the house picked up.

15. A: "Dawz **gij vanj** gwnz daiz roengz ma!"
 take cls. bowl on table down return
 'Put away the bowls on the table!'

B: "Cij ngamq lij **sack aen**; mbouj vaiq ma!"
 only just still single cls.; not quick part.
 'There is just one single bowl; what's the big deal?'

2.3 *Gij* used for specific groups of things

Recall that classifiers are not used when general classes or types are being referred to. Since *gij* is the classifier for collections of things, some of the noun phrases it is used in may seem similar to noun phrases which refer to general classes. When the group being referred to is a specific set then *gij* is used. One common way to indicate a particular set is to restrict the reference with a relative clause. Although a class or set is still being referred to, it is more specific than the general category without any restricting attributes. Note the differences between the following sentences.

- 16 **Meijgozvunz** haemq sang
 America-people relatively tall
 ‘Americans are pretty tall.’
- 17.a. **gij Meijgozvunz** daeuj daengz Cungjgoz youz he
 cls. America-people come arrive China travel part.
 ‘Americans who come to China as tourists’
- 17.b. ***Meijgozvunz** daeuj daengz Cungjgoz youz he
 America-people come arrive China travel part.

Depending on the context of the phrase within a discourse, the bare noun *Meijgozvunz* ‘Americans’ could also occur with *gij*. For examples and explanation see the section on the contrastive function of *gij*, section 4.2.

3. Syntax of *Gij*

In the preceding section the function of *gij* as a classifier for collections of nouns was explained and exemplified. Normally the choice of classifier noun is determined by the noun; that is to say, classifier nouns cannot combine indiscriminately with just any noun. The fact that *gij* can be used quite freely with most nouns thus sets it apart from other classifiers. There are several other ways that *gij* differs syntactically from other classifiers, as explained in the following sections.

3.1 *Gij* noun phrases cannot be enumerated

Unlike other classifiers, *gij* cannot co-occur with a number word in a classifier phrase (Wei 1986:18). It is as if the single word *gij* fills both the number and the classifier slot of the noun phrase (Wei 1986:17). Below are three examples of sentences which are ungrammatical because a number word precedes *gij*.

18. *Gou lau aemq mbouj hwnj **sam** **gij** **cwzyin** yienghneix.
 I fear carry not raise three cls. responsibility manner-this
 *‘I’m afraid [I] cannot carry these three kinds of responsibility.’

19. *Gou mbouj lumz **song** **gij** **aencingz** **de**.
 I not forget two cls. kindness his
 *‘I (will) not forget his two kindnesses.’

- 20.a. **Sam bonj** **saw** youq gwnz daiz mwngz cungj dawz bae liux.
 three cls.: book writing at on table you all take go part.
 ‘The three books on the table, you take them all.’

- 20.b. **Gij saw** youq gwnz daiz mwngz cungj dawz bae liux.
 cls. writing at on table you all take go part.
 ‘The books on the table, you take them all.’

But:

- 20.c ***Sam** **gij** **saw** youq gwnz daiz mwngz cungj dawz bae liux.
 three cls. writing at on table you all take go PTCL
 *‘Three the books on the table, you take them all.’

Just as things which are most typically individuated can be viewed as a mass and take the classifier *gij*, things which naturally occur as masses can also be enumerated. When they are quantified, however, a classifier other than *gij* must be used. Water could be counted drop by drop, or sand grain by grain. Or the material could be measured or put into a container, and the containers or units of measure counted. In these cases the nouns for the container or measure fill the classifier position.

21. Sam **ndik** raemx doek gwnz mbaw ceij gou,
 three cls.: drop water drip on cls.: leaf paper my
 ‘Three drops of water fell on my paper.’

22. Ndenq hawj gou song **doengj** naezhoi veiq!
 pass give me two MW:bucket mortar part.
 ‘Pass me two buckets of mortar.’

23. Cawx song **gaen** mbamienh ma.
 buy two MW:catty powder-wheat return
 ‘Buy two catties of flour.’

The fact that *gij* cannot combine with number words follows from the semantics; *gij* refers to a uniform collection of things taken as a conglomerate. The quantity of individual items is not in focus.

3.2 *Gij* cannot be used distributively

In Zhuang, classifiers can be used distributively. In distributive structures the classifier noun by itself constitutes the entire noun phrase, and two such noun phrases occur in the sentence. In the situation which the sentence describes, more than one of the items mentioned are present. The sentence as a whole relates each individual instance of the first referent to one individual instance of the second referent. (Examples 2, 24 and 25 are from Wang et al. 1979:96)

2. **Boux** raemj go.
cls.: person chop-down cls.: plant
'Each person cut down one tree.'

