Areal semantics

Maria Koptjevskaja Tamm Stockholm University

tamm@ling.su.se

Contact-induced change

The prototypical contact-induced change, often called 'interference' (Thomason 2001), involves direct importation or transfer of linguistic features from one language to another, with various possible modifications of the imported feature during this process.

Stockholm University

Research on language contact

➢ The traditional niche for studies on language contact –historical linguistics, where contact is often invoked as a cause for linguistic change.

➢ The more recent niche – areal typology , 'the study of patterns in the areal distribution of typologically relevant features of languages' (Dahl 2001: 1956).

Stockholm University

Two main research angles in areal studies

➢ What are the possible outcomes of language contact in different parts of the language system?

➢ To what extent is it possible to use various kinds of linguistic phenomena for reconstructing contact?

Stockholm University
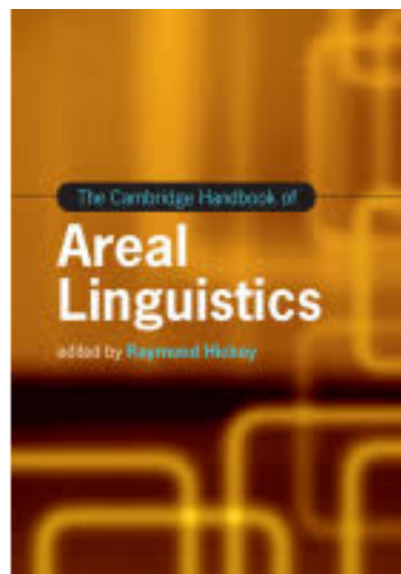
Areal semantics

Areal semantics – diffusion of semantic features across language boundaries in a geographical area.

Stockholm University

Contact semantics

Unfortunately, there is no single work (book, chapter, or article) which deals with contact semantics in its own right. 'Semantics' typically does not show up as an entry in the indexes of general textbooks dealing with contact issues. The topics, concepts and observations that have been gathered together here are typically scattered throughout books under such topics as 'the psychology of bilingualism', 'lexical borrowing', 'morphological transfer', 'social factors in second language learning', 'pidgins and creoles', and so on. This state of affairs reflects the fact that contact semantics has not been pursued as an area of study in its own right.

Ameka & Wilkins. 1996. Semantics. In: Goebl et al. (eds.): Kontaktlinguistik/Contact Linguistics/Linguistique de contact, V.1: 130-138. Berlin/New York: DeGruyter

Stockholm University

Areal lexical semantics

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria & Henrik Liljegren 2017, Lexical semantics and areal linguistics. In Hickey, R. (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Areal Linguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 204 – 236.

Stockholm University

Areal lexical semantics

Lexico-semantic patterns: from the convergence of individual lexemes, through the structuring of entire semantic domains to the organization of entire lexicons.

➤ What are the possible outcomes of language contact in the realm of the lexicon)?

➤ To what extent is it possible to use lexical phenomena for reconstructing contact?

Stockholm
University

Replication of matter vs. replication of patterns (Matras & Sakel 2007)

Contact-induced language change can lead to direct replication of morphemes and phonological shapes from a source language; we shall refer to this in the following as replication of linguistic *matter*, abbreviated *MAT*. Language contact can also lead to re-shaping of language-internal structures. In the latter process, the formal substance or matter is not imported but is taken from the inherited stock of forms of the recipient or replica language (i.e. the language that is undergoing change). Rather, it is the patterns of distribution, of grammatical and semantic meaning, and of formal-syntactic arrangement at various levels (discourse, clause, phrase, or word) that are modelled on an external source. We call this *pattern replication*, abbreviated *PAT*.

Replication of matter: Borrowed words

Cf. Eitan Grossman's course

Differences in borrowability: different parts of the lexicon differ in their propensity to be borrowed:

o depending on their lexical category
o depending on their semantic class
o depending on the contact situation

Pattern replication in the lexicon

❧ Lexico-semantic parallels

  ○ polysemy calquing / sharing

  ○ lexico-constructional calquing /sharing

❧ Shared formulaic expressions

❧ Area-specific lexicalizations and a shared or similar-looking internal organization of certain semantic domains

Stockholm
University

Polysemy calquing/sharing

"Semantic borrowing", "semantic loan", "semantic shifts", "loan synonyms

yaaš   verde   yaaš   yerde

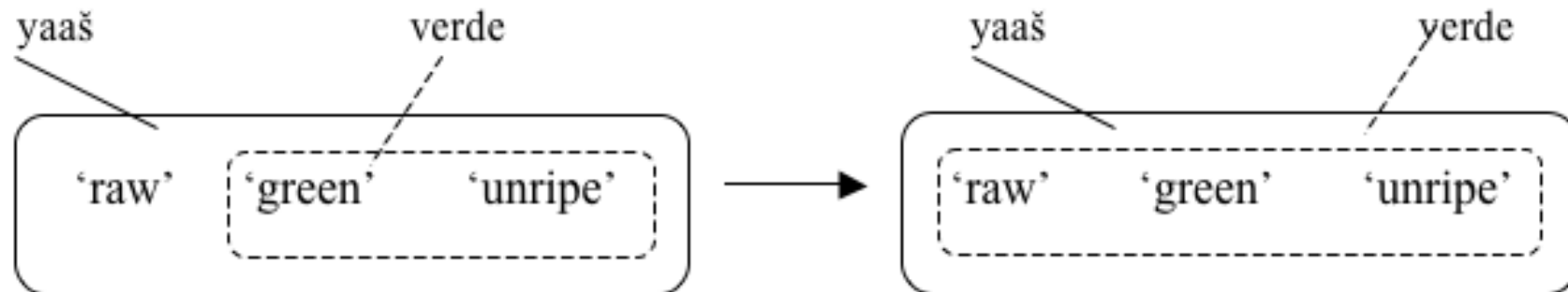'raw'   'green'   'unripe'   →   'raw'   'green'   'unripe'

Fig. 1: The process of polysemy copying – Spanish *verde* and Acatec *yaaš* in the speech of Acatec-Spanish bilinguals (after Smith-Stark 1994)

Stockholm University

Polysemy calquing/sharing

(1) 'draw water' = 'copy, imitate' in the languages of Ethiopia-Eritrea: *k'ädda* in Amharic (Afro-Asiatic, Semitic), *waraabe* in Oromo (Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic) and *duuk'k'ides* in Gamo (Afro-Asiatic, Omotic) (Hayward 1991, 1999)

(2) 'child' = 'fruit' in West-African languages: *díŋ* in Mandinka (Mande, West Mande) and in several other Mande languages, *doom* in Wolof (Niger-Congo, Atlantic), *ízè* in Songhay (Nilo-Saharan, Songai), *fidju* in Kabuverdianu (Portuguese-based creole), *obi* in Sɛlɛɛ (Niger-Congo, Kwa)

(3) 'eat' = 'drink' in many Papuan and Australian Aboriginal languages, e.g. *kə-* in Manambu (Ndu) or *a* in Kwoma (Kwoma-Nukuma) (Aikhenvald 2009), as well as in a number of other languages of the world (Vanhove (ed.) 2007).

