# Counter-rotating eddy pair in the Luzon Strait

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## Abstract:

Based on satellite remote-sensing observation data and Hybrid Coordinate Ocean Model (HYCOM) re-analysis data, we studied the counter-rotating eddy pair in the Luzon Strait (LS). Statistical analysis reveals that when an anti-cyclonic mesoscale eddy (AE) (cyclonic mesoscale eddy [CE]) in the Northwest Pacific (NWP) gradually approaches the east side of the LS, a CE (an AE) gradually forms on the west side of the LS, and it is defined as the AE (CE) mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS. The counter-rotating eddy pair exhibits obvious seasonal variation: the AE mode mainly occurs in the summer half of the year, while the CE mode mainly occurs in the winter half of the year. The mean durations of the AE and CE modes are both approximately 70 d. Based on vorticity budget equation and energy analysis, the dynamic mechanism of counter-rotating eddy-pair occurrence is determined to be as follows: the AE (CE)

23 on the east side of the LS causes a positive (negative) vorticity anomaly through horizontal

24 velocity shear on the west side of the LS, and the positive (negative) vorticity anomaly is

25 transported westward by the zonal advection of the vorticity, finally leading to the formation of the

26 CE (AE) on the west side of the LS.

27 **Keywords:** counter-rotating eddy pair; Luzon Strait; vorticity budget equation; barotropic

28 instability

29 **1 Introduction**

30    The Luzon Strait (LS), located between the island of Taiwan and Luzon Island, is an important

31 gap for particle and energy exchange between the South China Sea (SCS) and Northwest Pacific

32 (NWP). The topography around the LS is very complicated. The LS is composed of three straits

33 from north to south: Bashi Strait, Balintang Strait, and Babuyan Strait. The Batanes Islands and

34 Babuyan Islands are located in these straits (Figure 1). This complex topography leads to the

35 generation and aggregation of a large number of mesoscale eddies, which then play an important

36 role in the dynamic ocean process around the LS (Liu *et al*., 2012; Lu and Liu, 2013; Sun *et al*.,

37 2016a; Sun *et al*., 2020).

38    Mesoscale eddies interaction is an important focus of previous studies on mesoscale eddies in

39 the LS. Jing and Li (2003) used satellite remote-sensing observation data to discover a cyclonic

40 mesoscale cold eddy around Lanyu Island to the northeast of the LS. They pointed out that the

41 formation of the Lanyu cold eddy was the result of the joint action of the meandering Kuroshio

42 overshooting and conservation of the potential vorticity. Sun *et al*. (2016b) believed that the

43 formation of the Lanyu cold eddy was a process of eddies-eddies interaction. They used satellite

44 observation data and composition analysis to study the Lanyu cold-eddy phenomenon, and pointed

45  out that the combined action of the Kuroshio loop (cyclonic circulation) and an AE from the NWP

46  led to the formation of the Lanyu cold eddy. Based on satellite observation data, *in situ*

47  observation data and numerical modelling data, Zhang *et al.* (2017) studied mesoscale

48  eddies-eddies interaction to the northwest of the LS. They analyzed the energy budget of the

49  Kuroshio invading the SCS, and determined that the northern branch of the anti-cyclonic

50  circulation caused by the Kuroshio loop had a large horizontal shear stress and thus led to the

51  formation of a CE southwest of Taiwan Island through the barotropic instability.

52      Previous studies showed that mesoscale eddies-eddies interaction can cause particle and

53  energy exchange and often occurs in the vicinity of the LS (Sun *et al*., 2016b; Zhang *et al*., 2017;

54  Sun *et al*., 2018). Since the LS is an important gap for particle and energy exchange between the

55  SCS and NWP, a logical question is whether this phenomenon of mesoscale eddies-eddies

56  interaction can occur on the east and west sides of the LS and whether it plays an important role in

57  the particle and energy exchange between the SCS and NWP. To explore this issue, we compare

58  sea-surface height anomaly (SSHA) distributions in the SCS when a CE occurs and when an AE

59  occurs on the east side of the LS (Figure 2). The specific process is described in detail in Section

60  3.1. Figure 2 shows that when an AE (a CE) occurs on the east side of the LS, a CE (an AE) forms

61  on the west side of the LS, which was observed in the *in situ* observation data (Huang *et al*., 2019).

62  This is referred to in this article as the counter-rotating eddy-pair phenomenon.

63      To our knowledge, this is the first time a counter-rotating eddy-pair phenomenon in the LS

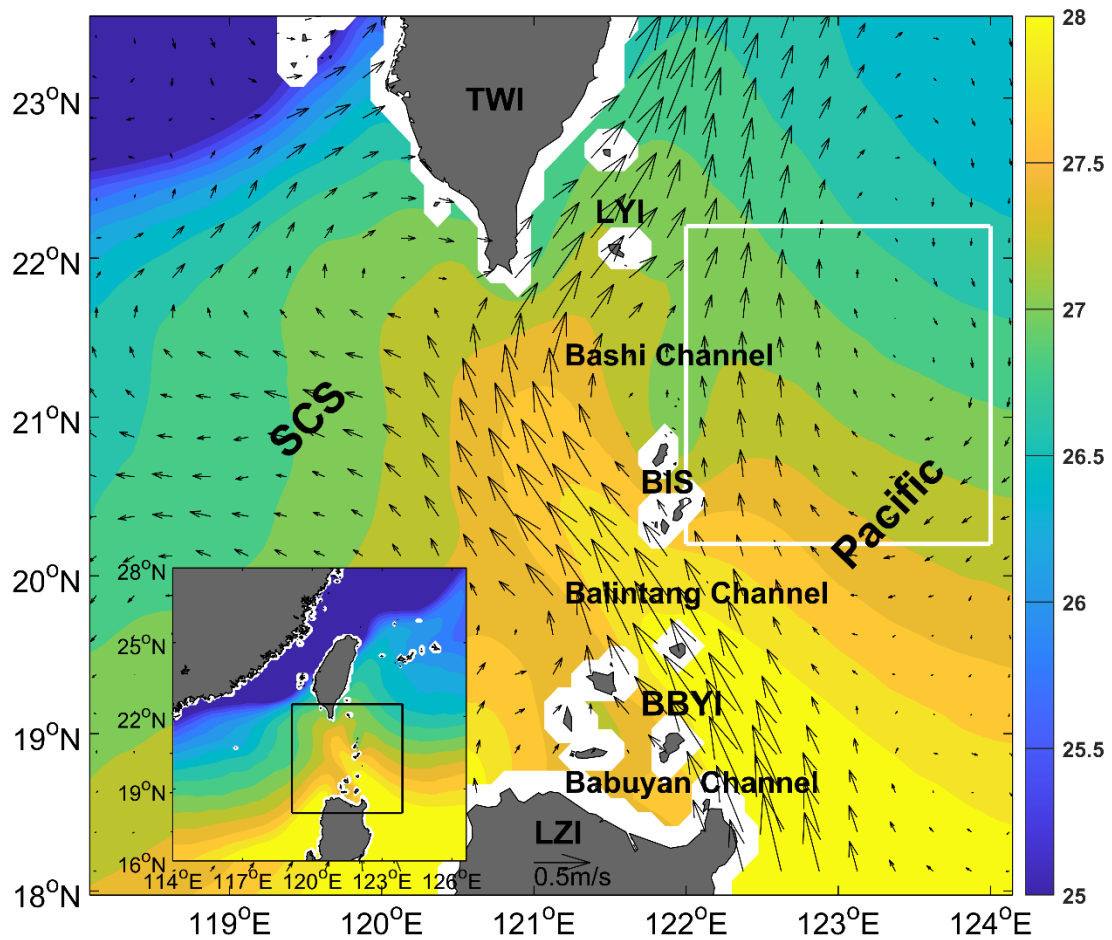
64  has been proposed, which creates a new form of particle and energy exchange between the SCS

65  and the NWP. The present study will supplement and perfect the theory of particle and energy

66  exchange between the SCS and NWP. We give the statistical characteristics and dynamic

67  mechanism of this phenomenon herein. The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2

68  briefly introduces the data and methods, Section 3 presents the research results, and Section 4

69  provides a discussion and conclusion.

70

71  Figure 1. Climate state of spatial distribution of RSS SST (°C; shading) and CMEMS geostrophic

72  current (m/s; vectors) from 2003 to 2020. SCS, South China Sea; BIS, Batanes Islands; TWI,

73  Taiwan Island; LZI, Luzon Island; BBYI, Babuyan Islands; LYI, Lanyu Island. White box borders

74  20.2–22.2°N, 122–124°E. Extent of the main map is shown as black-bordered box in inset.

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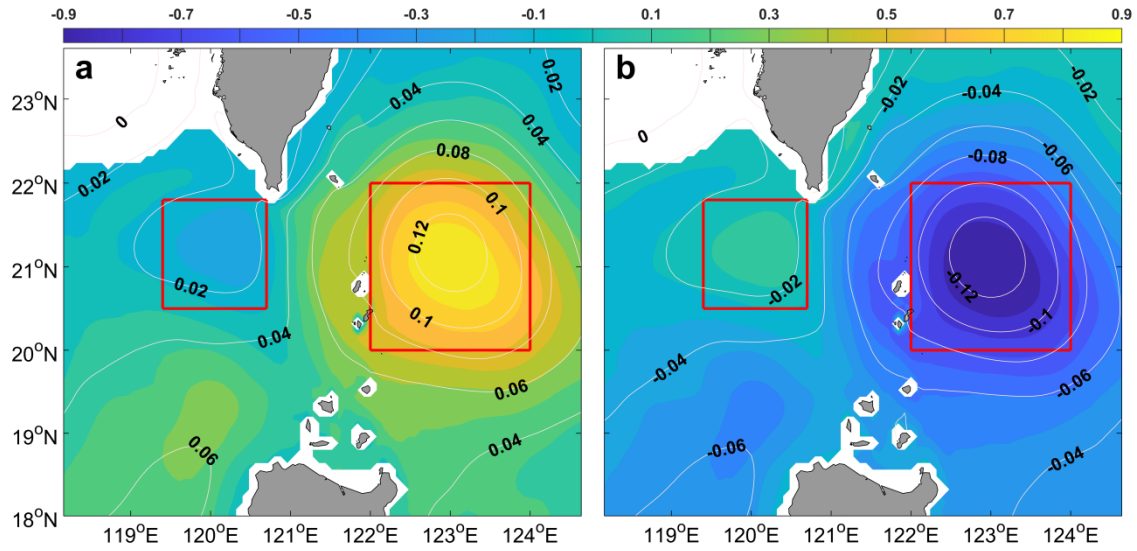


Figure 2. Spatial distribution of counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS. Spatial patterns of AE (a) and

CE (b) modes. Panel a (b) corresponds to average state when an AE (a CE) occurred in area

marked by red box on east side of LS from 1993 to 2020. Contours represent SSHA (units of m).

