

# Measuring Language Similarities

Michael Cysouw  
Geneling, 17 Juli 2006



# Preamble

- Measuring language similarities is independent of their interpretation
  - ▶ Genealogical Relationship ?
  - ▶ Borrowing ?
  - ▶ Human Language Universal ?
- It is a separate research questions which similarities should have what interpretation

# Method of comparison depends on datastructure

	<b>Primary data</b> Elements of languages	<b>Secondary data</b> Statements about languages
<b>Monolingual data</b>	Utterances	Lexemes
	Text	Dictionary
		Grammar

# Measurements on Monolingual Datasources

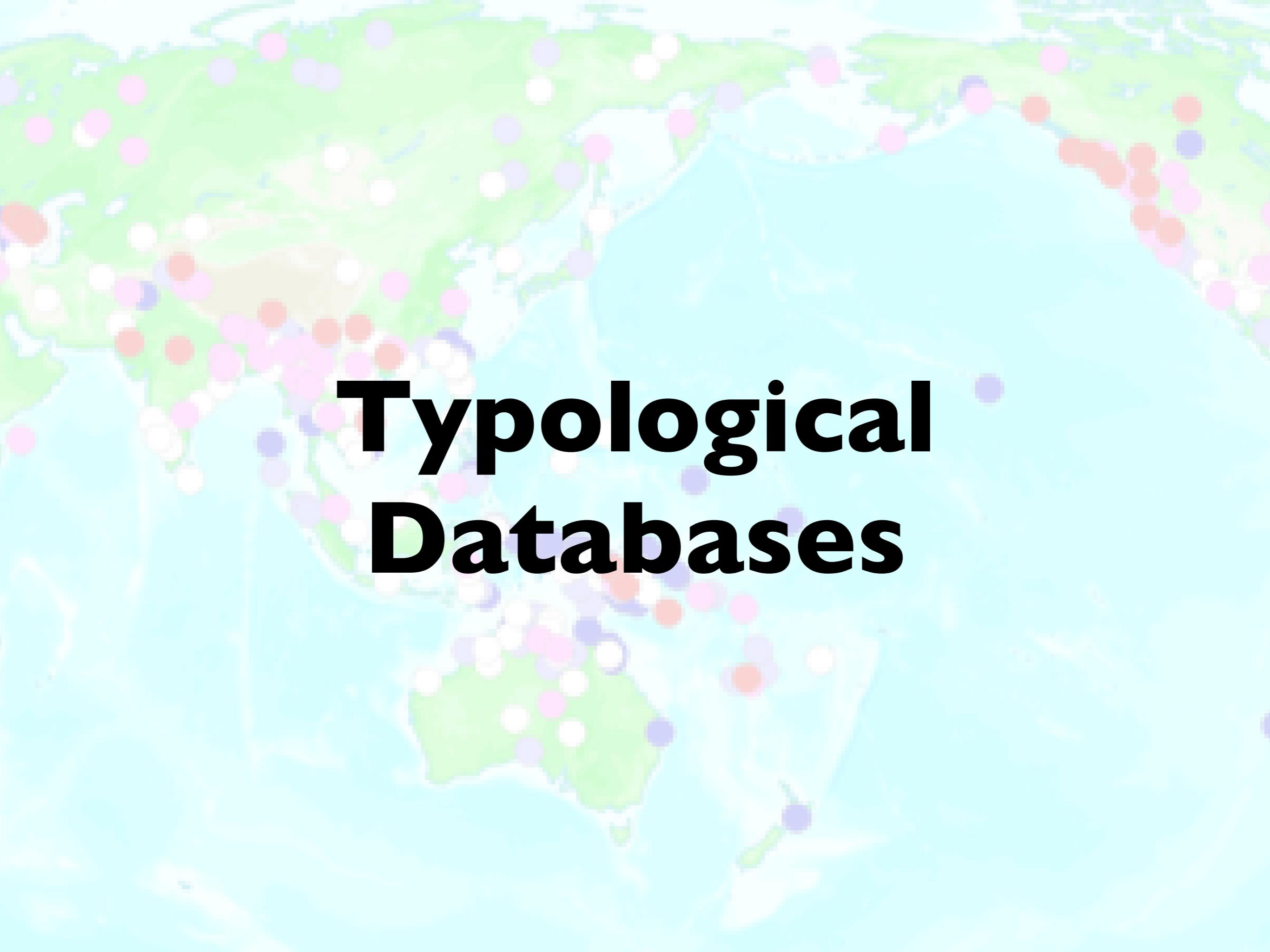
- Textcounts, e.g.:
  - ▶ Greenberg's morphological indices
  - ▶ Givón's anaphorical distance
  - ▶ Bickel's referential density
- Gradient Grammatical Indices, e.g.:
  - ▶ Maddieson's number of consonants
  - ▶ Bickel's index of inflectional synthesis
- Dictionary counts ?

# Method of comparison depends on datastructure

	<b>Primary data</b> Elements of languages	<b>Secondary data</b> Statements about languages
<b>Monolingual data</b>	Utterances	Lexemes
	Text	Dictionary
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# Method of comparison depends on datastructure

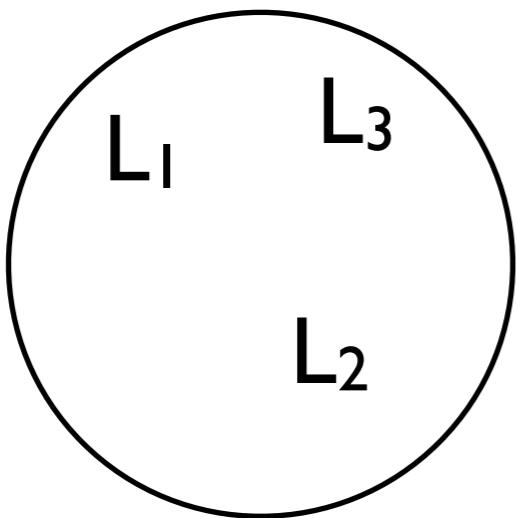
	<b>Primary data</b> Elements of languages	<b>Secondary data</b> Statements about languages
<b>Monolingual data</b>	Utterances	Lexemes
<b>Comparative data</b>	Text	Dictionary
Contextually situated exemplars	Wordlists	Grammar
		Typological databases



