TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF PASSIVE LABILITY

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1 Introduction[1]

This paper discusses the phenomenon of passive lability from a typological perspective. Passive lability, or morphologically uncoded passive, is found when a structure with syntactic properties of a passive does not show any specific morphological marking as opposed to the basic transitive (active) construction, as in (1) from Bambara[2].

(1) Bambara (Mande, Mali; Creissels 2014: 920)

a. *wùlu* *má* *sògo* *dún*
dog/DEF PFV.NEG meat/DEF eat
'The dog has not eaten the meat.'

b. *sògo* *má* *dún* *wùlu* *fɛ̀*
meat/DEF PFV.NEG eat dog/DEF by
'The meat has not been eaten by the dog.'

In (1a), we see the transitive construction with the agent (A) in the sentence-initial subject position and the patient (P) in the object position between the so-called predicative marker signaling tense-aspect, mood and polarity, and the lexical verb. Example (1b) presents an intransitive construction, in which the subject position is occupied by the P participant while the A participant occurs in a postverbal postpositional phrase. The syntactic and functional relation between examples (1a) and (1b) is parallel to that between their English translations, i.e. that between an active and a passive construction. However, there is a remarkable difference between Bambara and English: in the former, apart from a clear change in the mapping between semantic roles and grammatical relations, there is no formal difference between the active and the passive, most importantly, no difference in verbal morphology. Insofar as constructions like (1b) can be recognised as instances of passive, they are morphologically uncoded passives, and insofar as the relation between (1a) and (1b) can be subsumed under the heading of lability, i.e. morphologically uncoded valency alternation, they represent passive lability. Passive lability is a subtype of a broader notion of P-lability (Creissels 2014; 2024: 660, 666–673), where the P participant of the transitive valency frame corresponds to the S participant of the intransitive valency frame of the predicate.

Passive lability has had a bizarre fate in linguistics. On the one hand, it has been known for a long time to specialists on individual languages and language families, in particular in West Africa, see e.g. Grégoire (1985), Cobbinah (2008), Vydrina (2011), Kuznetsova (2011), Makeeva (2011), Cobbinah & Lüpke (2012), Creissels (2014, 2015, 2018: 745) on the Mande language family, and Reineke & Miehe (2005) and Sulemana (2025) on the Gur branch of Atlantic-Congo. Likewise, uncoded passives have been recognised in both descriptive and theoretically oriented studies on creole languages at least since Allsopp (1983), see Winford (1988),

[1] This article grew out of talks at the workshops "The Word, Alignment, Valency: In honour of Fernando Zúñiga" (Bern, December 2023) and "Transitivity and labile verbs in typological and diachronic perspectives" at the 58th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (Bordeaux, August 2025), as well as at the Linguistic Colloquium of the University of Cologne (June 2023) and Linguistic Convergence Laboratory (HSE University, online, June 2024). I thank the organisers and participants of these events, as well as Denis Creissels, Michael Daniel, Harald Hammarström, Martin Haspelmath, Angelika Jakobi, Lutz Marten, Anastasia Panova, Andrey Shluinsky, *** and Fernando Zúñiga for their various help and useful suggestions. All faults and shortcomings remain mine.

[2] Glossing in examples was adapted where necessary and added where missing in the source.

LaCharité & Wellington (1999), Haspelmath (2013), Kouwenberg (2023) and Veenstra (2025). Besides these two large areas of research, there has also been work arguing for an uncoded passive analysis of some constructions in a few Austronesian languages (Arka & Kosmas 2005, Donohue 2005).

On the other hand, passive lability has been until recently but scarcely mentioned in typological and theoretical work on voice and valency alternations (cf. Cabredo Hofherr 2023). The obvious reason for this neglect is that morphological marking is built into most definitions of passives in the typological literature (see e.g. Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000: 7; Keenan & Dryer 2007: 327–328; Siewierska 2013; Haspelmath 2026a, 2026b) which, concomitantly, has almost exclusively focused on diathesis changes morphologically encoded in the verb. Thus, Bambara is treated in the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (Siewierska 2013) as a representative of the class of languages where passive constructions are absent — on a par with, for instance, Yidiny (Pama-Nyungan, Australia). The crucial difference between Bambara and Yidiny, however, is that constructions like (1b) above, which are similar to "canonical" passives as found in languages like Russian or English in all respects but the presence of formal marking, are found in the former but not in the latter (see Dixon 1977: 273–293). Treating the system of valency operations of Bambara as more similar to that of Yidiny than to that of English is thus questionable. To quote Cobbinah & Lüpke (2012: 154),

> Yet we believe that in the case of zero-coded passives, the functional parallels between them and the main-stream morphologically marked ones are too important and systematic to be swept aside as being exclusively of terminological relevance or as presenting a limited number of exotic cases.

Likewise, although the phenomenon of lability (aka "ambitransitivity" and "flexivalency", Creissels 2024: Ch. 15), i.e. uncoded diathesis alternations, has been recognized in linguistics for quite a long time, the discussions of lability in typological work have largely ignored passive lability, see e.g. Haspelmath (1993), Drossard (1998), Kulikov (2011), Lehmann (2015). As a first exception to this general trend, Letuchiy (2009, 2013) offered a comprehensive typology of valency alternations encoded by labile verbs, devoting a short but insightful section (Letuchiy 2013: 136–146) to passive lability. In particular, Letuchiy has singled out a stative subtype of passive lability, where the passive counterpart of the transitive construction can only denote a state resulting from the action expressed by the verb, but not the action itself, as in (2) from Abaza.

(2) Abaza (Northwest Caucasian, Russia; Arkadiev 2023: 492–493)

a. *a-ph^{w}ə́spa a-ŝ ʕa-l-ṭə́-d*
DEF-girl DEF-door CSL-3SG.F.ERG-open-DCL
'The girl opened the door.'

b. *sə-ŝ-k^{w}a w-zə-ṭ-ṗ*
1SG.PR-door-PL 2SG.M.IO-BEN-open-NPST.DCL
'My doors are open for you.'

c. *d-ç̣a-ṗ*
3SG.H.ABS-sit-NPST.DCL
'He is sitting.'