Colors represent sea temperature anomaly (units of °C) at a depth of 300 m. Interval of SSHA is

0.03 m. Red boxes on west and east sides of LS border mark 20.5–21.8°N, 119.4–120.7°E and 20–

22°N, and 122–124°E, respectively. Figure is similar to Figure 3 of Sun *et al*. (2018), and is based

on HYCOM data.

**2 Data and methods**

2.1 Data

Satellite remote-sensing SSHA, geostrophic current, and geostrophic current anomaly data

were provided by the Copernicus Marine Environment Monitoring Service (CMEMS). The dataset

was generated by the processing system including data from all altimeter missions: Sentinel-3A/B,

Jason-3, HY-2A, Cryosat-2, OSTM/Jason-2, Jason-1, Topex/Poseidon, Envisat, GFO, and

ERS-1/2. The dataset provides global coverage data from January 1, 1993 to August 2, 2021, with

a spatial resolution of 0.25°×0.25° and temporal sampling frequency of 1 d. It also provides one

92    near-real-time component and one delayed-time component. The delayed-time component has

93    been inter-calibrated and provides a homogeneous and highly accurate, long time series of all

94    altimeter data (Pujol and Francoise, 2019), and is chosen for use in this paper.

95        Model data are obtained from the Hybrid Coordinate Ocean Model (HYCOM) model output

96    by the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory. The dataset is based on ocean prediction system output,

97    and the product with the longest time span from 2 October 1992 to 31 December 2012 was chosen

98    from all HYCOM data-assimilation products provided by the HYCOM organization. The dataset

99    is based on ocean prediction system output with a spatial resolution of $0.08°×0.08°$ and 40

100   standard z levels between 80.48°S and 80.48°N. It provides temperature, salinity, sea-surface

101   height, zonal flow, and meridional flow (Wallcraft *et al*., 2003).

102       The wind dataset was provided by the National Centers for Environmental Information

103   (NCEI). The dataset merges multiple satellite observations with *in situ* instrument and related

104   individual products, provides 6-h, daily, and monthly wind and climate data with a spatial

105   resolution of $0.25°×0.25°$, and contains globally gridded ocean surface vector winds and wind

106   stresses (Zhang *et al*., 2006).

107       Sea surface temperature (SST) data are from remote-sensing systems (RSSs). The dataset

108   merges the near-coastal capability and high spatial resolution of infrared SST data with

109   through-cloud capabilities of microwave SST data, and has applied atmospheric corrections. It

110   provides daily data with a spatial resolution of 9 km×9 km from July 1, 2002 to the present.

111   2.2 Methods

112       2.2.1 Eddy energetic and hydrodynamic instability formula

113       The formation mechanisms of mesoscale eddies in the ocean are commonly attributed to

114      baroclinic and barotropic instabilities (Pedlosky, 1987). The barotropic conversion (BT) and

115      baroclinic conversion (BC) are manifestations of the baroclinic and barotropic instabilities,

116      respectively, and they are the major eddy energy sources around the LS (Yang *et al.,* 2013; Zhang

117      *et al*., 2013, 2015, 2017). In addition, the wind-stress work (WW) can also contribute to the

118      formation of eddies (Ivchenko, 1997; Sun *et al*., 2015). The BT, BC, and WW can be expressed as

119      follows (Ivchenko, 1997; Oey, 2008):

$$BT = -\int \left( \overline{u'^2} \frac{\partial \overline{u}}{\partial x} + \overline{v'^2} \frac{\partial \overline{v}}{\partial y} + \overline{u'v'} \frac{\partial \overline{u}}{\partial y} + \overline{u'v'} \frac{\partial \overline{v}}{\partial x} \right) dz, \qquad (1)$$

$$BC = -\int \frac{g^2}{\rho_0^2 N^2} \left( \overline{u'\rho'} \frac{\partial \overline{\rho}}{\partial x} + \overline{v'\rho'} \frac{\partial \overline{\rho}}{\partial y} \right) dz, \qquad (2)$$

$$WW = \frac{1}{\rho} \left( \overline{u'\tau'_x} + \overline{v'\tau'_y} \right), \qquad (3)$$

123      Where $t$ is time; $u, v,$ and $w$ are the zonal velocity, meridional velocity, and vertical velocity,

124      respectively, and their positive directions are east, north, and up, respectively. $g$ is the

125      acceleration due to gravity; $N$ is the buoyancy frequency; $\rho$ is the density of sea water; $\rho_0 =$

126      $1030 \, kg \bullet m^{-3}$ is the mean sea-water density; $p$ is the sea pressure; and $\tau_x$ and $\tau_y$ are the zonal

127      and meridional components of the wind stress, respectively. $x, y,$ and $z$ are the conventional

128      east-west, north-south, and up-down Cartesian coordinates, respectively. The depth integrals for

129      BT and BC are from 400 m to the sea surface. The overbar denotes a time average over 70 d, the

130      primes denote deviations from the average value of 35 d before and after this day, and the other

131      symbols and notations are standard. From Figures 6 and 8, it can be seen that the counter-rotating

132      eddy-pair phenomenon occurs, develops, and disappears from t = −36 to t = 36, i.e., approximately

133      70 d. Therefore, the period is chosen to be 70 d. We have made several attempts to set the period

134      between 65 and 80 d, and they will not affect our basic conclusion. BT and BC were calculated

135      from HYCOM data. CMEMS surface-current velocity data and NCDC wind data were used to

136    calculate WW.

137    2.2.2 Vorticity budget equation

138    To examine the influence of the vorticity change, we applied the vorticity budget equation

139    (Muller,1995; Kuo and Tseng, 2021):

140
$$\frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial t} = -u\frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial x} - v\frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial y} - (\zeta + f)\nabla \bullet \vec{u} - v\frac{\partial f}{\partial y} + \frac{1}{\rho^2}\left(\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial x}\frac{\partial P}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial \rho}{\partial y}\frac{\partial P}{\partial x}\right) - v\frac{\partial^2 \zeta}{\partial^2 z}, \quad (4)$$

141    Where $\zeta = \frac{\partial v}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial u}{\partial y}$ is the relative vorticity, $t$ is time, $f$ is the Coriolis parameter, $P$ is the

142    sea-water pressure, and $v = 1.004 \times 10^{-6}$ is the kinematic viscosity coefficient.

143    $x, y, z, u, v,$ and $\rho$ in formula (4) are as defined in formulas (1)-(3). The items on the right-hand

144    side of the equation are, from left to right, the zonal advection, meridional advection, stretching,

145    beta, baroclinic, and diffusion terms.

146    2.2.3 Definition of modes and intensity index of counter-rotating eddy-pair phenomenon

147    When an AE (a CE) in the NWP gradually approaches the northern LS, a CE (an AE)

148    gradually forms on the west side of the LS, and we define it as an AE (a CE) mode of the

149    counter-rotating eddy-pair phenomenon, as shown in Figures 2a, 3a, and 6 (Figures 2b, 3b, and 8).

150    To reflect the intensity of counter-rotating eddy-pair phenomenon, we must construct an

151    intensity index. As this phenomenon mainly involves the difference of SSHA between the east and

152    west sides of the LS, the index is defined as the time series of the SSHA in the east red box of

153    Figure 2 (expressed as $SSHA_{east}$) minus that in the west red box of Figure 2 (expressed as $SSHA_{west}$),

154    which is shown in Figure 3a and can be expressed as $Index = SSHA_{east} - SSHA_{west}$.

155    **3 Results**

156    3.1 Identification of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS

157    Based on cluster analysis, which is the same as the clustering method used by Sun *et al.*

158    (2018), the SSHA and sea-temperature anomaly (STA) are determined based on the days when an

159    AE and a CE exist on the east side of the LS (shown in the white box in Figure 1), respectively.

160    Figure 2a shows that the SSHA in the red box on the east side of the LS increases from the outside

161    to inside, which means that there is an AE. Owing to geostrophic balance and mass conservation,

162    the AE causes convergence of sea water, leading to down-welling in its center, subsequently

163    leading to an increase in the temperature in the deep ocean. This is verified by the fact that the

164    STA in the red box on the east side of the LS gradually increases from outside to inside and the

165    value is highest in the center. In addition, the SSHA in the red box on the west side of the LS

166    decreases from outside to inside and the STA is negative, indicating the presence of a weak CE.

167    According to the definition of modes of the counter-rotating eddy pair given in Section 2.2.3, the

168    SSHA pattern in Figure 2a can be identified as an AE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair.

169        Figure 2b is similar to Figure 2a, but for a CE and an AE on the east and west sides of the LS,

170    respectively, its SSHA pattern can be identified as an AE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair.

