



Ideophonic Compounds in East and Southeast Asia

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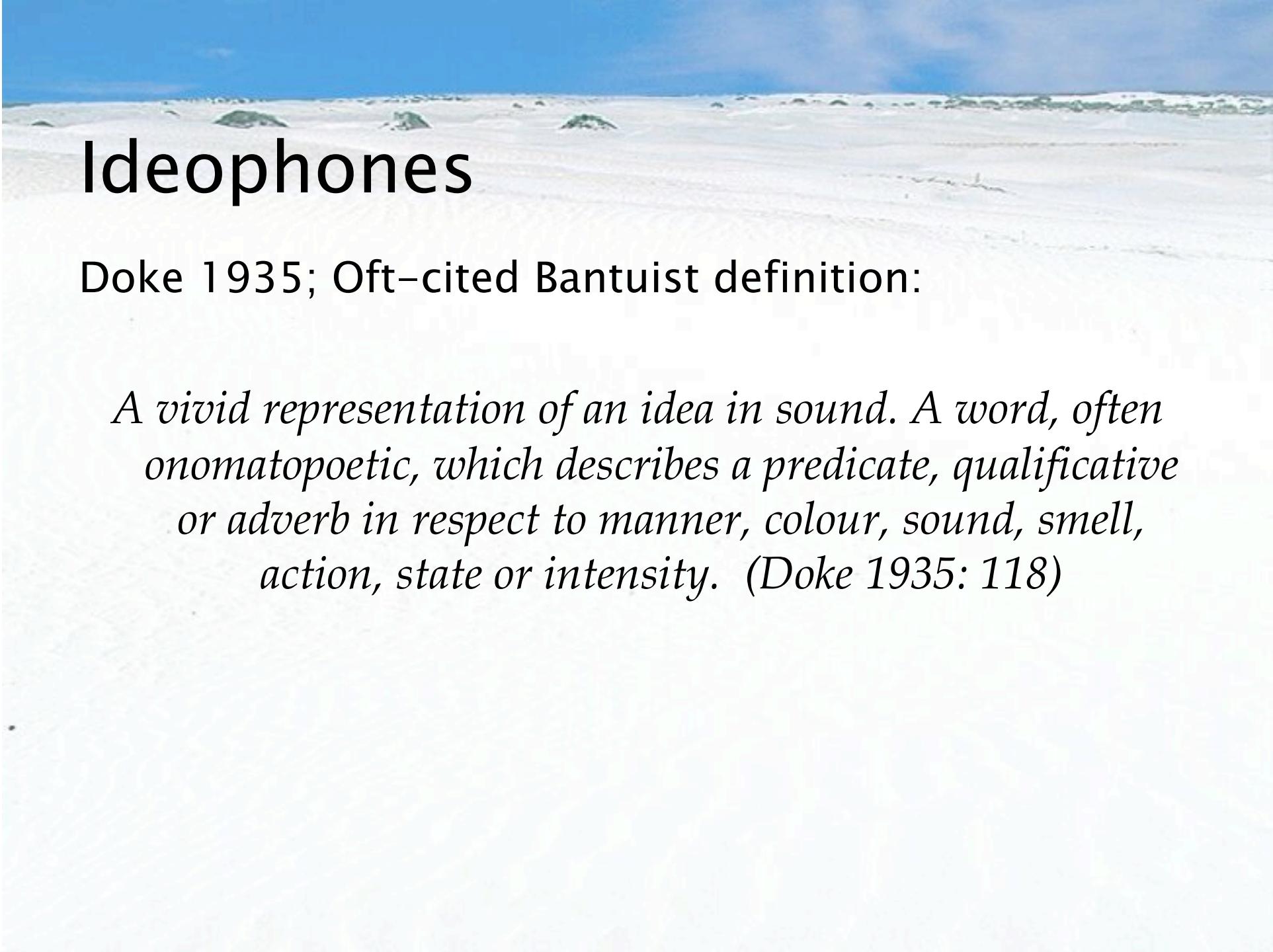


Ideophones a.k.a. expressives, mimetics.

a universal feature of human language. (Kilian-Hatz 2001: 163)

typologically widespread (Nuckolls 2004: 131)

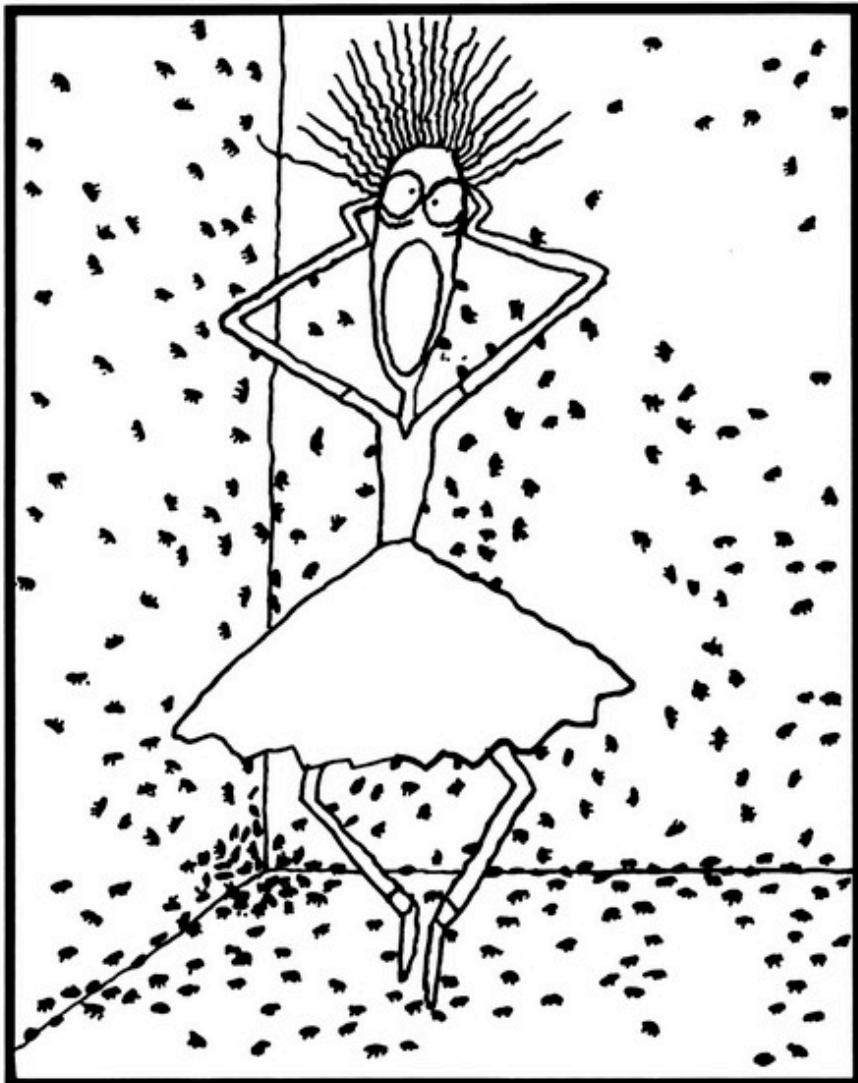
[m]any natural languages have a basic class of words which have been called 'ideophones' (Diffloth 1972: 440)



Ideophones

Doke 1935; Oft-cited Bantuist definition:

A vivid representation of an idea in sound. A word, often onomatopoetic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity. (Doke 1935: 118)



uja uja [A]

Describes many small things gathered together and moving, such as a swarm of insects or a crowd of people seen from a distance.

うじやうじや

小さな虫などがたくさん集まってうごめいているさま。

Japanese ideophone
uja uja (Gomi 1989:24)

ideophone.org/do-you-know-this-feeling



Ideophones

Dingemanse 2011; from an Africanist point of view:

marked words that depict sensory imagery

- marked phonologically;
- words (not paralinguistic utterances, not phonaesthemes);
- sensory imagery: depicting imagery, often very detailed, of various types of senses;
- DEPICT;

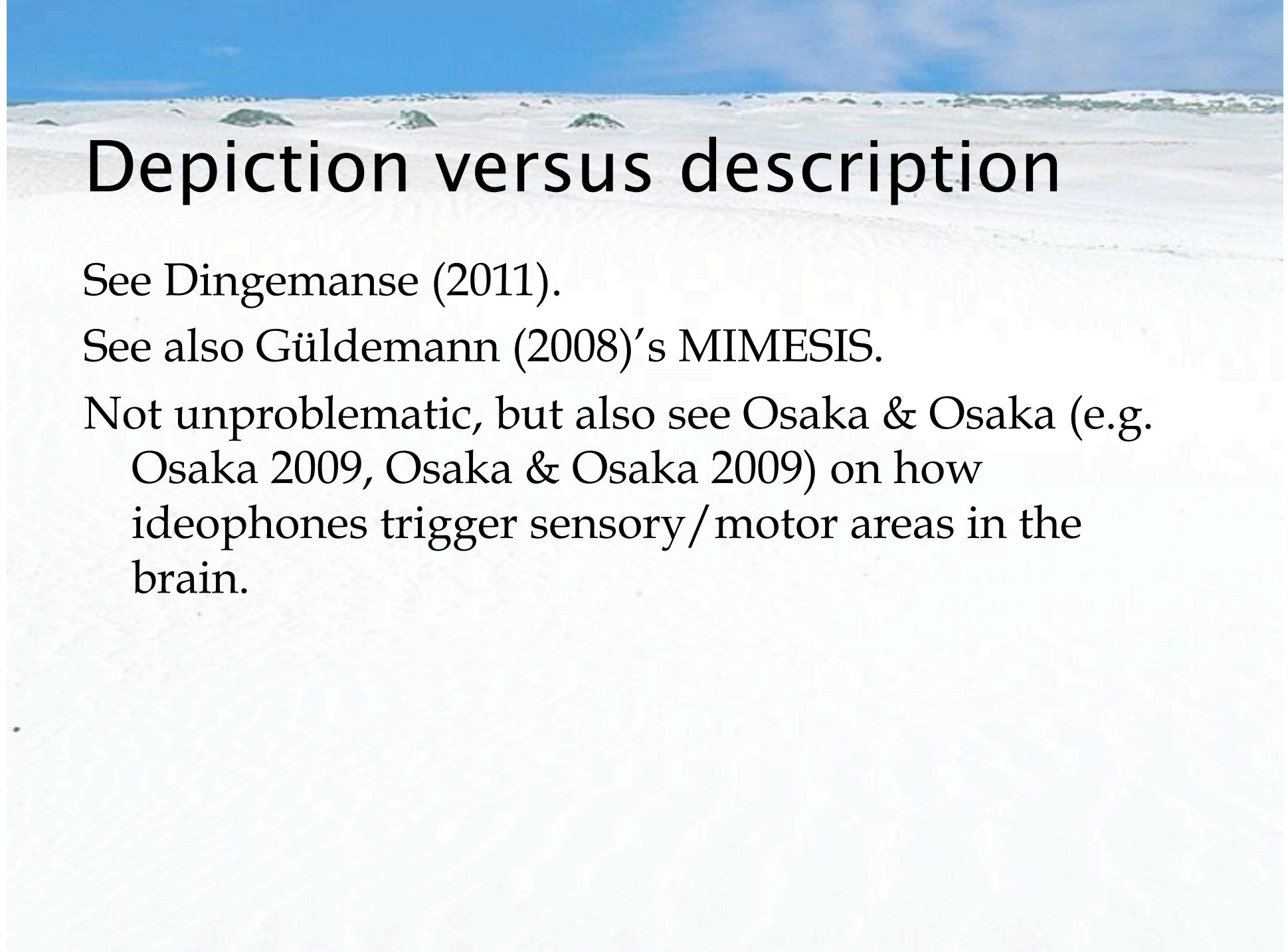
(phonosemantically defined class(es) of words; they often have their own morphosyntactic properties)

