

A helpful guideline
based on areal typology
for describing
**Mainland Southeast
Asian Languages**

Alice Vittrant¹ & Justin Watkins²

¹Université Aix-Marseille (AMU) – CNRS-DDL
alice.vittrant@univ-amu.fr

²School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London
jw2@soas.ac.uk

Summary

- Aim of our talk

Vittrant, A. & Watkins J., (2018), « Appendix : Guideline to describe a South-East Asian language », in A. Vittrant, & J. Watkins (eds), *The Mainland Southeast Asia Linguistic Area*, Berlin : Mouton de Gruyter, p. 653-686

- Summary of our talk

1. Linguistic context of the last decades
 - Fieldwork, typology
 - Language contact
2. Our research on Southeast Asian languages
 - Authors background, experiences
 - MSEA linguistic area
3. Questioning the linguistic area notion
 - Debate on the notion
 - Relevancy of the notion
4. Structure of our guidelines

1. Linguistic context (XXIst century)

- Typology, Fieldwork and descriptive linguistics: ever-expanding domains

Typology



Textbooks and handbooks in Typology

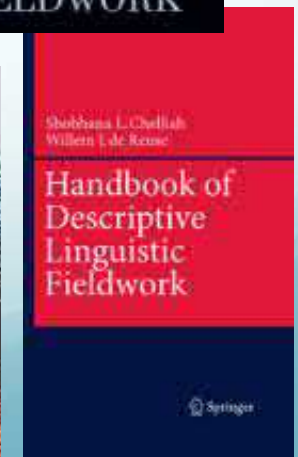
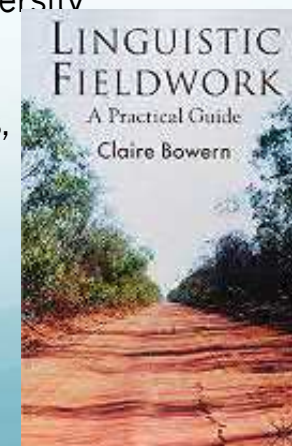
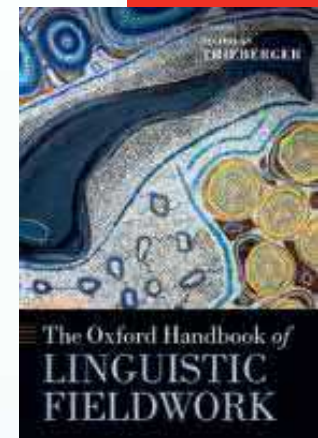
- Whaley, Lindsay J. *Introduction to typology: the unity and diversity of language*. Thousand Oaks, Etats-Unis d'Amérique, 1997.
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- Song, Jae Jung, éd. *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Typology*. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Velupillai, Viveka. *An introduction to linguistic typology*. Amsterdam, Pays-Bas, Etats-Unis d'Amérique, 2012.
- Moravcsik, Edith A. *Introducing language typology*. Cambridge, Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord, Pays multiples, 2013.
- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y., et R. M. W. Dixon, éd. *The Cambridge handbook of linguistic typology*. Cambridge, Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

1. Linguistic context (XXIst century)

- Typology, Fieldwork and descriptive linguistics: ever-expanding domains

Linguistic fieldwork: some Textbooks and Handbooks

- Newman, Paul, et Martha Ratliff. **Linguistic Fieldwork**. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Bower, Claire. **Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide**. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Newman, Paul. « **Fieldwork and Field Methods** in Linguistics ». *Language, Documentation & Conservation* 3, n° 1 (june 2009): 113-25.
- Chelliah, Shobhana Lakshmi, et Willem Joseph de Reuse. **Handbook of descriptive linguistic fieldwork**. Dordrecht Netherlands, Pays-Bas, 2011.
- Sakel, Jeanette, et Daniel Leonard Everett. **Linguistic Fieldwork: A Student Guide**. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Thieberger, Nick. **The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork**. Oxford Handbooks in Linguistics. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- ...