Abaza, a head-marking language with ergative alignment of verbal cross-referencing, indexes the A participant of transitive construction in (2a) by the ergative person-number-gender prefix occurring before the verbal stem; by contrast, the P participant in (2a,b) is not overtly indexed, but had it been indexed, the corresponding cross-referencing prefix would occupy the

verb-initial slot, as in (2c). Example (2b) shows an alternative construction where the A participant is expressed neither by a nominal nor in the verb and can only be inferred from the context (in this particular example, taken from a poem, 'my doors are open for you' is an indirect way of saying that 'I shall always open my doors for you'). As regards verbal morphology, the predicate in (2b) bears no marker signaling voice or valency change, its intransitivity being indicated solely by the absence of the ergative prefix. However, the predicates of (2a) and (2b) differ in another important respect: while the verb in (2a) is in the so-called Aorist (perfective past) tense signaled by the declarative suffix *-d*, the verb in (2b) bears the non-past declarative suffix *-ṗ*, which (in this case) indicates that the tense is present and that the whole predicate is stative rather than dynamic, as shown in (2c) by the same form of an underived stative predicate. In Arkadiev (2023) I have argued in detail that the construction in (2b) is, first, a stative, more exactly, a passive resultative counterpart to the transitive construction in (2a), and, second, that, insofar as the passive resultative in Abaza does not bear any dedicated overt marking (cf. Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988: 20), it falls into the domain of passive lability as well.

More recently, Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019: 178–199) and Creissels (2024: 656–696) devoted whole chapters to lability and have shown that equivalents of every type of morphologically coded "voice" found in the languages of the world, including the passive, are attested among morphologically uncoded alternations. Still, the phenomenon of passive lability has never been subject of a dedicated wide-scale typological study. There is no understanding of where passive lability is found and how widespread it is in the languages of the world, nor of the cross-linguistic variation of passive lability and of how it fits within the typology of voice. The goal of this article is to try to fill this gap by proposing a typology of passive lability on the basis of a modest cross-linguistic sample and a limited set of parameters, thus setting the scene for future more comprehensive studies rather than making any firm conclusions.

The structure of the remainder of the article is as follows. In §2 I discuss the working definition of passive lability and a number of conceptual and methodological issues it raises. In §3, I present my language sample and data sources. §4 introduces the parameters of the typology and discusses them in turn. §5 concludes.

2 Defining passive lability

I depart from the characterisation of passive offered in Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019), which is largely in line with the received understanding of passive in typological literature (see references above):

(3) Characteristics of the prototypical passive (Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 83)
   a. Syntactic valency is one less than in the active diathesis.
   b. Its subject corresponds to the nonsubject P of the active voice.
   c. Its peripheral, and optional, argument (typically marked by a non-core case or adposition) corresponds to the subject A of the active voice.
   d. Passivisation is formally coded on the predicate complex.

Passive lability (= morphologically uncoded passive) is essentially defined as a passive construction fulfilling the criteria (3a), (3b) and (3c) but violating criterion (3d), i.e. lacking any special formal coding; cf. Creissels (2024: 137). The application of this definition to language-particular constructions requires certain comments.

First, by criterion (3b) I only consider as instances of passive lability constructions that clearly involve syntactic promotion of the P of the active construction to the privileged syntactic position in the intransitive construction (S), as evidenced by word order, flagging or indexing. Thus, in the Bambara examples in (1), the P of the transitive construction occurs in the object position following the predicative marker, whereas in the passive construction it occupies the

subject position before the predicative marker; this excludes the interpretation of (1b) as a transitive clause with a deleted agent. The Abaza examples in (2) are more intricate, since due to the ergative alignment of verbal indexing the P of transitive constructions and the S of intransitive constructions are encoded identically by the absolutive cross-reference prefixes, which can be omitted under certain conditions. However, the construction in (2b) is clearly intransitive (the optional benefactive applicative not affecting transitivity) as evidenced by the absence of the ergative A prefix, hence, it is safe to assume that the absolutive argument of (2b) is S.

By contrast, so-called non-promotional passives (see e.g. Givón 2001: 127–132; Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 84–88) as well as transitive impersonals (Malchukov & Ogawa 2011: 44–50), if formally unmarked, are not subsumed under passive lability, since in the absence of formal marking it is hardly possible to distinguish putative uncoded non-promotional passives from cases of agent omission. Thus, the Russian transitive impersonal construction with a zero A, an accusative-marked P and third person plural verbal agreement shown in (4b) is a transitive construction with a generic A parallel to the regular transitive construction with an overt plural A, rather than an instance of lability or passive or any other kind.

(4) Russian (Slavic < Indo-European; based on Mel'čuk 2025: 500)

a. *Ivan-a* *obokra-l-i* *vor-y*.
Ivan-ACC.SG rob.PFV-PST-PL thief-NOM.PL
'Some thieves robbed Ivan.'

b. *Ivan-a* *obokra-l-i* $\varnothing_{\text{generic}}$.
Ivan-ACC.SG rob.PFV-PST-PL "they"
'Ivan was robbed.', lit. "(some unspecified people) robbed Ivan'

While for languages with accusative case marking, like Russian, or clearly distinct subject and object slots in the linear structure, like Bambara, distinguishing between P-lability and transitive impersonal constructions like (4b) is relatively straightforward, it becomes problematic or even impossible in languages with ergative alignment of case-making (as we have seen on the example of Abaza, verbal indexing can resolve this analytical problem). Here it is worth considering the distinction between "strong" and "weak" types of lability drawn by Creissels (2014: 914; 2024: 663–666). According to Creissels,

> in strong lability, either the only core argument of the intransitive construction is encoded differently from the argument with a similar or identical role in the transitive construction (as the vase in English *The vase broke* / *The child broke the vase*), or the two constructions differ formally in other respects than the mere absence of a nominal term <...>

Thus, the German examples in (5) constitute a case of strong P-lability, since the S argument in the monovalent construction in (5b) is encoded differently (by the nominative case on the definite article) from the corresponding P argument in the bivalent transitive construction (by the accusative case). The same pertains to the Bambara examples in (1), where encoding is manifested by word order, and to the Abaza examples in (2), where the two constructions differ in indexing in addition to the "mere absence" of the A participant.

(5) German (Germanic < Indo-European; own knowledge)

a. *Der Junge zerbrach den Krug*.
'The boy broke the jug.'

b. *Der Krug zerbrach*.
'The jug broke.'

By contrast, according to Creissels (2014: 914),

> in weak lability, the only core argument of the intransitive construction is encoded exactly like the argument with a similar or identical role in the transitive construction, and superficially, the two constructions show no other formal distinction than the presence vs. absence of a noun phrase (as in English *John drinks tea* / *John drinks*) <...>

While in languages with nominative-accusative alignment weak P-lability is hardly possible (at least if transitive impersonals like (4b) above are excluded), it is well-attested in languages with ergative case-marking, where the P of a bivalent construction and the S of a monovalent construction both occur in the absolutive case. Thus, in the absence of rich indexing that would provide independent cues for the number of arguments, the two constructions differ only in the presence vs. absence of the nominal expressing the A.

