

Macau Humanities Forum
亞洲語言的語義變化與
區域類型學研究

SEMANTIC SHIFTS AND AREAL
TYPOLOGY IN ASIA

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Goals

- In today's talk, we will set out to examine several cases of shared patterns of polysemy that lead to shared grammaticalization pathways in East and Southeast Asia.
- These patterns are triggered by a primary stage of semantic shifts.



- We will argue that
 - (i) semantic change is the basis for lexical and morphosyntactic change and not an epiphenomenon
 - (ii) patterns of polysemy that recur across Mainland East and Southeast Asia (MESEA) are more reliable as a basis for establishing a linguistic area than lists of features (cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm & Liljegren 2019)

Contents of this talk 本次演讲的内容

1. Mainland East and Southeast Asia area (MESEA):
Characteristics
2. Linguistic areas and semantic change
3. Semantic change on the lexical level:
 'Mother' augmentatives
4. Semantic change at the morphosyntactic level:
 Psycho-collocations
5. Semantic change at syntactic level:
 Verbs of existence, possession and location
6. Conclusion

1. MAINLAND EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN AREA: CHARACTERISTICS

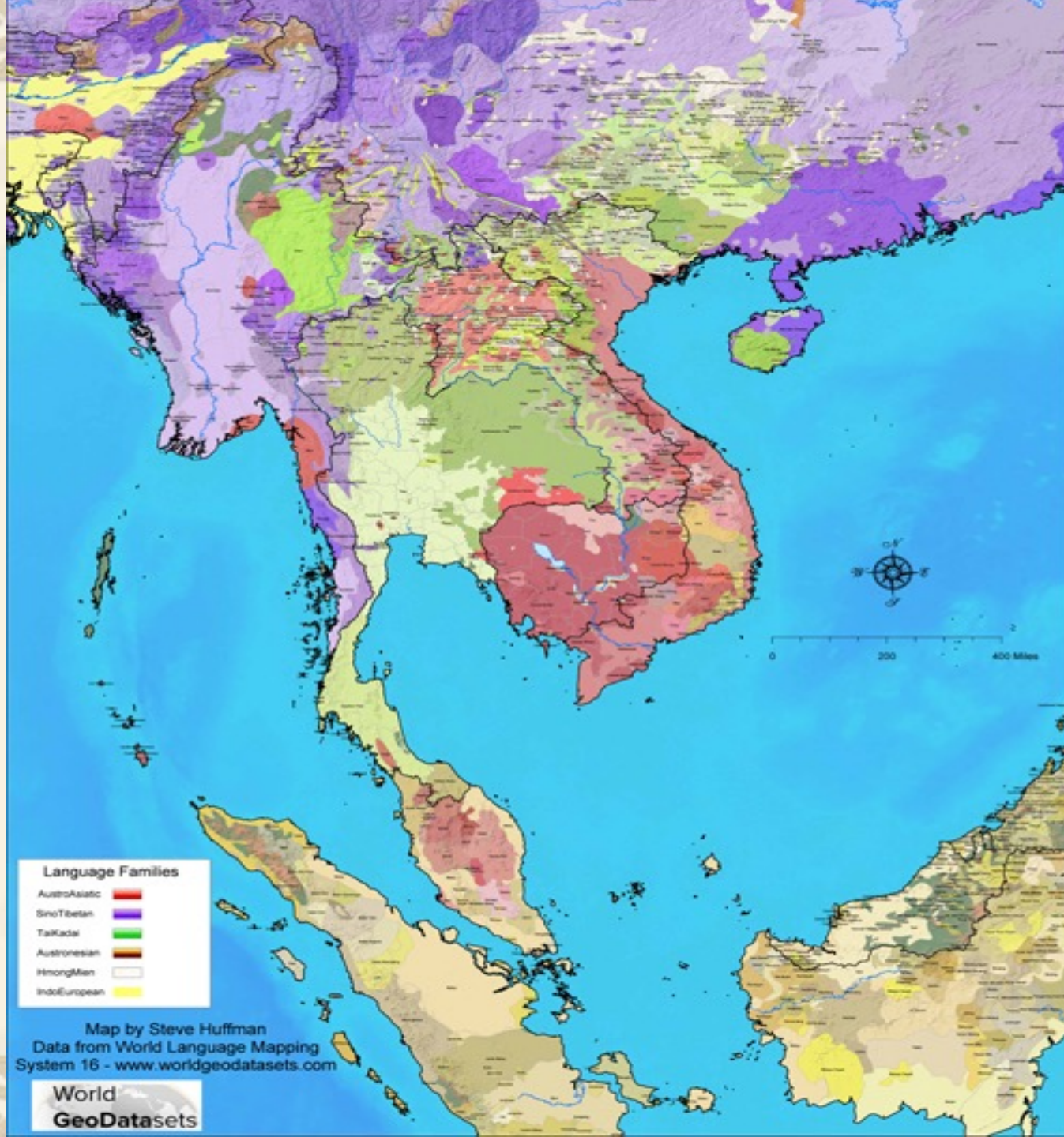


Mainland Southeast Asian linguistic area

Five major language families make up this large linguistic area:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| i. Sino-Tibetan | 汉藏语系 (Sinitic & Tibeto-Burman) |
| ii. Kra-Dai | 壮侗语系 |
| iii. Austroasiatic | 南亚语系 (Mon-Khmer & Munda) |
| iv. Hmong-Mien | 苗瑶语系 |
| v. Austronesian | 南岛语系 |

Within this area, further subdivisions can be made:



东南亚语言区 (i)

Two major linguistic zones in Southeast Asia proposed by J. Matisoff (1991, 2001 ...):

INDOSPHERIC

e.g. Tibeto-Burman languages of Northeastern India and Nepal, Austroasiatic languages such as Munda, Khasi...

