

Typological studies with passive/antipassive as an example

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This lecture is about

1. Typology
 - What is linguistic typology
2. Examples of linguistic typologies
 - Word order typology
 - Morphological typology
 - Morphosyntactic typology: Nominative vs. ergative languages
3. Voices from a typological perspective
 - Voice
 - Passive
 - Antipassive

What is linguistic typology

References

- The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Typology. 2010. edited by Jae Jung Song
- Pereltsvaig, Asya. 2012. Languages of the World. An Introduction.
- Croft, William. 1990, 2003. Typology and Universals.
- Nichols, Johanna. 1992. Linguistic Diversity in Space and Time.
- World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS) – <https://wals.info/>

Comparative study of human languages:

- Comparing languages with each other with respect to a given linguistic phenomenon.
- Classifying observed crosslinguistic variation into types.
- Formulating generalizations over the distribution of linguistic patterns across the languages of the world and their relationship to other patterns.
 - universals and parameters

Greenberg's universals

Greenberg (1963):

- What is possible/impossible in human language?
- Why?

Examples of Greenberg's universals:

- All languages with dominant VSO order have SVO as an alternative or as the only alternative basic order.
- With overwhelmingly more than chance frequency, languages with dominant order VSO have the adjective after the noun.
- If a language is exclusively suffixing, it is postpositional; if it is exclusively prefixing, it is prepositional.
- Whenever the verb agrees with a nominal subject or nominal object in gender, it also agrees in number.

More: <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/e-learning/Greenberg>

Linguistic Typology

What you compare and how:

← Data samples are important

- Different language families,
- Different regions.

Word order typology

Word order typology

← The ordering of subject, object, and verb in a transitive clause, more specifically declarative clauses in which both the subject and object involve a noun (and not just a pronoun).

- (1) [The dog] chased [the cat].
S(ubject) V(erb) O(bject) – SVO

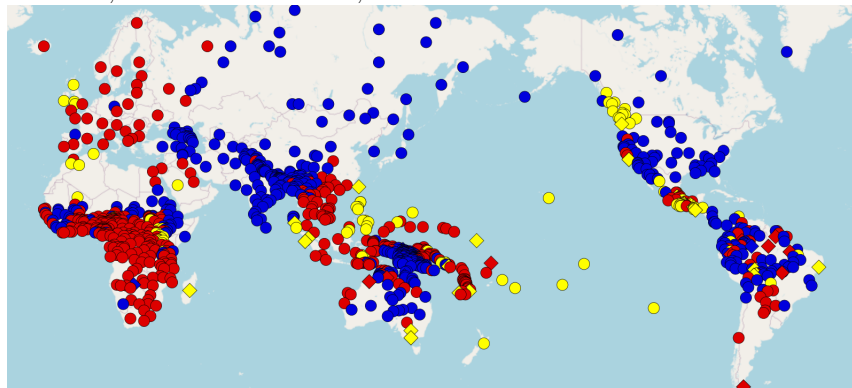
Word Order Typology

WALS: 1376 languages

- Subject-object-verb (SOV) 564
- Subject-verb-object (SVO) 488
- Verb-subject-object (VSO) 95
- Verb-object-subject (VOS) 25
- Object-verb-subject (OVS) 11
- Object-subject-verb (OSV) 4
- Lacking a dominant word order 189

