

Tense, Aspect, Mood and Evidentiality

Lecture 4:

The diachronic perspective

Östen Dahl



**Stockholm
University**

What is diachrony?

- Since Saussure, linguists have made a distinction between
 - synchrony – the study of a language at one particular point in time
 - diachrony – the study of the way languages develop over time

Ferdinand de Saussure



Why diachrony?

- In the traditional perspective, focus was on reconstructing earlier stages of a language and thus on language-specific developments
- A more recent perspective focuses on the diachronic processes that give rise to the synchronic systems that we can observe
- Uniformitarianism assumes that the same forces of change are active at all times and places; hence the perspective is cross-linguistic



Grammaticalization

- Narrowly conceived, grammaticalization is the process by which lexical items develop into grammatical markers
- In a broader perspective, grammaticalization covers the processes by which grammatical systems arise and develop over time

L'ÉVOLUTION
DES
FORMES GRAMMATICALES

Les procédés par lesquels se constituent les formes grammaticales sont au nombre de deux ; tous les deux sont connus, même des personnes qui n'ont jamais étudié la linguistique, et chacun a eu occasion, sinon d'y arrêter son esprit, du moins de les observer en passant.

The term *grammaticalisation* was introduced in 1912 by Antoine Meillet



A classical TAME example of grammaticalization

Latin

facere habeo

do.INF have.PRS.1SG
'I have to do = I must do'

faciam

do.FUT.1SG
'I will do'

niens. C'est par ce moyen que les langues romanes se sont donné un futur quand le futur du latin ancien est devenu trop faible, trop inexpressif : *facere habeo*, qui est l'original de *(je) ferai*, signifie « j'ai à faire », c'est-à-dire « je dois faire ». L'infinifit et

(je) ferai

(I) do.FUT.1SG
'I will do'

farò

do.FUT.1SG
'I will do'

haré

do.FUT.1SG
'I will do'

French

Italian

Spanish



What happened?

- In this case, it is easy to see that the following things have happened:
 - Change of meaning:
 - obligation → future
 - Phonological reduction:
 - -re habeo → [re]
 - “Univerbation”
 - word → affix



Other things that happen in grammaticalization

- Obligatorification
 - Items become obligatory in certain contexts
 - The absence of an item becomes meaningful
- Featurization
 - Items are understood as expressing inflectional features which form paradigms
- Non-linear marking
 - Grammatical marking is done by other means than by adding separable morphemes

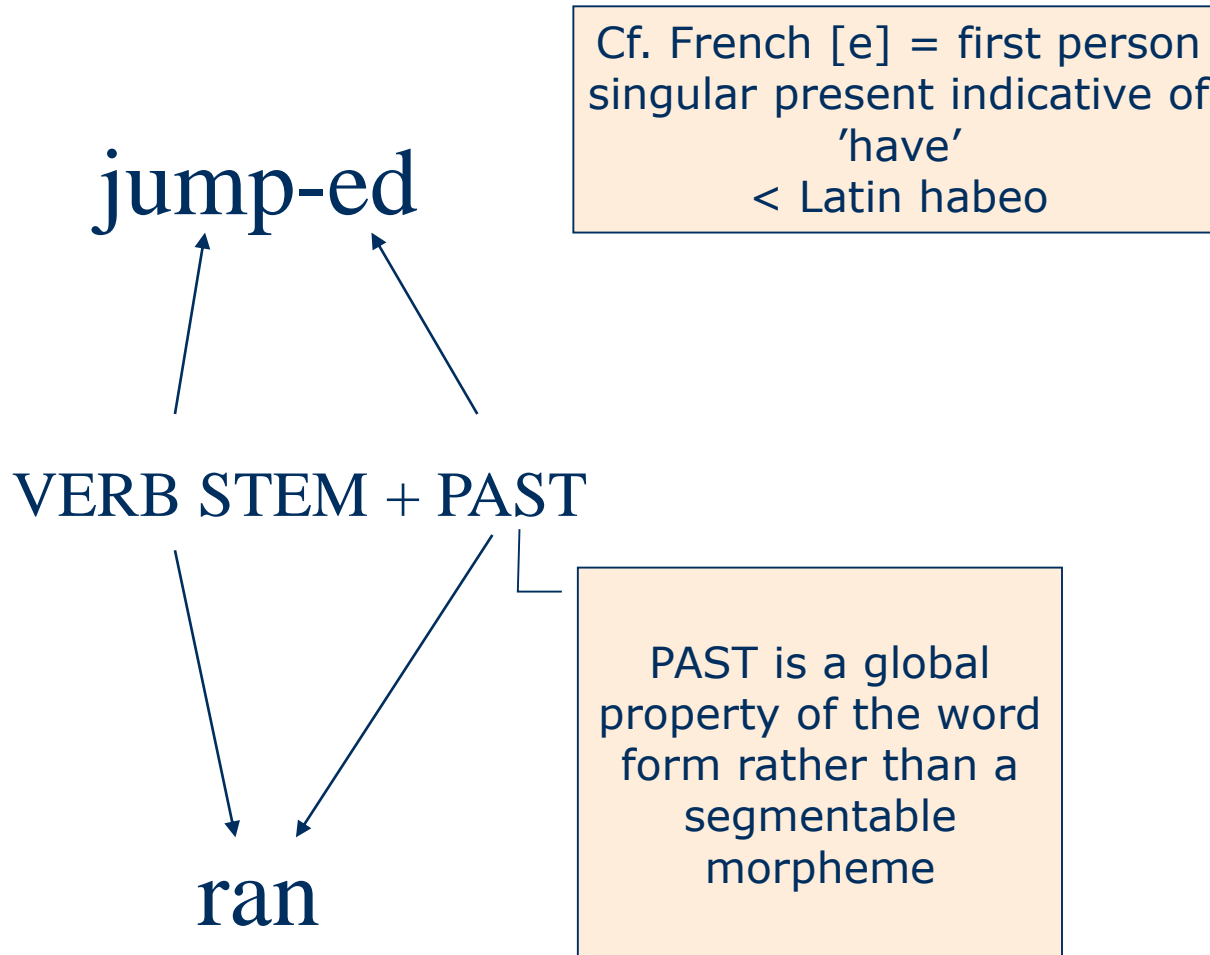


What does “obligatory” mean?

