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Applicative functions of Slavic verbal prefixes from a cross-linguistic perspective

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Based on recent publications:

- Zúñiga, Fernando, Peter Arkadiev & Veronika Hegedűs. 2024. Applicativizing preverbs in selected European languages. In: Fernando Zúñiga & Denis Creissels (eds.), *Applicative Constructions in the World's Languages*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 419–471.
- Arkadiev, Peter. 2023. Applicative functions of verbal prefixes. In: Marc L. Greenberg et al. (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopaedia of Slavic Languages and Linguistics Online*.

Roadmap

- Introducing applicatives
- European preverbs as applicatives
- Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax
- Applicativisation in Slavic: semantics
- Outlook

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Introducing applicatives

- Zúñiga & Creissels (2024: 4):

The base construction (BC) and the applicative construction (AC) are related as follows:

- The predicates in both constructions are built upon the same root, but the one in the AC bears additional overt marking that distinguishes it from the one in the BC.
- The participant encoded as S or A in the BC appears as S or A in the AC.
- The AC includes a noun phrase in a role other than S or A, the applied phrase (AppP), which refers to a participant that either requires a non-core coding in the BC different from its coding in the AC or cannot be expressed at all in the BC.

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- ii. The participant encoded as S or A in the BC appears as S or A in the AC.
- iii. The AC includes a noun phrase in a role other than S or A, the applied phrase (AppP), which refers to a participant that either requires a non-core coding in the BC different from its coding in the AC or cannot be expressed at all in the BC.

Introducing applicatives

Yecualta Totonac (Totonacan, Mexico; MacKay 1999: 283)

(1)a. *šwáan ti-wíla-† laka-tánŋi*
Juan INC-seated-PFV OBL-bench
'Juan sat on the bench.' (BC)

b. *šwáan púu-ti-wíla-† hón-tánŋi*
Juan APPL-INC-seated-PFV DET-bench
'Juan sat on the bench.' (AC)

APPL – applicative, DET – determiner, INC – inceptive, OBL – oblique, PFV – perfective

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Intransitive base verb

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Intransitive base verb

Oblique participant

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Applicative construction

Derived transitive verb

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Applicative construction

Applicative marker

Derived transitive verb

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Applied (direct) object

Applicative construction

Applicative marker

Derived transitive verb

Introducing applicatives

- The term first used by the Italian-Spanish Jesuit missionary Horacio Carocho (1586-1666) in his *Arte de la lengua Mexicana* (1645: III,14), an exemplary early grammar of Classical Nahuatl.



CAPITVLO CATORZE
de los verbos aplicatiuos.

Verbo aplicatiuo es el que ordena la accion del verbo à otra persona, ò cosa, atribuyendosela por via de daño, ò provecho, quitandosela, ò poniendosela, ò referiendosela de qualquiera manera, q̄ sea, como se entenderà por los exemplos, verbi gracia. *nitlaqua*, como algo, su aplicatiuo es *nitlaquālja in notāzin*, como algo, à mi Padre, como si tenia fruta, ò otra cosa, y se la como. *Onēchilaquāliq̄ in maq̄nāquabuēcābuān*, sus

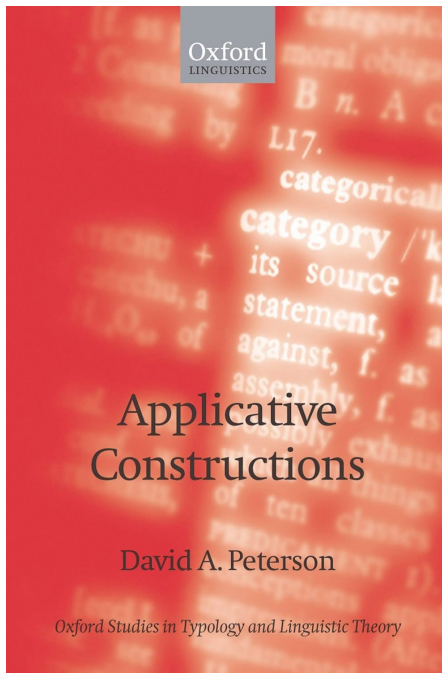
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- Later (re)introduced in Bantu studies at the beginning of the 20th century, and established itself as a term current in linguistic typology from ca. 1970-ies on.

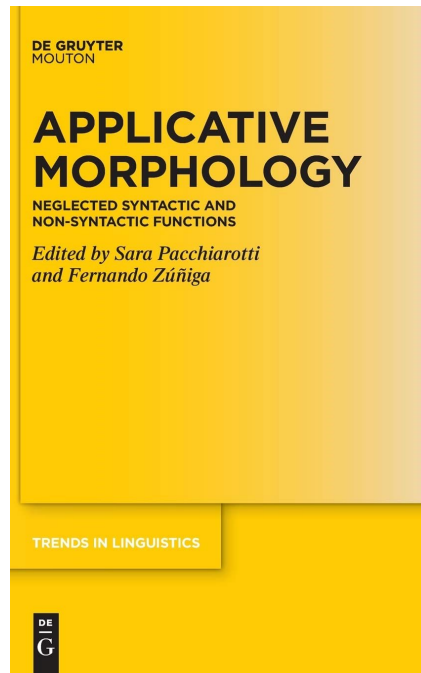
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2007