Consider the following examples from Godoberi. In (6), where the same verbal root can occur both intransitively meaning ‘come’ and transitively meaning ‘bring’, the semantic difference between the two variants suggests that the construction in (6b) is monovalent (anticausative) and does not involve any covert agent. In example (7), however, exactly the same surface morphosyntactic distinction rather invites an analysis in terms of a null generic agent of the type found in the Russian impersonal in (4b) above, since there is no way for the donkey to be beaten without an agent.

Godoberi (Andic < Nakh-Daghestanian; Kibrik ed. 1996: 110, 112)

(6) a. *il-u-di* *mak’i* *išqa* *w-aʔa*
mother-OBL-ERG child home M-deliver.PST
‘Mother brought the boy home.’

b. *mak’i* *išqa* *w-aʔa*
child home M-come.PST
‘The boy came home.’

(7) a. *im-u-di* *hamaXi* *č’inni*
father-OBL-ERG donkey beat.PST
‘Father beat the donkey.’

b. $Ø_{generic}$ *hamaXi* *č’inni*
donkey beat.PST
‘The donkey got beaten, they beat the donkey.’

Creissels (2014: 916) further observes that in languages with ergative alignment “anticausative readings of transitive verbs used intransitively, if they exist, are always ambiguous with passive readings” (implying that (6b) could also mean ‘the boy was brought home’), thus “weak lability of the passive type is in those languages trivial”. I therefore take into consideration only strong P-lability, thus excluding cases like Godoberi.

Likewise, even though the distinction between passive and anticausative is often not clear-cut (see e.g. Vydrina 2011: 198–202; Creissels 2014; 2024: 395–396; Rochant 2019; Daniel 2022), I am reluctant to subsume under passive lability those cases of strong P-lability where spontaneous agentless readings clearly predominate, as e.g. in the German and English causative-inchoative alternations of the type shown in (5). In practical terms, this implies that P-lability qualifies as passive lability only if it applies to transitive verbs denoting events that cannot normally occur without a significant involvement of an agent, such as ‘eat’, ‘build’,

'rob' or 'call' (cf. Haspelmath 1993: 103–106, 2016 on the "spontaneity scale" and its discussion in the context of lability by Letuchiy 2013: 107–127).[3,4]

On the other hand, I do not exclude from the domain of passive lability constructions that prohibit the overt expression of the demoted agent, even though such agentless passives would in principle be hard to distinguish from anticausatives (Creissels 2024: 381–382). The reason for this is that many languages with morphologically coded passives do not allow the agent to be expressed either or treat agented passives as marginal or pragmatically "marked". Thus Keenan & Dryer (2007: 328–329) define their "basic passives" as those lacking the agent, claiming that they are the most widespread and default subtype of passive in the languages of the world; see, however, Siewierska & Bakker (2013) for a more nuanced view. As we shall see in §4.2, uncoded passives show considerable variation with regard to agent expression.

In the same vein, I include into my definition of passive lability the stative-resultative type, as exemplified by Abaza above, on a par with dynamic uncoded passives of the Bambara type. This is justified by the fact that such constructions fulfil the basic definitional criteria of passives given above, which do not include the requirement that the passive construction be necessarily exactly synonymous with its active counterpart (cf. Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 98). Thus, if the German sentence (7b) is conventionally included into the passive domain as an instance of "statal passive" (*Zustandspassiv*), the same logic should apply to its Abaza counterpart in (7a), too.

(7) a. Abaza (elicited)
a-qə́ŝ *p-čə-ṗ*
DEF-window PREF-break-NPST.DCL
b. German (own knowledge)
Das Fenster ist zerbrochen.
a=b 'The window is broken.'

The same consideration concerns passives with modal or generic semantics of the type exemplified by the English construction in (8) traditionally known as "middle" (Keyser & Roeper 1984).

(8) English (Germanic < Indo-European; Keyser & Roeper 1984: 381)
a. *Someone bribed the bureaucrats*.
b. *Bureaucrats bribe easily*.

Given that the valency alternation in (8) does not involve any formal marking in English, this language also possesses an instance of passive lability.

Finally, an important remark is in order concerning the "lack of morphological encoding" in the understanding of (passive) lability. While in Bambara (as well as German and English) the predicates occurring in the transitive and intransitive constructions show no formal differences whatsoever (which, at least in case of Bambara and English, correlates with an analytic profile of their morphosyntax), as the Abaza examples show, this is by no means necessary. Inflectional or periphrastic markers of TAM (dynamic vs. stative), person (bipersonal vs.

[3] While it is true that, strictly speaking, a jug cannot break spontaneously without any external cause, the activity causing the breaking is unspecified and need not even be agentive in the strict sense of the term (cf. *The wind overturned the stand and the jug fell and broke*). This reminds one of the well-known distinction between result verbs and manner verbs (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1998).

[4] Creissels (2024: 668–669) notes that a "decisive proof of the passive nature of the intransitive constructions involved in this transitive–passive alternation is their ability to include agent-oriented adverbs" such a 'cleverly'. This diagnostic, however, cannot be applied in the current study due to lack of data.

monopersonal indexing) or other morphology differentiating between the transitive and the intransitive members of an alternation should not be confused with specialised markers of the passive or, more generally, detransitive voice (cf. the distinction between *direct* and *indirect* encoding, Lehmann 2014). The case of Abaza and other similar cases to be discussed below fall under the notion of *conversion* (Mel'čuk 2006: 297, 304–306; Valera 2015), i.e. shift of the lexeme from one distributional class (e.g. transitive verbs) to another (e.g. intransitive verbs or intransitive stative predicates), which is expected to be accompanied by a shift in inflectional potential associated with those distributional classes in a given language.

3 Sample and data

My cross-linguistic study of passive lability is based on a phenomenon-based sample (Miestamo 2025) comprising 53 languages representing 18 language families, including four isolates, located in all macroareas, with particularly high concentration in Western Africa and the Caribbean (Creoles). The sample is not genealogically stratified and is not intended for capturing any statistical tendencies. The sample languages were selected by consulting the lists of languages with passive lability reported in the existing overview literature, such as Cobbinah & Lüpke (2012), Letuchiy (2013), Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019) and others, as well as grammars and other descriptive work on genealogically or geographically close languages. Table 1 lists the languages of the sample by macroarea and family; full information about the sample languages, including sources, is given in the supplementary materials[5].