- In morphology, “obligatory” can mean that a certain morpheme is always present (in Latin, every noun has a case ending)
- However, the existence of zero markings risks making obligatoriness empty
- With a different notion of obligatoriness, a marking is obligatory if it has to be present given a certain condition



Featurization and non-linear marking



The notion of maturation

- Informal definition:
 - a mature linguistic phenomenon is one which necessarily has a non-trivial prehistory
- Examples:
 - ablaut (apophony), as in Germanic strong verbs: drink – drank – drunk
 - grammatical gender, as in French
 - un beau jour – une belle journée
- Maturation tends to increase complexity in the form of non-linearity
- It also decreases phonetic redundancy

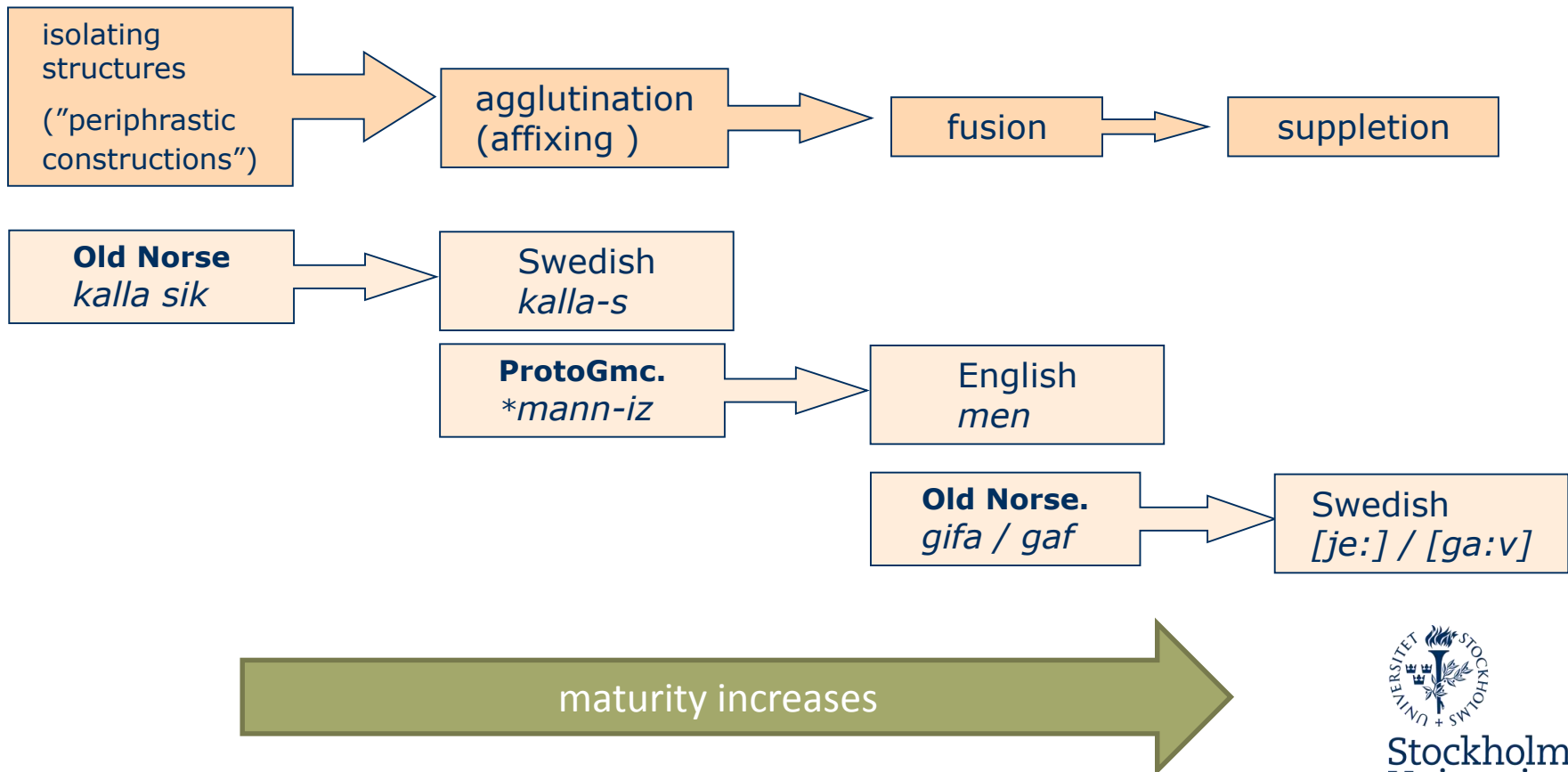


Some mature phenomena

- phonology: nasal vowels, tones
- morphology: fused expression, prosodic marking
- syntax: agreement, non-hierarchical order



Stages in the development of morphological structure ("grammaticalization")

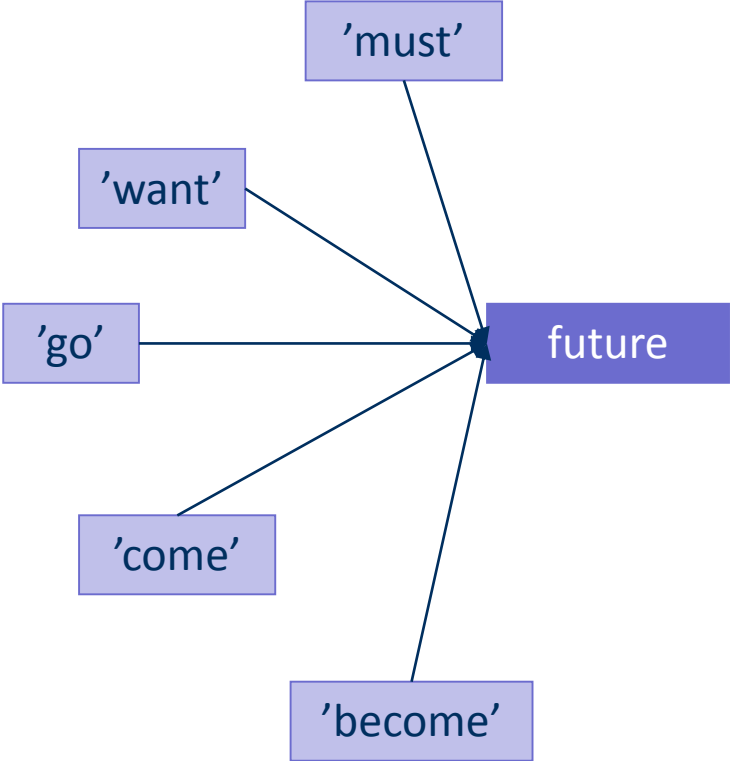


Layering

- An important phenomenon that shapes TAME systems is layering
- Layering means that grams of different degrees of maturity may coexist in the same system and compete for the same territory
- Layered grams may differ both semantically and stylistically
- Layering thus creates complexity



