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From LIKE/LOVE to habitual: the case of Mainland East and Southeast Asian languages

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Abstract: This paper documents the common grammaticalization path of the LIKE/LOVE constructions into expressing habitual aspect in Mainland East and Southeast Asian languages. The stages and degrees of grammaticalization for the LIKE/LOVE constructions vary cross-linguistically and different stages of evolution co-exist in one and the same language. Based on the synchronic data from a sample of six national languages in that region, it is found that the grammaticalization process in Chinese, Thai, and Lao is advanced while the process in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese is incipient. At the initial stage of their grammaticalization, there are three context-induced intermediate steps of development before the constructions in question are compatible with inanimate subject referents and the habitual meaning becomes the only possible interpretation. At the later stage, languages vary in their combinability with stative verbs and in their possibility of occurring in future temporal context. The common human experience that if one likes/loves doing something, one tends to do it frequently renders it highly unlikely that this grammaticalization pattern is an areal feature confined to Mainland East and Southeast Asia.

Keywords: LIKE/LOVE construction; habitual; grammaticalization; Mainland East and Southeast Asian languages

1 Introduction

Habitual aspect is defined as describing “a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time” (Comrie 1976: 27). A well-known case is English *used to* as in (1).

(1) *She used to drink coffee but now she drinks tea.*

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Apart from *used to*, English has a variety of means to indicate habitual aspect, such as *would*, the simple present tense, frequency adverbs, temporal expressions, as well as plural nouns. De Smet and Cuyckens (2005) argue that, in addition to the enjoyment/volition meaning, '*like/love + to-infinitive*' has developed a habitual use as in (2a) and (2b).

(2) a. *She comes from Oregon. She wears a raincoat and boots because it **likes to** rain in Oregon.*
(De Smet and Cuyckens 2005: 28)

b. *Truth **loves to** appear openly.*
(De Smet and Cuyckens 2005: 20)

(2a) means that it rains often in Oregon and (2b) means that truth frequently appears openly. The habitual meaning in both sentences is the only possible reading, as the inanimate subject referents are semantically incompatible with the lexical source meaning of '*like/love*'. This development of *like/love* into expressing habitual aspect is a process of grammaticalization. Grammaticalization involves the development of a linguistic item or construction from lexical to grammatical or from grammatical to even more grammatical. The book *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization* (Heine and Kuteva 2002; Kuteva et al. 2019) offers a very comprehensive documentation of grammaticalization pathways across the world's languages. In both its original version (2002) and its revised version (2019), the source concept LOVE¹ can develop into four targets: Avertive, Future, Intention, and Proximative. Habitual is not listed. Bisang et al. (2020) present a qualitative and quantitative investigation into the 30 source concepts retrieved from Heine and Kuteva (2002), trying to find areal and universal patterns in grammaticalization. The source concept LOVE is among the 30 concepts and three languages in Mainland East and Southeast Asia (Chinese, Khmer, and Thai) are included in the sample language genera. Despite this, the pathway from LOVE to habitual is not reported by them.

The development from LIKE/LOVE to habitual is by no means an idiosyncrasy of English. Similar processes are found in Mainland East and Southeast Asian languages.² Chinese *ài*, Lao *māk*, and Thai '*c'હጀp*' can function as full verbs indicating the

1 In Kuteva et al. (2019), LOVE is a cover term for both LOVE and LIKE. In this paper, I make a distinction between LIKE and LOVE in glossing, based on literal lexical meanings of the verbs.

2 The examples in this paper, unless otherwise indicated, are from my own collection. The Vietnamese data were from VietnameseWaC, Sketch Engine (retrieved on 21 January 2022, translated by Vu Xuan Nuoc) whereas the data in other languages were either from my informants (Khmer/Choeng Sokmalen, Burmese/Hnin Hnin Phy, Thai/Saranrat Kanlayakiti, Lao/Soumalee, Chinese/the author), or occasionally from the internet. Those retrieved from the internet were checked by native speakers. The phonetic transcriptions of examples in my dataset (Thai, Lao, Burmese, and Khmer) were obtained from the SEALang Library (<http://sealang.net/library/>), while those from

LIKE/LOVE meaning. As shown in (3), they also have a habitual use, as English *like/love to* does. *Tóu-fǎ* ‘hair’ in Chinese, *khaw*⁵ ‘rice’ in Lao, and *s̄ua/p̄hâa* ‘clothes’ in Thai are all inanimate subject referents, which are incapable of experiencing LIKE/LOVE emotions.³ The habitual meaning is thus the only possible interpretation of these verbs.

(3) a. Chinese

头发	爱	出	油?	你	洗	头	时	可能
<i>tóufǎ</i>	<i>ài</i>	<i>chū</i>	<i>yóu?</i>	<i>nǐ</i>	<i>xǐ</i>	<i>tóu</i>	<i>shí</i>	<i>kěněng</i>
hair	HAB ⁴	produce	oil	you	wash	head	time	may
犯	了	这	些	错误				
<i>fàn</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>zhè</i>	<i>xiē</i>	<i>cuòwù</i>				
make	PFV	this	some	mistake				

‘Does your hair often get oily? You may have made these mistakes when washing your hair.’

b. Lao (Enfield 2007: 175)

<i>thèèw</i> ³	<i>nit</i> ⁴ ,	<i>khaw</i> ⁵	<i>bòø</i>	<i>mak</i> ¹	<i>ngaam</i> ²
area	DEM	rice	NEG	HAB	look.good

‘(In) this area, rice tends not to look good (i.e., be of good quality).’

c. Thai

วัน	ที่	ฝนตก	เสื้อผ้า	ชื้น	รา
<i>wan</i>	<i>tʰi</i>	<i>fɔn'tɔk</i>	<i>s̄ua/p̄hâa</i>	<i>'cʰɔɔp</i>	<i>kʰuŋ'raa</i>
day	REL	rain	clothes	HAB	get.mouldy

‘Clothes tend to get mildewed on rainy days.’

The phenomenon that LOVE verbs can express habitual aspect has been noticed in the literature, for instance, for Saramaccan (Maurer and The APiCS Consortium 2013; McWhorter and Good 2012), Mandarin Chinese (Endo and Tao 2009; Lamarre 2005), Lao (Enfield 2007), Latin (De Smet and Cuyckens 2005), and Eton (Van de Velde 2008), but it seems that no detailed studies of how LOVE verbs develop into a habitual function are available, not even for individual languages.

publications keep their original transcriptions, and the written scripts were not added if not provided in their original publications. Please note that the interpretations of data in this paper rely heavily on my informants’ intuition and may be subject to different judgments by other native speakers.

³ These inanimate subject referents are usually not personified in the individual languages and cultures in Mainland East and Southeast Asia.

⁴ The gloss ‘HAB’ is given only when the construction in question is fully grammaticalized while in other cases the original lexical meaning ‘love’ or ‘like’ is given.

This paper aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed study of how LIKE/LOVE verbs develop into indicating habitual aspect, based on the analysis of the languages in Mainland East and Southeast Asia (MESEA).