Stockholm University

Lexico-constructional parallels

(4) Singlish vs. Mandarin (http://www.singlishdictionary.com/)
   a. *eat salt* vs. *chī* 'eat' + *yán* 'salt' – 'suffer a bitter or serious setback'
   b. *give face* vs. *gěi* 'give, grant' + *miàn* 'face; reputation, prestige' – 'show due respect for one's feelings'

The first ex. seems to be wrong, MKT

Mandarin

| *chī* 'eat' | *yán* 'salt' |

'suffer a bitter or serious setback'

Singlish

| *eat* 'eat' | *salt* 'salt' |

'suffer a bitter or serious setback'

Stockholm University

Lexico-constructional parallels

(6) 'sun' = 'eye of the day' (a shared compounding pattern) in Mainland Southeast Asia and parts of Oceania: *mata hari* in Malay/Indonesian (Austronesian, Malay-Polynesian), *wangere ma la'o* 'day POSS eye' in Sahu (Papuan, North Halmahera), *mata-ni-siga* 'eye/face-POSS-day/sun' in Fijian (Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian), *masonàndro* (*màso-nàndro*) in Malagasy (Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian) (Urban 2010, 2012, Blust 2011)

(7) 'people' = 'man' + 'woman' (a shared compounding pattern) in the languages of New Guinea: *man-meri* in Tok Pisin, *uwr-sa* in Abau (Sepik), *oná-aa* in East Kewa (Nuclear Trans New Guinea, West-Central East New Guinea Highlands), *nɨbi bɨ* in Kobon (Nuclear Trans New Guinea, Madang) (Wälchli 2015), *kadi-imet* in Waskia (Nuclear Trans New Guinea, Madang), or *tamol-pein* in Takia (Austronesian, Oceanic) (Ross 2007: 122)

(8) 'to obey someone' = 'to follow someone's mouth' (a shared collocational pattern) in the languages of Karkar island (Papua New Guinea): *awa-n ŋa-ri* 'mouth-3SG.POSS 1SG.S-follow' in Takia (Austronesian, Oceanic) vs. *kuriŋ karotu-sam* 'mouth:3SG.POSS follow-1SG.S' in Waskia (Nuclear Trans New Guinea, Madang) (Ross 2007: 122)

Lexico-constructional parallels

Tok Pisin

| man 'man' | meri 'woman' |

'people'

East Kewa

| oná 'man' | aa 'woman' |

'people'
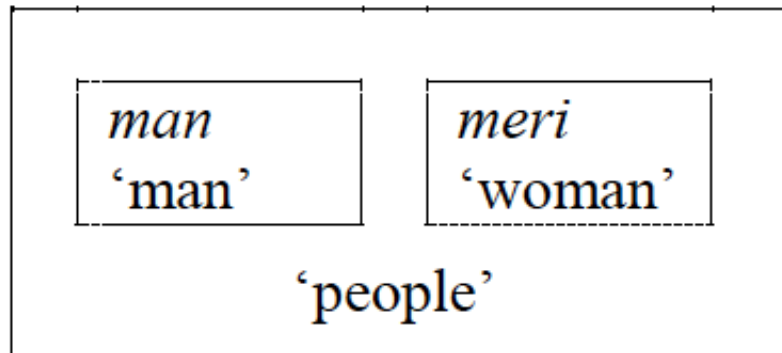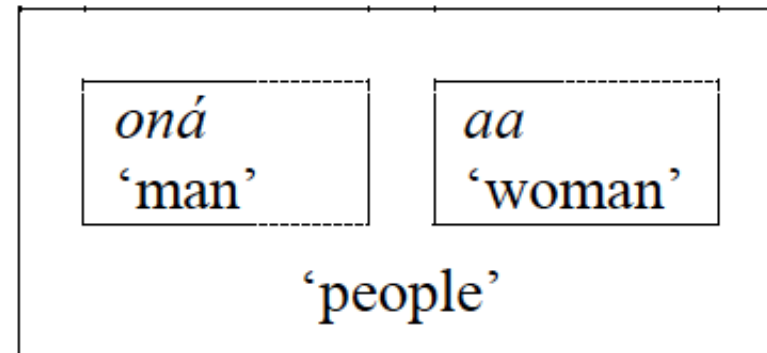
Lexico-constructional parallels – Tok Pisin *man-meri* and East Kewa *oná-aa*.

Semantic associations

 Lexico-semantic parallels

- polysemy calquing / sharing
- lexico-constructional calquing /sharing

No strict borderline, e.g.:

- 'fruit' = 'child'
- 'fruit' = 'child of the tree'
- 'fruit' = 'child' / 'child of the tree'

In all these cases there is a *semantic association* between 'child' and 'fruit'

Stockholm
University

Lexico-semantic parallels as areality indicators

Examples of lexico-semantic parallels abound in the literature on contact phenomena, but there is little discussion of their role in areal linguistics. Two notable exceptions:

ॐ Meso-America: Smith-Stark (1994) and Brown (2011)

ॐ Ethiopia-Erithrea: Hayward (1991, 1999)

Stockholm University

Lexico-semantic parallels as areality indicators

Evidence that these have a great potential as areality indicators:

☙ idiosyncratic

☙ multiple

☙ logically independent from each other

Stockholm University

Shared formulaic expressions

ↂ Conventionalized formulaic expressions used for particular pragmatic functions (e.g., greetings, curses, proverbs, etc.) – a special case among shared lexico-constructional patterns:

ↂ cf. the familiar farewell expressions *au revoir* (French), *auf Wiedersehen* (German), *på återseende* (Swedish), *do svidanija* (Russian), *näkemiin* (Finnish)

Stockholm University

Shared formulaic expressions: expressions of extreme gratitude in the languages of Volta Basin (Ameka 2011)

(a) Ewe (Niger-Congo, Kwa, Gbe; Ghana and Togo)

Né	me-kú	lá,	me-ga-fa	aví	o.
COND	1SG-die	TP	2SG:NEG-REP-shed	cry	NEG

'When I die, don't cry.'

(b) Akan (Niger-Congo, Kwa, Tano; Ghana)

Se	ma-wu-a,	n-su.
COND	1SG-die-TP	2SG:NEG-cry.

'When I die, don't cry.'

(c) Dagaare ((Niger-Congo, Gur, Oti-Volta; N Ghana, Burkina Faso)

Ka	maa	wa	kpi	tɔɔ	kono.
If	1SG	come	die	NEG:IMP	cry

'When I die, don't cry.'

