

Polysemy Analysis of "生"(Shēng)

Module code: SICH3011

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Student ID number: 2503167

Date: 18 November 2025

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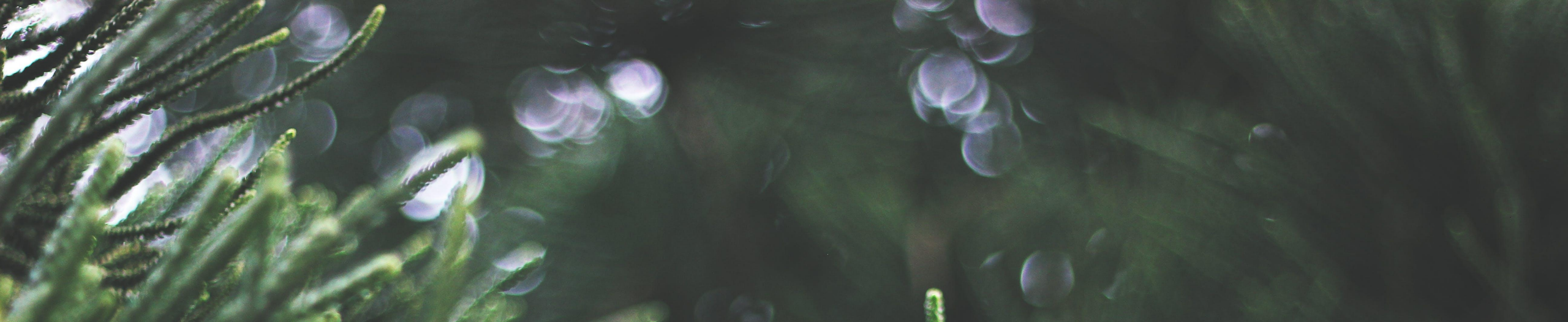
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Part One

Introduction to the Character Form of "*Sheng*" (生)

Original Meaning of "*Sheng*" (生)



Oracle Bone Script (Jia 200),
Shang Dynasty



It means "to grow, to advance".
The character depicts plants
sprouting from the soil. All
characters related to "growth"
are derived from 生.