[5] https://github.com/peterarkadiev/Passive-lability

Table 1. The language sample

Macroarea	**Family**	**Languages**
Eurasia (7)	Indo-European (2)	Classical Armenian, English
	Northwest Caucasian (2)	Abaza, Abkhaz
	Yeniseian (1)	Ket
	isolates	Basque, Sumerian
Africa (27=8)	Atlantic-Congo (14)	Akebu, Buli, Byali, Ditammari, Fongbe, Kaansa, Kabiye, Kinyarwanda, Lega, Luguru, Minyanka, Supyire, Swahili, Syer
	Afroasiatic (3)	Ghomara, Kabiye, Tarifiyt
	Indo-European (1)	Mauritian Creole
	Mande (8)	Bambara, Gban, Guro, Jalonke, Kakabe, Kla-Dan, Mandinka, Mano
	Nubian	Tagle
	Songhay	Koyraboro Senni
Australia & Oceania(8)	Austronesian (3)	Hoava, Palu'e, Manggarai
	Nyulnyulan (3)	Nyigina, Nyulnyul, Yawuru
	Indo-European (1)	Batavia Creole
	Sepik (1)	Alamblak
	Yam (1)	Nama
North America (4)	Eskimo-Aleut (1)	Central Alaskan Yupik
	Indo-European (3)	Haitian Creole, Jamaican Creole, Trinidad Creole
	isolate	Zuni
South America (4)	Indo-European (2)	Berbice Dutch, Early Sranan
	Yanomamic (1)	Sanumá
	isolate	Movima

My sources of data include both descriptive grammars and, where available, special publications dealing with lability, passivisation, valency and voice. Besides, for Abaza I also relied on my own fieldwork materials collected in 2017–2019, and for Gban and Ngen (both Mande) and Akebu (Kwa) on fieldwork materials kindly shared by Maksim Fedotov, Tatiana Korol, and Nadezhda Makeeva.

While my language sample clearly shows that passive lability is not restricted to a particular language family or geographical area, it is certainly unable to tell how widespread passive lability is in the languages of the world in general. In order to approach this question, I checked which of the languages of my sample are included into the sample of Siewierska (2013) from WALS, which comprises 373 languages.[6] This yielded 14 languages (Abkhaz, Alamblak, Bambara, Basque, Central Alaskan Yupik, English, Ket, Koyraboro Senni, Mauritian Creole, Nyulnyul, Sanumá, Supyire, Swahili, Zuni), which is ca. 8% of the languages listed by Siewierska as having a passive and less than 4% of the whole sample. This suggests that passive lability is a typologically infrequent phenomenon, that, however, tends to independently emerge in unrelated languages.

[6] Ideally, I should have gone through all the languages of Siewierska's sample and checked which of them show passive lability. This, however, was not feasible do to time constraints and can only be done in the future.

4 Typology of passive lability

In my typology, I employ a number of parameters familiar from the work on morphologically coded passives, i.e. (i) semantics of the passive construction (dynamic, stative, or modal), (ii) possibility to express the agent, as well as (iii) semantic or lexical restrictions on the availability of the passive construction. Besides, I employ two parameters specific to passive lability, i.e. (iv) presence and type of extra morphology associated with transitive resp. passive constructions, and (v) whether passive lability coexists in the given language with a morphologically expressed passive. In the following subsections I shall discuss these parameters in turn. It has to be noted that I was not always able to obtain sufficient information for all languages of the sample, in particular with respect to restrictions on passive formation.

4.1 Semantics of passive lability

Most of the languages of the sample (38) show passive lability of the dynamic type, i.e. the passive variant of the verb expresses the same event as the transitive one (stative interpretation is in most cases also available). The absolute majority of these languages are either from Africa, see (9), or are creoles, see (10).

(9) Kakabe (Mande, Guinea; Vydrina 2011: 190)
a. *Fánta bi Séɛku kéle-la*
Fanta IPFV Seeku call-IPFV
'Fanta is calling Seeku.'
b. *Séɛku bi kéle-la*
Seeku IPFV call-IPFV
'Seeku is being called.'

(10) Batavia Creole Portuguese (Indo-European > Romance; Indonesia; Maurer 2011: 99)
Iste ele, noba ki sa pidi di siu siu
DEM 3SG news REL PROG ask_for PREP sir sir
'This it is, the news which is being asked for by the gentlemen.'

Still, dynamic uncoded passives are attested in all macroareas, see (11) from Alamblak as well a number of examples in the following subsections.

(11) Alamblak (Sepik, Papua New Guinea; Bruce 1984: 195)
a. *yima-f mɨy-m pok-rah-f-m*
man-DU tree-PL cut-FUT-3DU-3PL
'Two men will cut the trees.'
b. *mɨy-m pok-rah-m*
tree-PL cut-FUT-3PL
'The trees will be cut.'

By contrast, languages that allow only stative subtype of passive lability are clearly a minority (13), however, they are more evenly distributed across macroareas, including Africa. Interestingly, none of them are creoles (despite claims in earlier literature that creole uncoded passives are mostly stative, see the discussion in Winford 1988). In addition to the Abaza examples given above, consider (12) from Tarifiyt and (13) from Sanumá.

(12) Tarifiyt (Afroasiatic > Berber, Marocco; Gutova 2013: 107)
a. *afellah* *ye-krez* *iger*
farmer 3SG.M-plough/PFV field
'The farmer ploughed the field.'
b. *iger* *ye-krez*
field 3SG.M-plough/PFV
'The field is ploughed.'

(13) Sanumá (Yanomamic, Venezuela; Borgman 1990: 202)
sama *a* *pa-ki* *ke*
tapir 3SG lie_on_ground-FOC IMMED.PST
i. '(He) laid the tapir (on the ground).'
ii. 'The tapir lay down (on the ground).'

An interesting situation is attested in Sumerian (Jagersma 2010: 303–307). Here the unmarked passive formed by omission of the ergative agent prefix, cf. (14a), is productively used in the stative meaning (14b) and is opposed to the dynamic passive with the middle prefix *ba-* (14c); however, passive lability of the dynamic type can be reconstructed for an earlier stage, as evidenced by examples like (14d), which in the extant texts occur only in subordinate and modal contexts.