171    According to the intensity index defined in Section 2.2.3, the SSHA is constructed based on the

172    days when the positive and negative intensity index values are more than one standard deviation

173    from the mean, as shown in Figures 3b and 3c. Figure 3b (3c) shows that an AE (a CE) on the east

174    side of the LS corresponds well to a CE (an AE) on the west side of the LS, and can well reflect

175    the AE (CE) mode of a counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS. It also shows that we can well

176    identify this phenomenon according to the intensity index, and, furthermore, that the positive and

177    negative intensity indexes correspond to AE and CE modes, respectively, of this phenomenon.

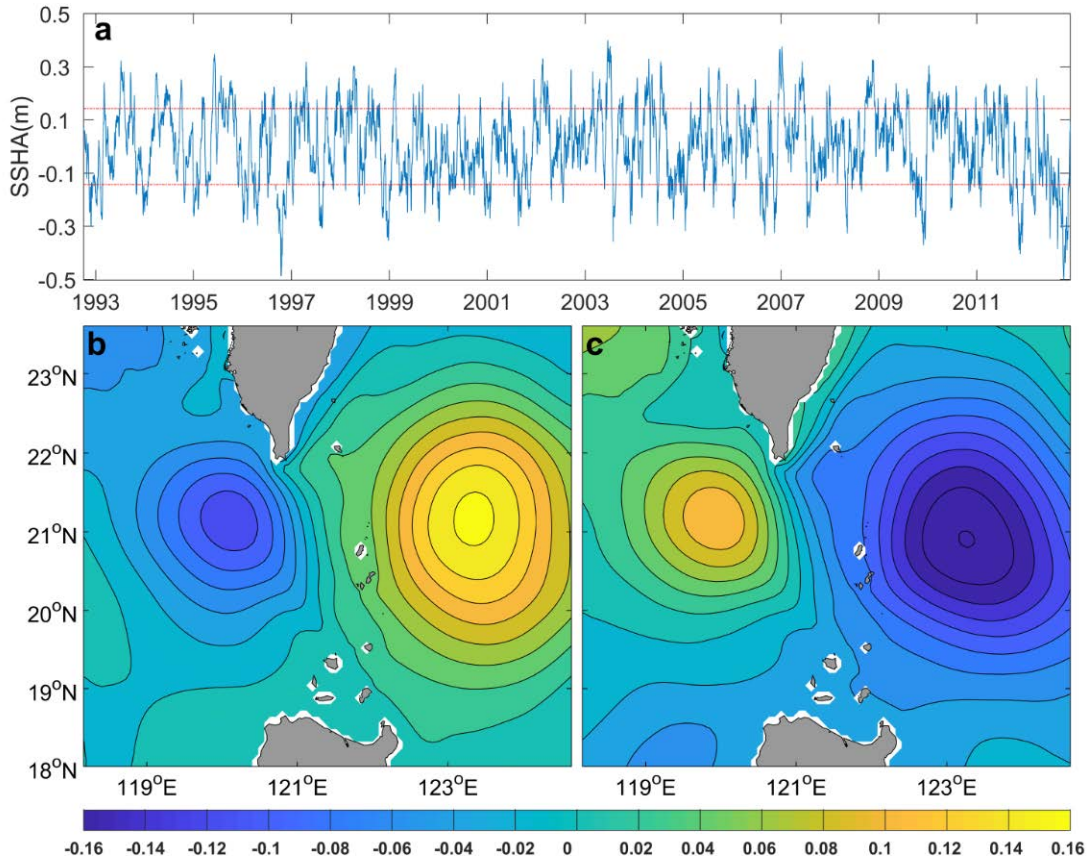



Figure 3. Time series of intensity index of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS (a). Red dotted line

above (below) represents the sum (difference) of one time the standard deviation and the average

value of the time series. Composition of SSHA for positive (b) and negative (c) intensity-index

days. SSHA interval is 0.02 m. Figure based on HYCOM data.

3.2 Seasonal variation of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS

We counted the temporal distribution of the positive and negative intensity index values in a

statistical sense. Figure 4a (4b) shows that most of the AE (CE) mode of the instances of the

counter-rotating eddy pair occur in the summer (winter) half of the year. The first two months with

the highest incidences of the AE (CE) mode are May and June (December and January), and their

occurrence rates are 17.01% and 15.47% (19.69% and 15.57%), respectively. We constructed the

geostrophic current in May and June (Figure 5a) and in December and January (Figure 5b). The

patterns of the Kuroshio Current in Figures 5a and 5b exhibit as the "Leap" and "Loop" patterns

191   of the Kuroshio in the LS, which illustrates that the Leap and Loop patterns of the Kuroshio

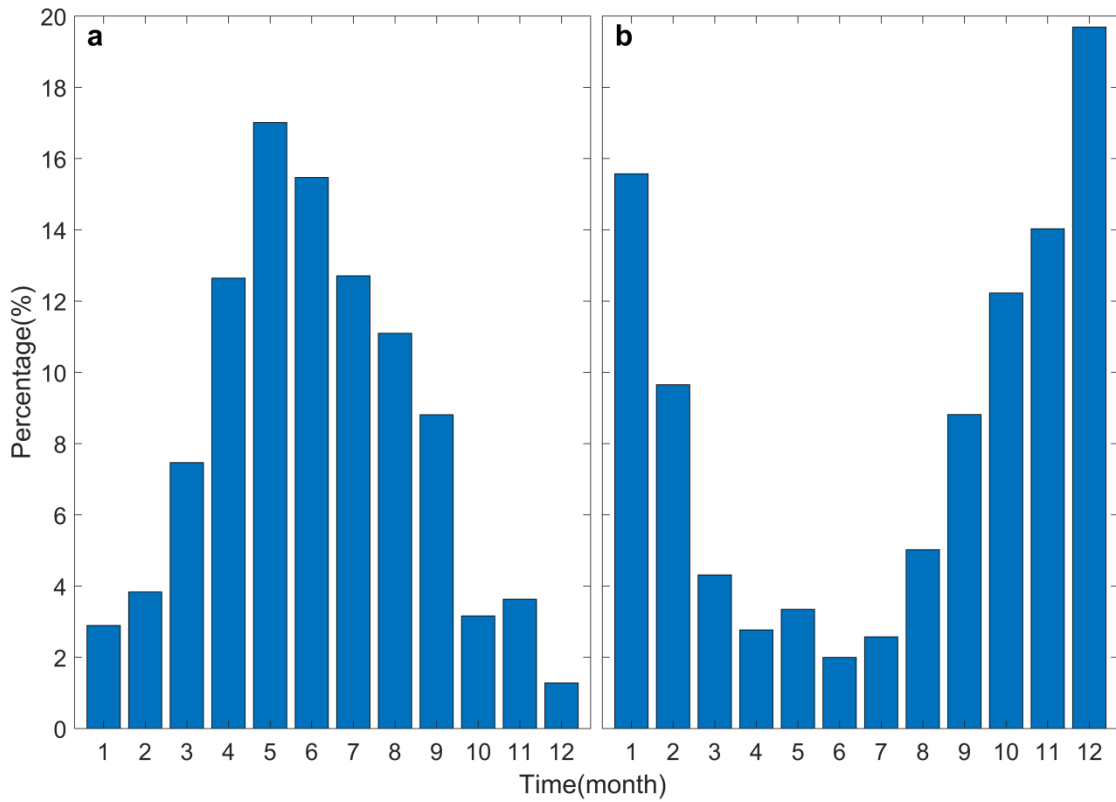
192   contribute to the occurrence of the AE and CE modes, respectively, of the counter-rotating eddy

193   pair. Figure 5c (5d) shows that the geostrophic current anomaly in the northern LS is northward

194   (southward). It produces positive (negative) vorticity through horizontal velocity shear on the west

195   side of the LS, and then contributes to the formation of a CE (an AE) on the west side of the LS.

196   We discuss the dynamic mechanism of the counter-rotating eddy-pair phenomenon in detail in

197   Section 3.3.

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199   Figure 4. Seasonal distribution of occurrence rate for positive (a) and negative (b) intensity

