Agentive nominalizations are a great idea, but not universal: Towards a diachronic typology

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Today’s question

Why are some categories common in the world’s languages, and why are some rare?

The past tense in a sample of the world's languages (Dahl & Velupillai 2013)

Feature 66A: The Past Tense

This feature is described in the text of chapter 66 The Past Tense by Östen Dahl and Viveka Velupillai cite

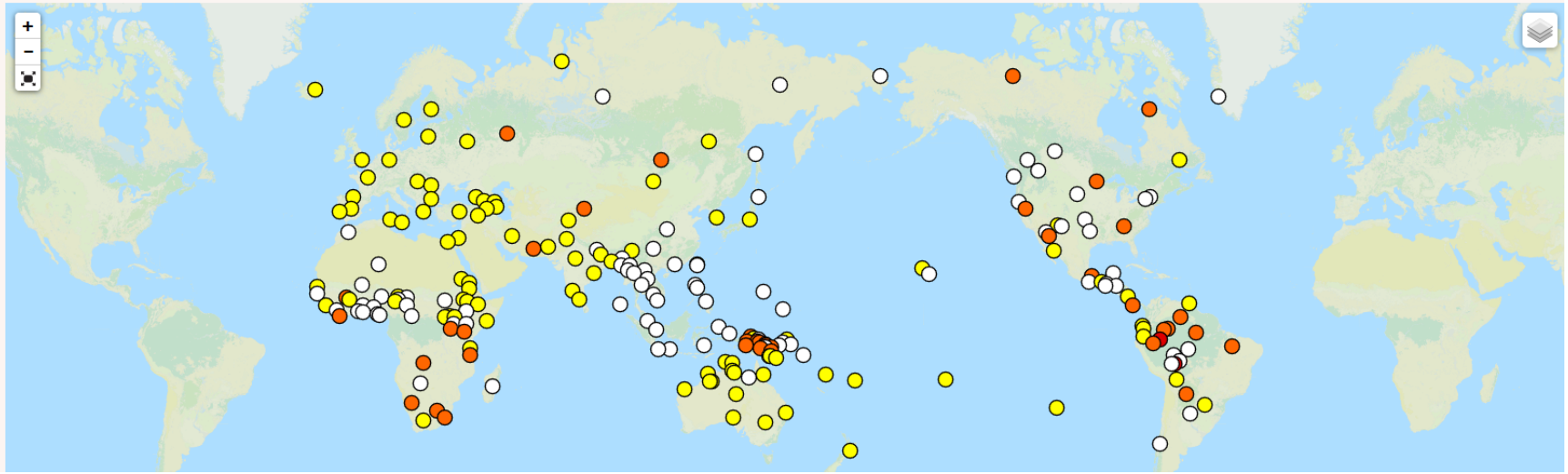
You may combine this feature with another one. Start typing the feature name or number in the field below.

× 66A: The Past Tense Submit

Values

Present, no remoteness distinctions	94
Present, 2-3 remoteness distinctions	38
Present, 4 or more remoteness distinctions	2
No past tense	88

Legend Icon size Show/hide Labels GeoJSON



The answer I'll give today

From the point of view of diachronic typology, cross-linguistically common categories are common, *inter alia*, because they involve (Grossman 2016):

1. **TYPE**: the type of change is common (vs. rare types of change)
2. **PATH**: multiple pathways of change that converge (vs. a single pathway)
3. **STAGE**: one-step or simple pathways of development (vs. many-step or complex pathways)
4. **SOURCE**: common source constructions vs. rare source constructions
5. **STABILITY**: once grammaticalized, the category type tends to be stable
6. **DIFFUSABILITY**: spread easily via language contact

Mutatis mutandis

The more that these factors converge, the more common a particular category will be, cross-linguistically.

(And cross-linguistic rarities can be explained by the convergence of these factors, but in reverse.)

A case study

Why do a lot of languages have agentive nominalization constructions, while others don't?

Agentive nominalization construction (ANC)

An **agentive nominalization construction** is defined here as

(a) a morphosyntactic construction

(b) that includes an action-denoting root

(c) refers to the agent of the action

(d) and behaves syntactically like a noun.

Agentive nominalization construction (ANC)

Agentive nominalizations can denote semantic roles other than agent (English *kill-er* but also *dream-er*).

Others may be limited to a particular specialized type of agent, e.g., Malay *tukang* 'skilled craftsman,' which in Papuan Malay was generalized (*tukang tipu* (NMLZ lie) 'liar').

