A preliminary typology of uncoded passive alternations

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Introducing uncoded passives

- Most of the literature on the typology of valency alternations has focused on diathesis changes that are explicitly morphologically encoded in the verb.

- The phenomenon of so-called "lability" aka "ambitransitivity", i.e. uncoded diathesis alternations, has been recognized but remained largely limited to discussions of causative/anticausative alternations.

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- German and English:

(1)   a.   *Der Junge* *zerbrach* *die Vase*.
            'The boy broke the vase.'

         b.   *Die Vase* *zerbrach*.
            'The vase broke.'

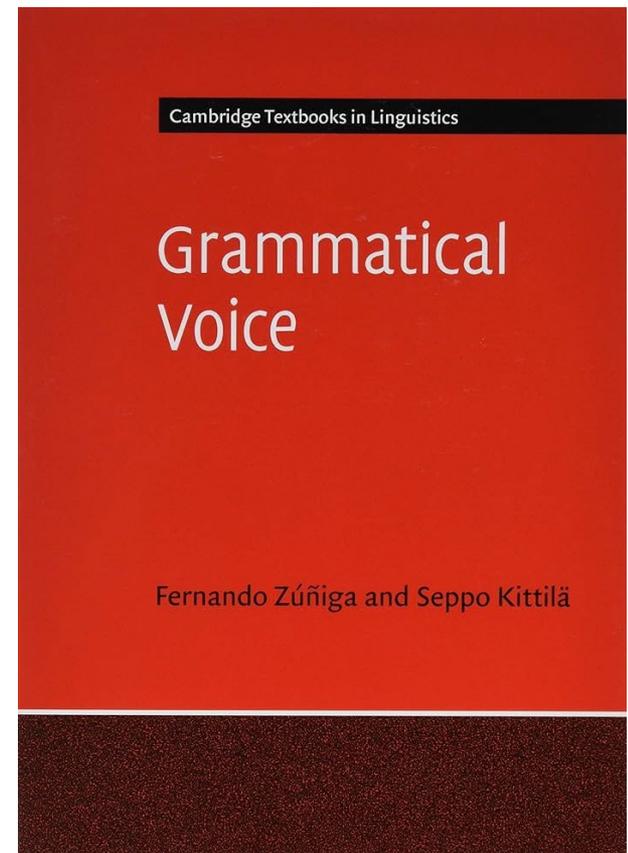# Introducing uncoded passives

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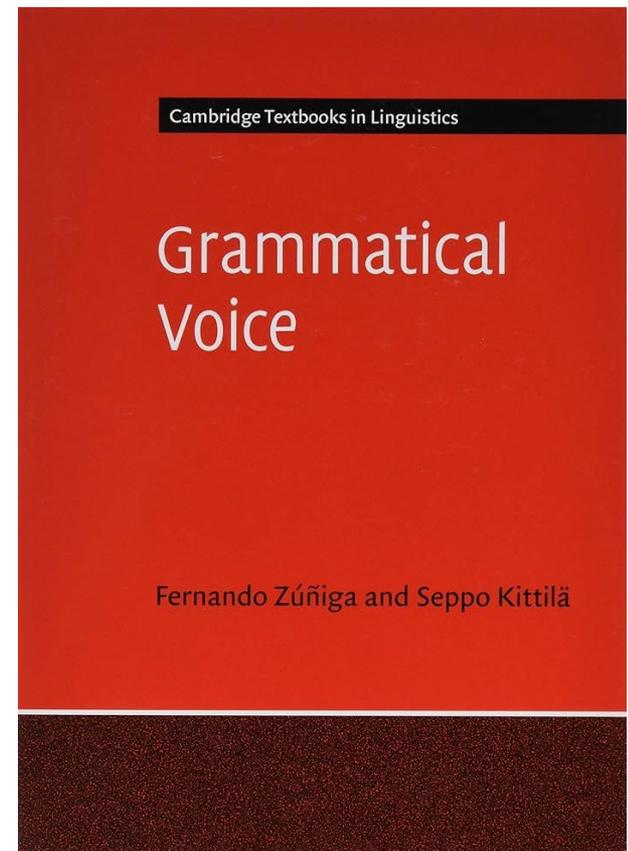
Anticausative lability or P-lability

Introducing uncoded passives

- As a remarkable exception to this general trend, Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019) devote a whole chapter 6 (p. 178-199) to uncoded alternations.