1. Linguistic context (XXIst century)

- Linguistics of language contact



Topics related to language contacts

Genetic linguistics & language contact

Typology & language contact

Grammatical theory & language contact

Mixed languages, language death & language contact

Convergence, areal linguistics & language contact

...

- S. G. Thomason and T. Kaufman (1988), *Language contact, creolization, and genetic linguistics*, Berkeley, USA: University of California Press
- Hickey, R. (ed), 2010, *Handbook of Language Contact*, Blackwell Publishing

2. What is behind this guideline?

- Authors background

Alice Vittrant

- PhD on Burmese TAM (comparison with Tibeto-Burman languages)
- fieldwork on Burmese dialects (Arakanese, Intha)
- Southeast Asian language (Hmong)
- descriptive linguistics & endangered languages
- typology

Justin Watkins

- PhD on Wa phonology
- teaching Burmese, Cambodian and linguistic
- Fieldwork on Southeast Asian Languages in Myanmar (Khamti, Sumtu, Sgaw Karen)



2. What is behind this guideline?

- Our experience with Tibeto-Burman languages

Burmese as a TB language

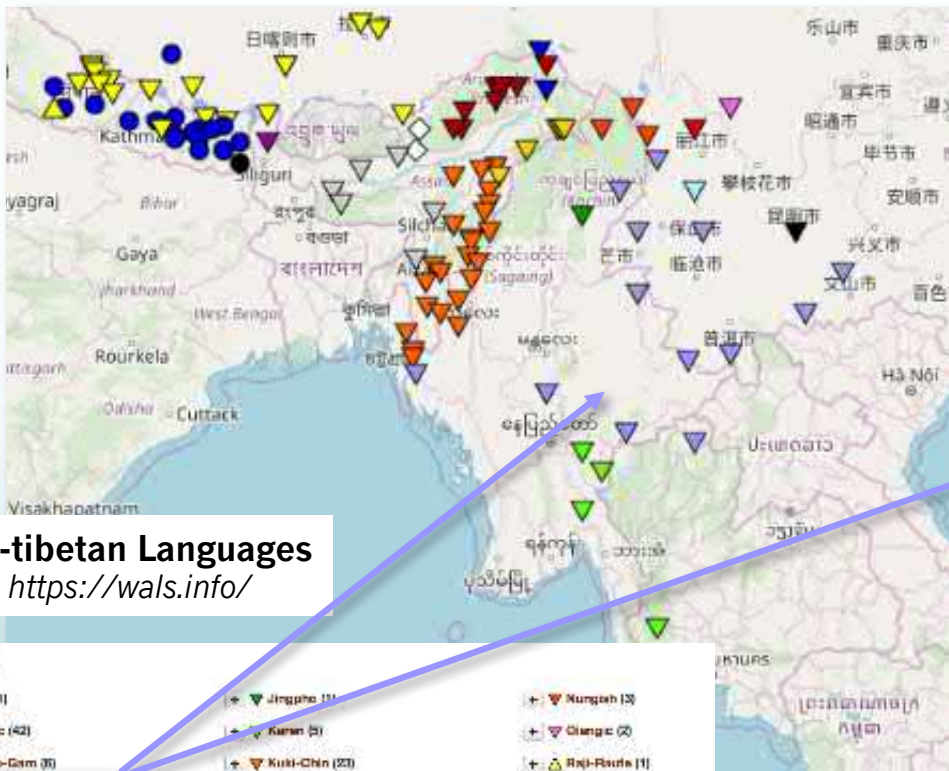
Lexical Item	Burmese Orthography	Transliteration & phonetics	Tibetan Orthography	Transliteration et phonetic	Reconstruction *proto Tibeto-Burman
hand	လက်	<lak> [lɛʔ]	ལག་པ་	<lag-pa> [lag-pa]	*g-lak
road	လမ်း	<lâm> [lɛ̃ ³]	ལམ་	<lam> [lam]	*lam
silver	ငွေ	<ŋwe> [ŋwe ²]	དངུས་	<dŋul> [ŋyl]	*d-ŋul
dog	ခွေး	<khwê> [khwe ³]	ཁྱི་	<khyi> [ci]	*khəy
1 ^e sg	ငါ	<ŋa> [ŋa ²]	ང་	<ŋa> [ŋa]	*ŋa
black	နက်	<nak> [nɛʔ]	ནག་ བོ་	<nag-po> [nagpo]	*s-nak
one	တစ်	<tac> [tiʔ]	གཅིག་	<gt'sig> [ɕik]	*g-t(y)ik
two	နှစ်	<hnac> [ŋiʔ]	གཉིས་	<gnyis> [ni]	*g-nit/nis
three	သုံး	<sûm> [θon ³]	གསུམ་	<gsum> [sum]	*gsum