SINOSPHERIC

includes **Southern Sinitic** (basically Sinitic languages south of the Yangzi River), Hmong-Mien, Tai-Kadai, Vietnamese (Mon-Khmer, Austroasiatic), Lolo-Burmese ... etc.

Mainland Southeast Asian linguistic area according to (Matisoff 1991), Chappell (2017)

Some of the syntactic features include:

- i. DWELL /BE:AT > Progressive marker
- ii. FINISH > perfective aspect marker
- iii. GET, OBTAIN > 'manage', 'able to'
- iv. GIVE > causatives & benefactives
- v. SAY > complementizers
- vi. Verb concatenation > resultative and directional compound verbs

2. LINGUISTIC AREAS AND SEMANTIC CHANGE



2.1. Linguistic areas in China

- For China, Hashimoto (1976) and Norman (1988) argued in favour of a North-South split in typology
- The split is conditioned by language contact in the North due to *Altaicization* of linguistic features, whereas in the South, features linked with Kra-Dai languages can be identified - *Taïcization*
- Since Matisoff basically excluded the North of China from his two linguistic areas, his proposal neatly dovetails with Hashimoto's and Norman's.



Problem

- All the features proposed by Matisoff for the sinosphere south of the Yangtze River are typical of Sinitic languages to its north!
- The partial exception is GIVE > causative verb which is more semantically restricted in Northern Mandarin
- → East & Southeast Asia as a mega-area
- However, the problem arises that most of these semantic shifts are attested in other parts of the world too!



Language contact or independent development?

- The North-South dichotomy for Sinitic languages is essentially based on the premise of external borrowing - that most typological differences are due to centuries-long language contact
- This is not always the case:
- Detailed case studies on Sinitic languages are not only beginning to show a more complex situation of linguistic micro-areas and variation
- but also that internal change involved, that is, independent innovations have been made



- In the next hour, let's examine some quite fascinating semantic shifts of the MSEA linguistic area which are potentially unique
- How should we define a linguistic area?
- Before doing this, the commonly accepted definition for a linguistic area is presented on the next slide



Definition of a linguistic area

- Possibly the earliest definition was made by Emmeneau (1956: 16) :
- ‘The term « linguistic area » may be defined as meaning an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family but showing traits in common which are found not to belong to the other members of (at least) one of the families.’



Main features of a linguistic area:

- More recent definitions include the following points:
- A linguistic area coincides with a geographical area.
- It groups together related and unrelated languages & dialects
- Through long-term language contact, this group of languages comes to share major features of the lexicon, morphology and grammar
- The features that identify the area are the ones not found outside this immediate area in other languages, related or not



- But we need to know how linguistic areas are formed.
- From a linguistic point of view this involves sharing patterns that arise through semantic change, and recur throughout the languages in the given area.
- Why do they recur?
- Either the patterns are a natural internal development in each language of the group or they are borrowed.



2.2. Semantic change: Definition

A morpheme or word changes its meaning through time, if at one stage in the language's history, **S1**, it means « **M1** » but **not** « **M2** » while at a later stage in its history, **S2**, it comes to mean « **M2** but not **M1** »

S = stage

M = meaning

(Wierzbicka 1977, Matisoff 1978: 173, Wilkins 1996, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2017)



Two examples of semantic change

“**Overlap Model**” of Heine (1993, 1997b); similar model in Wilkins (1996) : Two examples

S1	M1	bag	heart
S2	M1, M2	bag, belly	heart, liver
S3	M2	belly	liver

- Both examples are common semantic shifts:
- *bag* > *belly* in Indo-European and
- *heart* > *liver* in Asian languages

Divergence

- Note that the **S3** stage may not take place and both meanings, and both **M1** and **M2** are retained.
- The diachronic feature of '**divergence**' is indeed very common in Asian languages which leads to high frequency polysemy

“When a lexical form undergoes grammaticalization to a clitic or affix, the original form may remain as an autonomous lexical element and undergo the same changes as ordinary lexical items.” (Hopper 1991: 22)

Example of divergence

Yinchuan dialect of Lan-Yin Mandarin

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| (i) | Verb 'to give' | $k\omega^{53}$ isolation tone |
| | | $k\omega^{35}$ context tone |
| (ii) | Preposition 'for' | $k\omega^{13}$ |
| (iii) | Verbal enclitic | = $k\omega$ |
| (iv) | Verbal prefix | $k\omega-$ |

All functions are in use synchronically.

(example from Lin 2012: 186)



Shared polysemy: definition

- ‘**Polysemy**’ refers to multiple meanings of the one form in a synchronic framework
- The term ‘**polysemy sharing**’ or ‘shared **polysemy**’ refers to areal patterns of polysemy which arise due to high frequency in a group of related and unrelated languages.
- It is frequently difficult to discern if the semantic changes are due to independent, internal change or due to language contact and thus borrowing.
- In the case of borrowing, difficult to discern which is the **MODEL** and which, the **REPLICA** language (Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Liljegren 2017).