Word Order Typology

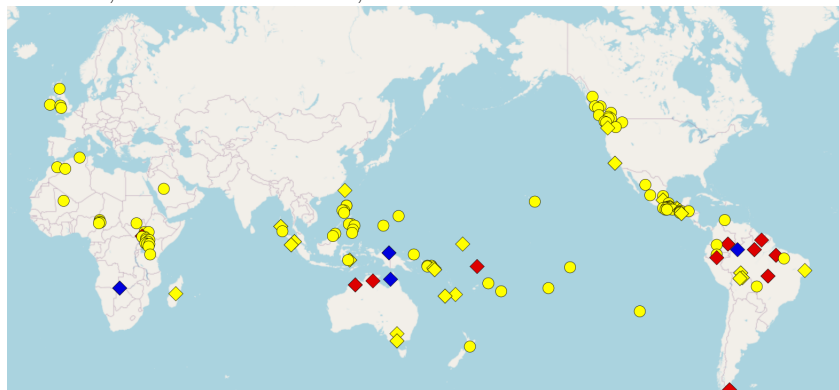
WALS: SOV – blue circle, SVO – red circle, VSO – yellow circle, VOS – yellow diamond, OVS – red diamond, OSV – blue diamond.



Link: <https://wals.info/feature/81A#2/18.0/153.1>

Word Order Typology

WALS: without SVO and SOV languages. VSO – yellow circle, VOS – yellow diamond, OVS – red diamond, OSV – blue diamond.



Link: <https://wals.info/feature/81A#2/18.0/153.1>

Word Order Typology

Examples from <https://wals.info/chapter/81>

Japanese: **SOV**

- (2) John ga tegami o yon-da.
John subj letter obj read-pst
'John read the letter.'

Irish: **VSO**

- (3) Léann [na sagairt] [na leabhair].
read.pres the.pl priest.pl the.pl book.pl
'The priests are reading the books.'

Word Order Typology

Examples from <https://wals.info/chapter/81>

Nias (Austronesian; Sumatra, Indonesia): **VOS**

- (4) i-rino vakhe ina-gu
3sg.realis-cook abs.rice mother-1sg.poss
'My mother cooked rice.'

Hixkaryana (Carib; Brazil): **OVS**

- (5) toto y-ahos -ye kamara
man 3:3-grab-distant.pst jaguar
'The jaguar grabbed the man.'

Morphological typology

Morphological typology

← whether or not affixation is allowed and degrees of morphological complexity
(How many morphemes are in one word?)

→ index of synthesis

! Sometimes it is very difficult to determine whether an item is a word or a morpheme !

Morphological typology

Languages:

- isolating ('purely analytic'): frequently have tonal systems, serial verbs, fixed word order, etc.
- analytic (some morphemes and compounding is allowed)
- synthetic: (lots of) bound morphemes
 - agglutinative: morphemes within words are easily parsed or "loosely" arranged; the morpheme boundaries are easy to identify. 1-to-many word to morpheme ratio; 1-to-1 morpheme to meaning;
 - fusional: morphemes that combine multiple pieces of grammatical information;
- polysynthetic: frequent incorporation, no overt arguments, etc.

Morphological typology

- Synthetic languages

Agglutinative languages

- (6) Nönö mälänem äškal-vlä-štä-m anžâktenöt. Hill Mari (Uralic)
they I.dat cow-pl-poss.3pl-acc showed
'They showed me their cows.'

Fusional languages

- (7) Latin
- Marcus ferit Cornēliam.
Marcus hits Cornelia.
 - Cornēlia dedit Marcō dōnum/dōna.
Cornelia has given Marcus a gift/gifts.

Morphological typology

- Polysynthetic languages

West Greenlandic:

tusaa-nngit-su-usaar-tuaannar-sinnaa-nngi-vip-putit

'hear'-neg.-intrans.participle-'pretend'-'all the time'-'can'-neg.-
'really'-2nd.sng.indicative

'You simply cannot pretend not to be hearing all the time'

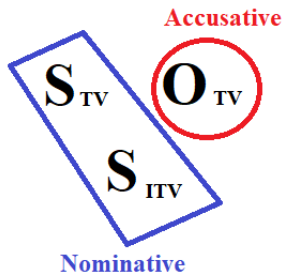
Nominative vs. ergative languages

Nominative vs. Ergative

If there are two nominal phrases in a clause, it would be good to indicate which one is the subject (structurally higher, more prominent) and which one is the object (structurally lower, less prominent) → We can mark one of them (and leave the second one unmarked, default, for instance).