Table 1: Burmese and Tibetan cognates (from Matisoff 2003)

2. What is behind this guideline?

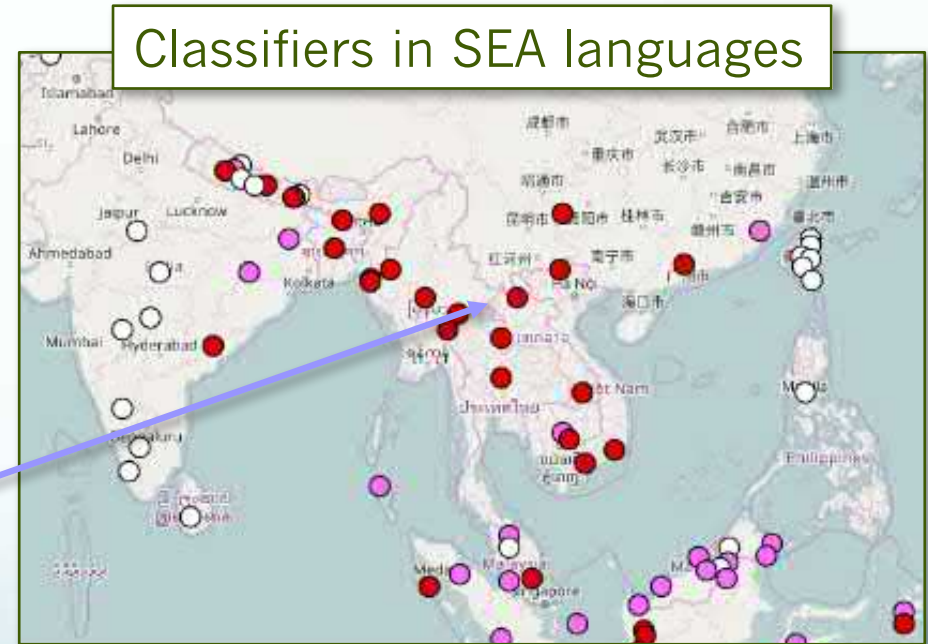
- Our experience with Tibeto-Burman languages

Burmese goes outside the Tibeto-Burman type



Sino-tibetan Languages
From <https://wals.info/>

Genera					
+	▼ Bai (1)	+	▼ Jingpho (1)	+	▼ Nungsh (3)
+	▼ Bedic (42)	+	▼ Karen (5)	+	▼ Chango (2)
+	▼ Indo-Gan (3)	+	▼ Kuki-Chin (23)	+	▼ Raji-Rauhe (1)
+	▼ Burmese-Lolo (13)	+	▼ Lepcha (1)	+	▼ Gyalmg (2)
+	▼ Chinese (10)	+	▼ Miskrami (18)	+	▼ Tani (1)
+	▼ Dimalic (1)	+	▼ Naxi (1)	+	▼ Western Arunachal (2)
+	▼ Digaroi (2)	+	▼ Northern Naga (1)		