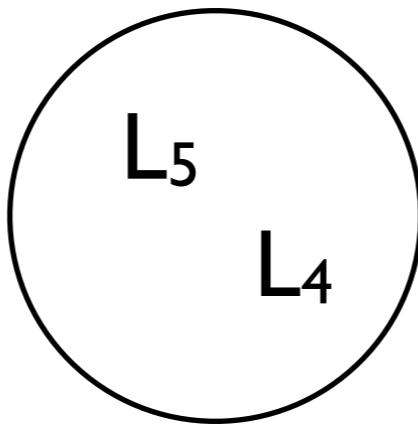
# Typological Databases

# Typology: Grouping of Languages into Types

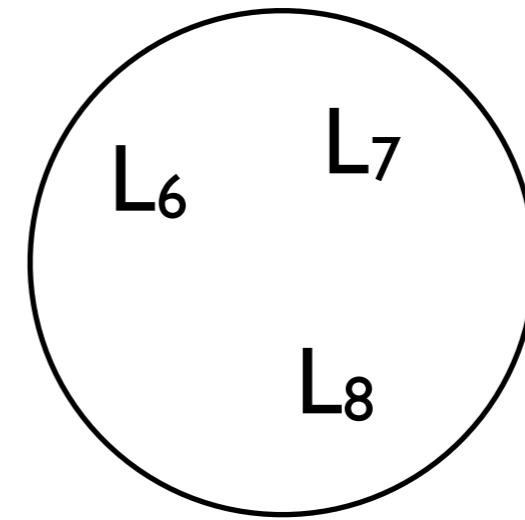
Type A



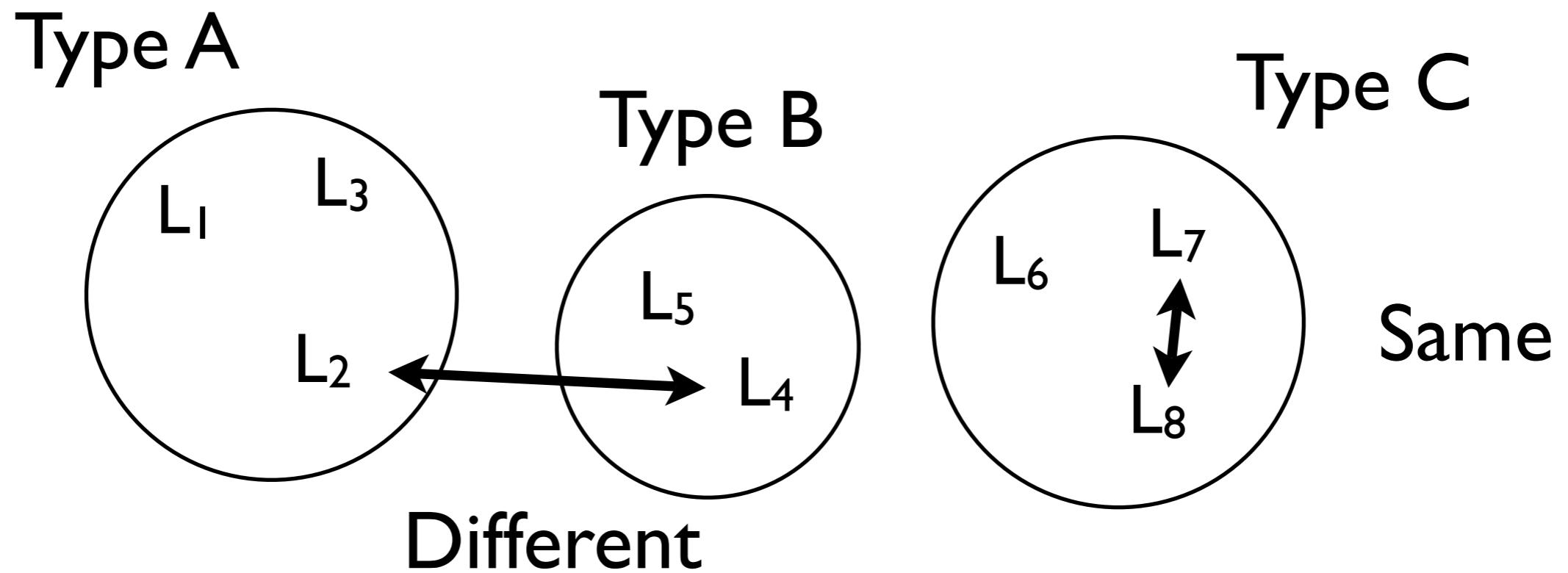
Type B



Type C



# Little Information ...



*We want more fine-grained  
measurements of similarity !*

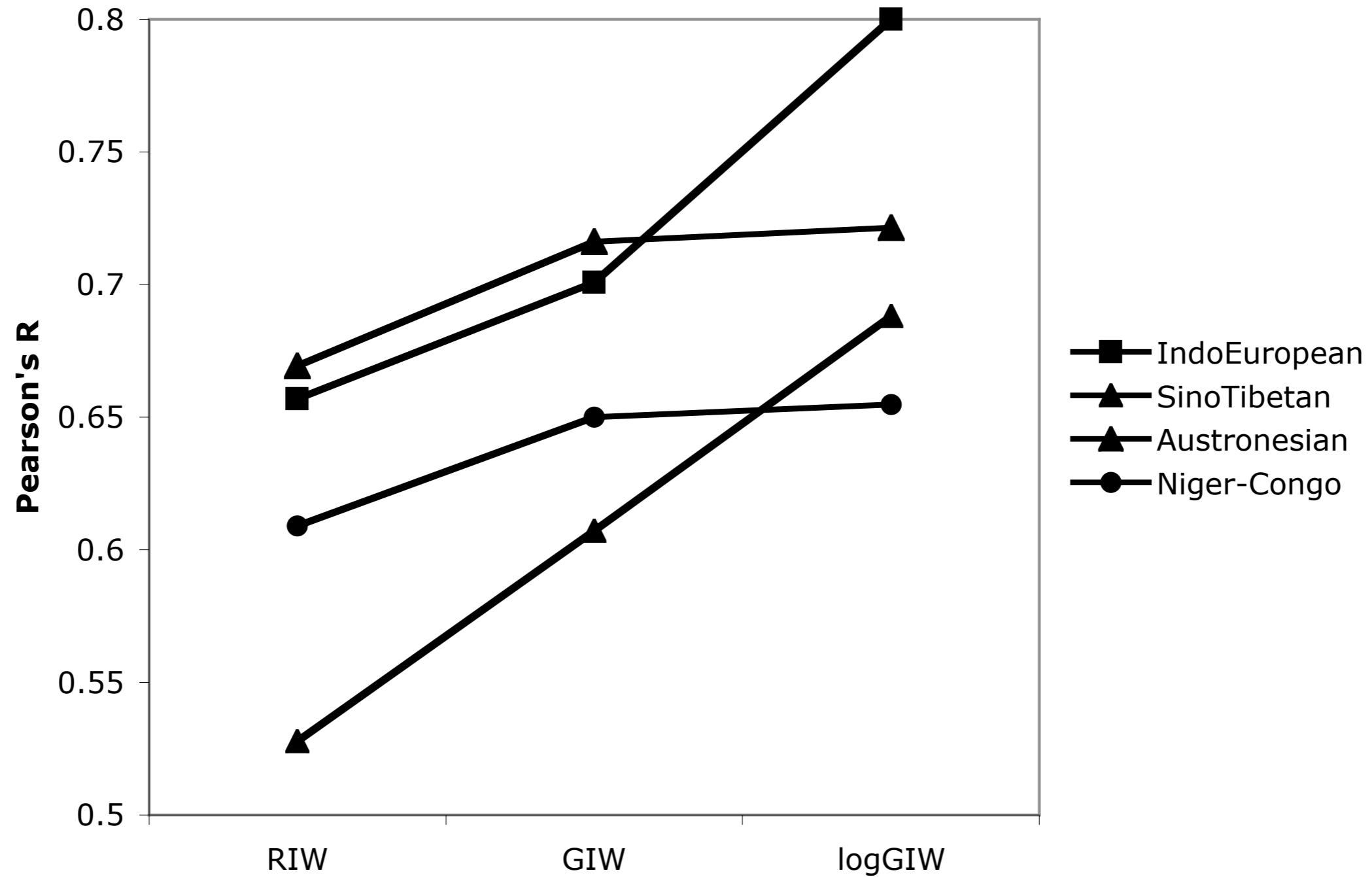
# Solution: Use many Typologies (think: WALS)

- Measures of similarity between  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  for a set of  $W$  typologies:
  - ▶  $S(L_1, L_2) = \# \text{ Similarities}$
  - ▶  $S(L_1, L_2) = W - \# \text{ Differences}$
  - ▶  $S(L_1, L_2) = \# \text{ Similarities} / \# \text{ Data available for both}$
  - ▶  $S(L_1, L_2) = \# \text{ Similarities} / (\# \text{ Similarities} + \# \text{ Differences})$
  - ▶ ‘Relativer Identitätswert’ (Goebl 1984)

# Improvement for Similarities

- Unusual types are more indicative of similarity:
  - ▶ Instead of counting every similarity as ‘1’
  - ▶ use:  $1 - (\text{fraction having this type})$
  - ▶ ‘Gewichteter Identitätswert’ (Goebel 1984)
  - ▶ This idea is related to statistical information
  - ▶ use:  $-\log(\text{fraction having this type})$

# Specifying Similarities



# Improving Differences

- $S(L_1, L_2) = \frac{\# \text{ Similarities}}{\# \text{ Similarities} + \# \text{ Differences}}$
- Instead of counting every differences as ‘1’, take into account that some types are more similar to each other than others



LANGUAGE VIEWER

COMPOSER

# WALS the Feature Viewer

SHOW MAP

select a feature

- ▶ thematically
- ▶ alphabetically
- ▶ user-defined

SHRINK LIST

search for a feature

51

SEARCH

FEATURE PROFILE area: Nominal Categories

## 51. Position of Case Affixes

Author: Matthew S. Dryer

934 languages

DESCRIPTION

symbol:	include:	click to list languages below [no. of lgs : of genera : of families]	Merge:	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Case suffixes [431:174:90]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Case prefixes [35:19:14]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>								
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Case tone [4:2:1]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Case stem change [2:1:1]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Mixed morphological case [8:7:6]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Postpositional clitics [95:59:36]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Prepositional clitics [15:10:8]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>								
	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Inpositional clitics [6:3:1]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. No case affixes or adpositional clitics [338:145:56]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

