



Ideophonic Compounds in East and Southeast Asia

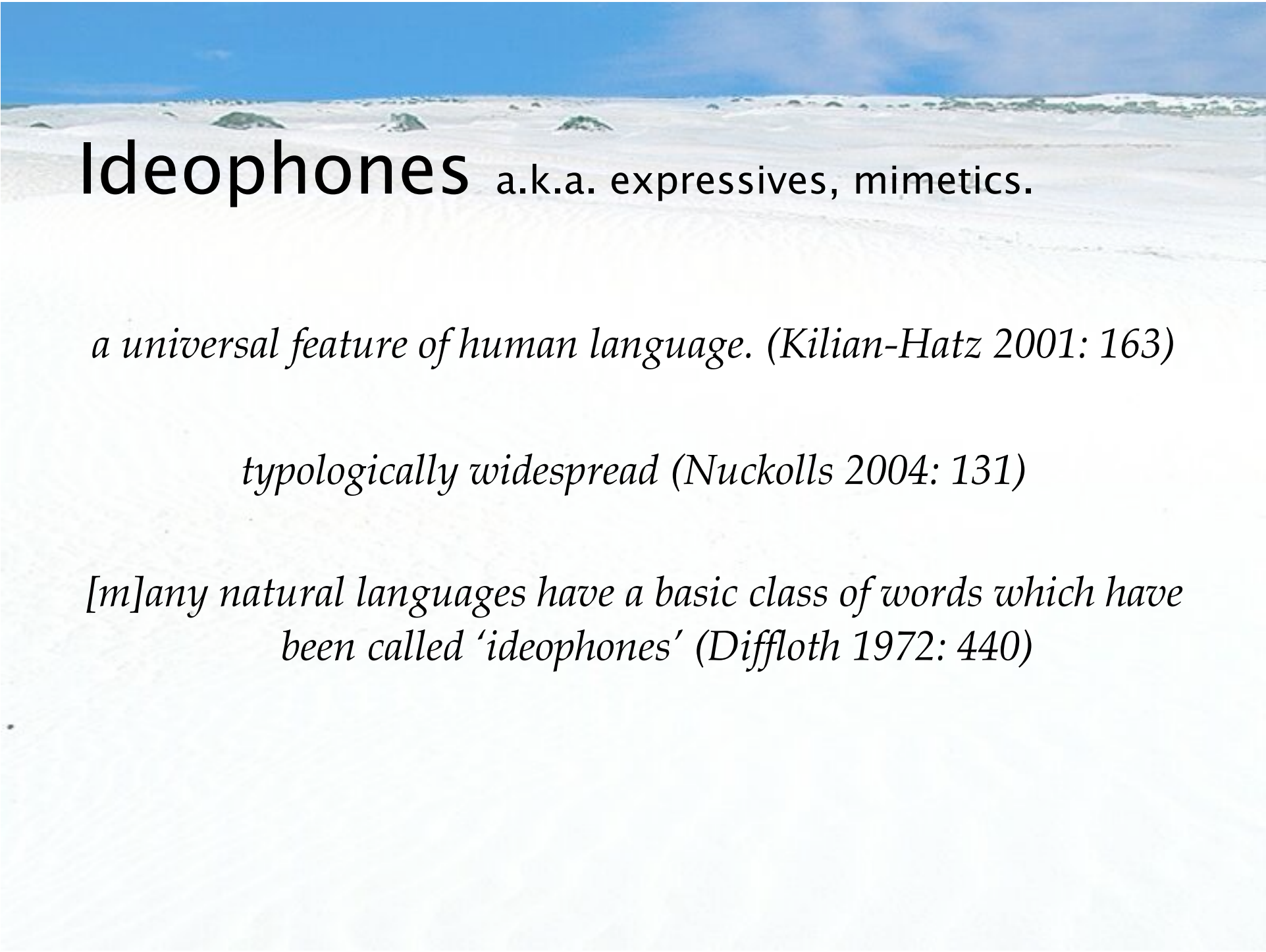
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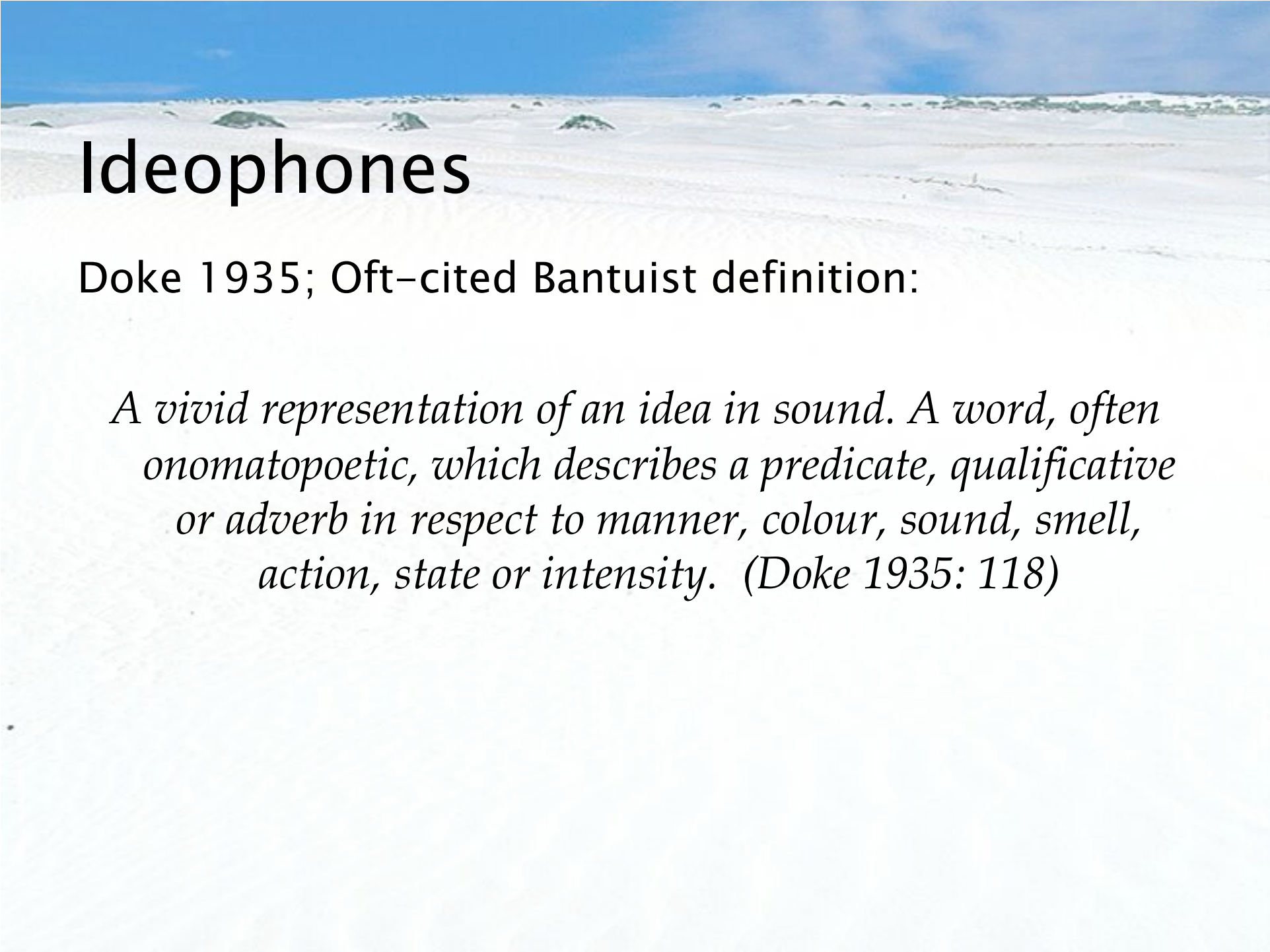


Ideophones a.k.a. expressives, mimetics.