Sources for futures



Layering of future grams

English

I will/shall do → *I'll do*

I am going to do → *I'm gonna do*

French

facere habeo → *je ferai*

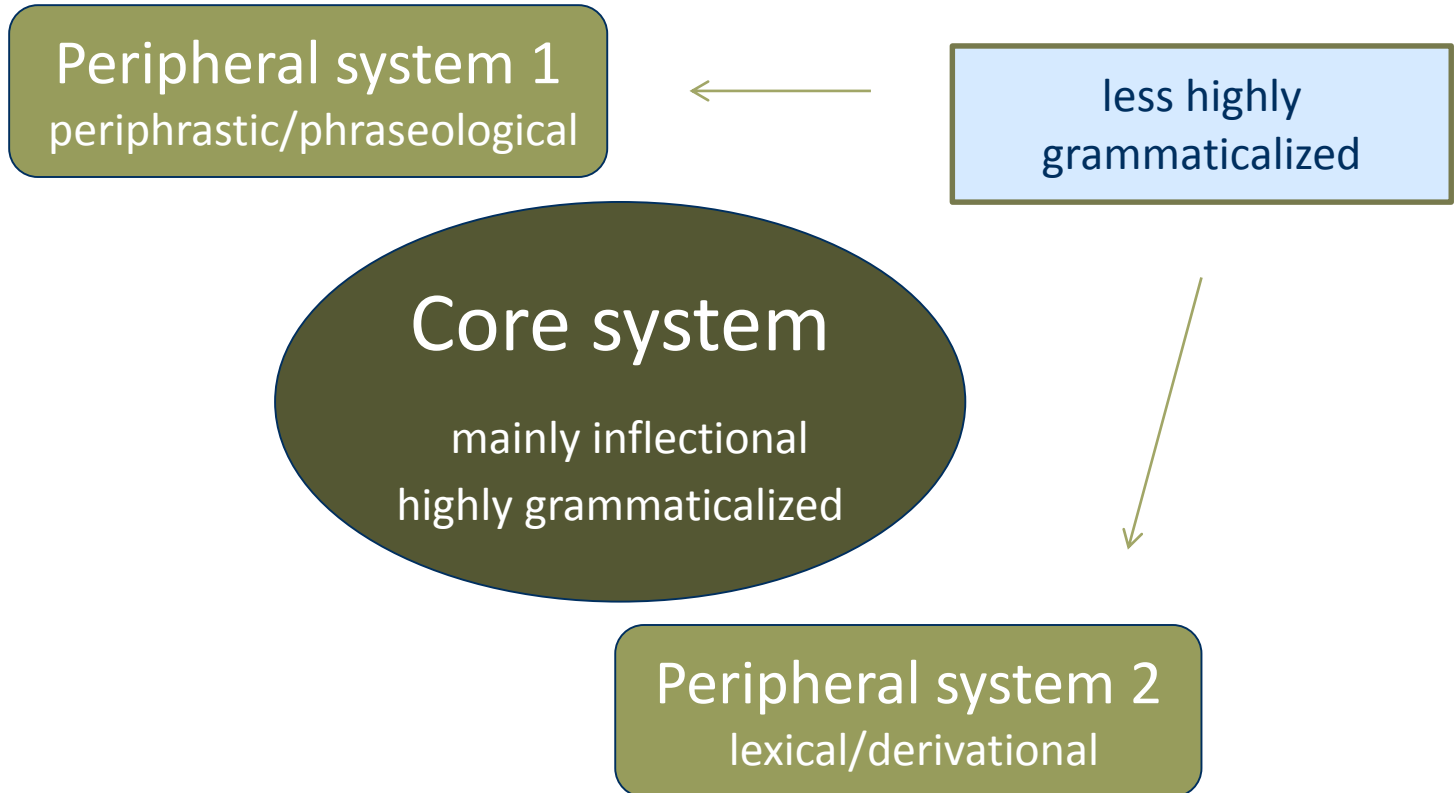
je vais faire



- The existence of layered systems shows that a new gram may arise even if another gram with the same basic function exists
- Thus, the rise of new grams need not depend on a “need” for a certain distinction to be expressed