200   indexes.
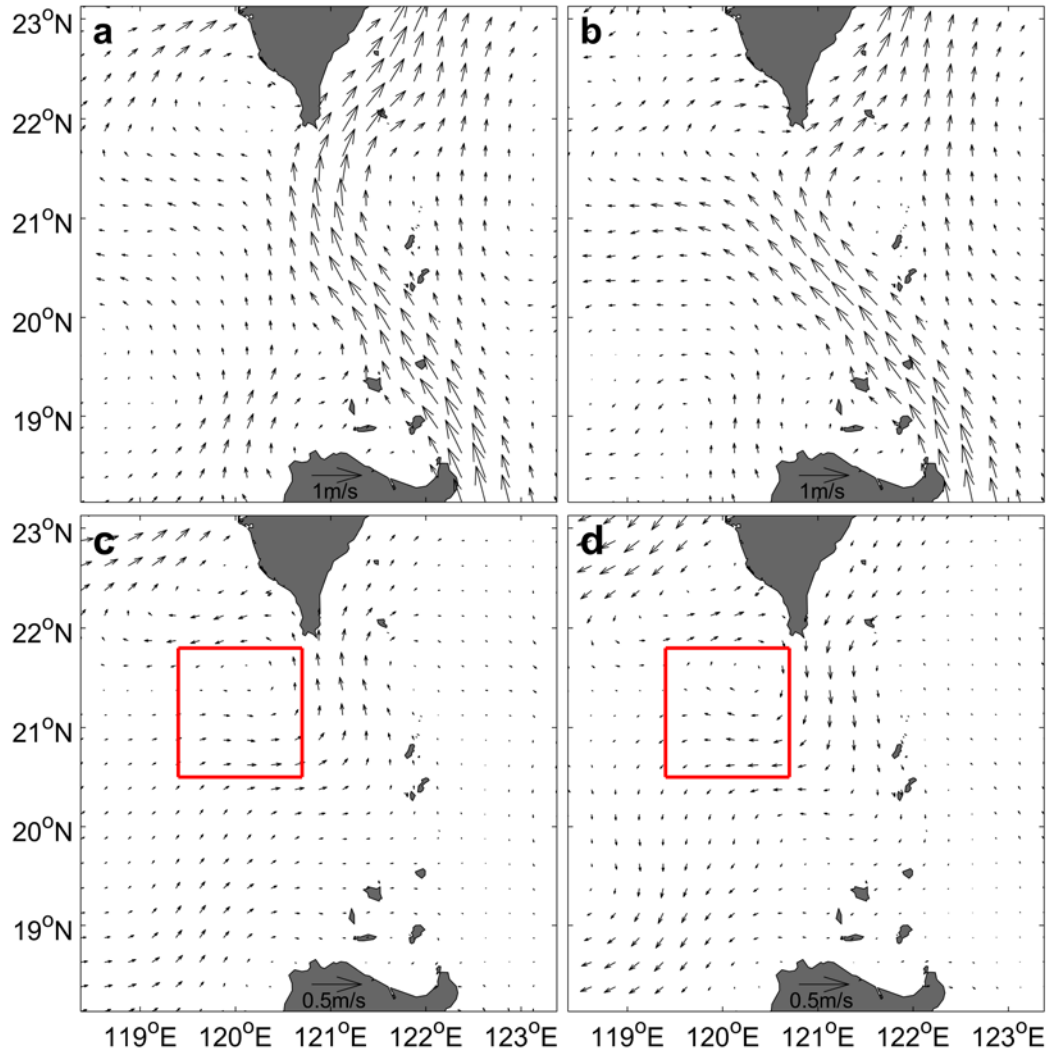
Figure 5. Climatic distributions of geostrophic current in May and June (a) and in December and

January (b), and of geostrophic current anomaly in May and June (c) and in December and

January (d). Red boxes in c and d outline 20.5–21.8°N, 119.4–120.7°E, which represent the

position of mesoscale eddies on west side of LS. Figure based on CMEMS data.

3.3 Evolution of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS

Figure 6 shows the spatial evolution of the AE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the

LS. It shows that at the beginning, for example, at t = −24, there is a weak AE far from the east

side of the LS, but no CE on the west side of the LS. From t = −20 to t = 0, as the AE in the NWP

approaches the northern LS, a CE gradually forms on the west side of the LS. At t = 0, the AE

211    mode reaches its maximum. Then, from t = 4 to t = 36, as the AE in the NWP gradually moves

212    away from the northern LS, the CE on the west side of the LS gradually weakens until it finally

213    dies out.

214        The growth and weakening of a mesoscale eddy must be accompanied by a change in its

215    relative vorticity. Figure 7a shows that as the AE on the east side of the LS approaches and then

216    moves away from the northern LS, its relative vorticity initially decreases and then increases,

217    while the relative vorticity of the corresponding CE on the west side of the LS initially increases

218    and then decreases. The maximum negative (positive) value of the time series of the AE (CE) on

219    the east (west) side of the LS reaches $-4.2 \times 10^{-6}$ s$^{-1}$ $(3.6 \times 10^{-6}$ s$^{-1})$. These time series have good

220    correspondence and their correlation coefficient is $-0.97$ at the 95% confidence level. Therefore,

221    the temporal variations in the relative vorticity in Figure 7a verify the evolution of the AE mode of

222    the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS.

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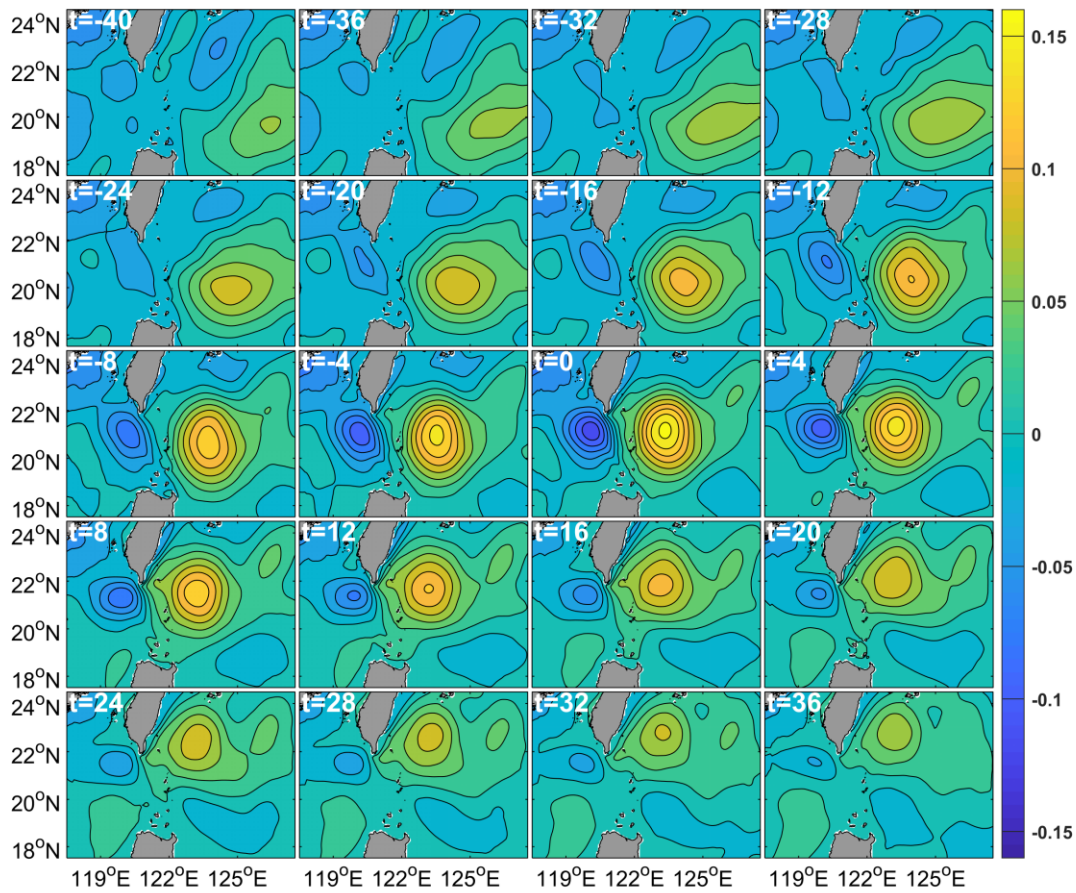
Figure 6. Evolution of AE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS based on HYCOM data.

Contours and shading both represent SSHA (units of m). SSHA interval is 0.02 m. t value in the

top left-hand corner of each panel denotes the days before (negative value) or after (positive value)

AE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair reached the maximum (t=0). t = 0 corresponds to the time

of Figure 3b.

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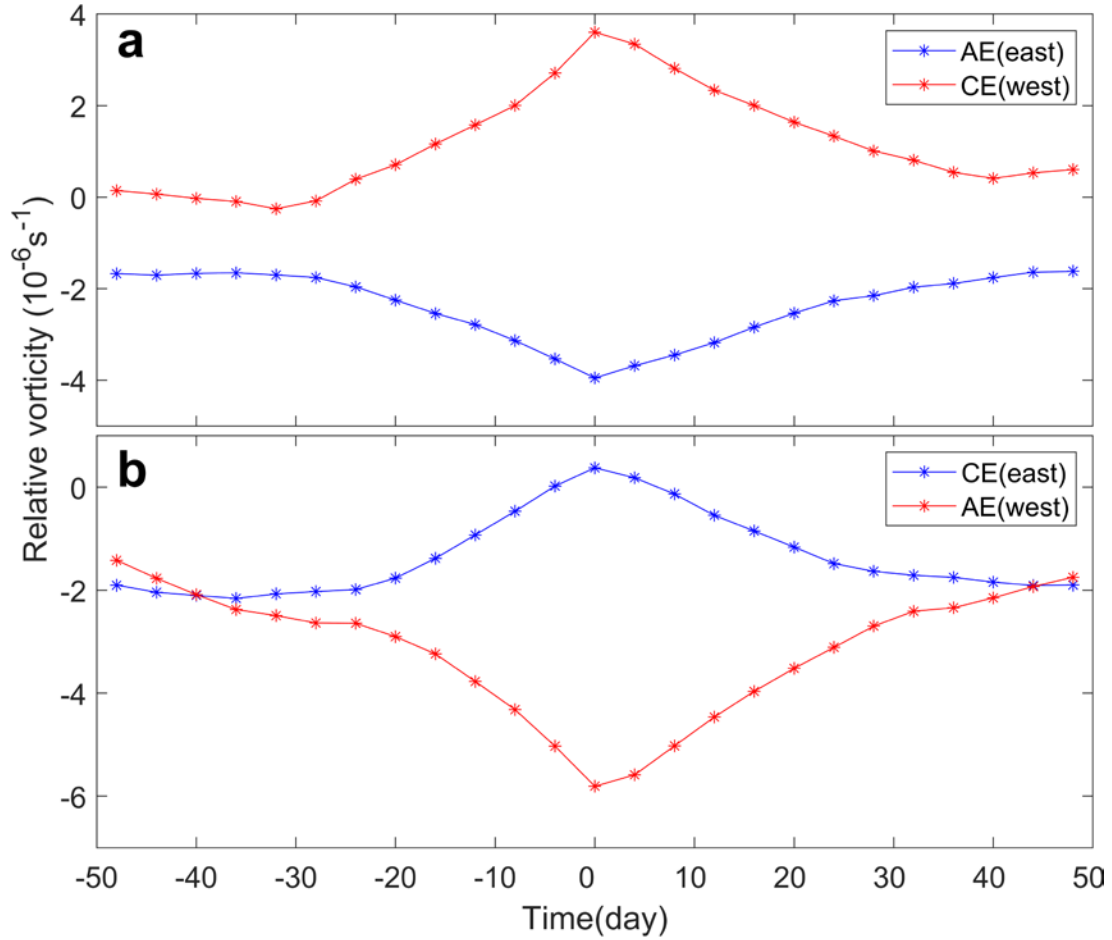
Figure 7. Distribution of relative vorticity in area bordered by red boxes in Figure 2. Panel a,

relative vorticity of AE mode over time. Blue (red) line represents time series of relative vorticity

of AE (CE) on east (west) side of LS, which corresponds to Figure 6. Panel b, relative vorticity of

CE mode over time. Blue (red) line represents time series of relative vorticity of CE (AE) on east

(west) side of LS, which corresponds to Figure 8. Figure based on HYCOM data.