2022



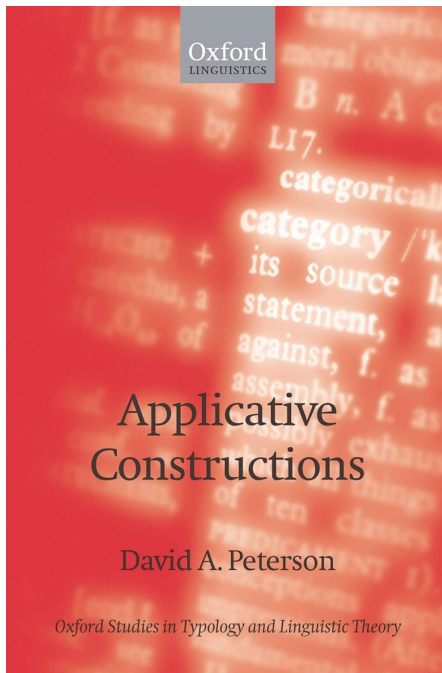
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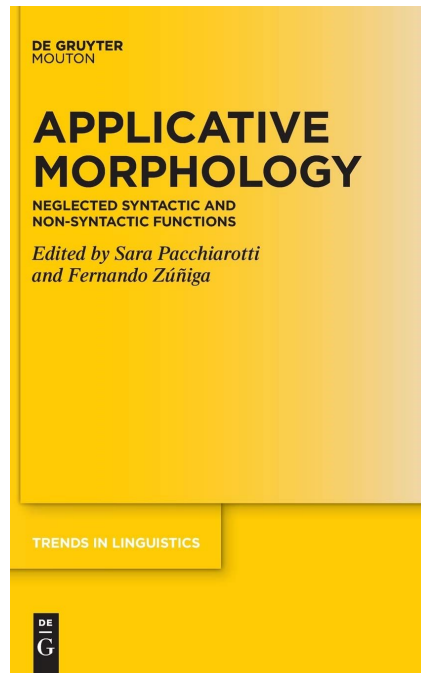
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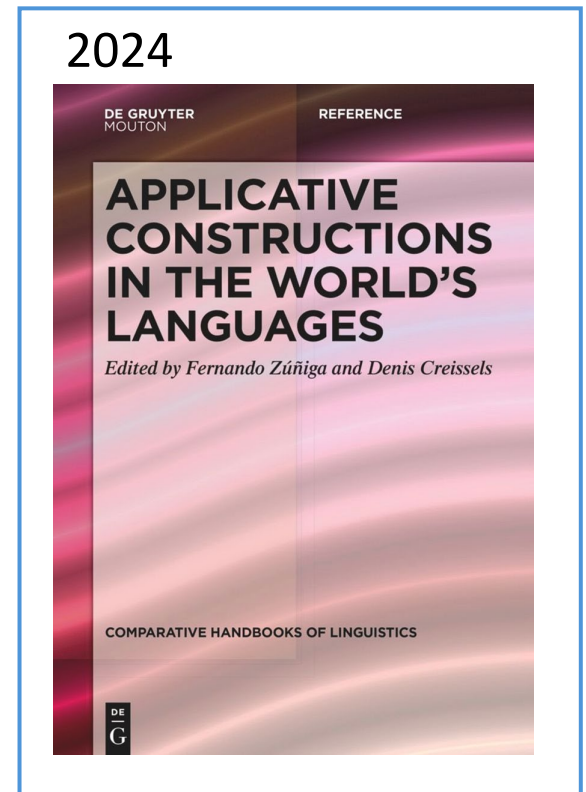
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Introducing applicatives

Syntactic classification of applicative constructions based on the grammatical role of the applied object (Zúñiga & Creissels 2024: 19):

- P-applicatives: the AppP aligns with the P (direct object) of transitive verbs like ‘break’;
- D-applicatives: the AppP aligns with the “dative” (indirect object) of ditransitive verbs like ‘give’;
- X-applicatives: the AppP is encoded as an oblique argument.

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Introducing applicatives

Mapudungun (Araucanian, Chile; Zúñiga & Creissels 2024: 24):
P-applicative

- (2) a. *Illku-n* (ñi *chaw mew*).
get.angry-1SG.IND my father POSTP
'I got angry (with my father).' (BC)
- b. *Illku-tu-fi-n* ñi *chaw*
get.angry-APPL-3.OBJ-1SG.IND my father
'I got angry with my father.' (AC)

APPL – applicative, IND – indicative, OBJ – object, POSTP – postposition

Introducing applicatives

Laz (Kartvelian, Turkey; Lacroix 2009: 484-5): D-applicative

(3)a. *hemu-k oxoi k'od-um-s*
he-ERG house build-TH-3SG.SBJ
'He is building a house.' (BC)

b. *hemu-k Xasani-s oxoi u-k'od-um-s*
he-ERG Hasan-DAT house 3SG.OBJ+APPL-build-3SG.SBJ
'He is building a house for Hasan.' (AC)

APPL – applicative, DAT – dative, ERG – ergative, OBJ – object, SBJ – subject,
TH – “thematic” suffix

Introducing applicatives

Tswana (Atlantic-Congo > Bantu; Botswana; Creissels 2024: 231; glossing adapted): X-applicative

(4) a. *lòrátó* *!ú-ttáá-àpàj-à* *mùtò:χó.*

Lorato CL.SBJ-FUT-cook-IND porridge

‘Lorato will cook the porridge.’

b. *lòrátó* *!ú-ttáá-àpè-él-à* *mùtò:χó*

Lorato CL.SBJ-FUT-cook-**APPL**-IND porridge

mó *pìtsé-ḡ* *é* *!tô:nà.*

LOC pot-LOC LNK CL.big

‘Lorato will cook the porridge in the big pot.’