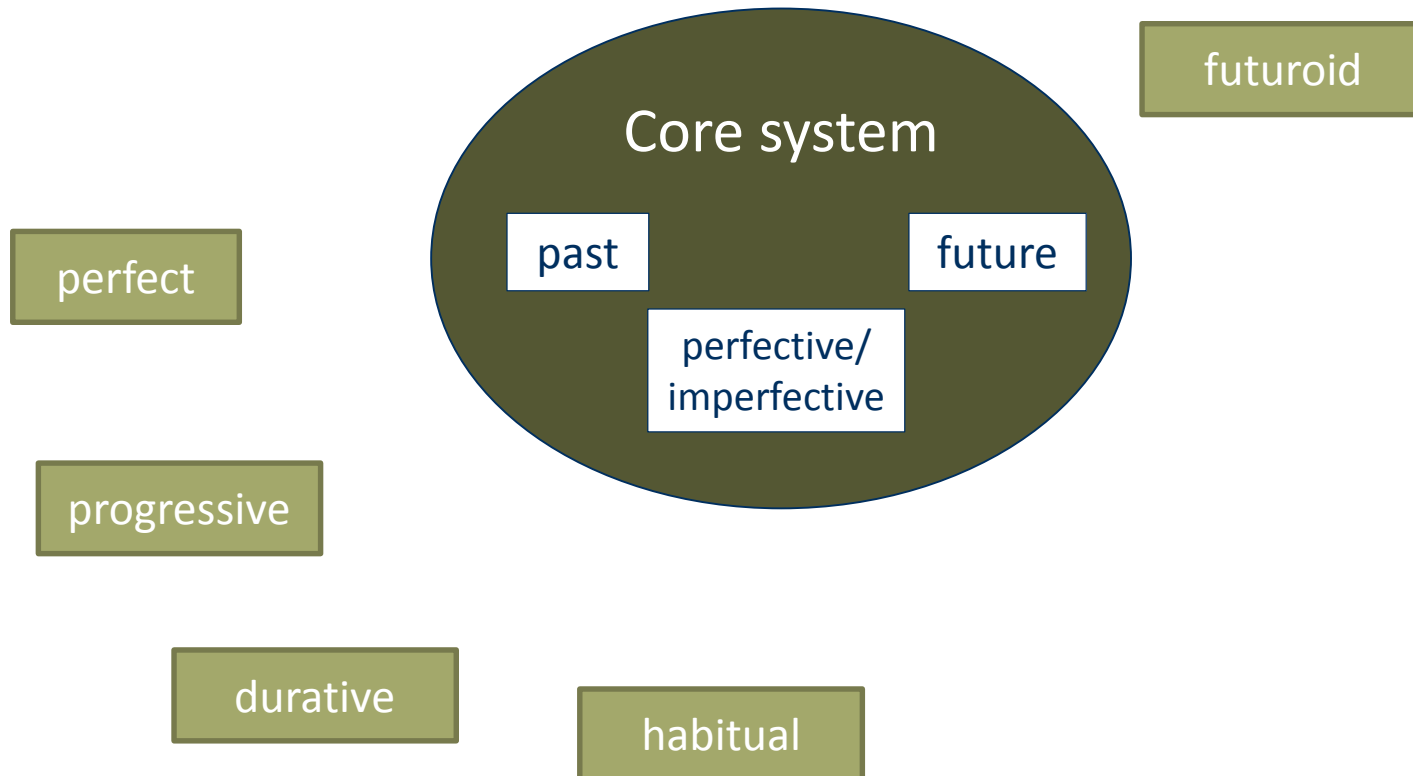


TAME systems



Grammaticalization in TAME systems

grammaticalizing...



Areal clusterings

- The geographical distribution of grammatical phenomena in the languages of the world is seldom random
- In most cases, languages that share a certain grammatical feature will tend to cluster in certain areas of the world...
- and the clusterings will often involve languages which are not genealogically related although they are close geographically.



Lack of historical information

- Since the history of most languages in the world is not well-known, it is usually difficult to identify the diachronic processes that give rise to those clusterings
- In other words, often we cannot go further than just observing the geographical patterns.
- Tense and aspect systems are no exception here.



WALS

- A glance at the maps in the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS) shows that there are both continent-sized clusterings and more local ones.



<http://wals.info>

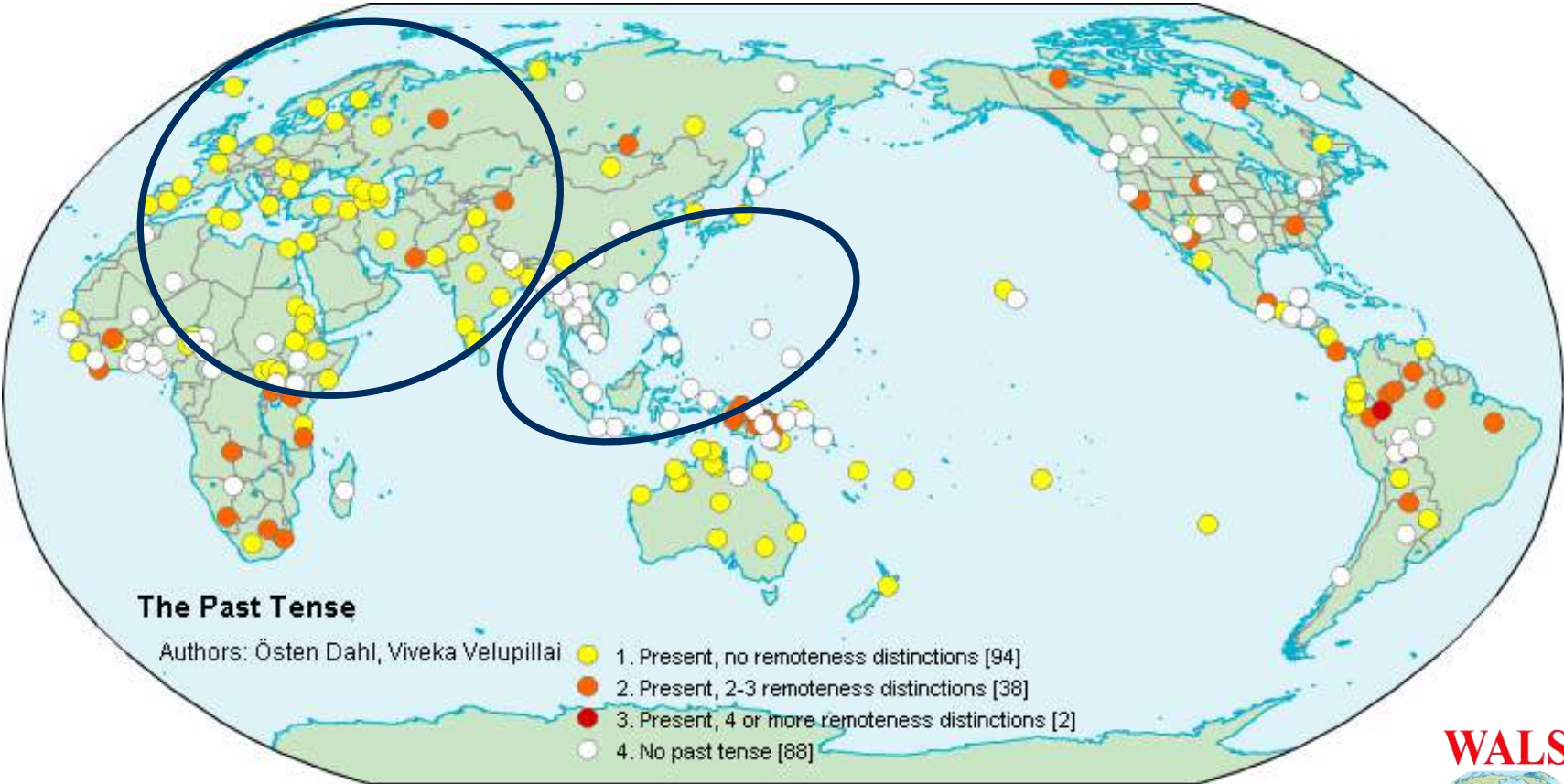


Continent-size clusterings: Past tenses

- There are certain large areas in the world where the distinction between past and non-past is found in practically all languages, the most salient one covering the western half of Eurasia, but also areas where hardly any languages have a grammaticalized marking of past tense, such as South-East Asia
- These clusterings have a long history which predates the oldest written documents, and thus it is not possible to identify the details of their genesis.