Figure 8 plots the CE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS. It shows that at the

beginning, for example, at t = −32, there is a weak CE far from the east side of the LS, but no AE

on the west side of the LS. From t = −28 to t = 0, as the CE in NWP approaches the northern LS,

an AE gradually forms on the west side of the LS. At t = 0, the CE mode of the evolution of the

counter-rotating eddy pair reaches the maximum. Then, from t = 4 to t = 36, as the CE in the NWP

240    gradually moves away from the northern LS, the AE in the west side of the LS gradually weakens

241    until it finally dies out. Figure 7b plots the CE mode and shows that as the CE on the east side of

242    the LS approaches and moves away from the northern LS, its relative vorticity initially increases

243    and then decreases, while the relative vorticity of the corresponding AE on the west side of the LS

244    initially decreases and then increases. The maximum positive (negative) value of the time series of

245    the CE (AE) on the east (west) side of the LS can reach $0.48 \times 10^{-6}\,\mathrm{s}^{-1}$ ($-6.7 \times 10^{-6}\,\mathrm{s}^{-1}$). These time

246    series have good correspondence and their correlation coefficient is $-0.96$ at the 95% confidence

247    level. Therefore, the temporal variations in the relative vorticity in Figure 7b verify the evolution

248    of the AE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS. The evolution of the AE and CE

249    modes of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS is also reflected by the satellite observations

250    (Figures 9 and 10).

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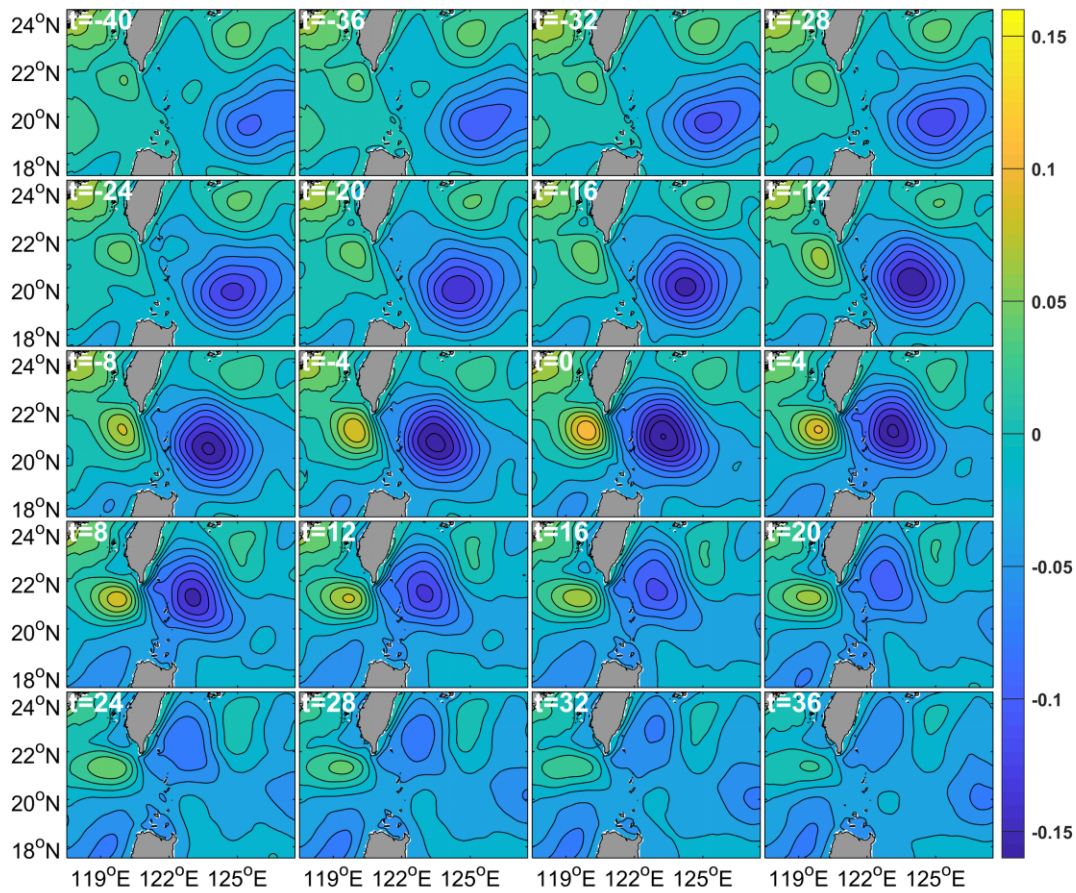
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255    Figure 8 Evolution of CE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS based on HYCOM data.

256    Contours and shading both represent SSHA (units of m). SSHA interval is 0.02 m. t in the top

257    left-hand corner of each panel denotes the days before (negative value) or after (positive value) the

258    CE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair reached the maximum (t=0). t = 0 corresponds to time

259    of Figure 3b.

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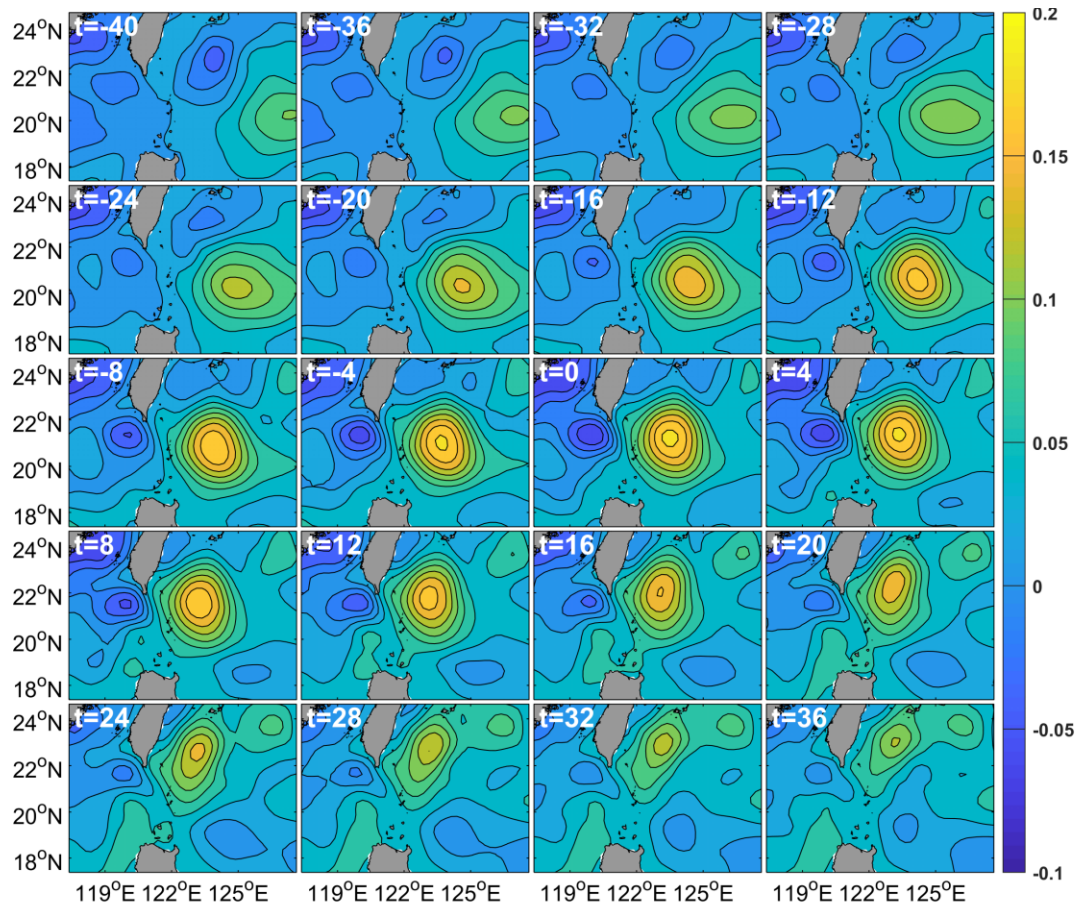
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263 Figure 9 Evolution of AE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS based on CMEMS data.

