A black and white photograph of a tropical beach. In the foreground, there is a sandy beach with some driftwood. The middle ground shows a line of palm trees and other tropical vegetation. In the background, a building with a thatched roof is visible. The sky is filled with clouds.

Variation in the occurrence of the transitive suffix in a corpus of Tok Pisin

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Overview

- Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin)
- The Slone Wantok Corpus
- Transitive verbs in Tok Pisin
- Three possible sources of variation:
 - meaning differences
 - regional differences
 - differences over time



Melanesian Pidgin

- Tok Pisin is a language spoken in Papua New Guinea, mainly as a second language, about 121,000 speakers, although there are some first-language speakers, ca. 50,000. (SIL)
- Main lexifier language is English. Older German stratum of vocabulary. Noticeable influence from Kuanua (Tolai)
- A large number of other potential substrates.



The Slone *Wantok* Corpus

- Composed of stories sent in to a newspaper, *Wantok*, over a 30 year period
- The stories are *Ancestor stories* (*Stori Tumbuna*) and typically of traditional origins
- Information on the publication date of the story is provided
- Information on the region of origin of the story is provided (some missing data)
- Approximately 800,000 words in the corpus



Transitive verbs in Tok Pisin

- Any verb ending in *-im* is transitive and has a direct object :
 - *bihanim mi* ‘to follow me’
- Any transitive verb not ending in the suffix *-im* requires *long* before its object:
 - *lukluk long graun* ‘look on the ground’

(Mihalic 1971:24)



Transitive verbs in Tok Pisin

There are a number of transitive verbs that appear with and without the suffix:

abrus (miss/ evade), *dring* (drink), *wet* (wait), *kaikai* (eat), *bilip* (believe), *goap* (go up), *hangamap* (hang up), *holimpas* (hold), *kalap* (jump), *lain* (line up), *lukaut* (look out), *singaut* (call for), *tok* (talk), *was* (watch)

Without the suffix they “require the preposition *long*.”

(Mihalic 1971: 26)



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Verb groups based on glossing and collocate patterns

Cases where the suffixed verbs and verbs followed by *long* **differ** in their semantics:

abrus (miss / evade), *dring* (drink), *wet* (wait),
kaikai (eat)

Cases where the suffixed verbs and verbs followed by *long* have very **similar** semantics:

bilip (believe), *goap* (go up), *hangamap* (hang up),
holimpas (hold), *kalap* (jump), *lain* (line up), *lukaut* (look
out), *singaut* (call for), *tok* (talk), *was* (watch)



Verbs with differing semantics

abrus (long) ‘to miss’

Spia bilong tupela i no save abrus long wanpela abus.

‘Their arrows never missed an animal.’

abrusim ‘to evade’

Sikau i abrusim gut spia.

‘The marsupial dodged the spears well.’

The difference in these verb pairs lies with the causer of the “missing”: the source or the target



Glossing of *singaut* and *singautim*

- *Singaut (long)* ‘to call for someone’, ‘to call for’

Man ya i singaut long meri long kalap i go long kanu.

‘The man called out for the woman to jump into the canoe’

- *Singautim* ‘to call someone’, ‘to call for’

Em i singautim meri bilong em long stretim ol dispela kaikai

‘He called out for his wife to take care of all of the food’