The Past Tense



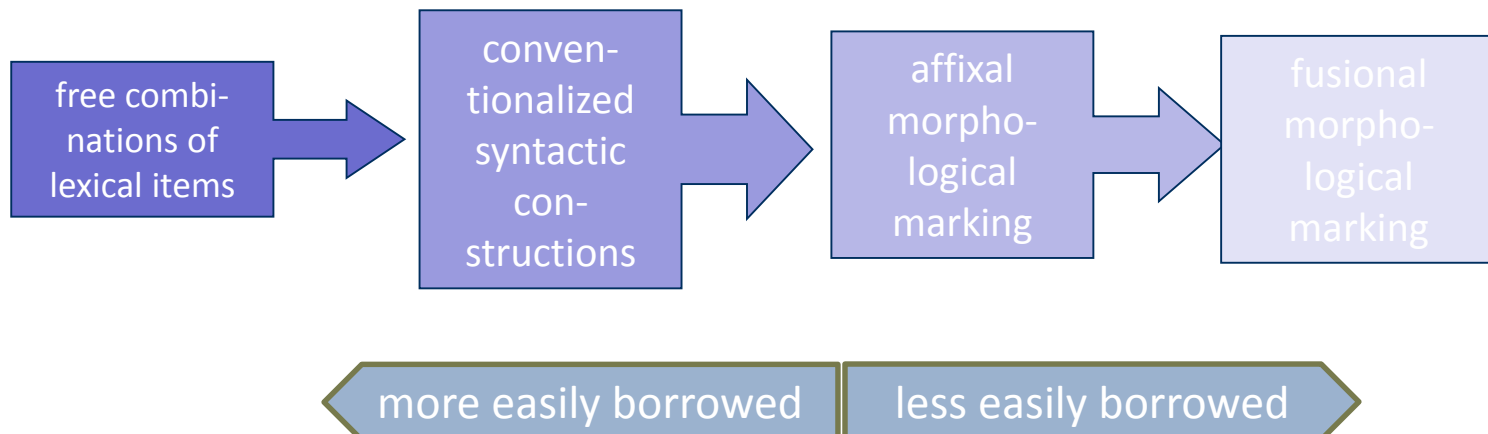
Local areal patterns

- In other cases, however, we can see how a certain kind of tense-aspect marking spreads over an area during a specific time-period