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

typologically widespread (Nuckolls 2004: 131)

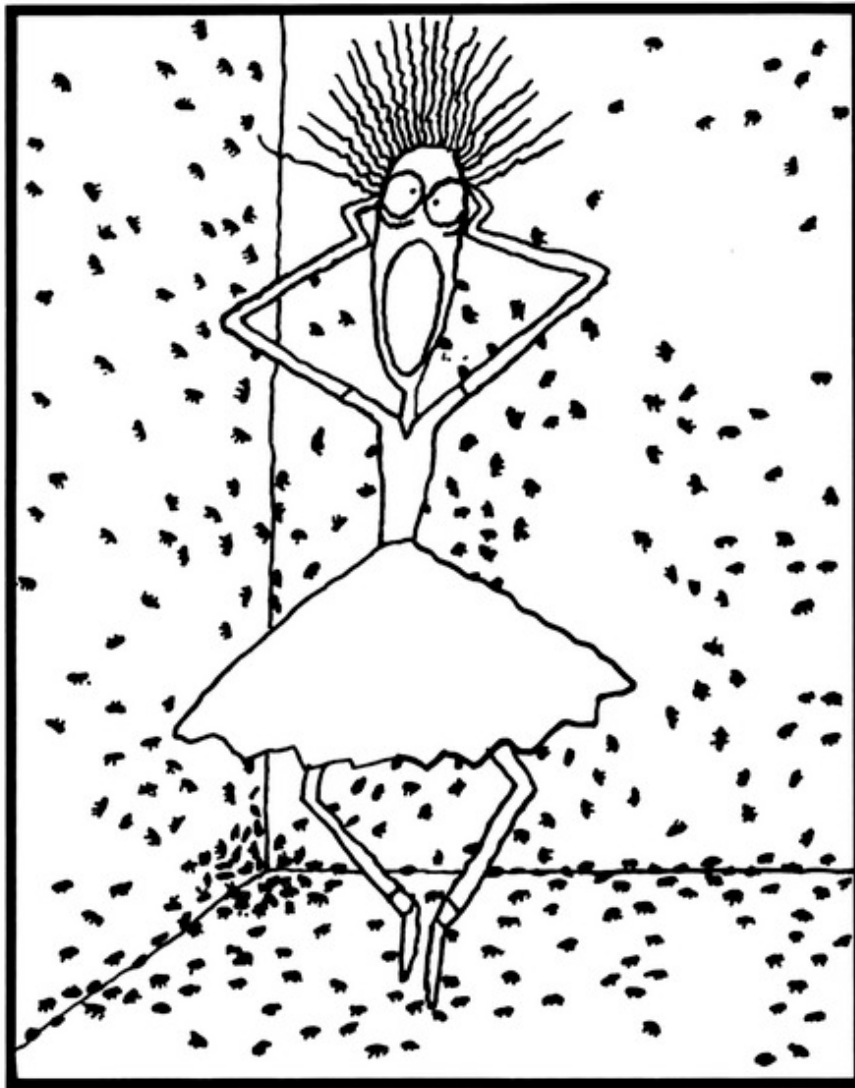
[m]any natural languages have a basic class of words which have been called 'ideophones' (Diffloth 1972: 440)



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]

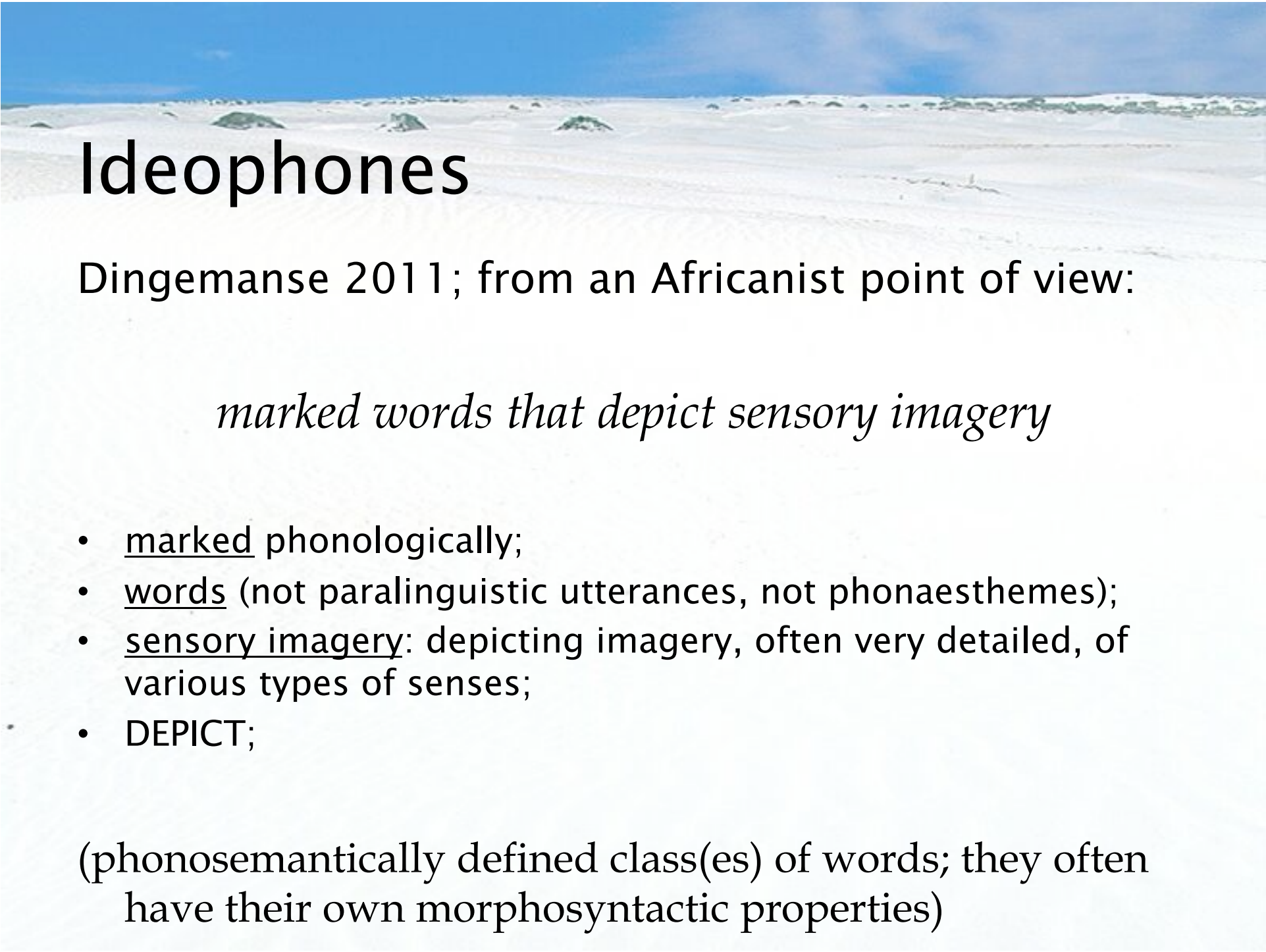
Describes many small things gathered together and moving, such as a swarm of insects or a crowd of people seen from a distance.

うじゃうじゃ

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:

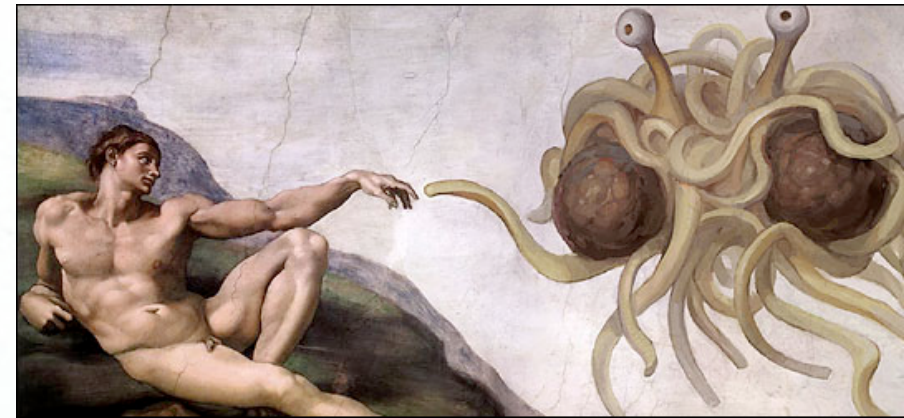
marked words that depict sensory imagery