arrange the languages by

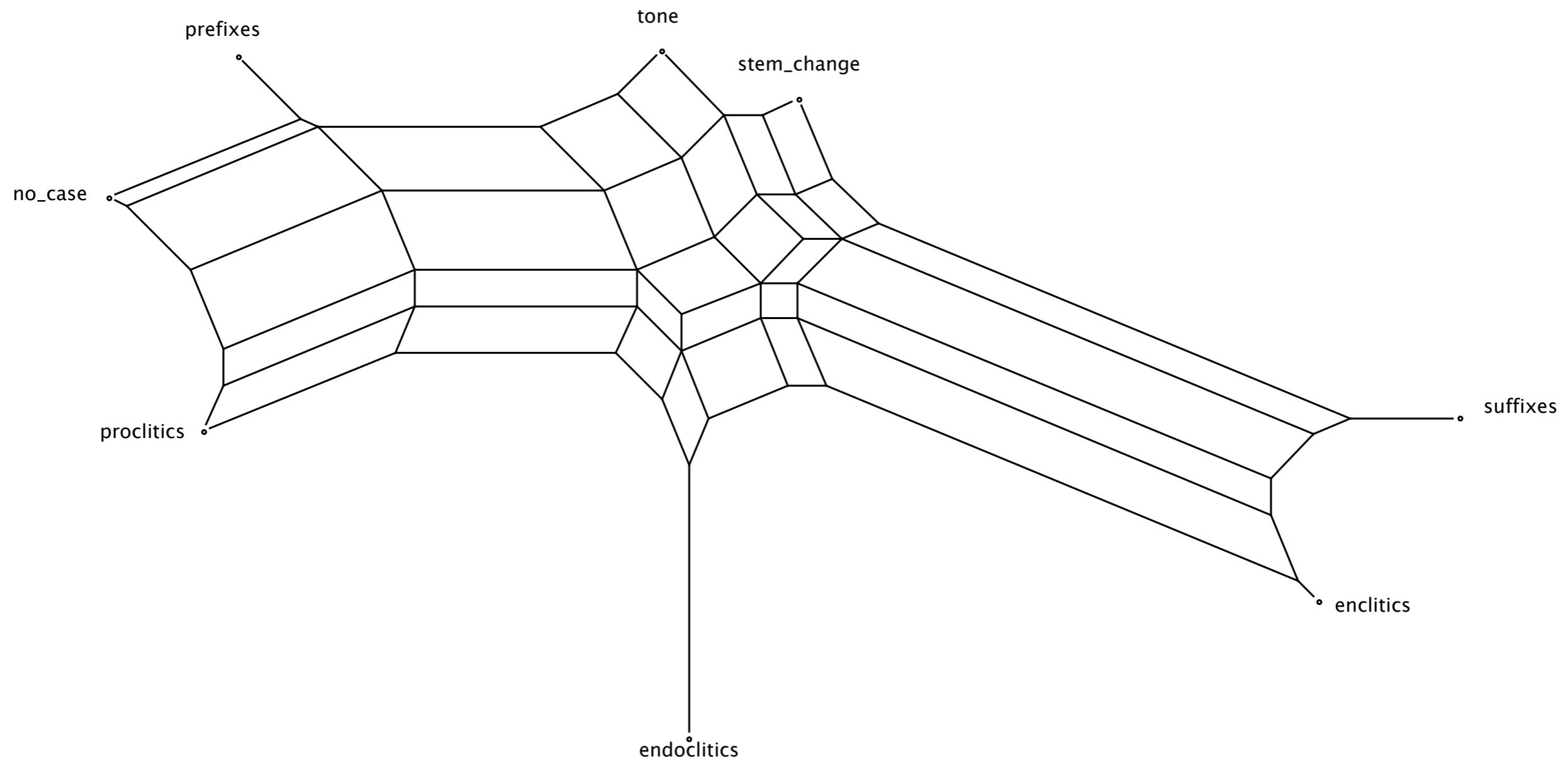
languages ▾

COPY LIST

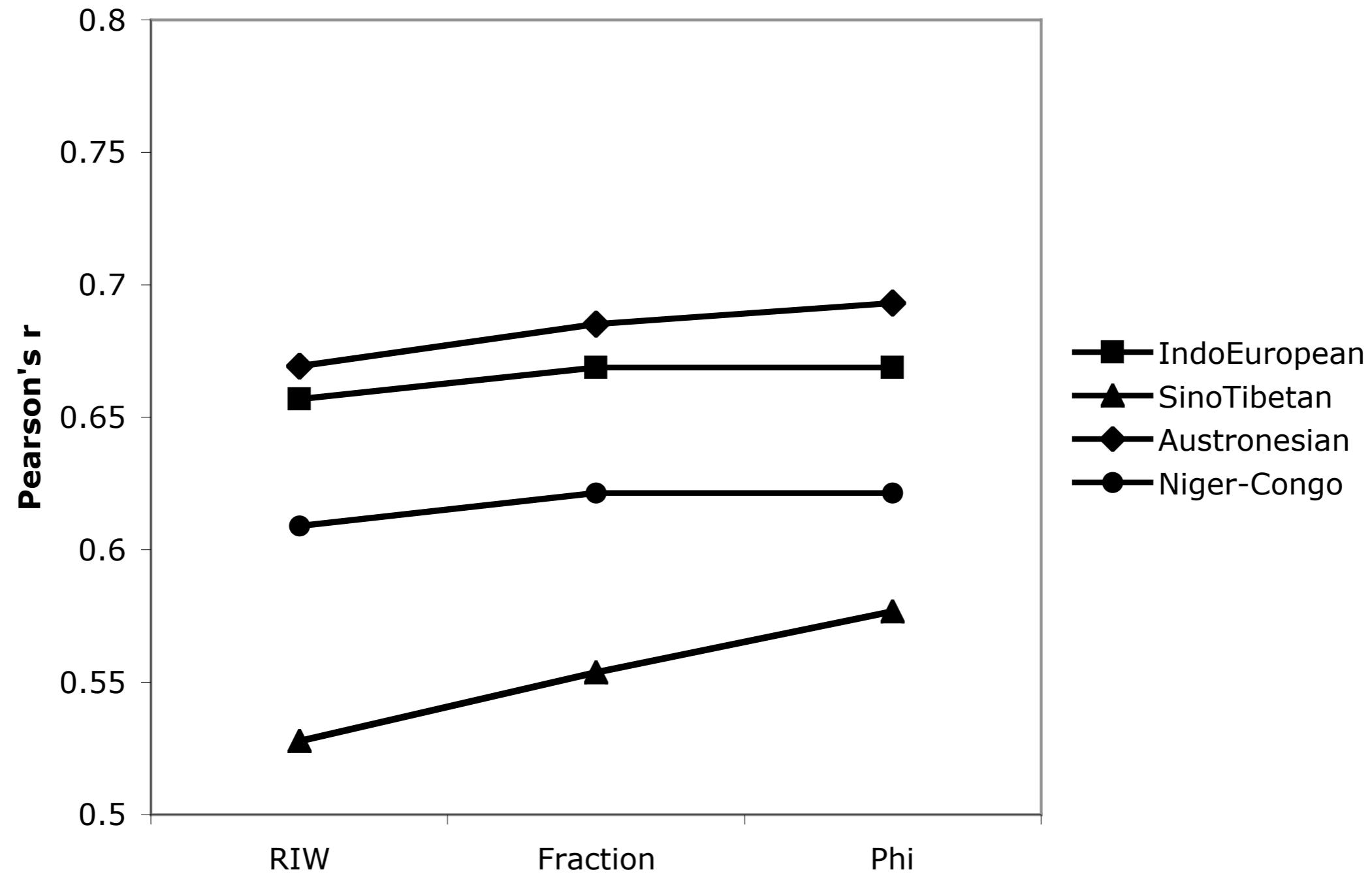
# Type Similarities

	suffix	prefix	tone	stem	mixed	enclit	proclit	endo	no
suffixes	1	0.04	0.67	0.61	0.36	0.80	0.18	0.26	0.00
prefixes	0.04	1	0.72	0.74	0.88	0.21	0.62	0.48	0.88
tone	0.67	0.72	1	0.77	0.75	0.43	0.52	0.53	0.74
stem_change	0.61	0.74	0.77	1	0.76	0.48	0.53	0.53	0.64
mixed	0.36	0.88	0.75	0.76	1	0.29	0.96	0.52	0.86
enclitics	0.80	0.21	0.43	0.48	0.29	1	0.26	0.43	0.18
proclitics	0.18	0.62	0.52	0.53	0.96	0.26	1	0.52	0.89
endoclitics	0.26	0.48	0.53	0.53	0.52	0.43	0.52	1	0.29
no_case	0.00	0.88	0.74	0.64	0.86	0.18	0.89	0.29	1

# Network of Types



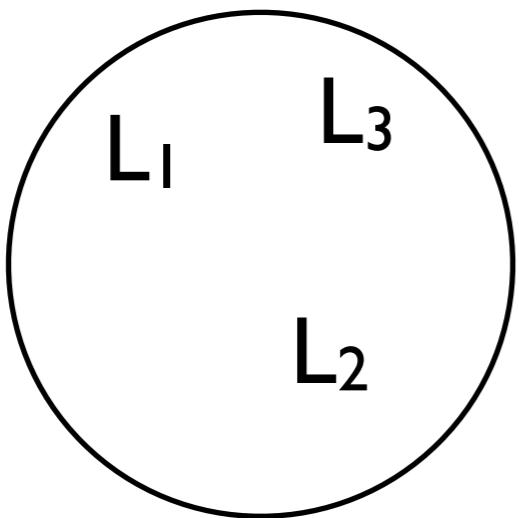
# Specifying Differences



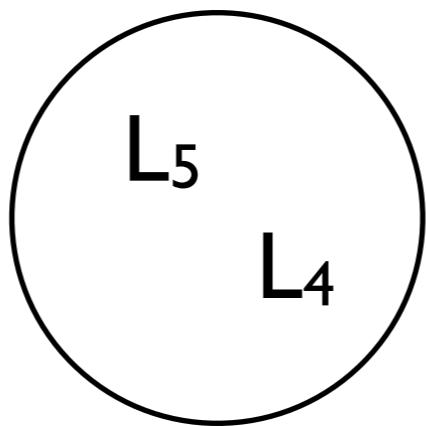
# Further Improvements

- Combine both of these improvement (?)
- Investigate which typologies are most strongly linked to goal at hand:
  - ▶ genealogically stable features
  - ▶ less likely borrowable features
- Make finer grained typologies!