Clark & Gerrig (1990) fundamental methods of communicative acts:

- indication (e.g. );
- description (e.g. */'bɒbi mæk'ferən 'sez dəvnt 'wʌri bi 'hæpi/*)
- demonstration (\approx DEPICTION in Dingemanse 2011);



there is still some level of arbitrariness/
convention with depiction

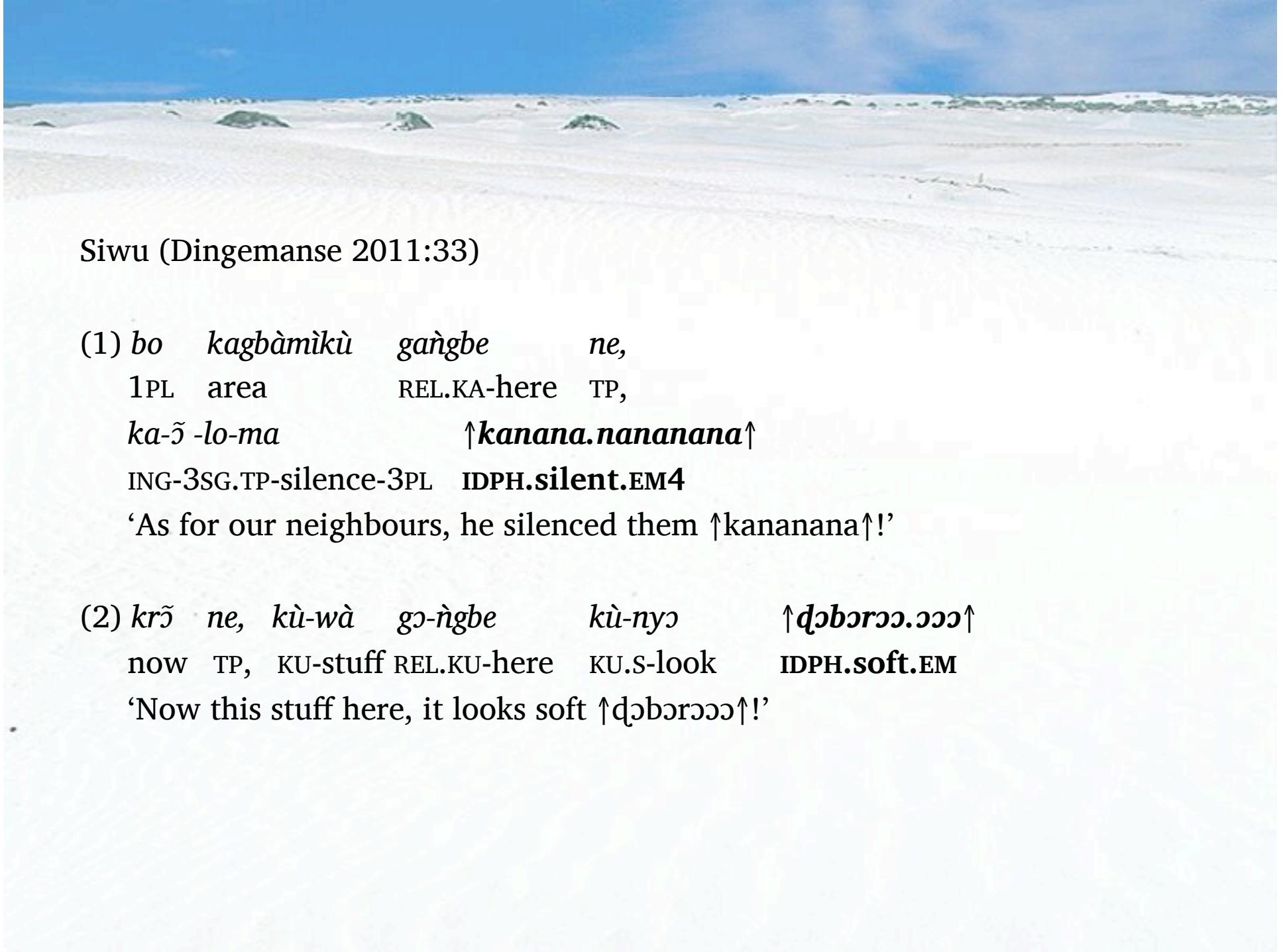


Depiction versus description

See Dingemanse (2011).

See also Güldemann (2008)'s MIMESIS.

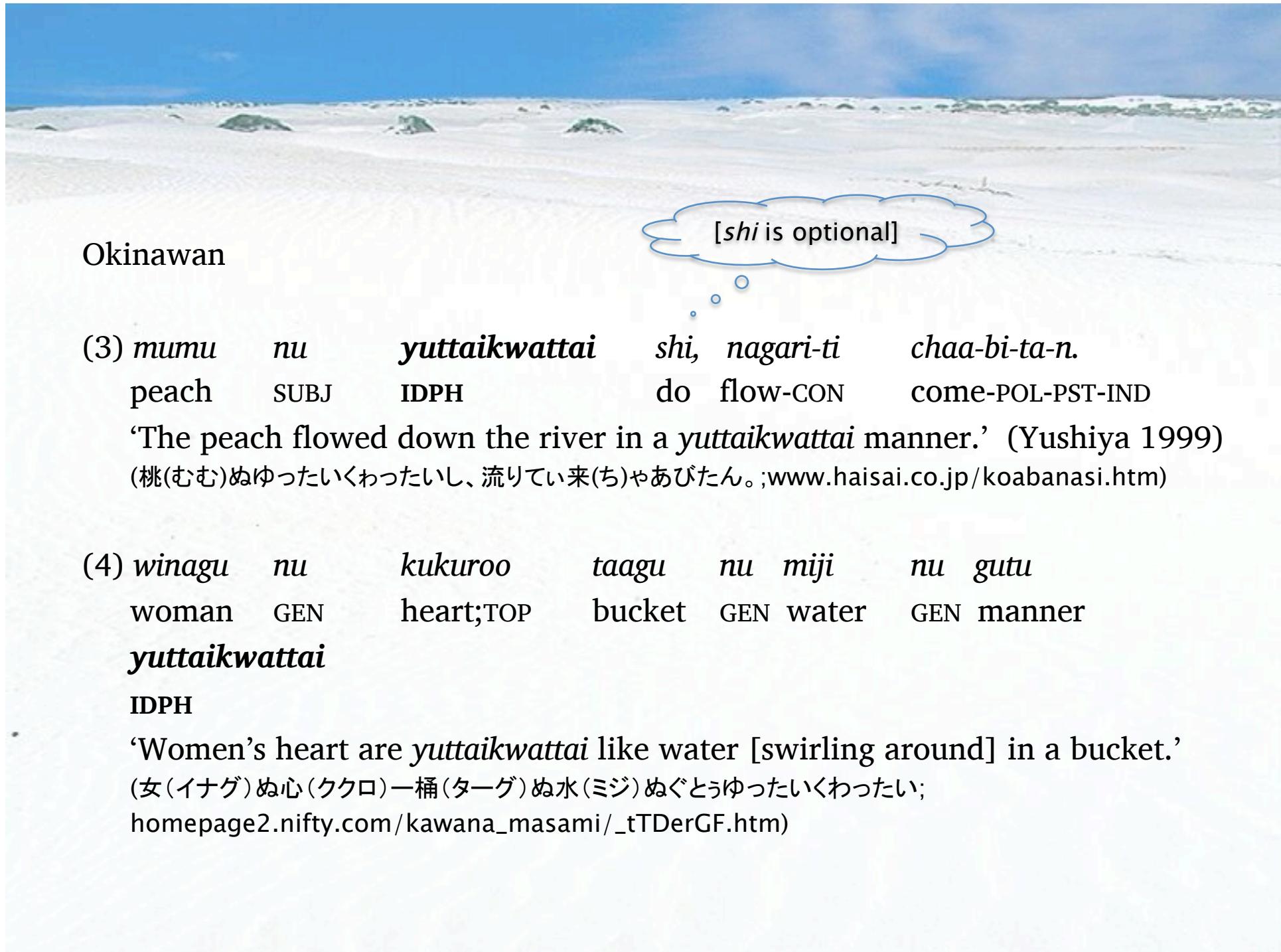
Not unproblematic, but also see Osaka & Osaka (e.g. Osaka 2009, Osaka & Osaka 2009) on how ideophones trigger sensory/motor areas in the brain.



Siwu (Dingemanse 2011:33)

- (1) *bo kagbàmìkù gaṅgbe ne,*
1PL area REL.KA-here TP,
ka-᷊ -lo-ma ↑*kanana.nananana*↑
ING-3SG.TP-silence-3PL IDPH.**silent.EM4**
'As for our neighbours, he silenced them ↑kananana↑!'

- (2) *kr̩ ne, kù-wà gɔ-ṅgbe kù-nyɔ* ↑*cc.ccɔɔɔɔɔɔ*↑
now TP, KU-stuff REL.KU-here KU.S-look IDPH.**soft.EM**
'Now this stuff here, it looks soft ↑ɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔ↑!'



Okinawan

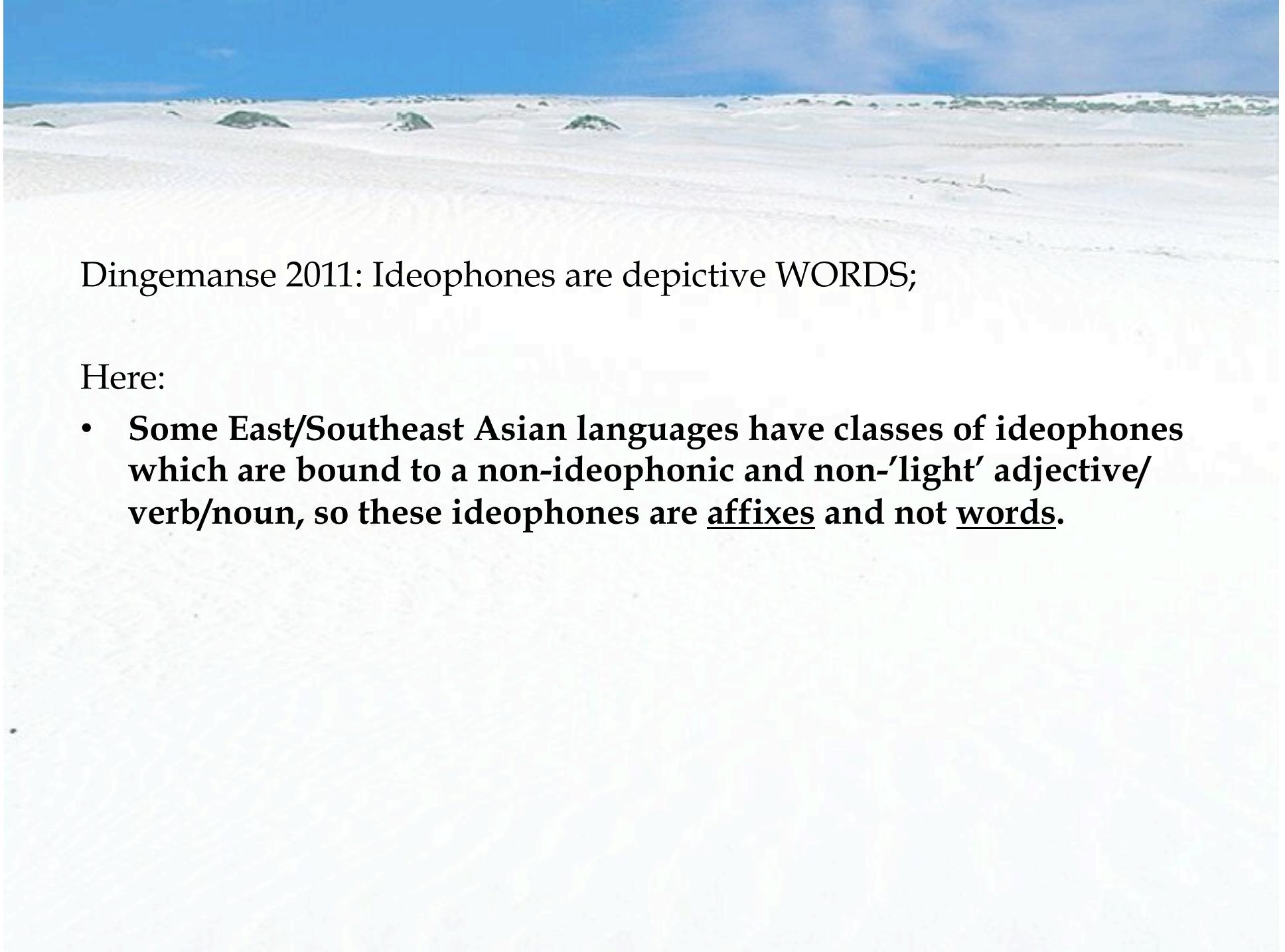
[*shi* is optional]

