

Finally, the so-called articles do not affect scope with modals.

- (8) e tangir-i-a ni warek-i booki Mere
 3.SG want-PL-SG to read-pl book.PL Mary
 ‘Mary wants to read (some) books’ (could be any books or specific books the speaker has in mind)
- (9) e wareka te boki Mere
 3.SG read ART book Mary
 ‘Mary wants to read a book (but I don’t know which one).’

The linear order also suggests that these forms are low in the extended nominal domain. Specifically, they appear to the right of numerals. Thus, we suggest that these markers are actually number heads and encode nothing more than number.

Analysis: We assume an extended nominal projection that includes NumP (Ritter 1992; Ritter 1991). Hereafter, we refer to the forms *te* and *taian* as number heads (NUM and NUM.PL, respectively). Although plural marking on the noun is non-concatenative, we assume that it is represented by a phonological feature responsible for vowel lengthening on the Num head. The noun raises to Num to pick up this number affix (in the sense of Pollock 1989; Longobardi 1996). Here, then, is the proposed structure for “five books” in (1). We have represented the plural morpheme as a floating [+long] feature for convenience.

- (10) [NumP five-CL [Num⁺ book_r-[+long] [NP *t_i*]]]

However, if the Num head contains either the forms *te* or *taian*, then movement from N to Num is blocked, and the noun appears in the singular form.

- (11) [NumP five-CL [Num⁺ taian [NP book]]]

At the moment, the choice between the number markers with segmental material (*te* and *taian*) and the non-concatenative vowel lengthening number marker does not correlate with any semantic difference we have been able to pinpoint; however, *te* is found on nominalizations (Groves et al. 1985: 33).

We turn now to the issue of classifiers and obligatory number marking. It has been proposed that there are two possible structures for numeral classifiers cross-linguistically (Little et al. 2022 among others). Specifically, either (i) the classifier and the noun form a constituent, or (ii) the classifier and the numeral form a constituent. Preliminary evidence for the classifiers-for-numerals structure comes from the fact that the classifier is affixal on the numeral. If this structure is on the right track, it would explain how the classifier and obligatory number marking can co-occur. Namely, the classifier doesn’t appear in the head of NumP, but rather forms a constituent with the numeral, which appears in the specifier of NumP. We leave further investigation of the constituency of the classifier to future research.

Conclusion: We have investigated the so-called articles in Kiribati and have concluded that they are actually number markers. The plural number marker is in complementary distribution with the non-concatenative plural marker that gives rise to vowel lengthening. Our evidence for this claim is that the two forms in question (*te* and *taian*) do not correlate with any semantic difference typically associated with determiners and articles. Furthermore these forms appear between the numeral (in SpecNumP) and the noun, suggesting they occupy the head of NumP. Finally, we have observed that classifiers and obligatory number marking are found in Kiribati, which is typologically rare. We have suggested that the classifier forms a constituent with the numeral, leaving the head of NumP free to host number marking.

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