264 Contours and shading both represent SSHA (units of m). SSHA interval is 0.02 m. t in the top

265 left-hand corner of each panel denotes days before (negative value) or after (positive value) the

266 AE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair reached the maximum (t=0). t = 0 corresponds to time of

267 Figure 3b.

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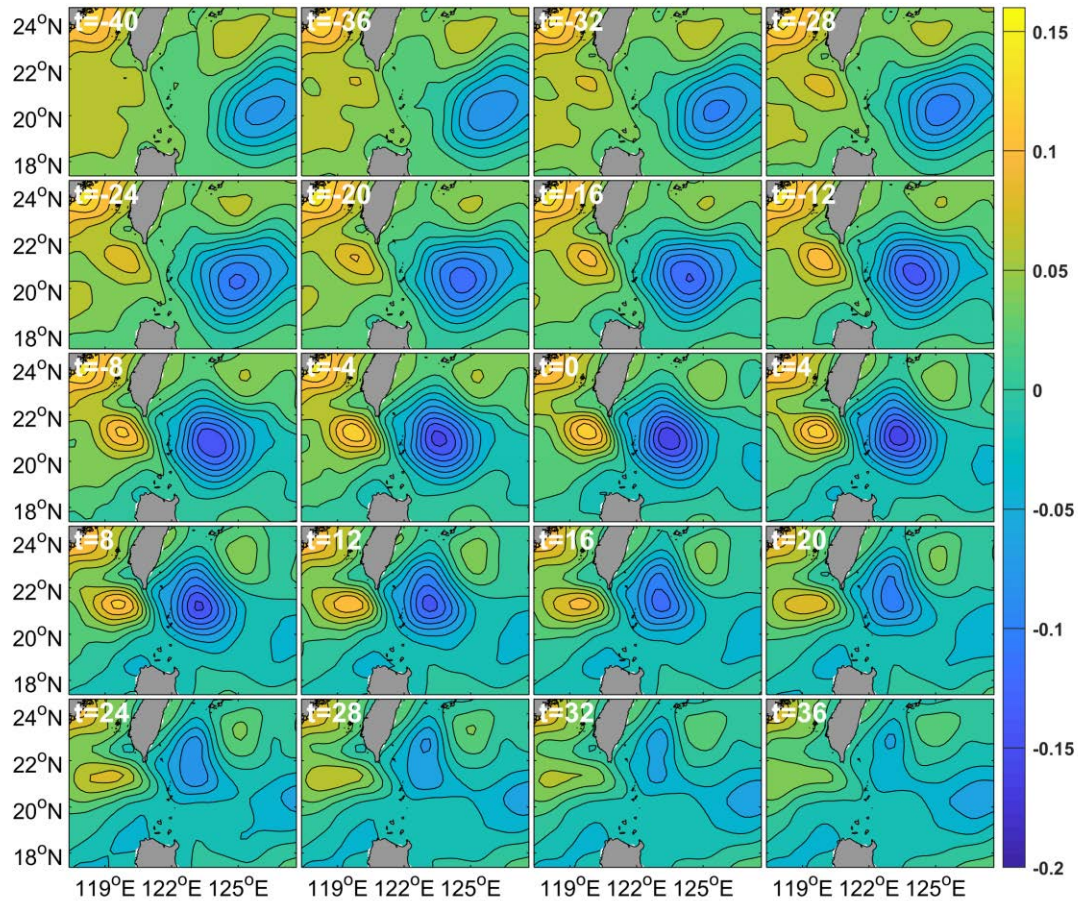


Figure 10 Evolution of CE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS based on CMEMS data.

Contours and shading both represent SSHA (units of m). SSHA interval is 0.02 m. t in the top

left-hand corner of each panel denotes days before (negative value) or after (positive value) the

CE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair reached the maximum (t=0). t = 0 corresponds to time of

Figure 3b.

3.4 Formation mechanism of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS

Zhang *et al*. (2017) reported that CEs mainly formed due to the barotropic instability caused

by horizontal velocity shear of the Kuroshio Loop current southwest of Taiwan Island. Huang *et al*.

(2019) discovered that an AE from the NWP caused a CE to form on the west side of the LS via

horizontal velocity shear. In addition, Figures 3b and 3c show that the dense contour of the SSHA

means that there are strong current anomalies and thus strong horizontal velocity shear at the

283    junction of the AE and CE. Therefore, we investigated the role of horizontal velocity shear in the

284    formation of a counter-rotating eddy in the LS.

285    Because meridional horizontal velocity shear is weak, we only show the zonal velocity shear.

286    Figure 11 shows that from t = −40 to t = 0, as the AE on the east side of the NWP gradually

287    approaches the northern LS, the absolute value of the zonal horizontal velocity shear ($\frac{\partial v}{\partial x}$)

288    gradually increases, and a CE gradually forms and strengthens on the west side of the LS. From t

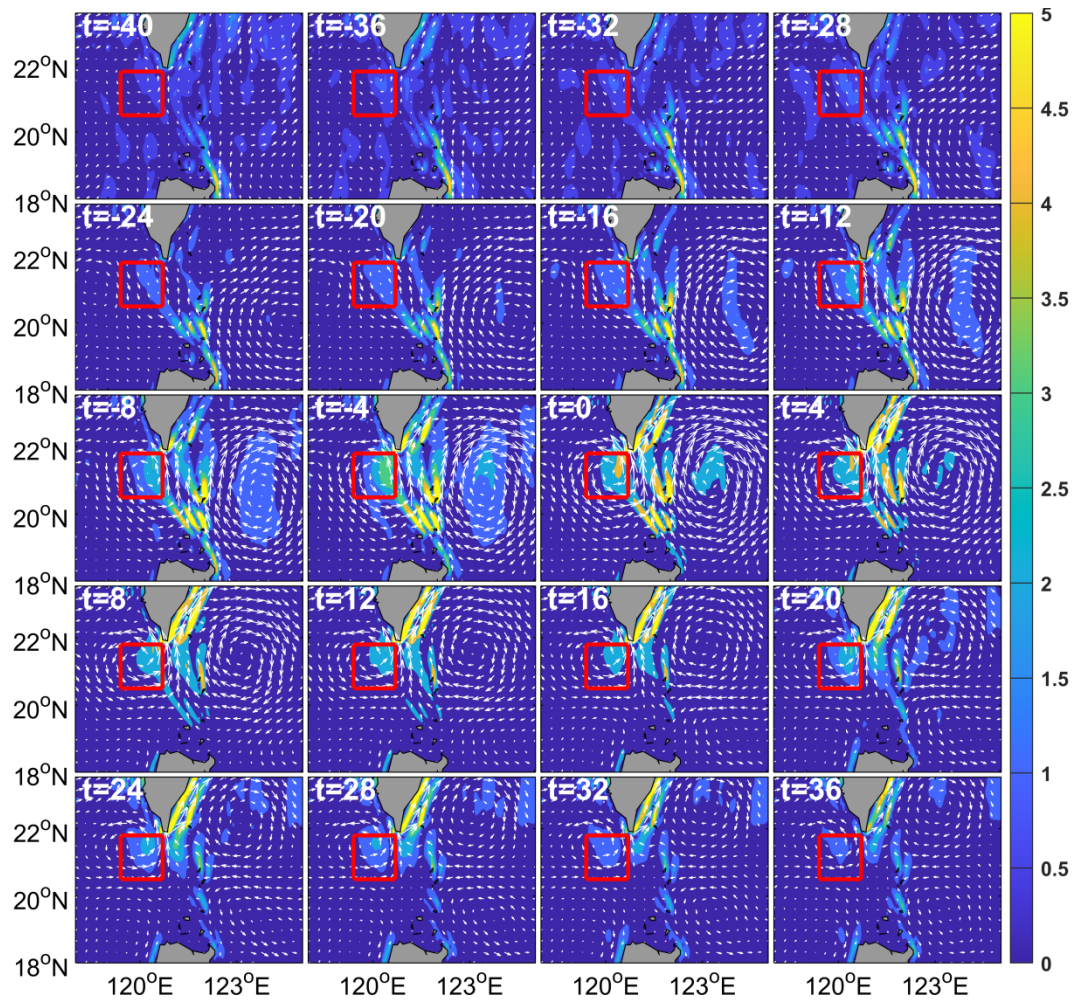
289    = 0 to t = 36, as the AE gradually moves away from the northern LS, the absolute value of the

290    zonal horizontal velocity shear gradually decreases, and the CE on the west side of the LS

291    gradually weakens. Figure 12 plots the CE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS and

292    shows a similar corresponding evolution process. This demonstrates that there is good

293    correspondence between the zonal horizontal velocity shear and evolution process of the

294    counter-rotating eddy pair.

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296 Figure 11 Evolution process of absolute value of zonal horizontal velocity shear ($\frac{\partial v}{\partial x}$) for AE

297 mode of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS based on HYCOM data. Shading represents zonal

298 horizontal velocity shear (units of $10^{-6}\,\mathrm{s^{-2}}$). Vector represents the current anomaly. t in the top

299 left-hand corner of each panel denotes days before (negative value) or after (positive value) the

300 AE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair reached the maximum (t = 0). t = 0 corresponds to time of

301 Figure 3b. Red boxes on west side of LS cover 20.5–21.8°N, 119.4–120.7°E and represent

302 location of CE on west side of LS.