《說文解字》：進也。象艸木生出
土上。凡生之屬皆从生。所庚切。¹



Character Form Evolution

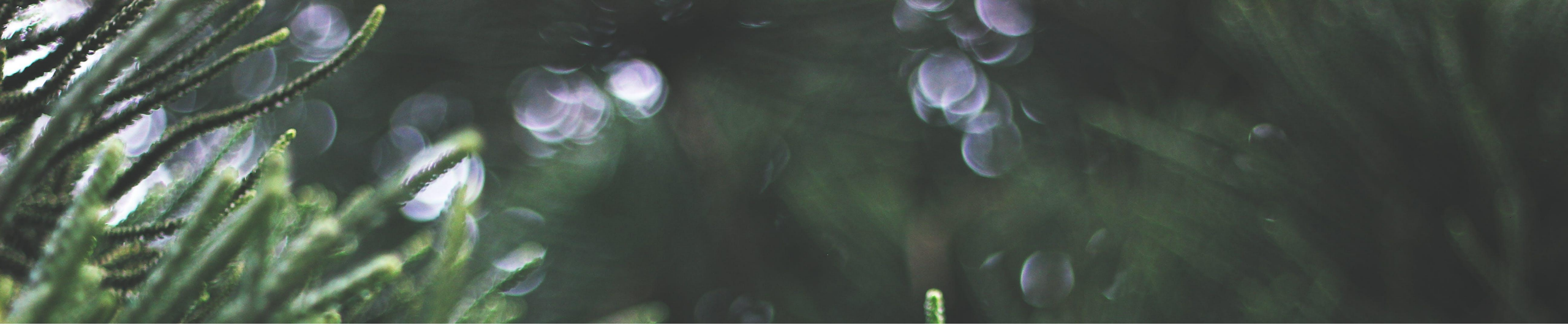


Oracle Bone
Script (Jia
200), Shang
Dynasty

Silu Ding 𠩺鼎
(Bronze Script),
Early Western
Zhou Dynasty

Shuihudi Bamboo
Slips 10.1
(Clerical Script),
Qin Dynasty

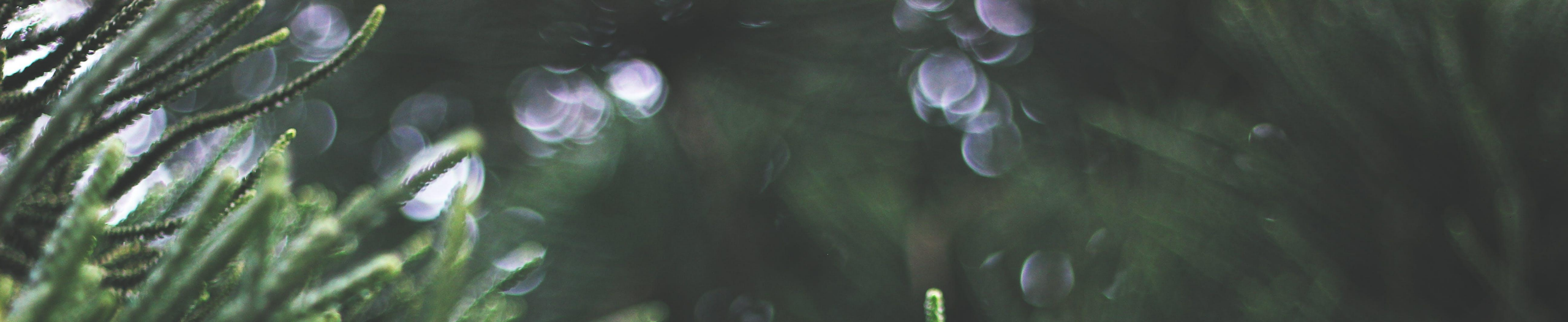
Xi Ping Stone
Classics, Shangshu
▪ Pangeng (Clerical
Script), Eastern
Han Dynasty



Part Two

Introduction to Common Semantic Categories

Category	Explanation	Examples
Extended Meaning	Life growing Students referred to as "Shēng" Not yet ripe The strange or unfamiliar referred to as 'shēng'. Life inborn	reproduction 生育、繁殖
Extended Meaning		pupil、 student 學生
Extended Meaning		The fruit is not yet ripe. 果實尚未成熟。
Extended Meaning		strangeness 陌生
Abstract meaning		The remainder of one's life 餘生
Abstract meaning		She is naturally gentle and courteous. 她天生溫文有禮。