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

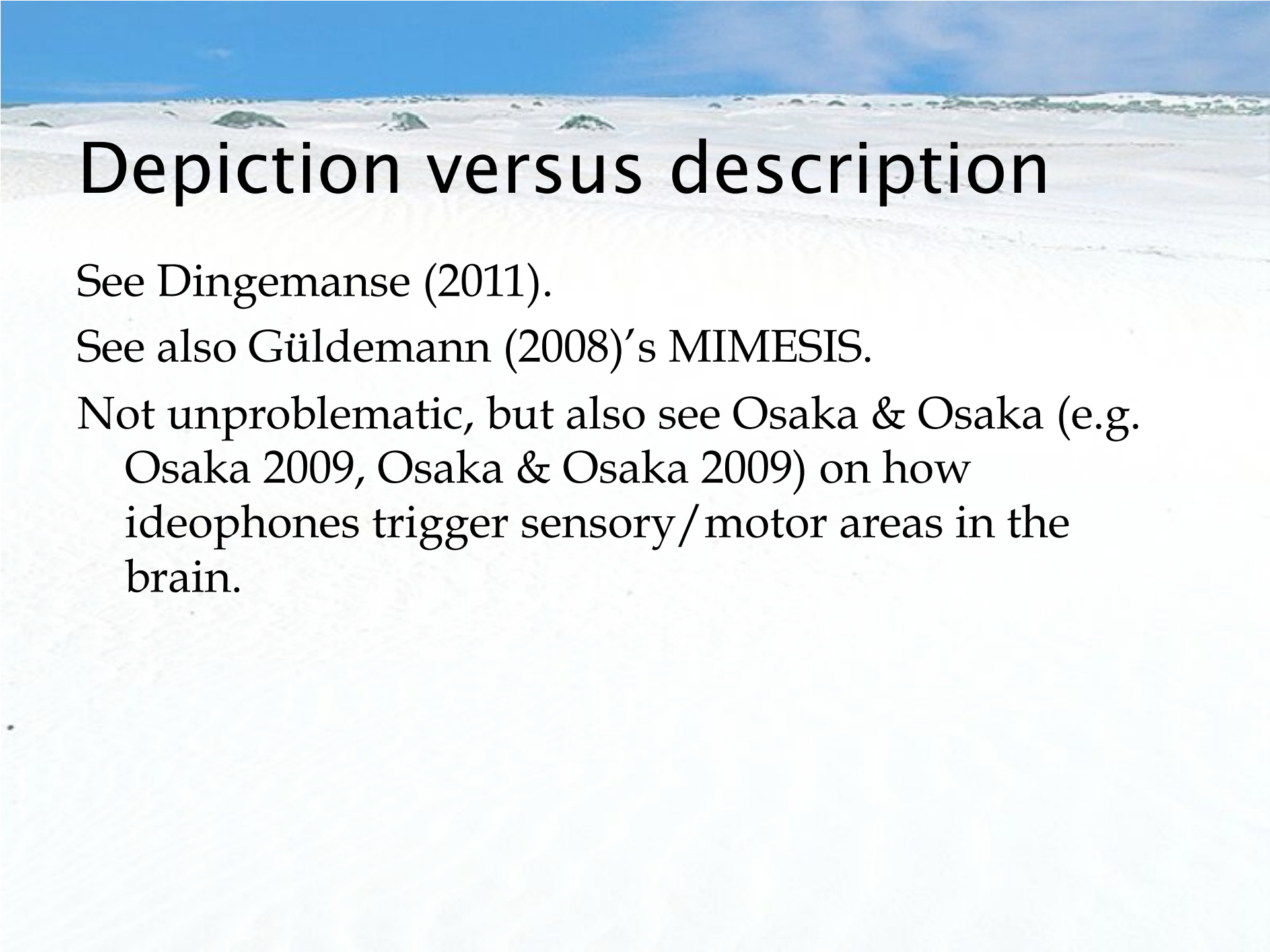
(phonosemantically defined class(es) of words; they often have their own morphosyntactic properties)

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

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



there is still some level of
arbitrariness/
convention with depiction

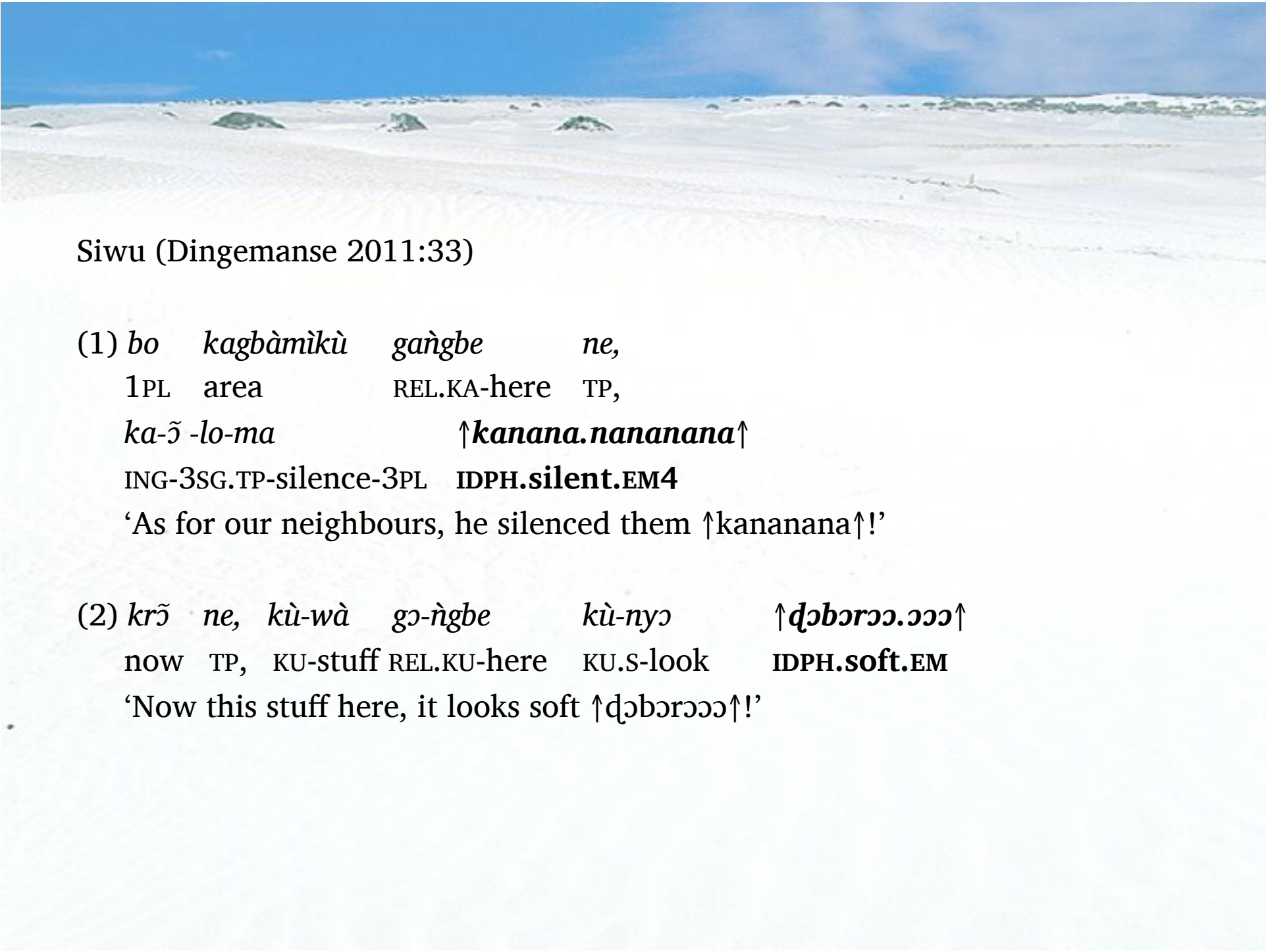


Depiction versus description

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 kagbàmikù gàngbe ne,*
1PL area REL.KA-here TP,
ka-ṣ -lo-ma *↑kanana.nananana↑*
ING-3SG.TP-silence-3PL IDPH.silent.EM4
‘As for our neighbours, he silenced them *↑kananana↑*!’

(2) *krĩ ne, kù-wà gɔ̀-̀ngbe kù-nyɔ* *↑dɔ̀bɔ̀rɔ̀ɔ.ɔ̀ɔ̀ɔ̀↑*
now TP, KU-stuff REL.KU-here KU.S-look IDPH.soft.EM
‘Now this stuff here, it looks soft *↑dɔ̀bɔ̀rɔ̀ɔ̀↑*!’