MESEA⁵ is a *Sprachbund* (linguistic area) (Bisang 1996, 2006, 2008; Enfield 2003, 2005, 2019, 2021; Enfield and Comrie 2015; Matisoff 1991; Sidwell and Jenny 2021; Vittrant and Watkins 2019; among others). There are five language families in this region: Sino-Tibetan, Hmong-Mien, Tai-Kadai, Austroasiatic, and Austronesian, including national languages of China, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma (cf. Jenny 2021). Due to a long history of contact, languages in this area share significant “documented parallels on the morphological, phonetic, and structural levels” (Siebenhütter 2021: 708). Almost all languages have numeral classifier systems (though with varying degrees of complexity), serial verb constructions, sentence-final particles, paucity of inflectional marking of grammatical categories such as person, tense or case, heavy dependence on pragmatic inference, and are radical pro-drop (the omission of nominal arguments without concomitant marking on the verb in independent clauses), to name just a few. Regarding grammaticalization, the languages of MESEA have been found to share areal patterns as well. For instance, nouns denoting ‘thing, object’ grammaticalized into genitive markers, BE verbs into progressives and locatives, GIVE verbs into causatives or benefactives (Matisoff 1991); COME TO HAVE/ACQUIRE/GET verbs developed tense and multiple modal functions (Bisang 1996, 2004; Enfield 2003); and COME and GO verbs developed into directionals (Bisang 2021; Matisoff 1991).

This paper aims to document the grammaticalization of LIKE/LOVE constructions into habituals as another areal pattern in the languages of MESEA. The goals are as follows: (i) to give an overall account of variation in the process of grammaticalization from LIKE/LOVE constructions to habituals in the languages of MESEA (Section 2.2); (ii) to show in detail what intermediate steps are needed for the habitual meaning to be underway during the initial process of grammaticalization (Section 2.3); (iii) to demonstrate what further advances these LIKE/LOVE constructions might make during their later stages of development (Section 2.4); and (iv) to discuss whether this grammaticalization path is an areal feature confined to MESEA (Section 3).

⁵ Other terms have been used in the literature, *Mainland Southeast Asia* and *East and Mainland Southeast Asia*. The former excludes the part of China above the Yangtze River whereas the latter includes this part of China as well as Japan and Korea. Here I follow Chappell and Lü’s (2022) term *Mainland East and Southeast Asia*, which refers to the region that covers all China and Mainland Southeast Asia.

In order to achieve these goals, six national languages in this region, namely Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Lao, Khmer, and Burmese, are sampled for analysis.⁶ Obviously, given the fact that there are hundreds of languages in MESEA, this sampling is based on convenience and availability of data, and it is not intended to be representative of all the languages or language families in this region. Nevertheless, the grammaticalization process proposed in this paper may be also valid for many languages in this linguistic area. Ideally, the grammaticalization process is best explained with evidence from diachronic data. However, when diachronic data may not be readily available, an analysis of synchronic contextual variation offers a powerful tool for reconstruction, especially regarding the recent processes where the whole range of intermediate stages of evolution is accessible in the form of synchronic data (Heine 2002: 83). In line with this idea and given the fact that different degrees and stages of development co-exist both across and within the individual languages of MESEA, I will explore the grammaticalization process of the LIKE/LOVE constructions from a synchronic perspective.

2 From LIKE/LOVE to habitual: context-induced change

2.1 Introduction

The LIKE/LOVE construction in the languages of MESEA is the concatenation of a LIKE/LOVE verb with another verb. The LIKE/LOVE verbs in question are 爱 *ài* 'love' in Chinese, *thích* 'like' in Vietnamese, ชอบ *c'ôcp* 'like' in Thai, ចូលចិត្ត *coolcat* 'like' in Khmer, ມັກ *mák* 'like' in Lao, and တိမ့် *gai?* 'like' in Burmese.⁷ In Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Khmer, and Lao, which have the basic VO order, the LIKE/LOVE verb is followed by another bare verb while in Burmese, which has the basic OV order, the LIKE verb is preceded by another verb which is suffixed by a nominalizer (see examples in Section 2.2).

The reason why these LIKE/LOVE verbs are dealt with as constructions is that they are not compositional with regard to indicating habitual aspect. Neither the

⁶ If not otherwise indicated, the variety studied is the standard language of the country concerned. Hence, Chinese refers to Standard Chinese.

⁷ There is no attempt to imply that these verbs are equivalents. Each language has more than one means to express LIKE/LOVE concepts. The reason why these verbs were selected is that they are most similar in functional range.

LIKE/LOVE verb nor the other juxtaposed verb alone can bring about the habitual meaning. It is the entire construction that gives rise to it. This can be confirmed by the fact that the LIKE/LOVE verbs in these six languages can all function as a full verb if co-occurring with a nominal/pronominal object, as exemplified by sentences from Khmer, Lao, and Burmese in (4). In such cases, only the lexical meaning 'like' obtains. The habitual reading is not possible.

(4) As a full verb

a. Khmer

ព្រំ	ចូលចិត្តត	អុនក
<i>knom</i>	<i>coolcat</i>	<i>neak</i>
1SG	like	2SG
'I like you.'		

b. Lao

ຂ້ອຍ	ມັກ	ແມວ
<i>kʰɔ̄j</i>	<i>māk</i>	<i>mē:w</i>
1SG	like	cat
'I like cats.'		

c. Burmese

သူ	တရှတ်	ဟင်း	အရမ်း	ကြို့ပြုတယ်
<i>θù</i>	<i>təyou?</i>	<i>hĩ</i>	<i>əyā</i>	<i>faiʔtè</i>
3SG.M	China	dish	very	like.NFUT
'He really likes Chinese dishes.'				

The LIKE/LOVE constructions in the languages of MESEA have followed a common grammaticalization path. They all developed into expressing habitual aspect, yet with varying degrees of development. Apart from their variation in degrees, different stages of development co-exist within one and the same language. For instance, in Chinese, synchronically, the verb 爱 *ài* 'love' has three uses: (i) a full verb, (ii) an element that indicates both the meaning of love and the meaning of habitual aspect, and (iii) a habitual marker.

In the following sections, I will document the grammaticalization pathway from LIKE/LOVE constructions to habitual aspect in the languages of MESEA. Firstly, I will provide a detailed account of the varying stages of the grammaticalization based on the model proposed by Heine (2002) (Section 2.2); secondly, I will show that there is an intermediate three-step development during the initial stage of grammaticalization (Section 2.3); and thirdly, I will demonstrate how these LIKE/LOVE constructions diverge in linguistic behavior even when they arrive at a more advanced stage of grammaticalization (Section 2.4).

Table 1: Heine's four-stage scenario of grammaticalization process (Heine 2002: 86).

Stage	Context	Resulting meaning
I Initial stage	Unconstrained	Source meaning
II Bridging context	There is a specific context giving rise to an inference in favor of a new meaning	Target meaning foregrounded
III Switch context	There is a new context which is incompatible with the source meaning	Source meaning backgrounded
IV Conventionalization	The target meaning no longer needs to be supported by the context that gave rise to it; it may be used in new contexts	Target meaning only

2.2 From LIKE/LOVE to habitual: stages of grammaticalization

Heine (2002) proposes a context-induced four-stage scenario to explain the intermediate stages in the process from a lexical item/construction to a grammatical item/construction. As indicated in Table 1, at Stage I, only the source meaning occurs; at Stage II, there is a *bridging context* that gives rise to an inference in favor of a new meaning; at Stage III, there is a *switch context* that is incompatible with the source meaning; at Stage IV, the grammatical meaning is *conventionalized* and does not need the support of context.