24. Deiqcangj soengq saw hawj raeuz; gou **bonj**,...
group-leader send writings give us; me cls.: book,
'The group leader gave us books; a book for me,

...mwngz **bonj**, **boux** **bonj**.
...you cls.: book cls.: person cls.: book
...a book for you, one book for each person.'

A closely related structure is the reduplication of classifiers to mean 'each and every X'.

25. **Duz** **duz** cungj biz.
cls.: animal cls.: animal all fat
'Each and every animal is fat.'

26. A: Aeu aen sozliuq ha, cixnaeuz aeu aen diet de?
want cls. plastic part. or want cls. iron det.
'(Do you) want the plastic one or the metal one?'

B: **Aen** **aen** cungj ndaej.
cls. cls. all good
'Any one is fine.'

In both of these structures the individual instances of the nouns are in focus. Since *gij* refers to collections of things, it cannot be used in these structures. (Wang et al. 1979:56)

3.3 Apparent exceptions in Wuming Zhuang.

In at least three places near the Wuming county seat, people do sometimes use *gij* together with number words in a noun phrase, and they do reduplicate *gij* to mean ‘each and every’. The number of countable nouns I have found which can take both *gij* and a number is small. Furthermore, in many of these cases the meaning of the word *gij* has shifted from signifying a group of homogenous items to signifying one kind or type of thing. The progression of this semantic shift is quite natural. This shift can take place for certain nouns when *gij* fills the classifier slot, but it does not ever happen for nouns for feelings, nor when *gij* is the head of a relative clause.

In the cases of the words for ‘feet, legs, hands’ and ‘name’ there could not have been a semantic shift to ‘type of’. For these nouns the similar sounding classifier *gaiq* can be substituted with a very slight change in meaning. In various dialects it is the classifier for things such as cultivated fields, fans, writing instruments, clothing, hands and feet and chunks of things like meat. In some northern Zhuang dialects the classifier *gaiq* is used instead of *gij* in all contexts where *gij* occurs in Wuming Zhuang. Despite the fact that *gaiq* can substitute for *gij* in these few examples, since there is a slight meaning difference they are not just variants. There does seem to be a close connection between the two similar sounding classifiers, but I cannot explain why these countable nouns can collate with *gij* in this dialect.

(For ‘feet’ and ‘legs’, the classifiers *cik* and *gaiq* could be substituted)

27. **Song** **gij** fawz de cungj gaem ha gaeq.
 two cls. hand he all grab leg chicken
 ‘He held a chicken leg in each of his two hands.’

(For ‘name’ the classifier *gaiq* is interchangeable with *gij*)

28. Gou miz **song** **gij** coh, **gij** **he** heuh Bwz Licuh, **gij** **he** heuh Peggy.
 I have two cls. name, cls. one call Bai Lizhu, cls. one call Peggy
 ‘I have two names; one is Bai Lizhu, and one is Peggy.’

(In the following three examples, the words *gaiq* or *cungj* ‘type/kind’ could be substituted.)

29. Gwnz daiz miz **sam** **gij** doxgaiq.
 on table exist three cls. things
 ‘On the table there are three things.’ OR
 ‘On the table there are three types of things.’

30. **Song** **gij** bingh de cungj naek.
 two cls. sick he all heavy
 ‘Both of his illnesses are serious.’
31. **Song** **gij** hong de yungj lai lo.
 two cls. work he busy very part.
 ‘Both of his jobs are very busy now.’

(In the next example, *cungj* or *yiengh* ‘type/kind’ can be substituted.)

32. **Seiq** **gij** raemx neix cungj mbouj ndaej gw.
 four cls. water this all not able eat
 These four (kinds of) water all cannot be drunk.

In these Wuming varieties, when *gij* is reduplicated the phrase means ‘each and every type/kind’:

33. Bae gai cawx noh ha, raeq ha, byaek ha.
 go market buy meat LIST, egg LIST, vegetables LIST.
 ‘(I) went to market and bought meat, eggs, vegetables.’

Gij **gij** cungj bengz.
 cls. cls. all expensive.
 ‘Each kind was expensive.’

In this last example, the buyer may have bought beef, and pork, chicken and duck eggs, and several kinds of vegetables. For each category of things, the price was higher than expected. In the reduplication example we see again the semantic shift of the word *gij*, from signifying a collection of things to signifying one category or kind of thing.

3.4 Nominalization

The first section exemplified classifiers as the only nominal element in a noun phrase, modified directly by numbers, possessors and attributive adjectives. In fact, the attributes which classifiers can take also include verbs, verb phrases and sentences. When the head of the modifying constituent is a verb, the construction can be viewed as a nominalization.