(14) Sumerian (isolate, Ancient Near East; Jagersma 2010: 304, 306)
a. *da.ge.gu$_{10}$=e* *kišib* *∅-bi-n-ra-∅*
Dagegu-ERG seal TAM-3N.OBL-3SG.ERG-hit-3N.ABS
'Dagegu rolled (his) seal over it.'
b. *kišib* *ur.ba.ú* *ses=ane=ak* *ʔi-b-ra-Ø*
seal Ur-Bau brother=his=GEN TAM-3N.OBL-hit-3N.ABS
'The seal of his brother Ur-Bau is rolled over this.'
c. *kišib* *UŠ.ĝu$_{10}$=ak* *Ø-ba-b-ra-Ø*
seal Ushgu-GEN TAM-MID-3N.OBL-hit-3N.ABS
'The seal of Ushgu was rolled over it.'
d. *balaʔ=ane* *ḫa=ʔi-ku$_5$.ř-Ø*
reign=his MOD-TAM-cut-3N.ABS
'May his reign be cut off!'

Finally, there are two languages in which passive lability is restricted to modal contexts; it is English, see (8) above, and Fongbe, see (15) with a contrast between an uncoded potential passive and a dynamic passive marked by auxiliary and a reduplicated verbal noun.

(15) Fongbe (Atlantic-Congo > Kwa, Benin; Brousseau 1998: 54)
a. *Lánpù* *élɔ́* *nɔ̀* *cí* *gànjí.*
lamp DEM HAB extinguish well
'This lamp extinguishes easily.'
b. *Lánpù* *ɔ́* *nyí* *cí~cí.*
lamp DEF COP NML-extinguish
'This lamp has been extinguished (by someone).'

It has to be noted that in languages with dynamic uncoded passives modal meanings of this type arise in habitual and generic contexts, consider examples (16) from Tagle and a discussion of Basque "impersonals" in Fernández & Berro (2022).

(16) Tagle (Nubian, Sudan; Jakobi & Ibrahim 2018: 105–106)
a. *ʈīŋī-dū* *ì-nì=ì* *ɖɨ̄ŋŋ-ɛ̄-n*
baboon-PL baobab-PL=ACC climb-PLR-3
'The baboons climb the baobabs.'
b. *ì-nì* *ɖɨ̄ŋŋ-ɛ̄-n*
baobab-PL climb-PLR-3
'The baobabs get climbed; the baobabs are easy to climb.'

All in all, it appears that the semantics of passive lability tends to align with genealogical groups and (relatively compact) areas; thus all languages of West Africa in my sample, which belong to the Mande family as well as the Gur, Kwa and Senufo branches of Atlantic-Congo family, have dynamic passives; by contrast, the Berber languages of North Africa, as well as Koyraboro Senni (Songhay of Mali), have only stative passives.

4.2 Expression of the agent

The languages of my sample are fairly evenly divided between those that allow the expression of the agent in their uncoded passives, even if marginally (24), and those that do not (29), with a slight preference for the latter. Notably, there is no correlation with genealogical or areal groupings, apart from the fact that agent expression is not found in any languages of the Americas showing passive lability. Thus, among the Mande languages Bambara, Guro, Kla-Dan and, marginally, Mano allow agent expression, see (1) above, while Gban, Jalonke, Kakabe and Mandinka do not, see (9) above. Likewise, among the Senufo languages of my sample, agent expression is possible in Minyanka and Syer (17), but banned in Supyire (Carlson 1994: 250) (18).

(17) Minyanka (Atlantic-Congo > Senufo, Mali; Coulibaly 2020: 239)
a. *Ísá* *yá* *Músà* *bɨ́*.
Isa PFV.AFF Musa hit
'Isa hit Musa.'
b. *Músà* *yá* *bɨ́* *Ísá* *ˈmá.*
Musa PFV.AFF hit Isa by
'Musa was hit by Isa.'

(18) Supyire (Atlantic-Congo > Senufo, Mali; Carlson 1994: 251)
a. *Nàŋa* *à* *sikàŋi* *bò*.
man/DEF PRF goat/DEF kill
'The man has killed the goat.'
b. *Sikàŋa* *a* *bò*.
goat/DEF PRF kill
'The goat has been killed.'

No uniformity with respect to agent expression is observed in the Creoles, either. The split appears to divide Caribbean Creoles, which prohibit agents in their uncoded passives, from Indian Ocean Creoles, which allow it. Contrast examples from Haitian and Mauritian, both French-lexifier creoles, in (19) and (20). I leave aside the question of whether this difference can be explained by the influence from distinct substrate languages.

(19) Haitian Creole (Indo-European > Romance, Glaude 2012: 110)
a. *Mari achte wòb la.*
Marie buy dress DEF
'Marie bought the dress.'
b. *Wòb la achte (*ak/pou Mari).*
dress DEF buy PREP Marie
'The dress was bought (*by Marie).'

(20) Mauritian Creole (Indo-European > Romance, Mauritius; Kriegel 2007: 76)
e lekim-la met dan kann par ban laburer
and foam-DEF put in sugarcane by PL worker
'And the foam is placed in the sugarcane fields by the workers.'

Interestingly and somewhat unexpectedly from the perspective of the typology of passives (but see Siewierska & Bakker 2013: 168–175), there are a number of languages in my sample which not only do not prohibit the expression of the agent in their uncoded passives, but even require it. Thus, for Manggarai, an Austronesian language spoken on the island of Flores in Indonesia, Arka & Kosmas (2005: 100–101) report that the agent marked by the preposition *le* "in many cases appears to be obligatory", see (21a,b); however, further they note that "although uncommon, [a]gentless passive structures are indeed attested in texts" when the agent "is either well understood ... or considered unimportant in a given context", see (21c).

(21) Manggarai (Austronesian > Bima-Lembata, Indonesia; Arka & Kosmas 2005: 95, 102)
a. *aku cero latung=k*
1SG fry corn=1SG
'I fry / am frying corn.'
b. *latung hitu cero l=aku=i*
corn that fry OBL=1SG=3SG
'The corn is (being) fried by me.'
c. *ata ngai weo kin one lobo ghaju*
REL PROG hang still in tip wood
'[the rice backet,] which was still hanging (lit. being hung) on a tip of a tree'

In the closely related language Palu'e (Donohue 2005), alongside the basic transitive construction with AVP order shown in (22a), an alternative construction exists, in which the order is PAV (22b), but the agent does not receive any marking indicating its demotion. According to Donohue, syntactic tests show that the latter construction cannot be analysed as mere fronting of a topicalised object and that the agent is indeed demoted to an adjunct. While it is not explicitly stated that the agent is obligatory in the PAV construction, no examples of its omission are given, either.