According to Heine's model, the grammaticalization process of the LIKE/LOVE constructions in the languages of MESEA shares the same properties at Stage I and Stage IV yet differs at Stage II and Stage III. All LIKE/LOVE verbs still retain their original lexical meanings as illustrated in (4) above, which is characteristic of Stage I; no language has reached the conventionalization stage (Stage IV), which means that the constructions at issue are not conventionalized, and the habitual interpretation still needs the support of context. As regards differences, one of them lies in whether they use the LIKE/LOVE verbs in switch contexts, which is characteristic of Stage III. Among the six national languages investigated, three languages (Chinese, Thai, and Lao) have researched this stage. Their LIKE/LOVE constructions are compatible with the inanimate subject referents and the habitual meaning is the only possible interpretation, as in (3). More examples are given in (5).

(5) a. Chinese

面粉	在	夏季	七	八	月份	爱	生	虫子
miānfěn	zài	xiàjì	qī	bā	yuèfèn	ài	shēng	chóngzī
flour	LOC	summer	seven	eight	month	HAB	give.birth.to	worm

'Flour is prone to get infested with worms in July and August.'

b. Thai

วัน ที่ อากาศ ร้อน ได้ ไม่ ชอบ นี่ เสียงดัง “กร๊อบแกร๊บ”
 'wan tʰii aa'kàat 'ròon 'tó? 'máay 'cʰòɔp 'mii 's̥ian'dan 'kròɔp'krèep'
 day REL weather hot table wood HAB have loud 'crack.crack'
 'Wooden tables tend to give off loud cracking sounds in hot weather.'

c. Lao

ຍາມ ຜິນ ຕົກ ເຄືອງເຮືອນ ມັກ ອັບເຊື້ອລາ ຕະຫຼອດ
 nám fön tók kʰia:ŋhia:n māk ápsialá: tálɔ:t
 season rain fall furniture HAB mildew always
 'Furniture is always prone to mildew on rainy days.'

Chinese *miànfěn* 'flour' in (5a), Thai *'tó?máay* 'wooden table' in (5b), and Lao *kʰia:ŋhia:n* 'furniture' in (5c) are all inanimate subject referents which cannot act either as an experiencer of liking or loving emotions or as an actor of the action or event designated by the second verb. Thus, only the habitual meaning obtains.

However, in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese, the LIKE/LOVE constructions are incompatible with inanimate subject referents, as illustrated by (6) in Khmer.

(6) Khmer

*អ៊ីនធីណិត ចូលចិត្ត ខ្សោច
 ?i:n.tʰi:.nat coolcat kʰooč
 internet like break.down
 'Internet likes to break down.'

With regard to the bridging context (Stage II), these six languages vary as to whether they have fully completed this stage. In Chinese, Thai, and Lao, the LIKE/LOVE constructions are fully developed as they can occur in contexts where the meaning of LIKE/LOVE is in contradiction with what is described by the event concerned, as in (7). 'Get seasick', 'stumble while walking', and 'get arrested' are all undesirable, out of the control of the subject referents' free will, and highly unlikely to be liked or loved. Thus, the habitual meaning is the most plausible interpretation, yet their lexical source meaning cannot be completely ruled out as the meaning of LIKE/LOVE is still possible if a certain occasion arises (e.g., a child may like to get seasick because in this way she will get her parents' attention). This is one of the crucial differences between the bridging context (Stage II) and the switch context (Stage III), since at Stage III, the original source meaning is completely excluded.

(7) a. Chinese (Lü 2016: 49)

我 爱 晕船
 wǒ ài yūnchuán
 I love be.seasick
 'I tend to get seasick.'

b. Thai

ฉัน ชอบ เดิน สะดุด
 'cʰǎn 'cʰɔ̄ɔp 'dəən sa'dùt
 1SG like walk stumble
 'I tend to stumble while walking.'

c. Lao (Enfield 2008: 120)

phu⁰-ñing² nùng⁴ sakeet⁵ vēlaad² nan⁴ han⁰ mak¹ ca⁰ thùùk⁵ cap²
 person-F wear skirt time DEM.NPROX TOP.PART like IRR suffer catch
 'Women who wore skirts at that time would tend to get arrested.'

Unlike Chinese, Thai, and Lao, the constructions in Khmer, Burmese, and Vietnamese are incompatible with undesirable events that the subject referents have no control of, as in (8).

(8) Vietnamese

*Tôi **thích** say-sóng
 I like get-seasick
 'I tend to get seasick.'

Nevertheless, they are compatible with events that the subject referents have control of, be it desirable or undesirable, as in (9). The habitual meaning is present in all three sentences. In (9a), the statement 'The rich like to look down on the poor' has an inference that they do it often; in (9b), 'I like singing' implies that I sing very often; in (9c), 'hitting people' is most probably not liked by people; thus, the habitual meaning becomes more plausible than the LIKE meaning.

(9) a. Khmer

អុនកមាន ចូលចិត្តត មិលជាយ អុនកកវ
 neakmien coolcat maelney neakkraa
 rich.people like despise poor.people
 (i) 'The rich like to look down on the poor.'⁸

(ii) 'The rich often look down on the poor.'

b. Burmese

ကျွန်မ သီချင်း ဆိတာ ကျိုံတယ်
 təməaθatp̥i sʰòtā tʃaiʔtè
 1SG.F song sing.NMLZ like.NFUT
 (i) 'I like singing.'
 (ii) 'I sing very often.'

8 When a sentence is given two translations, the first one is the primary meaning of the sentence whereas the second one is the secondary meaning.

Table 2: The stages of grammaticalization of the LIKE/LOVE constructions in the languages of MESEA.

Languages	I Full verb	II Bridging context	III Switch context	IV Conventionalization
Vietnamese	+	±		
Khmer	+	±		
Burmese	+	±		
Chinese	+	+	+	
Thai	+	+	+	
Lao	+	+	+	

The symbol “+” indicates that the constructions in the languages have not fully evolved into that stage.

c. Vietnamese

đứa-trẻ này thích đánh người

child this like hit People

(i) ‘This child often hits people.’

(ii) ‘This child likes hitting people.’

The stages of grammaticalization of the constructions across the six languages in MESEA are summarized in Table 2.

Heine’s (2002) four-stage scenario provides a very good explanation for what happens to a linguistic item/construction on the way to grammaticalization, but Heine is also fully aware of the fact that his four-stage scenario “rests on a simplification of the facts considered. First, what it suggests is that there are four discrete stages, while in fact we are dealing with a *continuum* leading from stage I to stage IV and beyond” (Heine 2002: 86; emphasis mine). Similarly, Traugott (2003: 626) points out that, “[g]rammaticalization phenomena are essentially gradient and variable. They proceed by minimal steps, not abrupt leaps or parametric changes”. This is particularly true concerning the development of the LIKE/LOVE constructions from Stage I to Stage II. It is impossible for a lexical item to jump abruptly into a grammatical meaning that is more favored than the lexical one. Certain intermediate small steps must be involved. Then the question arises: what intermediate steps are relevant for the grammaticalization of a lexical LIKE/LOVE verb into a habitual marker? This question will be discussed in Section 2.3.