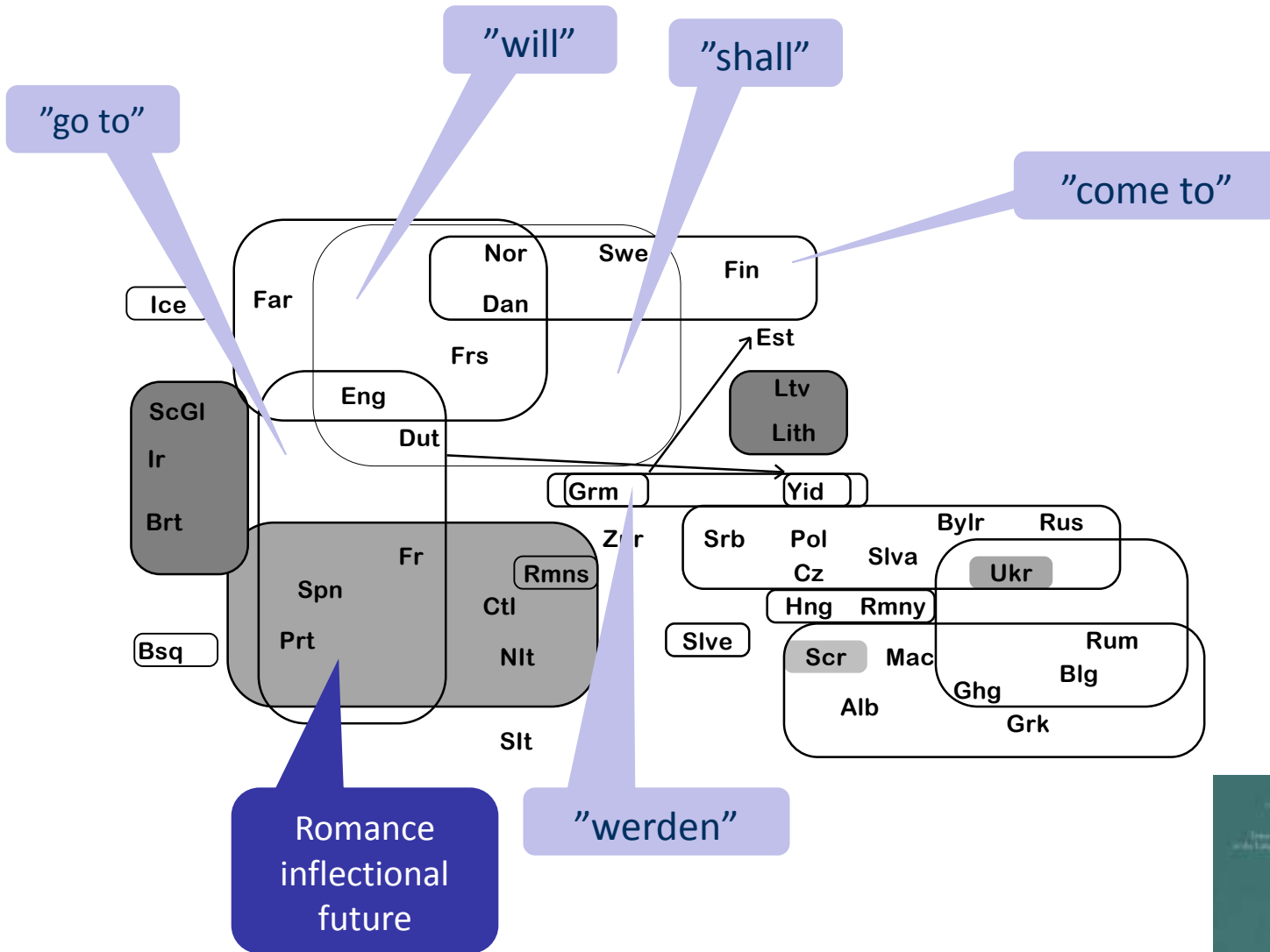


Contact-induced changes

- Contact-induced changes seem to be most frequent in the beginning of a grammaticalization chain, which means that it is periphrastic constructions rather than inflectional markings that spread in this way

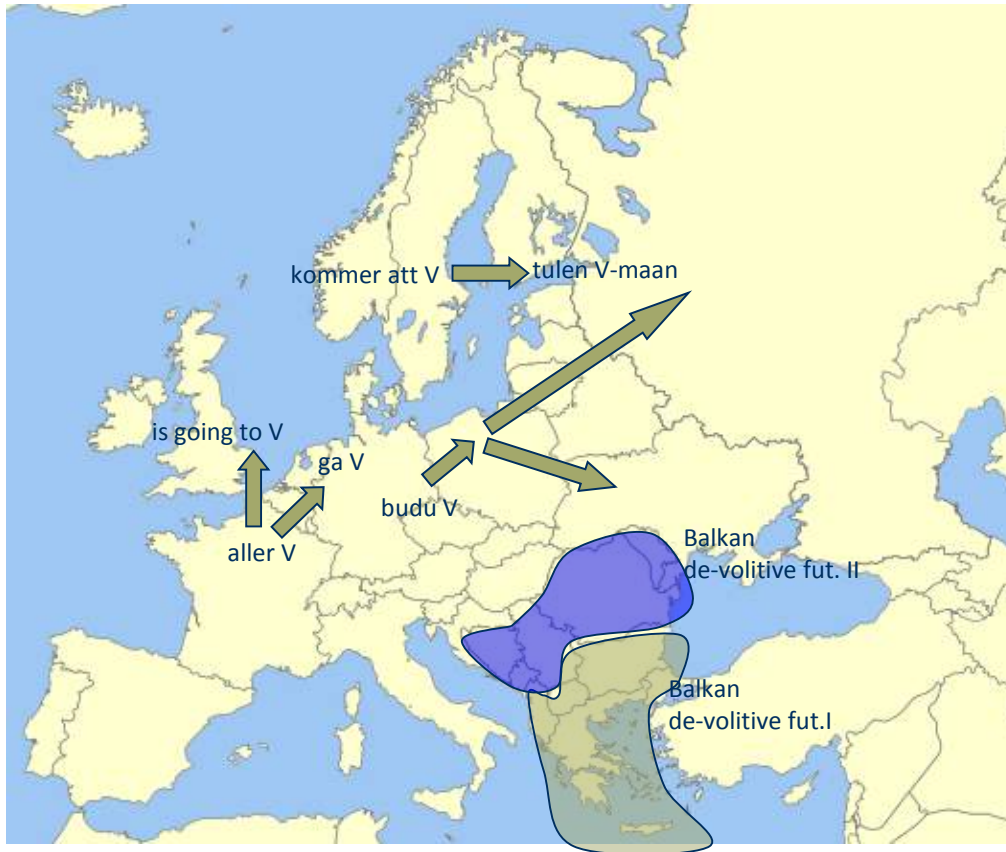


Future "gram families" in Europe



Romance inflectional future

Futures in Europe – some contact-induced changes



The perfect

- Lindstedt 2000:
 - a perfect is a “gram” associated with the verb (i) which is used for past situations with current relevance and (ii) which is not used as a narrative tense
 - perfects are frequent, “that is to say, likely to appear in different languages”, but unstable, as it often tend to be lost – commonly by developing into something else