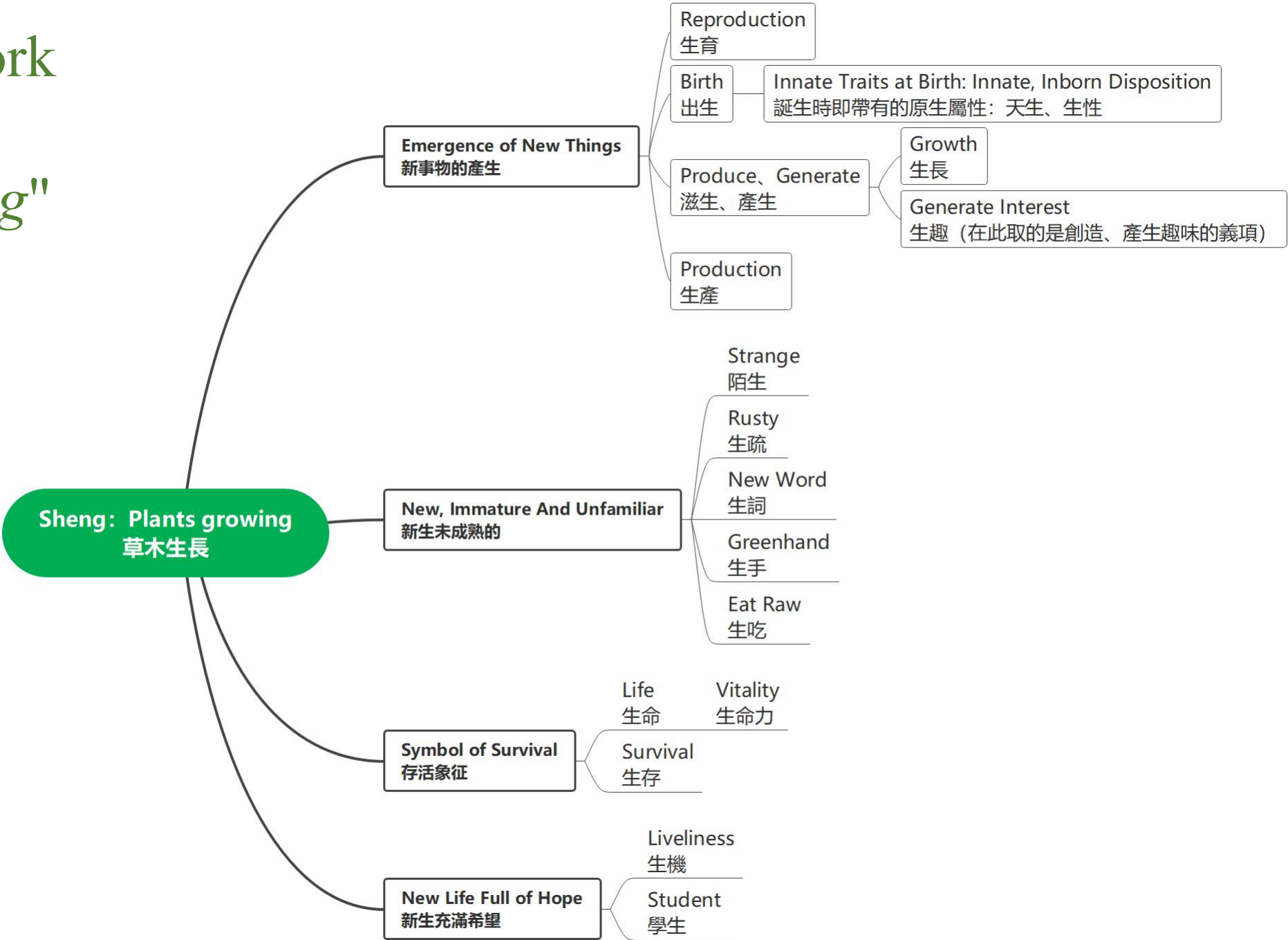


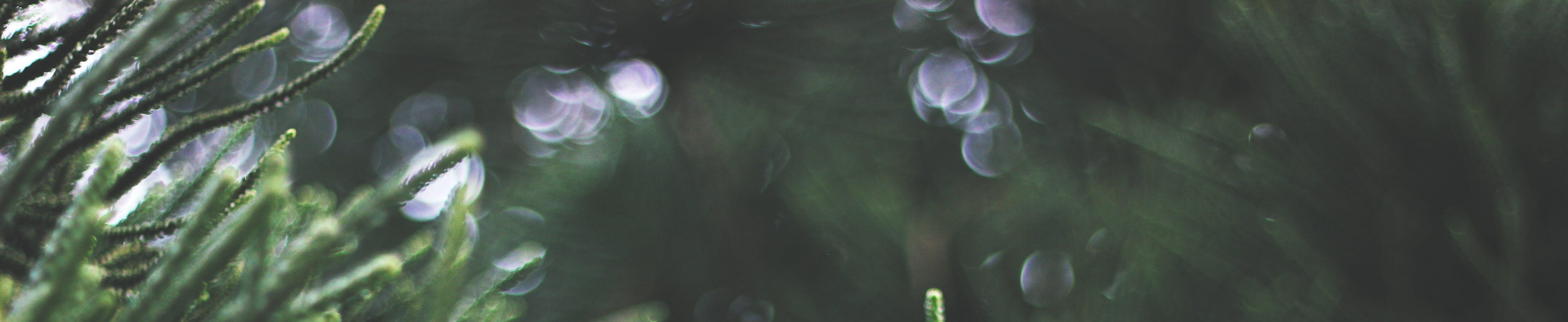
Part Three

Semantic Network Diagram of the Character "*Sheng*" (生)

Semantic Network

Diagram of the Character "*Sheng*" (生)





Part Four

Analysis of Semantic Boundaries of "*Sheng*" (生)



Is the character "*Sheng*" (生) in the word "*Shengji*" (生計, meaning "livelihood") an extended meaning or a metaphorical meaning?