2.3 Intermediate steps at the initial stage of grammaticalization

The previous section is devoted to an overall account of the different stages of grammaticalization for the LIKE/LOVE constructions across the languages in MESEA. This section will focus on the relevant intermediate steps of development from Stage I to Stage II.

Pragmatic inference is one of the driving forces of grammaticalization. As observed by Bybee et al. (1994: 286), “[a] semantic change can take place when a certain implication commonly arises with a certain linguistic form. That implication can be taken as part of the inherent meaning of the form, and can even go so far as to replace the original meaning of the form”.⁹ The languages of MESEA are well known for serializing verbs in one clause without overt marking of coordination or subordination. When the LIKE/LOVE verb takes another verb as its complement, the pragmatic inference of habitual aspect commonly arises, especially when the action falls into the category of daily activities that one tends to do very often, e.g., reading, exercising, etc. This semantic extension is quite natural since if one likes/loves to do something, it is probable that one will do it frequently. This tendency is given in (10).

(10) If *x* likes/loves to perform a daily activity *p*, then it is probable that *x* performs *p* frequently.

Exercising in (11a) and going shopping in (11b) are daily, recurring activities. This naturally gives rise to a habitual inference as the participant enjoys doing it.

(11) a. Chinese

他	爱	运动
<i>tā</i>	<i>ài</i>	<i>yùndòng</i>
he	love	exercise
(i)	'He loves exercising.'	
(ii)	'He exercises often.'	

b. Khmer

នាង	ចូលចិត្ត	ជីវិ	ផ្សាយ
<i>nieŋ</i>	<i>coolcat</i>	<i>daə</i>	<i>psaa</i>
3SG.F	like	go	market
(i)	'She likes to go shopping.'		
(ii)	'She often goes shopping.'		

This is the first step for the habitual meaning to arise. Then over time, this pragmatic inference evolves into the second step, which involves the extension from desirable actions into something generally considered to be socially undesirable, as in (12). Actions such as seeking revenge in (12a) and cursing in (12b) are actions with typically perceived negative features, which are less likely to be liked or enjoyed by people other than the subject referent. Thus, the interpretation of habitual aspect is more prominent than the original lexical LIKE/LOVE meaning.

⁹ The term ‘implication’ in the quotation is understood as ‘inference’ or ‘implicature’.

(12) a. Chinese

他	爱	打击报复
<i>tā</i>	<i>ài</i>	<i>dǎjībàofù</i>
he	love	take.revenge

(i) 'He often seeks revenge.'

(ii) 'He likes seeking revenge.'

b. Burmese

၁ၢ	၁ၢ	ဆဲတာ	ကို	ကျို့၍တယ်
<i>θù</i>	<i>lù</i>	<i>sʰétà</i>	<i>kò</i>	<i>faiʔtè</i>
3SG.M	person	curse	NMLZ	like.NFUT

(i) 'He curses a lot.'

(ii) 'He likes cursing.'

While the second step involves undesirable actions that the actors have control/preference over, the third step involves the contextual extension to the kind of undesirable events that the human participants have no control over, as in (7) above. More examples are given in (13). Getting seasick (7a), stumbling while walking (7b), getting arrested (7c), not catching the bus (13a), and being forgetful (13b) are all events that the human participants cannot control, do not expect to happen, and are thus in contradiction with the LIKE/LOVE meaning. However, the original lexical meaning still cannot be completely ruled out, as some people may take delight in unfortunate events. Then at this step the lexical source meaning becomes marginal with the habitual meaning being dominant. This third step is what Heine calls the stage of the bridging context (Stage II).

(13) a. Thai¹⁰

ฉัน	มักจะ	ตื่นสาย	เลย	ชوب	ตก	รถ
'cʰān	'mák jaC	'tùen'ssāy	'ləay	'cʰōwp	'tòk	'rót
1SG	always	get.up	late	like	fall	car

'I always get up late and tend to miss the bus/car/train.'

b. Lao

ລາວ	ມັກ	ຂີ້ມີມ
lá:o	mák	kʰí:lí:m
3SG	like	forgetful

'He/ She tends to be forgetful.'

This context-induced three-step development from the lexical source meaning to the habitual meaning at Stage II is summarized in Table 3.

¹⁰ One of the reviewers points out that the Thai *mák ja* ‘always’ has fully grammaticalized into a habitual marker. I reserve this for future research.

Table 3: Intermediate steps from the source meaning stage to the bridging context stage.

Step	Context	Meaning
Step 1	Co-occur with desirable events	Habitual meaning inferred, source meaning dominant
Step 2	Co-occur with socially undesirable controllable events	Habitual meaning prominent, source meaning backgrounded
Step 3	Co-occur with undesirable uncontrollable events	Habitual meaning dominant, source meaning marginalized

As seen from Table 3, the development from Stage I to Stage II involves three gradual steps, at which contextual extensions play a vital role. As remarked by Traugott (2003: 624), “early in grammaticalization, lexemes grammaticalize only in certain highly specifiable morphosyntactic contexts, and under specifiable pragmatic conditions”. The extension from desirable events (Step 1) to socially undesirable controllable events (Step 2), and then to undesirable uncontrollable events (Step 3) witnesses an increase in the degree of contradiction with the original LIKE/LOVE meaning, which is paralleled with an increase in the prominence of the grammatical meaning and a decrease in the presence of the lexical source meaning. As a result, the defeasibility of the habitual meaning from Step 1 to Step 3 also diminishes. As the grammaticalization process is still ongoing in MESEA, this step-by-step contextual extension is observable in synchronic data. For instance, in Chinese as in (14a), at Step 1, the habitual inference can be readily canceled, leaving LOVE as the only reading (desirable activity), whereas at Step 2, as in (14b), the habitual meaning can hardly be canceled (socially undesirable controllable behavior), and at Step 3, it cannot be canceled at all as in (14c) (undesirable uncontrollable event). In both (14b) and (14c), it is either very odd or semantically unacceptable for the construction to have the LOVE meaning only.

(14) Chinese

a. 我 爱 做 饭, 可是 从来 不 做
wǒ ài zuò fàn kěshì cónglái bu zuò
 1SG love make meal but never NEG make
 ‘I love to cook, but I have never cooked.’

b. ?他 爱 背后 说 别人 坏 话, 可是 从来
tā ài bēihòu shuō biérén huài huà kěshì cónglái
 3SG love behind.back say others bad words but never
 没 说 过
méi shuō guò
 NEG say EXP
 ‘He loves badmouthing others behind their backs, but he has never done it.’

c. *我 骑 车 爱 摔跤, 可是 从 没 摔 过
 wǒ qí chē ài shuāijiāo, kěshì cóng méi shuāi guò
 1sg ride bike love stumble but never NEG stumble EXP
 'I tend to fall off when riding a bike, but I have never fallen.'

If a meaning cannot be canceled, that means that it is not pragmatically inferred, but entailed and semanticized as part of the inherent meaning of the item/construction. However, as seen in many examples in this paper, this semanticization is limited to the contexts at Step 2 and Step 3 as well as at Stage III (switch context). This might indicate that the grammaticalization process is still ongoing; nevertheless, it does not necessarily follow that the process is new and recent. For instance, the Chinese *ài* construction already had a habitual use even dated back to the Five Dynasties (907–960 AD) as pointed out by Ota (2003: 190).

