

SINGULATIVES CROSS- LINGUISTICALLY AND IN EASTERN AFRICAN LANGUAGES

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WHAT ARE SINGULATIVES?

WELSH (INDO-EUROPEAN, NURMIO 2019)

- the basic number distinction is unmarked singular/marked plural

cadair 'chair' pl. cadeir-iau



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llygod 'mice', sgt. **llygod-en** 'a mouse' (sgt.=singulative)

moch 'pigs', sgt. **moch-yn** 'a pig'

sêr 'stars', sgt. **ser-en** 'a star'



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- and the same marker is used for units of mass nouns:

tywod 'sand', sgt. **tywod-yn** 'a grain of sand'



OUTLINE

- DEFINITION
- RESEARCH QUESTIONS
- SINGULATIVES IN DIFFERENT NUMBER SYSTEMS
- SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC
- LANGUAGE SAMPLE
- METHODOLOGY
- CONCLUSION



WORKING DEFINITION

- **the singulative is a category that denotes at least 'one' or 'a/one unit' formed by adding a marker to a non-unit denoting base**



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- markers: bound forms
- markers do not include 'unitizers' (*grain of sand, G Sandkorn*), conversion (*beer* [mass] > *a beer*) and classifiers
- markers can be polysemous and have other functions



PROVISIONAL MAP OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGULATIVES



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- DEFINITION
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OUR PROJECT:
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

MORPHOLOGY

SEMANTICS,
USAGE AND
LINGUISTIC
THEORY

DIACHRONY



RESEARCH QUESTIONS: 1

Morphology

- What are the possible base forms for singulatives cross-linguistically?
- What kind of markers are used? Do they have other functions apart from the singulative?
- What kinds of grammatical number systems do singulatives occur in?



RESEARCH QUESTIONS: 2

Semantics, usage and linguistic theory

- To what extent does singulative morphology interact with semantics?
- How are singulatives used by speakers and what semantic, cognitive or social factors condition different usage patterns?



RESEARCH QUESTIONS: 3

Diachrony

- How does singulative marking arise in different languages and families?
- What are the most common pathways of development and change?



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UNMARKED PLURAL BASE & SPLIT SYSTEM

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- and the same marker is used for units of mass nouns (and a few other functions):

tywod 'sand', sgt. **tywod-yn** 'a grain of sand'



UNMARKED PLURAL BASE & SPLIT SYSTEM

MALTESE (AFRO-ASIATIC) (MIFSUD 1996, CORBETT 2000)

- unmarked singular/marked plural

'**skōla** 'school', pl. '**skeyyel**

- unmarked plural*/marked singulative/plural of singulative

dub 'bīn 'flies', sgt. **dub 'bīn-a** 'a fly', pl. **dubbi 'n-īt** 'flies' (with numerals)

- unmarked plural: often called 'collective' in grammars
- Mifsud: it has both a type meaning and a collective one



UNMARKED PLURAL BASE & SPLIT SYSTEM

MURSI (SURMIC) (WORKU 2020, PROJECT WORK BY SARA CARRIER-BORDELEAU)

- unmarked singular/marked plural

sg. čár, pl. čár-íḡá 'leopard'

- unmarked plural/marked singulative

pl. b̀urá, sgt. b̀urá-j 'egg, fruit'

pl. d̀ugú, sgt. dúgú-j 'seed' (+ marked plural d̀ugú-ḡá 'different kinds of seeds')

- replacement pattern

sg. ḡàb-ì, pl. ḡàw-à 'ear'

- tripartite pattern with singular, singulative and plural

sg. kíđó, sgt. kíđói (with 'one'), pl. kíđén 'river'



INVERSE NUMBER SYSTEMS

- the same marker is used for singular or plural, depending on the base
- **DAGAARE (GUR): -ri** (GRIMM 2012, 2018)

a. <i>tìé</i>	<i>tìirí</i>	b. <i>nyágá</i>	<i>nyágrí</i>
tree.BASIC	tree.INVERSE	root.BASIC	root.INVERSE
'a tree'	'trees'	'roots'	'a root'

- **KIOWA (KIOWA-TANOAN; NORTH AMERICA): -dò/-óy** (SUTTON 2010; CORBETT 2000: 159-160)

a. <i>tógúl</i>	<i>tógú:dó</i>	b. <i>ònsó:</i>	<i>ònsôy</i>
young man.BASIC	young man.INVERSE	foot.BASIC	foot.INVERSE
'a young man' (sg/du)	'young men' (pl)	'feet' (dual/pl)	'a foot' (sg)

- also at least in Austronesian, Nilotic and Atlantic-Congo (Corbett 2000: 159-166)



GENERAL NUMBER: TRIPARTITE SYSTEM

SOMALI, CENTRAL DIALECT (AFRO-ASIATIC) (SAEED 1982)

general	singulative	plural	gloss
naag f.	naag-to	naag-o	woman
naŋ m.	naŋ-ko	nam-o	man