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)ぬゆったいくわったいし、流りてい来(ち)やあびたん。; www.haisai.co.jp/koabanasi.htm)

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

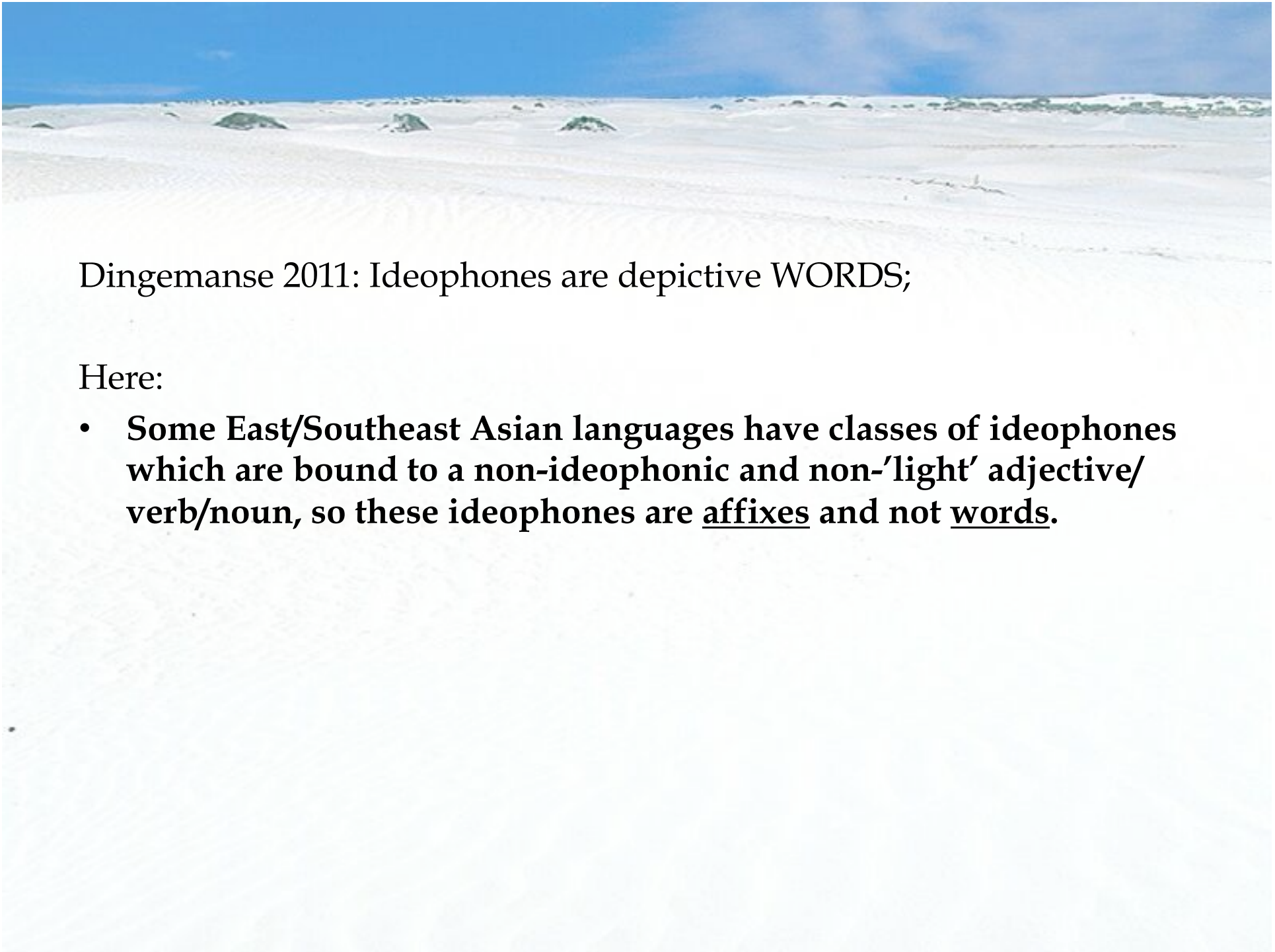
yuttaikwattai

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)ぬぐとうゆったいくわったい;

homepage2.nifty.com/kawana_masami/_tTDerGF.htm)



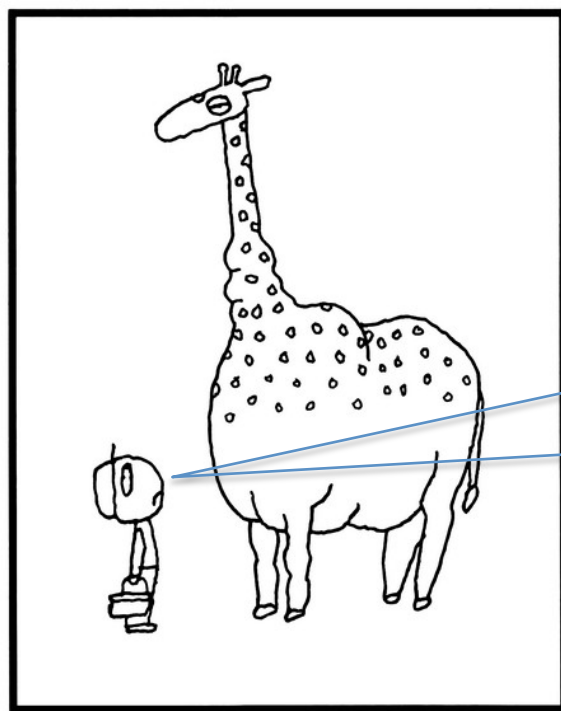
Dingemanse 2011: Ideophones are depictive WORDS;

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 lngs

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



e.g. Cantonese
fei⁴ -tan⁴tan⁴
fat -IDPH

(**tan⁴tan⁴*)

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。うがいをするさまにも用いる。

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.

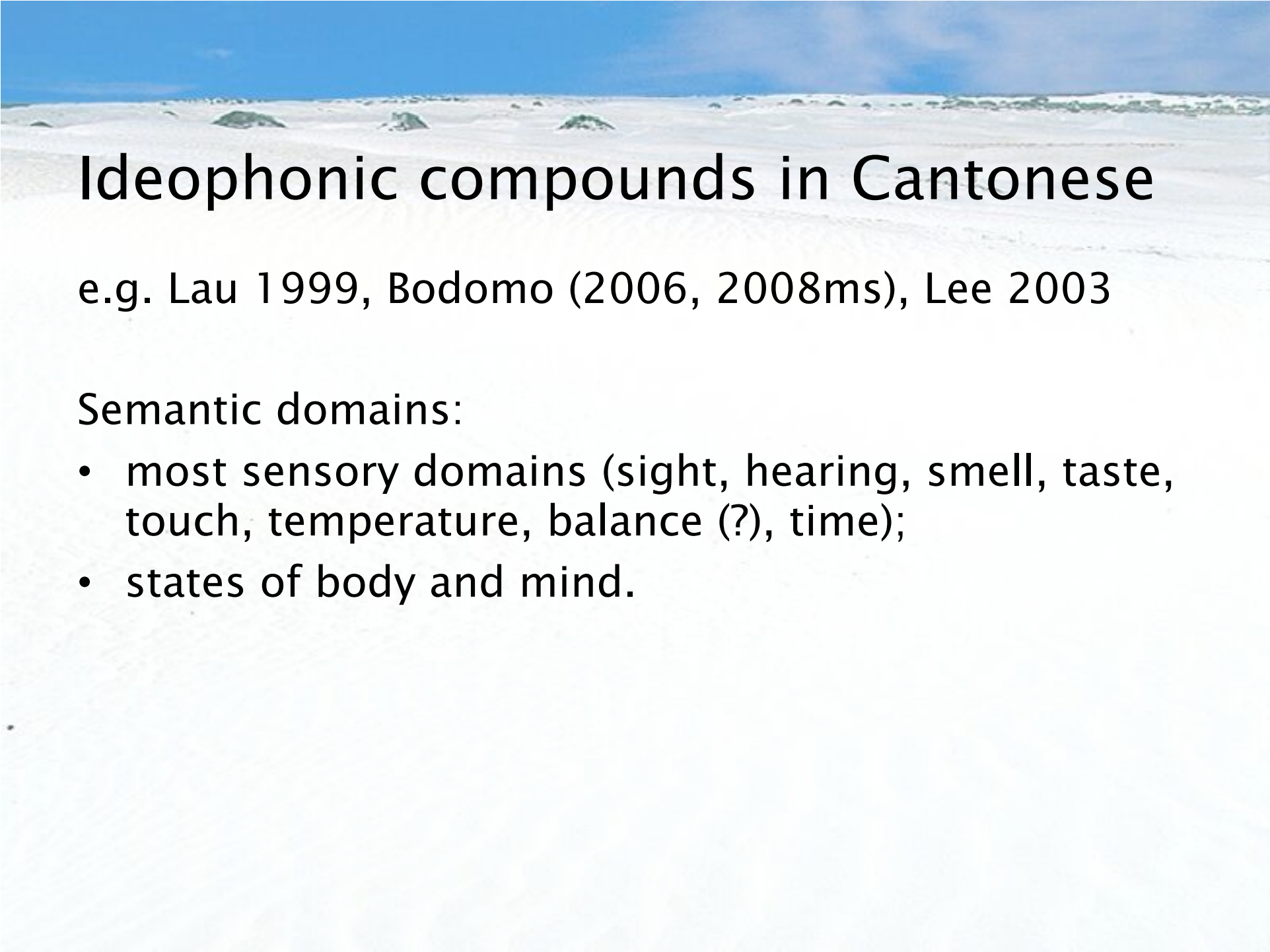
e.g. Cantonese

wat⁶-lyut¹ lyut¹

smooth-IDPH

wat⁶-saan⁴ saan⁴

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.

fei⁴-dyut¹ dyut¹ *fei⁴-tan⁴tan⁴*
fat-IDPH fat-IDPH

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.)