First option – to mark the **Object** (i.e. the structurally lower NP).

← Nominative-Accusative languages

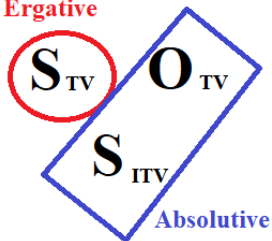


Nominative vs. Ergative

Second option – to mark the **Subject** (i.e. the structurally higher NP).

← Ergative-Absolutive languages

Ergative



Ergative languages

Hunzib (Nakh-Daghestanian; eastern Caucasus):

- (8) a. **kid** y-ut'-ur.
girl cl2-sleep-pst
'The girl slept.'
- b. **oždi-l** **kid** hehe-r.
boy-erg girl hit-pst
'The boy hit the girl.'

Source for case: ergative – inherent, by v; absolutive – structural, by T or v.
[Aldridge 2004; Legate 2008]

Nominative vs. Ergative

Note: We can mark the nominals themselves (Case marking alignment) or we can add special agreement markers to the main verb that correspond to subject / object (verbal person marking alignment).

Kaqchikel (Mayan, spoken in Guatemala) – ergative alignment on the verb.

(9) a. (Röj) y-at-q-oyoj (rat)

1PL ICMP-ABS.2SG-ERG.1PL-call

‘We call you.’

b. (Rat) y-oj-aw-oyoj (röj)

2SG ICMP-ABS.1PL-ERG.2SG-call 1PL

‘You call us.’

(10) y-oj-ok
ICMP-ABS.1PL-enter

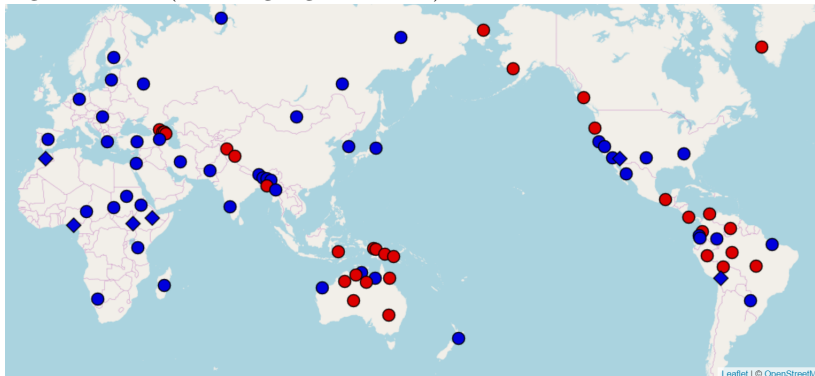
‘We enter.’

(11) y-at-ok
ICMP-ABS.2SG-enter

‘You enter.’

Nominative vs. Ergative

Case marking alignment – nominative (blue, 52) vs. ergative (red, 32) – according to WALS (190 languages in total).



Link: <https://wals.info/feature/98A#2/25.5/148.9>

Comparing a phenomenon in different languages:

Passive/antipassive Voice

Voice

Originally, **Voice** – particular alternations in the assignments of grammatical functions to the verb's arguments.

Voice (1) – change in the grammatical functions of the arguments.

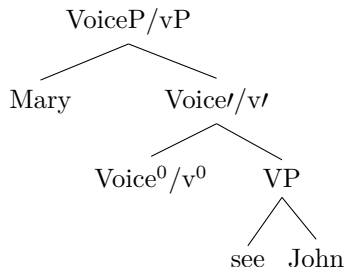
Voice (2) – valence alternation (decrease or increase of the number of arguments; see Levin and Rappaport 1995, Haspelmath and Müller-Bardey 2005, Reinhart and Sioni 2005, a.o.)