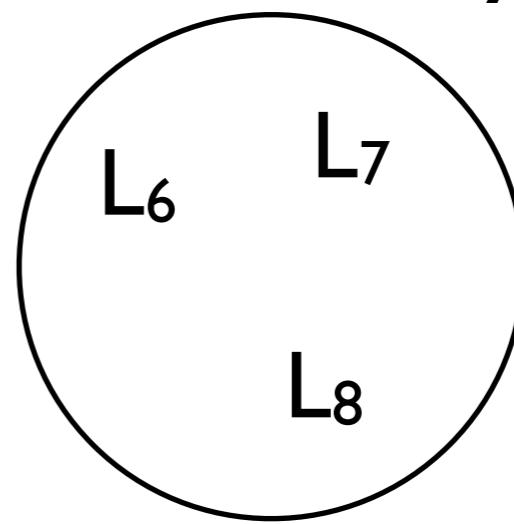
Type A



Type B



Type C







# Type A

# Type B

# Type C

# Type A

# Type B

# Type C

Type A

Type B

Type C

	$L_1$	$L_2$	$L_3$	$L_4$	$L_5$	$L_6$	$L_7$	$L_8$	...
$L_1$				0	0	0	0	0	
$L_2$				0	0	0	0	0	
$L_3$				0	0	0	0	0	
$L_4$	0	0	0			0	0	0	
$L_5$	0	0	0			0	0	0	
$L_6$	0	0	0	0	0				
$L_7$	0	0	0	0	0				
$L_8$	0	0	0	0	0				
...									

Undifferentiated Typology

Type A

Type B

Type C

	L <sub>1</sub>	L <sub>2</sub>	L <sub>3</sub>	L <sub>4</sub>	L <sub>5</sub>	L <sub>6</sub>	L <sub>7</sub>	L <sub>8</sub>	...
L <sub>1</sub>	I	I	I	0.37	0.37	0.28	0.28	0.28	
L <sub>2</sub>	I	I	I	0.37	0.37	0.28	0.28	0.28	
L <sub>3</sub>	I	I	I	0.37	0.37	0.28	0.28	0.28	
L <sub>4</sub>	0.37	0.37	0.37	I	I	0.58	0.58	0.58	
L <sub>5</sub>	0.37	0.37	0.37	I	I	0.58	0.58	0.58	
L <sub>6</sub>	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.58	0.58	I	I	I	
L <sub>7</sub>	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.58	0.58	I	I	I	
L <sub>8</sub>	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.58	0.58	I	I	I	
...									

Differentiated Typology

	L <sub>1</sub>	L <sub>2</sub>	L <sub>3</sub>	L <sub>4</sub>	L <sub>5</sub>	L <sub>6</sub>	L <sub>7</sub>	L <sub>8</sub>	...
L <sub>1</sub>	1	0.55	0.72	0.31	0.70	0.61	0.50	0.58	
L <sub>2</sub>	0.55	1	0.55	0.31	0.40	0.44	0.31	0.48	
L <sub>3</sub>	0.72	0.55	1	0.29	0.53	0.51	0.48	0.60	
L <sub>4</sub>	0.31	0.31	0.29	1	0.38	0.36	0.26	0.27	
L <sub>5</sub>	0.70	0.40	0.53	0.38	1	0.64	0.51	0.46	
L <sub>6</sub>	0.61	0.44	0.51	0.36	0.64	1	0.57	0.43	
L <sub>7</sub>	0.50	0.31	0.48	0.26	0.51	0.57	1	0.47	
L <sub>8</sub>	0.58	0.48	0.60	0.27	0.46	0.43	0.47	1	
...									

‘Deconstructed’ Typology, or a ‘Typology without Types’

# **Contextually Situated Exemplars**

# Contextually Situated Exemplars ?

- Choose a domain to make a typology
- Choose a (large) set of **situations in context** that fit into the domain
- Investigate these situations in all languages to compare
- Easy way: use existing translations ('parallel texts')