Analysis of Semantic Boundaries of "*Sheng*" (生) : The Case of "Livelihood"

Breakdown of "*Shengji*" (生計)

“生”= Survival (core meaning: maintaining life)

“計”= Planning / Means (core meaning: ways to achieve a goal)

Overall Definition:

The ways to sustain one's daily life.

Translated as 'livelihood'

"Shengji" (生計) in *Archaic Phonology Micro Mirror* – Representing an Extended Meaning

Pressed by life, he had to seek ways everywhere to make a living.

(*People's Literature*, 1979, No. 2: "由於生活的逼迫，他不得不到處找門路、謀生計。")²

Thus, "*Sheng*" here is an extended sense, linking back to its original meaning of plant growth and life survival.

And when "*sheng*" and "*shengji*" are combined, it means "the way to sustain a person's daily life", which is translated as "livelihood."



Metaphorical Meaning of "*Shengji*"- Lakoff

The entire family worked hard to make a living. Since childhood, I have deeply understood the principle that "every grain is hard-won."³

“全家人為了生計拼命工作，自小即深刻體會「粒粒皆辛苦」的道理。”



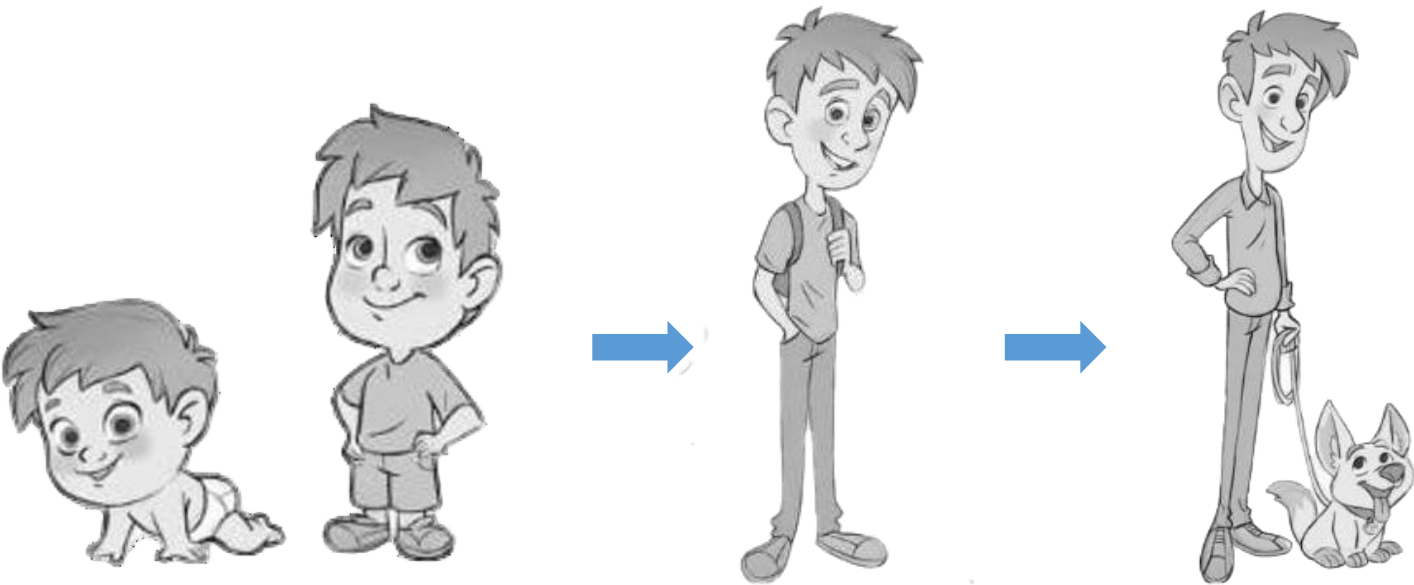
How does the growth of life manifest itself in economic activities? like “*Shengji*” (生計)