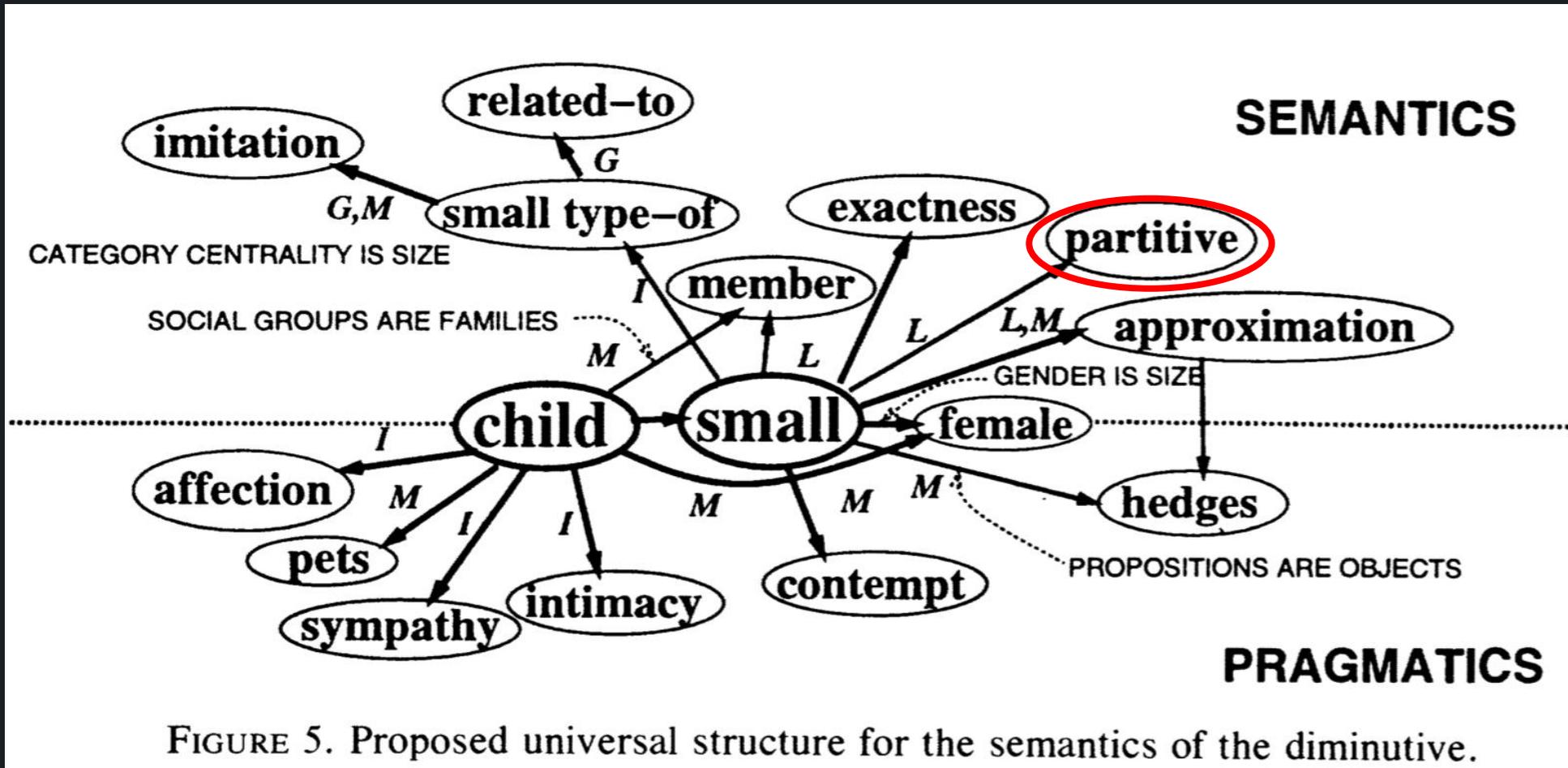
- singulative suffix ‘similar to the set of determiners’
- def. art. **-kə/-tə** (non-remote) and **-ki/-ti** (remote)



MASS BASE

- mass = uncountable
- Welsh (Indo-European)
- **tywod** 'sand', sgt. **tywod-yn** 'a grain of sand'





Jurafsky, Daniel. 1996. Universal tendencies in the semantics of the diminutive.



MASS BASE + 'DIMINUTIVE'

RUSSIAN (INDO-EUROPEAN) (KAGAN & NURMIO, FORTH.)

mašina 'car', dimin. **mašin-k-a** 'small/dear car'

bumaga 'paper', sgt. **bumaž-k-a** '(small) piece of paper'



MASS BASE + 'DIMINUTIVE'

- ITALIAN (INDO-EUROPEAN)

tavolo 'table', dimin. **tavol-ino** 'small/dear table'

cioccolato 'chocolate', sgt. **cioccolat-ino** 'a chocolate sweet, praline'

- TUNDRA ENETS (URALIC) (KHANINA & SHLUINSKY, *THE ENETS CORPUS*, MS)

niɔ 'child', dimin. **niɔ-ku** 'little/dear child'

pe 'wood', sgt. **pe-ku** 'splinter'



MASS BASE + 'DIMINUTIVE'