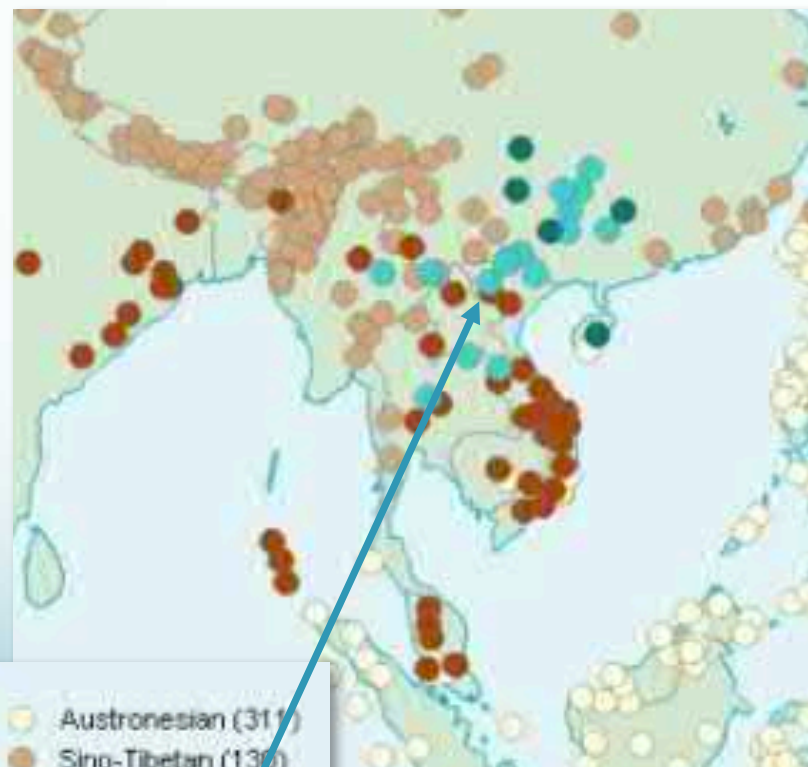


Limited or no CLF in Western Tibeto-Burman languages (*Tibet, Népal, North india*)

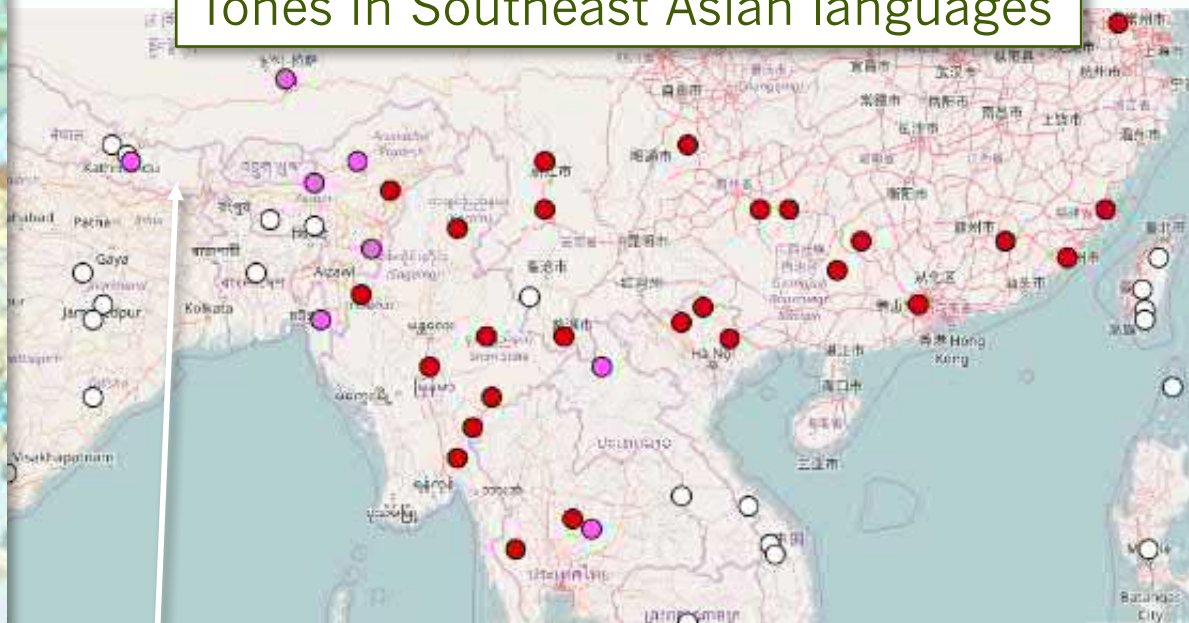
2. What is behind this guideline?