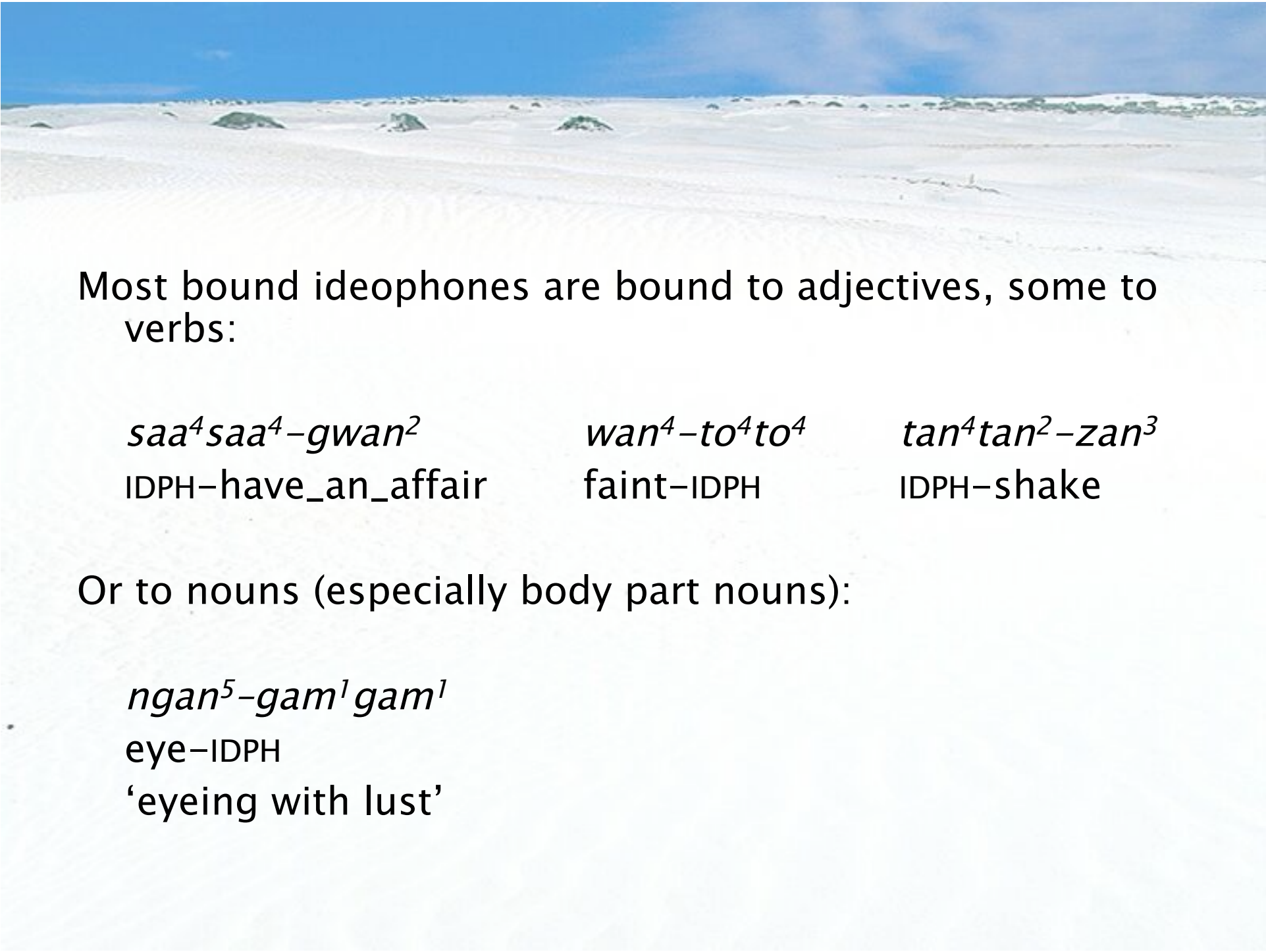
daai⁶ tou⁵ -lam⁴dam¹

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 be 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-tau¹ tau¹

?-IDPH

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

c.f. *jin⁶- gam¹*

current- gold

‘cash’



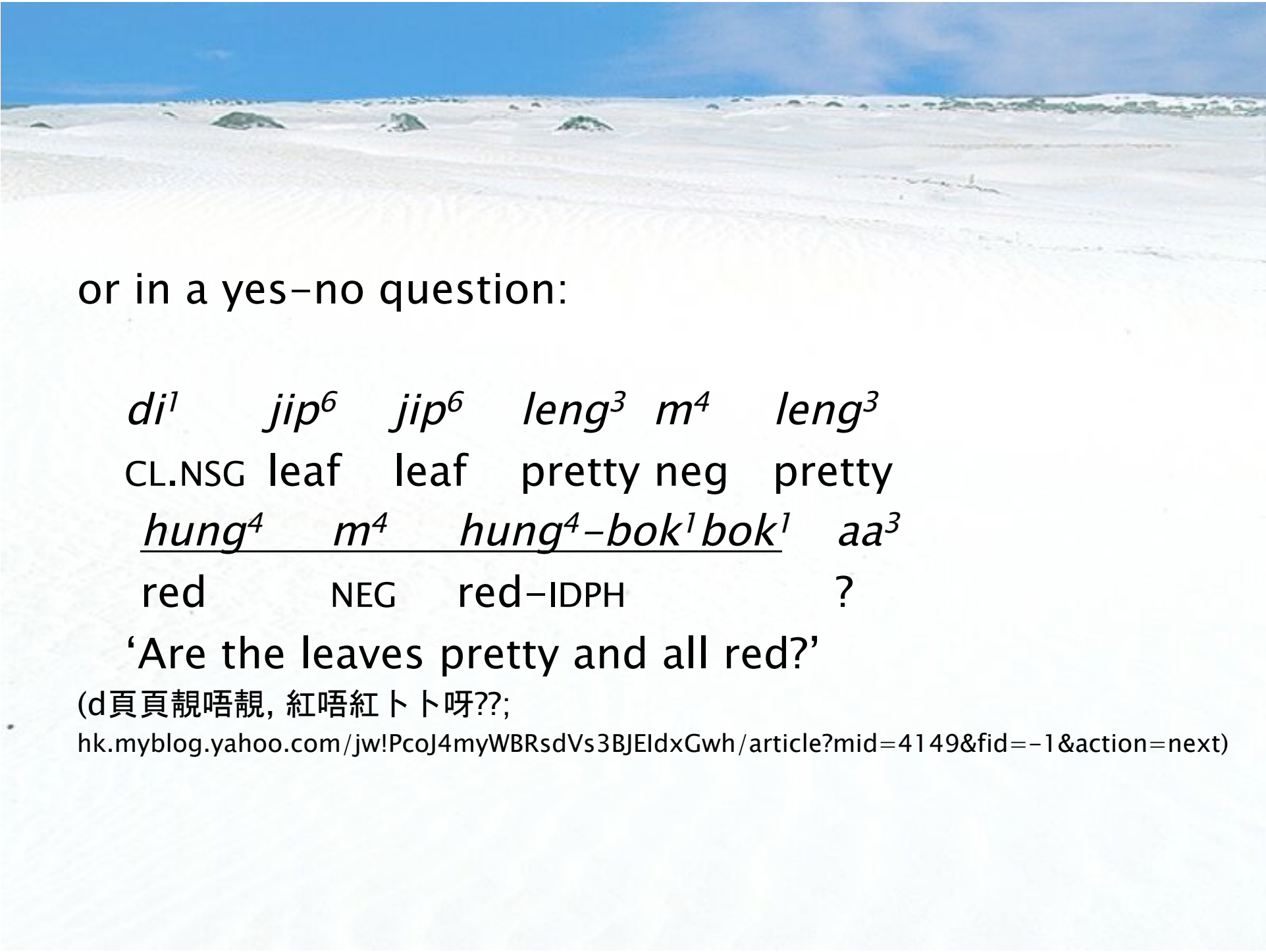
Idophononic compounds are less easily modified.