Shared formulaic expressions as areality indicators

ઝ not compositional => chances for similar independent innovation low

ઝ learned as conversational routines and conventions => witness of shared socialization and repeated communication

ઝ often permeated with shared cultural scripts and values => bear testimony to the shared cultural history of the area

Stockholm
University

European phraseologisms: Piirainen (2013)

- 73 linguistic varieties spoken in Europe, 17 non-European languages and Esperanto.

- 380 widespread European phraseologisms

- *night and day* [69], *to be/fight like cat and dog* [68], *to be someone's right hand* [64], *to play with fire* [64], *to take someone under one's wings* [62], and *to tear/ pull one's hair out* [62]

- texts of ancient writers, the Bible, post-classical literature, proverbial units of medieval and reformation times, and fables, tales and legends.

Area-specific lexicalisations

❧ Concepts that are lexicalized across languages in a particular area, but strike outsiders as very specific and curious. Not necessarily testifying to language contact:

- ✓ shared physical environment (e.g., types of terrain, snow, seasons, types of skin etc.)

- ✓ shared material culture and/or cultural values and practices which may, but do not have to go hand in hand with language contact.

Stockholm University

Area-specific lexicalisations: South-East Asia

⟡ Jingpo (Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman) *my ìt ʔəwām~ my ìt* , Thai (Tai-Kadai, Kam-Tai) *krɛɛŋ-caj*, Burmese (Sino-Tibetan, Tibetan-Burman) *ʔâ-na*, Japanese (Japonic) *enryō suru*

'to be deterred by feelings of respect, embarrassment, fear of offending; be generally restrained in one's interpersonal behaviour by the knowledge that self-assertiveness is not socially approved' (Marlan 1979)

"reflecting a mind-set more typical of the [Southeast Asian] region than the more aggressive interpersonal ideal in Western competitive societies" (Matisoff 2004: 369)

Stockholm
University

Area-specific lexicalisations: Ethiopia-Erithrea

Similar lexicalizations within more "universal" semantic domains:

- *t'äfäff yalä* in Amharic, *kafaffa* in Oromo, *ts'izʔa* in Gamo 'dry enough for use' (clothes that have been washed for wearing, a road for travelling, a firewood to be used as fuel, etc.) (Hayward 1991, 1999)

- 'borrowing something to be returned in kind (like money)' vs. 'borrowing smth which is itself to be returned'
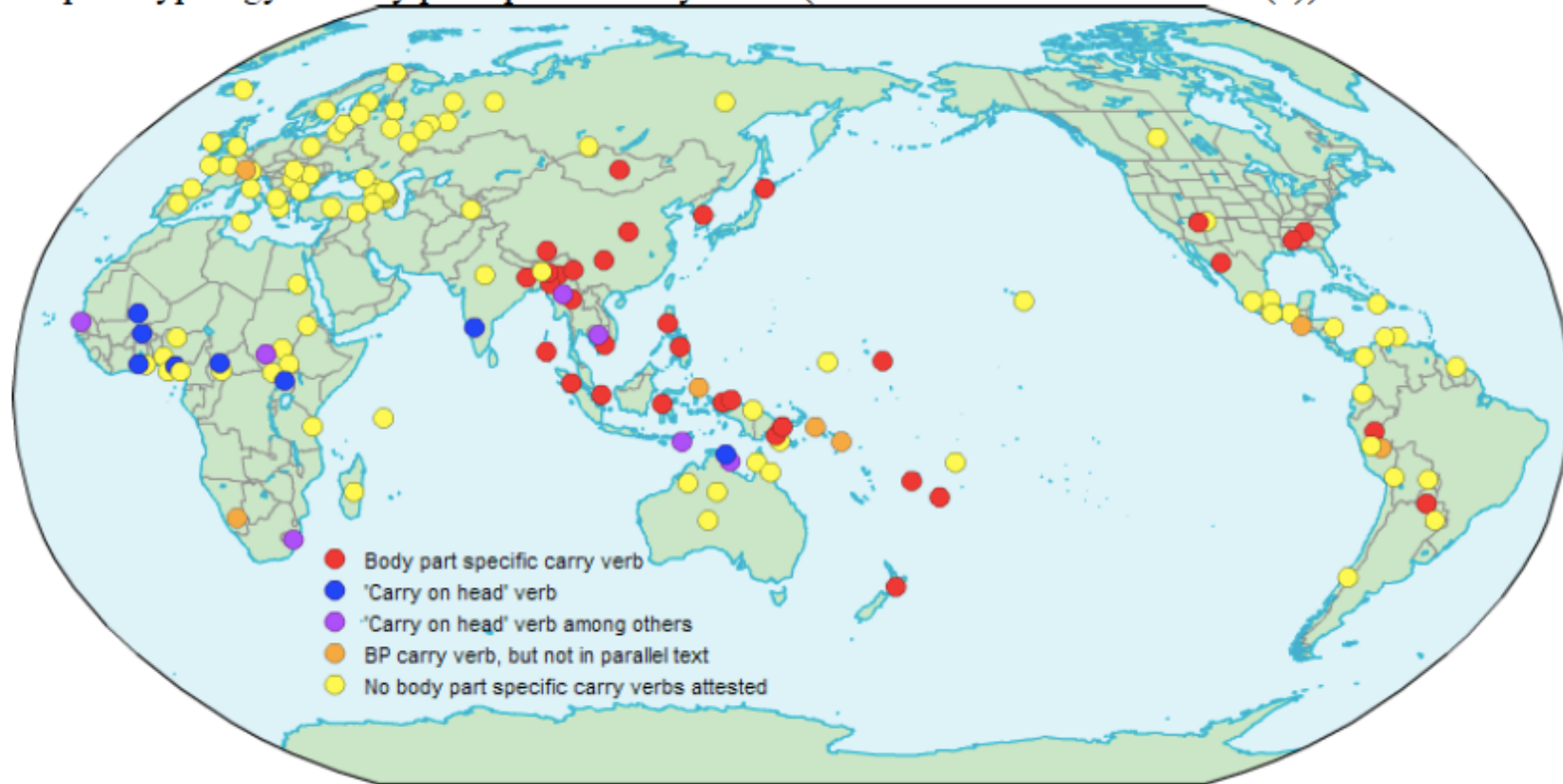
Stockholm University

Shared organization of a semantic domain: calendrical expressions in the Hindukush languages

Kamviri	Burushaski	Dameli	Balti	
nučúṭ		*učooṭ/čooṭ diyoo*	*dunma jaq*	'three days ago'
nutrí	*yáarbulto*	*itrii*	*karchaqla*	'the day before yesterday'
dus	*sabuúr*	*doos*	*gonde*	'yesterday'
strák gaaǰaar	*khúulto*	*mu(n)dya*	*diring*	'today'
daalkẽ́	*jímale*	*beraa*	*bela, haske*	'tomorrow'
aatrí	*hípulto*	*truida*	*snangla*	'the day after tomorrow'
aacǔ́ṭ	*máalto*	*čooṭ/čooṭa ki*	*rzesla*	'three days hence'

Stockholm University

Shared organisation of semantic domains in a "milder version"

❧ Matisoff (2004: 366), the Southeast Asian lexico-semantic areal features include a rich lexicon of verbs of manipulation within such domains as CARRYING or CUTTING.