(De-)agentive drift

ANCs that start out as limited to agent nominalizations in the narrow sense, or are limited to transitive verbs, tend to generalize to encompass more semantic roles or to spread to intransitive verbs.

Old English *cwellere* ‘killer’ (< *cwellan* ‘kill’)

Modern English *dreamer, broiled, toaster*

Agentive nominalization construction (ANC)

However, for comparative purposes, a language-specific construction is considered to be an agentive nominalization if it meets the above definition.

It also has to be grammaticalized, i.e., the function is **coded** rather than a matter of **inference**.

Agentive nominalizations are a great idea

ANCs are frequent in the world's languages (Bauer 2002, Comrie & Thompson 2007, Baker & Vinokurova 2009, Luschützky & Rainer 2011) but not universal.

For example, in Bauer's sample, 24 out of 42 languages have ANCs (but notice that 18 don't!)

In a nutshell

ANCs are cross-linguistically common because they:

1. Mostly develop from a very frequent type of change, grammaticalization (**TYPE**).
2. Develop through numerous converging pathways of grammaticalization (**PATH**).
3. Often do not require complex or multi-stage pathways of development (**STAGE**).
4. Have cross-linguistically frequent source constructions (**SOURCE**).
5. Tend to be stable, once grammaticalized (**STABILITY**).
6. Are easily borrowed (**DIFFUSABILITY**).

1. A quick synchronic typology

The sample

1. A primary **convenience sample** of 56 languages.

Africa	8
Australia	5
Eurasia	14 (incl. 4 sign languages)
North America	11
Papunesia	8
South America	10

2. Supplemented by the 82-language sample used in Luschützky & Rainer (2011).

Morphosyntactic diversity

ANCs can be marked by linear and non-linear morphosyntactic processes, including:

- Suffixes
- Prefixes
- Infixes
- Circumfixes
- Reduplication
- Tone alternations
- Ablaut
- and combinations thereof

Most nominalizers in the sample are affixes, and of these, most are suffixes.

Affixes

Of the languages that have grammaticalized ANCs, the majority of nominalizers are bound morphemes, and do not show any synchronic internal structure. Most (in the sample) are suffixes.

Mapudungun (Araucian, Chile, Zúñiga 2007

(a)	küdaw	'work'
(b)	küdaw-fe	'worker'

Abkhaz (Abkhaz-Adyge, Georgia, Chiribka 2003: 28)

(a)	á-ʒərjo-ra	'listen'
(b)	á-ʒərjᵒ-jᵒə	'listener'

Wai Wai (Cariban, Brazil, Hawkins 1998: 94)

(a)	wo-	'shoot'
(b)	wo-nê	'shooter'

Prefixes, infixes, and circumfixes

Khasi (Khasic, Mon-Khmer)

(a)	trey	'to work'
(b)	**noŋ**-trey	'worker'

Nancowry (Nicobarese, Mon-Khmer)

(a)	túŋ	'to smell'
(b)	t-**am**-úŋ	'smeller'

Kavalan (Austronesian, Taiwan, Hsieh 2011)

(a) **pa**-sudad-**an**

NMLZ-write-NMLZ

'writer'

Reduplication

In Hadza, the ANC is characterized by the reduplication of the initial syllable.

Hadza (isolate, Tanzania, Sands 2013)

(a)	tohle	‘to farm’
(b)	to-tohle	‘farmer’

In Kulina, the ANC shows reduplication of the initial syllable, as well as a suffix.

Kulina (Panoan, Brazil; Dienst 2014: 267)

(a)	maiza	‘lie’
(b)	ma-maiza-de	‘liar’

Non-linear morphology: tone

In Bora, ANCs are marked by a tonal alternation

Bora (Boran, Brazil; Thiesen & Weber 2012: 100-101)

(a)	táábooóbe	'he is treating'
(b)	taabóóbe	'the doctor'
(c)	úwáábooóbe	'he teaches'
(d)	uwáábooóbe	'the teacher'

This process has been described succinctly as 'low tone regresses to the antepenult' (Thiesen & Weber 100-101), although a more precise characterization can be given.