- (3) *mumu nu yuttaikwattai shi, nagari-ti chaa-bi-ta-n.*
peach SUBJ IDPH do flow-CON come-POL-PST-IND

‘The peach flowed down the river in a *yuttaikwattai* manner.’ (Yushiya 1999)
(桃(むむ)ぬゅったいくわったいし、流りてい来(ち)やあびたん。;www.haisai.co.jp/koabanas.htm)

- (4) *winagu nu kukuroo taagu nu miji nu gutu*
woman GEN heart;TOP bucket GEN water GEN manner
yuttaikwattai
IDPH

‘Women’s heart are *yuttaikwattai* like water [swirling around] in a bucket.’
(女(イナグ)ぬ心(ククロ)一桶(ターグ)ぬ水(ミジ)ぬぐとうゅったいくわったい;
homepage2.nifty.com/kawana_masami/_tTDeGF.htm)



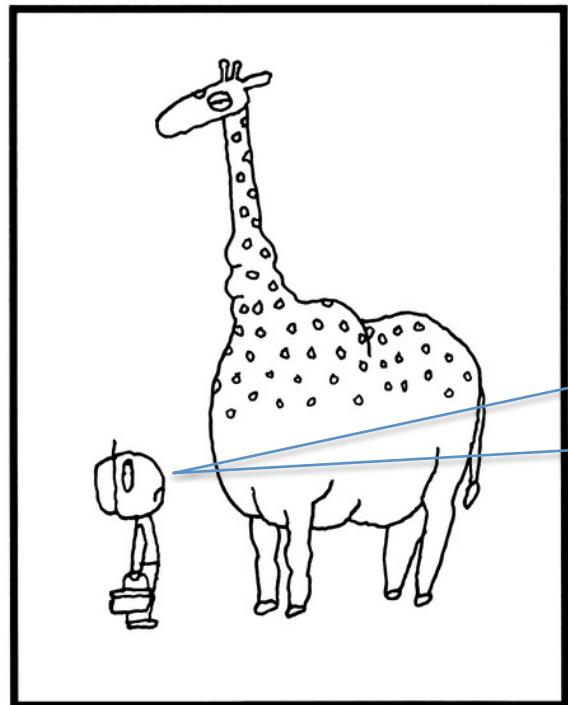
Dingemanse 2011: Ideophones are depictive WORDS;

Here:

- Some East/Southeast Asian languages have classes of ideophones which are bound to a non-ideophonic and non-'light' adjective/verb/noun, so these ideophones are affixes and not words.

Bound Ideophones in Sinitic Langs

Affixed to a ‘full’ lexical adjective/verb/noun (i.e. not just light predicate/dummy noun)



bukubuku ①[A][B][C] ②[A]

① Describes something outrageously fat. Flabby. Obese. ② Describes the sound or act of bubbles or foam rising or of something giving off bubbles while sinking. Also used to describe the sound of gargling.

ぶくぶく

①しまりなく太ったさま。②泡立つ音や様子。泡を出しながら沈んでいくさま、うかいをするさまにも用いる。

e.g. Cantonese
fei⁴ -tan⁴tan⁴
fat -IDPH

(**tan⁴tan⁴*)

Figure: Japanese *buku buku*
(Gomi 1989:149)
ideophone.org/do-you-know-this-feeling)



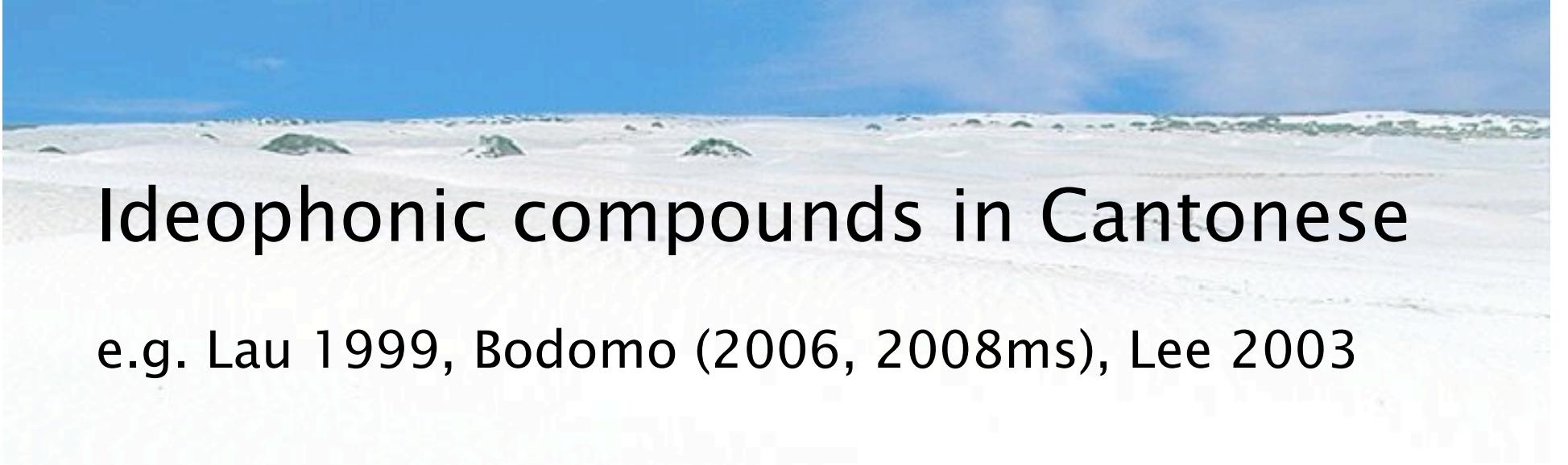
Ideophonic Compounds

Compounds with at least one ideophone and at least one ‘full’ (i.e. non-ideophonic and not ‘light’) lexical item.

e.g. Cantonese

wat⁶-lyut¹lyut¹
smooth-IDPH

wat⁶-saan⁴saan⁴
smooth-IDPH

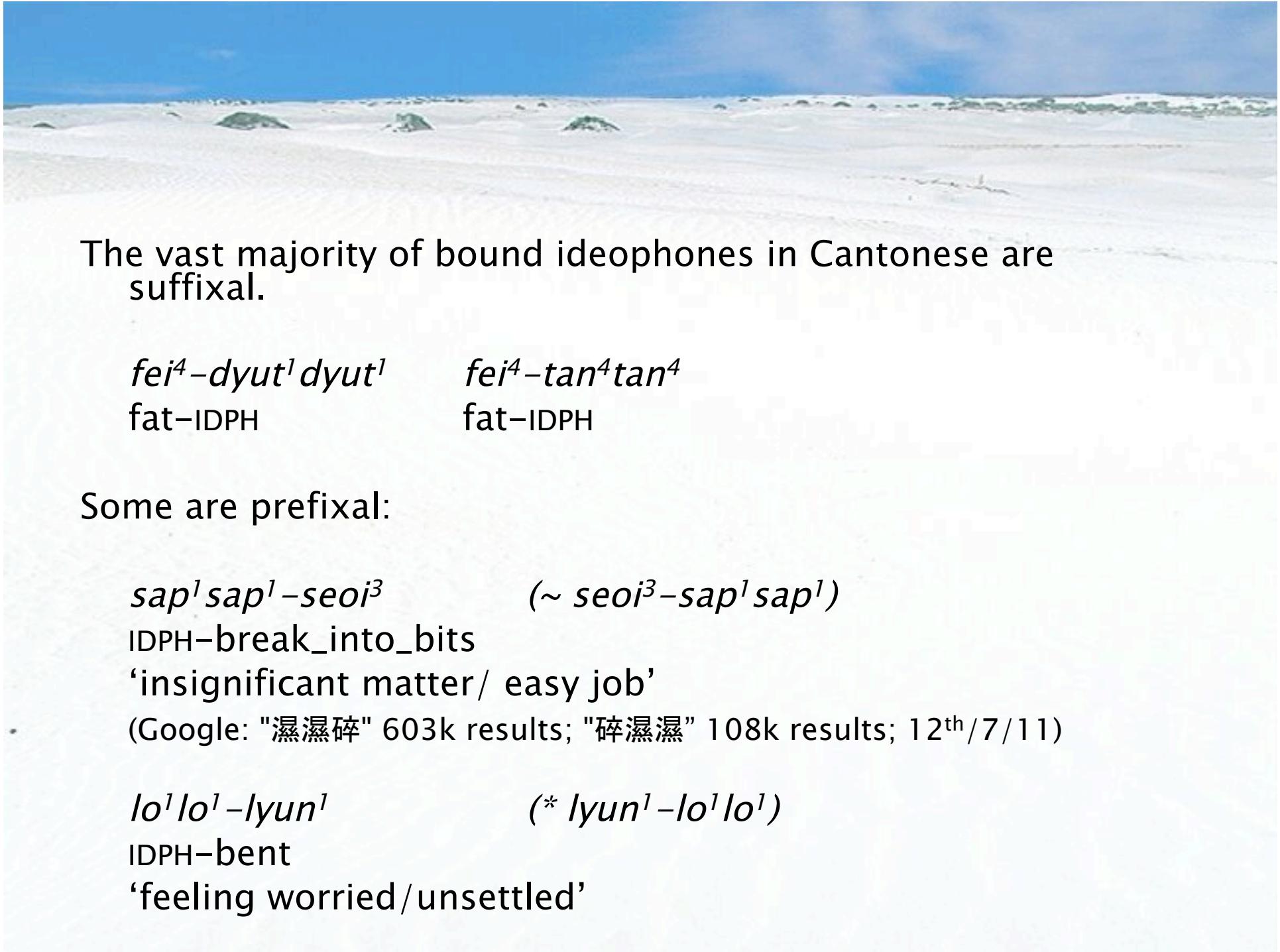


Ideophonic compounds in Cantonese

e.g. Lau 1999, Bodomo (2006, 2008ms), Lee 2003

Semantic domains:

- most sensory domains (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, temperature, balance (?), time);
- states of body and mind.



The vast majority of bound ideophones in Cantonese are suffixal.