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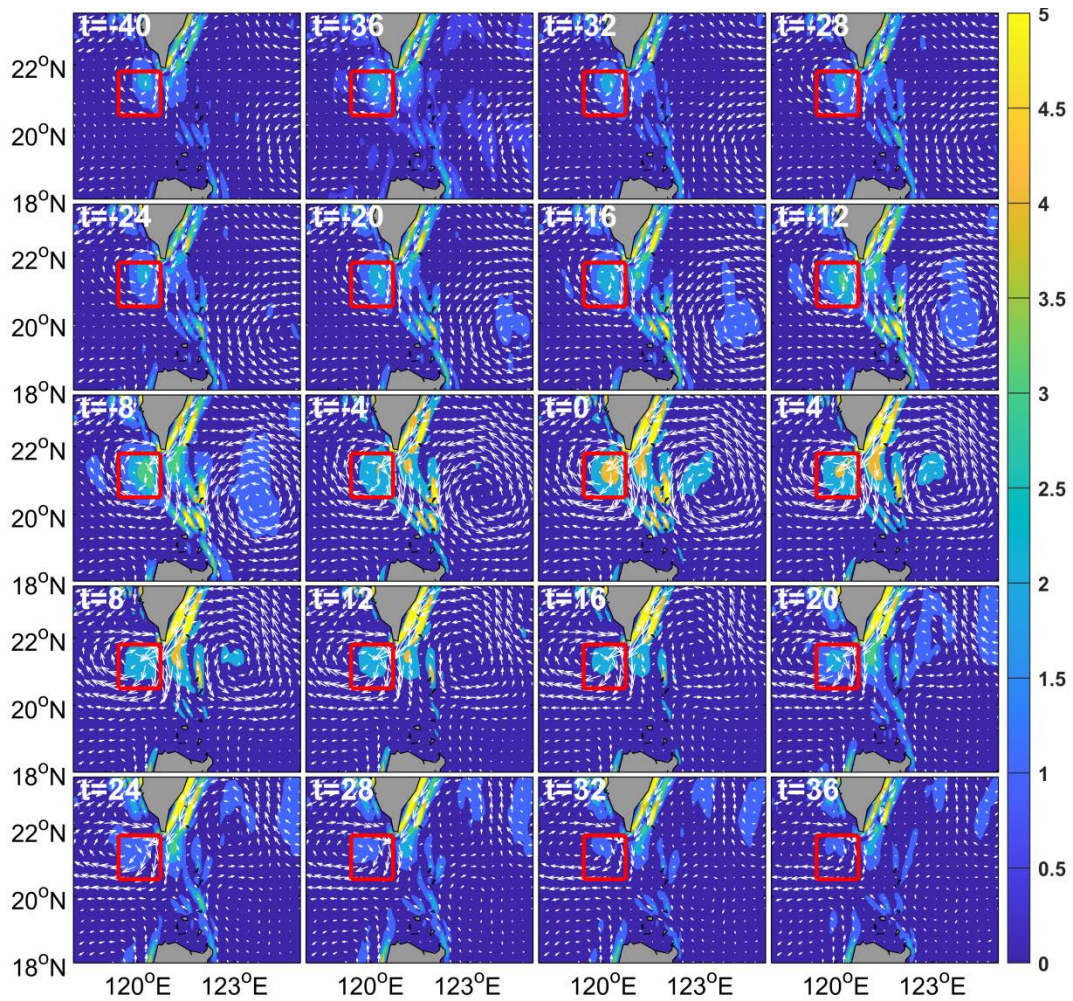


Figure 12 Evolution process of absolute value of zonal horizontal velocity shear ($\frac{\partial v}{\partial x}$) for CE

mode of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS based on HYCOM data. Shading represents zonal

horizontal velocity shear (units of $10^{-6}\,\mathrm{s}^{-2}$). Vector represents current anomaly. t in top left-hand

corner of each panel denotes days before (negative value) or after (positive value) the AE mode of

counter-rotating eddy pair reached the maximum (t = 0). Time t = 0 corresponds to time of Figure

3b. Red boxes on west side of LS cover 20.5-21.8°N, 119.4-120.7°E and represent the location of

CE on west side of LS.

However, Figure 11 (12) shows that zonal horizontal velocity shear only occurs on the

right-hand side of the red box; that is, on the right-hand side of the CE (AE). How does the

horizontal velocity shear pass to the entire CE (AE)? To answer this question, we used the

314   vorticity budget equation. Figures 13a1–f1 plot the AE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair and

315   show the respective contributions of the zonal advection, meridional advection, stretching, beta,

316   baroclinic, and diffusion terms of the vorticity budget equation. Compared to the stretching, beta,

317   baroclinic, and diffusion terms, the values of the zonal advection and meridional advection terms

318   in the red box are large. However, most of the values of the meridional advection term in the red

319   box are negative. Only positive vorticity advection can lead to formation of a CE, which suggests

320   that the zonal advection term is the main cause of CE formation in the red box. To further test this

321   conclusion, Figure 14a shows the correspondence between the relative vorticity anomaly and

322   zonal advection of the vorticity in the red box in Figure 13, illustrating that there is good

323   correspondence and their correlation coefficient is as high as 0.96 at the 95% confidence level.

324   Therefore, we conclude that the zonal advection term plays the most important role in vorticity

325   transport and contributes to the formation of the CE on the west side of the LS.

326       Figures 13a2–f2 are plots the CE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair and shows that,

327   compared to the stretching, beta, baroclinic, and diffusion terms, the values of the zonal advection

328   and meridional advection terms in the red box are large. However, most of the values of the

329   meridional advection term in the red box are positive. Only negative vorticity advection can lead

330   to formation of an AE, which implies that the zonal advection term is the main cause of AE

331   formation in the red box. To further test this conclusion, Figure 14b shows the correspondence

332   between the relative vorticity anomaly and zonal advection of vorticity, illustrating that there is

333   good correspondence and their correlation coefficient is as high as 0.84 at the 95% confidence

334   level. Therefore, we conclude that the zonal advection term plays the most important role in

335   vorticity transport and contributes to the formation of the AE on the west side of the LS.