APPL – applicative, CL – noun class agreement, FUT – future, IND – indicative
LNK – linker, LOC – locative, SBJ – subject

Introducing applicatives

- Semantic subtypes of applicatives:
 - benefactive/malefactive;
 - comitative
 - instrumental
 - location
 - others
- Languages can have a single, often semantically underspecified applicative marker, or a whole set of semantically specific applicatives.

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West Circassian (Northwest Caucasian, Russia; Arkadiev et al. 2024): semantically specialised applicatives

- (5) *a zə-r qə-s-fa-ŝ^w-ŝ*
DEM one-ABS CSL-1SG.IO-BEN-2PL.ERG-do[IMP]
'Do this one thing for me!' (benefactive)
- (6) *nepsə-r qə-s-ŝ^wa-k^we*
tear-ABS CSL-1SG.IO-MAL-go
'Tears appear against my will.' (malefactive)
- (7) *apere-me a-də-de-č'ə-ʋa-ʋe-x*
first-OBL.PL 3PL.IO-COM-LOC:enclosure-go_out-PST-PST-PL
'They left together with those who went first.' (comitative)

ABS – absolutive, BEN – benefactive, COM – comitative, CSL – cislocative,
DEM – demonstrative, ERG – ergative, IMP – imperative, IO – indirect object,
LOC - locative preverb, MAL – malefactive, OBL – oblique, PST – past tense

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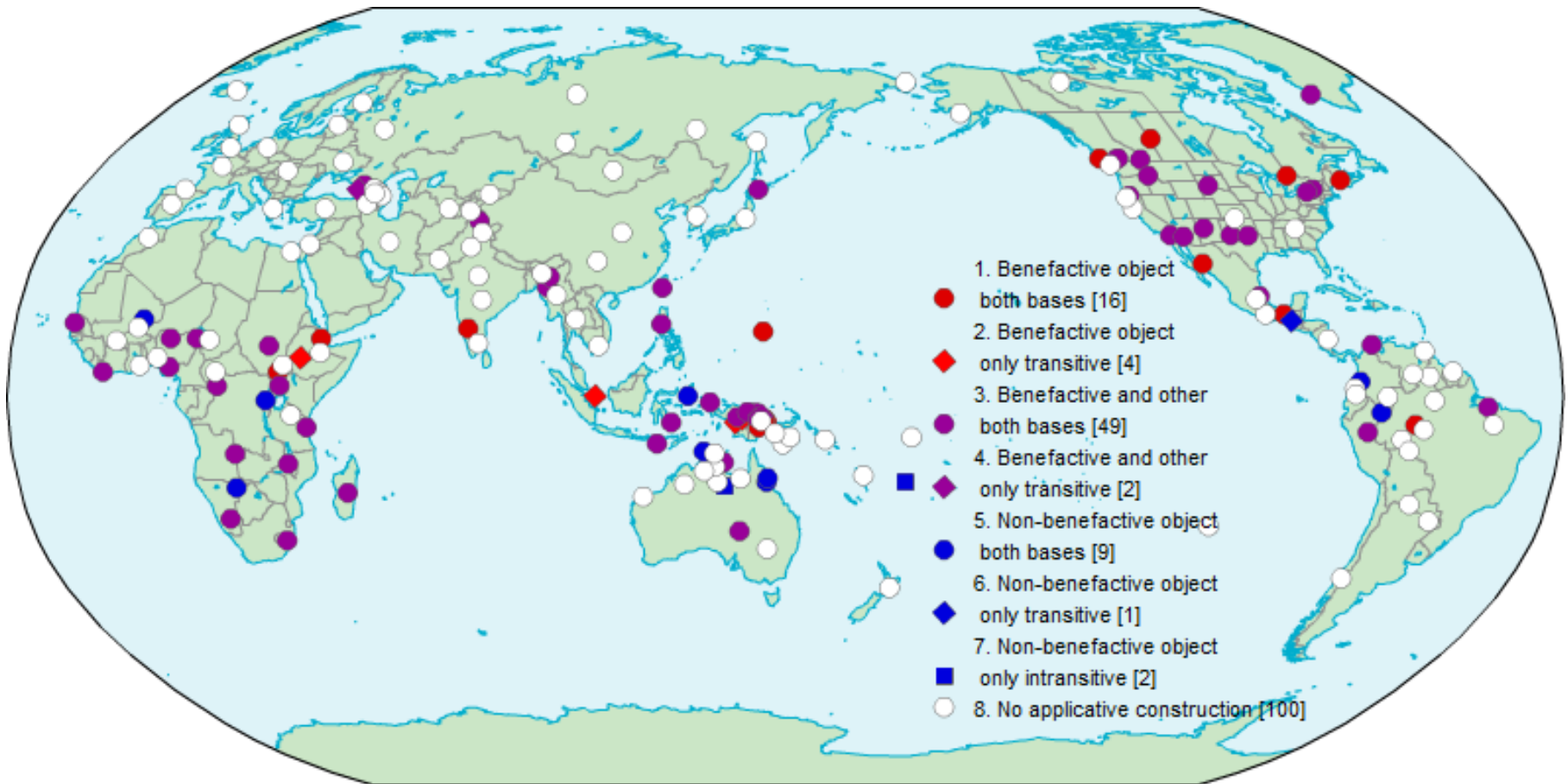
Introducing applicatives