- Our experience of Southeast Asian languages

Lolo-Burmese languages as Southeast Asian Languages



Tones in Southeast Asian languages



Limited or no tone system in Western Tibeto-Burman languages (*Tibet, Népal, North india*)
Tones in Tai-Kadai and Lolo-Burmese Languages

2. What is behind our guidelines?

- Linguistic Area of Southeast Asia (SEA)

Structural similarities in non-affiliated languages

Henderson, E.J.A. (1965) The topography of certain phonetic and morphological characteristics of South East Asian languages, *Lingua*. 15,400–34.

See also **Clark** 1989, **Matisoff** 1986, 1991 or **Bisang** 1996...

Mainland Southeast Asian *Sprachbund* : first mentions

- **Matisoff**, J.A. (2001) Genetic versus Contact Relationship : Prosodic Diffusibility in South-East Asian Languages. In Aikhenvald, A.Y. and Dixon, R.M.W. (eds.) *Areal diffusion and genetic inheritance : problems in comparative linguistics*. Oxford, UK : Oxford University Press. pp. 291–327
- **Enfield**, N.J. (2005) Areal linguistics and Mainland Southeast Asia, *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 34,181–206.

New Descriptive works in Southeast Asia (SEA)

- Development in the linguistics of the SEA area (*Conferences & Publications*)
 - **Empirical researches**
 - Reference material (languages descriptions, grammars, sketches, dictionaries...)
- See *Enfield & Comrie (2015:10-13)* for details

3. Questioning the notion of Linguistic area

- Linguistic area : an issue in language contact

How to define a linguistic area (*sprachbund*)?

Key elements :

- geographical region (with shared cultural features)
- three or more languages
- shared structural features
- contact between the languages in the region
- not accident
- inheritance from a common ancestor

Criteria discussed

- Number of shared features
- Languages from distincts phylum or families
- Symetrical or asymetrical diffusion
- Boundaries/ limits of a linguistic area
- Relevancy and account for extralinguistic elements
-

Origin of the shared features ?

- evidence for non-inherited features,
- acquired by contact, evidence for diffusion

3. Questioning the notion of Linguistic area

- Linguistic area : an issue in language contact

Using the linguistic area (*Sprachbund*) notion

- **Extensive approach:**

Linguistics and extra-linguistic features

Cf. *Gil 2015 with the 'Mekong-Mamberamo Area'*

- Greetings (asking for the speaker destination)
- Passing gesture
- Lexical compound 'eye-day' ↔ sun
- Numeral CLF
- Isolating structure
- ...



The languages of **Nusantara** are commonly thought of as representing a progressive attenuation, dissipation, or shading out of the prototypical Mainland Southeast Asia linguistic profile. The more western parts of Nusantara are often viewed as an extension of the Mainland Southeast Asia linguistic area [...]

However, as one moves further down the Nusantara archipelago and away from Mainland Southeast Asia, the languages are generally seen to be shedding their Mainland Southeast Asian characteristics and taking on those of neighbouring linguistic areas. To the north, the languages of northern Borneo and Sulawesi have been noted to bear a closer typological resemblance to those of the Philippines. (Gil, 2015:262)

3. Questioning the notion of Linguistic area

- Linguistic area : an issue in language contact

Using the linguistic area (*Sprachbund*) notion

- **Extensive approach:** Linguistics and extra-linguistic features
Cf. Gil 2015 with the 'Mekong-Mamberamo Area'



Campbell & al 2006

- **Historicist approach :**

« Circumstantialist areal linguistics has been criticised, since it does not eliminate chance, universals, and possibly undetected genetic relationships as alternative possible explanations for shared traits. The historicist approach seeks concrete evidence showing that the shared traits are diffused ». (Campbell, 2006a : 458)