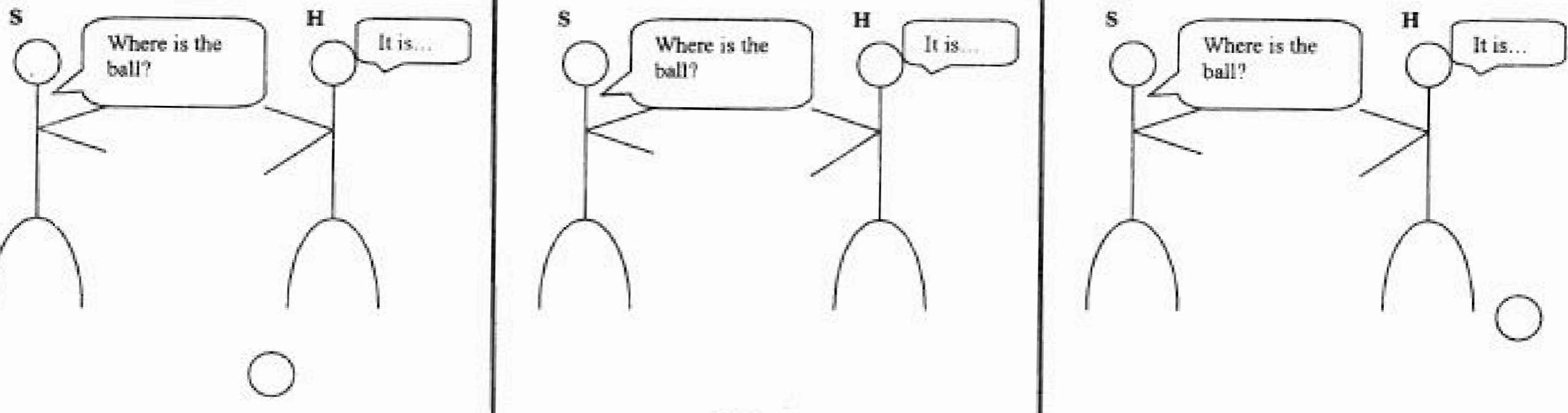
## Appendix

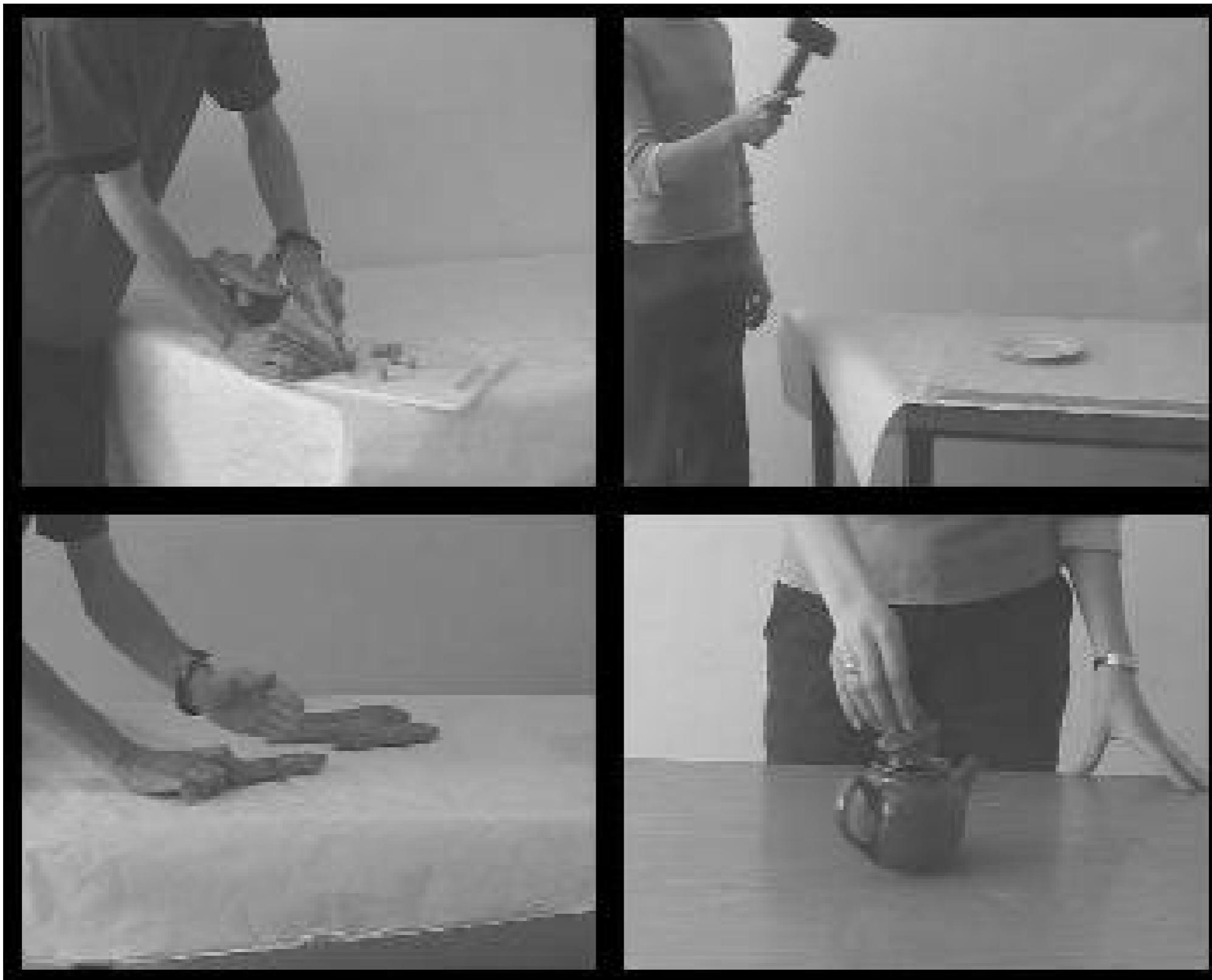
# The TMA questionnaire

Context indications are given within square brackets. Words within parentheses are not to be translated.

### Part A – sentences

- (1) [Standing in front of a house] The house BE BIG
- (2) [Talking about the house in which the speaker lives (the house is out of sight)] The house BE BIG
- (3) [Talking about a house in which the speaker used to live but which has now been torn down] The house BE BIG
- (4) [Talking about a house which the speaker saw for the first time yesterday and doesn't see now:] The house BE BIG
- (5) [Q: What your brother DO right now? (=What activity is he engaged in?) A by someone who can see him] He WRITE letters





Majid, Asifa et al. (2004) Event categorization: A crosslinguistic perspective. Proceedings of AMCSS, pp. 885-890.

	MRD	LIT	ENG	FRE
1050	sams	eiti	go	aller
1070	sams	eiti	come	venir
1090	sams	eiti	come	venir
1104	lisems	kopti	come	sortir
1105	valgoms	zengti	descend	descendre
1114	—	—	come	se faire entendre
1120	vetjams	varyti	drive	pousser
1140	sams	eiti	come	se rendre
1160	jutams	eiti	walk	marcher

	MRD	LIT	ENG	FRE
1050	sams	eiti	go	aller
1070	sams	eiti	come	venir
1090	sams	eiti	come	venir
1104	lisems	kopti	come	sortir
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1114	—	—	come	se faire entendre
1120	vetjams	varyti	drive	pousser
1140	sams	eiti	come	se rendre
1160	jutams	eiti	walk	marcher

## Contextually Situated Exemplar

	MRD	LIT	ENG	FRE
1050	sams	eiti	go	aller
1070	sams	eiti	come	venir
1090	sams	eiti	come	venir
1104	lisems	kopti	come	sortir
1105	valgoms	zengti	descend	descendre
1114	–	–	come	se faire entendre
1120	vetjams	varyti	drive	pousser
1140	sams	eiti	come	se rendre
1160	jutams	eiti	walk	marcher

**Languoid**

	MRD	LIT	ENG	FRE
1050	sams	eiti	go	aller
1070	sams	eiti	come	venir
1090	sams	eiti	come	venir
1104	lisems	kopti	come	sortir
1105	valgoms	zengti	descend	descendre
1114	–	–	come	se faire entendre
1120	vetjams	varyti	drive	pousser
1140	sams	eiti	come	se rendre
1160	jutams	eiti	walk	marcher