Metaphorical Meaning of "*Shengji*" (生計) - Lakoff

Life Growth (Source Domain)	Economic Activities for Livelihood (Target Domain)
Life resists external invasion (e.g.,insect pest,diseases)	Making a living resists competition, unemployment.
Growth - Youth - Adulthood	Start - Development - Stable income stage
Plants need sunlight and water to grow	Making a living requires skills and resources
Life has adaptability	Livelihood needs time to explore and adjust

Life Growth
(Source Domain)

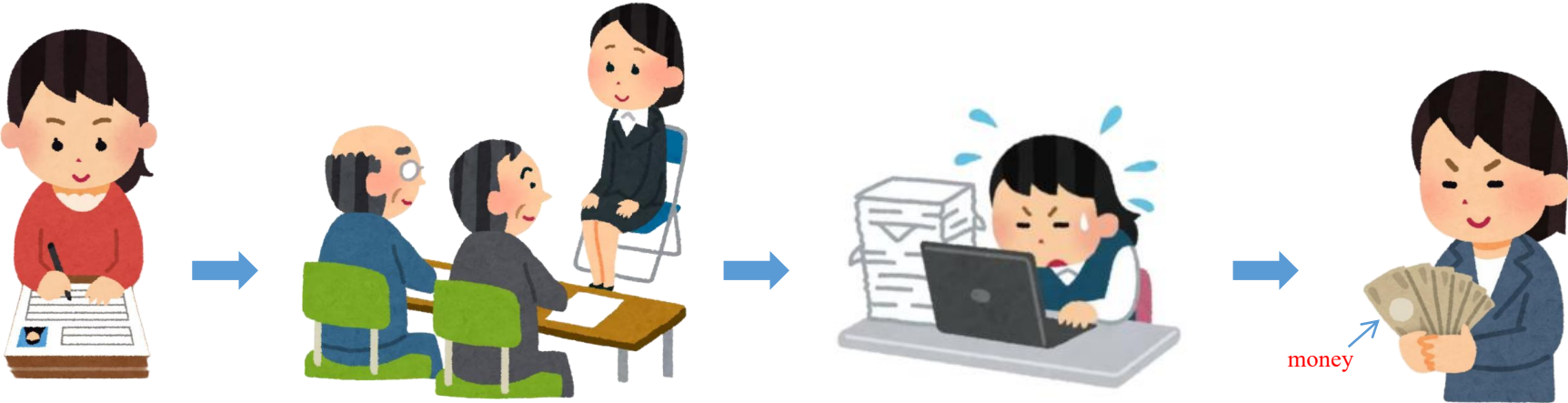


Growth

Youth

Adulthood

Economic Activities
for Livelihood
(Target Domain)



Start (Resume Submission & Interviews)

Career Development
(working hard stage)

Stable income stage

Life Growth (Source Domain)