Macro-Tani (Sino-Tibetan, India; Modi & Post 2022):
semantically unusual applicatives:

- comparative ‘perform the action more than someone’
- prioritive ‘perform the action before someone’
- territive ‘frighten someone as a result of the action’
- imitative ‘perform the action imitating someone’
- eruditive ‘teach someone while performing the action’
- expugnitive ‘cause someone to be defeated by performing the action’

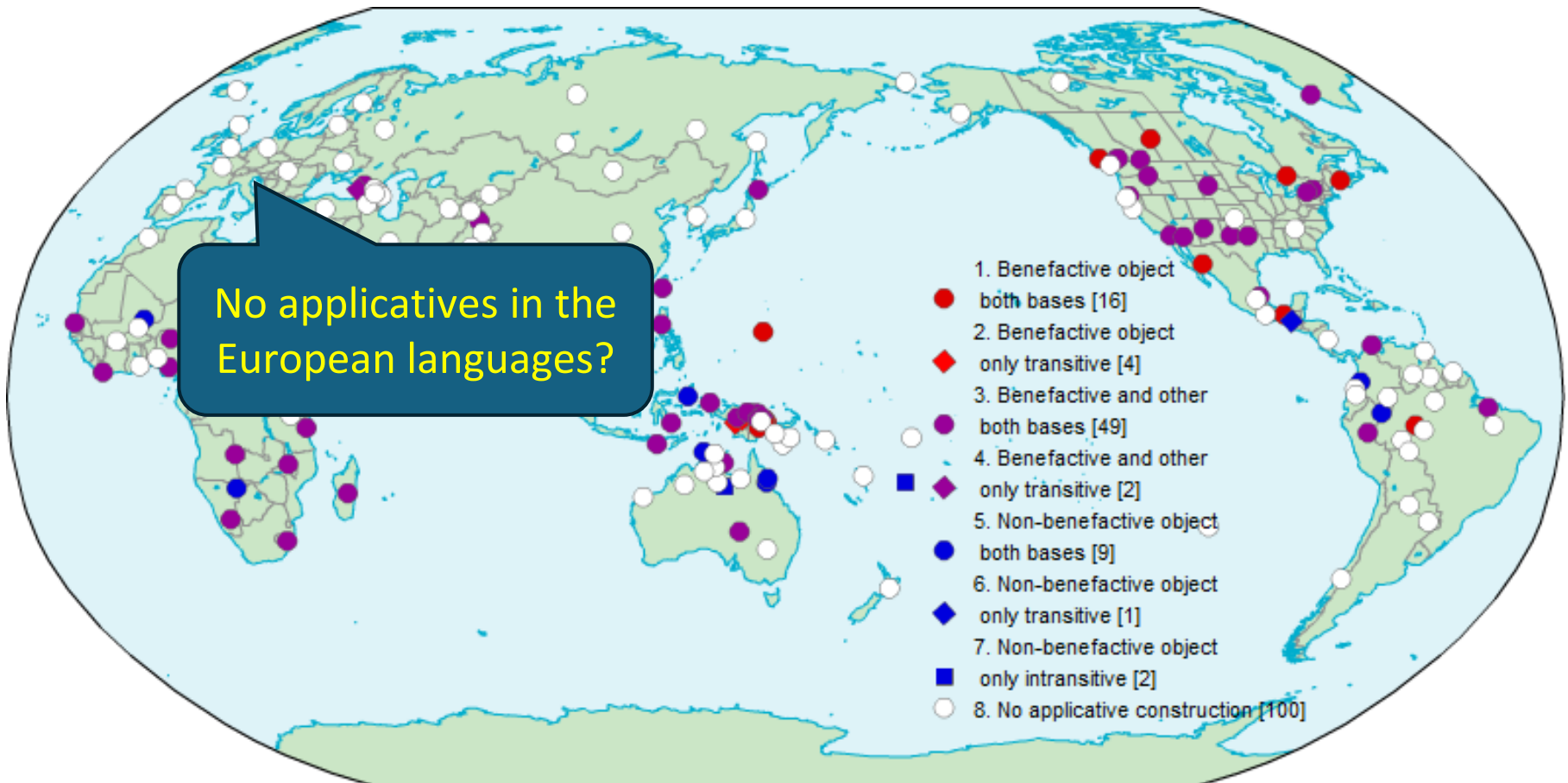
Introducing applicatives

Map from the World Atlas of Language Structures (Polinsky 2013)



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European preverbs as applicatives

- That familiar European languages actually feature phenomena which can be naturally subsumed under the notion of applicative has been recognised at least since 1990-ies, in particular with respect to German verbal prefixation (Wunderlich 1991; Michaelis & Ruppenhofer 2000, 2001).
- See Zúñiga et al. (2024: 420-38) for an overview.