336

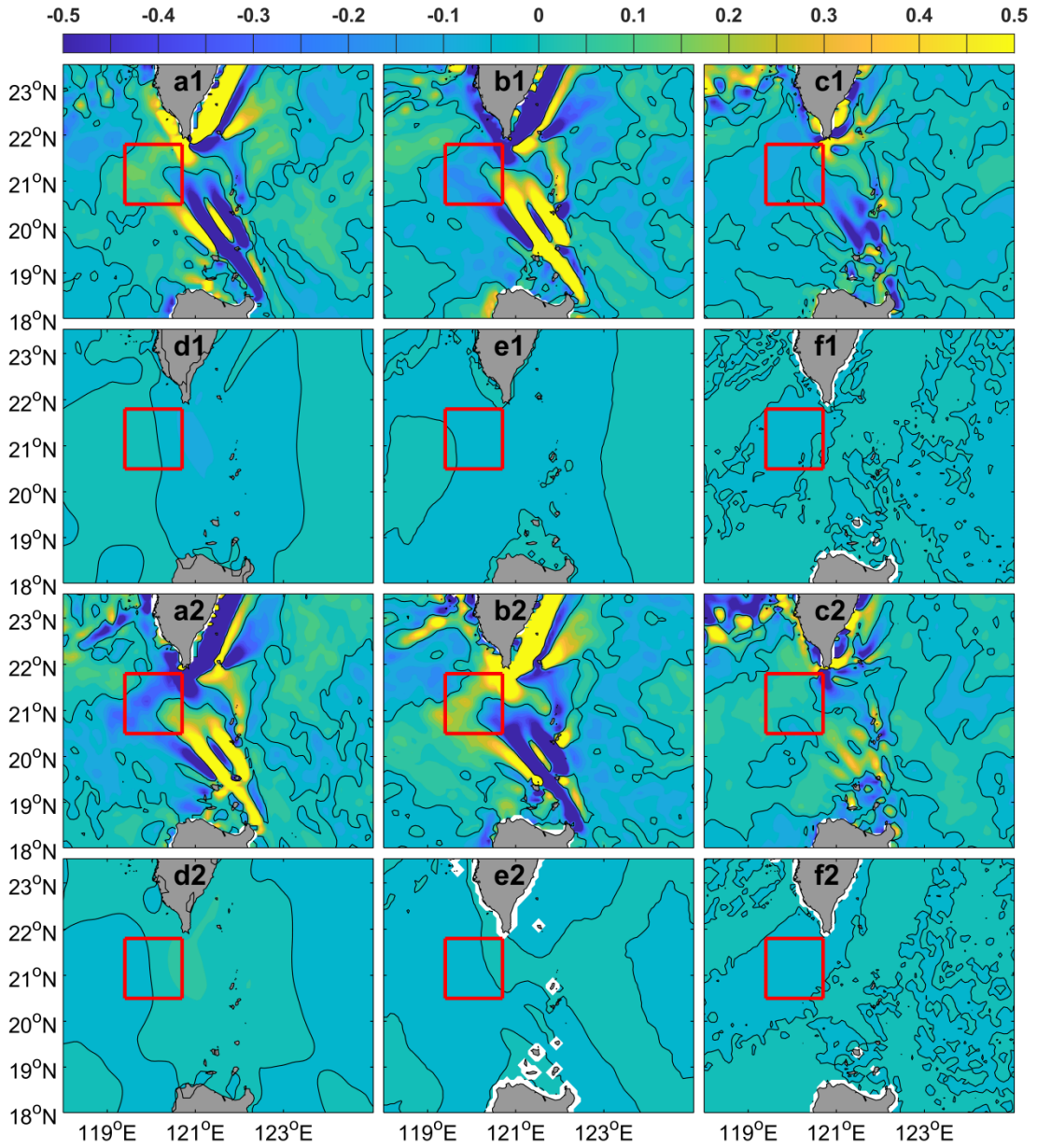



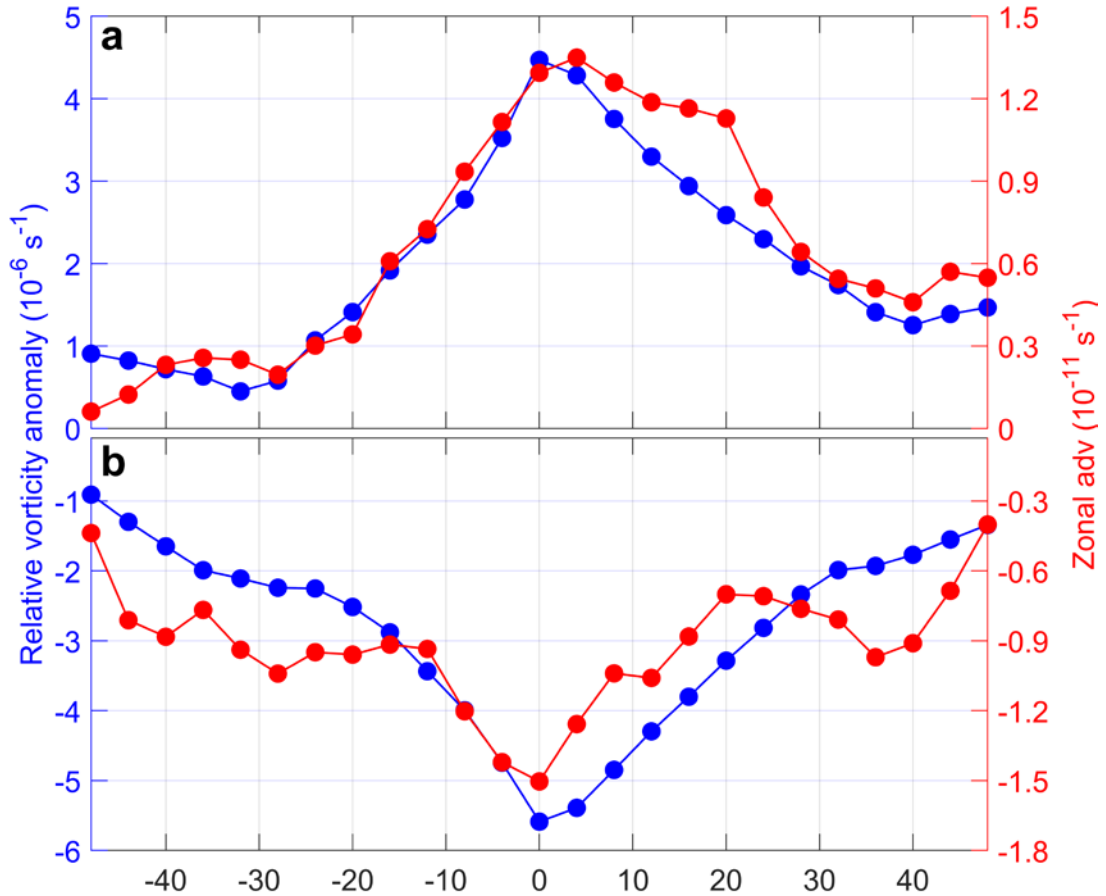
Figure 13. Vorticity budget equation for (a1–f1) AE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair and

(a2–f2) CE mode of counter-rotating eddy pair. a1 and a2 represent the zonal advection term, b1

and b2 the meridional advection term, c1 and c2 the stretching term, d1 and d2 the beta term, e1

and e2 the baroclinic term, and f1 and f2 the diffusion term. Units are $10^{-10}\,\mathrm{s}^{-2}$. Red boxes on west

side of LS border cover 20.5–21.8°N, 119.4–120.7°E, and represent location of CE or AE on west

side of LS. Black solid line represents the zero contour. Figure based on HYCOM data.

343

344    Figure 14. Distribution of relative vorticity anomaly and zonal advection of vorticity

345    surrounded by red boxes in Figure 13 for AE (a) and CE (b) modes of counter-rotating eddy pair

346    in LS.

347    We proposed above that the horizontal velocity shear caused by the mesoscale eddy on the east

348    side of the LS is transported westward through zonal advection, resulting in the formation of a

349    counter-rotating mesoscale eddy on the west side of the LS. Horizontal velocity shear will

350    inevitably lead to barotropic instability. Now, we verify our conclusion from the perspective of

351    energy. Figures 15a, 15b, and 15c show that, compared to the BC and WW values, the BT values

352    in the LS are large and most of the values are positive, especially in the area surrounded by the red

353    box in Figure 15a, which is the junction of the AE and CE. This means that the BT plays the most

354    important role in formation of the AE on the west side of the LS.

Figures 15d, 15e, and 15f show the BT, BC, and WW, respectively, corresponding to the AE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS. The description and dynamic mechanism of the AE mode are similar to those of the CE mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS, so the details will not be discussed here.

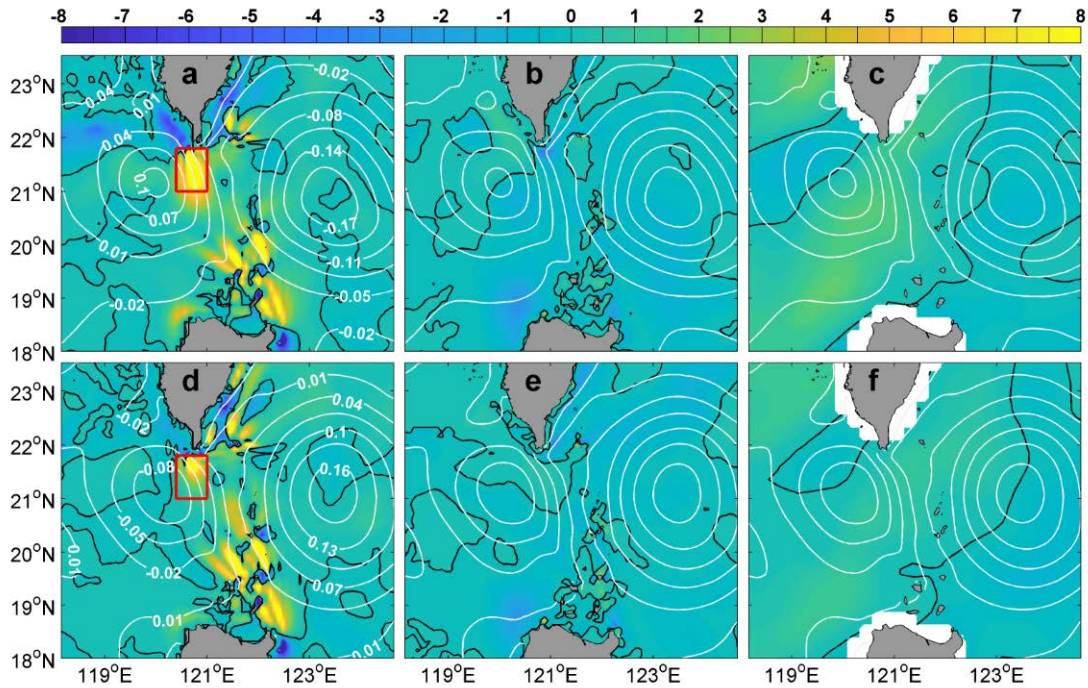



Figure 15. BT based on HYCOM data ($10^{-5}$ m$^3$ s$^{-3}$) represented by colors (a, d); BC based on HYCOM data ($10^{-5}$ m$^3$ s$^{-3}$) represented by colors (b, e); WW based on CMEMS surface velocity data and NCDC wind data ($10^{-5}$ m$^3$ s$^{-3}$) represented by colors (c, f). Red box borders 21°N–21.8°N, 120.4°E–121°E. White contours represent SSHA contours of. Panels a, b, and c (d, e, and f) plot CE (AE) mode of counter-rotating eddy pair in LS.

**4 Discussion and conclusions**

In this study, based on satellite observation data and HYCOM re-analysis data, the counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS is investigated. The phenomenon of counter-rotating eddy pairs is defined as the stage when an AE (a CE) in the NWP gradually approaches the northern LS, and a CE (an AE) forms on the west side of the LS. This phenomenon exhibits obvious seasonal

370    variation; that is, the AE mode mainly occurs in the summer half of the year, while the CE mode

371    mainly occurs in the winter half of the year. The mean durations of the AE and CE modes are both

372    approximately 70 d. The Leap and Loop patterns of the Kuroshio Current contribute to the

373    occurrence of the AE and CE modes, respectively, of counter-rotating eddy pairs. Based on the

374    vorticity budget equation and energy analysis, the dynamic mechanism of the occurrence of a

375    counter-rotating eddy pair is as follows. The AE (CE) in the NWP causes a positive (negative)

376    vorticity anomaly through horizontal velocity shear on the west side of the LS, and the positive

377    (negative) vorticity anomaly is transported westward by the zonal advection of the vorticity,

378    finally leading to the formation of a CE (an AE) on the west side of the LS. This conclusion is also

379    verified by barotropic instability based on the energy analysis.

380        When we investigated the question of how the horizontal velocity shear passes to the entire

381    CE or AE in Section 3.4, we found that the magnitudes of the meridional and zonal advection

382    terms are roughly the same. Because the meridional advection term has the opposite effect of CE

383    (AE) formation in the west side of the LS for the AE (CE) mode of the counter-rotating eddy pair,

384    we confirmed that the zonal advection term plays a main role in horizontal velocity shear

385    transportation. However, since the magnitude of the meridional advection term is very large, it

386    may play a role in the ocean dynamic process of the LS, which deserves further study.

387        The results presented in this study are preliminary and several problems require further

388    research. The occurrence probability of a counter-rotating eddy pair in the LS must be determined.

389    The counter-rotating eddy pair phenomenon involves spatiotemporal variations in two mesoscale

390    eddies on both sides of the LS, and it is difficult to provide a quantifiable definition of this

391    phenomenon for a single event. For example, how far apart must the mesoscale eddies on the east

392 and west sides of the LS be to define them as a counter-rotating eddy pair. We preliminarily

393 calculated that the incidence of this phenomenon is approximately 5%.

394 Another problem to solve involves threshold of the NWP mesoscale eddies entering the SCS,

395 and what role the Kuroshio Current plays in the counter-rotating eddy-pair phenomenon in the LS.

396 In this study, our illustration of the counter-rotating eddy pair phenomenon does not include the

397 mean current field, which means that the influence of the Kuroshio Current is not considered.

398 However, the role of the Kuroshio in energy transfer is still worthy of further study. Numerical

399 simulations can be useful to address this issue. Our study provides new perspective on particle and

400 energy exchange, and further perfects the theory of particle and energy exchange between the SCS

401 and NWP.

402

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416

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