- They show that among morphologic-ally uncoded diathesis alternations one can find equivalents of every type of morphologically coded "voice" found in the languages of the world, including the passive (p. 188-189).

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

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

DEF – definite, NEG – negation,
PFV – perfective

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

DEF – definite, NEG – negation,
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Introducing uncoded passives

- Abaza (Northwest Caucasian, Russia; Arkadiev 2023)

(3)   a. *a-phʷə́spa a-ŝ   ʕa-l-ṭə́-d*
          DEF-girl   DEF-door   CSL-3SG.F.ERG-open/AOR-DCL
          'The girl opened the door.' (elicited)

AOR – aorist, CSL – cislocative,
DCL – declarative, ERG – ergative,
F – feminine

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b. *sə-ŝ-kʷa w-zə-ṭ-ṗ*
1SG.PR-door-PL 2SG.M.IO-BEN-open/RES-NPST.DCL
'My doors are open for you.' (textual)

AOR – aorist, BEN – benefactive, CSL – cislocative, DCL – declarative, ERG – ergative, F – feminine, IO – indirect object, M – masculine, NPST – non-past, PR – possessor, RES – resultative

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AOR – a   eclarative,
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Intransitivisation through elimination of the ergative prefix

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AOR – a... ...eclarative,
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Conversion from the "dynamic" to the "static" inflectional class

Introducing uncoded passives

- Morphologically uncoded passives have been known to specialists on individual languages and whole language families (in particular, Mande in Western Africa) for quite some time:

  - Mande: Cobbinah 2008, Vydrina 2011, Cobbinah & Lüpke 2012, Creissels 2014, 2015 etc.
  - Gur: Reineke & Miehe 2005
  - Jamaican Creole: LaCharité & Wellington 1999
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Introducing uncoded passives

- Still, only scarcely mentioned in typological and theoretical work (beside Z&K 2019, see also Cabredo Hoffher 2023).

- Morphological marking is built into most definitions of passives in the typological literature, cf. Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000: 7), Keenan & Dryer (2007: 327–328), Siewierska (2013), Haspelmath (2021).

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Introducing uncoded passives

- 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."

Introducing uncoded passives

- No understanding of where uncoded passives are found and how widespread they are in the languages of the world.

- Little awareness of the cross-linguistic variation of uncoded passives and of how they fit within the typology of voice.

- A few exceptions:
  - Letuchiy (2009: 136-145) within a broader typology of labile verbs;
  - Arkadiev (2023), with a focus on Abaza and the resultative/stative subtype of uncoded passives.

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Definition and sample

- Z&K (2019: 83): Characteristics of the prototypical passive voice:
  a. Syntactic valency is one less than in the active diathesis.
  b. Its subject corresponds to the nonsubject P of the active voice.
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Non-promotional passives: excluded

- I only consider constructions clearly involving syntactic promotion of the P of the active construction to the privileged syntactic position in the intransitive construction, as evidenced by word order, flagging or indexing.

- Reason: in the absence of formal marking it is hardly possible to distinguish putative uncoded non-promotional passives from cases of simple agent omission.

- However, see L. Nichols (2002) on apparently uncoded non-promotional passive in Zuni.

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- However, see L. Nichols (2002) on apparently uncoded non-promotional passive in Zuni, existing alongside a promotional passive, also uncoded.

Definition and sample

Agentless passives: included

- Reason: many languages with morphologically coded passives do not allow the agent to be expressed or treat agented passives as marginal or pragmatically "marked" (e.g. Keenan & Dryer 2007, but see Siewierska & Bakker 2013).

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Abaza vs. German:

(4)   *a-qə́ŝ*   *p.čə-ṗ*
         DEF-window   break/RES-NPST.DCL
         'Das Fenster ist zerbrochen.'

- If the German translation of (4) is included into the passive domain as an instance of *Zustandspassiv*, the same logic should apply to the Abaza original, too.

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  - Cf. the distinction between direct and indirect encoding (Lehmann 2014) and the notion of conversion (Valera 2015).