3. SEMANTIC CHANGE ON THE LEXICAL LEVEL: 'MOTHER' AUGMENTATIVES



3.1. Kin semantics

- The kin terms which are common lexical sources for semantic shifts and create derivational morphology are:
 - **MOTHER**
 - > female of the species >
augmentative₁ = 'source', 'large'
 - **FATHER**
 - > male of the species >
augmentative₂ = 'leader'
 - **CHILD, SON**
 - > young of the species
 - > diminutive = 'object smaller than normal'
 - > noun marker



Diminutives

- Diminutive morphemes often have words for ‘child’ as their source. This is a well-known pan-Sinitic feature which is also found in Southeast Asian languages, not to mention in African languages:
- Sinitic languages have three main sources:

兒 ER

子 ZI

仔, 崽 ZAI Cantonese 狗仔 *gau²za²*

孺 JIAN and all are derived from ‘**child**’ or ‘young of the species’

3.2. Compound forms – female of species

- In Sinitic languages , the most common way for expressing the female of the species is to use a compounding process with **MU** 母 ‘mother’ and its synonyms : Standard Mandarin has *mǔzhū* 母猪, Southern Min uses *ti¹bo²* 猪母;
- Yichun Gan uses *tɕy³⁴p^ho⁴⁴* 猪婆
- In Waxiang 瓦乡话, *tiəw⁵⁵ɲiẽ¹³* 猪娘 is used for a sow that has farrowed – i.e. has given birth

‘Mother’ augmentatives

Matisoff (1992) noted that the augmentative morpheme with very high frequency is derived from ‘mother’ all across Southeast Asia, deriving nouns that refer to either:

- (i) the main part
- (ii) the source or
- (iii) a larger object than the normal size



Semantic shifts for 'mother'

- The original meaning of the morpheme undergoes semantic change, specifically of the generalization type to the point where the 'mother' morpheme may be used quite neutrally without any meaning of 'female gender'.

MOTHER > FEMALE OCCUPATIONS >

FEMALE OF THE SPECIES > AUGMENTATIVE

> NOUN MARKER



Standard Thai (SW Tai, Kra-dai)

As in Sinitic languages, **mêê** = 'mother' can be used in opposition to **phôo** = 'father' to form nouns that refer to humans and their occupations or social roles.

STAGE 1:

Thai human nouns: female and male gender

mêê-mót

'witch'

phôo- mót

'wizard'

mót = ? 'magic'

mêê-khrua

'female cook'

phôo- khrua

'male cook'

khrua = 'kitchen'

(Matisoff 1991:303)

Standard Thai (SW Tai, Kra-dai)

STAGE 2: Female of the species

kàj m̂̂ -kaj

‘chicken’ ‘hen’ (Kuteva et al 2019: 286)

ŝya m̂̂-ŝya

‘tiger’ ‘female tiger’, ‘tough woman’



STAGE 3: Augmentative use in Thai

mêê-bòt

AUG-text

‘heading’, ‘chief part of a text’

mêê-tháp

AUG-army

‘general’, ‘commander-in-chief’

mêê-náam

AUG- water

‘river’

mêε-kuncεε

AUG-key

‘lock’

mêê-sǐi

AUG-
colour

‘primary
colours’

SEMANTIC BLEACHING:

Hence, an originally [+female] term can refer to men as well! 31



Vietnamese **cái**

Gender formatives for animal species : **cái** = female, **đực** = male

bò 'bovine' : bò **cái** 'cow'

bò **đực** 'bull'

mèo 'cat': mèo **cái** 'she-cat'

mèo **đực** 'tomcat'

(Nguyen 1997: 171)

Augmentative use of **cái**:

hòn **cái** 'main, big island';

(Kuteva et al 2019: 285)

cong **cái** 'main stem of plant'

đường **cái** 'main road, highway'

rễ **cái** 'main root' (Matisoff 1991)

Standard Chinese (Mandarin, Sinitic)

mǔxiào 母校 mother-school 'alma mater'

母音 **mǔyīn** 'consonant', 母语 **mǔyǔ** 'mother tongue'

母钟 **mǔzhōng**

-many technical terms

but there is no really productive augmentative prefix using 'mother' as its source.



Distinctive areal feature of MESEA

MOTHER > FEMALES OF SPECIES > AUGMENTATIVE

in Thai, Hmong, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Malay/Indonesian, Japanese & Tibeto-Burman languages, including Naga languages of NE India, Tibetan, Burmese and Yi (Loloish)
Crosslinguistically, Bantu languages of Africa use these 'mother-morphs' as augmentatives (Grandi 2011)

- but not Indo-European languages such as Italian, Greek, Slavonic where

AUGMENTATIVE < locative and collective plural markers

- therefore not a unique feature but **distinctive polysemy sharing!**



3.3. Digital semantics 拇指 ‘thumb’

- Strikingly, the compound of **MOTHER + FINGER** is the typical way to code ‘thumb’ in Matisoff’s survey, including Mandarin *mǔzhǐ* 拇指 for which 拇 is likely a graphical variant
- shared across Sino-Tibetan (Standard Mandarin, Karenic, Burmese, Akha, Lahu), Tai languages (Standard Thai) and Mon-Khmer languages (Vietnamese)
- It extends to Malay and as far as the Indonesian archipelago (Austronesian)



Vietnamese

ngón

‘digit’

ngón tay **cái**

‘thumb’

(digit-hand-mother)

ngón chân **cái**

‘big toe’

(digit-foot-mother)

Indonesian/Malay

ibu jari

‘thumb’

(mother-finger)

ibu tangan

‘thumb’

(mother-hand)

ibu kaki

‘toe’

(mother-foot)

Thai

hũa-mêê-myy

‘thumb’

(head-mother-hand)

hũa-mêê-tiin

‘big toe’

(head-mother-foot)



Unique feature?