??? *m*⁴ *san*¹–*cuk*¹*cuk*¹
NEG new–IDPH

However, e.g. in a *m*⁴...*m*⁴... construction:

<i>di</i> ¹	<i>ngan</i> ⁴ <i>zi</i> ²	<i>m</i> ⁴	<i>san</i> ¹ – <i>cuk</i> ¹ <i>cuk</i> ¹	
CL.NSG	banknote	NEG	new–IDPH	
<i>keoi</i> ⁵	<i>m</i> ⁴	<i>jung</i> ⁶	<i>ge</i> ³	<i>wo</i> ³ ...
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:

*di*¹ *jip*⁶ *jip*⁶ *leng*³ *m*⁴ *leng*³
CL.NSG leaf leaf pretty neg pretty
*hung*⁴ *m*⁴ *hung*⁴–*bok*¹*bok*¹ *aa*³
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!PcoJ4myWBRsdVs3BJEldxGwh/article?mid=4149&fid=-1&action=next)



sik¹-wan¹ m⁴ ngaam¹

colour-temp NEG correct

jau⁵ di¹ ceng¹-bi¹bi¹

exist bit I_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(阿宜)



siu²cong⁴lung⁴ dou¹ gei² mat⁶
also quite dense

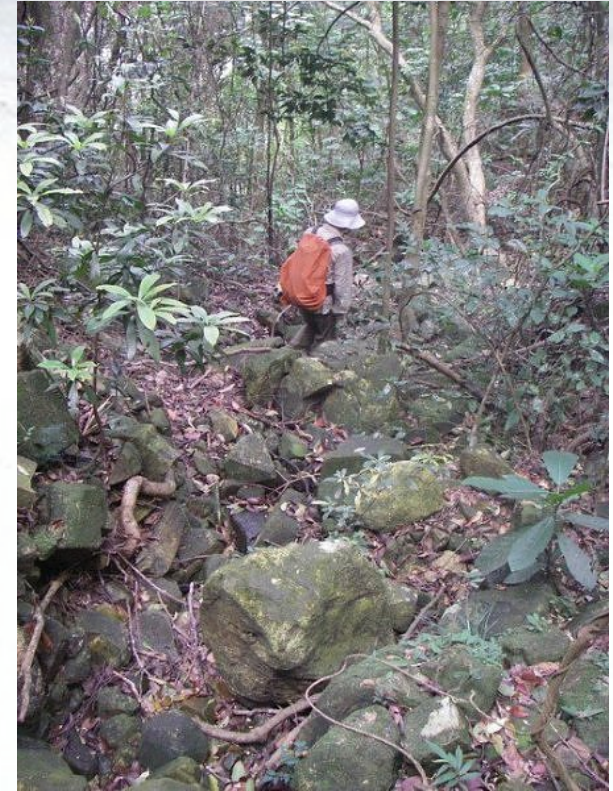
ji⁴ce² *hou² ceng¹-bi¹ bi¹*

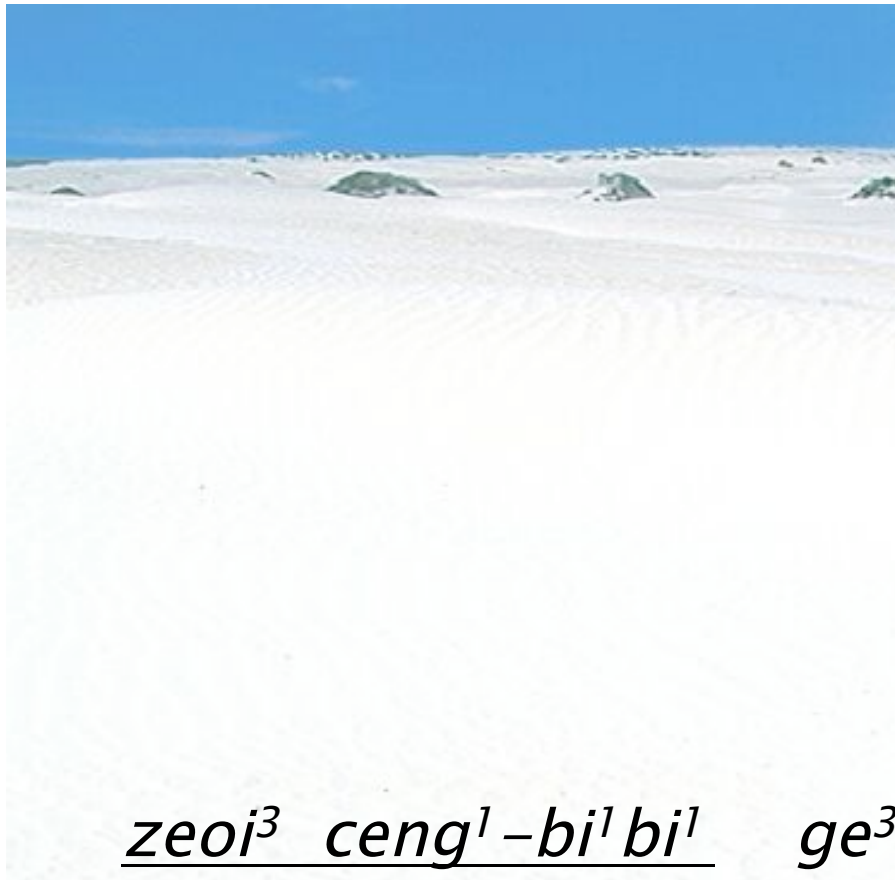
moreover very l_green-IDPH

‘*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)





zeoi³ ceng¹-bi¹bi¹ ge³

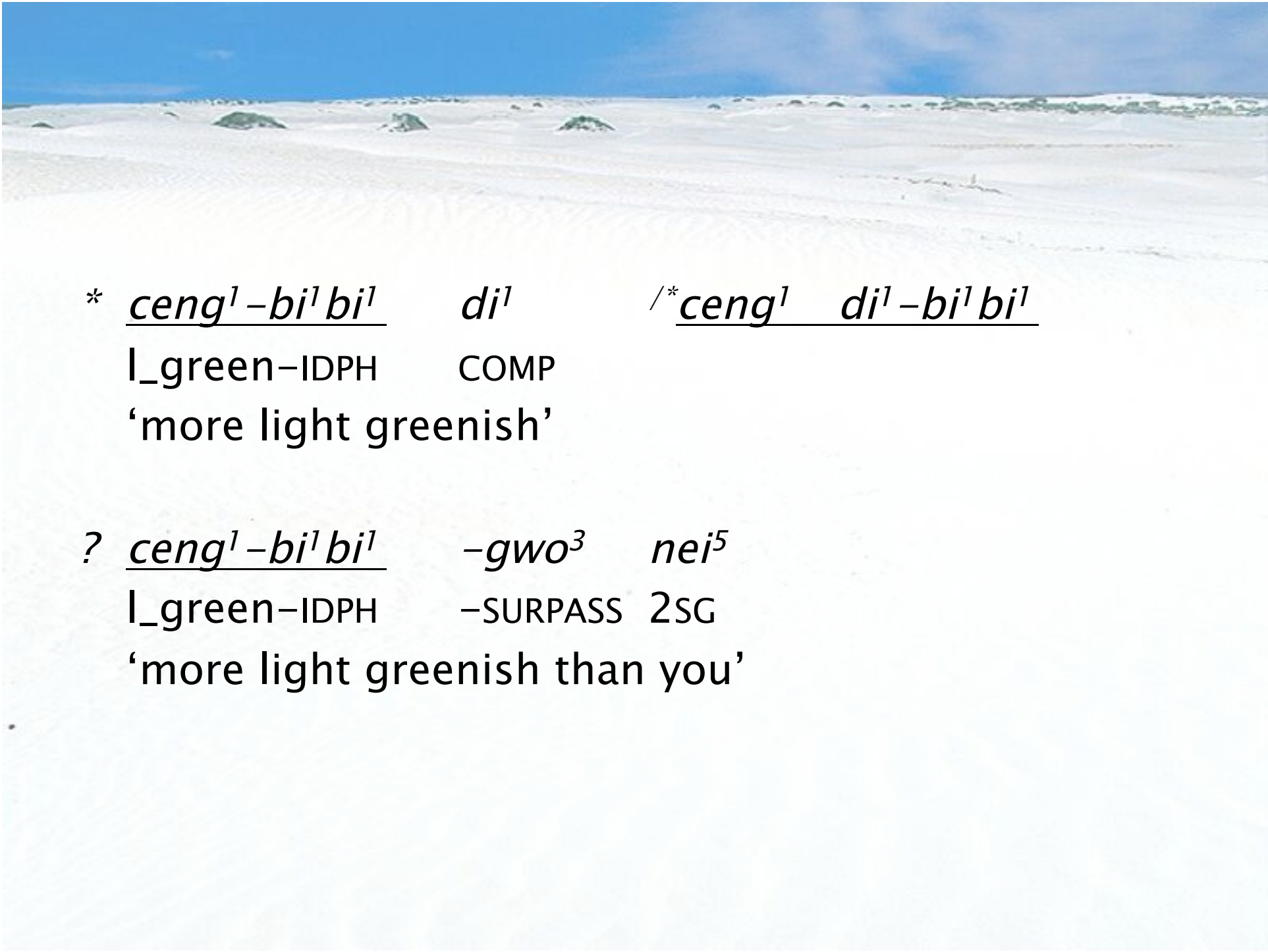
most I_green-IDPH MOD

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–bi¹ bi¹* *di¹* /**ceng¹ di¹–bi¹ bi¹*
I_green–IDPH COMP
‘more light greenish’

