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**Title:** The semantic role of classifiers in Japanese

**Abstract:** In obligatory classifier languages like Japanese, numerals cannot directly modify nouns without the help of a classifier. It is standardly considered that this is because nouns in obligatory classifier languages have uncountable denotations, unlike in non-classifier languages like English, and they need to be turned into countable denotations by classifiers before being able to be modified by numerals. Contrary to this, it is proposed that what makes Japanese an obligatory classifier language is not the semantics of nouns but the semantics of numerals. Specifically, evidence is presented that numerals in Japanese cannot function as predicates on their own, which is taken as suggesting that numerals in Japanese are exclusively used as singular terms. It is then proposed that the semantic function of classifiers is to turn such singular terms into modifiers/predicates.