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Definition and sample

- Africa:
  - Mande: Bambara, Mandinka, Kakabe, Mano, Jalonke
  - Senufo: Minyanka, Supyire, Syer
  - Gur: Kaansa, Ditammari, Byali
  - Songhay: Koyraboro Senni
  - Berber: Kabyle, Tarifiyt
- Eurasia:
  - Indo-European: English
  - Northwest Caucasian: Abaza, Abkhaz
  - Yeniseian: Ket
- Oceania:
  - Austronesian: Manggarai, Palu'e
  - Yam: Nama
- Americas:
  - Yanomamic: Sanumá
  - Eskimo-Aleut: Central Alaskan Yupik
  - Zuni
  - Creoles: Jamaican Creole

Map created with Lingtypology (Moroz 2017)

Parameters of variation

- Basically the same as those of morphologically coded passives:
  - expression of the agent: possible vs. impossible;
  - semantics: dynamic vs. resultative/static vs. modal;
  - lexical restrictions on passive formation;
  - presence and type of extra morphology associated with transitive resp. passive constructions.

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Parameters of variation

- Expression of the agent

possible, even if marginal (8)	impossible (17)
Abaza, Abkhaz, Bambara, Mano, Minyanka, Syer, Palu'e, Manggarai	English, Ket, Mandinka, Kakabe, Jalonke, Supyire, Kaansa, Ditammari, Byali, Zuni, Nama, Koyraboro Senni, Kabyle, Taifiyt, Sanumá, CAY, Jamaican Creole

Parameters of variation

Map created with Lingtypology (Moroz 2017)

Parameters of variation

- Expression of the agent

- Family-internal variation:
  - Mande: Bambara, Mano vs. Mandinka, Kakabe, Jalonke
  - Senufo: Minyanka, Syer vs. Supyire

Parameters of variation

- Expression of the agent

- An exceptional situation in the two Austronesian languages Manggarai and Palu'e (both from the Flores Barat subgroup), where the expression of the agent is claimed to be obligatory (Arka & Kosmas 2005: 100-102; Donohue 2005).

Parameters of variation

- Manggarai (Austronesian, Indonesia; Arka & Kosmas 2005: 95):

(5)   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.'

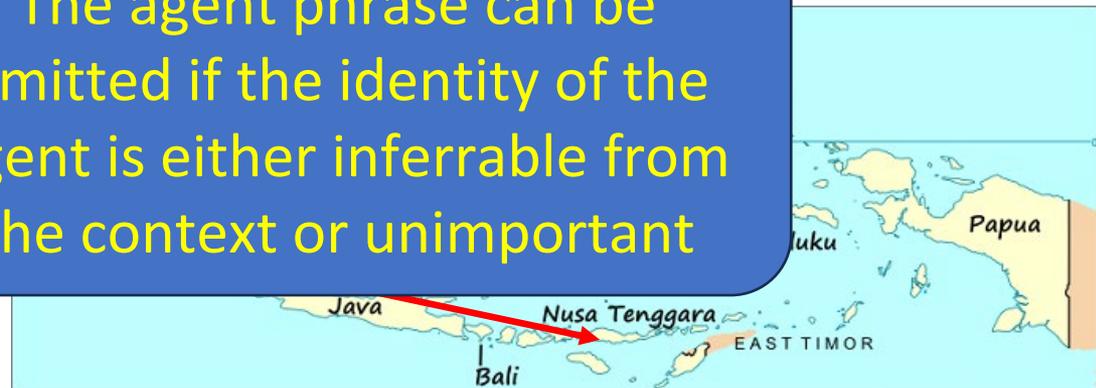OBL – oblique case

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         corn   that   fry   OBL=1SG=3SG
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The agent phrase can be omitted if the identity of the agent is either inferrable from the context or unimportant

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Parameters of variation

- Palu'e (Austronesian, Indonesia; Donohue 2005: 60):

(6)   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.'