➤ Focus on borrowings themselves and their path diffusion

3. Questioning the notion of Linguistic area

- Linguistic area : an issue in language contact

Using the linguistic area (*Sprachbund*) notion :

Myusken et al. 2015

Quantitative Approach : quantifying measures relating to *Sprachbund* phenomena

- **Bottom-up approach** : looking for similarities between the languages of a particular region, similarities which cannot be explained through common ancestry or through typological pressure or chance (*most of the works*)
- **Top-down approach** : take a preselected, independent, and supposedly cross-linguistically valid set of features, and then try to determine whether the distribution of these features shows areal bias, in terms of the geographic density of particular feature specifications

➤ Define how much a language belong to an area
'soft 'or 'gradient' boundaries
total convergence or cherry picked convergence

3. Questioning the notion of Linguistic area

- Linguistic area : an issue in language contact

Using the linguistic area (*Sprachbund*) notion :

- **Extensive approach:** Linguistics and extra-linguistic features
Cf. Gil 2015 with the 'Mekong-Mamberamo Area'
- **Historicist approach :** borrowings and path diffusion
Cf. Campbell & al 2006
- **Quantitative approach :** quantifying measures relating to Sprachbund phenomena
Cf. Muysken & al 2015 on Guapore-Mamoré Area

⇒ *Other and less restricted denominations :
zones of contact-induced structural convergence
(Bisang 2006:96)*

⇒ *Degree of membership
(with central languages /peripheral languages)*

3. Questioning the notion of Linguistic area

- Linguistic area : a relevant notion for language description

Predictive power of the linguistic area (*Sprachbund*) notion :

Illustration

Fieldwork in North Vietnam on an endangered language

- First fieldwork (2010)
- Unknown affiliation (but Hmong-Mien affiliation suspected)
- Elicitation task (EFEO-CNRS-SOAS list – see Pain & al 2016)

Frederic Pain, Michel Ferlus, Alexis Michaud, Thị Thu Hà Phạm, Ryan Gehrman. *EFEO-CNRS-SOAS Word List for Linguistic Fieldwork in Southeast Asia*. 2016. <halshs-01068533v2>

Eliciting basic nominal words (*animals*)

Result : bisyllabic words with recurrent first syllables

(cf. table 2)

> puzzling in a SEA language

(tendency toward monosyllabicity, CLF)

> motivated us to develop this guideline **16**



3. Questioning the notion of Linguistic area

- Linguistic area : a relevant notion for language description

Predictive power of a linguistic area : Hmong Bjo description

First result : bisyllabiques words with recurrent first syllables

Revision in the light of our knowledge of areal common features

Table 2: elicitation in Hmong Bjo

(1)	N° item	signification	first transcription		analysis & revision of the transcription		
	66.	fish	[t ⁵⁵ m ³² bja ³²]	>	t ⁵⁵ . m ³² bja ³² CLF . fish	'the fish'	fish ⇔ m ³² bja ³²
	65.	dog	[t ⁵⁵ d ³³ a ³³]				dog ⇔ (d~)d ³³ a ³³
	74.	pig	[t ⁵⁵ m ²² bo ²²]				pig ⇔ m ²² bo ²²
	75.	chicken	[t ⁵⁵ q ⁵⁵ ε ⁵⁵]				chicken ⇔ q ⁵⁵ ε ⁵⁵
	104.	tree	[t ⁵⁵ ho ⁵⁵]				tree ⇔ ho ⁵⁵
	87.	flower	[n ⁵⁵ p ³³ ā ³³]	>	n ⁵⁵ . p ³³ ā ³³ CLF . flower	'the flower'	flower ⇔ p ³³ ā ³³
		glass, cup	[n ⁵⁵ kh ⁵⁵ o ⁵⁵]				glass, cup ⇔ kh ⁵⁵ o ⁵⁵
		hammock	[n ⁵⁵ t ²² ɔ ²²]				hammock ⇔ t ²² ɔ ²²
	118.	house	[n ^{55(m)} pja ³³]				house ⇔ pja ³³
	159.	fruit	[n ⁵⁵ tse ²²]				fruit ⇔ tse ²²