Some are prefixal:

sap¹sap¹-seoⁱ³ (~ *seoⁱ³-sap¹sap¹*)
IDPH-break_into_bits
'insignificant matter/ easy job'
(Google: "濕濕碎" 603k results; "碎濕濕" 108k results; 12th/7/11)

lo¹lo¹-lyun¹ (* *lyun¹-lo¹lo¹*)
IDPH-bent
'feeling worried/unsettled'



Most involves complete reduplication, some partial:

gwat⁶-leoi⁴ceoi⁴
blunt-IDPH

zik⁶-bat⁴lat⁴
straight-IDPH

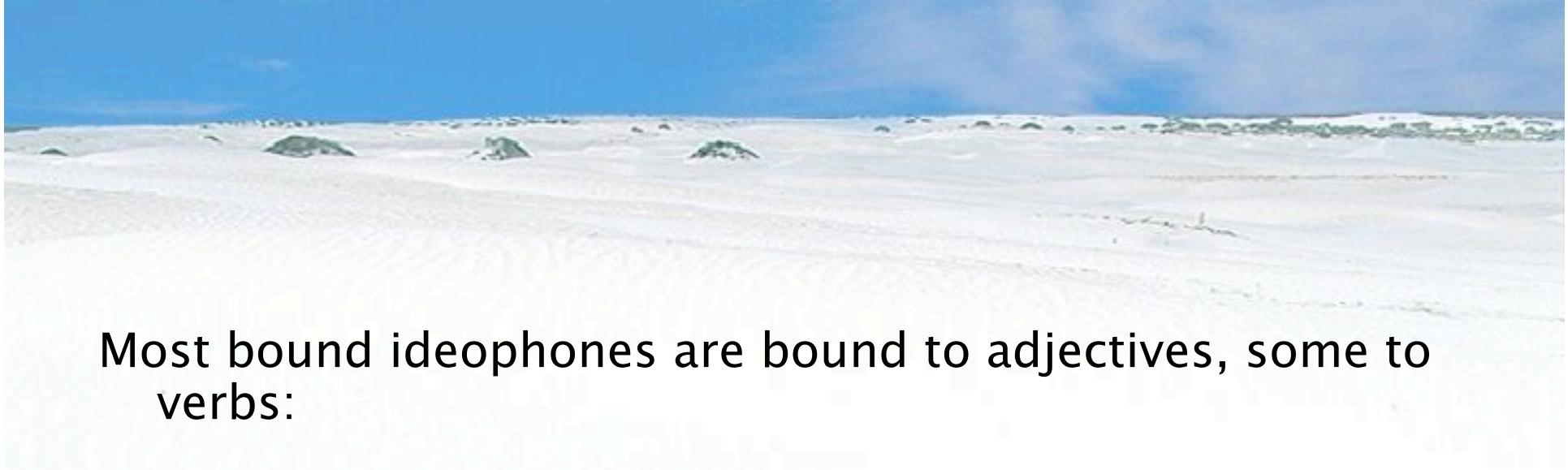
Very occasionally there are tetrasyllabic ideophonic compounds.
(All syllables are obligatory.)

daai⁶ tou⁵ -lam⁴dam¹

big belly-IDPH

‘to appear to be in an advanced stage of pregnancy’

haau⁴-si¹-dan³duk¹
coquettish-?-IDPH



Most bound ideophones are bound to adjectives, some to verbs:

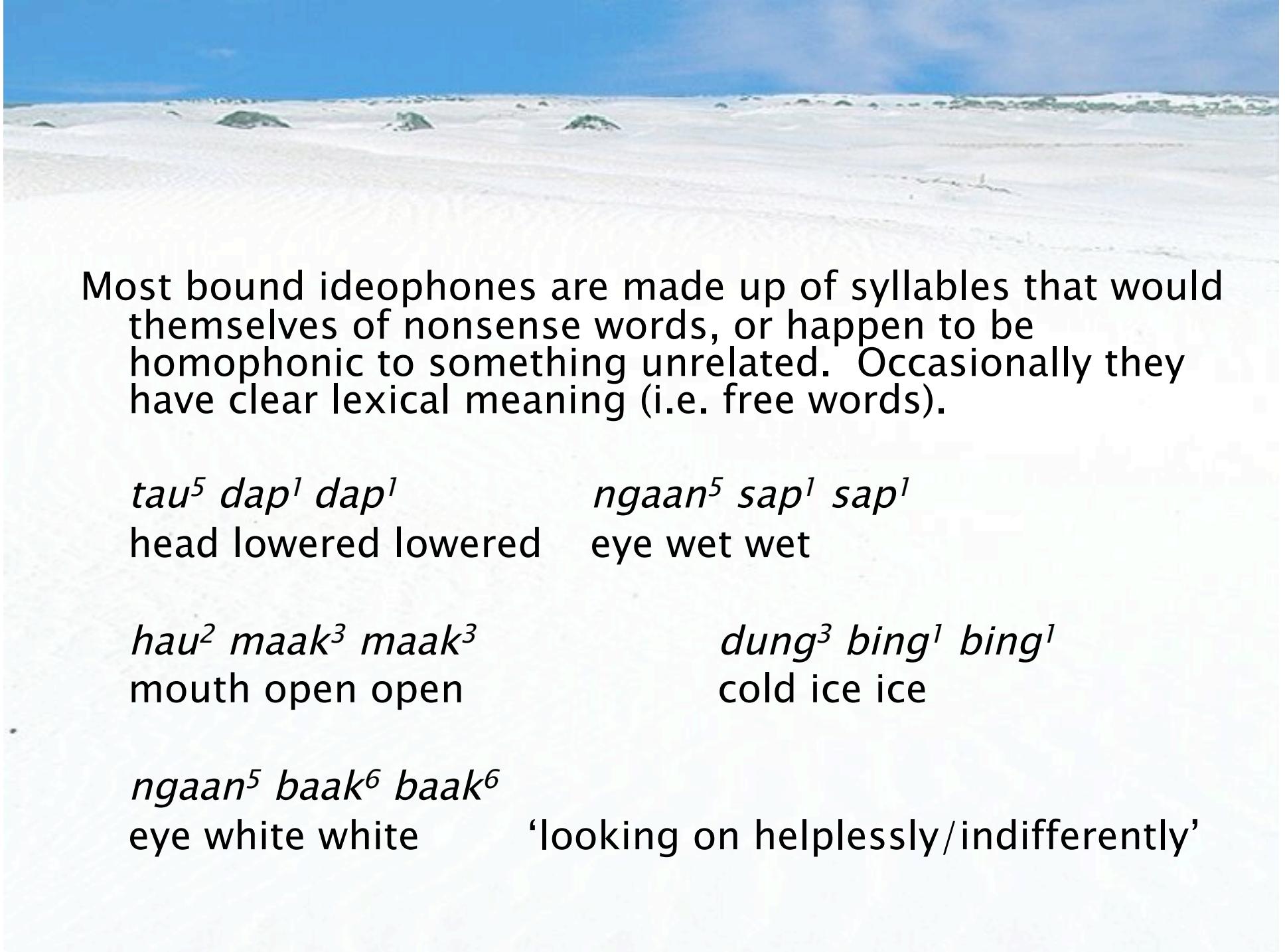
saa⁴saa⁴-gwan²
IDPH-have_an_affair

wan⁴-to⁴to⁴
faint-IDPH

tan⁴tan²-zan³
IDPH-shake

Or to nouns (especially body part nouns):

ngan⁵-gam¹gam¹
eye-IDPH
'eyeing with lust'



Most bound ideophones are made up of syllables that would themselves of nonsense words, or happen to be homophonic to something unrelated. Occasionally they have clear lexical meaning (i.e. free words).

tau⁵ dap¹ dap¹

head lowered lowered

ngaan⁵ sap¹ sap¹

eye wet wet

hau² maak³ maak³

mouth open open

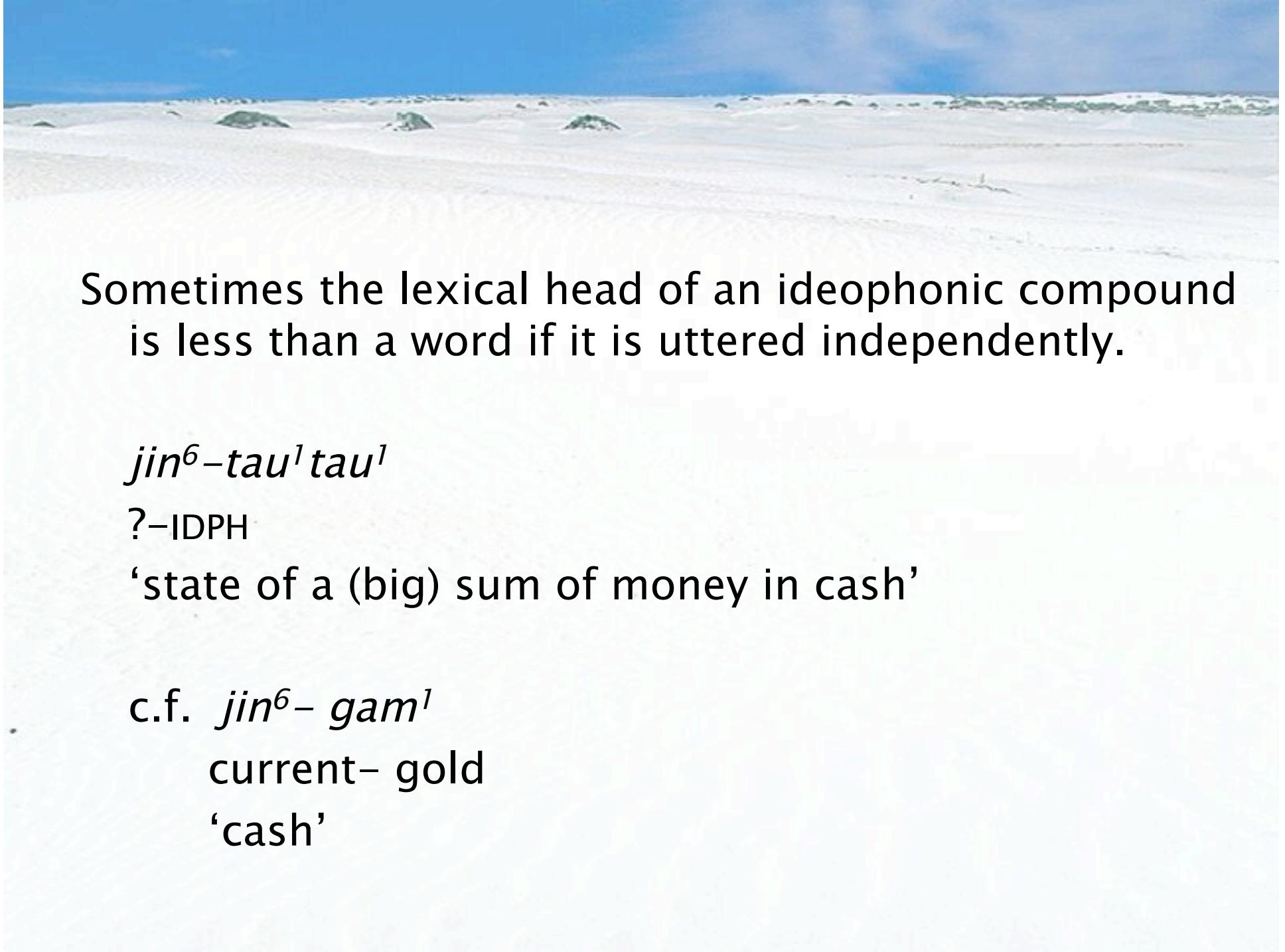
dung³ bing¹ bing¹

cold ice ice

ngaan⁵ baak⁶ baak⁶

eye white white

‘looking on helplessly/indifferently’



Sometimes the lexical head of an ideophonic compound
is less than a word if it is uttered independently.

jin⁶-tau¹tau¹

?-IDPH

‘state of a (big) sum of money in cash’

c.f. *jin⁶- gam'*

current- gold

‘cash’



Idophonic compounds are less easily modified.