There are two kinds of nominalization in Zhuang: relative clauses and derived abstract nouns. One characteristic which distinguishes the two is that in relative clauses a noun can follow the classifier in the phrase, but for the derived abstract nouns the constituents are just *gij* and the verb. Only *gij* can be the head of the abstract noun phrases, but either *gij* or some other classifier can be the head of a

relative clause. Another distinguishing characteristic is that in relative clauses the head (be it *gij* or some other classifier) serves two functions at once; it both nominalizes the verb phrase, and is itself a noun which is a participant of the lower verb. The function of the modifying verbal clause is to delimit and specify the referent of the head classifier. In abstract noun phrases, however, the head of the phrase (*gij*) functions only as a nominalizer and not as a participant of the lower verb. An additional distinguishing characteristic is that in the varieties of Wuming Zhuang where *gij* sometimes collocates with numbers, this collocation never happens when the *gij* is functioning as the head of a relative clause. It can occur, however, when *gij* is in a derived abstract noun phrase.

3.4.1 Relative clause nominalization²

One very common use of *gij* is as the first constituent in a relative clause. Other classifiers also occur here. There are sometimes quite distinct interpretations of relative clauses which begin with a classifier noun and those which begin with *gij*. In Zhuang there are no overt markers telling which grammatical constituent has been relativized in a relative clause. The interpretation of relative clauses follows from the role structure of the verb, the semantics of the head classifier, and the context. When the classifier noun is animate and the verb takes an animate subject, then the classifier is most naturally understood as referring to the subject. When the classifier is 'tool' and the verb is 'use', then the interpretation is that the tool is being used, not that it is using something else. Thus the interpretation is based on semantics and real world knowledge of the situation.

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 34. | duz
cls.: animal | gwn
eat | 'the animal that is eating' |
| 35. | boux
cls.: person | yungh
use | gvaq
part. |
| | | | 'the person who has used (it)' |
| 36. | fag
cls.: tool | yungh
use | gvaq
part. |
| | | | 'the tool which has been used' |
| 37. | *duz
cls.: animal | ciengx
raise | *'the animal that is raising' |

²For Chinese, Li and Thompson (1981:575-580) distinguish between nominalized phrases that do not have a head noun, and those that do. Only those that do are called relative clauses. In Zhuang, however, the classifier functions both as the head noun and as the nominalizer. There is therefore not any real difference between structures which have and do not have general nouns following the classifier; both are relative clauses. The only cases of nominalization which I do not analyze as relative clauses are the derived abstract noun structures discussed in the following section.

38. **Fag** **mbouj** **yungh daengz** hwnj sing lo.
 cls.: tool not use arrive rise rust part.
 'The tool that hasn't yet been used has gotten rusty.'

Given enough context, the animate classifier *boux* 'person' can be understood to refer to the object of the modifying verb, as in the following example.

39. **Boux** **seizneix** **mbouj yungh daengz** de naengh fat nit lo.
 cls.: person now not use arrive he sit become cold part.
 'The person who is not used (on a job) now can sit around and be lazy.'

The most immediate aspect of the context used to interpret the referent of the head classifier is the other grammatical relations that are specified within the modifying verb phrase. In example 34 *duz gwn* there are no other nouns specified, and the classifier noun refers to the subject. If only one grammatical relation is unspecified, however, then the nominalization refers to the unspecified relation. Thus the classifier *duz* can only be interpreted as referring to the object if a subject is specified, as in the following example.

40. *duz* **gou** gwn neix
 cls.: animal I eat this
 'this animal that I am eating'

Similarly the context and the semantics of the word *gij* help to determine the hearer's understanding of which grammatical constituent is relativized. *Gij* does not have as much semantic content as other classifiers, but it does have some. The unmarked interpretation is that if a classifier other than *gij* is used, the referent is one thing; if *gij* is used then the unmarked interpretation is that the referent is a group of like things (Wei 1986:21). Also, in the unmarked case *gij* refers to inanimate things, and so it is interpreted as the object of the verb unless context forces another interpretation. These are tendencies, not strict rules.

One context which forces an animate subject reference for *gij* is when the verb phrase includes a stated object. In this case the nominalization is understood as referring to the only unspecified relation, which is the subject. Note that this is just the converse from the situation when the classifier *duz* 'animal' is the head of the relative clause.

41. *Gij* gwn **haeux** de bae gaxgonq.
 cls. eat rice det. go before
 'The ones who were eating left first.'

42. Gij daenj **haiz** de bae guh roen, gij loh din de bae ndaem naz.
 cls. wear shoes det. go make road, cls. bare foot det. go plant paddy
 'Those wearing shoes went to work on the road; those who are barefoot go to plant fields.'

Another context which forces an animate subject reference for *gij* is a contrastive context in the discourse. If an entire clause is being relativized with *gij* then the phrase is usually unambiguous. For the minimal construction [*gij* + verb] however, the unmarked reading would be as an abstract noun, as is described in section 3.4.2. It can be understood as a relative clause referring to the subject of the nominalized verb, meaning 'the ones who are VERBing' when groups doing one thing are contrasted with groups doing something else.