(15) Classical Chinese (Ota 2003: 190)

时时 爱 被 翁婆 怪, 往往 频
 shíshí ài bēi wēngpó guài, wǎngwǎng pín
 often love PASS parents-in-law criticize often frequently
 遭 伯叔 嘴
 zāo bóshū chēn
 suffer uncles Blame

'(I) am frequently subject to the criticism of my parents-in-law, and to the blame of my uncles.' (*Dunhuang Bianwen ji: Fumu en zhong jing jiang jing wen*: P2418)

In (15), the two clauses are in parallel structure, and each word or phrase in the first clause is symmetric in meaning to the counterpart(s) in the second clause. *Ài* is presented to have a similar meaning to *pín* 'frequently'. Although the Chinese *ài* construction had already developed a habitual meaning even more than a thousand years ago, it is highly likely that the co-existence of the LIKE/LOVE meaning and the habitual meaning will continue for a long time. This might be due to two main reasons. One is that habitual expressions have a relatively low frequency of occurrence as compared to progressive or anterior (Bybee et al. 1994: 159), which may slow down their evolutionary advancement; the other is that, as in many languages of the world, a grammaticalization process may retain the lexical use of the linguistic item even when it is highly grammaticalized. It is comparatively common for the traces of diachronic change to be observable synchronically.

Earlier discussions in this section have shown that the constructions in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese have not reached Step 3 whereas those in Chinese,

Table 4: Three-step development at the bridging context stage in the languages of MESEA.

Languages	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Vietnamese	+	+	
Khmer	+	+	
Burmese	+	+	
Chinese	+	+	+
Thai	+	+	+
Lao	+	+	+

Thai, and Lao not only reached it but went beyond to arrive at the stage of the switch context. This distribution is given in Table 4.

One of the possible speculations for this variation is that at Step 1 in the bridging stage, the constructions in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese do not usually co-occur with the activities that people tend to perform very often or can occur in contexts that do not support a habitual reading, and thus give rise to other meanings, which consequently results in the grammatical meaning of habitual aspect not being inferred frequently enough in the language to prompt its full development at the stage of the bridging context. This may have to do with the fact that, in addition to the LIKE/LOVE meaning, the constructions in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese can have the volitional meaning 'prefer' as in (16).

(16) Vietnamese

Đao-này tự-dưng thấy chán mọi thứ, thích ở nhà nằm ngủ, đọc sách.
recently suddenly feel bored every thing prefer stay home lie sleep,
read book.

'Recently, (I) suddenly felt fed up with everything, and prefer to stay home, sleeping and reading.'

It seems also quite natural for an enjoyment meaning to develop into a meaning of volition. If one enjoys (likes/loves) doing something, naturally one would want/prefer to do it. Presumably, the multiple meanings of the constructions in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese could give rise to multiple pathways of grammaticalization, which may somehow hinder their further development of the habitual meaning. However, this is usually not the case in Chinese, Thai, and Lao. For instance, as in (17), it is ungrammatical to use the *ài* construction in the context that facilitates a 'prefer'

reading.¹¹ Undoubtedly, given the intense language contact in this region, this is a rather complex issue. Historical evidence and research are needed to see how this has evolved diachronically.

(17) Chinese

*我	平时	喝	茶,	今天	爱	喝	一	杯	咖啡
wǒ	píngshí	hē	chá, jīntiān	ài	hè	yī	bēi	kāfēi	
1SG	usually	drink	tea	today	love	drink	one	CLF	coffee

'I usually drink tea, but today I prefer to drink a cup of coffee.'

2.4 Divergences at the later stage of grammaticalization

2.4.1 Introduction

At Stage II, the LIKE/LOVE constructions involve three intermediate steps, and the languages in this study differ in whether they have reached Step 3. At their later stage of development, the constructions also diverge. Although the constructions in Chinese, Thai, and Lao are most advanced in their progress as all of them can combine with inanimate subject referents (Stage III), their degree of development is not homogeneous. They vary in their combinability with stative verbs and in their occurrence in future temporal context, which will be the focus of the following sections.

2.4.2 Stative verbs

Based on the data samples, in general, all the LIKE/LOVE constructions have a preference for dynamic verbs, as in (18).

¹¹ *ài* can have a volitional reading yet is restricted to constructions with either *wh*-words or with the structure 'ài V NEG V'.

(i) 你 爱 怎样 就 怎样, 我 管 不 着
 nǐ ài zěnyàng jiù zěnyàng, wǒ guǎn bù zháo
 2SG want how then how 1SG control NEG reach
 'You can do whatever you want. I don't care.'

(ii) 你 爱 吃 不 吃, 跟 我 没 关系
 nǐ ài chī bù chī, gēn wǒ méi guānxì
 2SG want eat NEG eat with 1SG NEG connection
 'You want to eat or not. It's none of my business.'

(18) a. Khmer

តាត់ ប្រុលចិត្តត លាង់ ទូរ ទូរស័ព្ទទ
koat **coolcat** *leen* *tuu* *tu:rəə?.sap*
3SG.M like play compare cell.phone

(i) 'He likes to play on the phone.'

(ii) 'He plays on the phone often.'

b. Chinese

这 种 木头 很 爱 裂
zhè zhǒng mùtou hěn ài liè
this type wood very HAB crack
'This type of wood tends to crack easily.'

c. Burmese

ကျွန်မ ရည်းဘား အိပ် ခါနီး ရချိုးတာ မ ကိုယ့် ဘူး
fə'ma ʃízá ei? kʰáni yèitʰótà mə ʃai? bú
1SG.F boyfriend sleep before shower NEG like NEG
(i) 'My boyfriend doesn't like to take a shower before going to bed.'
(ii) 'My boyfriend often does not take a shower before going to bed.'

Stative verbs such as 'know' and 'resemble' differ from other *Aktionsart* types of verbs in that the de-compositional analysis of a stative verb results in the homogeneity of subevents (Pustejovsky 1991). The combinability of the constructions in the languages of MESEA with stative verbs varies depending on their degree of grammaticalization. The more advanced in their degree of grammaticalization, the more compatible they are with stative verbs. The LIKE/LOVE constructions in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese are less grammaticalized and thus incompatible with stative verbs as illustrated by Vietnamese in (19).

(19) Vietnamese

*Tôi **thích** tin rằng bạn không thích tôi
1SG like believe that you NEG like 1SG
'I tend to believe that you don't like me.'

In the case of more grammaticalized constructions in Chinese, Thai, and Lao, they also vary as regards their combinability. The Chinese *ài* construction usually does not co-occur with stative verbs, yet there are marginal cases in which the co-occurrence is acceptable under certain circumstances. *Zhī-dào* 'know' is stative as in (20a). However, native speakers find it odd when it combines with *ài* as in (20b), which is only acceptable when *ài* is emphasized and has the LOVE meaning only. *Rèn-wéi* 'believe' is also stative, yet it is compatible with the *ài* construction as in (20c), in which the presence of *ài* indicates a series of bounded states of believing, instead of a single, continuous state.