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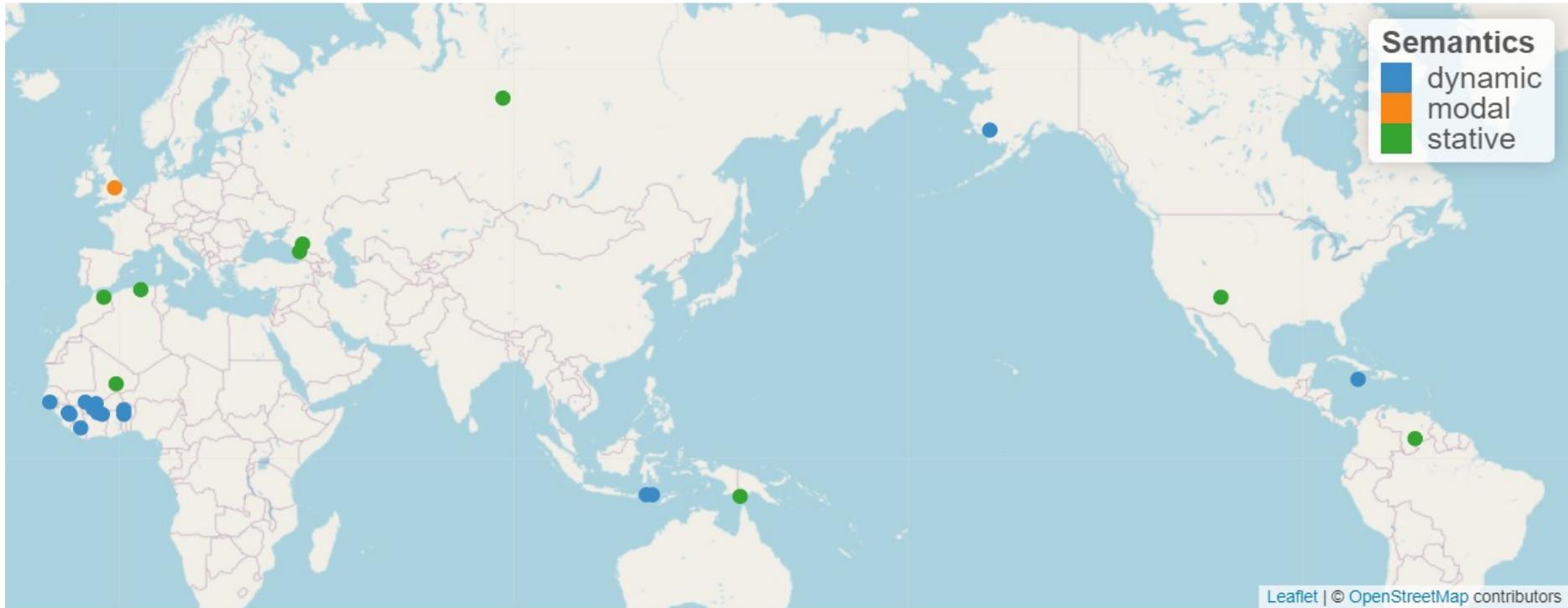> No mention of the possibility to omit the agent in the source

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Parameters of variation

- Semantics

Dynamic (14)	Stative (9)	Modal (1)
Bambara, Mandinka, Kakabe, Mano, Jalonke, Minyanka, Supyire, Syer, Kaansa, Byali, Ditammari, Palu'e, Manggarai, CAY	Abaza, Abkhaz, Ket, Zuni, Nama, Koyraboro Senni, Kabyle, Tarifiyt, Sanumá	English

Parameters of variation

Map created with Lingtypology (Moroz 2017)

Parameters of variation

- Kakabe (Mande, Guinea; Vydrina 2011: 190): dynamic

(7)   a. *Fánta   bi   Sɛ́ɛku   kéle-la*
          Fanta   IPFV   Seeku   call-IPFV
          'Fanta is calling Seeku.'

        b. *Sɛ́ɛku   bi   kéle-la*
          Seeku   IPFV   call-IPFV
          'Seeku is being called.'

IPRF – imperfective

African Languages
(C) Jost Gippert, 1993-2003

Parameters of variation

- Koyraboro Senni (Songhay, Mali; Heath 1999: 163): stative

(8)   a. *ay   na   kus-oo   too   hari*
                  1SG.SBJ   TR   jar-DEF.SG   fill   water
                  'I filled the jar with water.'

        b. *bidoŋ-oo   ga   too   hari*
                  jug-DEF.SG   IPFV   fill   water
                  'The jug is full of water.'

SBJ – subject, TR – transitivity marker

African Languages
(C) Jost Gippert, 1993-2003

Parameters of variation

- English (Indo-European > Germanic; Keyser & Roeper 1984: 381): modal

(9)   a. *Someone bribed the bureaucrats.*

          b. *Bureaucrats bribe ??(easily).*

Cf. Holvoet & Daugavet 2020, Inglese 2022 on facilitative middles and their relations to passives.