??? *m⁴* *san¹-cuk¹cuk¹*
 NEG new-IDPH

However, e.g. in a *m⁴...m⁴...* construction:

<i>di¹</i>	<i>ngan⁴zi²</i>	<i>m⁴</i>	<i>san¹-cuk¹cuk¹</i>	
CL.NSG	banknote	NEG	new-IDPH	
<i>keoi⁵</i>	<i>m⁴</i>	<i>jung⁶</i>	<i>ge³</i>	<i>wo³...</i>
3SG	NEG	use	MOD	FP

‘The banknotes if they are not totally new s/he doesn’t use them...’



or in a yes-no question:

di¹ jip⁶ jip⁶ leng³ m⁴ leng³
CL.NSG leaf leaf pretty neg pretty
hung⁴ m⁴ hung⁴-bok¹bok¹ aa³
red NEG red-IDPH ?

‘Are the leaves pretty and all red?’

(d頁頁靚唔靚, 紅唔紅卜卜呀??;

hk.myblog.yahoo.com/jw!PcoJ4myWBRsdVs3BJElxGwh/article?mid=4149&fid=-1&action=next

sik¹-wan¹ m⁴ ngaam¹
colour-temp NEG correct
jau⁵ di¹ ceng¹-bi¹bi¹
exist bit l_green-IDPH

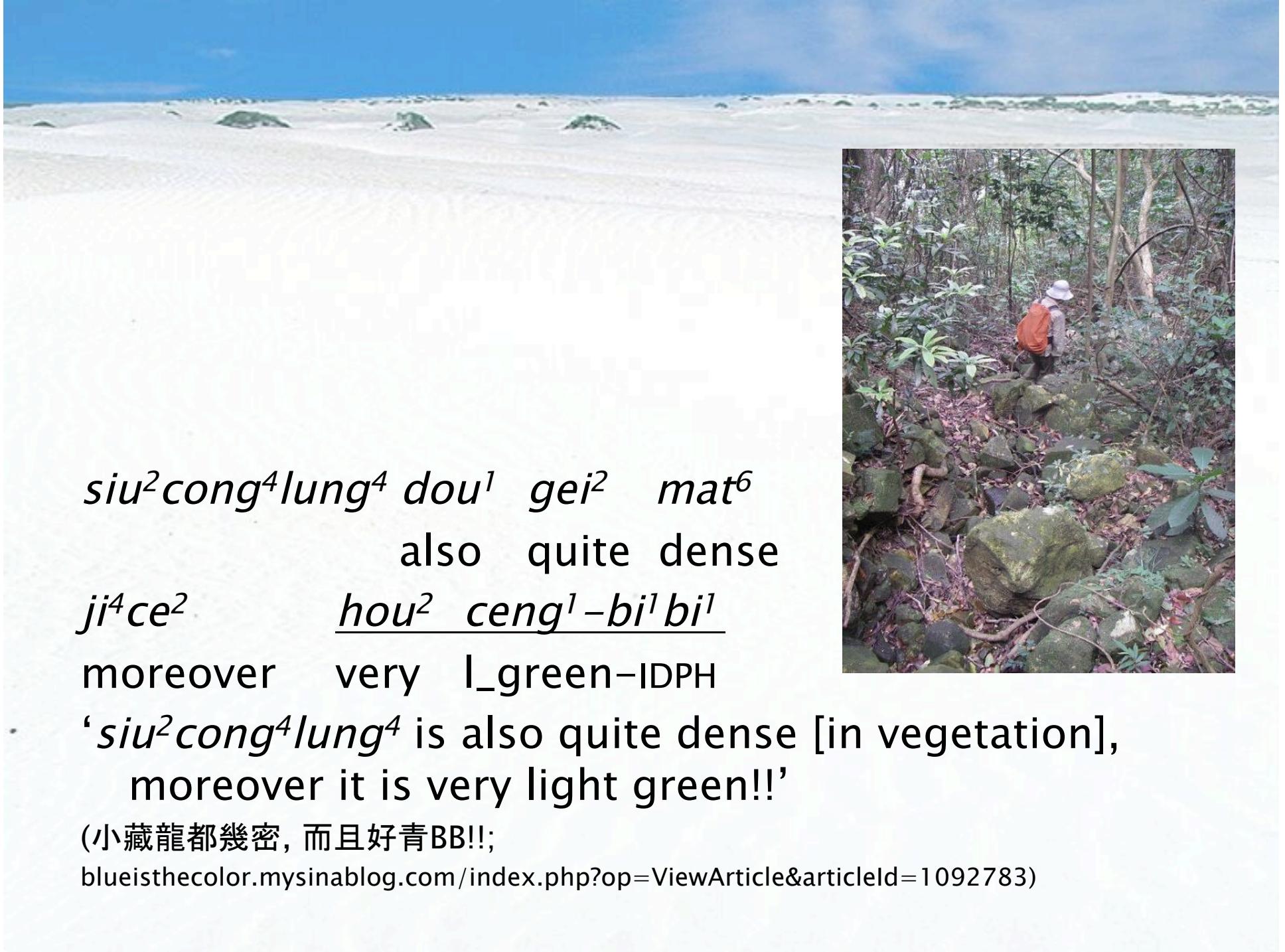
‘The colour temperature is not right, it is a bit light greenish’

(色溫唔啱,有啲青bb;

www-d12in01u.hkmug.org/viewthread.php?tid=49706&extra=page%3D30&page=1)



katy(阿宣)



siu²cong⁴lung⁴ dou¹ gei² mat⁶
also quite dense

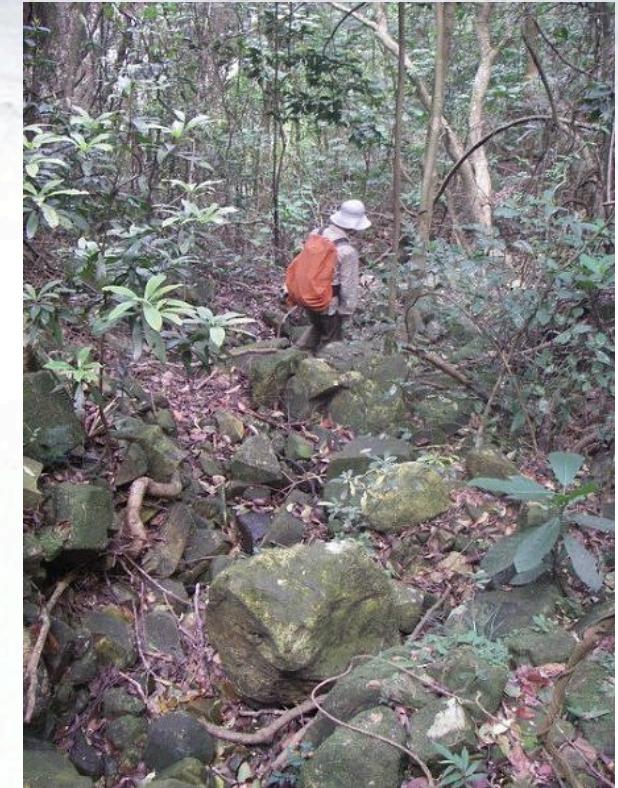
ji⁴ce² hou² ceng¹-bi¹bi¹

moreover very l_green-IDPH

‘*siu²cong⁴lung⁴* is also quite dense [in vegetation],
moreover it is very light green!!’

(小藏龍都幾密，而且好青BB!!;

blueisthecolor.mysinablog.com/index.php?op=ViewArticle&articleId=1092783)





GZ4U.NET

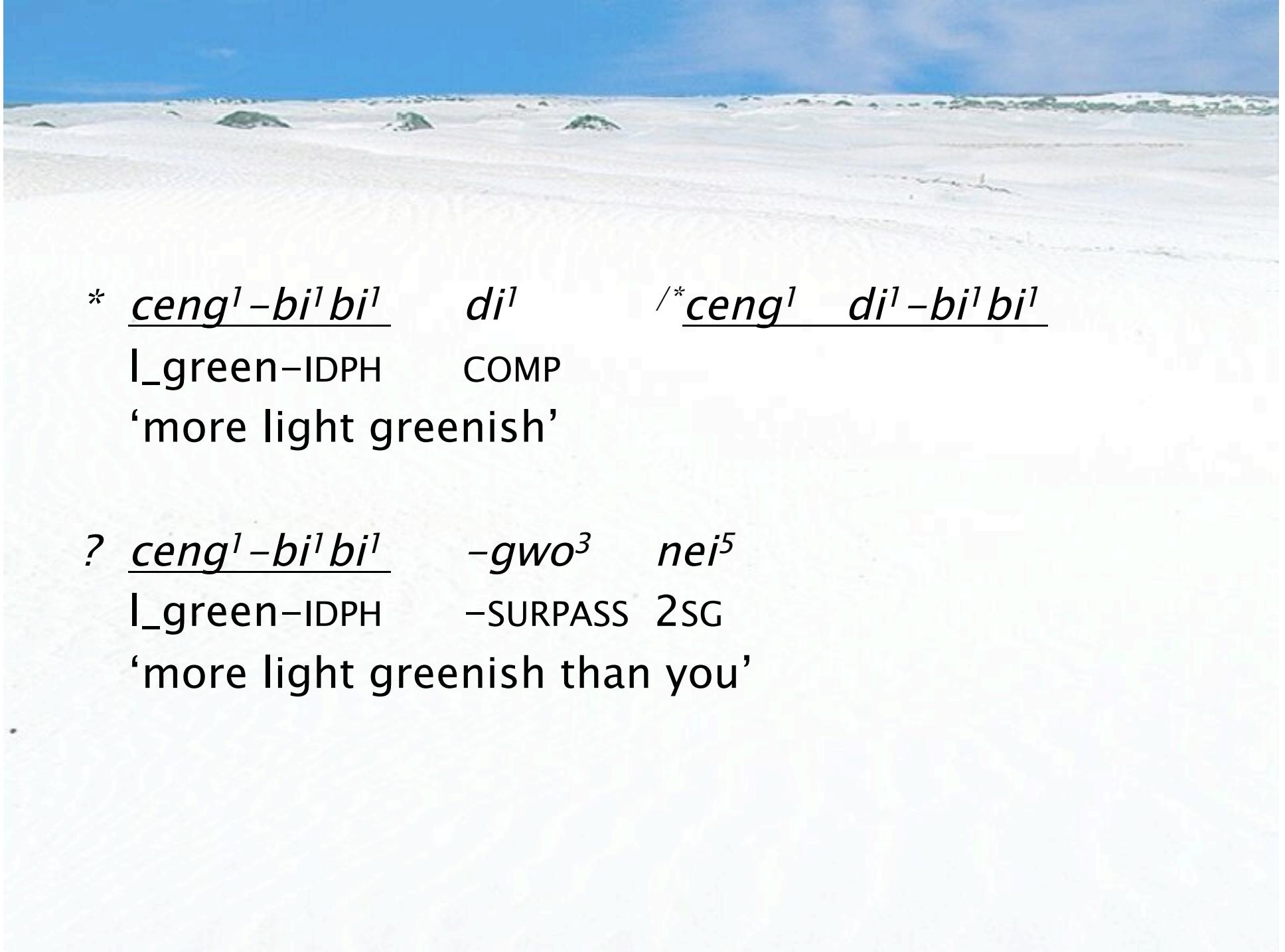
zeoi³ ceng¹-bi¹bi¹ ge³

most I_green-IDPH MOD

joeng⁵ zo² loeng⁵ go³ gei² jyut⁶
keep PFV two CL some month

‘The ones most light green I kept them for about two months...’