(22) Palu'e (Austronesian > Bima-Lembata, Indonesia; Donohue 2005: 60)
a. *ia cube vavi vaʔa*
3SG shoot pig that
'He shot that pig.'
b. *vavi vaʔa ia cube*
pig that 3SG shoot
'That pig was shot by him.'

A somewhat similar situation is observed in several East Bantu languages spoken in Tanzania and Rwanda, where constructions known as "subject-object reversal" or "patient inversion" (see Marten & van der Wal 2014: 330–333) are attested. They involve a switch in word order from the canonical AVP to PVA, with the P now controlling verbal agreement, compare examples from Kinyarwanda in (23a,b). In contrast to the morphologically marked passives (23c), which are present in all these languages as well, the agent of patient inversion construction is neither marked by a preposition nor can be omitted.

(23) Kinyarwanda (Atlantic-Congo > Bantu, Rwanda; Kimenyi 1988: 358)
a. *Aba-góre* *ba-a-ri* *bâ-teet-s-e* *ibí-shyíimbo.*
CL2-women CL2-PST-be CL2-cook-ASP-FV CL8-beans
'The women were cooking beans.'
b. *Ibí-shyíimbo* *by-aa-ri* *bî-teet-s-e* *aba-góre.*
CL8-beans CL8-PST-be CL8-cook-ASP-FV CL2-women
'The beans were being cooked by the women.'
c. *Ibí-shyíimbo* *by-aa-ri* *bî-teet-s-w-e* *n'-âba-góre*.
CL8-beans CL8-PST-be CL8-cook-ASP-PASS-FV by-CL2-women
'The beans were being cooked by the women.'

In all languages where they are present, patient inversion constructions appear to be fairly restricted and pragmatically marked (Russell 1985). Moreover, while these constructions fall under my definition of passive lability insofar as word order and verb agreement is concerned, it has been claimed that the preverbal patient does not show all syntactic properties of canonical subjects and rather behaves as a fronted topic (Morimoto 2006).

Finally, in some Nyulnyulan languages of northern Australia, so-called "medioactive" (McGregor 1999) constructions are attested, where the agent, usually a natural force or a cause of an (adverse) physical or emotional state, retains its ergative marking and is not omissible, however, no longer triggers verbal cross-reference, the P now being indexed in the subject slot, compare the Nyulnyul examples in (24).

(24) Nyulnyul (Nyulnyulan, Australia; McGregor 2011: 580–581)
a. *jungk-in* *i-na-marr-in-ngay*
fire-ERG 3.SBJ-PREF-burn-PRS-1SG.OBJ
'The fire burns me.'
b. *nga-la-marr-karr* *jungk-in*
1SG.SBJ-IRR-burn-TEMP fire-ERG
'I might get burnt by the fire.'

Given that it is a hallmark of prototypical passives that the agent is pragmatically backgrounded and can be freely omitted, it is perhaps unsurprising that those cases of uncoded passives where the agent is (claimed to be) obligatory at the same time raise most doubts as to whether they fall under the notion of passive (lability) in the first place. Including them into this discussion, however, is, from my point of view, instructive.

4.3 Restrictions on passive lability

The question of restrictions on lability, in particular with respect to the classes of verbs admitting it, has always figured prominently in the study of labile verbs, see e.g. Letuchiy (2009, 2013) and references therein. This same question, however, has not been addressed as systematically in the research on passives, the usual assumption being that passivisation should in principle apply to any transitive verb. The languages of my sample differ widely in both

availability of information concerning restrictions on passive lability and the types of restrictions reported. The discussion below should therefore be considered very preliminary.

Descriptions of some languages explicitly state that passive lability is in principle possible with any kind of transitive verb, see e.g. Vydrina (2011: 190) on Kakabe, Creissels (2015: 230, 234) on Mandinka, Carlson (1994: 250) on Supyire, Nichols (2002: 75 fn. 5) on Zuni. Superficially, it seems that such virtually unrestricted passive lability is systematically attested only in Mande languages, and even within this family it is not universal. Thus, Kuznetsova (2011: 271) remarks that only transitive verbs with inanimate patients, most of which describe reversible changes of state or position, admit passive lability in Guro.

Close to unrestricted passive lability come some languages with the stative subtype of uncoded passives, where lability applies to telic (change of state) transitive verbs without apparent further constraints, e.g. Abaza[7]. This is expected given that stative passives are resultative and thus can only naturally apply to predicates with a lexically predetermined resultant state (Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988: 15–17). Interestingly, a somewhat similar restriction is observed for dynamic passive lability in Central Alaskan Yupik, where P-lability (including, but not restricted to, a passive interpretation) is available for transitive verbs that "tend to focus on the result or the continuous state of the agent's action upon the patient" (25) (Miyaoka 2012: 901).

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut > Yupik, Alaska; Miyaoka 2012: 900)

(25) a. *Angute-m* *sass'aq* *navg-aa*.
man-ERG.SG watch.ABS.SG break-TR.IND.3SG>3SG
'The man broke the watch.'

b. *Sassaq* *naveg-tuq*.
watch.ABS.SG break-INTR.IND.3SG
'The watch broke / was broken.'

In some languages even more semantically circumscribed classes of verbs admit passive lability. Thus, the "medioactive" constructions of Nyulnyulan languages shown above is restricted to predicates denoting "happenings that befall people (rarely things) as a result of operation of external agencies" (McGregor 1999: 545); specifically for Nyulnyul, McGregor (2011: 580) list "less than a score of verbs" attested in the construction, most of which "describe conditions of the human body". A somewhat related constraint is reported by Lébikaza (1998: 70–72) for the Gur language Kabiye, where a construction resembling the Bantu patient inversion is mainly found with verbs of low transitivity with non-agentive subjects, see (26).

Kabiye (Atlantic-Congo > Gur, Ghana, Togo; Lébikaza 1998: 71)

(26) a. *ɖózi* *kísɛ́ɲsɪ* *tá* *mon-tóko* *kífalʊ́ʊ́*
sauce red stain 1SG.PR-shirt new
'The red sauce stained my new shirt.'

b. *mon-tóko* *kífalʊ́ʊ́* *tá* *ɖózi* *kísɛ́ɲsɪ*
1SG.PR-shirt new stain sauce red
'My new shirt is stained by the red sauce.'