Non-linear morphology: ablaut

In Nuer (W. Nilotic, fieldwork), the ANC is marked by lengthening, raising, and monophthongization of the vowel and breathiness on the vowel.

a.	naak	‘remove teeth	nəək	‘dentist’
b.	rɛɛt	‘tear’	reet	‘tearer’
c.	kɔk	‘trade	kook	‘trader’
d.	wuɔɔr	‘run’	wuur	‘runner’

Number of constructions

Languages can have a single agent nominalization construction, multiple agentive nominalization constructions, or no specialized agentive nominalization.

- In Warekena (Arawakan, Brazil), ANCs are typically marked by a suffix *–ina*, e.g., *miwata* 'play' vs. *miwatena* 'player.' However, some ANCs involve zero conversion, e.g., *puteta* '(to) fish, fisherman' (Aikhenvald 1998: 320).

- In Basque (isolate, Spain), there are two productive ANCs, *-le* and *–tzaile*. These are in complementary distribution.

- In Hadza (isolate, Tanzania), three different productive constructions are noted.

- Latin has at least four. Ancient Greek has many more.

Semantic splits

- Many languages have different ANCs with different meanings.
- Especially common is the 'at a given moment' vs. 'habitual' distinction.
- If a language has more than two, the third tends to be modal ('X who likes to V,' 'potential V-er') but other distinctions are known ('X who pretends to V')
- Temporal/aspectual distinctions are also found, including specialized ANCs for recent past, frequent (not necessarily habitual) activity, and more.
- Pejorative evaluation is commonly picked out by distinctive ANCs (cry-NMLZ > crybaby, ask-NMLZ > 'beggar').

TAM splits

Nganasan (Samoyedic, Wagner-Nagy 2001)

basu-d’a	‘to hunt’
basu-tuə	‘the one hunting’ (at a particular moment)
basu-”ši	‘hunter’ (characteristic action)
basu-gutə	‘one who likes hunting’

The closely related Nenets does not distinguish these ANCs, and uses present participles, e.g., xańe-s^{j} ‘to hunt’ vs. xańe-na ‘hunter.’

TAM splits

West Greenlandic (Eskimo-Aleut, Greenland)

malit-si	‘follower’
angu-gajuuq	‘seal-catcher often’
ani-qqaq	‘one who has just come out’

TAM splits

Macushí (Cariban, Brazil, Abbot 1991)

(a)	customary action	-koi/-ke (intransitive) or –nen (transitive)
	es-enyaka'ma-**ke**	
	DETRNSV-work-S:NMLZ	
	'worker'	
(b)	past –	-t̂ipon – transitive, -'pî - intransitive
	koneka-**t̂ipon** 'maker.PST'	
(c)	potential action	-ton
	pîika't̂i-**ton**	
	help-S:NMLZ	
	'helper' (one able to help us)	

Evaluative ANCs

Khwarshi (NE Caucasian, Dagestan)

keč’i	‘sing’	keč’i-qan	‘singer’
k’iše	‘dance’	k’iše-qan	‘dancer’
hoda	‘to ask’	hod-dale	‘beggar’
hik’	‘to hiccup’	hik’-dale	‘hiccuper’
i^nya	‘to cry’	i^nya-dale	‘cry-baby’

Transitivity splits

In Macushí (Cariban, Venezuela) and in Tzutujil (Mayan, , transitives and intransitives have different nominalizers.

In Jalonke (C. Mande, W. Africa), intransitive and transitive verbs occur in different nominalization constructions.

In Tepehua (Totonacan, Mexico), only intransitive verbs can occur in an ANC, whether inherently intransitive or derived by means of an antipassive marker.

Transitivity splits

Jalonke (Central Mande, W. Africa): ‘person’ compounds for intransitives, OV compounds for transitives

(a) bɛmbɛn-muxi-na
be.fat-person-DEF
‘the fat person’

(b) mango-baa-na
mango-extract-DEF)
‘the mango-picker’

(c) fala-tii-na
speak-stand(up)-DEF
‘the speaker’

Number splits

Different ANCs for singular and plural.

In Luwo (W. Nilotic), there are different ANCs for singular and plural.

koor	‘to watch out’
ŋàt-koor	‘watchman’
jo-koor	‘watchmen’

Splits indicate

That the different constructions have different grammaticalization pathways!

A proposed universal

‘agentive nominalizations do not have any verbal features’ (Baker & Vinokurova 2009).

- Agentive nominalizations do not occur with agent-oriented adverbs
- Agentive nominalizations do not allow negation
- Agentive nominalizations do not allow TAM distinctions

Conclusion: agentive nominalizations select a VP, nothing higher.