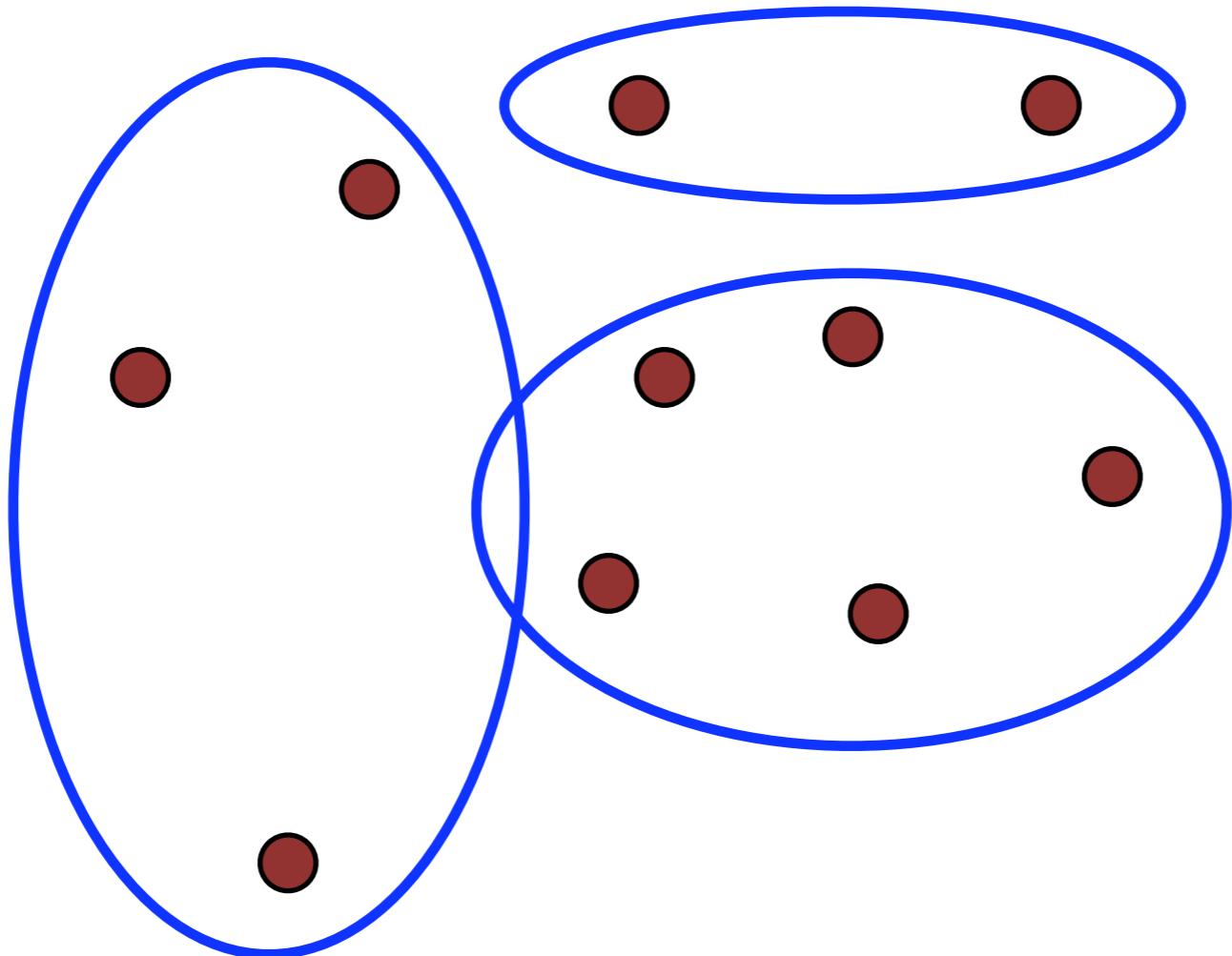
**Language Specific Category**

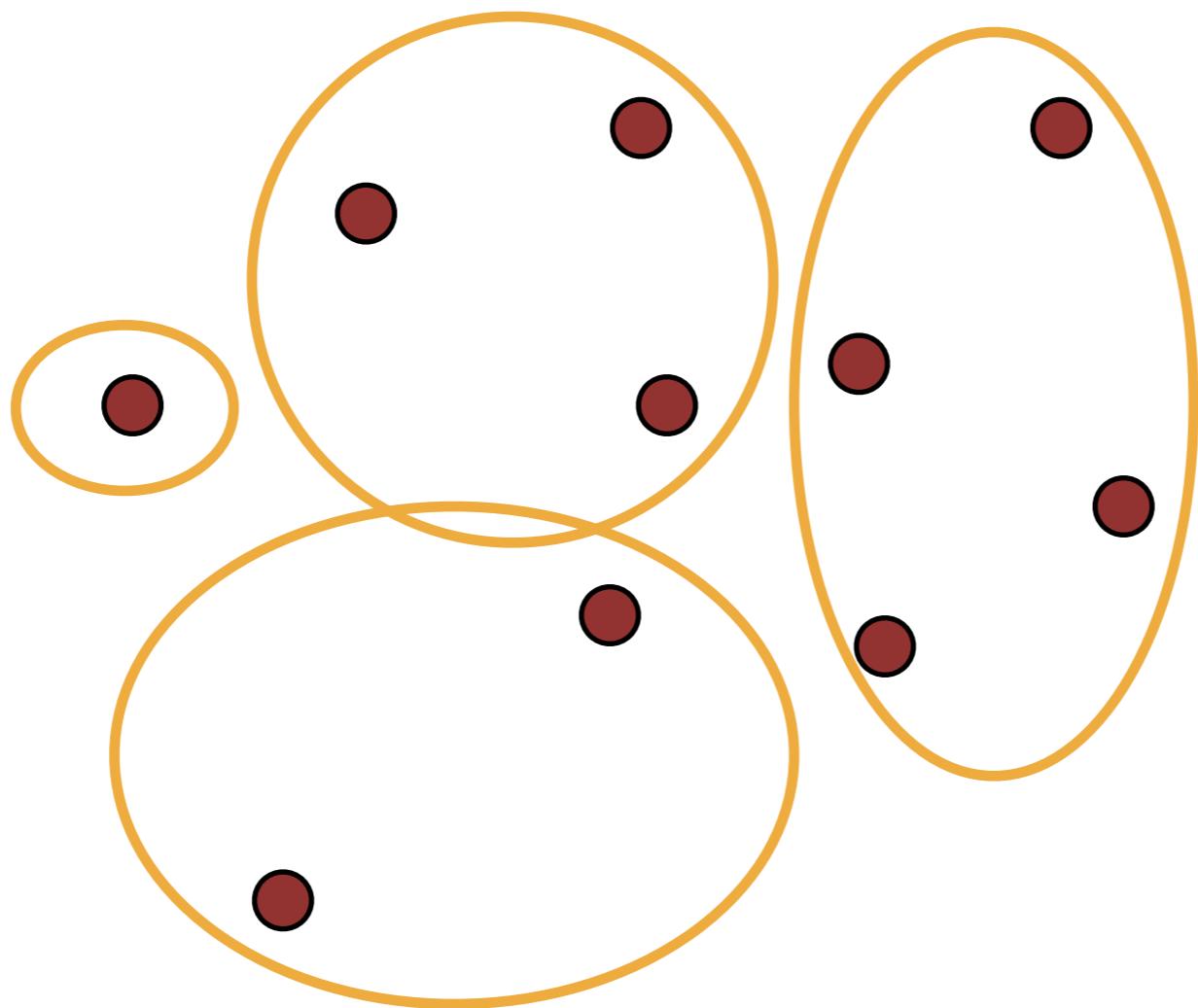
# Using Contextually Situated Exemplars

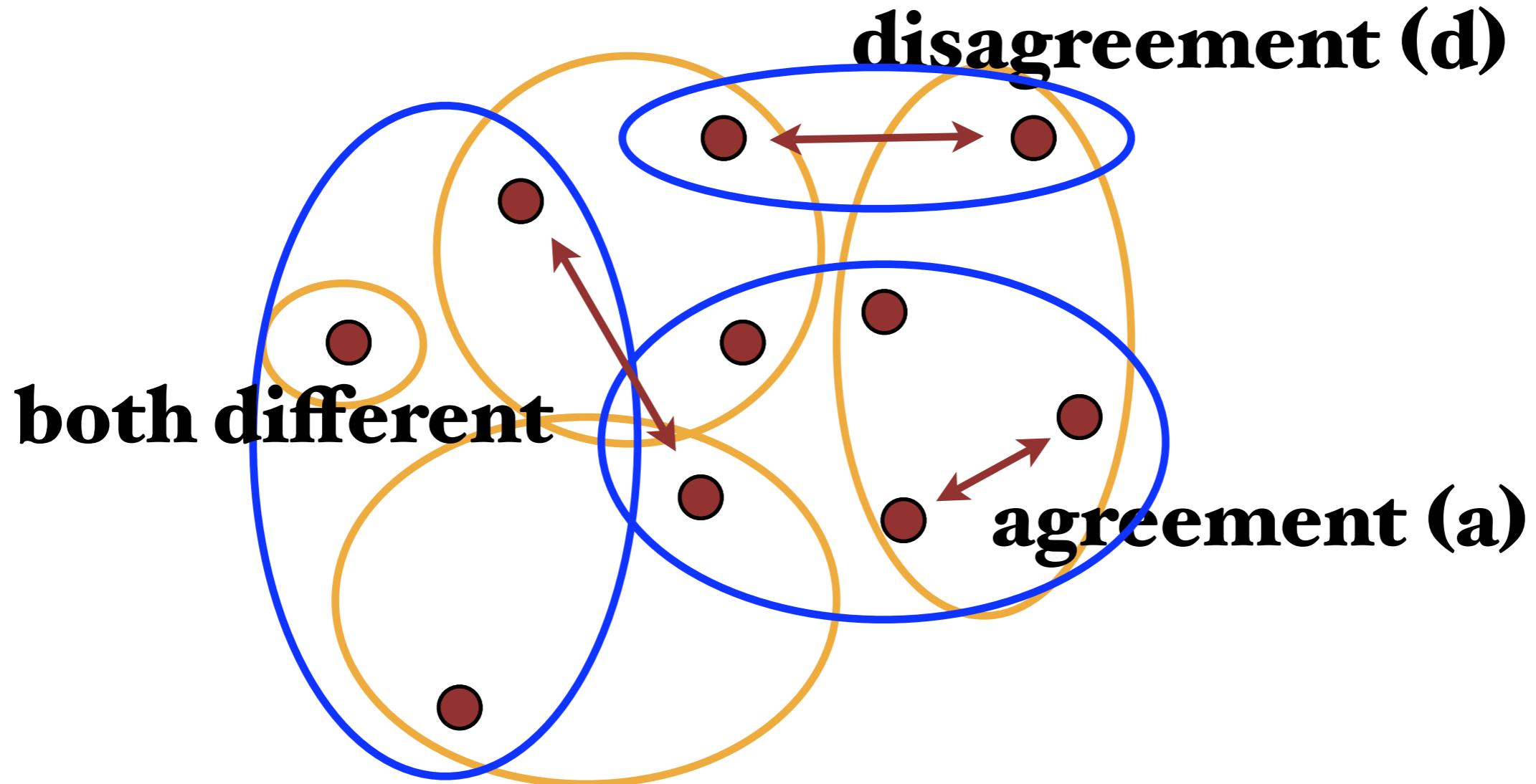
- A. Compare Exemplars (cf. Semantic Map)
- B. Compare Categories (The Real Thing!)
- C. Compare Languoids (cf. Typology)

	MRD	LIT	ENG	FRE
1050	sams	eiti	go	aller
1070	sams	eiti	come	venir
1090	sams	eiti	come	venir
1104	lisems	kopti	come	sortir
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1140	sams	eiti	come	se rendre
1160	jutams	eiti	walk	marcher

	MRD	LIT	ENG	FRE
1050	sams	eiti	go	aller
1070	sams	eiti	come	venir
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1104	lisems	kopti	come	sortir
1105	valgoms	zengti	descend	descendre
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1140	sams	eiti	come	se rendre
1160	jutams	eiti	walk	marcher