10 most frequent collocates of *singaut long* and *singautim*

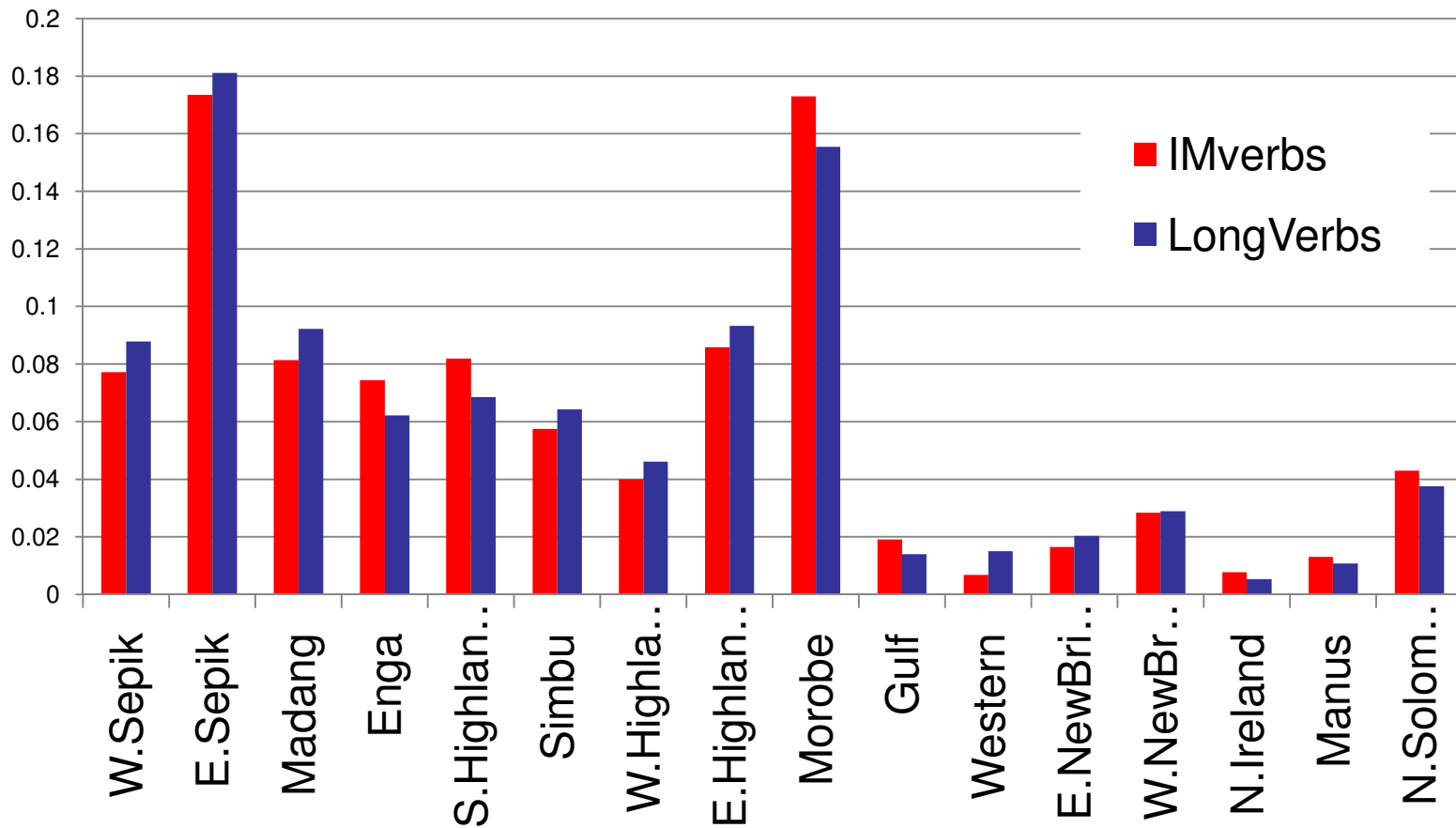
<i>singaut long</i>		<i>singautim</i>	
Relative Frequency	collocate	Relative Frequency	collocate
0.076687117	<i>ol</i>	0.197674419	<i>ol</i>
0.036809816	<i>em</i>	0.127906977	<i>olgeta</i>
0.024539877	<i>tupela</i>	0.098006645	<i>em</i>
0.021472393	<i>papa</i>	0.064784053	<i>tupela</i>
0.021472393	<i>mi</i>	0.043189369	<i>pikinini</i>
0.018404908	<i>wanem</i>	0.031561462	<i>meri</i>
0.018404908	<i>man</i>	0.024916944	<i>mi</i>
0.018404908	<i>dok</i>	0.024916944	<i>dok</i>
0.015337423	<i>pikinini</i>	0.023255814	<i>yu</i>
0.01226994	<i>tokples</i>	0.021594684	<i>man</i>