In English: active Voice vs. passive Voice

- (12) a. Mary wrote this book.
← active
- b. This book was written by Mary.
← passive

Voice

VoiceP (Kratzer 1996) / vP (Chomsky 1995; Marantz 1997) in the structure → Often interpreted as identical; a single projection for verbalizing and introducing the external argument.



Harley (2005): vP verbalizes, VoiceP introduces the external argument.

What can we do with arguments?

- 1 Reduce the number of arguments:
 - Demotion of arguments
passive, antipassive
 - Deletion of arguments
middle, antipassive
- 2 Increase the number of arguments
causative, applicative

Demotion of arguments

Passive

Passive

Passive – (1) the external argument is demoted, (2) an internal argument is promoted.

- (13) a. **Mary** wrote **this book**.
b. **This book** was written (by **Mary**).

The external argument is not deleted completely!

- (14) a. This book was written (by Mary).
- b. This book was written to impress everyone.
- c. This book was written drunk.

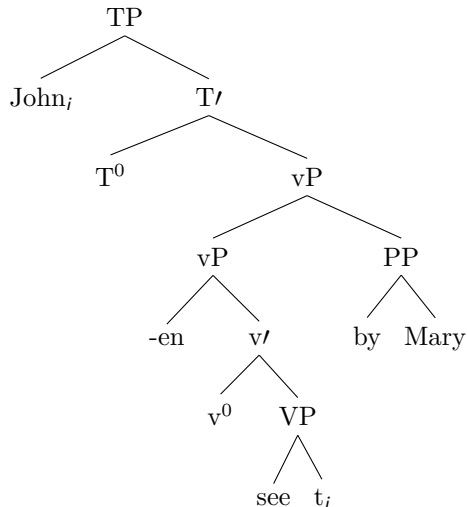
- (15) a. The ship was sunk with a torpedo.
- b. *The ship sank with a torpedo.

Any thematic role of the external argument:

- (16) a. The porcupine cage was welded **by Elmer**. (agent)
- b. Elmer was moved **by the porcupine's reaction**. (cause)
- c. The porcupine crate was received **by Elmer's firm**. (goal/recipient)
- d. Elmer was seen **by everyone who entered**. (experiencer)

Passive: (a) structural representation

Jaeggli (1986), Baker (1988), Baker, Johnson, Roberts (1989):



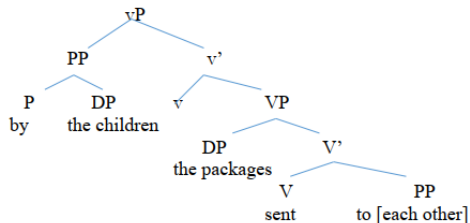
Problems: incorporation of an external argument, theta-criterion (Bruening (2013) for an update).

Passive: (a) structural representation

Problems with the external argument being an adjunct (Collins 2018) – binding:

- (17) a. The packages were sent by the children to themselves.
b. *The packages were sent for the children to themselves.

Collins 2018, structure:



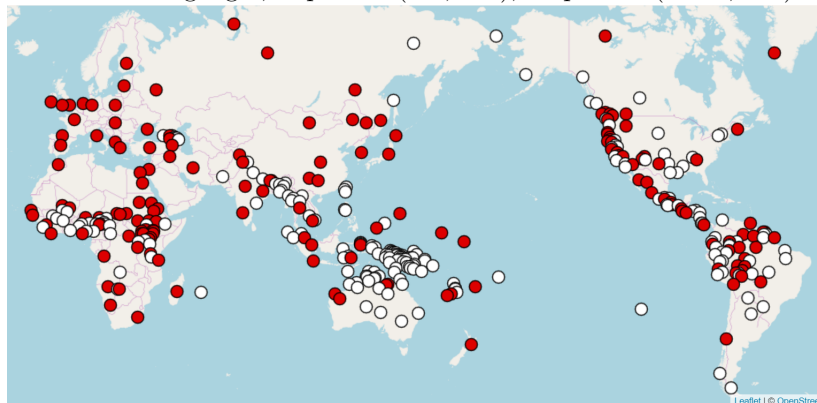
Passive in ergative languages

Passive in ergative languages – Labrador Inuit (Smith 1982):

- (18) a. Anguti-**up** **annak** taku-janga.
man-**erg** woman.**abs** see-3sg.subj:3sg.obj.prs
'The man sees the woman.'
- b. **Annak** (anguti-**mut**) taku-**jau**-juk.
woman.**abs** man-**dat** see-**pass**-3subj.prs
'The woman is seen (by the man).'