- BIDYOGO (ATLANTIC-CONGO) (DI GARBO & AGBETSOAMEDO 2018)
- in polarity with one another E- and KO- can mark evaluative (a.) and countability (b.) distinctions

a.	kɔ-kɔŋ	ɛ-kɔŋ
	KO-palm.leaf	E-palm.leaf
	'palm leaf'	'small palm leaf'
b.	ɛ-man	kɔ-man
	E-rice	KO-rice
	'rice'	'grain of rice'



SINGULATIVE MARKERS: OTHER DERIVATIONAL FUNCTIONS

- e.g. agent

Welsh (Indo-European, Nurmio 2019)

clebr 'gossip' → **clebr-en** (f.), **clebr-yn** (m.) 'a gossip, telltale (person)'

Kambaata (Afro-Asiatic, Treis 2014)

gurá 'left side' → **gurchú(-ta)** (masc./fem.) 'left-handed person'

Kuna (Chibchan; Colombia) (Holmer 1947, 1952)

opa- 'to bathe' (verb stem) → **ope-kwa** 'bather'



SINGULATIVE MARKERS: OTHER DERIVATIONAL FUNCTIONS

- ‘thing related to the base’
- derivative more narrow semantically and more concrete?

Welsh (Indo-European, Nurmio 2019)

awyr ‘air’ → **awyr-en** ‘airplane’

Kambaata (Afro-Asiatic, Treis 2014)

aganá ‘month’ → **agan-chú** ‘moon’ (Treis 2014)

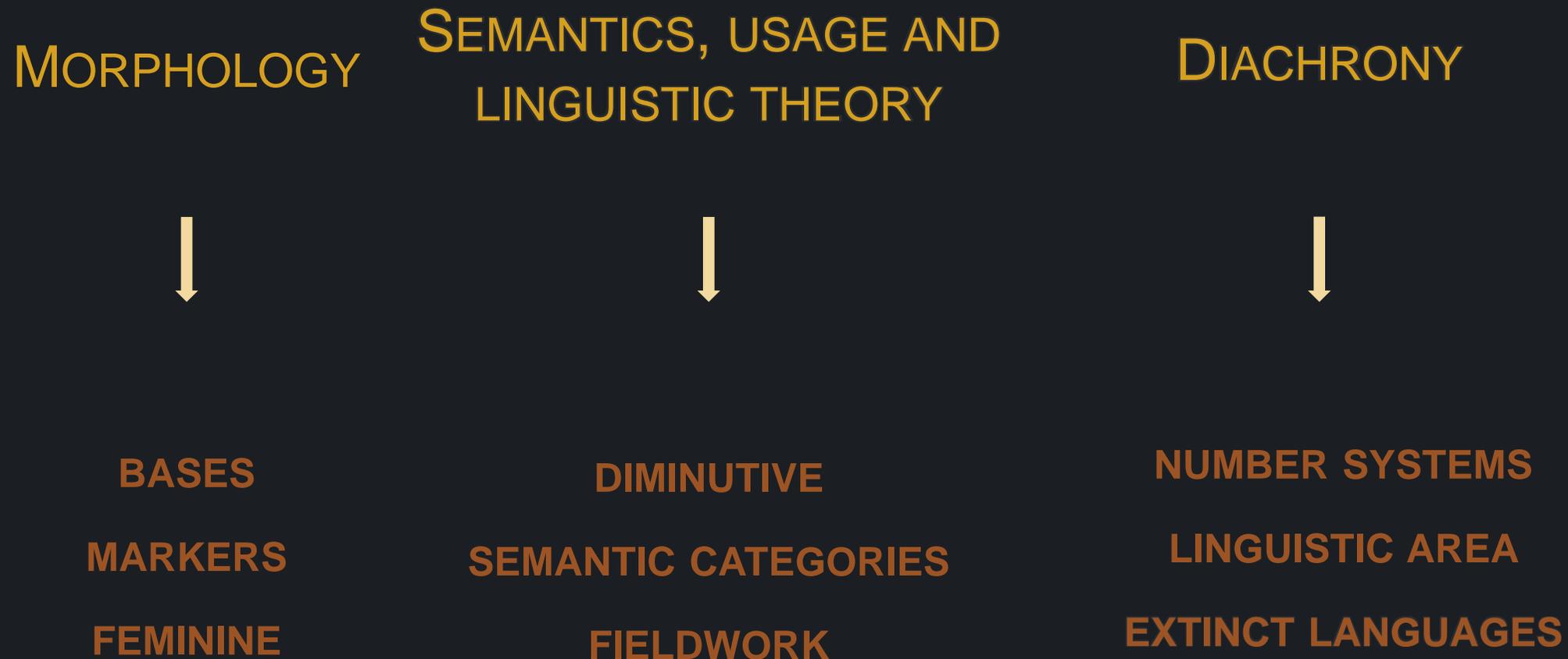


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SUB-PROJECT ON CUSHITIC LANGUAGES: RESEARCH QUESTIONS



MORPHOLOGY: WHICH BASE?