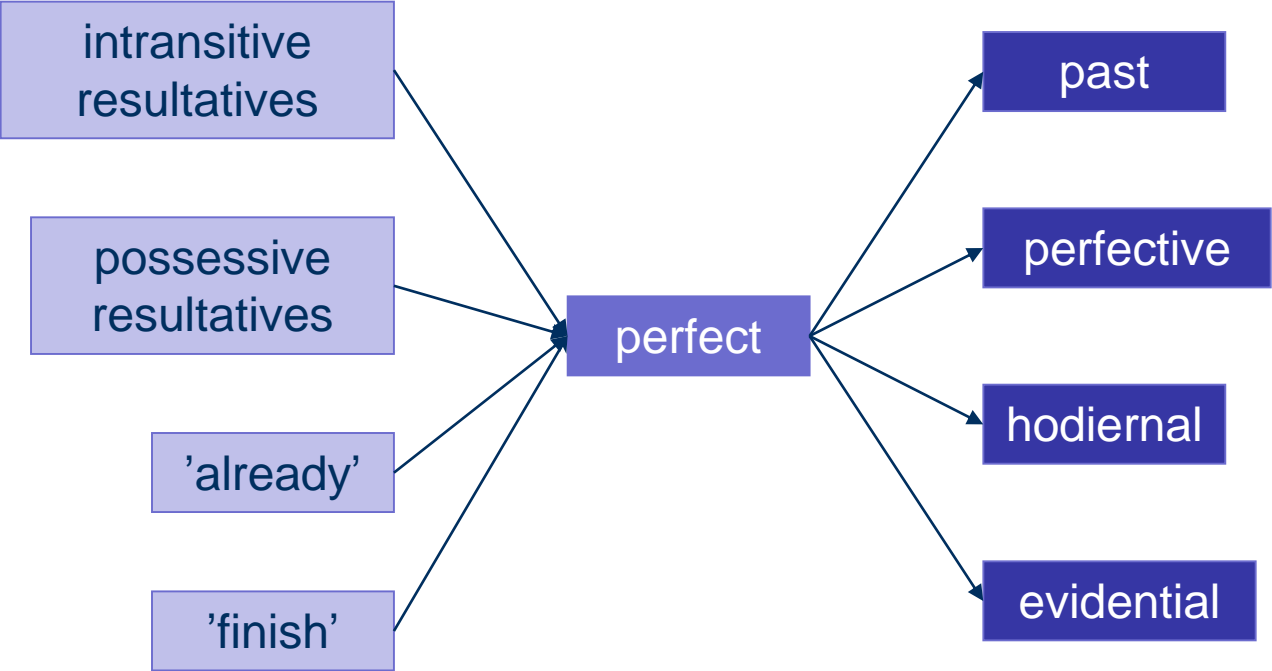


The perfect

- More specifically:
 - perfects combine resultative and experiential readings
 - The captain has turned on the fasten seatbelts sign
 - Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?
- Perfects are usually periphrastic, i.e. involve auxiliaries or particles, rather than morphological



The perfect – a volatile gram type

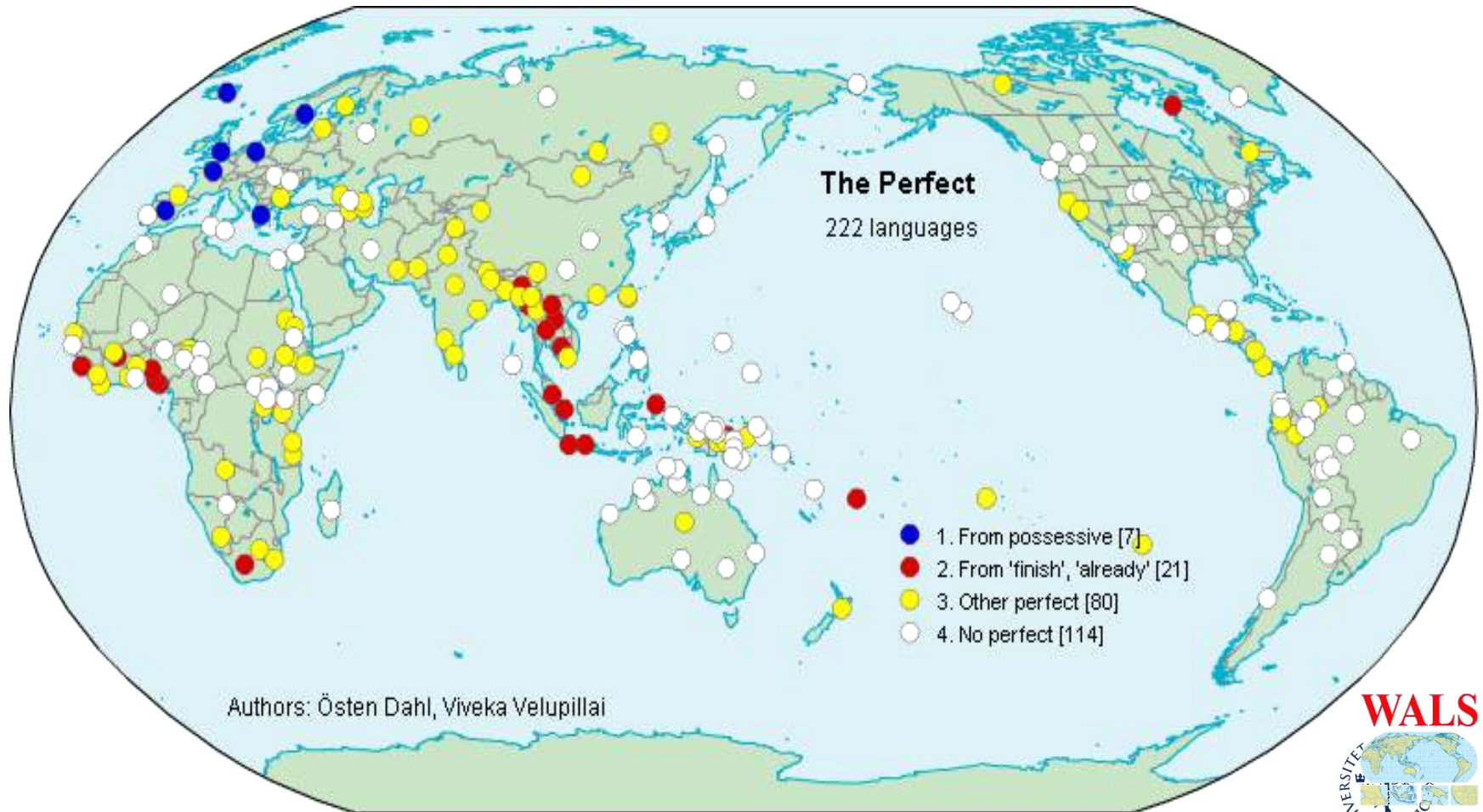


Historical sources of perfects

- possessives ('have'-perfects): Germanic, Romance
 - I have two letters written → I have written two letters
- resultative constructions
 - er ist gekommen (German)
 - il est venu (French)
- 'finish': Tok Pisin
- 'already'
- 'be after': Irish, Irish English

Notice: some European languages have a perfect which is a combination of two sources (possessive and resultative)