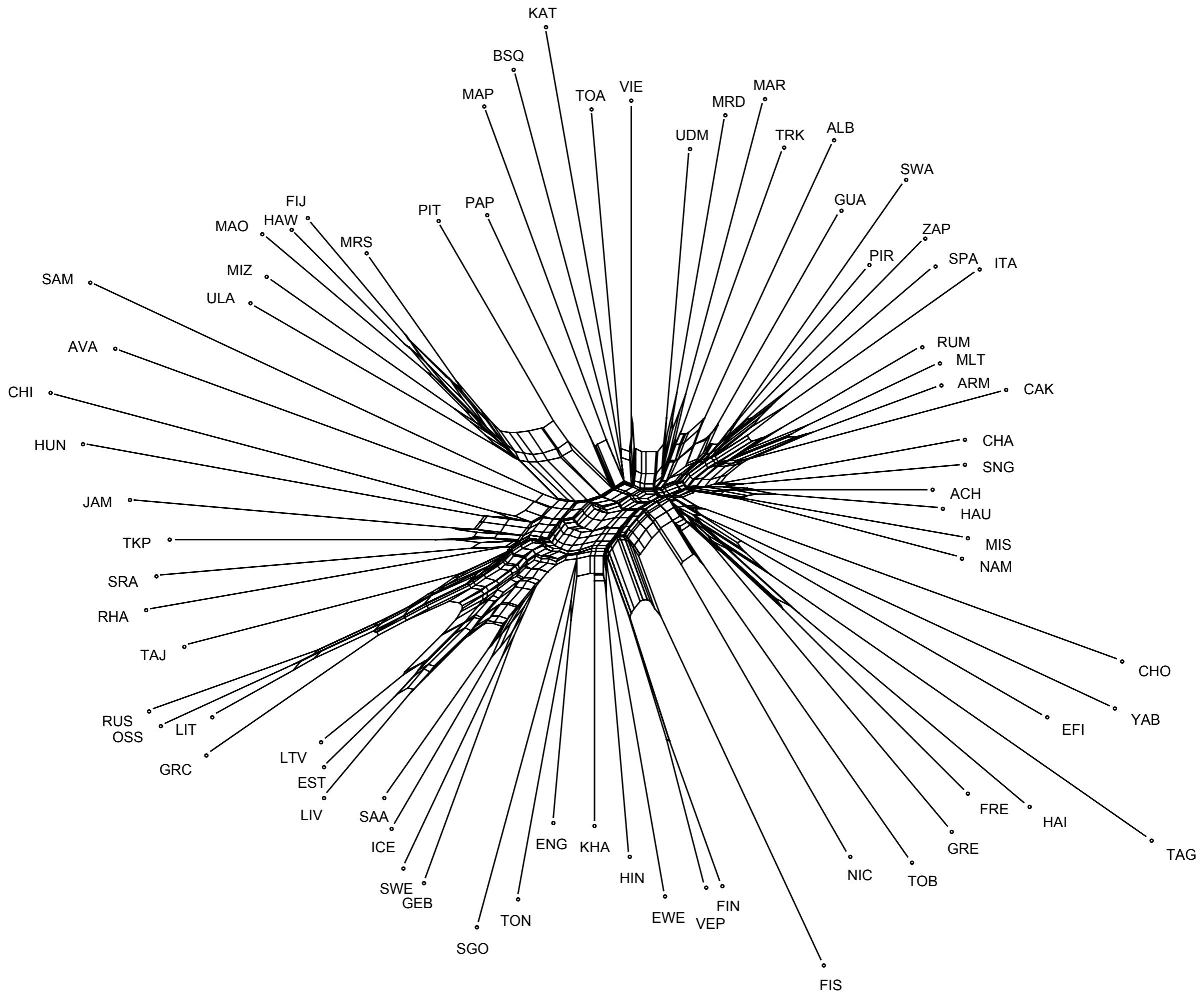




Jaccard similarity:

$$a/a+d$$

	ACH	ALB	ARM	AVA	BSQ	CAK	CHA	CHI	CHO	EFI	ENG	EST	EWE	FIJ	FIN	FIS	FRE	GEB	GRC	GRE	GUA	HAI	HAU	HAW	HIN	HUN	ICE	ITA	JAM	KAT	KHA	LIT	LIV	LTV	MAO	MAP	MA	
ACH	1	0.43	0.62	0.31	0.41	0.57	0.6	0.22	0.41	0.51	0.55	0.46	0.54	0.35	0.46	0.35	0.45	0.44	0.4	0.39	0.52	0.41	0.72	0.41	0.55	0.23	0.48	0.47	0.32	0.36	0.55	0.37	0.47	0.45	0.36	0.43	0.4	
ALB	0.43	1	0.53	0.26	0.41	0.45	0.41	0.2	0.32	0.34	0.38	0.3	0.33	0.26	0.31	0.29	0.4	0.33	0.25	0.41	0.53	0.35	0.49	0.29	0.34	0.28	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.28	0.37	0.26	0.28	0.33	0.28	0.4	0.4	
ARM	0.62	0.53	1	0.27	0.4	0.63	0.61	0.26	0.37	0.4	0.54	0.46	0.47	0.34	0.42	0.4	0.41	0.44	0.4	0.39	0.57	0.33	0.67	0.36	0.53	0.24	0.46	0.49	0.32	0.31	0.49	0.34	0.46	0.49	0.34	0.37	0.3	
AVA	0.31	0.26	0.27	1	0.27	0.24	0.27	0.25	0.18	0.22	0.32	0.36	0.27	0.31	0.33	0.21	0.26	0.32	0.24	0.25	0.31	0.23	0.26	0.28	0.32	0.25	0.34	0.26	0.28	0.25	0.32	0.33	0.34	0.37	0.3			
BSQ	0.41	0.41	0.4	0.27	1	0.41	0.34	0.22	0.25	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.32	0.29	0.32	0.21	0.36	0.26	0.23	0.37	0.44	0.33	0.38	0.3	0.32	0.26	0.28	0.42	0.25	0.32	0.34	0.25	0.27	0.3	0.34	0.36	0.3	
CAK	0.57	0.45	0.63	0.24	0.41	1	0.55	0.21	0.39	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.42	0.3	0.36	0.34	0.44	0.31	0.32	0.37	0.56	0.35	0.61	0.31	0.43	0.21	0.37	0.48	0.27	0.26	0.41	0.29	0.38	0.39	0.29	0.41	0.3	
CHA	0.6	0.41	0.61	0.27	0.34	0.55	1	0.24	0.41	0.41	0.6	0.41	0.46	0.33	0.43	0.39	0.43	0.43	0.39	0.47	0.33	0.59	0.39	0.45	0.24	0.5	0.46	0.3	0.35	0.57	0.33	0.43	0.46	0.33	0.37	0.3		
CHI	0.22	0.2	0.26	0.25	0.22	0.21	0.24	1	0.16	0.2	0.27	0.37	0.22	0.28	0.26	0.19	0.19	0.31	0.28	0.18	0.23	0.23	0.25	0.29	0.3	0.2	0.33	0.25	0.3	0.29	0.33	0.33	0.25	0.25	0.2	0.29	0.3	
CHO	0.41	0.32	0.37	0.18	0.25	0.39	0.41	0.16	1	0.29	0.28	0.24	0.31	0.21	0.26	0.22	0.27	0.24	0.22	0.33	0.27	0.45	0.23	0.27	0.17	0.26	0.32	0.21	0.26	0.31	0.21	0.24	0.27	0.2	0.29	0.3		
EFI	0.51	0.34	0.4	0.22	0.28	0.4	0.41	0.2	0.29	1	0.32	0.27	0.36	0.23	0.31	0.27	0.32	0.26	0.23	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.51	0.26	0.35	0.18	0.29	0.37	0.22	0.27	0.41	0.2	0.29	0.27	0.25	0.32	0.3	
ENG	0.55	0.38	0.54	0.32	0.29	0.4	0.6	0.27	0.28	0.32	1	0.58	0.47	0.47	0.48	0.37	0.32	0.52	0.5	0.34	0.39	0.25	0.5	0.46	0.54	0.33	0.6	0.37	0.44	0.35	0.58	0.5	0.56	0.6	0.41	0.31	0.3	
EST	0.46	0.3	0.46	0.36	0.28	0.38	0.41	0.37	0.24	0.27	0.58	1	0.46	0.49	0.48	0.3	0.28	0.58	0.49	0.25	0.39	0.21	0.41	0.38	0.48	0.39	0.63	0.29	0.46	0.31	0.58	0.6	0.8	0.79	0.42	0.31	0.3	
EWE	0.54	0.33	0.47	0.27	0.32	0.42	0.46	0.22	0.31	0.36	0.47	0.46	1	0.29	0.42	0.29	0.35	0.4	0.33	0.38	0.31	0.52	0.31	0.52	0.25	0.46	0.32	0.31	0.49	0.35	0.43	0.49	0.32	0.33	0.3			
FIJ	0.35	0.26	0.34	0.31	0.29	0.3	0.33	0.28	0.21	0.23	0.47	0.49	0.29	1	0.32	0.19	0.22	0.36	0.47	0.22	0.34	0.21	0.36	0.73	0.34	0.36	0.43	0.28	0.35	0.32	0.38	0.66	0.45	0.48	0.67	0.33	0	
FIN	0.46	0.31	0.42	0.33	0.32	0.36	0.43	0.26	0.26	0.31	0.48	0.48	0.42	0.32	1	0.42	0.31	0.45	0.36	0.33	0.38	0.24	0.45	0.3	0.5	0.28	0.48	0.36	0.37	0.28	0.48	0.38	0.46	0.48	0.3	0.27	0.3	
FIS	0.35	0.29	0.4	0.21	0.21	0.34	0.39	0.19	0.22	0.27	0.37	0.3	0.29	0.19	0.42	1	0.32	0.36	0.25	0.29	0.35	0.21	0.39	0.22	0.41	0.21	0.34	0.32	0.26	0.19	0.34	0.25	0.32	0.33	0.2	0.19	0.2	
FRE	0.45	0.4	0.41	0.26	0.36	0.44	0.43	0.19	0.27	0.32	0.32	0.28	0.35	0.22	0.31	0.32	1	0.3	0.22	0.43	0.43	0.52	0.39	0.24	0.36	0.21	0.35	0.51	0.25	0.26	0.34	0.22	0.35	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
GEB	0.44	0.33	0.44	0.32	0.26	0.31	0.43	0.31	0.24	0.26	0.52	0.58	0.4	0.36	0.45	0.36	0.3	1	0.41	0.26	0.36	0.2	0.41	0.36	0.49	0.31	0.57	0.3	0.39	0.25	0.46	0.48	0.56	0.59	0.33	0.22	0	
GRC	0.4	0.25	0.4	0.24	0.23	0.32	0.39	0.28	0.22	0.23	0.5	0.49	0.33	0.47	0.36	0.25	0.22	0.41	1	0.21	0.29	0.2	0.38	0.45	0.37	0.34	0.44	0.25	0.37	0.25	0.42	0.71	0.52	0.51	0.4	0.22	0.2	
GRE	0.39	0.41	0.39	0.25	0.37	0.37	0.43	0.18	0.27	0.32	0.34	0.25	0.3	0.22	0.33	0.29	0.43	0.26	0.21	1	0.38	0.38	0.42	0.24	0.31	0.23	0.28	0.42	0.24	0.27	0.39	0.2	0.24	0.28	0.35	0.3	0.3	0.3
GUA	0.52	0.53	0.57	0.31	0.44	0.56	0.47	0.25	0.33	0.33	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.34	0.38	0.35	0.43	0.36	0.29	0.38	1	0.38	0.51	0.33	0.48	0.28	0.38	0.47	0.31	0.3	0.46	0.3	0.37	0.42	0.35	0.49	0.4	
HAI	0.41	0.35	0.33	0.23	0.33	0.35	0.33	0.18	0.27	0.32	0.25	0.21	0.31	0.21	0.24	0.21	0.52	0.2	0.2	0.38	0.3	1	0.39	0.23	0.25	0.21	0.22	0.44	0.21	0.25	0.28	0.18	0.19	0.23	0.21	0.42	0.3	
HAU	0.72	0.49	0.67	0.26	0.38	0.61	0.59	0.23	0.45	0.51	0.5	0.41	0.52	0.36	0.45	0.39	0.39	0.41	0.38	0.42	0.51	0.39	1	0.38	0.51	0.24	0.43	0.47	0.33	0.31	0.51	0.33	0.43	0.44	0.44	0.4		
HAW	0.41	0.29	0.36	0.28	0.3	0.31	0.39	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.46	0.38	0.31	0.73	0.3	0.22	0.24	0.36	0.45	0.24	0.33	0.23	0.38	1	0													