UNMARKED PLURAL
Also called collective

	'rib'
Unmarked plural	<i>Ginaʔaa</i>
SGT	<i>Ginaʔ-itta</i>

Konso, Lowland East Cushitic; Southwest Ethiopia
(Orkaydo 2013:88)



MORPHOLOGY: WHICH BASE?

GENERAL NUMBER Also called transnumeral

	'slave'	
General	<i>gárbā</i>	
SGT	<i>garb-íčča</i> (m.)	<i>garb-ítti</i> (f.)
PL	<i>garb-ičč-oli</i>	

Oromo, Borana dialect, Lowland East Cushitic; Southwest Ethiopia
(Zaborski 1986:133)



MORPHOLOGY: WHICH BASE?

MASS NOUNS

	'water'	
Mass noun	<i>ʕand-e</i>	
SGT	<i>ʕand-itt-o</i> (m.)	<i>ʕand-itt-e</i> (f.)
PL	<i>ʕand-add-e</i>	

Ts'amakko, East Cushitic, Yaaku-Dullay; Southwest Ethiopia
(Savà 2005:63)



MORPHOLOGY: WHICH BASE?

	'rib'
Unmarked plural	<i>Gínaʔaa</i>
SGT	<i>Gínaʔ-itta</i>

	'slave'	
General	<i>gárbā</i>	
SGT	<i>garb-íčča</i> (m.)	<i>garb-ítti</i> (f.)
PL	<i>garb-ičč-oli</i>	

	'water'	
Mass noun	<i>ʕand-e</i>	
SGT	<i>ʕand-itt-o</i> (m.)	<i>ʕand-itt-e</i> (f.)
PL	<i>ʕand-add-e</i>	



(SOME) SINGULATIVE MARKERS

-ano, -amo, -mo, -ima, -aḥw, -imo, -imi

-at, -te, -ate, -ato, -éte, -it, -itat, -ete

-ut, -ōt (-ot?), -us

-tóʔò

-to, -ta, -tu, -tó, -tá

-ti, -titi

-ch-ú(-ta), -i-chch-ú(-ta), -ee-chch-ú(-ta)

-iččo, -eččo, -ičča, -čo

-eč, -ač, -s

-(š)šo

-a, -ā, -ā'