Adverbial modification exists

Ainu (isolate, Japan, Shibatani 1990)

tunas	ek-pe
fast	come-NMLZ

‘A fast comer, one who comes fast’ (lit. ‘comer fastly’)

Polarity splits exist

Some languages have dedicated morphemes that mark an agent who does not perform an action.

Coptic (Afroasiatic, Egypt)

ref-sônt	**at**-nau
NMLZ.AFF-create	NMLZ.NEG-see
‘creator’	‘blind one, one who does not see’

Valency/transitivity exist

Coptic (Afroasiatic, Egypt)

at-nau

NMLZ.NEG-see

‘blind’ (‘one who does not see’)

at-nau	ero-f
NMLZ.NEG-see	DAT-3SGM

‘invisible’ (‘one who (they) do not see him’)

Valency/transitivity exist

Coptic (Afroasiatic)

pa-ref-šop-t	ero-f
my-NMLZ-take-1SG.P	DAT-3SGM

'My helper (he who takes me unto him)'

Valency/transitivity exist

Giziga (Central Chadic)

(a) húf ‘farm’

(b) mù-húf ‘farmer’

(c) mí-yí-dò-y

NMLZ-give.birth-1SG.POSS-PL

‘my parents’ (‘my birthers’)

Contrary to a proposed universal

ANCs allow:

- polarity contrasts (Coptic, Afroasiatic)
- direct objects, different valency frames (Giziga, Central Chadic)
- adverbial modification (e.g., "fastly comer") (Ainu, isolate)

'agentive nominalizations do not have any verbal features,' explicitly excluding negation, valency, and adverbial modification (Baker & Vinokurova 2009).

2. Towards a Diachronic Typology

TYPE and PATH

- The most frequent type of change through which ANCs develop is **grammaticalization**, which is the major source (for identifiable linear morphology).
- There are **multiple pathways** that converge on ANCs.

Grammaticalization: lexical sources

The most frequent source for agentive nominalizers in the sample is a **lexical item denoting a human referent.**

There are several subtypes of this source construction. The first is a general nominal item that means ‘person’ or ‘man.’

Japanese	*-nin, -sya*	Ainu	*-kur*
Hindi	*-wa:la:*	Khwe	*khóé*
Meskwaki	*-neniw*	Paumarí	*abono*
Ponapean	*olen*	Pumi	*–mə*
Mwotlap	*n-et*	Anejom̃	*natimi-*

Nominalizers with PERSON-sources are also found in numerous sign languages from different macro-areas, e.g., American, Israeli, Indian, and Nepali Sign Languages.

PERSON sources

Nominal items that denote more specific subsets of human referents are also attested, as in:

Supyire	–fóó	‘owner, person in charge’
!Xun	-kx’àò	‘owner’
Bora	mɯ́nàà	‘people, fellow countryman’
Papuan Malay	tukang	‘skilled practitioner of’
Lhasa Tibetan	–mkhan	‘master’ (< ‘knower’)

Nominal items denoting body parts

Movima (isolate, Bolivia, Haude 2006)

i'ne pak-e-pa

PRO.f count-AGT-NMLZ

'She (is) an accountant.'

(-pa < chopa 'hand')

Also Japanese –*te*, e.g., *hanasi* 'speak' vs. *hanasi-te* 'speaker' (Shibatani 1990)

Verbal items

Kurdish –ker/-ger (< kir- ‘to do’)

Fairly straightforward, but surprisingly rare in the sample.

Seems characteristic of Iranian languages, cf. Juhuri –gor (Authier 2012).

Grammatical sources (‘secondary grammaticalization’)

Habitualizer/detransitivizer

Filomeno Mata Totonac -nVn

Table 3.12 Agentive nominalizations

tlaqná’a̰	< tlaq ‘play’	‘musician’
tsapaná’a̰	< tsapa ‘sew’	‘seamstress’
staaná’a̰	< staa ‘sell’	‘seller’
tsoqnú’ṵ	< tsoq ‘write’	‘writer’
’aqsiitní’ḭ	<’aq-siit ‘HEAD-cut’	‘barber’
maalaná’a̰	<maa-la ‘CAUS-live’	‘owner’
qałaaná’a̰	<qałaa ‘rob’	‘thief’
šapaná’a̰	<šapa ‘rub’	‘masseur’
čukunú’ṵ	<čuku ‘cut’	‘sawyer’
’aqsqawiní’ḭ	<’aqsqawi ‘trick’	‘demon’

Detransitivizer > ANC

In FM Totonac, the agentive nominalizer developed from the detransitivizer/habitual affix –nVn, (also described as an antipassive marker), which surfaces as –nV:.