A number of languages tend to disallow animate or human patients in their uncoded passives. Thus, in Kaansa, another Gur language (Reineke & Miehe 2005: 340), non-labile transitive verbs are mostly those with animate participants in both agent and patient roles (e.g. 'ask', 'call', 'insult', 'love'), while about two thirds of transitive verbs show passive lability when

[7] This must be accompanied by a caveat that while I was unable to discern any obvious constraints on the formation of the unmarked resultative passive in Abaza, it does not mean that such constraints do not exist.

their patient is inanimate (ibid.: 348), see (27). There are also some P-labile verbs with animate patients, but their intransitive uses seem to allow only anticausative readings, see (28a,b); the only exception is the verb ‘kill’ when its patient is non-human (28c).

Kaansa (Atlantic-Congo > Gur, Burkina-Faso; Reineke & Miehe 2005: 348–350)

(27) a. *ʊ* *bar-ma* *du-k-ira*
3SG lock-ASS house-CL-DEF
‘S/he locks the house.’

b. *du-k-ira* *bar-ma*
house-CL-DEF lock-ASS
‘The house is being locked up.’

(28) a. *bukɻ-mi-n-u*
deceive-1SG-PFV-CL.OBJ
‘I deceived him.’

b. *bukɻ-mi-ni-ma*
deceive-1SG-PFV-ASS
‘I have made a mistake.’

c. *kpɛ-ɛ* *khʊ-ʔʊ-r-ma*
goat-CL kill-3SG-PFV-ASS
‘The goat is killed.’

Similar restrictions are reported for the patient inversion constructions in the East Bantu languages, where the agent must be higher in animacy than the patient (Marten & van der Wal 2014: 331). Thus, in Kinyarwanda, inversion cannot apply to examples like (29a) because of “role confusion” (Kimenyi 1976: 150). However, Kimenyi further notes that patient inversion is licit even with verbs taking two animate arguments “if the pragmatics are well defined”, e.g. when the asymmetry between the participants is based on social expectations, see (29b,c).

(29) Kinyarwanda (Kimenyi 1976: 150–151)

a. *Umu-gabo* *y-a-som-ye* *umu-góre*.
CL1-man CL1-PST-kiss-FV CL1-woman
‘The man kissed the woman.’ / *‘The man was kissed by the woman.’

b. *Umu-gaanga* *a-vuur-a* *aba-rwáayi*.
CL1-doctor CL1-cure-FV CL2-patient
‘The doctor cures the patients’

c. *Aba-rwáayi* *ba-vuur-a* *umu-gaanga*.
CL2-patient CL2-cure-FV CL1-doctor
‘The patients are cured by the doctor.’

Finally, there are a number of languages where passive lability is restricted in arbitrary ways. Thus, in Ket passive lability of the stative type is observed with a particular inflection class of verbs which do not take one of the otherwise overt resultative markers (Kreynovich 1968: 248–260), compare examples in (30), where the passive resultative is formed by mere omission of the agent marker, and (31), where in addition a dedicated prefix occurs.

Ket (Yeniseian, Siberia)

(30) a. *kassat* *d-a-v-oʁon*
shoe_sole 1SG.ERG-PRS-3N.ABS-attach
‘I am mending a shoe-sole.’

b. *kassat* *a-v-oʁon*
shoe_sole PRS-3N.ABS-attach/RES
'The shoe-sole is mended.'
(Kreynovich 1968: 251)

(31) a. *ə́k-nà* *ínʁùs* *áks-dì-ŋal* *ku-b-bet-in*
2PL-GEN house what-N-ABL 2ERG-3N.ABS-make-AN.PL
'What are you making your house out of?'
b. *ə́t-na* *ínʁùs* *kí-rɛ̀-di-ŋal* *bím-b-**à**-vet*
1PL-GEN house this-N-N-ABL self-3N.ABS-**RES**-make
'Our house is made of this.'
(Vajda 2004: 32, 31)

A correlation between the parameters discussed so far can be hypothesised. As expected, statal uncoded passives almost never allow the expression of the agent and are always lexically restricted, either in terms of aspectual classes of input verbs, or idiosyncratically. Still, most dynamic uncoded passives do not allow agent expression, either, and many of them are lexically restricted in various ways as well.

4.4. Morphology accompanying passive lability

In more than half (29) of the languages of my sample passive lability is not accompanied by any change in verbal morphology, synthetic or periphrastic. While such languages are found in all macroareas, their overwhelming majority come from West Africa and Creoles, see the numerous examples above. This is unsurprising given the overall analytic profile of these languages, which is also valid for Manggarai and Palu'e; however, in this type also fall the clearly more synthetic Berber languages. The 24 languages where the transitive and passive variants do differ morphologically are distributed more evenly. Notably, among those languages are two from the Mande family, i.e. Bambara and Mandinka, where some of the analytic as well as synthetic verbal markers are sensitive to transitivity, as shown in examples (32) and (33). Crucially, the same markers are used with all transitive resp. intransitive verbs, including non-labile.

Mandinka (Mande, Senegal; Creissels 2015: 227, 233)

(32) a. *Kew-ó* ***te*** *kúlúŋ-o* *dádáa-la.*
man-DEF **INCMP.NEG.TR** boat-DEF repair-INF
'The man will not repair the boat.'
b. *Kúlúŋ-o* ***tê*** *dádáa-la.*
boat-DEF **INCMP.NEG.INTR** repair-INF
'The boat will not be repaired.'

(33) a. *Kew-ó* ***ye*** *wot-ôo* *dádaa*.
man-DEF **CMP.POS.TR** car-DEF repair
'The man repaired the car.'
b. *Wot-ôo* *dádáa-**ta***.
car-DEF repair-CMP.POS.INTR
'The car has been repaired.'

In most of the languages (15 out of 23) lability is accompanied by change in verbal indexing, which has been shown above for Abaza, Alamblak, Central Alaskan Yupik, Ket and Nyulnyul; here also belong the Bantu languages, insofar as the patient inversion construction

does not admit indexing of the object, which is optionally possible in the transitive variant. In some languages, alternation between bipersonal and monopersonal indexing is accompanied by further morphological changes, such as the shift from dynamic from stative TAM inflection in Abaza and Abkhaz shown above, or the change from a transitive to an intransitive auxiliary in Basque (Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 579–581), shown in (34).

(34) Basque (isolate, Spain, France; Fernández & Berro 2022: 1050)
a. *Unai-k* *pakete-a-k* *bidal-i* *di-**tu***.
unai-ERG package-DEF-PL send-PFV 3.ABS-have.PRS[3.ERG]
'Unai has sent the packages.'
b. *Pakete-a-k* *bidal-i* *di-**ra***.
package-DEF-PL send-PFV 3ABS-be.PL.PRS
'The packages have been sent.'