43. Youq henz dah miz haujlai duz vaiz. Mbangj duz gwn...
 at beside river exist many cls.: animal buffalo. Some cls.: animal eat
 'There are many water buffalo by the river; some are eating...'

... nywj, mbangj duz ninz. **Gij gwn de** couh dwg...
 grass, some cls.: animal lie-down. cls. eat det. just are
 ...and some are lying down. The ones that are eating are...

...gij gou, **gij ninz de** couh dwg gij de.
 cls. my, cls. lie-down det. just are cls. his.
 ...mine, the ones that are lying down are his.'

3.4.2 Nominalization which forms abstract nouns

When *gij* or classifier nouns are followed by adjectives, the relationship between the two is head + modifier, with the head referring to a noun which has the mentioned characteristic. For example, *duz hung* means 'the large animal' and *gij hung* means 'the large things', with the exact referents being understood from the context. In a relative clause such as *gij gwn haeux* 'those who are eating', the head *gij* refers to the group of animate beings which are eating rice, and this in contrast to a group of animate beings who are doing something else.

Nominalizations with *gij* have another possible interpretation, however. *Gij* alone has the special characteristic that when combined with an adjective or verb it can derive an abstract noun. Rather than referring to a concrete noun which has that characteristic or does the action, it refers to the quality itself or to the all-inclusive general category of things which are associated with the verb. This particular function of *gij* accords with the fact that *gij* is the classifier used with abstract nouns.

44. Vunz **bingh** mbouj ndaej guh **hong**.
 people sick not able do work.
 'Sick people cannot work.'
45. **Gij bingh de** haemq naek.
 cls. sick he relatively heavy
 'His illness is quite serious.'
 *'The sick ones are fairly heavy.'
46. **Gij hong de** mjaengz guh liux.
 cls. work he not-yet do part.
 'His work is not yet finished.'

In the following examples, the transitive verbs function as nouns which are all-inclusive general categories. In these cases the nominalization functions as a noun phrase in and of itself, and *gij* is functioning as the classifier of the abstract noun. This is in contrast with the relative clauses, where the nominalization restricts the scope of reference of the head, and the referent is a specific group of things.

47. **gij gwn** 'stuff eat' = 'food'
 cls. eat
48. **gij daenj** 'stuff wear' = 'clothing'
 cls. wear
49. **gij yungh** 'stuff use' = 'stuff'
 cls. use

One piece of evidence that the examples listed here are abstract noun phrases and not relative clauses is the fact that in Wuming Zhuang the classifier *gij* in these phrases can be re-interpreted as meaning 'kind/type of'. In sentences which exemplify this semantic shift, the classifiers *cungj* and *yiengh* can be substituted for *gij*, and number words can be added.

50. Vih **song gjij gwn** neix bae cimh baenz ngoenz.
 for-the-sake-of two cls. eat this go search entire day
 '(I) had to search all day long in order to find these two kinds of food.'

Even in these dialects of Wuming Zhuang it is ungrammatical to add a number word to a relative clause. In this context the *gij* could not be re-interpreted as meaning 'kind of', so adding a number word could not possibly make sense. The *gij* refers to a group of concrete things, and the number of members cannot be delimited by a number word because membership is already delimited by the verb phrase. If the relative clause were 'The books on the table', it means all the books on the table, no matter how many of them there are.

4. Discourse functions of *gij*

4.1 Definiteness or identifiability

Something is definite if the hearer can specifically identify the thing being talked about. One function of *gij* in Zhuang is to refer to definite referents. *Gij* differs from other classifiers in that other classifiers are used for both indefinite and definite, but *gij* is used only for definite noun phrases.

This follows partly from the fact that for singular noun phrases, the classifier is typically used even for indefinite noun phrases. Referential indefinite noun phrases include a number word and so also a classifier. But for groups and collections of things, indefinite instantiations are not enumerated and so do not require any classifier.

Even when whole groups of things are being introduced into a discourse, other strategies besides *gij* are used. Besides the strategy of using a quantifier such as *geij* 'several', *haujlai* 'many' combined with a classifier noun (see example 53), a measure word for collective sets of things can be used. Examples of collective measure words are *gyoengq* 'crowd' and *bang* 'group of'. Thus if a speaker chooses to use *gij* instead of another classifier, it is purely for discourse reasons such as definiteness.

4.1.1 Text-based definiteness

In a discourse, when the stage is being set and the participants are first introduced, the nouns are not definite. The existential verb *miz* is often used, and the noun phrase usually includes a quantifier and a classifier, although it can consist of a bare noun. At this stage *gij* is not used.