? *ceng¹–bi¹ bi¹* *–gwo³ nei⁵*
I_green–IDPH –SURPASS 2SG
‘more light greenish than you’

Other languages in the region

Southern Pinghua:

(c.f. Cantonese)

wat²–lut⁵lut⁵

‘smooth’

wat²–lyt⁵lyt⁵

pɛk²²–ɬut⁵ɬut⁵

‘white (skin; adult)’

pak²²–syt⁵syt⁵

pɛk²²–ɬɔt⁵ɬɔt⁵

‘white (skin; child)’

ɬun⁵³–tap⁵tap⁵

‘sour (slight)’

syn⁵⁵–mei⁵⁵mei⁵⁵

ɬun⁵³–tau⁵³tau⁵³

‘sour (strong)’

ham¹¹–lak⁵lak⁵

‘salty’

ham¹¹–?

ɬɛi⁵⁵–niŋ⁵⁵niŋ⁵⁵

‘small’

sɛi³³–?



Shanghainese:

'tɕ^hiŋ-dʒidʒi 'greenish'

p^haŋ-toʔtoʔ 'fat looking'

p^haŋ-kuku 'fat and full' (Creamer 1991)

Fuchow/Hokchiu:

pa^{ʔ21}-ts^ha^{ʔ53}ts^ha^{ʔ212} 'very white'

(pa^{ʔ5} sia²¹² sia²¹² >)

pa^{ʔ21}-lia⁵³lia²¹² ~ sia²¹lia²¹-pa^{ʔ5} 'pale/tasteless'

ŋaiŋ²⁴²-k^hɕu^{ʔ24}k^hɕu^{ʔ24} 'hard'

ŋaiŋ²⁴²-tieu⁵⁵tieu⁵⁵ 'stiff' (Féng 1998)



N. Zhuang (Tai):

ndaem ndat ndat ‘black’

Lao (Tai):

jên3 còòj4 còòj4 *เย็นจ้อย* ‘cool’ (Enfield p.c.)

Kam (Kam-Sui):

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

Be:

’ban²⁴ kin¹¹ kin¹¹ ‘bright’ (Liǎng & Zhāng 1997:82)

‘Mulao’ (Kra):

ηau³³ ten³³ ten³³ ‘sweet’ (Bó 2003:80)



Kaili Hmong (Eastern Guizhou Hmong):

*fan*⁵⁵ *ka*³¹ *la*³¹ '(ugly) yellow' (Zhāng & Cáo 2005:134)

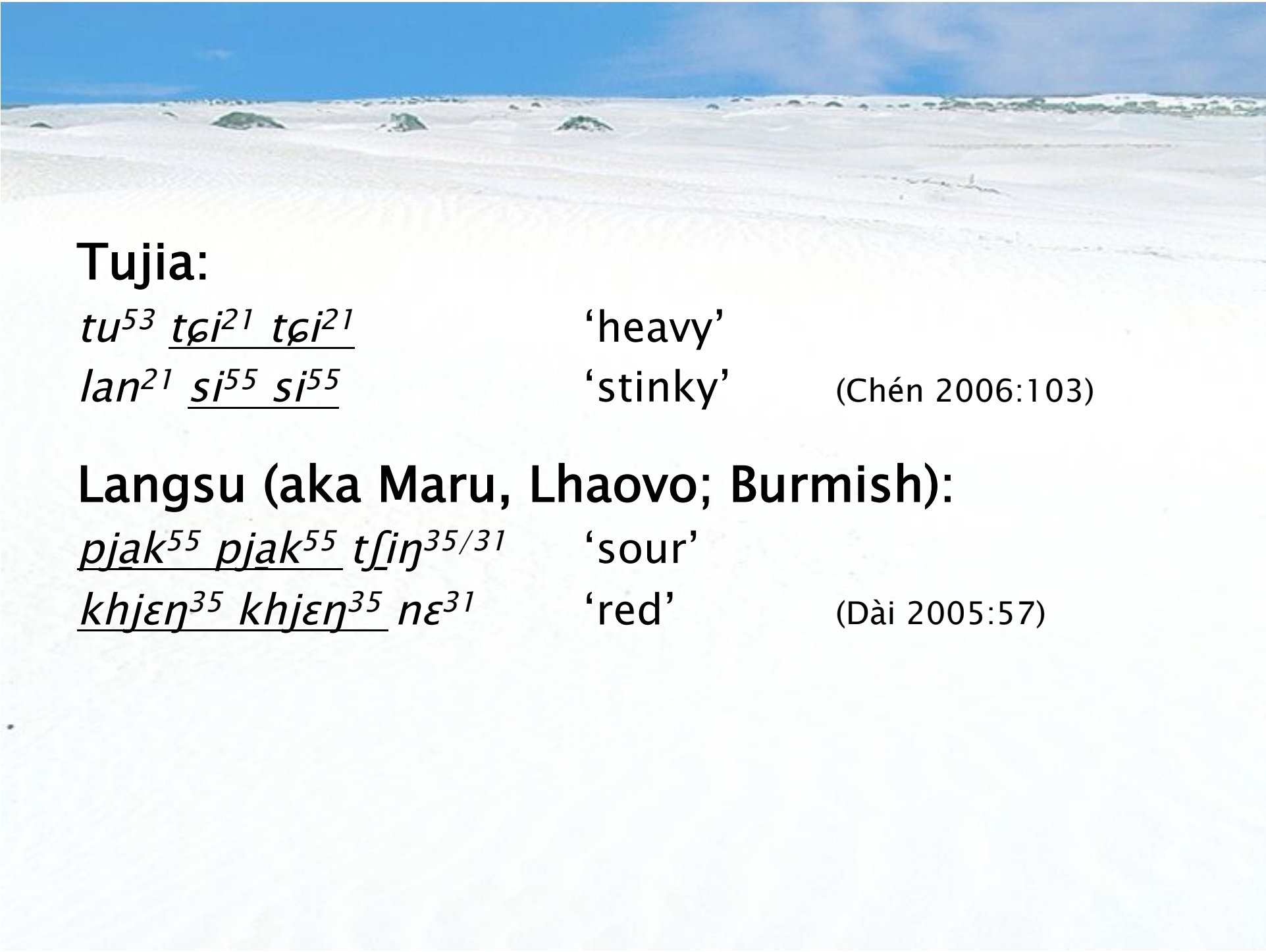
Vietnamese (Mon Khmer):

dài *lê* *thê* ~

dài *lướt* *thướt* 'long'

Mang (Mon Khmer):

*ʔe*⁵⁵ *lep*⁵¹ *lep*⁵¹ 'hard' (Gāo 2003:84)



Tujia:

*tu*⁵³ *tɕi*²¹ *tɕi*²¹

‘heavy’

*lan*²¹ *si*⁵⁵ *si*⁵⁵

‘stinky’

(Chén 2006:103)

Langsu (aka Maru, Lhaovo; Burmish):

*pjak*⁵⁵ *pjak*⁵⁵ *tʃin*^{35/31}

‘sour’

*khjɛŋ*³⁵ *khjɛŋ*³⁵ *nɛ*³¹

‘red’

(Dài 2005:57)



Tibetan (Bod, Tibeto–Burman):

dkar *khyugkhyug* དྲཱུག་ཅུག་ཅུག་ 'whitish (flashing light)'

dkar *chabchab* དྲཱུག་ཅབ་ཅབ་ 'whittish'

dkar *chemchem* དྲཱུག་ཅེས་ཅེས་ 'glittering / sparkling white'

(Goldstein 2001)

Idu (Northern Mishmi, Tibeto–Burman):

*ka*³³ *don*⁵⁵ *don*⁵⁵ 'bent'

*gu*³³ *tsu*⁵⁵ *tsu*⁵³ 'wrinkly' (Jiāng 2005:93)