(最青BB噶养咗两个几月...; bbs.gz4u.net/thread-1241374-1-1.html)



* *ceng¹-bi¹bi¹* *di¹* /**ceng¹ di¹-bi¹bi¹*

I_green-IDPH COMP
'more light greenish'

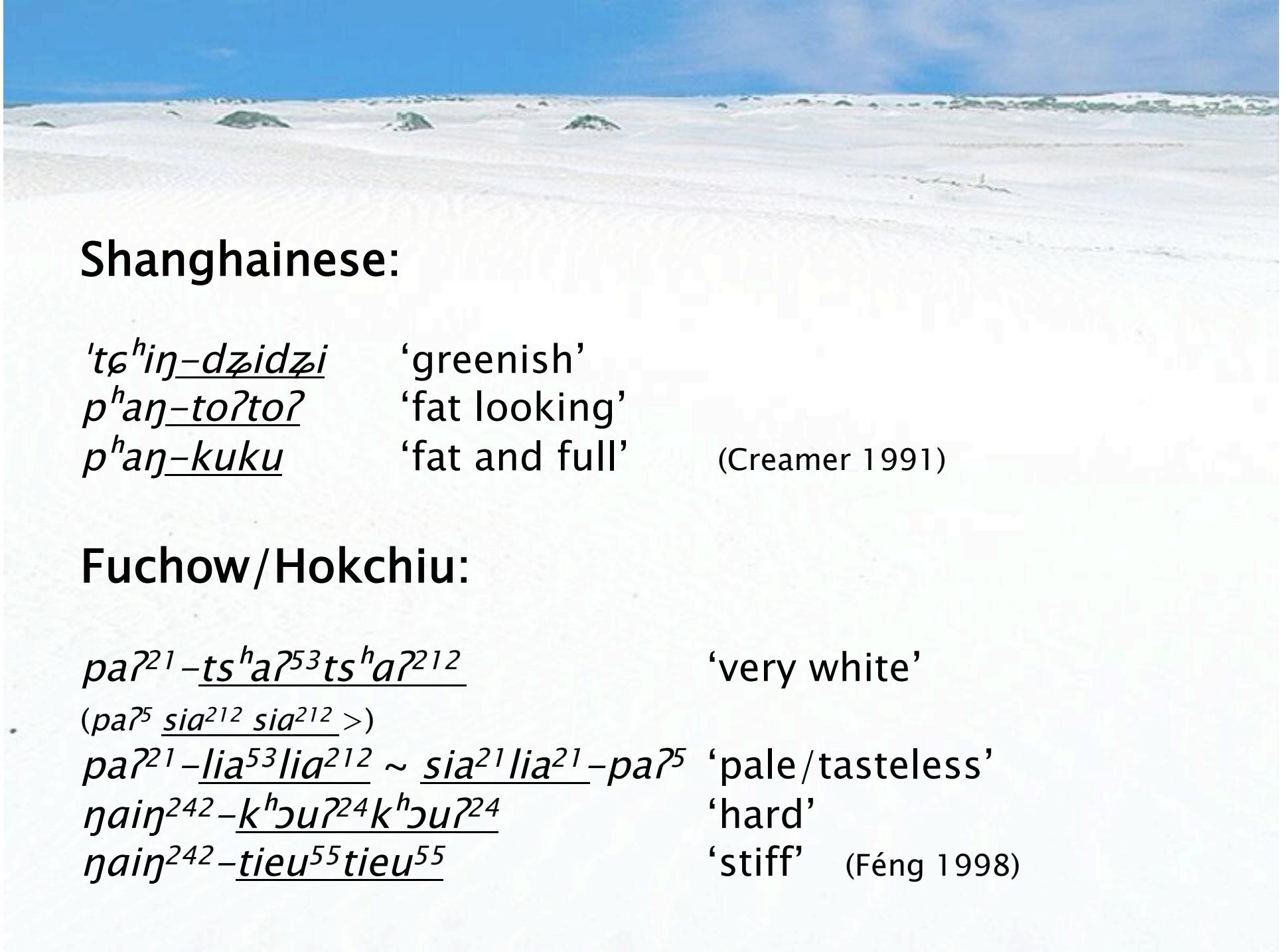
? *ceng¹-bi¹bi¹* -*gwo³* *nei⁵*
I_green-IDPH -SURPASS 2SG
'more light greenish than you'

Other languages in the region

Southern Pinghua:

(c.f. Cantonese)

<i>wat²-lut⁵lut⁵</i>	‘smooth’	<i>wat²-lyt⁵lyt⁵</i>
<i>pεk²²-tut⁵tut⁵</i>	‘white (skin; adult)’	<i>pak²²-syt⁵syt⁵</i>
<i>pεk²²-tɔt⁵tɔt⁵</i>	‘white (skin; child)’	
<i>tun⁵³-tap⁵tap⁵</i>	‘sour (slight)’	<i>syn⁵⁵-mei⁵⁵mei⁵⁵</i>
<i>tun⁵³-tau⁵³tau⁵³</i>	‘sour (strong)’	
<i>ham¹¹-lak⁵lak⁵</i>	‘salty’	<i>ham¹¹-?</i>
<i>təi⁵⁵-niŋ⁵⁵niŋ⁵⁵</i>	‘small’	<i>sej³³-?</i>



Shanghainese:

'tʂʰiŋ-dʐidʐi

‘greenish’

pʰaŋ-toʔto?

‘fat looking’

pʰaŋ-kuku

‘fat and full’

(Creamer 1991)

Fuchow/Hokchiu:

paʔ²¹-ts^haʔ⁵³ts^haʔ²¹²

‘very white’

(paʔ⁵ sia²¹² sia²¹² >)

paʔ²¹-lia⁵³lia²¹² ~ sia²¹lia²¹-paʔ⁵ ‘pale/tasteless’

ŋaiŋ²⁴²-k^hɔuʔ²⁴k^hɔuʔ²⁴ ‘hard’

ŋaiŋ²⁴²-tieu⁵⁵tieu⁵⁵ ‘stiff’ (Féng 1998)



N. Zhuang (Tai):

ndaem ndat ndat ‘black’

Lao (Tai):

jēn3 còòj4 còòj4 ເັນຈ້ອຍ່າງ ‘cool’ (Enfield p.c.)

Kam (Kam-Sui):

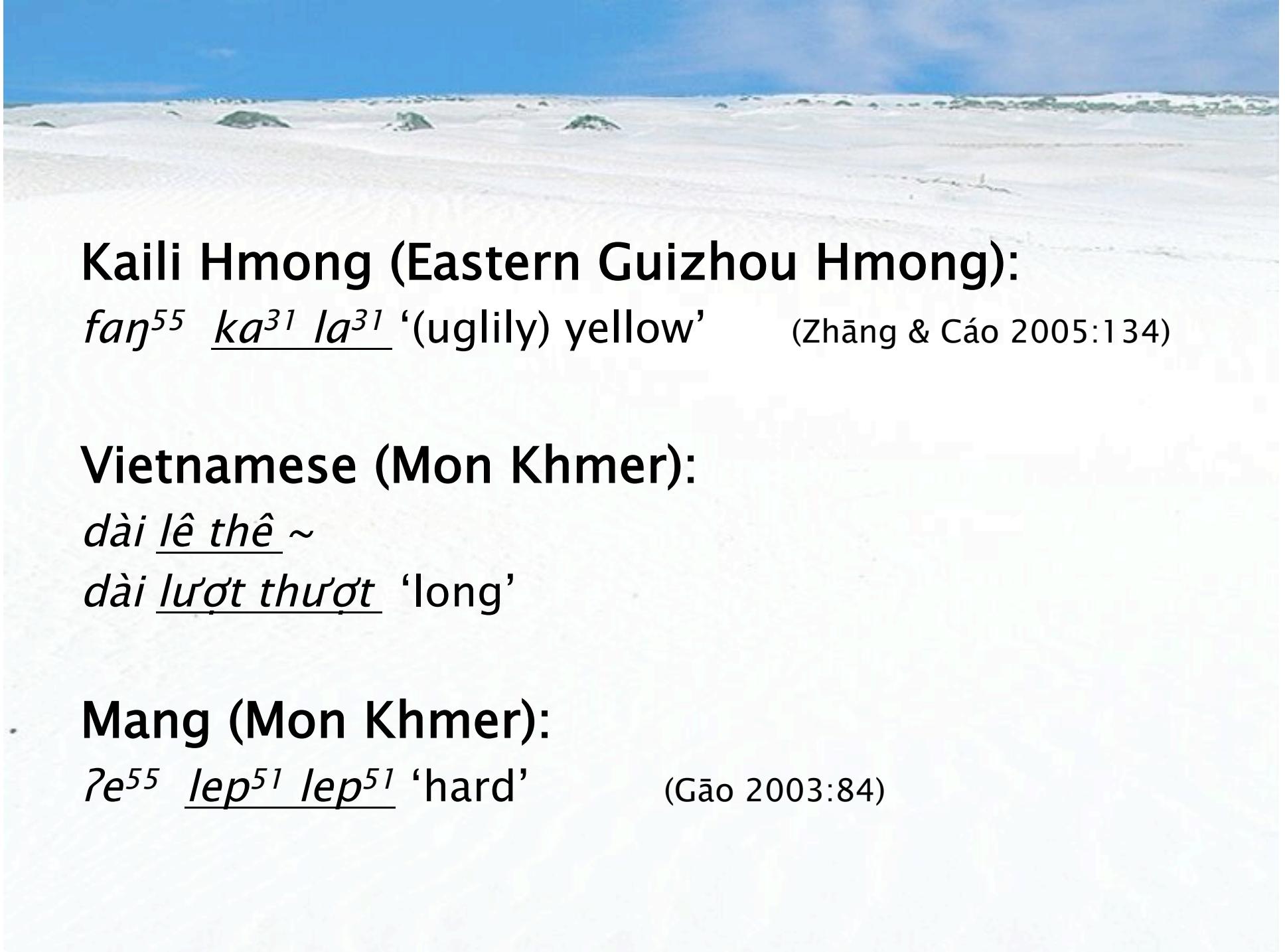
jai³²³ je³¹ je³¹ ‘long’ (Lóng 2003:125)

Be:

?baŋ²⁴ kin¹¹ kin¹¹ ‘bright’ (Liǎng & Zhāng 1997:82)

‘Mulao’ (Kra):

ŋau³³ ten³³ ten³³ ‘sweet’ (Bó 2003:80)



Kaili Hmong (Eastern Guizhou Hmong):

fan⁵⁵ ka³¹ la³¹ '(uglily) yellow' (Zhāng & Cáo 2005:134)