(first sentence of a story about two brothers)

51. Baezgonq, **miz goenglau**x **he** ciengx **song** **boux** **lwg**...
 long-ago exist cls.: man-old one raise two cls.: person child
 'Long ago there was an old man who raised two sons....'

...caenh **miz di reihnaz**, cij **miz geij duz** **vaiz**.
 at-most exist bit-of fields, merely exist several cls.: animal buffalo
 ... (he) only had a few fields and a few water buffalo.'

(first sentence of a discourse on how to kill a chicken)

52. Sien muz **cax** ndei, caiq bae gaeb **gaeq** ma.
 first grind knife good, again go grab chicken return.
 'First sharpen a knife well, and then go grab a chicken and bring it back.'

Later on in a discourse when something new is being introduced, if it is not reasonable to assume that the thing is accessible to the hearer, then it is indefinite and it is introduced in the same way that it would be in the stage-setting part of the story. For example, in a story a woman told about her daughter getting sick, she tells about being out with her daughter, her daughter fainting, and carrying her back to the school where they live. The fourth paragraph tells about what other people did. It begins:

53. Mwh haenx ndaw hag lij miz geij boux hauxseng dwk giuz.
 time that in school still exist several cls.: person youths play ball
 ‘At that time there were still several young people at the school playing.’

After the stage has been set and the hearer has the participants in mind, then things which have already been introduced or things which are known to exist in the situation can be referred to with *gij*. For example, in a text about a time when a person got injured, after getting to the point in the story where she is sitting outside a store along the street with a cut leg, the bystanders are introduced into the story using *gij*. Given the setting, the hearer would expect that other people would be present. This contrasts with the previous example, in which the hearer would not necessarily expect that there would be people at the school playing ball after school hours.

54. **Gij vunz** youq henz de doq heuh...
 cls. people at beside det. immediately call
 ‘The bystanders immediately called...
 ...hawj goengboh lwgnyez gou daeuj.
 let cls.: father child I come.
 ...for my husband to come.’

The text about how to kill a chicken illustrates that after something has been introduced once, then parts of that thing are identifiable to the hearer. Therefore even when the part is first mentioned it is definite and can take *gij*.

(second sentence of the chicken text)

55. Aeu fawz swix gaem **gij fwed de**.
 use hand left grasp cls. wing it.
 ‘Grasp its wings with (your) left hand.’
 (Later in the same story)

56. ...miq di fwn de okdaeuj. Loh-raen **gij noh de** le,...
 pluck bit-of feather it out-come show cls. meat it part.,
 ‘...Pluck some of the feathers. After (you) see its skin, ...’

57. Hawj **gij** **lwed** ndik roengz ndaw vanj bae.
 let cls. blood drip down inside bowl go
 'Let the blood drip down into a bowl.'

In the story about the two brothers, the first major section of the story is about how they divide up the family property after the father dies. The property mainly consists of the buffalo and the fields. Subsequent references to the water buffalo sometimes have the form quantifier + *duz*, and sometimes have the form *gij* + *vaiz*. The final result of the division of the property is that the oldest brother gets everything and the younger gets nothing. To emphasize the point that the older brother got all three buffalo the quantifier is often used ("I get all these three buffalo and now you don't have even one buffalo, so fields are useless to you, aren't they?"). When the number is not being emphasized, however, the form with *gij* is used.

58. Baez hoi dou **sam** **duz** **de** duzduz cungj gaen gou,...
 upon open door three cls.: animal det. cls.- cls. all follow me
 'When the door opened the three buffalo all followed me...
 ...cozmingz **gij** **vaiz** **neix** cungj gyaek gou lo.
 prove cls. buffalo this all fond-of me part.
 'This proves that these buffalo are all fond of me.'

4.1.2 Situation-based definiteness

Note that the relevant factor is not whether something has been introduced already in the discourse; rather it is whether the hearer can identify the referent. Thus the first mention of a noun can have *gij* if the reference is identifiable from the situation. Many dictionary example sentences have as the first phrase of the sentence a topic noun phrase with *gij*. In these cases the hearer has no context whatsoever. These topic phrases invariably include the deictic *neix* 'this' as well as *gij*, so it is presented as if the reader were standing by the speaker's side having the things stated in the topic pointed out to him. In a real conversation, the items being referred to must be known to the hearer if *gij* is used, as it is in the following example where speaker A expected to wash the dishes, but speaker B started doing them first:

59. A: Hawj gou guh gijmaz?
 Let me do what?
 'What will (you) let me do?'
 B: Hawj mwngz cuengq **gij** **swiq** **ndaej** **de**.
 let you place cls. wash get det.
 '(I'll) let you put away the ones that are washed.'