(20) Chinese

a. 我们 知道 你 会 同 我们 一起 去
 wǒmen zhīdào nǐ huì tóng wǒmen yìqǐ qù¹
 1PL know 2SG FUT with 1PL together go
 'I know that you will go together with me.'

b. ?我们 爱 知道 你 会 同 我们 一起 去
 wǒmen ài zhīdào nǐ huì tóng wǒmen yìqǐ qù¹
 1PL love know 2SG FUT with 1PL together go
 'I love to know that you will go together with me.'

c. 四 和 五 年级 的 同学, 平时 就 爱
 sì hé wǔ niánjí de tóngxué, píngshí jiù ài
 four and five grade ATTR student usually then love
 认为 自己 长大 了
 rènweì zìjǐ zhǎngda le
 believe oneself grow.up PERF
 (i) 'Fourth and fifth grade students usually love to believe that they have grown up.'
 (ii) 'Fourth and fifth grade students usually often believe that they have grown up.'

While the combination of stative verbs with *ài* is marginal in Chinese, it is more common in both Thai as in (21) and Lao as in (22).

(21) Thai

ฉัน ชอบ คิด ว่า เธอ ไม่ รัก ฉัน
 cʰǎn 'cʰɔ̄ɔp kʰít 'wâa 'tʰeo 'mây 'rák 'cʰǎn
 1SG like believe say 2SG NEG love 1SG
 'I tend to believe that you don't love me.'

(22) Lao

a. Context: the same speaker is describing what local people think about burial forests and cemeteries. (Enfield 2007: 222)

juu¹ bòòn¹ nan⁴ hanø mak¹-caø thùù³ vaa¹ man²
 be.at place DEM.NPROX TOP.DIST like-IRR believe COMP 3.B
mit²- mit²- mit² phii³
 there.is there.is there.is spirit
 'In those places, (people) often believe that there are- there are there are spirits.'

b. Enfield (2007: 520)

khacaw⁴ bøø khòoj¹ mak¹ juu¹ hùan² hanø naa³
 3PL.P NEG much like exist house TOP.DIST FAC.FILLIN
 'They (the boss and her colleagues) didn't tend to be at home, you see.'

In (21), lexically, *kʰít* ‘believe’ denotes an unbounded state. When it combines with *cʰɔɔp*, this unbounded single state refers to a series of episodic situations. The single state of ‘believe’ becomes recurrent on a series of occasions. The same is true for (22) in Lao, in which the combination of *mak¹* with *thùu³* ‘believe’ in (22a) and the combination with *juu¹* ‘exist’ in (22b) result in a shift in meaning from denoting a single unchanged state to denoting a series of states.

According to Heine (2003: 580), during the process of grammaticalization, “extension obtains when a linguistic item can be used in new contexts where it could not be used previously”. If all the constructions are heading towards the same direction of change, and constructions diverge in whether they are extended to certain contexts (in this case, stative verbs), then we may see this extension as a sign of further development along the common grammaticalization path. This means that, regarding the combination with stative verbs, among the three most advanced constructions, the constructions in Thai and Lao are most likely to be more advanced in grammaticalization than that in Chinese.

Among the studies on habituality, whether a habitual marker can combine with stative verbs is still under debate. On the surface, it seems that the LIKE/LOVE constructions have undergone a similar grammaticalization process to English *used to*, as remarked by Bybee et al. (1994: 156): English *used to* “generalized from use with only human subjects to use with subjects of all types, and in addition it has come to be employed with stative verbs, giving the sense of a past state” as in (23).

(23) *My father used to have a car like that.*

However, not all researchers agree that *used to* is a marker of habituality in this case. Comrie (1976: 27) defines habituality as describing “a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time”, thus including cases such as (24) in which a stative verb co-occurs with a habitual expression to indicate a single state that lasts throughout a certain single period, without intermission.

(24) *The temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus.*

Binnick (2005: 348–349), however, argues that *used to* is not a habitual marker as it does not concern a recurrent series of eventualities (2005: 350). Instead, it functions as a kind of present perfect although it has past tense morphology. On the contrary, unlike *used to*, English *would* marks habituality inherently as it can refer to a series of states as in (25), which sounds odd yet means that the temple of Diana stood at Ephesus on a series of separate occasions.

(25) *The temple of Diana would stand at Ephesus (from time to time).*

Whether *used to* is a marker of habitual aspect is still debatable, but what is true is that both *used to* and *would* can combine with stative verbs, though with different

effects. The LIKE/LOVE constructions in Thai, Lao, and Chinese are like *would*, in that, when they combine with stative verbs, their presence turns the sentence that indicates a single state into one that indicates a series of separate states. This strongly suggests that the habitual meaning denoted by these LIKE/LOVE constructions is confined to the plurality of episodic situations, which is quite in line with the definition given by Bybee et al. (1994: 127): habitual aspect describes situations “customarily repeated on different occasions” as well as the one proposed by Verkuyl (1993: 325–327, 1995, cited from Tatevosov 2005: 193): “unbounded pluralization of temporal intervals”.

If viewed from a grammaticalization perspective, presumably, habitual expressions may be initially compatible with dynamic verbs and then are extended to co-occur with stative verbs, as dynamic events are more likely to be repetitive than states. If a habitual expression does not bring a single state into the repetition of this state when it co-occurs with a stative verb, then the question is whether this expression is a dedicated habitual marker, as seen in the debate over whether English *used to* is a habitual construction.

2.4.3 Future temporal context

The languages of MESEA are well known for their paucity of inflectional marking of grammatical information that is usually expressed morphologically in European languages. The grammatical information such as tense or aspect is usually not obligatorily expressed and can be inferred from context. For instance, in (26), without a specific context, its grammatical meaning of tense and aspect is indeterminate.

(26) Chinese (Bisang 2004: 111)

(<i>Ta</i>)	<i>lai</i> .
s/she	come
‘(S/He) comes/has come/is coming/will come/etc.’	

With respect to the LIKE/LOVE verbs, they are not marked obligatorily for tense, except for Burmese *fai?tè*, which is usually suffixed by a non-future marker as in (27).

(27) Burmese

၁ၢ	လိမ်ာ	ကို	ကျိုးတယ
θù	leɪtā	kò	<i>fai?tè</i>
3SG.M	lie.NMLZ	NMLZ	like.NFUT
(i) ‘He likes telling lies.’			
(ii) ‘He often tells lies.’			

Hence, the temporal contexts in which the LIKE/LOVE constructions occur are usually determined either by pragmatic context or by explicit temporal expressions such as nouns or auxiliaries. The common temporal contexts in which all the constructions can occur are the present, as in (28a) and (28c), and the past, as in (28b) and (28c).

(28) a. Khmer (present temporal context)

បា ចូលចិត្តត ឆ្លាំ សុប ដុនាំង កូលីង
paa coolcat nam sup cnan pləəŋ
father like eat soup pot fire

(i) 'Father likes to eat hotpots.'

(ii) 'Father eats hotpots often.'

b. Thai (past temporal context)

ฉัน เคย ชอบ กิน ไก่ ทอด
c'hǎn kʰəəy cʰɔ̄ɔp kin kāy tʰɔ̄ɔt
1sg ever like eat chicken fry

(i) 'I liked to eat fried chicken.'