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- Lexical restrictions

  - often hard to assess since few authors discuss them explicitly;

  - still, some works provide lists of verbs admitting passive lability;

  - it is not always possible to determine whether these lists are exhaustive or even representative.
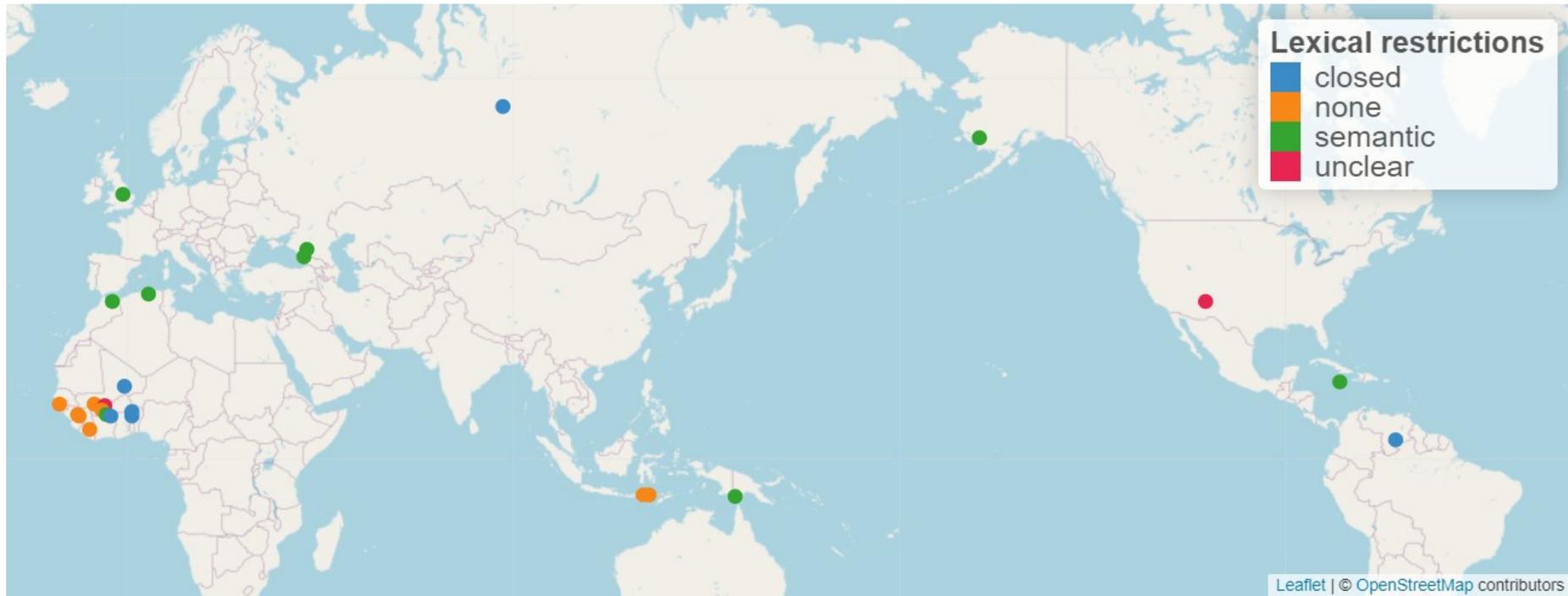
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- Lexical restrictions

(Almost) no restictions (7)	Bambara, Mandinka, Kakabe, Mano, Jalonke, Supyire, Palu'e, Manggarai
Semantic restrictions (9)	Abaza, Abkhaz, English, Syer, Nama, Kabyle, Tarifiyt, CAY, Jamaican Creole
Closed class (6)	Ket, Kaansa, Ditammari, Byali, Koyraboro Senni, Sanumá
No data or unclear (2)	Minyanka, Zuni

Parameters of variation

Map created with Lingtypology (Moroz 2017)