4.1.3 Definiteness as a necessary but not sufficient condition for determining the use of *gij*

There are examples where things which have been talked about in a discourse, and are therefore established as identifiable to the hearer, still occur as bare nouns without *gij*. Definiteness alone is not sufficient to determine when *gij* is used and when it is not used.

For example, in the story about the two brothers, after the ownership of the buffalo and fields is settled, the narrator sums up the situation as it stands so far, and then moves right on to the elder brother bringing up the next topic. The division of things is not yet done, and the narrator is naming off topics of what has been done so far. It is as if the buffalo and fields are items on a checklist.

60. Yiengq, **vaiz** beix de cix aeu liux, **reihnaz** cix aeu liux.
 Thus, buffalo elder-sibling he also get part., fields also get part.
 'So as for buffalo, the elder got (them, and) fields, he also got (those).'

"**Noegcae** ni, nuengx?"
 plowshaft part., younger-sibling
 'How about the plow?'

After the possession of the tools and the house is settled, the narrator sums up this entire section. The whole point of this section has been that the brother tricked the younger one out of absolutely everything. In the next part of the story the younger brother ends up roaming the wilderness looking for plants to eat. This time in the summation, which is an exhaustive listing, *gij* is used:

61. Yiengq, boux beix de **sam duz** **vaiz** cix aeu liux,...
 thus cls.: person elder-sibling he three cls.: animal buffalo also get part.,
 'So the older brother got all three water buffalo,

...**gij reihnaz** cix aeu liux, ndaw ranz **gij so** **ha**,...
 cls. fields also get part., inside house cls. shovel ah,
 ... (and) all the fields. In the house, the shovel,...

...**gvak ha**, guhmaz cienzbouh cungj aeu liux...
 hoe ah, whatever entire-part all get part.
 ...the hoe, etc. in their entirety all went to (the older brother);...

...Boux nuengx cix mbouj ndaej saek gaiq.
 cls.: person younger-sibling also not get single piece.
 The younger brother did not get one single thing.'

We can conclude that *gij* brings into focus the inclusion of all members of a set. Within the scope which is understood by the hearer (either from context or, in the case of relative clauses, stated in the restrictive relative clause itself), the use of *gij* in a noun phrase means it is all inclusive.

Definiteness is a necessary condition for the use of *gij* because concomitant with definiteness is an understanding on the hearer's part of the scope within which *gij* is being used. It is necessary but not sufficient, since there are cases where the noun is identifiable, but *gij* is not used. *Gij* serves to bring into focus the inclusion of all members of a set. From this it follows that the number is not in focus. By referring to all the members of the set, it also implicitly specifies that set and contrasts that set with the things which are not included in the set.

4.2 Contrastive function of *gij*

When one set of nouns is being contrasted with another, it is the case that, within the context of the understood scope, each contrasting set is an all-inclusive one. Therefore one function of *gij* is to indicate contrast. Since *gij* brings into focus the inclusion of all members of a set, it implicitly carries the contrastive function anyway: all the things which have the specified characteristics are included, and everything else is excluded.

In section 3.4.1, contrast was mentioned as one key element which determines the interpretation of [*gij* + verb] constructions. One possible interpretation is as a relative clause meaning "the ones who are VERBing," and the other interpretation is as an abstract noun derived from the verb. Without any contrasting context, the bare [*gij* + verb] construction is interpreted as an abstract noun construction, not as a relative clause. The relative clause reading is the marked one. For a relative clause, even one whose referent is plural, the unmarked case is to use a normal classifier noun. *Gij* is only chosen for use in this construction when the all-inclusiveness of the group is in focus, as when one group stands in contrast to another group. The following examples illustrate this. The form is *gij bingh de*, which can refer either to illness or to a set of living things which are sick.

Given the context:

62. Ranz gou ciengx haujlai duz gaeq, geij duz bingh lo.
 house my raise many cls.: animal chicken, several cls.: animals sick part.
 'My family is raising many chickens; several of them are sick now.'

Note the minimal difference between the following:

- 63.a. Gou lau **duz** **bingh** **de** rai bae.
 I fear cls.: animal sick det. die go
 'I'm afraid that the sick ones will die.'

- 63.b. *Gou lau **gij bingh de** rai bae.
 I fear cls. sick det. die go
 *'I'm afraid the sickness will die.'

64. Lau **gij bingh de** cen **gij ndei de**, couh linghvaih okdaeuj.
 fear cls. sick det. transmit cls. good det., just separately exit come.
 'Fearing (that) the sick ones will spread (the sickness to) the ones which are well, (I) just separate (them) out.'

Above I pointed out that noun phrases which are topics of general statements do not take classifiers or *gij*. One example was *Meijgozvunz*, 'Americans'. These general reference nouns can be made specific when the context defines a particular scope and one group is specified and contrasted within that scope.