Stockholm University

Map 4: Typology of body part specific carry verbs (such as used in domains like (1))

- Body part specific carry verb
- 'Carry on head' verb
- 'Carry on head' verb among others
- BP carry verb, but not in parallel text
- No body part specific carry verbs attested

Wälchli, Bernhard 2008. Motion events in parallel texts. A study in primary-data typology. A habilitation thesis, the University of Bern

Stockholm University

Causation and mechanisms

Inheritance, diffusion, shared environment or independent innovation?

ભ Easy cases: many languages belonging to different families within a more or less well-defined region share a property that is very rare in other parts of the world => language contact suggests itself as a particularly appealing explanation.

Causation and mechanisms

ɷ Most contact-induced change is not particularly spectacular, most isoglosses are probably neither unique to an area nor skewed in their distribution so much that they will 'betray' the area in a large-scale sample.

Stockholm University

Causation and mechanisms

❧ Isoglosses rooted in language contacts will often 'stand out' only within a particular area but will not necessarily be noticeable from a large-scale typological perspective => a combination of micro- and macrotypological methods

Stockholm University

Universal, genetic, areal, ex. 1: perception => cognition

- Sweetser (1990): universal link VISION => COGNITION [mainly based on IE languages]

- Evans & Wilkins (2001): areal/genetic link HEARING => COGNITION in 60 Australian aboriginal languages

- Vanhove (2008): HEARING => COGNITION is more widely spread than VISION => COGNITION [25 languages from different families]

Stockholm University

Ex. 2: Lexical motivation and analyzability

➤ Example: 'sun', 'moon', day'

➤ three morphologically simple lexemes

➤ association between 'sun' and 'moon':
  ✓ colexification
  ✓ 'moon' derived from 'sun

➤ association between 'sun' and 'day'
  ✓ colexification
  ✓ 'sun' derived from 'day'

Stockholm
University

Lexical motivation from a typological point of view

Urban, Matthias 2012. Analyzability and semantic associations in referring expressions. PhD diss., Leiden university:

o are there universal tendencies in the realization of certain meanings?

o which patterns are rare, only found in some languages?

o are there patterns that are peculiar to a certain area?

o are there patterns that are peculiar to a certain family?

Methodology

160 meanings, four domains:

- topological and nature-related terms (animal, Milky way, egg, flame, etc.)

- artifacts (airplane, mirror, knife, weapon, etc.)

- body parts and body fluids (beard, bladder, blood, etc.)

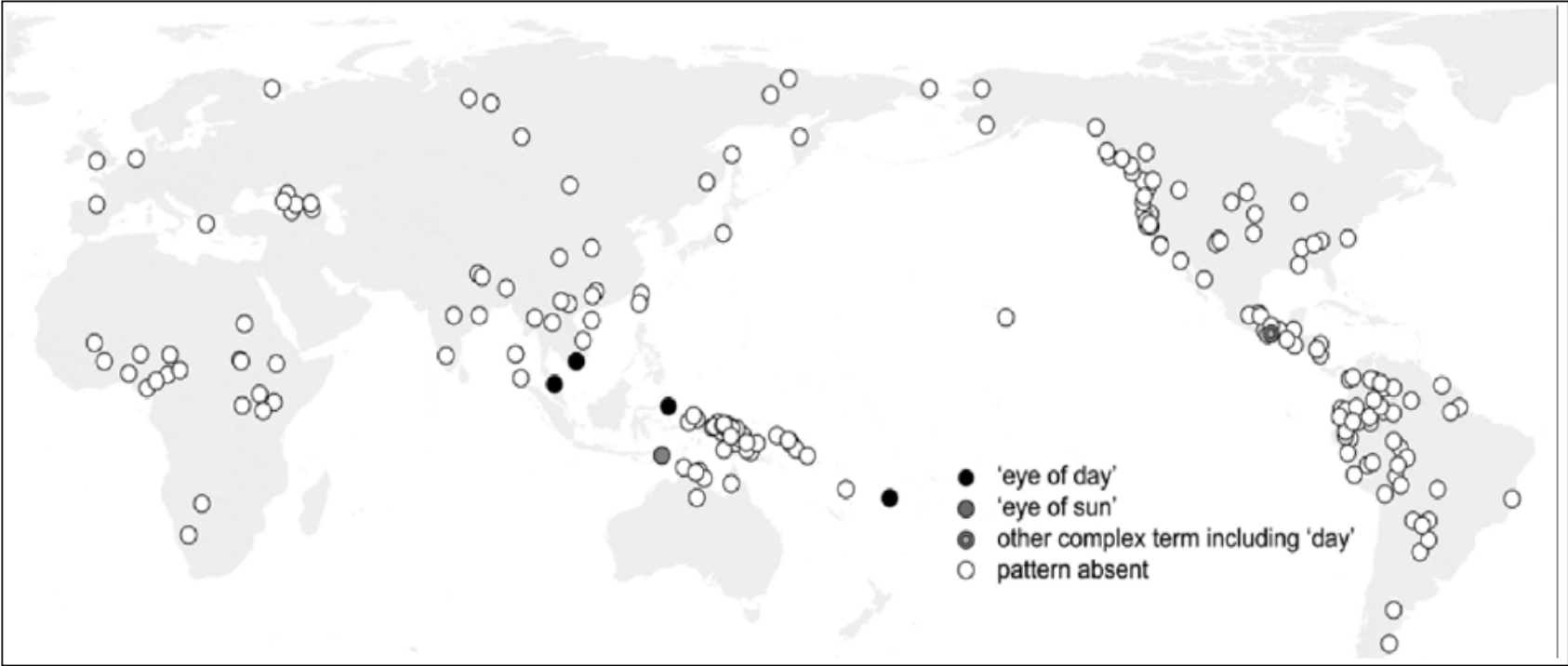- phases of the day and miscellanea (dawn, noon, widow, etc.)