(ii) 'I ate fried chicken often.'

c. Chinese (past and present temporal contexts)

我 以前 爱 喝 酒, 现在 爱 读 书
wǒ yǐqián ài hē jiǔ, xiànzài ài dú shū
1sg past love drink wine now love read book

(i) 'I loved to drink, (but) now I love to read.'

(ii) 'I drank, (but) now I read a lot.'

Regarding the future temporal context, however, constructions differ in whether the habitual meaning obtains although they all can occur in the future context. In Vietnamese, Burmese, Khmer, Chinese, and Thai, the habitual interpretation rarely holds in a future context. Only the LIKE/LOVE meaning remains. For instance, in Thai as in (29e), *a'naa'k'hot* 'future' and *k'ōŋ jaC* 'will' are two expressions that indicate the future temporal reference. In such a context, the sentence means 'I will enjoy reading books' and whether I will read often is irrelevant.

(29) a. Vietnamese

Nhất-dịnh *người* *Hongkong* *sẽ* **thích** *xem* *phim* *này*.
certainly people Hongkong FUT like watch movie this

(i) 'Hongkong people will certainly like to watch this movie.'

(ii) *'Hongkong people will certainly watch this movie often.'

b. Burmese

ကျွန်တင် နောင်တခါ ဘက်စကပ်ဘဇ် ဆော့တာ ကျို့၍မယ်
tʰən̥t̥ nāñtakʰà bēsak̥a?bó sʰət̥t̥ t̥fai?mè
1sg.M future basketball play.NMLZ like.FUT

(i) 'I will like playing basketball in the future.'

(ii) *'I will play basketball often in the future.'

c. Khmer

បានស្ថិតិ នឹង ចូលចិត្ត ព្យាយោង ហាមបីហុតិ
 baangsrey ninj coolcat jnam ham.bi:.gi:
 elder.sister will like eat hamburger
 (i) 'My elder sister will like eating hamburgers.'
 (ii) *'My elder sister will eat hamburgers often.'

d. Chinese

我 会 爱 看 电视 的
 wǒ huì ài kàn diànshì de
 1SG FUT love watch TV CERT

(i) 'I will love to watch TV, for sure.'
 (ii) *'I will watch TV often, for sure.'

e. Thai

ໃນ อนาคต ฉัน คงจะ ชอบ อ่าน หนังสือ
 'nay a'naak'hót 'c'hán k'hoŋ jaC 'c'hɔŋp 'aan naŋ'siúu*
 In future 1SG will like read book

(i) 'In the future I will like to read books.'
 (ii) *'In the future I will read books often.'

That the habitual meaning is unobtainable in a future context in these constructions can be confirmed by the fact that when a habitual meaning is saliently present as in the cases where the construction co-occurs with an undesirable activity (cf. Section 2.3), the sentence becomes barely acceptable in a future context. (30a) means that she is forgetful on a series of separate occasions. The presence of the future marker *huì* in (30b) renders the sentence rather odd. It is only acceptable under very specific circumstances such as in a community where being forgetful is favored. However, even under such a circumstance, the habitual reading is impossible.

(30) Chinese

a. 她 爱 忘事
 tā ài wàngshì
 3SG love forget
 'She tends to be forgetful.'

b. ?她 会 爱 忘事
 tā huì ài wàngshì
 3SG FUT love forget
 'She will tend to be forgetful.'

By contrast, the construction in Lao can occur in a future context as in (7c) (repeated here as [31a]), and in (31b).

(31) Lao

a (Enfield 2008: 120)

phu⁰-ning² nùng⁴ sakeet⁵ vēlaa² nan⁴ han⁰ mak¹ ca⁰
 person-F wear skirt time DEM.NPROX TOP.PART like IRR
 thùuk⁵ cap²
 suffer catch

‘Women who wore skirts at that time would tend to get arrested.’

b. ຖ້າ ບໍ່ ຕ່າງໃຈ ຕະນົນ, ມັກ ຈະ ໄດ້ ຄະແນນນ ບໍ່ ດີ
 tʰa: b̥: tāŋcay hí:an māk cha dai khaeenn bo di
 if NEG seriously study like IRR acquire grade NEG good
 ‘If (you) do not study hard, (you) would tend to get bad grades.’

Nevertheless, this does not mean the Lao construction always has a habitual reading in a future context. There are cases in which it does not, as in (32). This shows that the extension into a future context is not yet completed for the Lao construction.

(32) Lao

ມີໜ້າ ຂ້ອຍ ມັກ ຈະ ຕ່າງ ໃຈ ຕະນົນໜັງສີ
 mu-na khony māk cá tāŋcay hí:annāŋsī:
 future 1sg like IRR seriously study

(i) ‘In the future, I will like studying hard.’
 (ii) *‘In the future, I will study hard often.’

If the future temporal context is seen as a contextual extension into a new context along the same grammaticalization path, like the case of stative verbs, then the Lao construction has undergone a further step in its process of grammaticalization compared to all the other constructions at issue. This evidence somehow predicts how the other relevant constructions will evolve further.

However, this temporal extension may be true only to the evolution of the LIKE/LOVE constructions in MESEA. Cross-linguistically, habitual expressions vary greatly as to what kinds of temporal contexts they can occur in. In the past, it was believed that habituals tend to combine with past tense or occur in past contexts, as observed by Comrie (1976: 72). This is somehow echoed by Dahl (1985: 100–111), who claims that it is very hard to find the combinations of habitual markers with future markers, and habitual categories may be used secondarily in predictive contexts. However, more recent cross-linguistic investigation finds that this is not the case. For instance, Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca’s (1994: 151–160) corpus study reveals that habitual markers are compatible with all temporal contexts, past, present, and future. In their dataset, 17 languages have overt habituals that are not restricted by tense; 9 languages have specific past habituals; and 2 languages have present habitual. Hence, cross-linguistically, the occurrence of habitual markers in future context is by no

means rare. In fact, the future tense is so closely related to the habitual marker that in many languages such as English, Welsh, Lezgian, Uralic languages, tense/aspect markers have a polysemy of habitual and future tense. This is also attested in pidgins and creoles. As observed by Maurer and the *APiCS* consortium (2013), 24 languages out of 76 pidgins and creoles, the same marker can express both habitual and future values.

Given the great variation in the temporal contexts that habitual expressions can occur in, more diachronic research is needed to see what kind of temporal contexts habitual expressions originally occur in and what kind of contexts are later extensions during their process of grammaticalization.

2.5 Summary

In Section 2, I have documented the grammaticalization pathway from LIKE/LOVE constructions to habituials based on the synchronic data from languages in MESEA. The LIKE/LOVE constructions in the languages of MESEA differ as to their stages and degrees of grammaticalization. In Chinese, Thai, and Lao, the grammaticalization process is relatively advanced in the sense that they have reached Stage III (switch context), whereas in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese, this process is incipient in the sense that they haven't completely reached Stage II (bridging context). As the development from Stage I to Stage II cannot be abrupt, I have postulated that three intermediate steps have to be taken to reach Stage II. At Step 1, the constructions occur in contexts of desirable daily activities. Then the constructions are extended to be used in new contexts: contexts of socially undesirable activities which the subject referents have control of (Step 2), and contexts of undesirable activities which the subject referents have no control of (Step 3). At both Step 2 and Step 3, the habitual meaning becomes indefeasible and increasingly semanticized. The constructions in question are also found to diverge at later stages of their common grammaticalization process. Although the constructions in Chinese, Thai, and Lao all have reached Stage III, the construction in Lao is more advanced than the constructions in the other two languages as it is compatible with stative verbs and future temporal context whereas the construction in Chinese is only marginally compatible with stative verbs and incompatible with future context, and the construction in Thai is incompatible with future context despite its compatibility with stative verbs. The discussions and findings are summarized in Table 5. In this table, it is just for the sake of convenience that the three extensions beyond Stage II are presented in a sequence. There is no attempt to indicate that one is the further extension of another. They are independent of each other and are most probably in parallel development.