65. **Vaiqgozvunz** aeu fag cax ma gw haeux.
 foreign-people use cls.: tool knife return eat rice.
 'Foreigners eat with knives.'
66. **Cunghgozvunz** aeu dawh ma gw haeux.
 Chinese-people use chopsticks return eat rice.
 'Chinese eat with chopsticks.'

In the context where a mixed group of people is sharing a meal, and all the people who are non-Chinese are using forks and knives, but all the Chinese people are using chopsticks, one can say:

67. **Gij Cunghgozvunz** aeu dawh ma gw,
 cls. Chinese-people use chopsticks return eat
 'The Chinese are eating with chopsticks'
- hoeng **gij vaiqgozvunz** aeu fag cax ma gw.
 but cls. foreign-people use cls.: tool knife return eat.
 'but the foreigners are eating with knives.'

In the construction [*gij* + pronoun], the pronoun is usually a possessor and the whole phrase means 'the things which belong to the pronoun'.

68. **Gij doxgaiq neix dwg** **gij gou**.
 cls. things this are cls. my
 'These things are mine.'

Even this construction can have a contrastive reading, however, as in the following example:

69. **Gij** **raeuz** gangj mbanj couh dwg 'gvai roeg gvai nou'.
 cls. we speak village just are smart bird smart mouse.
 'We speak Zhuang saying "clever as a bird, crafty as a mouse."'

Here a separate contrasting group is not mentioned, so it is not obvious that this is the contrastive use of *gij* meaning 'those who are us.' However, no reasonable interpretation can be given of this sentence if the phrase *gij raeuz* is taken as a relative clause referring to 'our things.' Furthermore, I discovered that many Zhuang speakers do not know the saying cited in the example. Thus it became clear that the sentence means 'We, here in our area (as opposed to speakers of other Zhuang dialects) say "clever as a bird, crafty as a mouse."'.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that there are two basic syntactic functions of *gij*. First, it is a classifier of abstract nouns. Hand in hand with this function, it also derives abstract nouns from verbs and at the same time serves as the classifier in the derived noun phrase. In Wuming County, the *gij* which is functioning in this way sometimes shifts semantically to mean 'kind of/type of'. These functions are unique to *gij*.

A second function of *gij* is to refer to collective groups of homogenous items. One very common syntactic construction where it has this collective reference is in relative clauses. All other classifiers can also function as heads of relative clauses, so when *gij* is chosen for use in these constructions, it is for semantic or discourse reasons.

Semantic reasons for choosing *gij* rather than other classifiers are that *gij* refers to collective groups of things rather than to individual instantiations. There is also a tendency for *gij* to refer to inanimate rather than animate things. Finally, *gij* is used to emphasize the all-inclusiveness of the group within the designated scope. The syntactic characteristic that *gij* cannot normally combine with quantifiers follows from this aspect of the semantics.

At the discourse level, *gij* is used for groups of things which are made definite either by text-definiteness or by situation-definiteness. The second discourse function of *gij* is the contrastive function. Noun phrases which contrast with others in the discourse context or in the situation have *gij* in the classifier slot. While other classifiers are also used in definite noun phrases, the contrastive function is unique to *gij*.

Appendix

The following is an excerpt from the story of the two brothers; it tells how the younger brother became rich. The noun *roet* 'fart' occurs many times in these paragraphs in various combinations with and without *gij* and its own particular classifier *goeng*. Each *roet* noun phrase is enclosed in a box and tagged with a number. The numbers refer to the chart below which explains the factors determining the presence and choice of classifier in each phrase.

1	singular or enumerated	(normal classifier)
2	collective, specific	(<i>gij</i>)
3	contrastive	(<i>gij</i>)
4	non-referential	(bare noun)
5	general statement	(bare noun)

Boux nuengx yiengq gw bae gw dauq le
 cls.: person younger sibling thus eat go eat return part.

miz ngoenz he de ok

goeng	roet	he ¹
cls.	fart	one

 dwk
 exist day one he emit cls. fart one part.

"bued!" De naeuz: "Ye!"