Passive in the world's languages

WALS: 373 languages, + passive (red, 162), no passive (white, 211)



Link: <https://wals.info/feature/107A#2/16.6/148.9>

Passive: puzzles

Impersonal Passive – German (Steinbach 2002):

- (19) Es wird hier getanzt.
it aux here danced
'People are dancing here.'
Literally: 'There is dancing here.'

Passive: puzzles

In some languages it is possible to passivize intransitive verbs (Bolinger 1977, Bresnan 1982, Alsina 2009).

- (20)
- a. The bed was slept in by George Washington.
 - b. George Washington slept in the bed.
 - c. The bed has been thoroughly rolled around on.
 - d. Someone has rolled around on the bed.

Antipassive

Antipassive I

Antipassive – an internal argument is demoted. See Polinsky (2017) for an overview.

Conative constructions in English:

- (21)
- a. He ate **the meat**.
 - b. He shot **the bear** (#but he missed)
 - c. He ate **at the meat**.
 - d. He shot **at the bear** (but he missed)

Antipassive I

Antipassive in other nominative languages – Russian:

- (22) a. Mal'čik brosal kamni.
boy.nom threw stones.acc
'The boy threw stones.'
- b. Mal'čik brosal-sja kamnjami.
boy.nom threw-SJA stones.inst
Literally: 'The boy threw with stones.'

Antipassive I

Antipassive is better recognized in ergative languages.

An antipassivized predicate becomes intransitive → the ERG marker often disappears.

Active:

External argument = Subject, ERG

Internal argument = Object, ABS

Antipassive I:

External argument = Subject, ABS

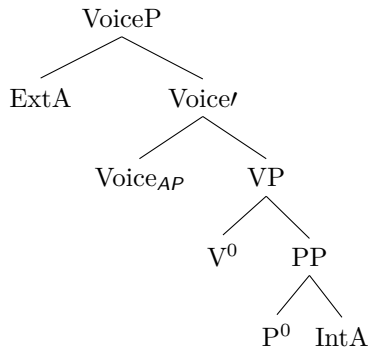
Internal argument = case-less bare nominal phrase or an oblique phrase.

Antipassive I

Antipassive in Kaqchikel (Mayan):

- (23) a. Ri alaboni x- \emptyset -ki-tik ri üt*z* ixim. ← Active
det man.pl cmp-abs.3sg-erg.3pl-plant det good corn
'The men planted good corn.'
- b. Ri alaboni x-e-tik-on (ixim).
det man.pl cmp-abs.3pl-plant-ap corn
'The men planted (corn).'
- c. Røj x-e-qa-tz'ët ri ox*i* tz'i.
we cmp-abs.3pl-erg.1pl-see det three dog
We saw three dogs.'
- d. Røj x-oj-tz'et-on r-chin ri ox*i* tz'i.
we cmp-abs.1pl-see-ap gen.3sg-of det three dog
'We saw three dogs.'
Literally: 'We saw at three dogs.'

Antipassive I: (a) structural representation



Antipassive II

In some languages (for instance, Inuit (Eskimo-Aleut)), demotion of an internal argument is connected to Aktionsart.

Active:

External argument = Subject, ERG

Internal argument = Object, ABS

Aktionsart (for affecting verbs): Telic

Antipassive II:

External argument = Subject, ERG

Internal argument = an oblique phrase.