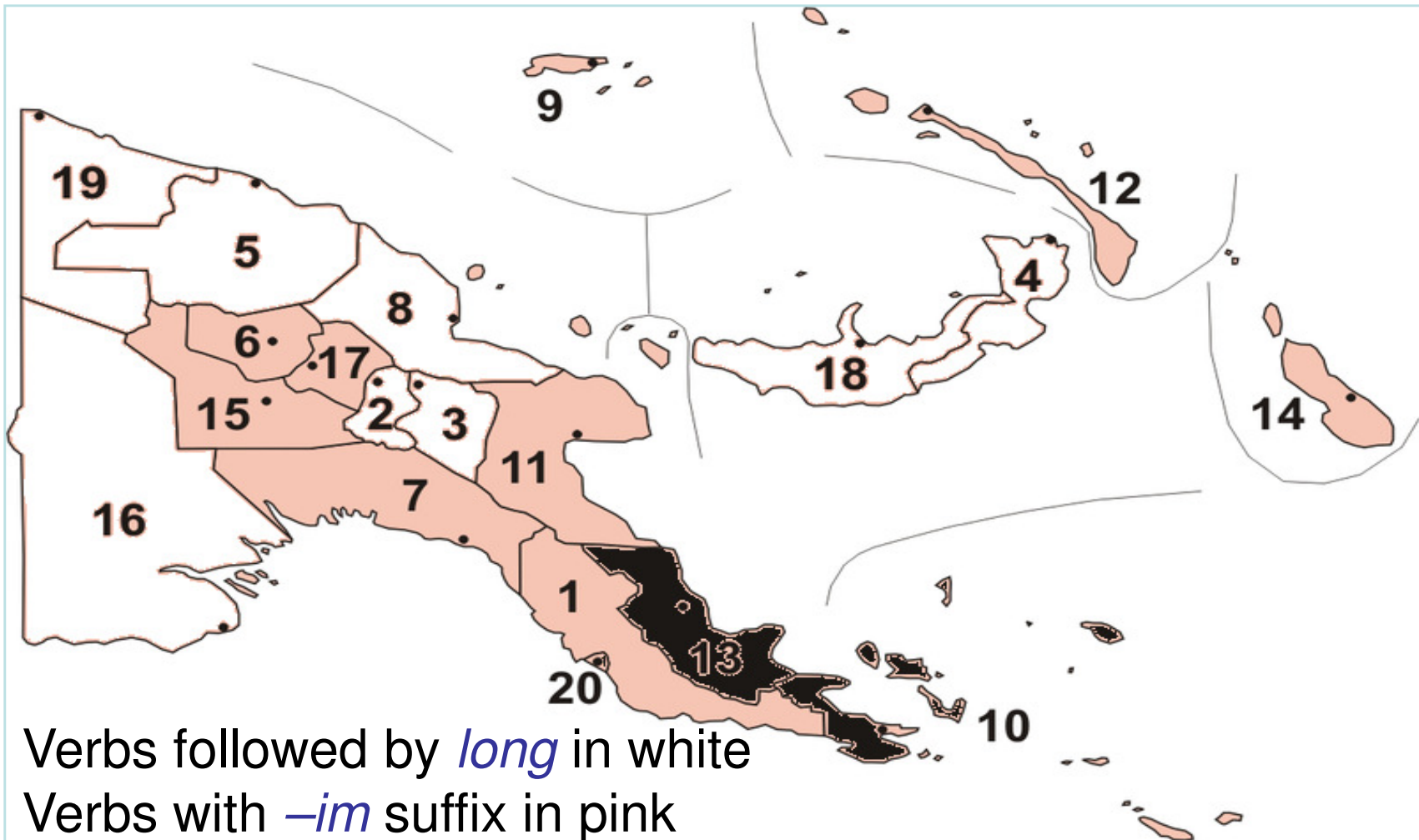
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 - **regional differences** in usage of verbs from the second group
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Comparing frequencies of verbs followed by *long* and *-im* suffixed verbs by Region



Comparing frequencies of verbs followed by *long* and *-im* suffixed verbs by Region