Some languages show idiosyncratic patterns. Thus, in Tagle (Jakobi & Ibrahim 2018: 102–106), while intransitive and transitive verbs agree in number with their S resp. P argument, both A-preserving and P-preserving (anticausative and passive) intransitive uses of transitive verbs only occur with the plural suffixes, whatever the number of the S, compare examples (16) above with (35).

(35) Tagle (Nubian, Sudan; Jakobi & Ibrahim 2018: 105–106)
a. *ʈīŋī-dū* *ì-tɔ̀=ɔ̀* *ɖɤ̄ŋŋ-**ɔ̄**-n*
baboon-PL baobab-SG=ACC climb-**SNG**-3
'The baboons climb the baobab.'
b. *ì-tɔ̀* *ɖɤ̄ŋŋ-**ɛ̄**-n*
baobab-SG climb-**PLR**-3
'The baobab gets climbed; the baobab is easy to climb.'

Thus, *pace* Cobbinah & Lüpke (2012: 154), who link the preference for passive lability in the languages of West Africa to "their general lack of verbal morphology", uncoded passives also occur in languages with rich and even polysynthetic verbal morphology.

4.5. Presence of morphologically coded passives

Most languages of my sample (30) do not have morphologically marked passives, P-lability being the only way for them to encode passive diathesis. The distribution of these languages shows a pronounced skewing towards West Africa; other languages with only uncoded passives include analytic Manggarai and Palu'e (Austronesian) and some of the Caribbean Creoles, as well as a number of (poly)synthetic languages with ergative alignment (Abaza, Abkhaz, Nama, Nyigina, Nyulnyul), but also some morphologically rich languages with accusative alignment (Alamblak, Tagle, Zuni). Most of these languages (26) have dynamic uncoded passives.

However, a considerable number of languages (23) do have morphologically coded passives alongside passive lability. Rather unsurprisingly, in most of these languages passive lability is in some way restricted. Thus, in Berber languages, Hoava and Sumerian passive lability is only stative, while dynamic passive is formally marked; in English and Fongbe the "middle" constructions show modal and aspectual restrictions absent with the regular marked passives. In Ket (see above), the coded and uncoded stative passives are distributed across idiosyncratic lexical verb classes; in the Bolivian isolate Movima, the distinction between unmarked and suffixed passive resultative forms of transitive verbs likewise appears to be related to lexical and morphophonological factors (Haude 2012: 276–282). The "patient inversion" construction

in Bantu languages, if considered a genuine instance of passive lability at all, is lexically, semantically and pragmatically constrained as opposed to the suffixal passive.

The only exception to this tendency for passive lability to be restricted vis-à-vis marked passive constructions is found in Mauritian Creole, where in addition to fairly productive passive lability a passive expressed by the auxiliary *gany* 'get' is attested with a "very limited group of verbs of negative physical affection" (Baker & Kriegel 2013: 257). A number of English-lexifier creoles also have *get*-passives alongside passive lability, but the distribution of the constructions awaits a detailed description.

5. Discussion and conclusions

As the above discussion has hopefully shown, passive lability, or morphologically uncoded passive, is fairly well attested cross-linguistically and, moreover, is — at least in its least disputable manifestations — sufficiently similar to morphologically coded passives and varies along the same basic dimensions as the latter. Therefore, passive lability should not be excluded from a comprehensive typology of passive and voice in general. Besides, as the data of such languages as Abaza, Basque or Central Alaskan Yupik prove, passive lability is by no means restricted to languages with limited morphology.

While passive lability is attested in all macroareas and diverse language families, there exist two clear hotbeds of it, viz. West Africa (in particular Mande, Gur and Senufo languages) and Creoles. Uncoded passives have not been discussed as an areal trait of the so-called Macro-Sudan Belt (Güldemann 2008, 2018: 479–486), at least for the reason that they appear to be only attested it its western part, however, the spread of passive lability in this area suggests itself as a potential result of areal diffusion. The situation with Creoles is less clear. While it is tempting to attribute the pervasiveness of passive lability in Caribbean Creoles to the influence of their West African substrates (cf. Veenstra 2025), many open questions remain. For instance, the Gbe languages of the Kwa branch of Atlantic-Congo, which have contributed significantly to the morphosyntactic structure of a number of Caribbean Creoles (see e.g. Lefebvre 1998 on Haitian Creole), have a marked dynamic passive, passive lability at least in Fongbe being restricted to the potential meaning (see Brousseau 1998: 53–59). For Trinidad English Creole, African substrates are apparently limited to the West Bantu languages (Mühleisen 2013), which do not possess even the patient inversion construction. Notably, Nigerian Pidgin (Faraclas 2013), experiencing immediate influence from a number of West African substrates, including Kwa, does not show passive lability of the "Caribbean" type, and Cape Verdean Creole, despite having Mandinka among its substrates, only features morphologically marked passives (Baptista 2013).

This paper could certainly not tackle all matters relevant for the typology of passive lability. An important question concerns the polyfunctionality of lability, i.e. which other voice-related functions are available to labile verbs across languages, as, for example, co-presence of P-lability and A-lability in Central Alaskan Yupik and Tagle. Another question is related to the diachronic origins of passive lability, i.e. whether it can emerge via loss of morphology (as was probably the case in the languages of Flores and some of the Creoles) or via functional extensions of anticausative lability. I hope that my contribution will spark more interest in these and related issues.

Abbreviations

1 — 1st person
A — agent
ABL — ablative
ABS — absolutive
ACC — accusative
AFF — affirmative
AN — animate
ASP — aspect
ASS — assertive
BEN — benefactive
CL — classifier
CMP — completive
COP — copula
CSL — cislocative
DCL — declarative
DEF — definite
DEM — demonstrative
DU — dual
ERG — ergative
F — feminine
FOC — focus
FUT — future
FV — final vowel
GEN — genitive
H — human
HAB — habitual
IMMED — immediate
INCMP — incompletive
IND — indicative
INF — infinitive
INTR — intransitive
IO — indirect object
IPFV — imperfective
IRR — irrealis
M — masculine
MID — middle
MOD — modal
N — neuter
NEG — negation
NML — nominalisation
NOM — nominative
NPST — non-past
OBJ — object
OBL — oblique
PASS — passive
PFV — perfective
PL — plural
PLR — plurative
POS — positive
PR — possessor
PREF — prefix
PREP — preposition
PRF — perfect
PROG — progressive
PRS — present
PST — past
REL — relativizer
RES — resultative
SBJ — subject
SG — singular
SNG — singulative
TAM — tense-aspect-mood
TEMP — temporal
TR — transitive

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