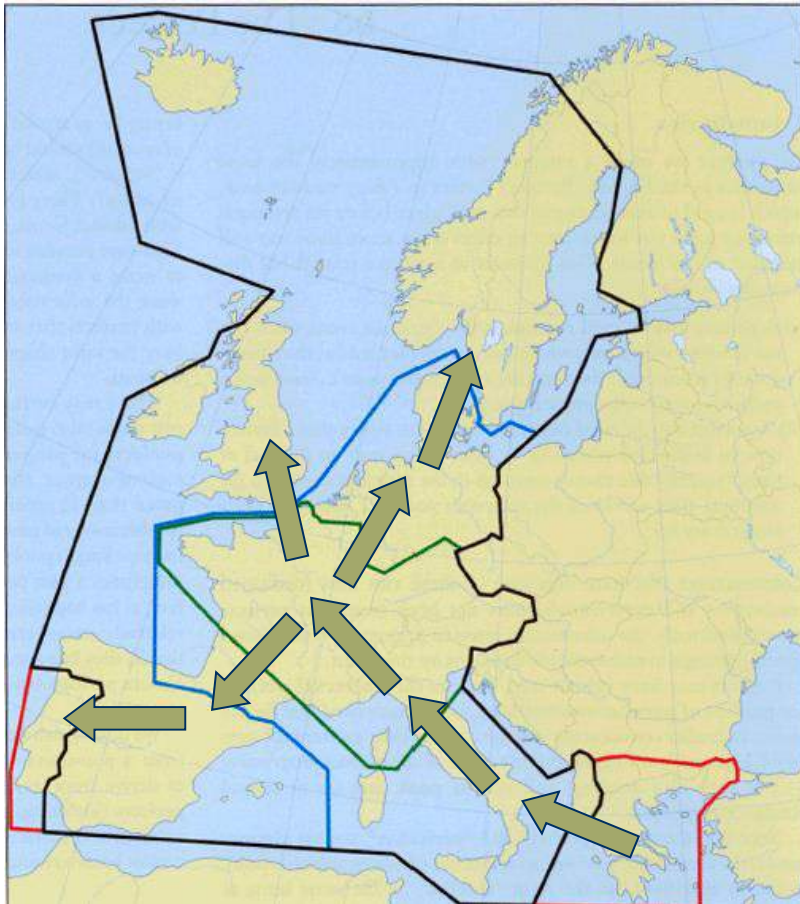
Perfects in the world



De-possessive perfects



Perfected in Europe



Present-day boundaries of the area where 'have' perfects (perfects based on a transitive possessive construction) and constructions derived from them occur

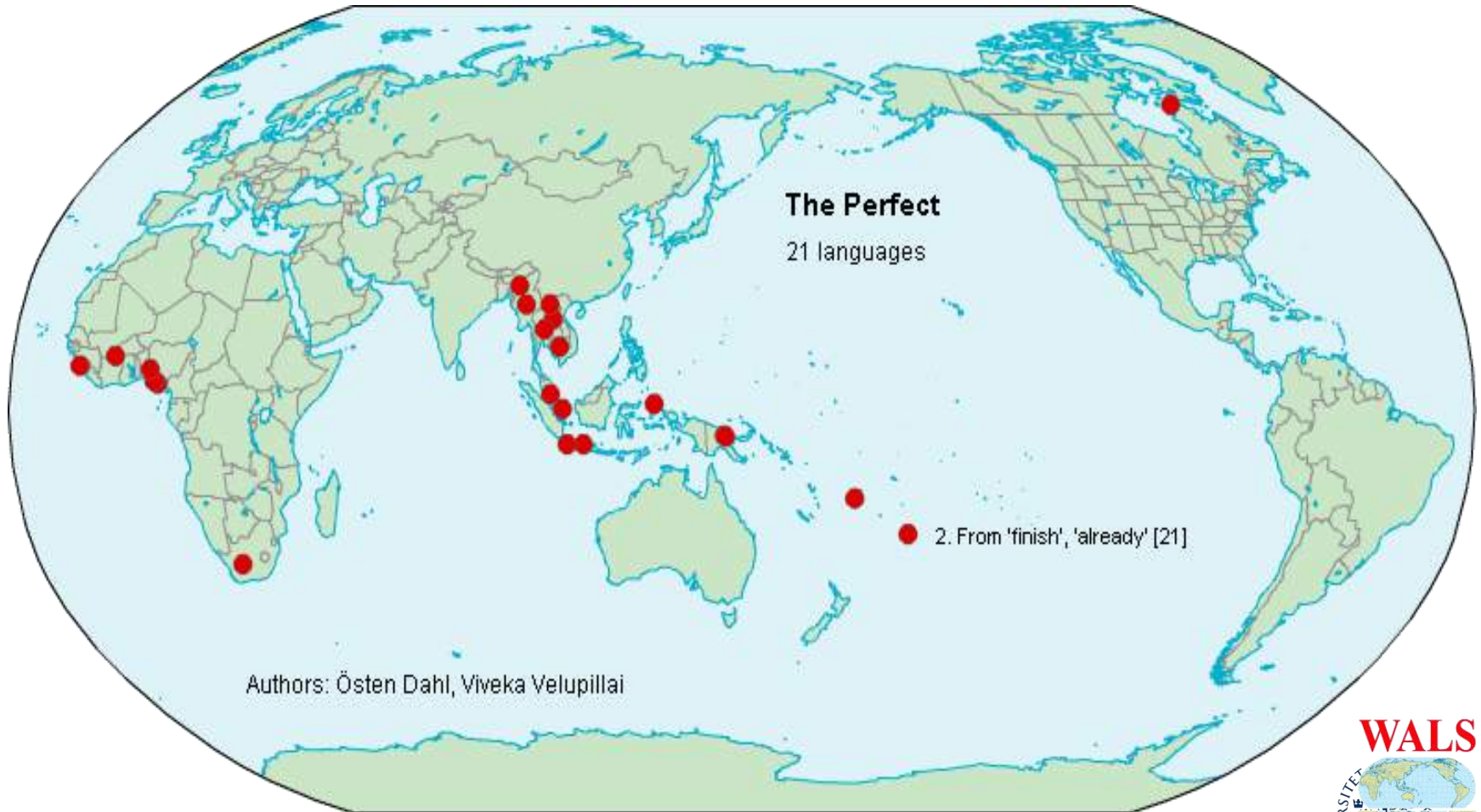
Peripheral area where less typical 'have' perfects are found

Area of division of labour between 'have' perfects and 'be' perfects

Area where a 'have' perfect has developed into a past or a perfective



Perfects from 'finish' or 'already'



'Imitives'?

- Elements treated as perfects but deriving from words meaning 'already' may in fact be better analyzed as a separate "gram type"
- They tend to be used extensively to express meanings having to do with the expectedness of states:
- Indonesian:
 - Sudah kawin? 'Are you (already/yet) married?'(probably because marriage is seen as a natural stage in a person's life-cycle)



Conclusions about perfects

- Perfects represent intermediate points in grammaticalization paths
- Although there is a limited number of such paths, they tend to be highly dependent on areal factors
- As a consequence, patterns of polysemy and polyfunctionality are also areally dependent