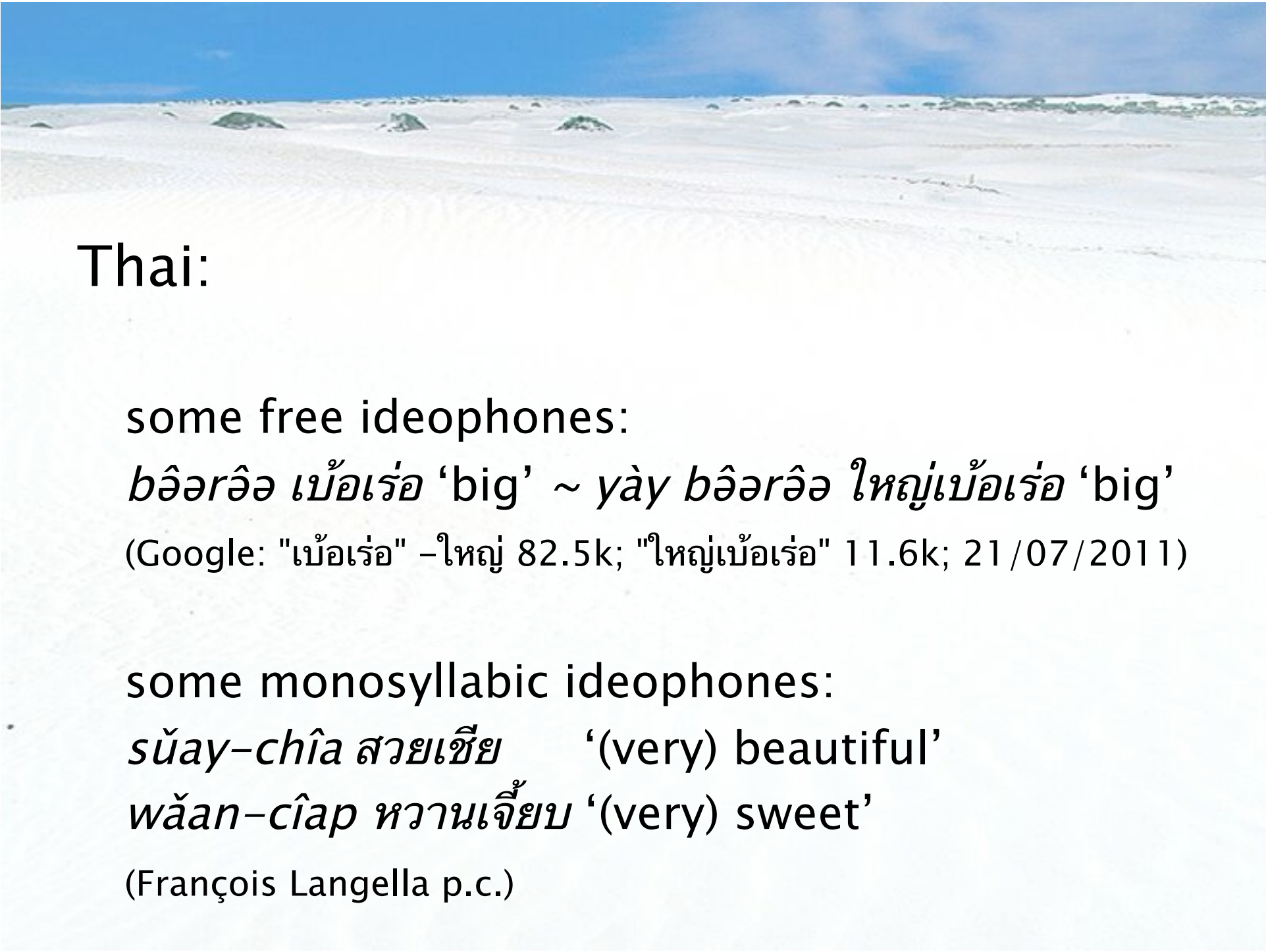
Some major differences

- In Vietnamese, the ideophones are not morphologically bound.

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

e.g. when modifying a head noun:

má đỏ ~ má hây hây ~ má đỏ hây hây
‘red cheek’



Thai:

some free ideophones:

bôarôo เบื่อเรือ ‘big’ ~ *yà y bôarôo* ใหญ่เบื่อเรือ ‘big’

(Google: "เบื่อเรือ" –ใหญ่ 82.5k; "ใหญ่เบื่อเรือ" 11.6k; 21/07/2011)

some monosyllabic ideophones:

sǎay-chîa สวยเขีย ‘(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

fan⁵⁵ (man¹¹) ka³¹la³¹

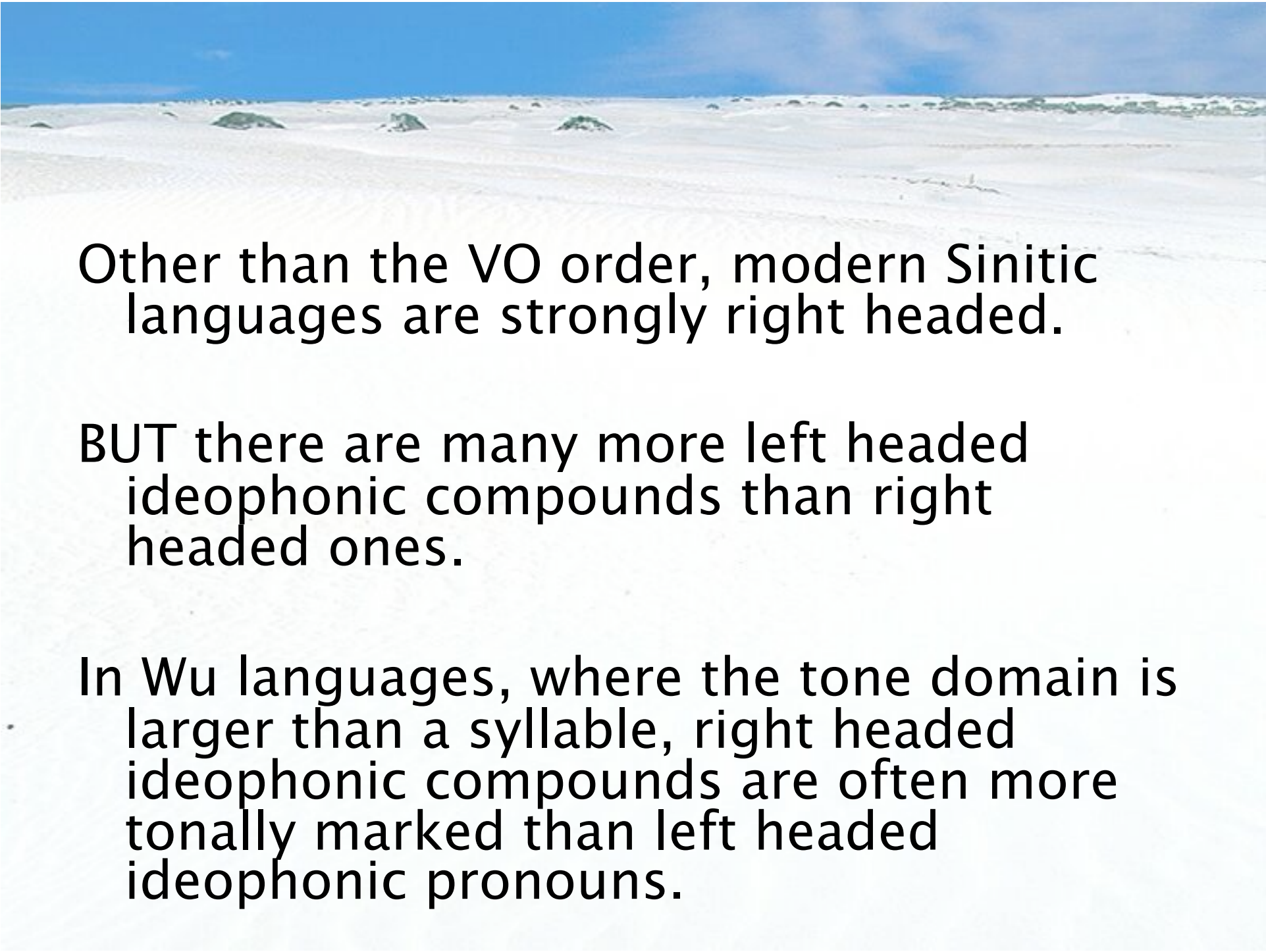
yellow (face) IDPH

‘(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

[ㄏ ㄊ ㄌ]:

[lã toʔtoʔ] ‘tactile cold’

[lã lili] ‘temp cold/
internal cold when sick’

[lã szsz] ‘temp cold’

[lã pinpin] ‘tactile ice
cold’ / ‘cold hue’ / ‘lack
of passion’

[lã sxsx] ‘getting cold in
the body’

[zaʔzaʔ][lã] ‘very cold’

['pinpin][lã] ~ ['pinpin lã]
‘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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