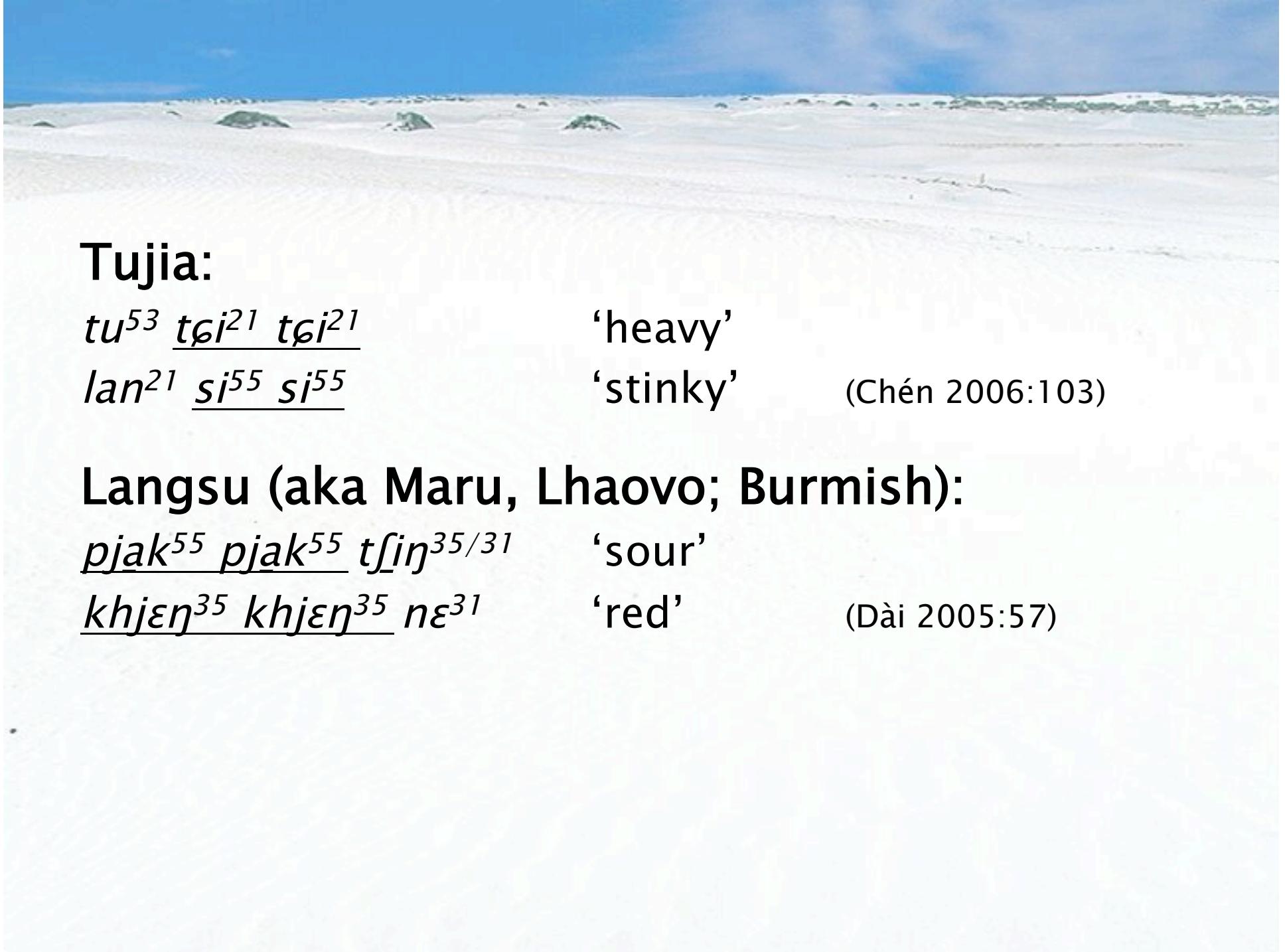
Vietnamese (Mon Khmer):

dài lê thè ~

dài lượt thượt 'long'

Mang (Mon Khmer):

?e⁵⁵ lep⁵¹ lep⁵¹ 'hard' (Gāo 2003:84)



Tujia:

tu⁵³ tɕi²¹ tɕi²¹

‘heavy’

lan²¹ si⁵⁵ si⁵⁵

‘stinky’

(Chén 2006:103)

Langsu (aka Maru, Lhaovo; Burmish):

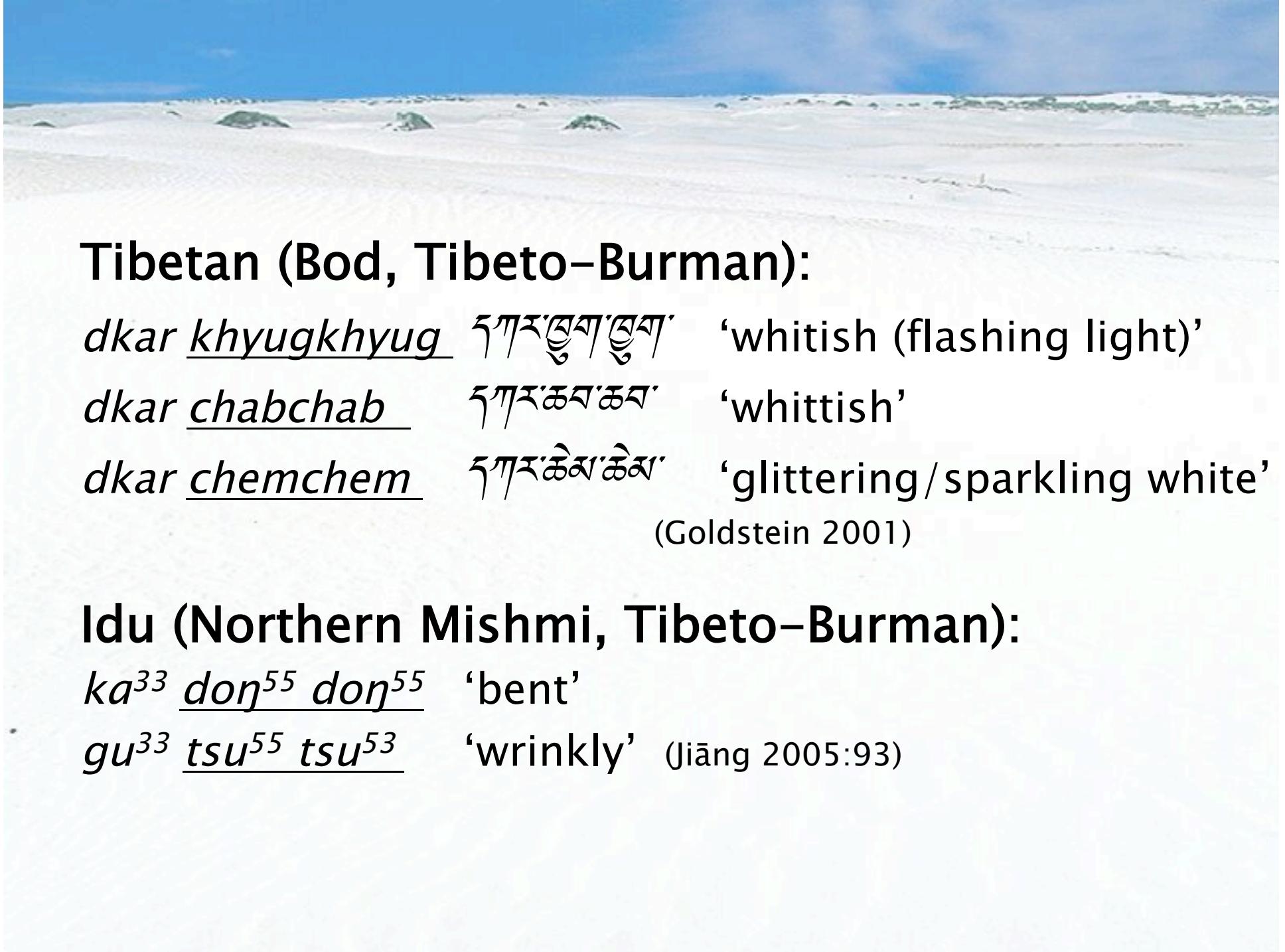
pjak⁵⁵ pjak⁵⁵ tʃin^{35/31}

‘sour’

khjɛŋ³⁵ khjɛŋ³⁵ nɛ³¹

‘red’

(Dài 2005:57)



Tibetan (Bod, Tibeto–Burman):

dkar khyugkhyug དྕର ຂྱແଗ ຂྱແଗ 'whitish (flashing light)'

dkar chabchab དྕର ດବ ດବ 'whittish'

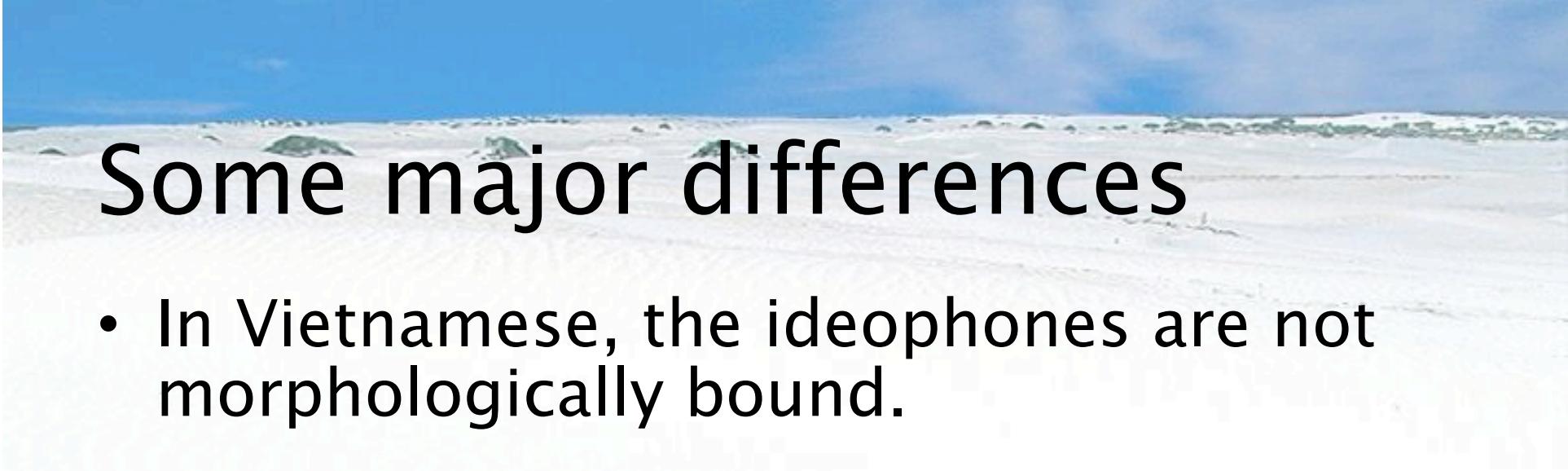
dkar chemchem དྕର ຂେମ ຂେମ 'glittering/sparkling white'

(Goldstein 2001)

Idu (Northern Mishmi, Tibeto–Burman):

ka³³ don⁵⁵ don⁵⁵ 'bent'

gu³³ tsu⁵⁵ tsu⁵³ 'wrinkly' (Jiāng 2005:93)



Some major differences

- In Vietnamese, the ideophones are not morphologically bound.

đỏ ‘red’, [*hở* *hở*] IDPH, [*đỏ* *hở* *hở*]
(nothing can intervene between)

e.g. when modifying a head noun:

má đỏ ~ *má hở hở* ~ *má đỏ hở hở*
‘red cheek’



Thai:

some free ideophones:

bâerâə เบื้อเร่อ 'big' ~ *yày bâerâə* ใหญ่เบื้อเร่อ 'big'

(Google: "เบื้อเร่อ" -ใหญ่ 82.5k; "ใหญ่เบื้อเร่อ" 11.6k; 21/07/2011)

some monosyllabic ideophones:

sǔay-chîa สวยงาม 'very beautiful'

wǎan-cîap หวานเจี๊ยบ 'very sweet'

(François Langella p.c.)



Separable ideophonic phrases

- In many Hmong varieties (but not Western Hunan Hmong), the ideophone and the preceding adjective/verb can be separated by a NP.