-ay, -ey, -ya

-o, -e, -essa

-a, -i, -u, -o, -e

Iraqw, Burunge

Elmolo

Iraqw, Burunge, Alagwa

Iraqw

Saho, ᶑAfar, Kambaata, Iraqw

Bayso

Kambaata

Sidaama

Elmolo

Sidaama

Saho

Beja, Iraqw

Bayso

Iraqw, Alagwa, Burunge



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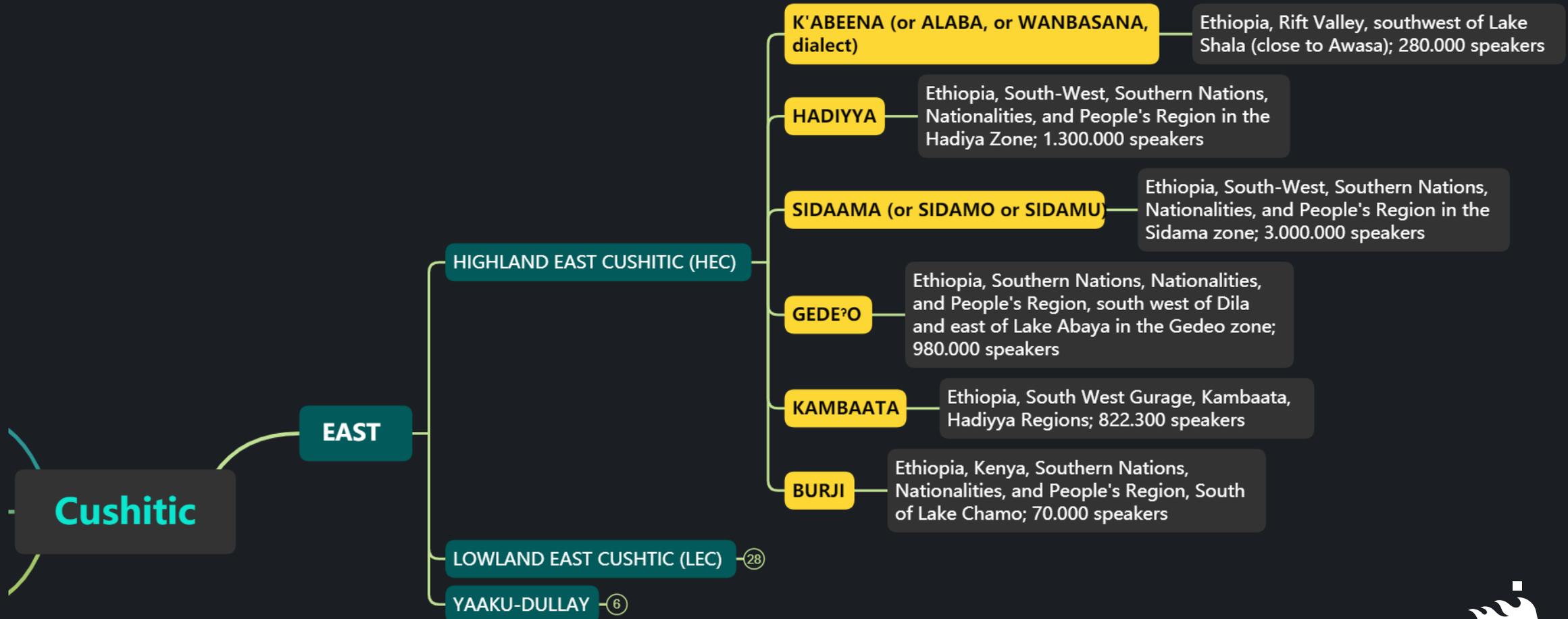
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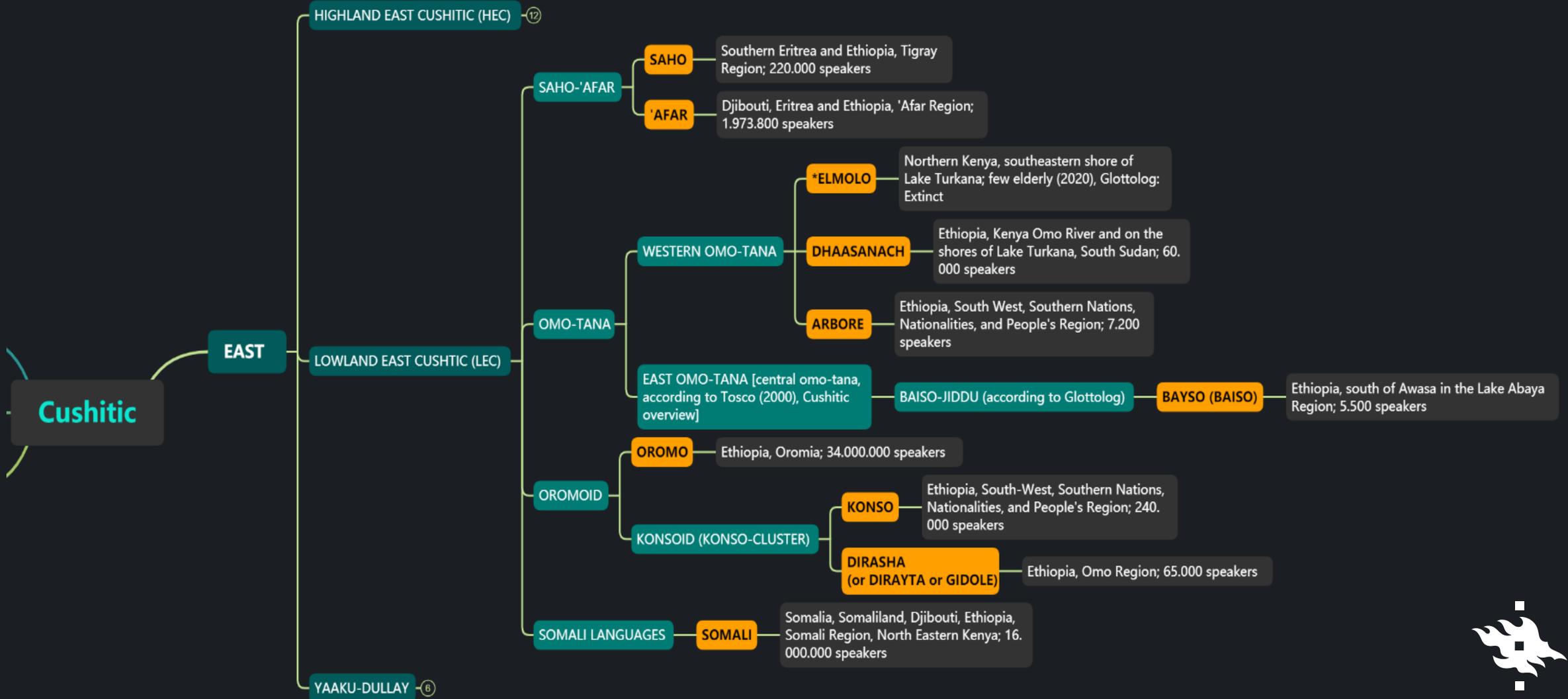
LANGUAGE SAMPLE: CUSHITIC LANGUAGES