- Could this semantic change involving a lexicalization of ‘mother’ + ‘finger’ or ‘mother’ + ‘hand’ be considered a distinct feature of MESEA?
- It seems Asia is not the only place where this is found.
- Brown & Witkowski (1981) – study of 118 languages of worldwide distribution
- **11** use ‘**mother of hand/foot**’ for ‘**thumb**’ and/or ‘**big toe**’
- mainly in North and South America: Dakota, Choctaw, Quechua and Mayan languages such as Tzeltal
- Tzeltal *ak’ab* ‘your hand’ + *sme?* ‘its mother’
(possessive forms) ⇒ *sme?ak’ab* ‘your thumb’

身体部位隐喻

4. Semantic change at the morphosyntactic level: Psycho-collocations



- On the level of morphosyntax, we find another striking phenomenon all across East and Southeast Asia:
- This is a construction which expresses physical sensations and emotions
- It involves a special type of predicate

Psycho-collocations

There is a special construction in which **a body part term** is associated with a **stative verb** or **adjective**

- together they refer to the subject of the clause which represents the 'whole', typically a human, if not animate noun.
- Different body part terms, typically internal ones, are privileged as the **seat of emotions** in transfield metaphors.



LOCUS OF EMOTIONS IS A BODY PART

- Common ones are ‘heart’, ‘belly’, ‘liver’ and ‘entrails’ (guts, intestines), sometimes ‘gall bladder’
- cf. Matisoff on Tibeto-Burman (1978, 1986, 2004), Koptjevskaja-Tamm & Liljegren (2017), Ponsonnet (2022) on Australian languages

liver Indonesian & Malay, Hmong,

heart Mandarin, Thai, Mon, Khmer, Wa, Pwo Karen,

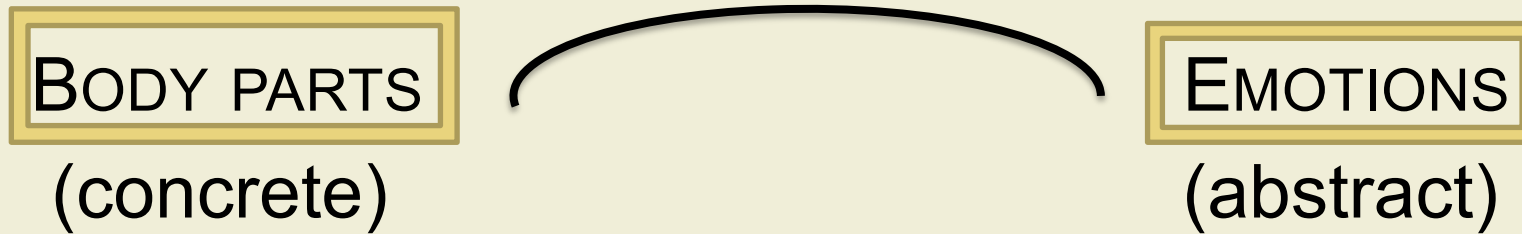
intestines Vietnamese

mind Burmese (Vittrant 2019)



Syntax of emotions “感情”的句法

- Essentially, what we find is the combination of body part terms with an intransitive predicate undergoes semantic shift to create a new “syntax of emotions” :
- The mechanism ‘powering’ the semantic shift is of course metaphor
- It is **transfield metaphor** since we move from the domain of body parts to the different one of emotions



Syntax

- The subject of the sentence typically represents the WHOLE and the body part term, the PART which is seen as somehow 'responsible' for the emotion or sensation when combined with an adjective or intransitive verb in the predicate.
- It is widespread as an areal lexical and syntactic feature in East and Southeast Asia and there are two main word orders:

NP _{S[+animate]}

Noun _[Body part]

VP _[Intransitive]

or:

NP _{S[+animate]}

VP _[Intransitive]

Noun _[Body part]

Thai example

Phǒm_{Subj} [sâw cay mâak]_{Pred}
1SG [sad heart very]
'I'm very sad/I'm hurt.'

*[Cay phǒm] _{Subj} [saw mâak] _{Pred}
* heart 1SG sad very

* 'My heart is sad.' – not acceptable in Thai
(example from Clark 1996: 539)



Psycho-collocations

- Matisoff names these **psycho-collocations** (1986:7), as they play a role in forming metaphorical expressions for concepts such as the '**mind**' and '**courage**', as in Standard Chinese and Japanese.
- He restricts the use somewhat to nouns that refer to psychological states
- In fact, we should expand his definition to include body part terms as the **psycho-noun**, since they clearly have this same metaphorical use.



定义 *Definition: Matisoff (1986:7)*

“We define a **psycho-collocation** [...] as a polymorphemic expression referring as a whole to a mental process, quality, or state, one of whose constituents is a **psycho-noun**, i.e. a noun with explicit psychological reference (translatable by English words like). HEART, MIND, SPIRIT, SOUL, TEMPER, NATURE, DISPOSITION, MOOD.

The rest of the **psi-collocation** contains morphemes (usually action verbs or adjectives) that complete the meaning. This element we call the **psycho-mate**”.

- Vietnamese, to take one example, makes use of *lòng* ‘entrails’, ‘intestines’ as its favourite psycho-noun and not the term for ‘liver’.