European preverbs as applicatives

- German (Michaelis & Ruppenhofer 2001: 2):
 - (8) a. *Sie wanderte im Schwarzwald.*
'She wandered in the Black Forest.' (BC)
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European preverbs as applicatives

- English *out*-prefixation: a case of a comparative / expugnative applicative (Kotowski 2020):

(9) a. *We drink more than our friends.* (BC)

b. *We try to outdrink our friends and end up as alcoholics.* (AC)
(Kotowski 2020: 62)

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European preverbs as applicatives

- An applicativisation-based analysis of the transitivizing functions of verbal prefixes in Lithuanian by Kozhanov (2016).

(10) a. *eiti* 'to go'

b. *ap-ei-ti* *vis-us* *draug-us*

PVB-go-INF all-ACC.PL.M friend-ACC.PL

'to visit all friends' (Kozhanov 2016: 367)

ACC – accusative, INF – infinitive, M – masculine, PVB – preverb

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compare Ukrainian:

(11) *обі́йти* *всіх друзів* 'id.'

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European preverbs as applicatives

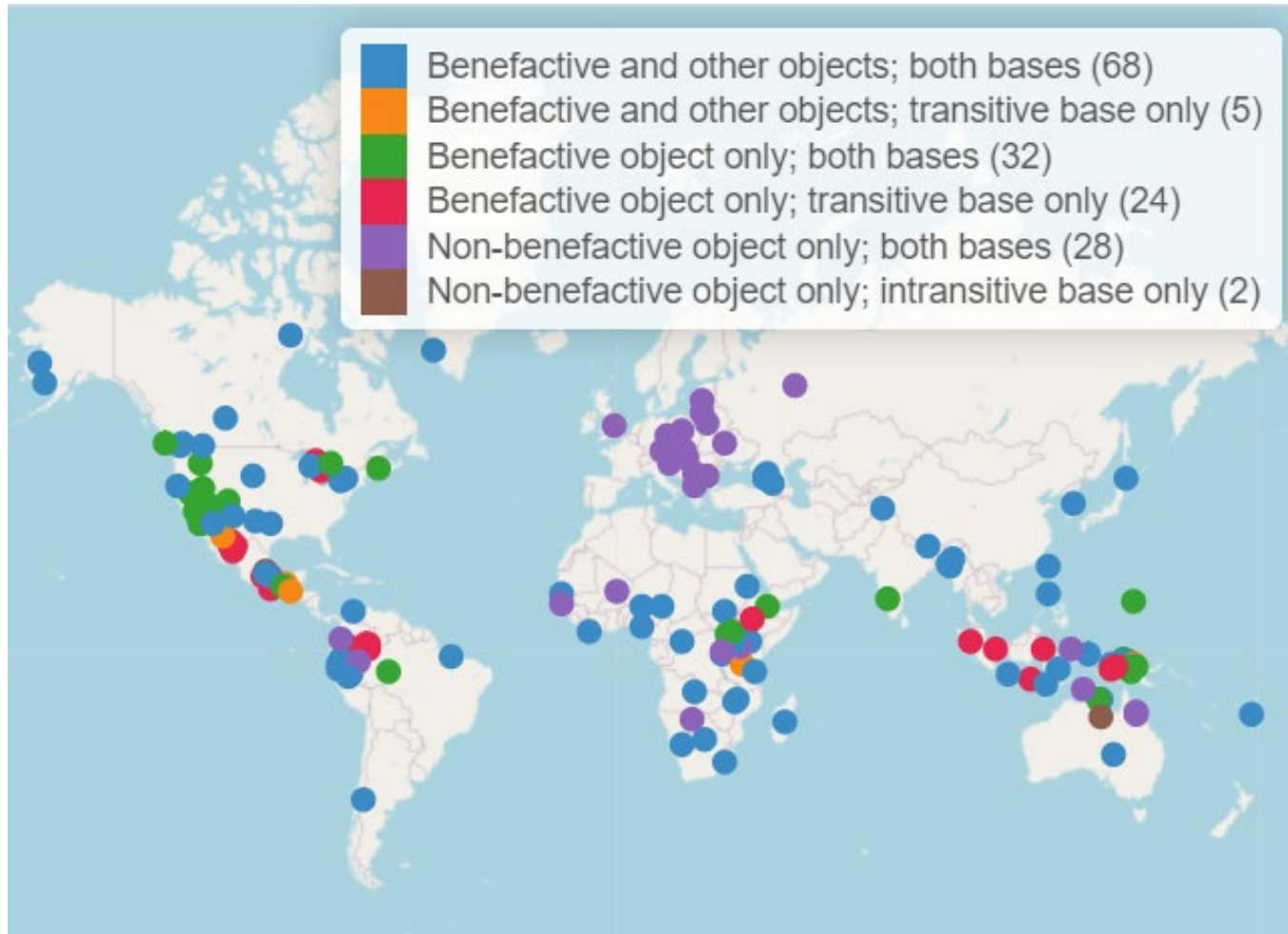
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- Still, this phenomenon has evaded attention of typologists interested in applicatives, and likewise the broader perspective offered in typological work has been largely unnoticed by Slavicists.