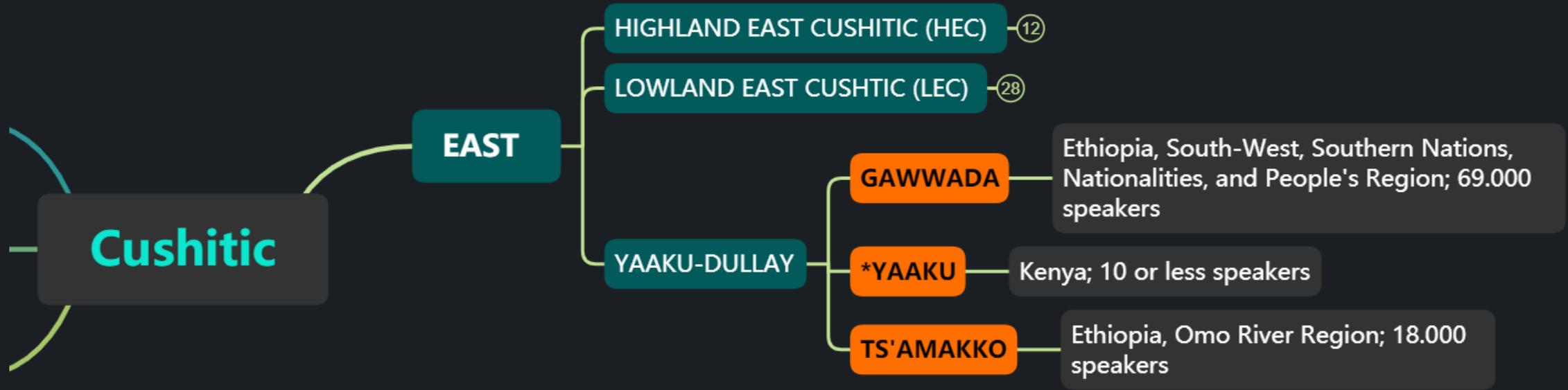
EAST CUSHITIC: HIGHLAND EAST CUSHITIC (HEC)



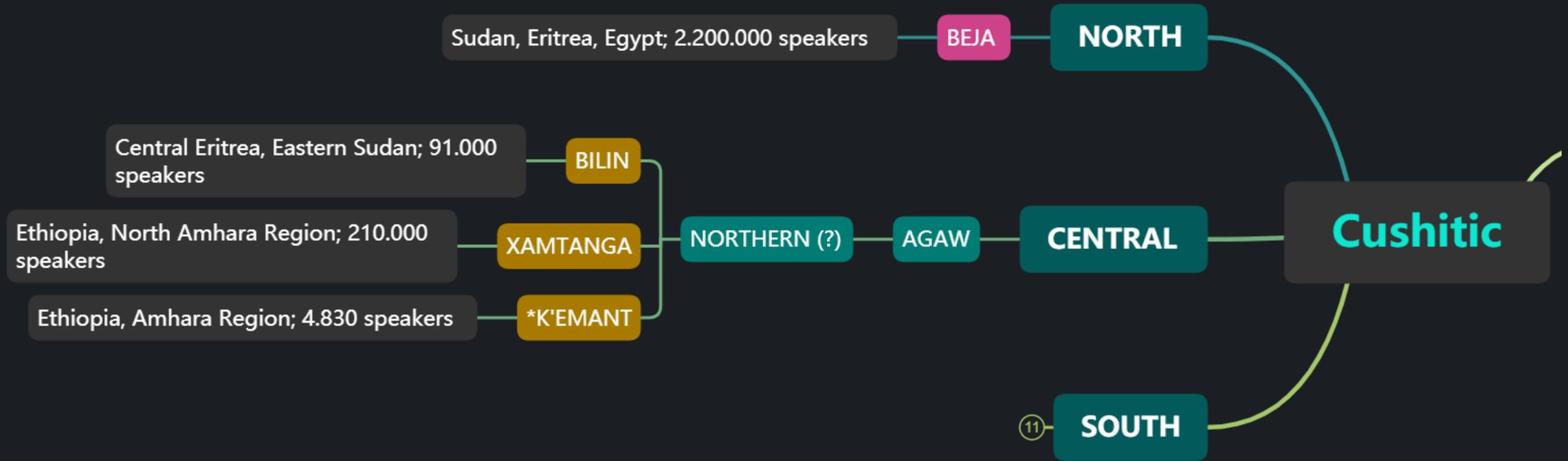
EAST CUSHITIC: LOWLAND EAST CUSHITIC (LEC)