Vietnamese metaphors for emotion

Psycho-mate

<i>vui</i>	'happy'
<i>thỏa</i>	'satisfied'
<i>sẵn</i>	'prepared'
<i>khó</i>	'difficult'
<i>đau</i>	'sick'
<i>bận</i>	'busy'
<i>hết</i>	'finished'
<i>đau</i>	'aching'
<i>thật</i>	'true'
<i>nóng</i>	'hot'

Psycho-noun 'intestines'

<i>lòng</i>	'pleased (to)'
<i>lòng</i>	'satisfied, content'
<i>lòng</i>	'ready, willing'
<i>lòng</i>	'feel troubled'
<i>lòng</i>	'broken-hearted'
<i>lòng</i>	'worried, preoccupied'
<i>lòng</i>	'devoted'
<i>lòng</i>	'be heartbroken'
<i>lòng</i>	'sincere'
<i>lòng</i>	'impatient'



White Hmong body part expressions with 'liver' (Laos, Northern Thailand)

kho siab

lonely liver 'lonely, homesick'

mob siab

be.sick liver 'be sick in the liver: hurt, sorry'

puv siab

be.full liver 'be full in the liver: be satisfied'

zoo siab

be.good liver 'be good in the heart: be happy'

chim siab

be. angry liver 'be angry'

nyuaj siab

be. difficult liver 'be worried'

(examples from Clark 1996: 536, 551)



Standard Mandarin

In Mandarin, several compound words expressing states are composed of **body part nouns** + **adjectives**:

- sometimes this expresses the actual physical state, such as 脸红 *liǎn hóng* ‘blushing’ and sometimes an associated emotion such as ‘embarrassed’.

说来惭愧，我这人一滴酒就脸红，从未沾过酒碗。

Shuō lái cánkuì, wǒ zhè rén yīdī jiǔ jiù liǎn hóng, cóng wèi zhānguò jiǔ wǎn.

‘I am ashamed to say that I blush at a drop of wine and have never touched a bowl.’

(数据来自CCL 资料库)



Crosslinguistic picture

- However, psycho-collocations are not only a feature of MESEA languages. They are found in other languages families and areas of the world, as we have observed.
- Widespread across Australian languages
- Kaytetye (Central Australia). (Ponsonnet 2022:9)

aleme

Itywere

belly

hungry

‘hungry, worried’



Crosslinguistic examples

Here are some more examples of core psychonouns:

heart English, Polish, Italian, Tunisian
Arabic, Swahili

intestines Polish

belly Kurdish (Nosrati 2022); Japanese;
Kuuk Thaayore (Pama-Nyungan),
Dalabon (Non Pama-Nyungan,
Australia)

Not unique to MESEA but certainly an important areal feature



Verbs of possession and existence

- What other candidates might be of assistance in establishing and verifying the status of the MESEA linguistic area?
- An important feature which is confirmed in my joint work with Prof. Shanshan Lü (Shanghai International Studies University) is the robust nature of the polysemy of verbs of possession and existence in MESEA.
- They have the same form in *all* the language families on the SEA mainland – not a sporadic phenomenon



5. Semantic change at the syntactic level:
**VERBS OF EXISTENCE, POSSESSION
AND LOCATION**



HAVE and EXIST syntax in Asia

- Chappell & Lü (2022) investigate the relationship between verbs of possession, location, existence and copulae in 116 Asian languages, particularly, the distribution and syncretism of the relevant verbs
- Four language families in sample
 1. SINO-TIBETAN
 2. KRA-DAI (TAI-KADAI)
 3. AUSTRASIATIC
 4. HMONG-MIEN (MIAO-YAO)
- <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling-2021-0219>



Findings of survey of 116 Asian languages

- We investigated the polysemy of verbal forms in four major construction types
- This allowed us to establish four main language patterns (in order of frequency)

- IV. $(V_{\text{LOC}}); (V_{\text{COP}}); (V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ (67/116) Sinitic, Kra-Dai,
Hmong-Mien, Austroasiatic (AA), Caijia
- III. $(V_{\text{LOC}} = V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}}); (V_{\text{COP}})$ (35/116) Tibeto-Burman, AA
- II. $(V_{\text{LOC}} = V_{\text{COP}}); (V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ (10/116) minor pattern, Sinitic
- I. $(V_{\text{LOC}} = V_{\text{COP}} = V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ (4/116) Bai languages only
- focus on the polysemy of $(V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ today

HAVE syntax

- In Asian languages, it is an invariant for HAVE and THERE.BE/EXIST to be identical in form in sample of 116 languages from the 4 different language families
- syntactically differentiated by transitive versus
- argue that HAVE verbs come from two main sources in Asia: either from **existential constructions** or from **verbs meaning 'catch', 'get', 'acquire'**

English examples of target constructions

(i) **Copular verb: X is a Y**

*Li Qingzhao **was** a grand poetess of the Song dynasty.*

(ii) **Locative verb: X is at a place Y.**

*This pagoda **is in** Bagan.*

(iii) **Existential verb: X exists / There is an X**

*Too many problems **exist** to ever solve it.*

***/There is** an ancient Buddhist monastery (up in the mountains).*

(iv) **Possessive verb: X has Y**

*Xiao Mei **has** many cousins ... and cats.*

Four main patterns of correlation for copular, locative, existential and possessive verbs