≈ 100 languages
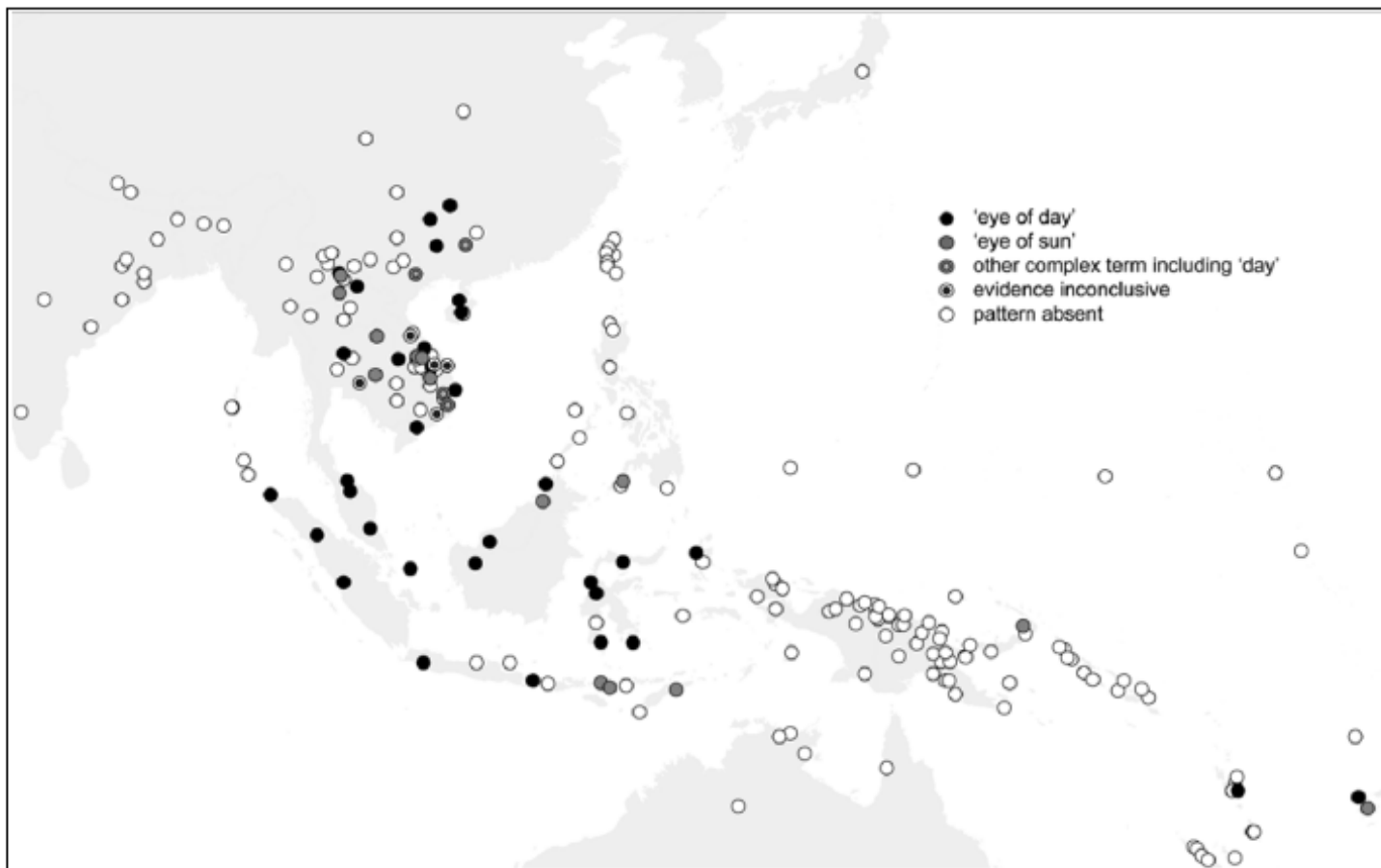
'animal' = 'pig-dog'

'Bone' = 'strong, strength'
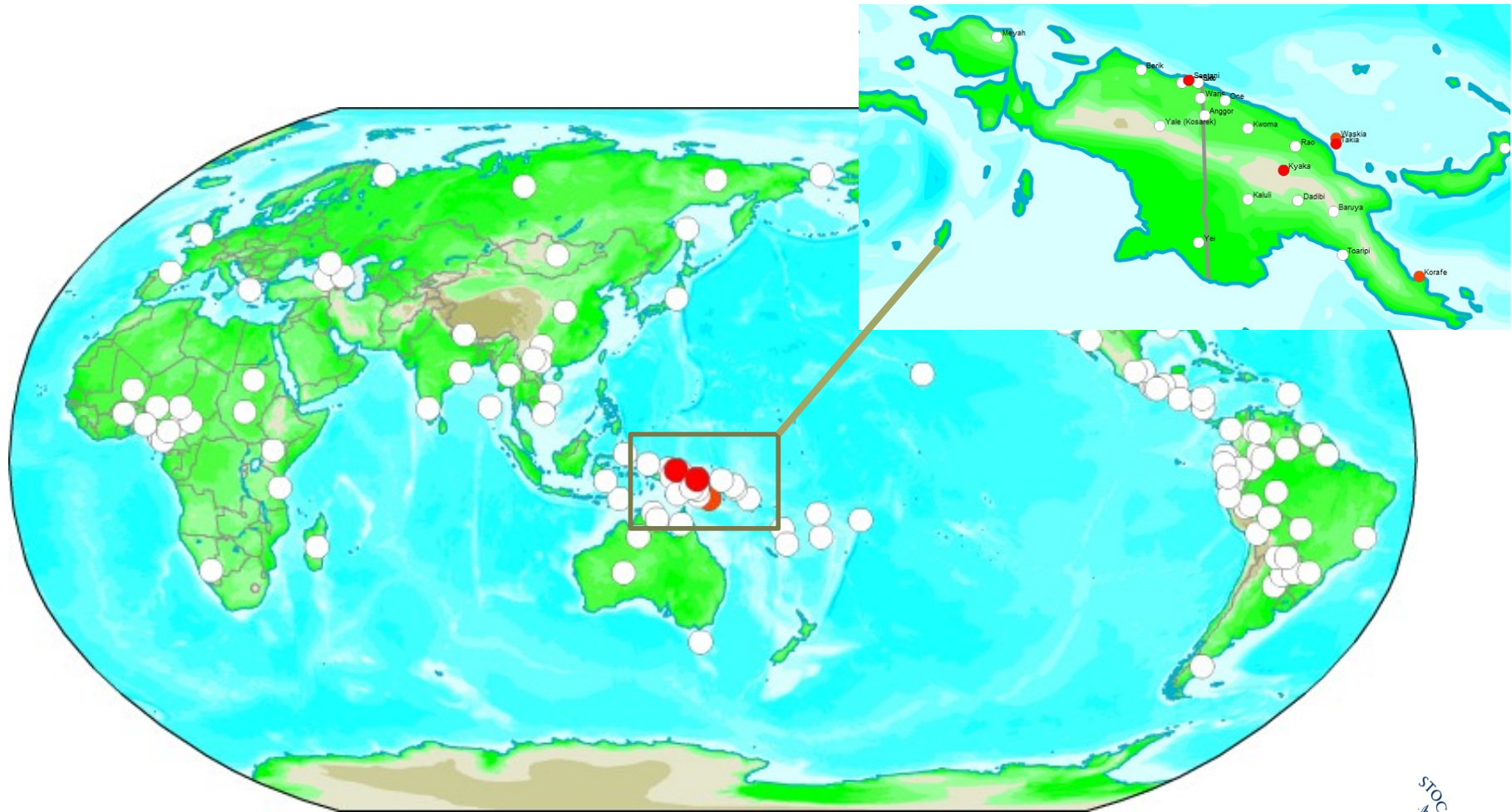
Universal, genetic, areal: 'sun' = 'eye of the day'