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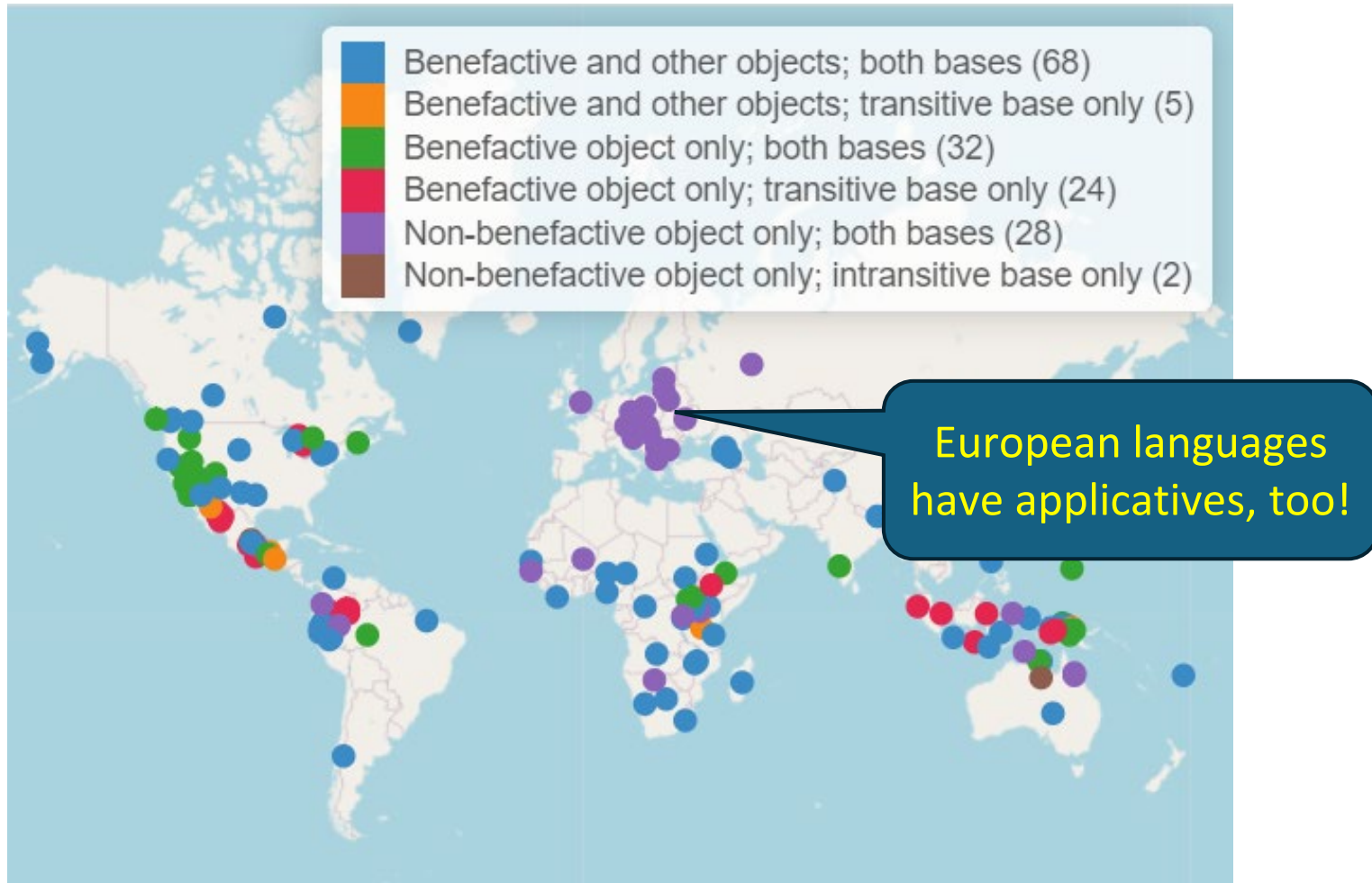
European preverbs as applicatives

Updated map from Moroz & Polinsky (2024), courtesy of George Moroz
https://lingconlab.github.io/supplementary_applicative_constructions/



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European preverbs as applicatives

- As far as I know, there are no systematic and comprehensive studies of valency-related functions of preverbs across Slavic (though cf. a useful overview in Oertle 2016).
- Works on individual languages and even individual preverbs exist (e.g. Spencer & Zaretskaya 1998 on Russian), but are often hard to find.
- My own work on the topic is also far from being systematic, let alone comprehensive.

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- As far as I know, there are no systematic and comprehensive studies of valency-related functions of preverbs across Slavic (though cf. a useful overview in Oertle 2016).
- Works on individual languages and individual preverbs exist (e.g. Spencer & Zaretskaya 1998 on Russian), but are often hard to find.
- My own work on the topic is also far from being systematic, let alone comprehensive.

European preverbs as applicatives

Coverage and sources of data:

- only modern standard languages;
- dictionaries, grammatical descriptions and special publications;
- (parallel) corpora, but no quantitative analysis.

Roadmap

- Introducing applicatives
- European preverbs as applicatives
- Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax
- Applicativisation in Slavic: semantics
- Outlook

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Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax

- Most of the literature discusses preverbs introducing direct objects (i.e. P-applicatives), but Slavic preverbs can also introduce indirect or oblique objects (i.e. function as D- and X-applicatives).
- In some cases, AppP can either retain its oblique marking or become a direct object, with or without a difference in meaning.