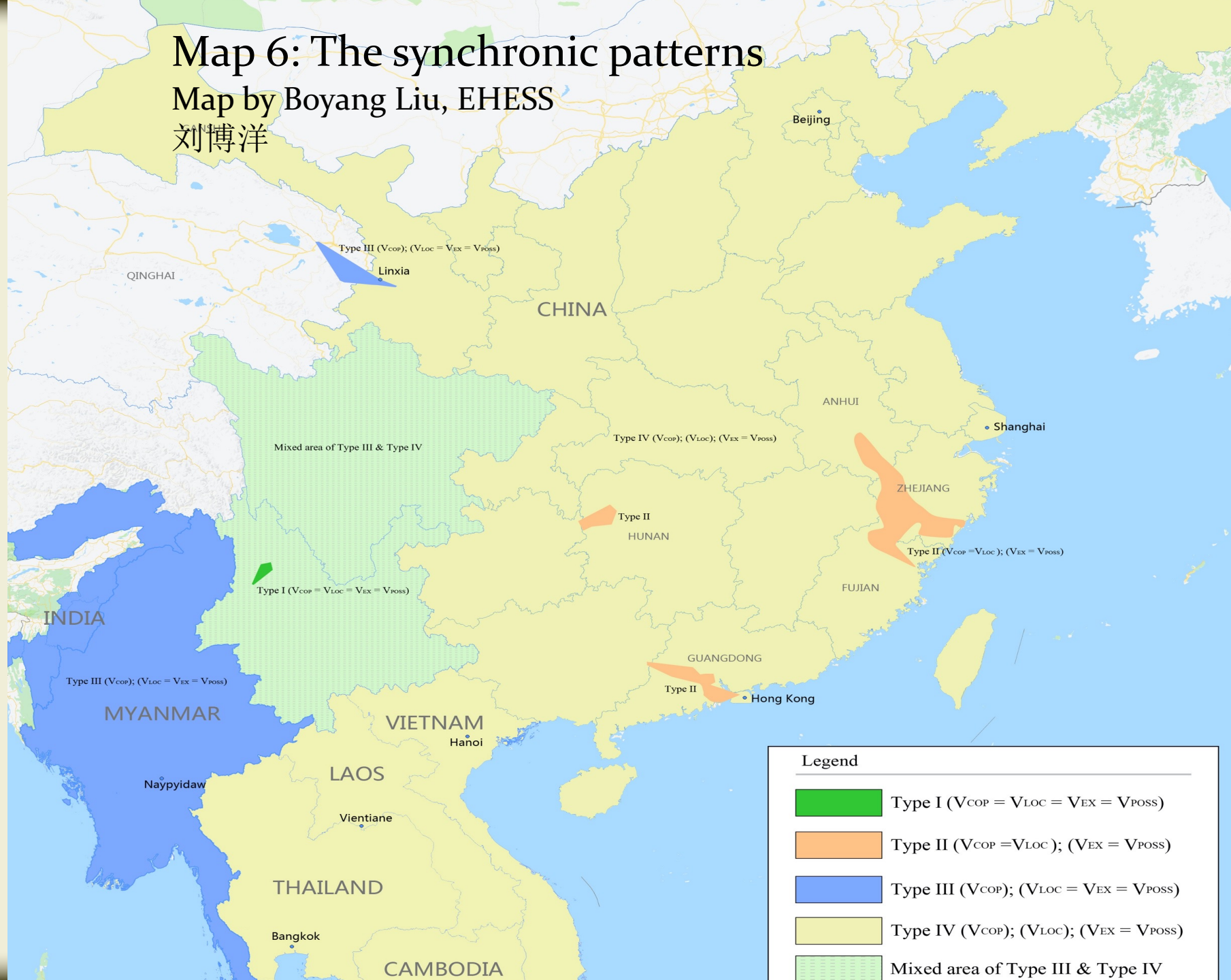
ONE FORM	N° of languages
<p>Type I:</p> $(V_{\text{COP}} = V_{\text{LOC}} = V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ <p>Several varieties of BAI (unclassified Sino-Tibetan)</p>	4
TWO FORMS	
<p>Type II:</p> $(V_{\text{COP}} = V_{\text{LOC}}); (V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ <p>SINITIC: Cantonese & Yue, many Hui and Wu dialects, Xianghua, Hmongic</p>	10
<p>Type III:</p> $(V_{\text{COP}}); (V_{\text{LOC}} = V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ <p>Predominant in TIBETO-BURMAN (Lolo-Burmese Qiangic, Karenic, Jingpho, also Tujia); some Austroasiatic languages in close contact with Lolo-Burmese</p>	35
THREE FORMS	
<p>Type IV:</p> $(V_{\text{COP}}); (V_{\text{LOC}}); (V_{\text{EX}} = V_{\text{POSS}})$ <p>Widespread in SINITIC, CAIJIA, KRA-DAI, HMONG-MIEN, and AUSTROASIATIC</p>	67
TOTAL	116







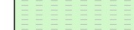
Map 6: The synchronic patterns

Map by Boyang Liu, EHESS

刘博洋



Legend

-  Type I ($V_{COP} = V_{LOC} = V_{EX} = V_{POSS}$)
-  Type II ($V_{COP} = V_{LOC}$); ($V_{EX} = V_{POSS}$)
-  Type III (V_{COP}); ($V_{LOC} = V_{EX} = V_{POSS}$)
-  Type IV (V_{COP}); (V_{LOC}); ($V_{EX} = V_{POSS}$)
-  Mixed area of Type III & Type IV

Existence \Leftrightarrow possession

Highlighted forms below - responsible for the shared existential and possessive verb forms in Sinitic, Bai, Hmong-Mien, Kra-Dai and Austroasiatic) (**Types I, II, and IV**)

(***GRASP**) > **HAVE POSSESSIVE > EXISTENTIAL**

and mainly Tibeto-Burman (**Type III**) for:

(**POSTURAL/DWELL**) > LOCATIVE > **EXISTENTIAL > HAVE POSSESSIVE**

Violation of unidirectionality principle?

