# Syntactic and interpretive constraints on the combination of numerals and nouns: Lalo Yi

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Lalo Yi imposes an important restriction on the use of numerals to count out nouns. Unlike other numeral classifier languages, it is often not possible to combine numerals and classifiers with nouns to form a single syntactic constituent, and instead, a numeral-classifier pair must appear clause-finally, in an immediately pre-verbal position as an independent syntactic constituent:

(1)　　**ɕo13sen33** hi55-ku33　**sa33-ma55**　ty55ʑi55 kuɛ13 a55　mu55.
　　　　*student*　*home-LOC*　*three-CL*　*return　RLS　SFP　VIS*
　　　　'Three students went back home.'

This restriction relates to the *specificity* of the NP. If demonstratives or the indefinite article element *nikhe* are present, this does enable the syntactic combination of numerals with nouns (2). The absence of any article in NP-numeral construals such as (1) onlys permit *non-specific* interpretations.

(2)　　tsi55tsi³³-di³¹ [**thi³¹u³¹ ni55khɛ55**n **nɯ31-pen31**　ta³¹　a³¹　　mu55.
　　　　*table-LOC*　*book*　*INDEF*　*two-CL*　　*put SFP　VIS*
　　　　'There are two specific books on the table.'

We offer a syntactic-semantic analysis of these patterns which suggests that any syntactic combination of nouns/NPs and numerals requires the projection of a DP constituent with a D position that is lexically instantiated. This allows for numerals to merge with NPs with specific interpretations, but as Lalo Yi has no non-specific (indefinite) article, numerals may only be construed with nouns via a different syntactic structure, in which numeral-classifier pairs occur in a unique functional projection located within *v*P. Such a structural analysis will be shown to allow for an explanation of other related restrictions: (i) it is only possible for *one* bare non-specific noun/NP per clause to be counted by a clause-final numeral-classifier pair, (ii) if aspect markers occur, a clause-final numeral-classifier pair may be construed with the object of the verb, but never with a subject NP, and (iii) certain types of verbs cannot be used with clause-final numeral-classifiers. We also show that numerals may be combined with classifiers as syntactic NumP constituents when they have no specific or asserted reference and are pure quantity expressions (e.g. 'Two people can lift up one cow.').