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Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax

- X-applicatives introduce obligatory prepositional phrases:
Russian (Biskup 2017: 21)

- (12) a. *Он мёрз (*в айсберге).*
'He was cold (*in an iceberg).' (BC)
- b. *Он **в**мёрз *(в айсберге).*
'He froze into an iceberg.' (AC)

- Clearly based on the spatial uses of preverbs with PPs:

- (13) a. *Он бежал.*
'He was running.'
- b. *Он вбежал в комнату.*
'He ran into the room.'

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Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax

- A special case of X-applicative: reflexive verbs with *do-* expressing attainment of a certain goal, which is expressed as a PP in East Slavic and by the genitive NP in e.g. Polish (cf. Richardson 2007: 81–83):

Belarusian (RNC parallel corpus)

(14) *абяцаў даслужыцца да генерала*
'he promised to rise (lit. serve) to general'

Polish (Przybylska 2006: 62)

(15) *Dosłużył się stopnia pułkownika.*
'He rose (lit. "served") to the rank of colonel.'

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Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax

- D-applicatives are rare and lexically restricted:
- Comitative uses of *pod-* (East) and *pri-* (West and South) with verbs of sound emission:

Bulgarian (RNC parallel corpus)

(16) *глася* 'sound':

пригласяйки на оркестъра, Варя тихичко заприпява...
'Joining the orchestra, Varja quietly started singing together...'

Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax

- D-applicatives are rare and lexically restricted:
- Quasi-benefactive with ‘adjudge’ verbs:

Russian (RNC)

(17) *судить* ‘judge’:

Она подала в суд и ей <...> присудили шестьсот рублей
‘She went to court and got 600 roubles as compensation.’

Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax

- P-applicativisation occurs with both intransitive and transitive verbs.
- With intransitive base verbs:
 - addition of an entirely new argument

Czech

(18) *ženit se* 'to marry':

...vyženil domek se zahradou (CNC)

'he acquired a house with a garden through marriage.'

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- (19) a. *S jejich pomocí vládli suverénně světovým mořím.*
'With their help, they ruled sovereignly in the world's seas (Dat).'
- b. *Snažím se ovládnout svoje vzrušení.*
'I am trying to take control over my excitement (Acc).'

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Ukrainian

- (20) a. ... *сеї осені маємо сіяти жито.* (GRAC)
'This fall we have to sow rye.' (BC)
- b. *Здавна основні орні площі в Україні були засіяні житом.* (RNC parallel corpus)
'Long ago, the main arable areas in Ukraine were sown with rye.' (AC)

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Czech (RNC parallel corpus)

- (21) a. *Pan Hamrnik kradl v zaměstnání kůže a pak je prodával.*
'Mr. Hamrnik stole leather at work and sold it.'
- b. *Oni mne chtěli okrást.*
'They wanted to rob me.'

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- P-applicativisation occurs with both intransitive and transitive verbs.
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Slovene (Internet)

(22) a. *Denar bom darovala cerkvi.*

‘I shall donate the money to the church.’ (BC)

b. *Narava ga je obdarovala z bistrostjo in lepoto.*

‘Nature endowed him with intelligence and beauty.’

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Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax

- **Optional** promotion of the oblique landmark to direct object with a number of spatial preverbs.
- Most notably *pre-/pere-* ‘across, through’, *pro-* ‘passing by, through’ and *o(b)-* ‘around’.

Ukrainian (RNC parallel corpus)

- (23) a. Вони <...> *обійшли* довкола операційного стола...
‘They...went around the operating table...’
- b. *Мусили зробити чималий гак, щоб обійти* урвище, яким закінчувалася гора.
‘They had to make a considerable detour to get around the cliff where the mountain ended.’

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Macedonian (Mitkovska and Bužarovska 2012: 138)

(24) a. *Eden helicopter nadleta nad zgradata.*

b. *Eden helicopter ja nadleta zgradata.*

a=b ‘A helicopter flew over the building.’

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- By default, phrases in the accusative licensed by preverbs share all the properties characteristic of canonical direct objects:
 - promotion to the nominative subject in passive
 - accusative-to-genitive conversion under negation (not applicable in all languages)
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- A notable exception: “perdurative” phrases licensed by *pro-/pre-* (Letučij 2012 on Russian; Žaucer 2009, 2012 on Slovene).

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Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

Moroz & Polinsky (2024: 1035):

- cross-linguistically the most common semantic role of the AppP in applicative constructions is the beneficiary;
- followed by comitatives, instruments and locations.

Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

Slavic (and, more generally, European) applicativising preverbs remarkably diverge from this cross-linguistic tendency:

- beneficiary and comitative AppPs are marginal;
- the most common semantic types of applicativisation are associated with various kinds of affectedness, including negative, i.e. maleficiary;
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An apparent paradox:

- a large number of applicativising preverbs;
- most of them polysemous:

Russian

(25) *играть* 'play':

разыграть обиду 'simulate an offence'

разыграть карту 'play a card'

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- a considerable degree of lexicalisation.

Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

- The beneficiary meaning appears to be restricted and unproductive:

Russian (RNC)

(27) *стирать* 'wash (clothes)':

Много лет кормил и обстирывал больную мать.