Goeng	roet	gou, ¹
cls.	fart	my

 yienghlawz
 SOUND he say hey cls. fart my manner-which

rangngaungau yienghneix ni?" Nuengx de cix gag
 fragrant-sweet manner-this part. younger-sibling he just self

naemj lubo, "Baenq vunz ok

roet, ⁴
fart

roet ⁵
fart

 haeu lo
 consider part. this-way people emit fart fart stinking part.

goeng	roet	gou ¹
cls.	fart	my

 cix rangngaungau ni! Yiengq swnz
 cls. fart my just fragrant-sweet part. thus now

gou cungj mbouj miz saek gaiq, mbangjbaez dawz
 I all not exist any-one piece perhaps take

			2
gij	roet	gou	
cls.	fart	my	

Yiengq daegnuengx couh hwnj haw bae, riengz gai
thus cls.: male-younger sibling just ascend market go along street

goengbeix, nuengxau! Gou ngoenzneix daeuj haw, mbouj
older-brother younger-brother I day-this come market not

miz	saek	gaiq	daeuj.	Hoeng	boux	vunz	gou	caeuq
exist	any-one	piece	come	but	cls.: person	people	me	with

vunz miz di mbouj doengz.
people exist bit not same

Gij	roet	vunz	haeu,
cls.	fart	people	stinking

hoeng	gij	roet	gou	rang.	Yizgoj	gakboux	mbouj	sinq
but	cls.	fart	my	fragrant	if	each- cls.	people not	believe

gou cix ok
I just emit

1
goeng he
cls. one

hawj	caezgya	baez	mup	gaeuj."
let	everybody	instance	smell	see

Ndaek lwgnyez nwnq de gvai bw! Naeuz ok
cls. child that he smart part. say emit

roet
fart

de couh ok, mbouj ok couh mbouj ok. O! De gan
he just emit not emit just not emit oh he just

ndaej	guhdaengz	yiengq	bw!
able	do-arrive	thus	part.

De gangj le couh “bued,”
he say part. just sound

goeng	roet	de	okdaeuj,	daihgya
cls.	fart	he	emit-come	everyone

baez mup. "Yu! Ndaek lwgnyez ndaek, gij roet de cingqcaen
 instance smell ooh cls. child cls. cls. fart he truly

rang cijnaeuz. Yizgoj aeu loengx daeuj caeux gij roet
 fragrant isn't it if take box come load cls. fart

hwnjdaej dwk, roxnaeuz ok roet haeuj loengx denz
 ascend-come part. or emit fart into box blanket

loengx buh bae, gjj buh gjj denz raeuz mboujcaengz
 box clothes go cls. clothes cls. blanket our would-not

rangngau haz?!"
 fragrant-sweet part.

Yiengq doengh boux miz cienz miz ngaenz couh dawz
 thus several cls.:person have money have silver just take

loengx ha, guhmaz okdaeuj. "Ne, ne! Caengj gou hoi
 box LIST what out-come hey hey wait I open

loengx le, mwngz cix ok roet haeujbae. Gou couh
 box part. you just emit fart into-go I just

gaepgek hwnjdaej, hawj gjj buh gou rangngau youq
 cover up-come let cls. clothes my fragrant-sweet at

ndaw de lo."
 inside it part.

Yiengq ngoenz haenx de ok cib geij goeng roet,
 thus day that he emit ten several cls. fart

it goeng roet ndaej saek maenz geij song maenz
 one cls. fart obtain one yuan several two yuan

ngaenz lo, de caemh veiz ndaej gvaq lo ne!
 day part. he also to-one's-profit obtain pass part. part.

De caenh yiengq guh lo. Ok roet roet cix rang,
 he invariably thus do part. emit fart fart also fragrant

5		youh	dij	cienz,	guh	bae	guh	ma,
roet	rang	moreover	worth	money	do	go	do	return
fart	fragrant							

gaenlaeng de miz ngaenz lai lo, fatcaiz lo.
 later he have money much part. rich part.

Free Translation:

After eating this and that in this way, there was one day when the younger brother broke wind with a 'blat'. He said, "Hey! What's this? How is it that my fart is so fragrant?" He thought to himself, "When people break wind, their farts really stink. But my farts are so sweet-smelling! Now since I don't have anything, maybe if I took my farts and sold them maybe I could make some money!"

So the younger brother went to the market. He went along the street shouting out, "Hey, Everyone! Ladies, gentlemen, young men and brothers! I have come to market today, but I haven't brought anything with me. But I myself am an unusual man. Other people's farts stink, but mine are fragrant, like perfume. If anyone doesn't believe it, I'll just let one out for everyone to smell for themselves."

That kid was really talented! When he said he would break wind, he just did, and when he didn't want to, he didn't. Ah! He was really able to do this!

After saying this, 'blat', his fart came out. As soon as everyone smelled it they exclaimed, "Wow! This child, his farts are really sweet-smelling, aren't they! If we bring out our boxes of quilts and clothes and he breaks wind into them, won't our clothes and quilts be fragrant!"

So the rich people, those who had money, brought out their boxes and things. "Here, here! Wait until I open the box, and you just break wind into it. I'll just cover it up again and let my clothes become fragrant inside there."

So on that day he let out a dozen or so farts, and each one earned him one and a half or two *yuan*. It was really profitable! He went on doing this. When he broke wind, it was fragrant; the fragrant farts were worth money. After doing this for a while he had a lot of money. He was really rich.

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