Two processes of grammaticalization

- No!
- We argue that there are two ***separate*** pathways which create the syncretism of intransitive existential verbs with transitive HAVE-possessive verbs
- attributable to different types of semantic change and syntactic reanalysis
- The two processes involved in creating this syncretism are

Impersonalization

&

HAVE-drift



5.1. The first process

Impersonalization: HAVE > EXIST

The first process that leads to the creation of EXIST verbs is ***Impersonalization*** which is well-attested for certain European languages, namely, the reanalysis from a possessive construction to an existential one, and in Khmer & Hmong:

French *avoir* 'have' with the aid of an expletive spatial clitic **y** 'there':

Il a un chien >

*Il **y** a un chien dans le jardin*

'He has a dog.' (*transitive verb*)

'There's a dog in the garden.'
(*intransitive verb*)

(examples from Creissels 2019)

Semantic change for HAVE-verbs

Impersonalization can be frequently traced back to an even earlier stage with a source for HAVE-verbs in dynamic action verbs such as 'take' or 'grasp'

*GRASP	>	HAVE	>	3SG.generic-HAVE	>	EXIST
Stage I	>	Stage II	>	Stage III	>	Stage IV
*Source	>	possessive verb	>	impersonalization	>	existential verb

White Hmong *muab* 'grasp with hand' versus *muaj* 'have' (+ morphological tone change)

White Hmong (Hmong-Mien), Northern Laos

Lexical **muab** ‘grasp with hand’

(i) Stage I: Verb ‘to grasp’

Niam,	koj	muab	ob	lub	nyuag	vab	los
Mother	2SG	take	two	CLF	little	tray	come

‘Mum, you bring two little trays...’ (Jarkey 2015:38)

(ii) Stage II: Possessive verb (+tone change)

kuv	muaj	ob	tug	me-nyuam
1SG	have	two	CLF	children

‘I have two children.’

(Jarkey 2015: 49)



White Hmong (Hmong-Mien), Northern Laos

(iii) **Stage III: Impersonal existential construction**
with **nws** '3SG' generic subject

nws	yeej	yuav-tsum	muaj	rog.
3SG	HAB	must	have/exist	war

'There must (always) be wars.'

(example from Jarkey 2015: 44)

Unspecified possessor as subject of HAVE verb

White Hmong – subjectless existential construction

(iv) Stage IV: existential construction – presentative

[nram	kwj-deg	nrad] _{LOC}	muaj	ib	tug	niag	maum-zaj-laug.
down	gully-water	down	have/exist	one	CLF	great	female-dragon-elder

‘Down in the gully down there, **there was** a great big old female dragon ...’
(Jarkey 2015: 44)

‘Grasp’ > Possessive: **X HAVE Y** (*trans.*) > ‘it’ have Y > **∅ – EXIST –Y** (*intrans.*)

(see Chappell & Creissels 2019 for further details)

Table 1: GRASP and TAKE as a source for HAVE in some Asian languages (Chappell & Lü 2022)

LANGUAGE	GRASP	HAVE	SOURCE
Songtao Xong	me ³⁵ 'grasp with hand'	me ³¹ 'have'	A. Luo (2015: 312)
Aizhai Xong	me ⁵³ 'grasp'	me ³¹ 'have'	J. Yu (2010: 511)
Fenghuang Xong	meb 'take'	mex 'have'	Sposato (2015)
Layiping Hmong	me ³⁵ 'take, grasp'	me ³¹ 'have'	F. Wang (1985: 182, 189)
Dananshan Hmong	mua ⁴³ 'take, grasp'	mua ³¹ 'have'	F. Wang (1985: 182, 189)
White Hmong	muab 'grasp with hand'	muaj 'have'	Jarkey (2015: 50)
Jingpho	lu ³¹ 'obtain'	lu ³¹ 'have'	L. Liu (1984)
Longxi Qiang	tsé 'catch, hold'	tsé 'have'	W. Zheng (2016)
Puxi Qiang	ŋa 'take'	ŋa 'have'	C. Huang (2004: 240)
Ong Be	lai ³ 'obtain'	lai ³ 'have'	M. Liang (1981)
Dong	li ³²³ 'acquire'	li ³²³ 'have'	Long & Zheng (1998: 164, 175, 239)
Khmer	ba:n 'get'	ba:n 'have'	Haiman (2011: 357)
Pacoh	boon 'acquire'	boon 'have'	Sidwell (2005: 99)
Katang	been 'acquire'	been 'have'	Enfield (2003: 186)
Katuic	pKatuic *bə:n 'have, get, be able'	Katu An Diem bɛ:n 'have', Kuy bu:n 'get, be able to'	Alves , Jenny & Sidwell (2020: 322-323)

5.2. Second process: HAVE-drift

**(POSTURAL VERB) > (DWELL) > LOCATIVE VERB >
EXISTENTIAL VERB > POSSESSIVE VERB**

HAVE-drift thus relates to a tendency for existential predicates to be reinterpreted as possessive ones (Stassen 2009:208-243).