- Urban (2012): cross-linguistically very rare, but frequent in Austroasiatic, Tai-Kadai and Austronesian languages of Southeast Asia and Oceania
- Blust (2011): much more universal

Stockholm University

MAP 1. WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION OF 'EYE OF DAY' BASED ON A GENEALOGICALLY BALANCED SAMPLE OF 214 LANGUAGES

MAP 2. 'EYE OF DAY' IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND OCEANIA

Legend:
- ● 'eye of day'
- ● 'eye of sun'
- ◉ other complex term including 'day'
- ⊙ evidence inconclusive
- ○ pattern absent

Universal, genetic, areal: where-greetings (formulaic expressions)

Gil (2015): the

Mekong-Mamberamo

linguistic area

Vietnamese
Đi   đâu?
go   where
'Where are you going?'
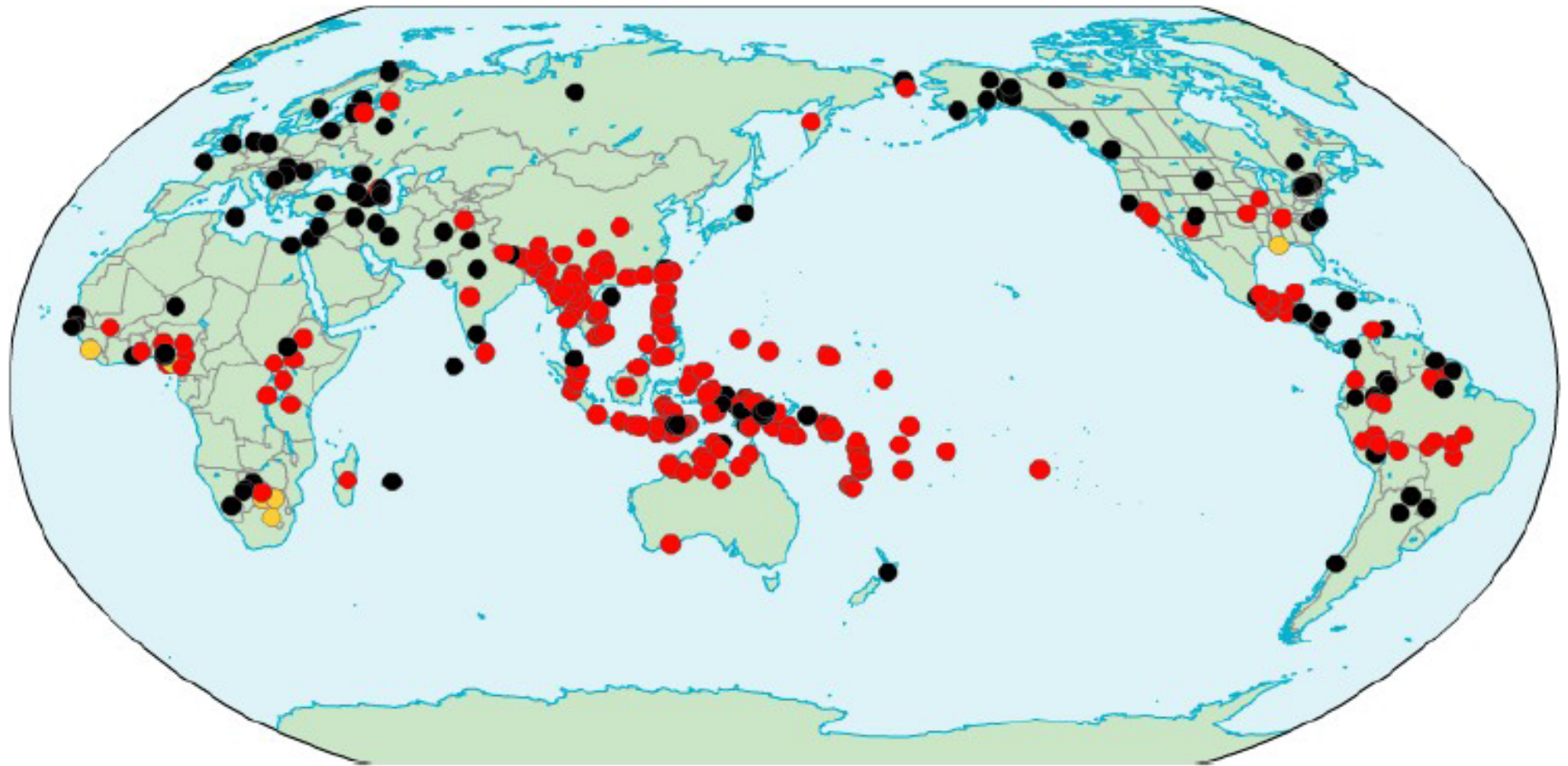
Jakarta Indonesian
Mau   ke   mana?
want   to   where
'Where are you going?'

Iha
topon-na   whe-angge
where-ALL   go-IRR
'Where are you going?'

Map 6: Conventionalized Greetings with 'Where', Worldwide

Red: directional conventionalized greeting with 'where'
Yellow: non-directional conventionalized greeting with 'where'
Grey: no conventionalized greeting with 'where'

Recent and current activities

✓ the project *Typology of semantic associations* (*Fédération typologie et universaux linguistiques* at the CNRS in Paris (http://www.typologie.cnrs.fr/spip.php?rubrique73&lang=fr, Vanhove 2008);

✓ the Catalogue of Semantic Shifts (Moscow, Inst. of Linguistics, numerous publications) (http://semshifts.iling-ran.ru/)

✓ CLICS: Database of Cross-Linguistic Colexifications (List et al., http://clics.lingpy.org/main.php) – an online database of colexifications in 221 languages.

Stockholm University

Colexification of 'head' and 'chief' crosslinguistically

- http://clics.lingpy.org/main.php

Found 17 colexifications for "head" and "chief, chieftain". ❓
Note that the number of attested colexifications may differ from the number of languages in which the colexifications were attested.