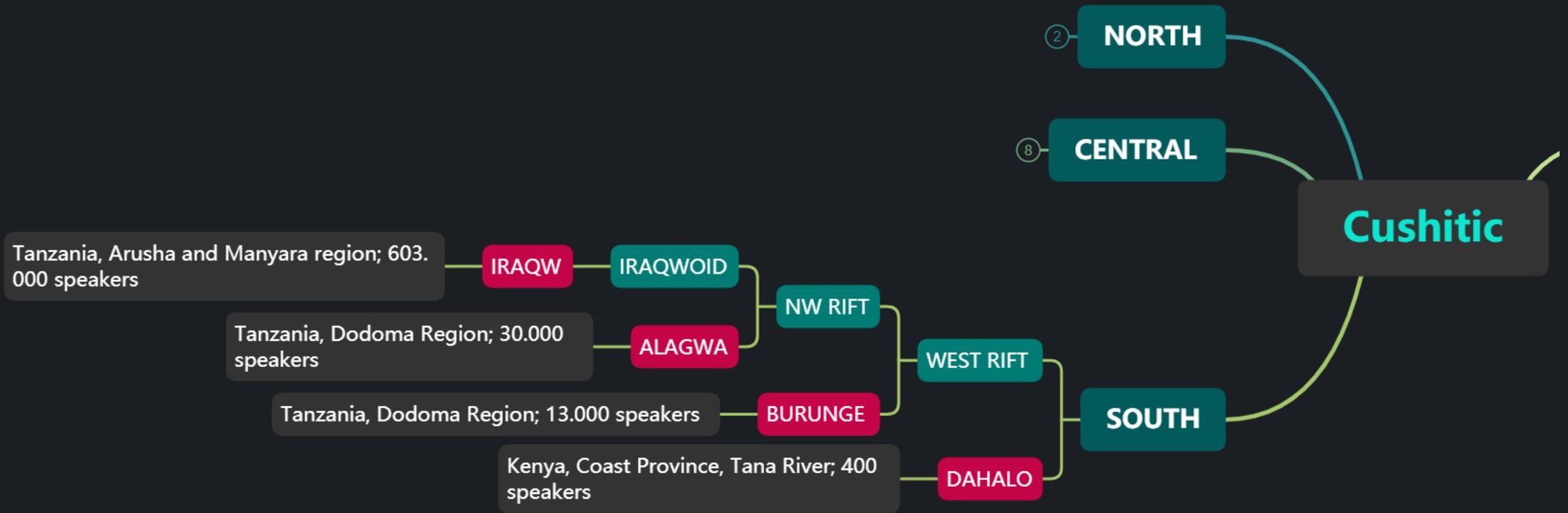
EAST CUSHITIC: YAAKU-DULLAY



NORTH AND CENTRAL CUSHITIC



SOUTH CUSHITIC

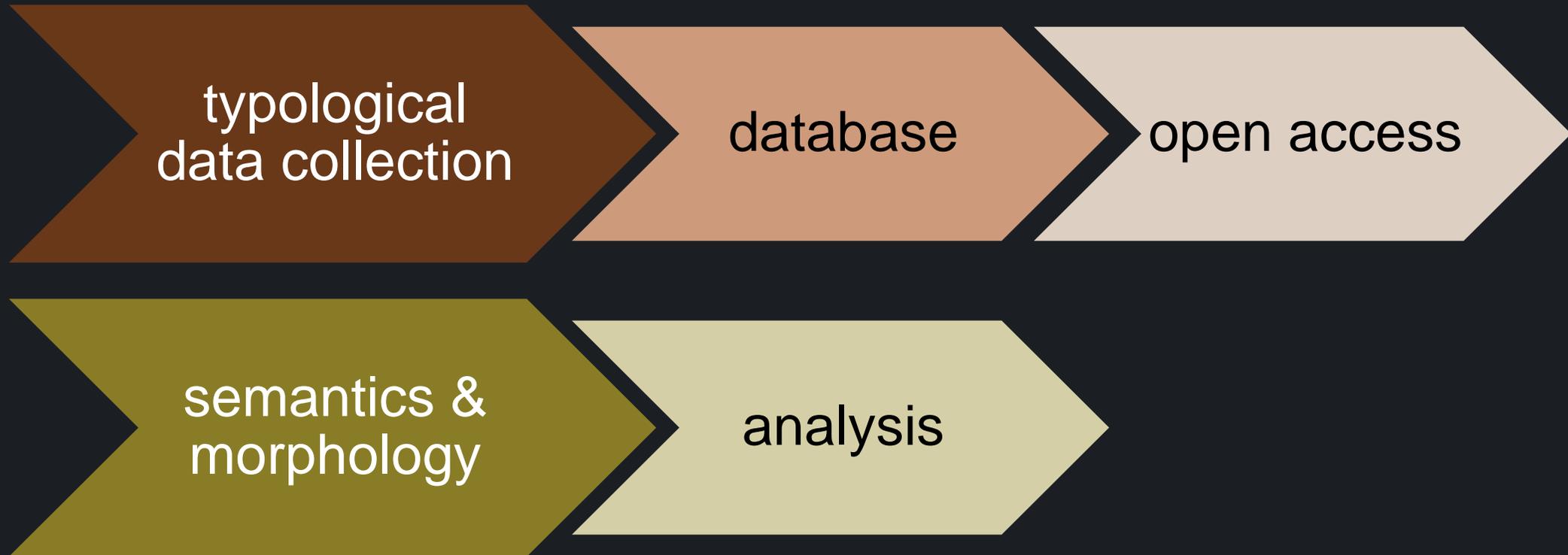


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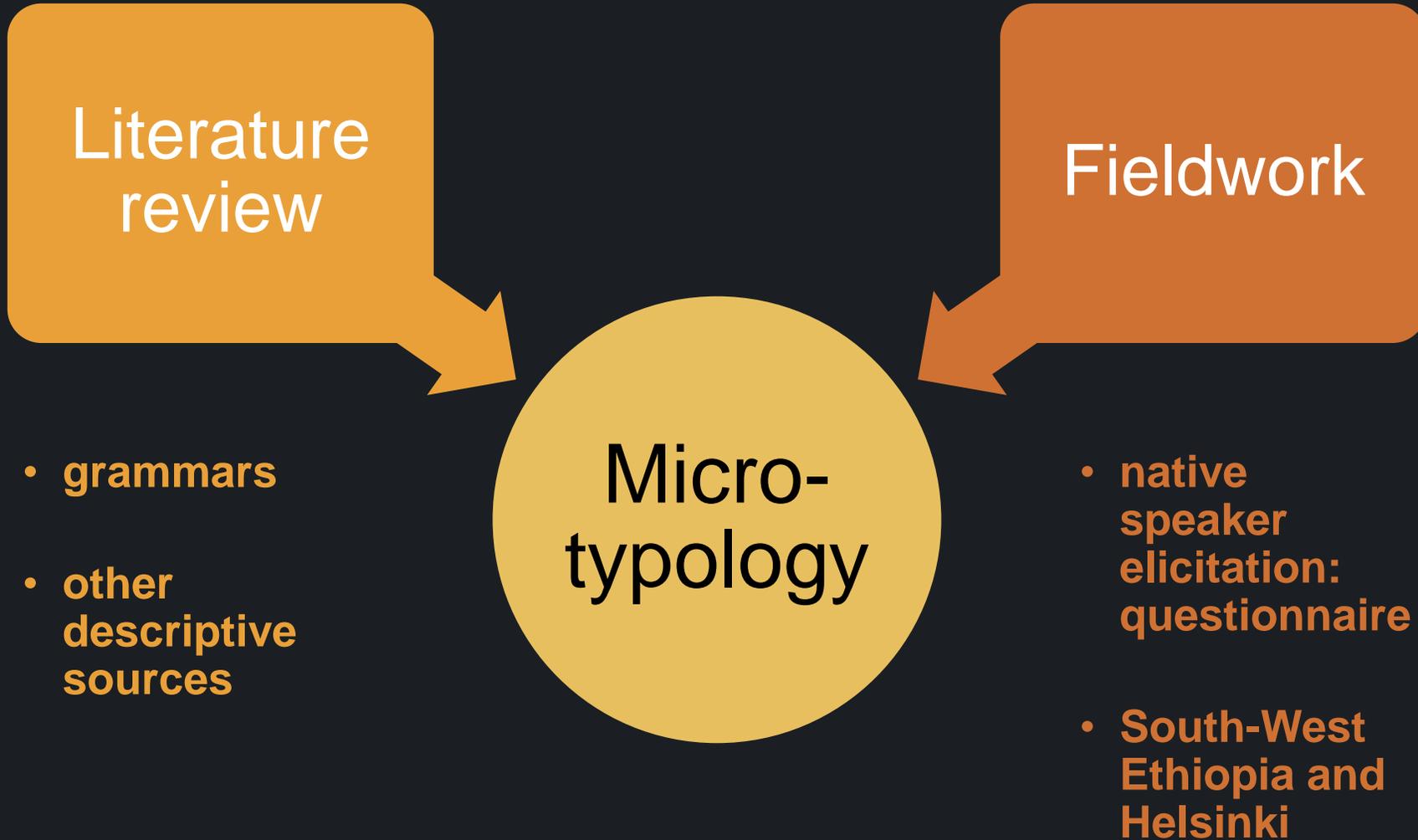
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METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY



TERMINOLOGY

data collection and its challenges

singulatives hidden behind:

• NOMEN UNITATIS

• SINGULAR

• DIMINUTIVE



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES:
GAWWADA (YAAKU-DULLAY)

ħisk-e 'women'



ħisk-atto 'woman'



(Tosco 2010:389)



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES:
DHAASANACH (LEC)

iš 'grass'



iš-itti 'a blade of grass'



(Zaborski 1986:125)



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES:
IRAQW (SOUTH)

ilwà 'milk'



ilwá-tóʔò 'a drop of milk'



(Zaborski 1986:269)



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES:
BAYSO (LEC)

wórab 'goat'



worá-titi 'he-goat'



(Zaborski 1986:97)



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES:
XAMTANGA (CENTRAL, AGAW)

dimin 'clouds'



dimin-a 'cloud'



(Appleyard 1987:252)



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES:
SAHO (LEC)

ḥútuk 'stars'



ḥútuk-ta 'star'



(Zaborski 1986:23)



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES: DAHALO (SOUTH)

bóóra 'boys'



bóór-eete 'boy'



(Tosco 1991:34)



EXAMPLES OF SINGULATIVES IN CUSHITIC LANGUAGES:
SIDAAMA (HEC)

sina 'branch (general)'

sin-na 'branches'



sin-č̣o 'branch'



(Kawachi 2007:86)



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CONCLUSION 1

- singulatives can occur as part of many different kinds of number systems and have different kinds of bases
- often derivational (especially mass-to-count)
- it is typologically more widespread than implied in literature
- singulatives hide behind different terms



CONCLUSION 2

- Cushitic languages are a great case study
- much variation in a small area
- may provide answers to our research questions
 - semantics: singulative patterns with certain semantic categories across the family
 - diachrony: related languages (and even dialects of one language, e.g. Somali) have different number systems



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- semantics, usage, cognition
 - Storch & Dimmendaal (2014): number markers may reflect ‘cognitive concepts and cultural semantics’ and some instances of apparent ‘variation’ (e.g. in marking singulative or plural) may in fact reflect complex morphology with semantic nuances



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