Aktionsart (for affecting verbs): **Atelic**

Antipassive II

Warlpiri (Pama–Nyungan; Australia) (Polinsky 2017):

- (24) a. njuntu-**lu** npa-tju pantu-nu ngatju.
2sg-**erg** 2sg-1sg spear-pst 1sg.**abs**
'you speared me'
successfully; complete event with a result
- b. njuntu-**lu** npa-tju-**la** pantu-nu ngatju-**ku**
2sg-**erg** 2sg-1sg-**ap** spear-pst 1sg-**dat**
'you speared at me'
you tried; incomplete event without a result

This is somewhat similar to English! Recall that in Kaqchikel there was no correlation between antipassive and aktionsart.

Antipassive III

Active:

External argument (active) = Subject, ERG

Internal argument (passive) = Object, ABS

Antipassive III:

External argument = Subject, ABS

Internal argument = deleted.

Antipassive III

- a. ʔətt-e melota-lyən piri-nin.
dog-ERG hare-ABS catch-AOR.3SG:3SG
'The dog caught a/the hare.'

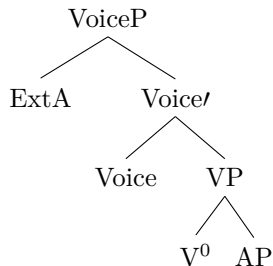
Chukchi

(Kurebito 2012: 184)

- b. ʔətt-ən ine-piri-ʔʔi
dog-ABS AP-catch-AOR.3SG
'The dog caught a/the hare.'
- c. ʔətt-ən milute-piri-ʔʔi.
dog-ABS hare-catch-AOR.3SG
'The dog caught a/the hare.'
- d. *ʔətt-ən ine-milute-piri-ʔʔi.
dog-ABS AP-hare-catch-AOR.3SG

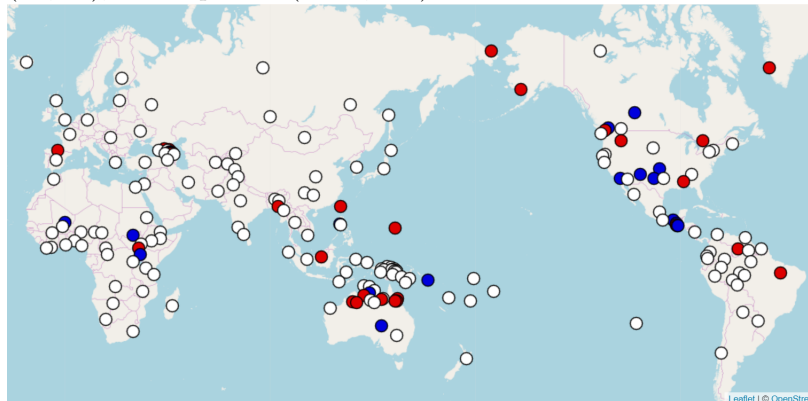
Antipassive III: (a) structural representation

The traditional analysis: antipassive (AP) morpheme as an incorporated object (back to Baker (1988)).



Antipassive in the world's languages

WALS: 146 languages, + antipassive implicit (blue, 18), + antipassive oblique (ref, 30), no antipassive (white, 146).



Link: <https://wals.info/feature/108A#2/23.2/148.5>

Recommended readings

Recommended readings to better understand the material:

- Nominative vs. Ergative languages: WALS chapter by Bernard Comrie
<https://wals.info/chapter/98>
- Passive: Basic English Syntax with Exercises by Mark Newson et al., Chapter 5 freely available online, google it
- Passive: WALS chapter Passive by Anna Siewierska
<https://wals.info/chapter/107>
- Antipassive: Maria Polinsky. Antipassive. In: Handbook of ergativity available online at
<https://scholar.harvard.edu/mpolinsky/publications/antipassive>
- Antipassive: WALS chapter Antipassive by Maria Polinsky
<https://wals.info/chapter/108>