Nr.	Language	ISO	Family	Source	Form
1	Akhvakh (Southern)	akv	North Caucasian	IDS	мирари
2	Albanian, Tosk	als	Indo-European	IDS	ˈkrüe
3	Andi	ani	North Caucasian	IDS	мийар
4	Archi (Var1)	aqc	North Caucasian	IDS	оӏнт
5	Archi (Var2)	aqc	North Caucasian	IDS	оӏнт
6	Archi	aqc	North Caucasian	WOLD	oˤnt
7	Mapudungun	arn	Araucanian	IDS	loŋko
8	Avar (Andalal)	ava	North Caucasian	IDS	белэр
9	Avar (Batlukh)	ava	North Caucasian	IDS	беꞇлер
10	Catalan-Valencian-Balear	cat	Indo-European	IDS	сар
11	Dargwa (Muiri)	dar	North Caucasian	IDS	бикӏ
12	Hinukh	gin	North Caucasian	IDS	къиму
13	Hawaiian	haw	Austronesian	IDS	poʔo
14	Italian	ita	Indo-European	IDS	capo
15	Karata	kpt	North Caucasian	IDS	гьадоъа
16	Mari, Meadow	mhr	Uralic	IDS	ˈβuy
17	Takia	tbc	Austronesian	WOLD	grma

2011

holm
ersity

Recent and current activities

Juvonen, Päivi & Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2015),

"The lexical typology of semantic shifts. Berlin: de Gruyter / Mouton"

http://www.degruyter.com/view/product/433753?rskey=q2C2vP
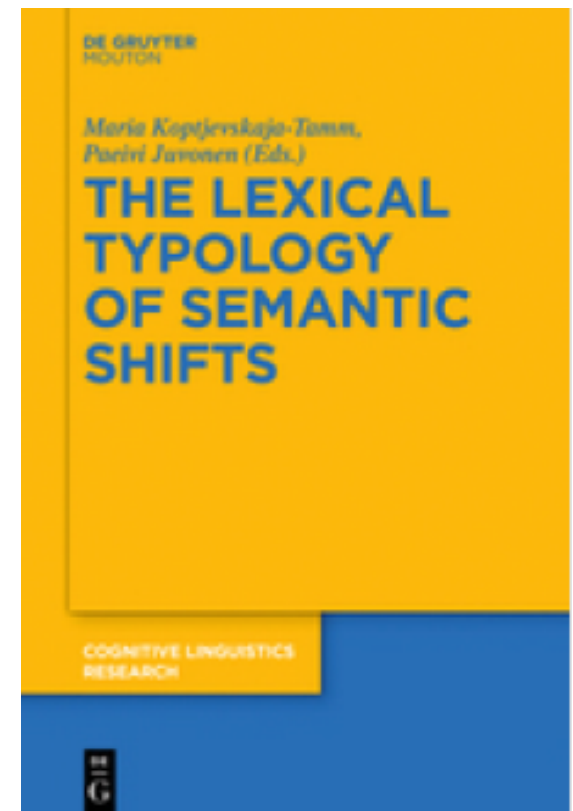
Colexification patterns as areality indicators

- Schapper, Antoinette, Lila San Roque and Rachel Hendery, "*Tree*, *firewood* and *fire* in the languages of Sahul".

- Sahul = Australia, New Guinea and surrounding islands, settled at least 45,000 years ago, one of the most diverse regions of the world biologically and linguistically.

Stockholm
University

Sahul languages

- Papuan languages – in and around the island of New Guinea, divided into the Trans-New Guinea (TNG) Phylum with ≥300 languages and around 60 small non-TNG families including a few language isolates.

- Australian languages – in Australia, divide into the Pama-Nyungan (PN) family with about 180 languages and 27 small non-PN families.

Stockholm University

Earlier observations

- **Papuan languages**, Laycock (1986: 4):

- The main conflation to look for here is that of 'tree' and 'fire' – via the intervening concept 'firewood'. It is found in Foe, and is reported to be common in [Trans-New Guinea Phylum] languages.

- **Australian languages**, Dixon (1980: 103):

- Some – but by no means all – Australian languages take the principle of having a single term to describe some natural object, and also something that can be made from it, to the extreme of having a single lexeme covering both 'tree, wood' and 'fire'.

Stockholm
University

Schapper, San Roque & Hendery

- A first in-depth survey of lexical expressions for 'tree', 'firewood' and 'fire' in 300 Australian and Papuan languages, focusing both on colexification and analysis of the relationships between simple and complex terms for these concepts.

Stockholm
University

Colexification

Table 5: Basic patterns of colexification of 'tree', 'firewood' and 'fire'

	Pattern name	Description
abc	full differentiation	three lexical expressions, one for 'tree', one for 'firewood', and one for 'fire'
abb	firewood/fire colexification	two lexical expressions, one for 'tree', and one for 'firewood' and 'fire'
aab	tree/firewood colexification	two lexical expressions, one for 'tree' and 'firewood', and one for 'fire'
aba	firewood differentiation	two lexical expressions, one for 'firewood', and one for 'tree' and 'fire'
aaa	full colexification	one lexical expression for 'tree', 'firewood' and 'fire'

Stockholm
University

Yimas [yee] {abc}

(5) a. *yan* 'tree'

      b. *ampra* 'firewood'

      c. *awt* 'fire'

Mehek [nux] {abb}

(6) a. *mu* 'tree'

      b. *kiri* 'firewood, fire'

Nasioi [nas] {aab}

(7) a. *koig* 'tree, firewood'

      b. *ntag* 'fire'

Mendi [age] {aba}

(8) a. *ri* 'tree, fire'

      b. *kap* 'firewood'

Guugu Yimithir [kky] {aaa}

(9) *yugu* 'tree, firewood, fire'

Stockholm University

Reclassifying the Sahul languages

- Daga: 'tree' and 'fire' colexified (*oma*), 'firewood' subcolexified (*oma oaewa*), because it shares the primary lexifier *oma*.

Table 18: Reclassification of languages on the basis of subcolexifications

		Papuan languages	Australian languages	Patterns of sub-colexification
abc	full differentiation	66	6	--
abb	firewood/fire colexification	80	68	aBb, abB
aab	tree/firewood colexification	33	0	aAb
aaa	full colexification	38	9	aAa, aAA, aaA

Stockholm University

Conclusions

➢ The most common (sub)colexification pattern amongst Sahul languages is to colexify 'firewood' and 'fire', but not 'tree'. This contradicts long-standing claims made in the Papuanist and Australianist literature of a widespread colexification of all three meanings.

➢ The full colexification pattern appears in a more restricted set of languages in eastern New Guinea and northern Australia, while 'firewood'/ 'fire' colexification appears across the Sahul area, though with a skewing towards TNG languages and towards southern New Guinea.

Stockholm
University

Conclusions

➢ The full colexification pattern and the 'firewood'/ 'fire' colexification patterns are rare worldwide. Full colexification (including the closely related 'tree'/ 'fire' colexification pattern) is almost entirely absent elsewhere, while 'firewood'/ 'fire' colexification showed some areality in South America alone. Cross-linguistically both patterns show a strong areal skewing towards Sahul.