Parameters of variation
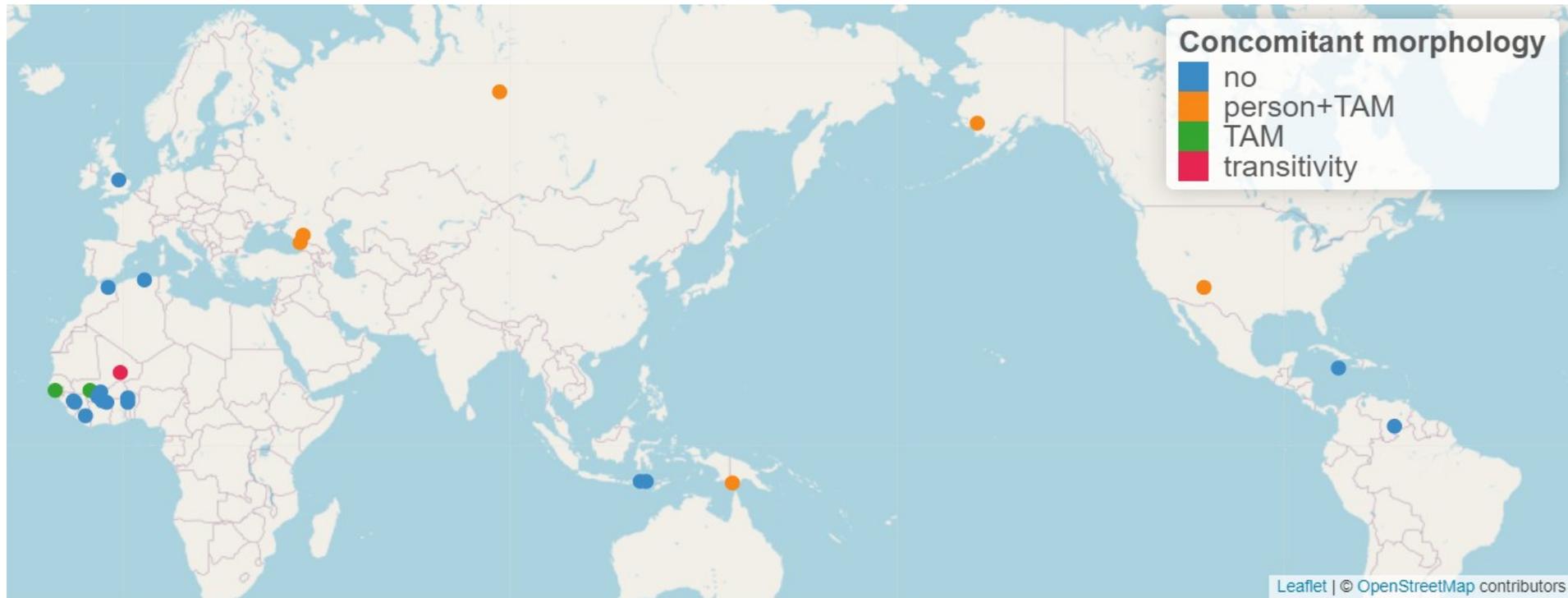
- Lexical restrictions
  - English: only agentive verbs (Keyser & Roeper 1984);
  - Abaza, Abkhaz, CAY, Berber: most telic transitive verbs denoting a change of state of the patient;
  - Syer (Dombrovsky-Hahn 2015: 545): "speakers avoid using the passive with verbs that denote activities which never occur spontaneously (e.g. *gbu* 'kill')";
  - Ditammari (Reineke & Miehe 2005: 343-4): passivisation possible only with some verbs taking inanimate patients;
  - Sanumá (Borgman 1990: 201-202): only "certain verbs", e.g. those denoting caused change of position (e.g. 'lay');
  - Koyraboro Senni (Heath 1999: 164): a small list of verbs;
  - Ket (Kreynovich 1968: 244-260): uncoded statal passive is attested with particular conjugational types of verbs.

Parameters of variation

- Concomitant morphology

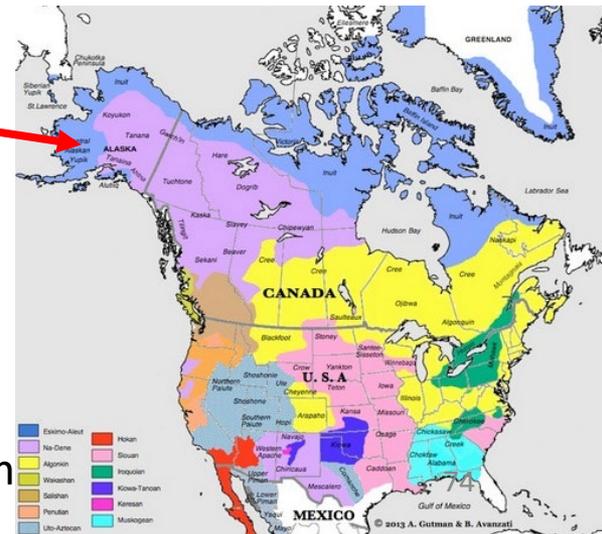| Person (+ TAM/transitivity) (6)	Abaza, Abkhaz, Ket, Nama, CAY, Zuni
TAM (2)	Bambara, Mandinka
Transitivity marking (1)	Koyraboro Senni
None or unclear (16)	English, Kakabe, Mano, Jalonke, Minyanka, Supyire, Syer, Kaansa, Ditammari, Byali, Manggarai, Palu'e, Kabyle, Tarifiyt, Sanumá, Jamaican Creole