Kaili Hmong

fəŋ⁵⁵ (maŋ¹¹) ka³¹la³¹

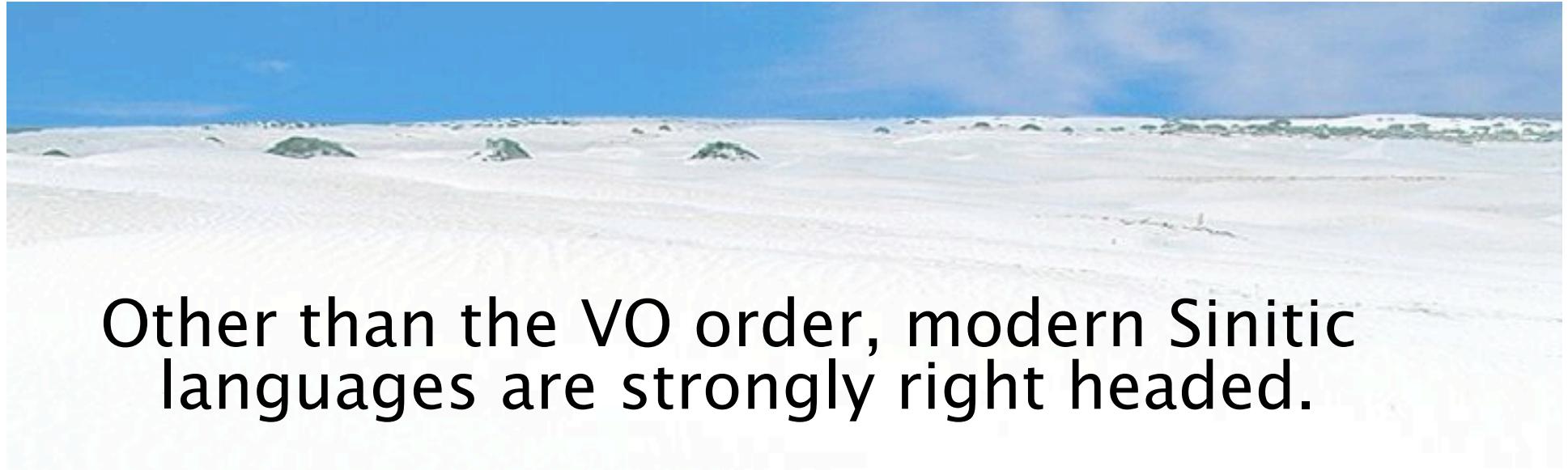
yellow (face) IDPH

‘(the face is) uglily yellow’ (Zhāng & Cáo 2005:137)

lɛ¹¹ (o³⁵ tɛ³⁵) kau³³jau³³

flow (clothe long) IDEO

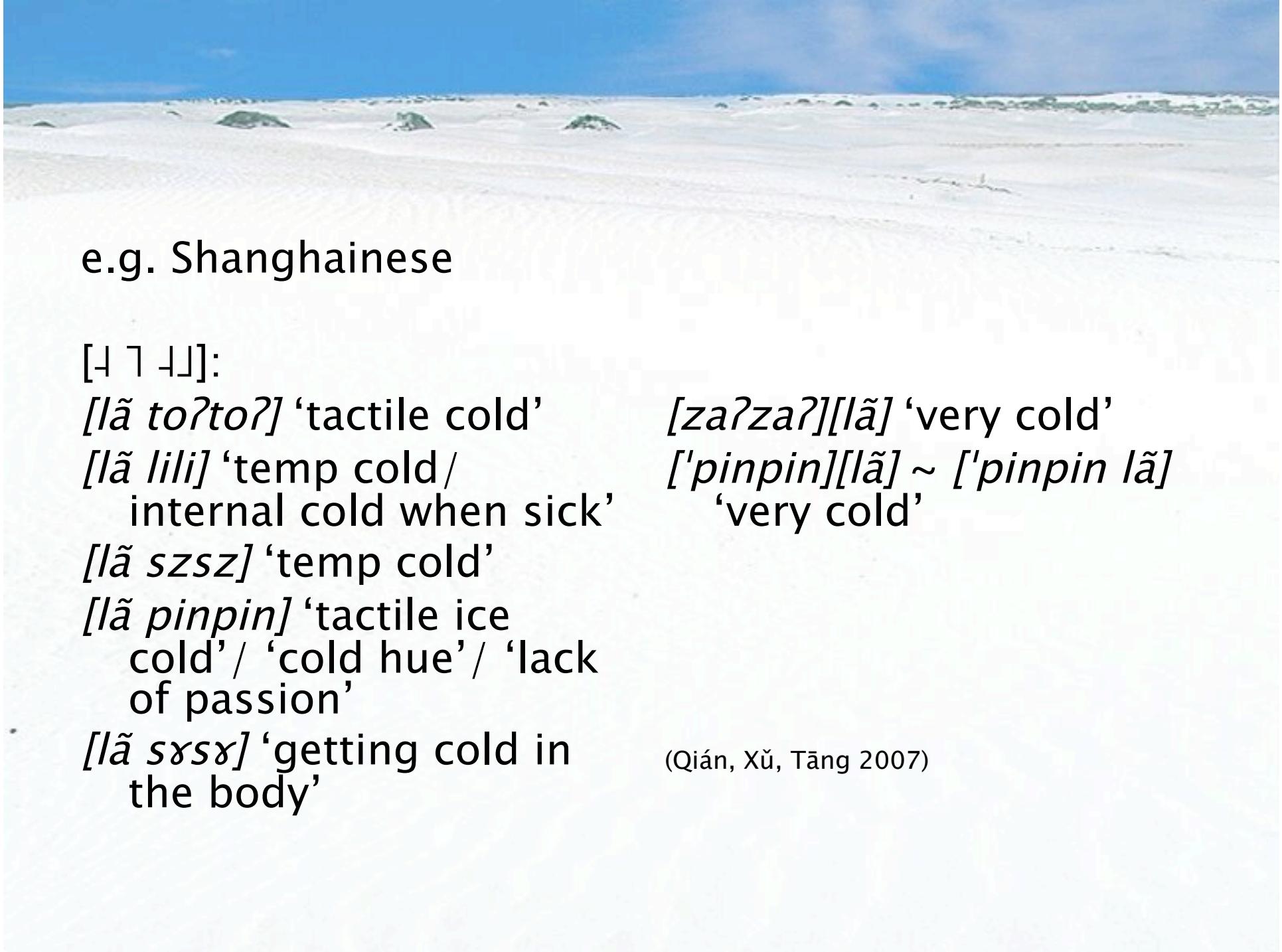
‘(the long clothe) flutters’ (Zhāng & Cáo 2005:115)



Other than the VO order, modern Sinitic languages are strongly right headed.

BUT there are many more left headed ideophonic compounds than right headed ones.

In Wu languages, where the tone domain is larger than a syllable, right headed ideophonic compounds are often more tonally marked than left headed ideophonic pronouns.



e.g. Shanghainese

[ɿ ɿ ɿ]:

- [ɿã tɔʔtɔʔ] ‘tactile cold’
- [ɿã lili] ‘temp cold/
internal cold when sick’
- [ɿã szsz] ‘temp cold’
- [ɿã pinpin] ‘tactile ice
cold’/ ‘cold hue’/ ‘lack
of passion’
- [ɿã sʂsʂ] ‘getting cold in
the body’

[zaʔzaʔ][ɿã] ‘very cold’
[ˈpinpin][ɿã] ~ [ˈpinpin ɿã]
‘very cold’

(Qián, Xǔ, Tāng 2007)



Old Chinese

Book of Odes:

行道遲遲 walk road IDPH:slow

雨雪霏霏 fall snow IDPH:fierce

白石皓皓 white stone IDPH

明星煌煌 bring star IDPH

築之登登 build it IDPH

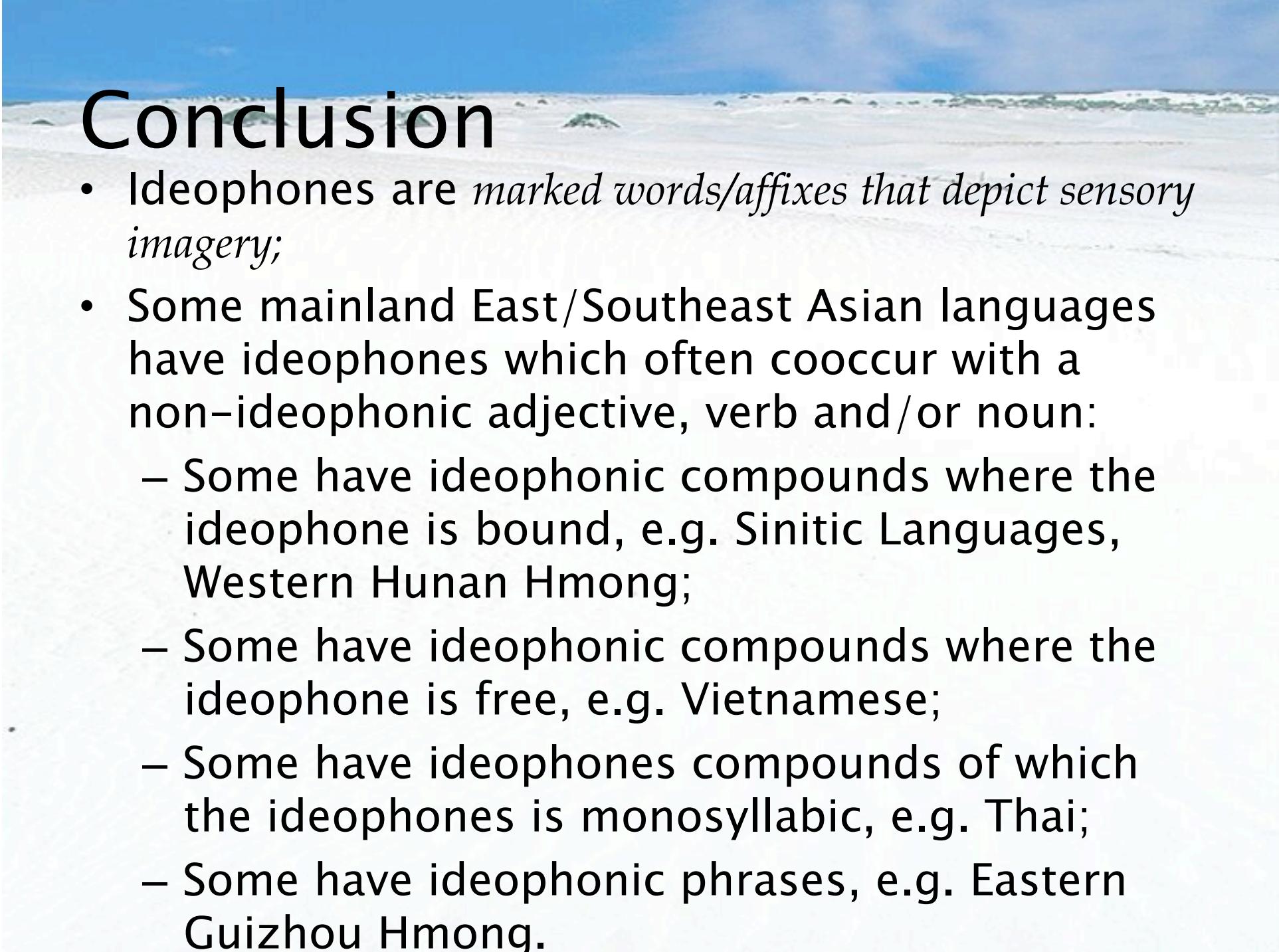
(Zhāng & Cáo 2005: 169–176)

Songs of Chu:

漂翻翻 float IDPH

芳菲菲 fragrant IDPH

(Zhāng & Cáo 2005: 147–148)



Conclusion

- Ideophones are *marked words/affixes that depict sensory imagery*;
- Some mainland East/Southeast Asian languages have ideophones which often cooccur with a non-ideophonic adjective, verb and/or noun:
 - Some have ideophonic compounds where the ideophone is bound, e.g. Sinitic Languages, Western Hunan Hmong;
 - Some have ideophonic compounds where the ideophone is free, e.g. Vietnamese;
 - Some have ideophones compounds of which the ideophones is monosyllabic, e.g. Thai;
 - Some have ideophonic phrases, e.g. Eastern Guizhou Hmong.

Conclusion

- In the case of Chinese at least, Sinitic languages probably developed from having free ideophones in ideophonic phrases in Old Chinese, to bound ideophones in ideophonic compounds in modern Sinitic languages.

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