Some Mopiu [Hmong Bjo] recordings are accessible on CoCoon.
<https://cococon.huma-num.fr>

4. Outline of our guideline

- Suggested table of contents

Five (traditional) main sections

- I- General information (affiliation, localisation)
- II-Phononetics, phonology
- III-Morphology
- IV- Grammar and Syntaxe
- V- Semantics & Pragmatics

- While describing the language, pay attention to the 42 recurrent features found in languages of the area, and evaluate their vitality/ pervasiveness

	CHAM (môn-khmer)	KHUMI (tibéto-birman)	BIRMAN (tibéto-birman)	MONG LENG (hmong-mien)
Use of classifiers	++	+	+++	+++
Classifiers used in counting	+	-	+++	++
Classifiers used with demonstratives	++	-	-	++
Adjectival verbs	+++	+++	+++	+++
Grammatical number	-	+	+	-
Inflection of verbs	-	++	-	-

Table 3: comparison of grammatical shared features in languages of the area

4. Outline of our guideline

- Examining 42 recurrent features

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Phonetics	Lexical tone or register
Phonetics	Back unrounded vowels
Phonetics	Initial velar nasal
Phonetics	Implosive consonants
Phonetics	Sesquisyllabic structures
Morphology	Tendency towards monosyllabicity
Morphology	Tendency to form compounds
Morphology	Tendency towards isolating (rather than affixation)
Morphology	Psycho-collocations
Morphology	Elaborate expressions
Morphology	Reduplication generally
Morphology	Reduplication of nouns
Morphology	Reduplication of verbs
Grammar	Use of classifiers
Grammar	Classifiers used in counting
Grammar	Classifiers used with demonstratives
Grammar	Adjectival verbs
Grammar	Grammatical number
Grammar	Inflection of verbs
Grammar	Use of tense/aspect markers
Grammar	Use of verb plural markers

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Grammar	Grammaticalization of GET/ OBTAIN (potential mod. resultative/perfect aspect)
Grammar	Grammaticalization of PUT, SET (completed/resultative aspect)
Grammar	Grammaticalization of GIVE (causative, benefactive; preposition)
Grammar	Grammaticalization of FINISH (perfective/ complete aspect; conjunction/temporal subordinator)
Grammar	Grammaticalization of directional verbs e.g. GO / COME (allative, venitive)
Grammar	Grammaticalization of SEE, WATCH (temptative)
Grammar	Grammaticalization of STAY, REMAIN (progressive <u>and</u> continuous, durative aspects)
Grammar	Serial verb constructions
Syntax	Verb precedes object (VO)
Syntax	Auxiliary precedes verb
Syntax	Preposition precedes noun
Syntax	Noun precedes adjective
Syntax	Noun precedes demonstrative
Syntax	Noun precedes genitive
Syntax	Noun precedes relative clause
Syntax	Use of topic-comment structures
Syntax	Ellipsis of arguments known from context
Lexical semantics	Specific terms for forms of rice
Pragmatics	Use of utterance-final pragmatic particles
Pragmatics	Encoding of politeness
Pragmatics	Encoding of honorifics

5. Conclusion

- ❑ Vittrant, A. & Watkins J., (2019), « Appendix : Guideline to describe a South-East Asian language », in A. Vittrant, & J. Watkins (eds), *The Mainland Southeast Asia Linguistic Area*, Berlin : Mouton de Gruyter, p. 653-686
- ❑ ONLINE : <http://tulquest.huma-num.fr/>

Access to our guideline

This website is an interactive space for sharing linguistic questionnaires and elicitation stimuli. The questionnaires are categorized according to Category (areal, metalinguistic, linguistic subfield, type of data, medium) and associated with metadata and contextual material (articles on the historical development of the questionnaire and critical review), as well as user comments.



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