Stockholm
University

Conclusions

➢ Also some of the Austronesian languages in the region show similar colexification patterns.

➢ In the Australian contact-language Kriol, *baya, faiya,* or *paiya < fire* can be used for 'fire', or 'firewood'. Both the word *wadi < wood* and the word *stik < stick* can be used for 'tree' or 'wood'.

➢ Sahul is a large diffusion area worthy of further investigation in linguistic studies by Papuanists and Australianists collectively.

Stockholm
University

Working one's way through a huge amount of data: Robert Östling

- Resources:
- World Atlas of Language Structures
- The Cross-linguistic database of Colexifications CLICS (http://clics.lingpy.org/main.php)
- The database of the Automated Similarity Judgment Programme ASJP (http://asjp.clld.org)
- Massive parallel corpora – 1142 translations of the New Testament in 1001 languages

Stockholm
University

Table 2: Agreement between algorithm and ASJP/WALS. Precision is the ratio between correctly identified colexifying languages, and all languages reported by the algorithm. Recall is the ratio between correctly identified colexifying languages and all colexifying languages in the given data.

Concepts	Identified	(Correctly)	Total	Precision	Recall
stone-mountain	24	(9)	12	38 %	75 %
tree-fire	15	(11)	14	73 %	79 %
hand-arm	51	(27)	92	53 %	29 %

Stockholm
University

Fig. 7: Languages (64) with TREE-FIRE colexification, according to ASJP (Wichmann et al. 2013). Shape/shade represents language family, according to the Glottolog classification (Hammarström et al. 2014). Only a handful of languages are outside Papua/northern Australia, scattered around the world.
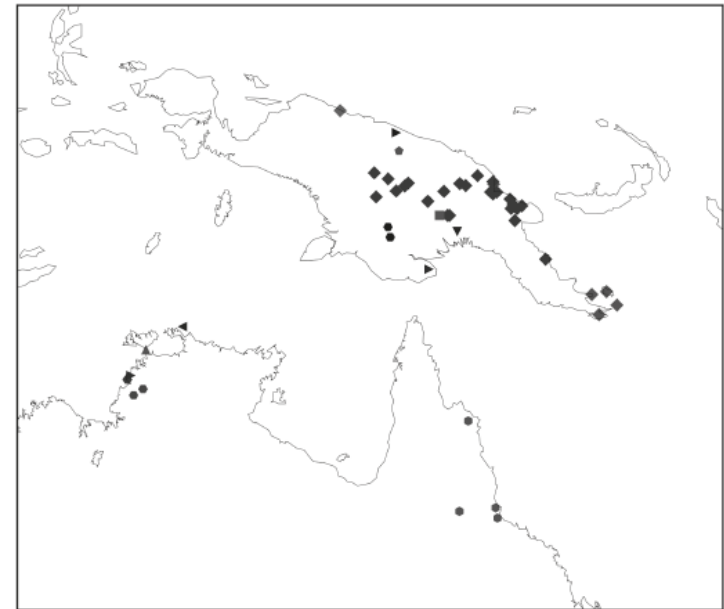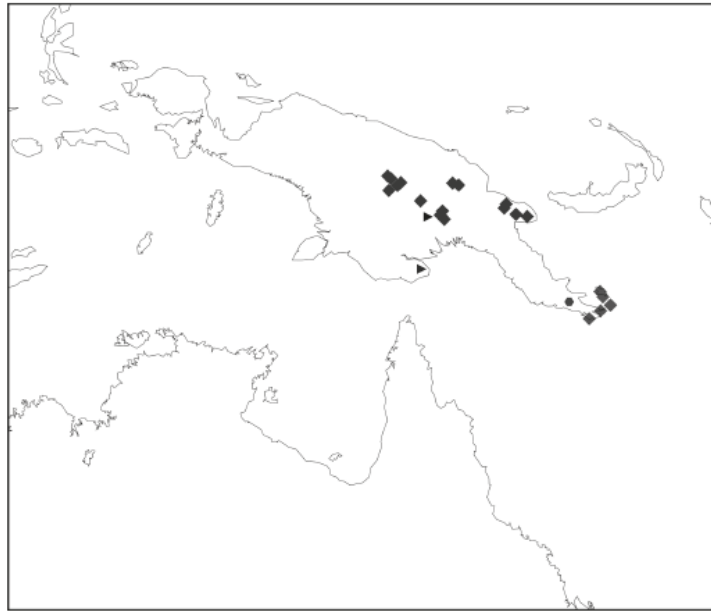
Fig. 6: Languages (23) with TREE-FIRE colexification, according to our algorithm. Shape/shade represents language family, according to the Glottolog classification (Hammarström et al. 2014). All languages are contained in Papua.

Stockholm
University

Östling's conclusions

- "A quick and dirty method which provides a preliminary answer to the question "where, if at all, does tree-fire colexification occur" in a few seconds, which may open up interesting and fruitful directions for more careful and time-consuming lexico-typological work."

Stockholm University

Conclusions

(Lexical) semantics in language contact and diffusion of lexico-semantic phenomena across language boundaries in a geographic area has a great potential for historical and areal linguistics, but is still awaiting systematic research.

This is partly related to the relatively limited cross-linguistic research on lexical issues in general, which may impede evaluation of particular lexico-semantic parallels as areal indicators and obstruct informed attempts to find reasonable explanations for their origin.

Conclusions

Lexical typology is currently on the rise. We are therefore looking forward towards more cross-linguistic research on the categorization of lexical semantic domains, polysemy patterns, semantic associations and lexico-constructional patterns, complemented by detailed case studies of these phenomena in languages in various contact situations. This knowledge is essential for gaining a better understanding of what happens with semantics in language contact.

Stockholm University

Critical issues

- How do we recognize contact induced similarities, rather than genetic, universal or accidental ones, and, in the same vein, how do we distinguish between significant and trivial similarities? Is this possible at all?

Critical issues

- How do we recognize contact induced similarities, rather than genetic, universal or accidental ones, and, in the same vein, how do we distinguish between significant and trivial similarities? Is this possible at all?

- What is the starting point for discovering such similarities (e.g., by "stumbling" upon them, by a systematic comparison, etc.)?

Stockholm University

Critical issues

- Are we interested in isolated linguistic phenomena or in a whole bunch of linguistic phenomena? For instance, in several linguistic phenomena that do not have to be related to each other, but happen to form isoglosses with a similar distribution. Or in internally related linguistic phenomena, such as entire semantic fields, rather than particular words.

Critical issues

- What is the specific contact situation behind the phenomena we are discussing and what is the possible connection between the linguistic and the extralinguistic aspects?

Thank you!