Parameters of variation

Map created with Lingtypology (Moroz 2017)

Parameters of variation

- Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut, USA; Miyaoka 2015: 1177, 1184):

(10) a. *angute-m*   *neqa*   *ner-a-a*
             man-ERG.SG   fish.ABS.SG   eat-TR-IND.3SG>3SG
             'The man is eating the fish.'
      b. *neqa*   *ner'-u-q*   *ak'a*
             fish.ABS.SG   eat-INTR-IND.3SG   IAM
             'The fish is/has been eaten.'

ABS – absolutive, ERG – ergative, IAM – iamitive 'already',
IND – indicative, INTR – intransitive, TR – transitive

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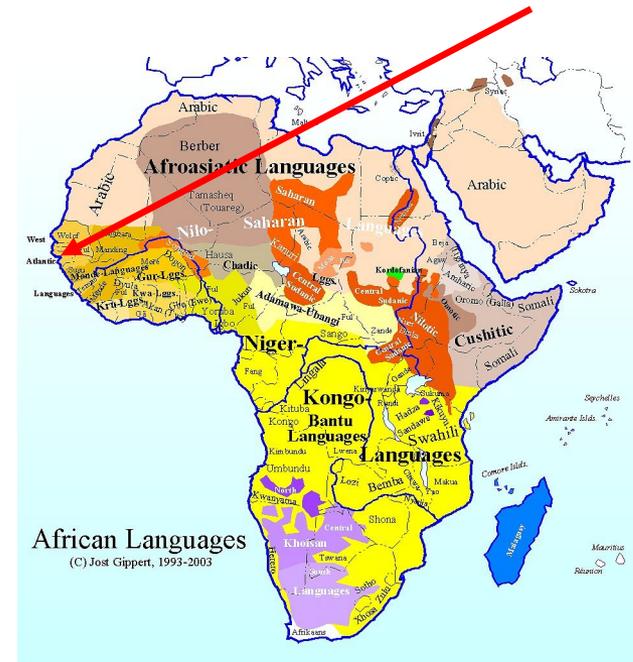languagesgulper.com

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Parameters of variation

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

(11) a. *kew-ó   te   kúlúŋ-o dádáa-la*
       man-DEF   INCMP.NEG.TR   boat-DEF repair-INF
       'The man will not repair the boat.'

African Languages
(C) Jost Gippert, 1993-2003

INCMP – incompletive, INF – infinitive,
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INCMP – incompletive, INF – infinitive, INTR – intransitive,
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Parameters of variation

- *Pace* Cobbinah & Lüpke (2012: 154), who link the preference for uncoded passivisation in the languages of West Africa to "their general lack of verbal morphology", it is clear that uncoded passives also occur in languages with rich and even polysynthetic verbal morphology.

Parameters of variation

- Possible correlations between parameters:

  - as expected, statal uncoded passives (almost) never allow the expression of agent and are always lexically restricted (either in terms of telicity/change of state, or idiosyncratically);

  - still, most dynamic uncoded passives do not allow agent expression, either, and many of them are lexically restricted in various ways.

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Summary and outlook

- Morphologically uncoded passives
  - are attested in quite diverse languages, especially in West Africa, but also elsewhere;
  - are sufficiently similar to morphologically coded passives and vary along basically the same dimensions;
  - should not be excluded from a comprehensive typology of passive and voice in general;
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Summary and outlook

- Directions for further research:
  - a more representative sample;
  - more family-level comparison, also including related languages with morphologically coded passives (if any);
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  - diachronic analysis, where possible.

Summary and outlook

- Methodological implications:
  - comparative concepts of typology should be designed in such a way as to neither exclude "deviating" and rare phenomena, nor disguise their specific properties;
  - "prototype-based" or "canonical" approaches, even if apparently "fuzzy", are perhaps not so bad in the end.

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Thank you for your attention!

Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit!

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