Table 5: The grammaticalization process of the LIKE/LOVE constructions in the languages of MESEA.

Languages	Stage I			Stage II			Beyond		
	Full verb			Bridging context					
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Inanimate	Stative verb	Future	subject referent	temporal context	
Vietnamese	+	+	+						
Khmer	+	+	+						
Burmese	+	+	+						
Chinese	+	+	+	+	+	±			
Thai	+	+	+	+	+	+			
Lao	+	+	+	+	+	+		±	

3 An areal feature of grammaticalization?

The grammaticalization in the languages of MESEA is characterized by the high relevance of pragmatic inference, non-obligatoriness of grammatical markers, and their multi-functionality (Bisang 2004, 2011, 2021). The high relevance of pragmatic inference is manifested in two ways. First, grammatical information often has to be inferred from context as even highly grammaticalized markers are not obligatory. Second, even when grammatical information is overtly expressed, many of the markers are multi-functional, so the interpretation of their specific functions in sentences depends heavily on pragmatic inference. One of the most typical examples is ‘come to have/acquire/get’ verbs in the languages of MESEA (Bisang 2004, 2009; Enfield 2003). Those verbs can occur in preverbal or postverbal positions. In each position, they have multiple functions within the domain of tense, aspect, and modality. The anchoring of a specific function in either position is to a certain extent determined by context.

The LIKE/LOVE constructions seem not to be representative of the typical grammaticalization features in MESEA. Pragmatic inference is relevant most in the sense that it functions as a driving force for their process of grammaticalization. Their occurrences are definitely not obligatory as there are multiple other means to express habituality in each individual language. Regarding multi-functionality, there is no known evidence that these constructions have developed into other grammatical functions apart from habituality.

As is the case in other domains of grammar, languages share similarities as well as variations in their process of diachronic change. The development from LIKE/LOVE to habitual falls into the category of ‘similarities’, not into the category of

‘variations’, as this pathway is not confined to the languages in MESEA. In some languages outside MESEA, a similar grammaticalization process has been noticed: in English (2a, b, Section 1), Russian, Saramaccan, and Eton. In (33a), the construction *ljubit*’ (‘love.IMP’) + INF.IMP is similar in meaning to ‘used to’; in (33b), *dì* ‘love, like’ expresses habitual aspect when used as a quasi-auxiliary; in (33c), *ló* is a habitual marker, which is a contracted form from *lóbi* ‘like, love’.

(33) a. Russian (Indo-European; Egbert Fortuin, p.c.)

Staryj Tuk ljubil zatevat' ix V kanun ivanova dnja.
old Took love.PST.IMP use.IMP them on Midsummer's Eve
‘Old Took used to have them [fireworks] on Midsummer's Eve.’

b. Eton (Bantu; Van de Velde 2008: 356)

àŋ gábé dìŋgè mà kùz bí pági
I-RPST-IMP INF-like-G 1SG.NPPR INF-buy LT 8-present
‘He liked to buy me presents and he bought them often.’

c. Saramaccan (English-Portuguese Creole; McWhorter and Good 2012: 124)

Akí ló u tapá a bundji
here HAB NF cover LOC fog
‘It's always foggy in here.’

If this grammaticalization process is found outside MESEA, then the question is whether this process exists only randomly in genetically and geographically unrelated languages. Although the grammaticalization process of the LIKE/LOVE constructions does not reflect the defining features of grammaticalization in MESEA, there is no doubt that there is a common pattern of grammaticalization from LIKE/LOVE constructions into habitual aspect in that area. If one enjoys doing something, one tends to do it frequently, thus largely culturally independent in that they tend to be conceived of in a similar way across linguistic and ethnic boundaries (Bybee et al. 1994: 10). Given that this is a basic human experience, it is highly likely that this areal pattern of grammaticalization will not be confined to MESEA, as are the cases of some grammaticalization clusters in MESEA that are also found in other linguistic areas, such as the grammaticalization of ‘finish’ verbs into perfective markers in Africa (Heine and Reh 1984) and elsewhere. Further investigation is needed to see whether this ‘LIKE/LOVE to habitual’ pattern exists areally or randomly in other linguistic areas.

Note that to say that there is such an areal pattern of grammaticalization in MESEA does not imply that every language/variety in that region has gone through the same process. The languages that I have investigated are national languages. In each country, there are a great number of languages/variety in addition to the national standard language. The languages/variety in each country also vary as

regards their evolution. Take the Sinitic languages as an example. The constructions at issue in many varieties are not as advanced in grammaticalization as that in Standard Chinese. For instance, in Southern Min, the LOVE verb can denote habitual aspect, yet it is incompatible with inanimate subjects (Lamarre 2005).

4 Concluding remarks

The LIKE/LOVE constructions in the languages of MESEA share a common grammaticalization path but with varying degrees and stages of grammaticalization. In Chinese, Thai, and Lao, the grammaticalization process is relatively advanced whereas in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Burmese, this process is incipient. Within each individual language, different stages of development co-exist synchronically. It has been shown that three intermediate steps are taken at the initial stage of grammaticalization for the LIKE/LOVE constructions. It is also found that languages have different degrees of development even at their later stage of grammaticalization. The Lao construction is most advanced in comparison with the other constructions as it can combine with stative verbs and can occur in future temporal context. The investigation into the grammaticalization of the LIKE/LOVE constructions also sheds some light on the issues on habituality such as how habitual expressions behave when they reach a later stage of a diachronic change and what counts as a dedicated habitual. As this grammaticalization development from LIKE/LOVE to habitual is true to common human experience and is not confined to the languages of MESEA, it is highly likely that this areal pattern is not unique to MESEA.

This study intends to serve as a point of departure, both for further investigation of LIKE/LOVE verbs from a diachronic perspective and for more investigation into other languages, language families, or linguistic areas. It also intends to invite linguistic fieldworkers and historical linguists to consider this grammaticalization pattern when they collect data or explore early textual data.

Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ATTR	attributive
B	bare
CERT	certainty
CLF	classifier
COMP	complementizer

DEM	demonstrative
DIST	distal
EXP	experiential marker
F	feminine
FAC.FILLIN	factive, filling in presupposed information
FUT	future
G	suffix or affix that occurs in several TAM-forms
HAB	habitual
IMP	imperfective
INF	infinitive
IRR	irrealis
LOC	locative
LT	lengthening
M	masculine
NEG	negation
NF	nonfinite
NFUT	non future
NMLZ	nominalizer
NPROX	nonproximal
NPPR	non-final form of the personal pronominal
P	polite
PART	particle
PASS	passive
PERF	perfect
PFV	perfective
PST	past
PL	plural
REL	relativizer
RPST	remote past
SG	singular
TOP	topic

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