- The second main grammaticalization chain is found largely in **Type III Tibeto-Burman languages** in our corpus



The second main grammaticalization chain:

EXIST > HAVE

- involves **HAVE-drift** via *transitivization* of an existential verb (cf. Stassen 2009:209).
- This semantic change is part of a larger scenario which can be traced back to a **LOCATIVE** verb and frequently to an earlier stage of **DWELL**, if not to an even earlier stage of a **POSTURAL** verb.
- **DWELL** proves to be a very common lexical source for **LOCATIVE** verbs in East and Southeast Asian languages.
- **64/116** locative verbs related to **DWELL** in our sample



Naxi (Na-Qiangic, Tibeto-Burman)

LEXICAL ɰi^{55} = 'lie'

$[\text{zue}^{21}]_S$ $[\text{tsud}^{33}=\text{k}\check{\text{v}}^{33}]_{\text{LOC}}$ $\text{th}e^{21}$ ɰi^{55} $\text{j}\check{\text{r}}^{33}$.
child bed=on DUR lie SENS
'The child is **lying/sleeping** in the bed.'

LOCATIVE ɰi^{33} = 'be in'

$[\eta\omega^{21}]_S$ $[\eta\check{\text{r}}^{33} \ \eta\text{g}\check{\text{r}}^{33} \ \text{n}\check{\text{v}}^{55}\text{me}^{33}=\text{l}\emptyset^{21}]_{\text{LOC}}$ $\text{th}e^{21}$ $\text{t}\check{\text{a}}^{55}$ ɰi^{33} .
2SG 1SG POSS heart=in DUR always be.in
'You've always **been in** my heart.'

(*Field notes* Shanshan Lü and Yuanjuan Mu, cited from Chappell & Lü 2022)

- Semantic shift of 'lie' > 'be.in' in same syntactic construction

Naxi (Na-Qiangic, Tibeto-Burman)

EXISTENTIAL ʒi^{33} = 'there be... inside'

$\text{ze}^{21}\text{kh}\emptyset^{33}\text{tʂ}\eta^{33}$ $\text{kh}\emptyset^{33}$ $\text{b}\gamma^{21}$ se^{21} , ηji^{21} $\text{m}\gamma^{33}$ ʒi^{33} .
well this CLF be.dry PFV water NEG there.be.in
'The well is dry and **there's** no water (inside).'

POSSESSIVE ʒi^{33} = 'have'

$[\text{ʒi}^{33}$ $\text{tʂ}\eta^{33}$ $\text{kv}^{55}]_s$ $\text{ci}\gamma^{55}$ ηgy^{33} , $\text{ti}^{55}\text{we}^{55}$ ηgy^{33}
person this CLF money have social.status have

$\text{se}^{21}\text{me}^{33}$, $[\text{pe}^{33}\text{s}\eta^{55}]_o$ ʒi^{33} $\text{m}\gamma^{55}\text{s}\eta^{33}$.
besides capacity have PRT

'He's not only rich and of high social standing, but **he has** the capacity as well.'

(*Fieldnotes*, S. Lü and Y. Mu, cited from Chappell & Lü 2022)

NOTE: ηgy^{33} 'have' is used with inanimate subjects

Two opposing semantic changes

- Hence two separate sets of semantic changes and syntactic reanalysis are behind the polysemy of HAVE and EXIST verbs in MESEA.
- (i) **Impersonalization**
- **GRASP > HAVE > EXIST** in Sinitic, Bai, Kra-Dai & Hmong-Mien
- (ii) **HAVE drift**
- **DWELL > LOCATIVE > EXIST > HAVE** in Tibeto-Burman

- The two pathways of semantic change which drive the syntactic reanalysis are
- robust across Mainland East and Southeast Asia
- They present a feature which although found elsewhere in the languages of the world,
- is invariant in our sample of 116 languages
- Therefore, it may be added to the list of distinguishing features for this Asian linguistic area



Semantic change prior to syntactic change

- Furthermore: our study of HAVE and EXIST polysemy in MESEA upholds the standpoint that the **syntactic reanalysis** and **grammaticalization** cannot take place
- unless a new semantic interpretation is available as the driving force.
- This involves a shift in meaning induced by speakers using the given expression in a new context (see Heine 2002)



6. CONCLUSION 结语



Summing up

- In examining just three cases of polysemy sharing, we observed that semantic changes such as
- ‘mother’ towards an augmentative marker,
- psycho-collocations involving metaphor and
- the widespread phenomenon of identical existential and possessive verbs
- are recurrent patterns of polysemy sharing in the MESEA area



Non-unique features

- Nonetheless, we also observed that these features may all be found in other languages elsewhere in the world
- How can we then establish MESEA as a linguistic area if none of the features are unique?



Claim

- Our claim is that a linguistic area can be best defined by overlapping sets of major semantic shifts that allow us to carve out the boundaries of an area
- That is, the ***configuration*** - or particular cluster - of semantic shifts is unique to the particular linguistic area, rather than the individual semantic shifts themselves in the form of a list.



Lists of features versus patterns of shared polysemy

- These **recurrent semantic shifts** in MESEAc can be used more effectively to model a linguistic area.
- This is because the patterns of shared polysemy and grammaticalization in Southeast Asia prove to be much more solid for defining a linguistic area than are the simple lists of features, usually proposed in the definition of a linguistic area.
- We hope to have convinced you!



谢谢各位！
Merci!

欢迎大家提出宝贵的意见和建议
Comments welcomed