(a)	st'a:-nan sell-IMPF 'X sells'	(b)	(ha:)st'a:-na: 'seller'

Intransitive verbs cannot occur with the detransitivizer –nVn.

Detransitivizer > ANC

But there is evidence that it has spread to experiencer nominalizations.

ni:-y	ni:-ni:
die-IMPF	die-NMLZ
‘X dies’	‘one who dies’
soqo-y	soqo-nu:
hurry-IMPF	hurry-NMLZ
‘X hurries’	‘one who hurries’

Bound classifiers?

Wambule (W. Kiranti, TB, Opgenort 2004)

(a)	ja	‘to eat’	jwaco	‘eater’
(b)	pa	‘to do’	pwaco	‘performer’

(< -co/-ce ‘person/female person’)

Diachronic explanations for number splits

In Luwo (W. Nilotic), there are different ANCs for singular and plural.

koor	‘to watch out’	
ŋàt-koor	‘watchman’	(< ‘person’)
jo-koor	‘watchmen’	(< ‘travellers’)

But the related W. Nilotic Lango shows the grammaticalization of ‘traveler’ for both sg. and plural.

Source constructions are crosslinguistically common

- Compounds involving lexical items like PERSON, OWNER, or HAND.
- Verbal items like ‘know’ or ‘do’ (Adyghe, Juhuri)
- Detransitive markers (Totonac, Chiapas Zoque, Macushi)
- Classifiers and noun class markers (Bafut, Yagua)
- Pronouns (Rawang)
- Participle markers (Nahuatl)

Interim summary

1. **TYPE** grammaticalization
2. **PATH** multiple converging pathways
3. **SOURCE** common source constructions

Simple pathways

Most pathways seem to be simple, in that they do not require relatively complex series of stages in order to develop (unlike, e.g., highly complex split case marking in Georgian).

Very common seems to be the reanalysis of compounds of the V-person type (e.g., hunt-person > hunter) or possessive constructions (person-of-hunt > hunter).

Skilled practitioner/knower to nominalizer?

Found in Lhasa Tibetan, Papuan Malay, Lyngam (Austroasiatic, India).

It is plausible that these are instances of analogical extension.

a) knower/master-swim > (NMLZ-swim) ‘swimmer’
b) NMLZ-dream ‘dreamer’

It is typical of grammaticalization that semantic selectional restrictions are gradually relaxed (Grossman & Polis 2014).

OWNER to agentive nominalizer?

Supyire (Atlantic-Congo, Carlson 1994: 115-116)

nàhà	‘(to) herd’
naha-fóó	‘herder’

The owner of a herd is plausibly inferred to be the herder, in certain cultural contexts (> reanalysis)
This can then spread to other types of verbal predicate.

cyán	‘(to) drop, lay (egg’
cyɛ́n-fóó	‘layer (of egg’)’

Complex pathways

In Coptic, one ANC is the result of the reanalysis and univerbation of a lexical item meaning 'person,' a RC marker, and a frozen 3SGM person marker.

Coptic (Afroasiatic, Egypt)

(a) *rmṯ* *ỉw-f-ḏd*
person REL-3SGM-sing
'person who sings, singer'

(b) *rm-ỉw-f-ḏd*
person-REL-3SGM-sing
'person who sings, singer'

(c) ref-čô
NMLZ-sing
'singer'

Interim summary

1. **TYPE** grammaticalization
2. **PATH** multiple converging pathways
3. **SOURCE** common source constructions
4. **STAGE** relatively simple, few stages

No known source

Many agentive nominalizers have an unknown source or are reconstructable to a proto-language.