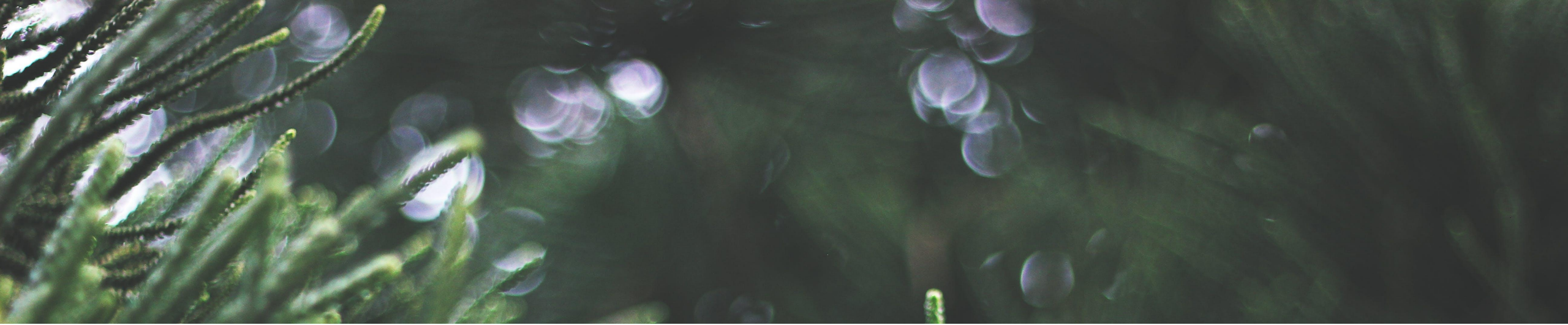


Plants need sunlight and water to grow

Economic Activities for Livelihood (Target Domain)



Making a living requires skills and resources



Part Five

Comparison of "*Sheng*" (生) Between East and West

Comparison of "Sheng" (生) Between East and West

East

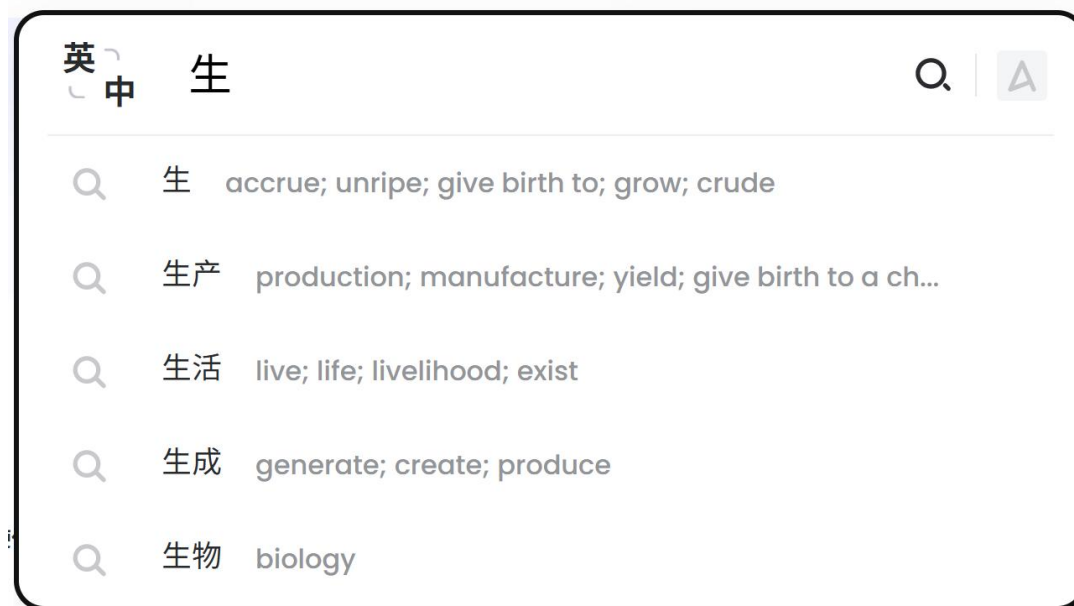
動

1. 長出、**生長**。如：「**生**出一對角。」《詩經·大雅·卷阿》：「梧桐**生**矣，于彼朝陽。」
2. **生產**、**生育**。《詩經·大雅·**生**民》：「不康禋祀，居然**生**子。」唐·白居易〈長恨歌〉：「遂令天下父母心，不重**生**男重**生**女。」
3. **發生**、**產生**。如：「**生**病」、「**生**效」、「**橫生**枝節」。《左傳·成公二年》：「義以**生**利，利以平民。」唐·杜甫〈愁〉詩：「江草日日喚愁**生**，巫峽泠泠非世情。」
4. **生存**、**活存**。如：「置之死地而後**生**」。
5. 製造、新創。如：「惹事**生**非」、「你又**生**出新花樣來了。」

A single character “生” can take on different meanings depending on the context.

West

有道 youdao



A single Western word tends to have one meaning, which is more straightforward.



