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1. A unit counter construction in Ewe

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Ewe, a Kwa language of West Africa has three noun plus numeral constructions. They are used for enumeration and counting. The first is an instantiation of the simple noun phrase construction in which nouns combine directly with numerals, as in (1). The simple noun phrase construction can be represented as follows (see e.g. Ameka 2001):

Identifier-N-Qualifier-Quantifier-Determiner-Plural-Intensifier

In the simple noun-plus-numeral construction, there is a dependency between the determiner and phrase-level plural-clitic marker. If the NP is not determined, then the plural marker does not occur. Compare (1a) and (1b):¹

	N	Qual-Adj	Qt-Num	Det	PL
(1a)	nyi	lolo	eve		má=wó
	cow	large	two		DIST=PL
	'those two large cows'				
(1b)	nyi	lolo	eve		(*=wó)
	cow	large	two		PL
	'two large cows'				

The second construction is an instantiation of an appositive noun phrase in which nouns construed as mass, such as fluids and grains, are juxtaposed to a phrase headed by a measure term and including a numeral to express quantity. The structure of the construction is in (2).

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	N	N [mea- sure]	Qual-Adj.	Qt- Num	Det	PL
(2a)	kpeli maize	kotokú sack	gã big	ene four=D EF+PL	=a=wó	
	‘the four big bags of maize’					
	N	N[mea- sure]	Qt-Num			
(2b)	dzomi palm-oil	atukpá bottle	adé six			
	‘six bottles of palm oil’					

The measure phrases that modify the noun head in these structures pertain to containers as in (2a) and (2b) or configurations as in *te ko eve* ‘two slices of yam’; or standard measures as in *awutse kpó afā* ‘half piece of cloth, i.e. 6 yards of cloth.’

In addition to these, a unit counter construction for individualizing and counting has emerged. It is compatible with both the direct noun-plus-numeral construction as in (1) and the appositive noun-plus-measure phrase and numeral construction. Both patterns are illustrated in (3a) and (3b). Compare (1a) and (3a) and (2b) and (3b) respectively.

	N	Qual- Adj	Pron	Coun- ter	Qt- Num	Det	PL
(3a)	Nyi Cow	lolo large	wó 3PL	ame UNIT	eve two	má=wó DIST=PL	
	‘large cows those two units of them’						
	N	N[mea- sure]	Pron	Coun- ter	Qt- Num		
(3b)	dzomi palm-oil	atukpá bottle	wó 3PL	ame UNIT	adé six		
	‘bottles of palm-oil six units of them’						

The unit counter construction involves an apposition between a substructure of an NP and a Pronominal unit counter

phrase. The critical operators in the construction are the 3PL pronoun which co-refers to the head noun, the unit counter *ame* and a numeral. The unit counter *ame* is a lexicalized usage of the noun *ame* ‘someone, person, being’ (Ameka 1994). It is an overt expression of unit counting. It is used to individuate entities. Even though it is lexicalized from a noun that refers to animates, it is used in counting both animate and inanimate entities. It does not impose any semantic restriction on the noun head, nor does it categorize. It does not denote quanta. The quantity information is provided by the numeral. It is thus not a classifier. The construction can be schematically represented as:

[[[N (N)] (Qual) [3PL <i>ame</i> Num.] Det PL INT]]
Measure [Pron UNIT]

The unit counter segment looks like an insertion into the higher NP. Because of this, Essegbey (1993) suggests that the unit counter segment is a quantifier phrase embedded within the NP. A constructional approach provides an insightful account, especially when it is viewed as a construction related to the other noun-plus-numeral constructions.

Notes

1. Abbreviations: 3 = third person; Adj = adjective; Det = determiner; DIST = distal demonstrative; INT = intensifier; N = noun; Num = numeral; PL = plural; Pron = pronoun; Qt = quantifier; qual = Qualifier; UNIT = unit counter.

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