Quechua	–q
Malay	peN-
Japhug	kɯ-
Central Alaskan Yup'ik	–łəʁ
Kokama Kukimiria	-wara/-tara
Rawang	-shu

In other words, agentive nominalizations seem to be stable once grammaticalized (STABILITY)

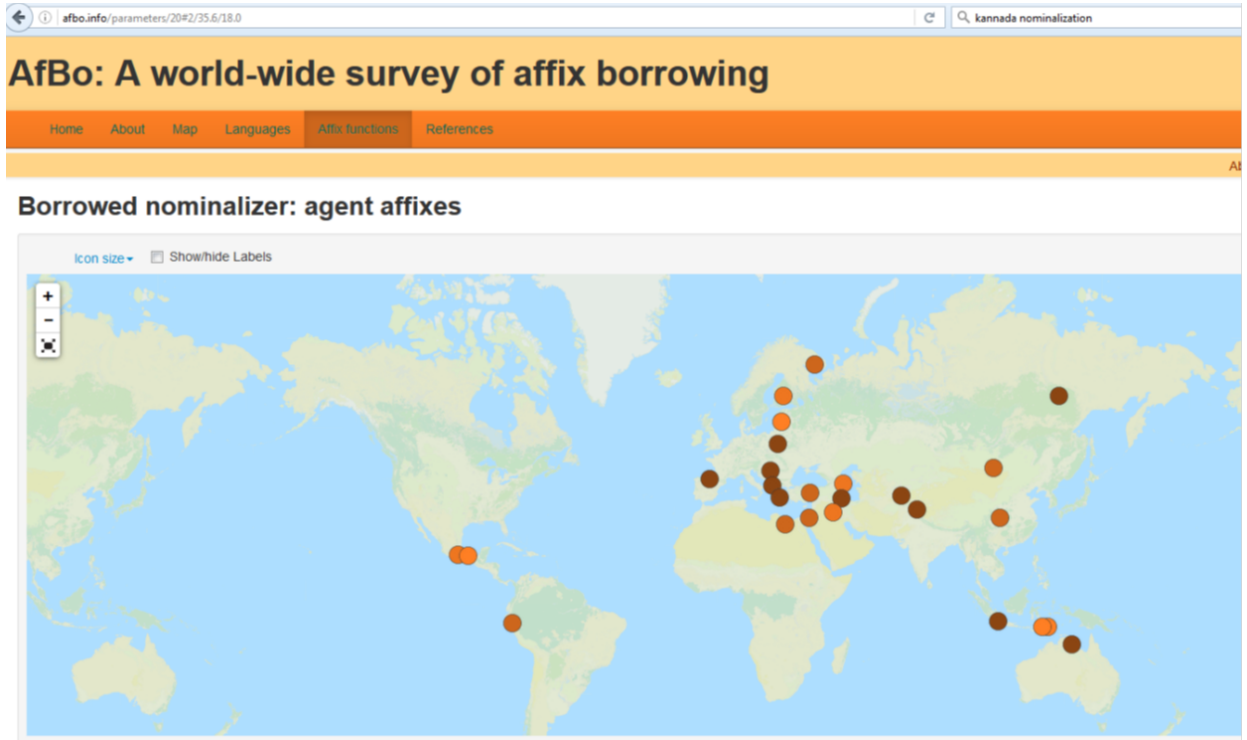
Interim summary

1. **TYPE** grammaticalization
2. **PATH** multiple converging pathways
3. **SOURCE** common source constructions
4. **STAGE** relatively simple
5. **STABILITY** stable

All in all, this predicts that ANCs will be cross-linguistically well-attested.

Moreover

ANC constructions are borrowed pretty frequently (Seifart 2013).



27 language pairs
51 borrowed ANC affixes

Even when there is no ‘gap’

Kannada (Dravidian, India) had an inherited ANC, but it also borrowed successive ANCs from contact languages.

balake-da:ra	‘consumer’ (use-NMLZ < Perso-Arabic)
ma:tu-ga:ra	‘talker’ (talk-NMLZ < Indo-Aryan)
daga-ko:ra	‘cheater’ (cheat-NMLZ < Persian)

1. **TYPE**	grammaticalization
2. **PATH**	multiple converging pathways
3. **SOURCE**	common source constructions
4. **STAGE**	relatively simple
5. **STABILITY**	stable
6. **BORROWABILITY**	good!

Languages without dedicated agentive nominalizations

Four types:

a) Indistinct from relative clause formation
b) Languages with a weak noun/verb distinction
c) General nominalization constructions
d) Referential use of finite verbal constructions

(a) Relative clauses

Nzadi (Bantu, Crane & Hyman)

muur	na	ŋga	sûm
person	DET	WH.HAB	buy
‘buyer’			

muur	na	ŋga	yɛɛ
person	DET	WH.HAB	sell

‘Although other Bantu languages are potentially rich in derivational processes, Nzadi has surprisingly few derived nouns. … there is no productive process of verb-to-noun derivation in the language.’