Conclusion



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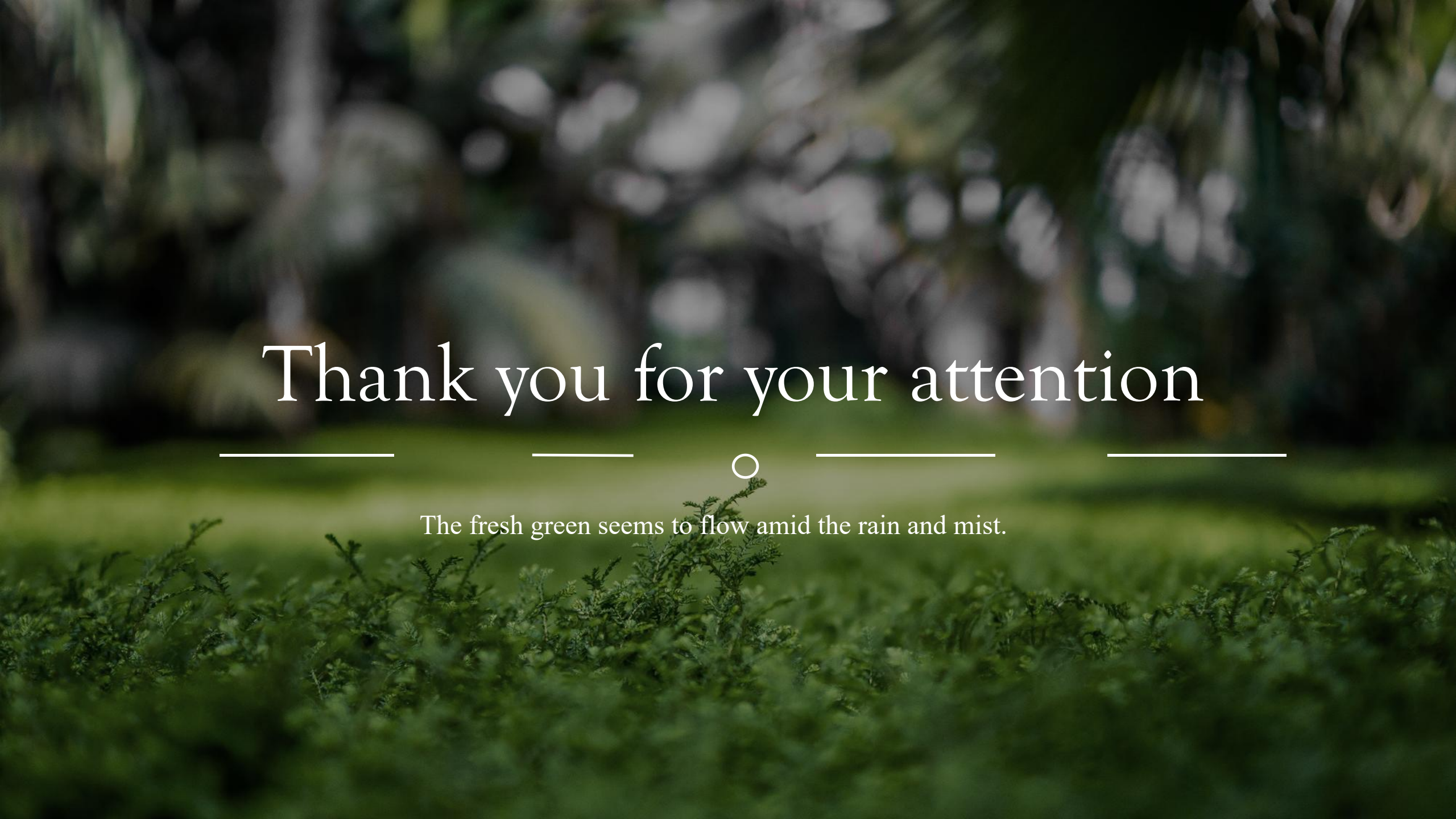
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Thank you for your attention

The fresh green seems to flow amid the rain and mist.