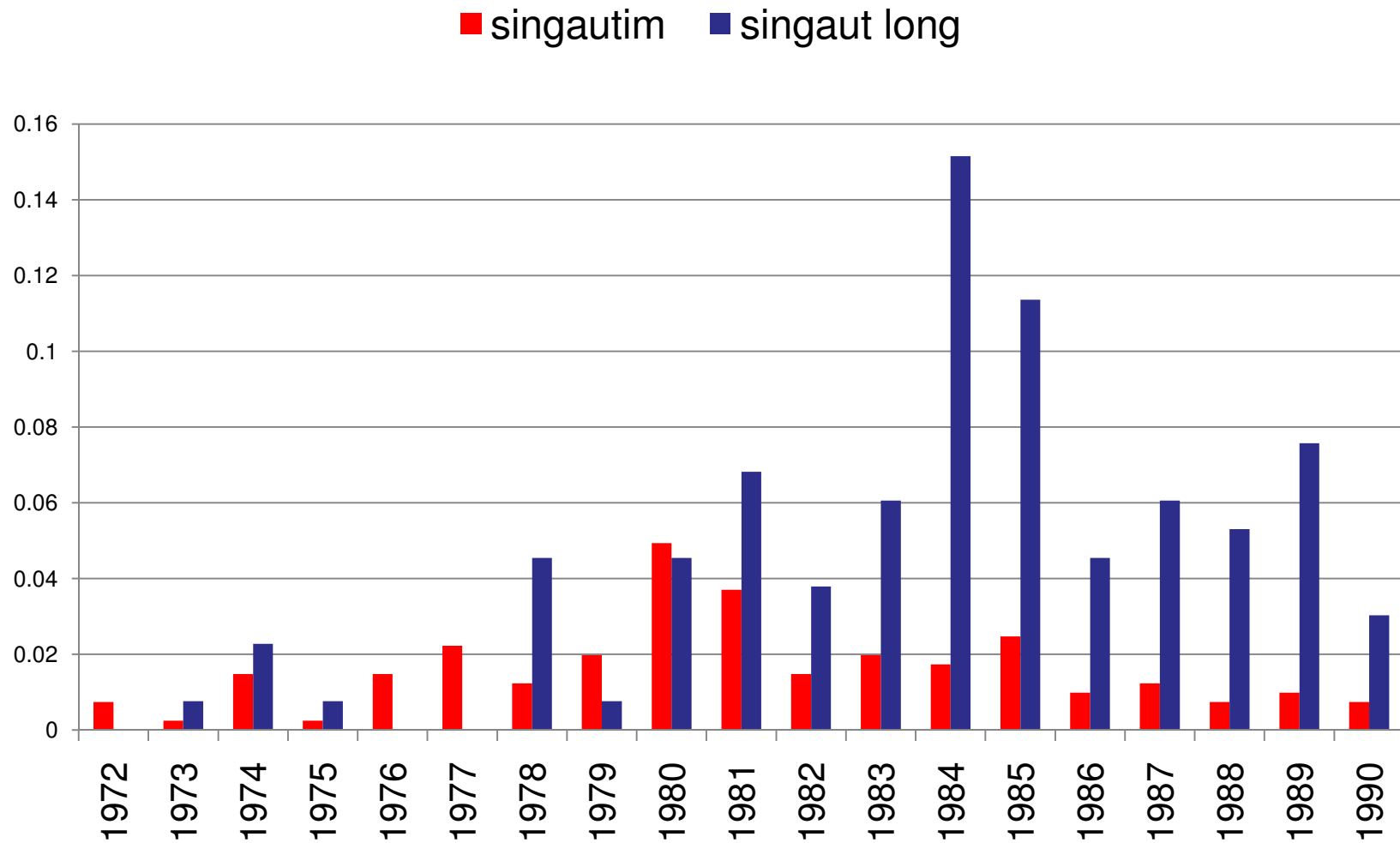




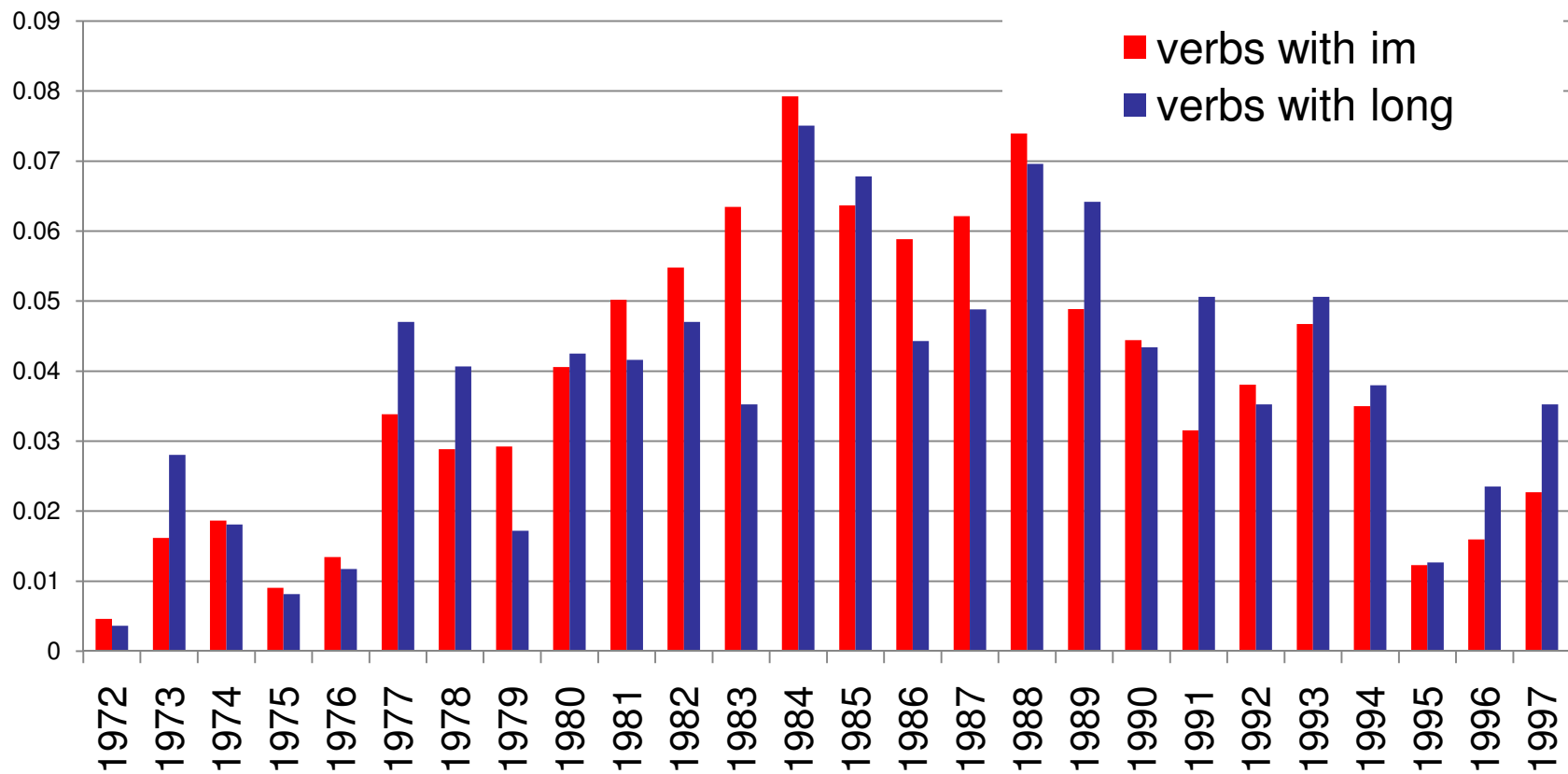
Overview

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 - **differences over time** in usage of verbs from the second group

Singautim and *Singaut long* over time



Comparing frequencies of verbs followed by *long* and *-im* suffixed verbs by time





Outlook

- One set of verbs show clear semantic differences
 - For the other set:
- Some indication of temporal variation
- Some indication of regional variation
- However, none of these factors seem to be able to explain the variation on their own
- Substrate languages might also play a role
- Statistical testing is necessary to gain further insights
- It remains a work in progress



Thank you.

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