'For many years he used to feed his infirm mother and wash her clothes.'

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(28) *считать* 'count', *весить* 'weigh':

*Того по миру пустил, другого **обсчитал**, третьего **обвесил**...*

'He ruined some man, shortchanged another, gave short weight to the third...'

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Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

Some of the more common semantic functions:

- creation or acquisition of an object as a result of the activity

Upper Sorbian (Faßke & Michalk 1981: 116)

(29) *Ja sej nawajchtarich por krošikow.*

‘I have earned a few pennies as a watchman.’

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(30) *ležati* 'lie':

Mogoče sem roko zaležala.

'Perhaps my arm became numb while I was lying on it.'

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(lit. I have over-lain my arm).

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- total involvement/affectedness of the object in the activity, with at least the following subtypes:
 - full coverage of a spatial region

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'My beard has overgrown my mouth.'

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 - a temporal interval is filled by the activity (perdurative)

BCMS (Šarić & Tchizmarova 2013: 25–26)

(32) *sjediti* ‘sit’:

*Morali smo **odsjediti** još jedno dosadno predavanje.*

‘We had to sit through another boring lecture.’

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- total involvement/affectedness of the object in the activity, with at least the following subtypes:
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BCMS (Šarić & Tchizmarova 2013: 25–26)

(32) *sjediti* ‘sit’:

*Morali smo **odsjediti** još **jedno dosadno predavanje**.*

‘We had to sit through (lit. outsit) another boring lecture.’

Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

Some of the more common semantic functions:

- total involvement/affectedness of the object in the activity, with at least the following subtypes:
 - activity involves the whole set of objects (distributive)

Ukrainian (GRAC)

(33) *дзвонити* 'make phone calls':

*Давай **обдзвонимо** наших клієнтів у Києві та по областях.*

'Let's call our clients in Kyiv and in the regions'

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Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

Some of the more common semantic functions:

- the object overtaken in motion or surpassed in the activity

Slovak (ParaSOL)

(34) *bežať* 'run':

*Raz zdanlivo nedopatrením sotil do muža, ktorého chcel
predbehnúť.*

'Once he as if accidentally pushed the man he wanted to
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(35) *кричати* 'shout':

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перекричати супротивника.*

'Each group shouted its own and tried to shout over the competitor.'

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Some of the more common semantic functions:

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- particularly prominent with the South Slavic *nad-* (Mitkovska & Bužarovska 2012: 145–146; Tchizmarova 2012: 242–244)

Bulgarian (Internet)

(36) a. *Мъжът работи.*

‘The man works.’ (BC)

b. *Няма мъж, който да я надработи.*

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Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

Some of the more common semantic functions:

- the object overtaken in motion or surpassed in the activity
- directly comparable, first, to the English *out*-verbs, and, second, to the comparative and expugnative applicatives reported by Modi & Post (2022) for the Macro-Tani languages.

Applicativisation in Slavic: Semantics

Some of the more common semantic functions:

- involvement of the object in speech and other semiotic activities

Polish (RNC parallel corpus)

(37) *mówić* 'speak':

Omówili śmy problem pokrótce.

'We briefly discussed the problem.'

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Slovak (skTenTen23, sketchengine)

(38) *plakať* 'cry':

Antigona oplakala a pochovala brata aj pod hrozbou smrti.
'Antogone mourned and buried her brother even under the threat of death.'

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- Cf. the term “adfective” describing “an Experiencer object which is construed as being affected by an action directed at or upon them” in Macro-Tani languages (Modi & Post 2022: 314).

Lower Adi (Sino-Tibetan > Macro-Tani, India; glossing adapted)

- (39) a. *koo də ɲil-duŋ*
child ART laugh-IPFV
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- Links between valency-increasing and actional functions of preverbs:
 - telicity and perfectivity are among the features of transitivity (Hopper & Thompson 1980 etc.);
 - this connection is visible in the so-called “purely perfectivising” uses of preverbs as well.

Russian

- (40) a. *я писала (письмо)* ‘I was writing (a letter)’
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Preverbatation renders the verb obligatorily transitive

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Roadmap

- Introducing applicatives
- European preverbs as applicatives
- Applicativisation in Slavic: syntax
- Applicativisation in Slavic: semantics
- Outlook

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Outlook

Slavic languages have applicatives, and these applicatives show a number of typologically non-trivial properties:

- they are all non-dedicated, i.e. introducing objects is not their only and even not the main function;
- an important and neglected example of applicatives developing from locative markers (cf. van Linden 2022);
- their range of meanings diverges from the cross-linguistic prototype;
- still, many of their functions find parallels in both close and remote languages;
- they are polysemous and interact with the verbal lexicon in intricate ways.

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Perspectives for future research:

- systematic dictionary- and corpus-based comparative investigations of semantics, lexical combinatorics and productivity of applicativising preverbs across Slavic;
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ParaSOL — Parallel Corpus of Slavic and Other Languages, <http://www.parasolcorpus.org/>

PNC — Polish National Corpus, <http://nkjp.pl/index.php>

RNC — Russian National Corpus, <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/index.html>

skTenTen23 — Slovak Web Corpus 2023, <https://www.sketchengine.eu/sktenten-slovak-corpus/>

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