# Wordlists

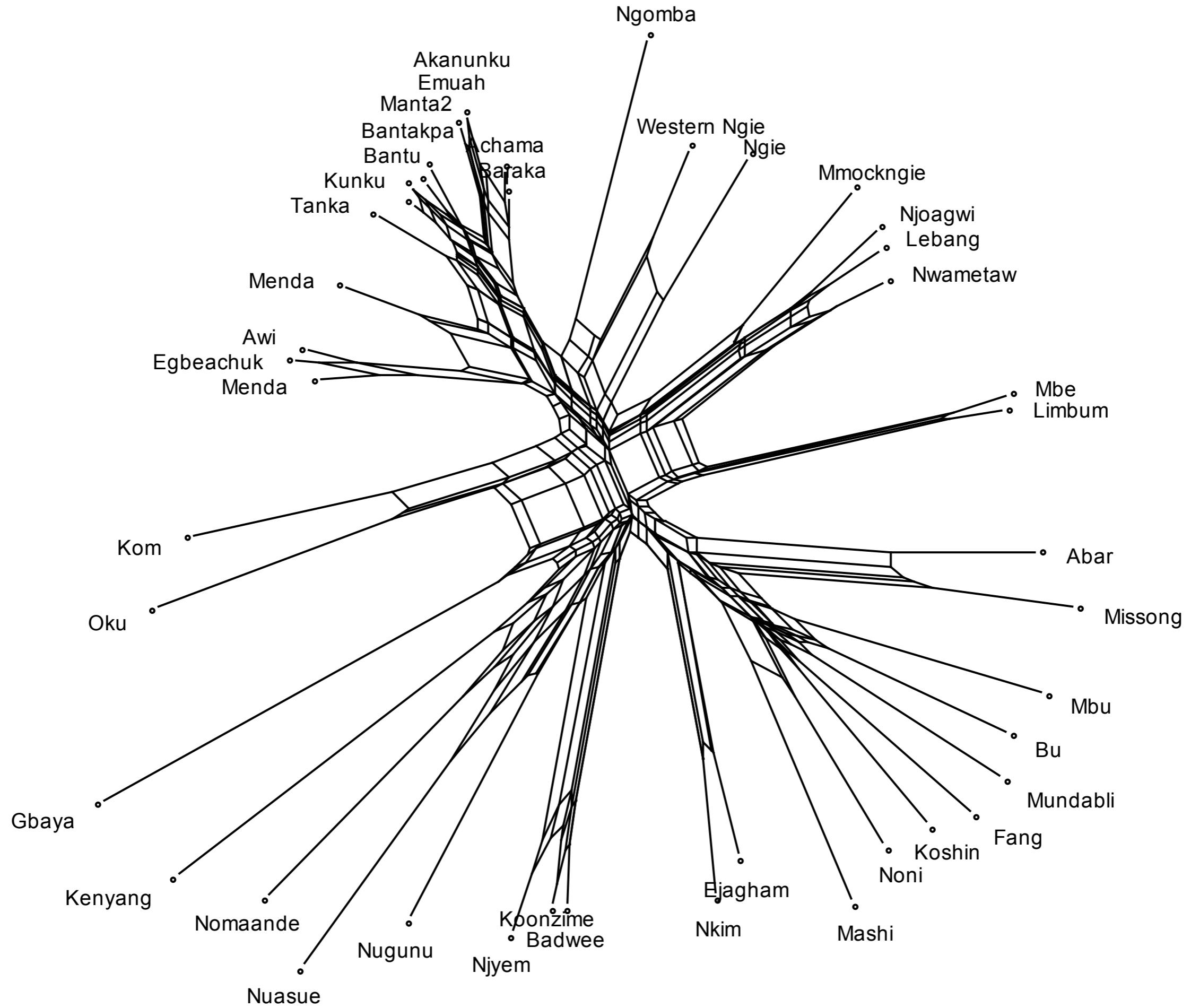
# Reminder!

- Wordlists are **not** only useful for investigating genealogical relations
- Wordlists are just ‘parallel dictionaries’ that allow for quantification of lexical similarity
- The meaning of such similarities is a research question

# Traditional Approach to Wordlist Analysis

- Presence vs. absence of cognates is used for computation of similarity
- Problems:
  - ▶ Judgement of cognacy presumes hypothesis about relationship
  - ▶ Very much of the available information is thrown away

Language	Group	'water'				
Abar	Beboid	a	nj	a		
Missong	Beboid	a	nj	ɛ		
Bu	Beboid		ŋg	†	n	
Mundabli	Beboid		ŋg	i		
Koshin	Beboid		nd	i		
Fang	Beboid		ndz	ia	m	
Mbu'	Beboid		mg	iə	ŋ	
Mashi	Beboid		ngw	ɔ		
Noni	Beboid		j	oo		
Ejaghgam	Ekoid			á	b	
Nkim	Ekoid		l	†	b	
Kendem	Mamfe	a	n	á	?	
Kenyang	Mamfe	m	a	ny	ɛ	p
Yambetta	Mbam A40	m	ə	n	í	
Nomaande	Mbam A40	m	e	ny	iiù	f eà
Nuasue	Mbam A60	m	i	mb	i	
Badwee	Narrow Bantu, A80	m	o	d	iiù	b eà
Koonzime	Narrow Bantu, A80	m	e	d	iiù	b eà
Njyem	Narrow Bantu, A80	m	eè	d	iiù	b oà





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