(a) Relative clauses

Meyah (East Bird's Head, Papua, Gravelle 2010)

ofa	ongga	oga	ojga	rot	mar
s/he	REL	voice	split	concerning	thing

'judge'

(b) Weak noun/verb distinction

Samoan (Polynesian, Mosel & Hovdhaugen 1992)

gaoi

a. steal

b. thief

Tuvaluan (Polynesian, Besnier 2000)

þule

a. rule

b. ruler

(c) General nominalizations

Maidu (Penutian) has an agentive suffix *-ky* which can attach to any verb stem and which can denote:

- agents (*sólti-* 'to play music' → *sóltiky-* 'musician')
- instruments (*hunéky* 'saw', from a base verb meaning 'to cut')
- patients (*pe-* 'to eat' → *peky* 'something to eat')

Importantly, the precise semantic nature of the nominalization is a matter of inference.

(d) Referential use of finite verbs

Blackfoot (Algonquian, Frantz 1991)

áakso'kaawa

áak-yo’kaa-wa

FUT-sleep-3SG

i) ‘He will sleep.’

ii) ‘One who will sleep.’

(d) Referential use of finite verbs

Blackfoot (Algonquian, Frantz 1991)

á-ottak-i-iksi

IMPF-give.a.drink-INTR-ANIMATE.PL

‘Bartenders’

(Frantz & Russell 1995:12)

(d) Referential use of finite verbs

This seems to be especially common in North America, and is reported for numerous Algic and Athabaskan languages.

Slavey (Athabaskan): "[a]lmost any sentence can be used nominally" (Rice 1989: 170).

(d) Referential use of finite verbs

Such referential uses can be lexicalized, as in Cayuga and Tuscarora (Iroquoian, Mithun 2000).

kaǫtanéhkwi
ka-rǫt-a-nehkwi
NEUTER.AGENT-log-EPENTHETIC-haul.IMPERFECTIVE
"it hauls logs" = 'horse'

hatéts?ęskeh
ha-atetsę?-s=ke
MASC.SG.I-cure-IMPERF=LOC
'at the doctor's'

Tuscarora ((Iroqiouan: Mithun Williams 1976: 32)

rakwá:tihs	wahratkáhtho?	katéskrahs
ra-kwatihs	wa-hr-at-kahtho-?	ka-teskr-ahs
M-young	AOR-M-look_at-PNCT	NONH-stink-SER
he_is_young	he_looked_at_it	it_stinks

'The boy looked at the goat'

Two competing motivations?

- All languages probably have the potential to refer to the agentive participant of an event, and for this construction to occupy an argument position.
- But: if you can do it with inference, do it with inference.

Not a new idea:

Bisang (2010) has proposed that predicative vs. referential function is a matter of inference in Preclassical Chinese.

Language structure as constraints on possible inference

LaPolla has argued that language structure does not **code meaning**, but rather **constrains inferences** that can be made in a given context.

Languages differ not only with respect to the domains that they grammaticalize, but also with respect to the extent that they leave interpretation to inference.

Mandarin

tā	qù	xuéxiào
3SG	go	school

a. ‘S/he went to school.’
b. ‘S/he is going to school.’
c. ‘S/he goes to school.’

Two competing motivations?

Nonetheless, frequently repeated use of a given construction type referentially might (but need not) lead to the lexicalization of particular meanings, and to the grammaticalization of an ANC.

Still a lot of questions…

- Does the grammaticalization of ANCs correlate with some aspect(s) of language structure?
- Do differences between usage profiles of potential source constructions lead to different grammaticalization pathways and results?
- Are there identifiable pathways of semantic change within the domain of ANCs (e.g., from agentive to non-agentive)?

Summary

Agentive nominalization constructions are a great idea, but not universal. From the point of view of diachronic typology:

- They tend to develop through a very common process of change, grammaticalization (**TYPE**).
- There are numerous pathways of change that converge on ANCs (**PATH**).
- Most of the source constructions are cross-linguistically common (e.g., words for 'person,' relative clauses, etc.) (**SOURCE**)
- They do not require multi-stage pathways of change (**STAGE**)
- They tend to be stable, once grammaticalized (**STABILITY**).
- They are borrowable, even if the borrowing language already has an ANC (**DIFFUSABILITY**)

Summary

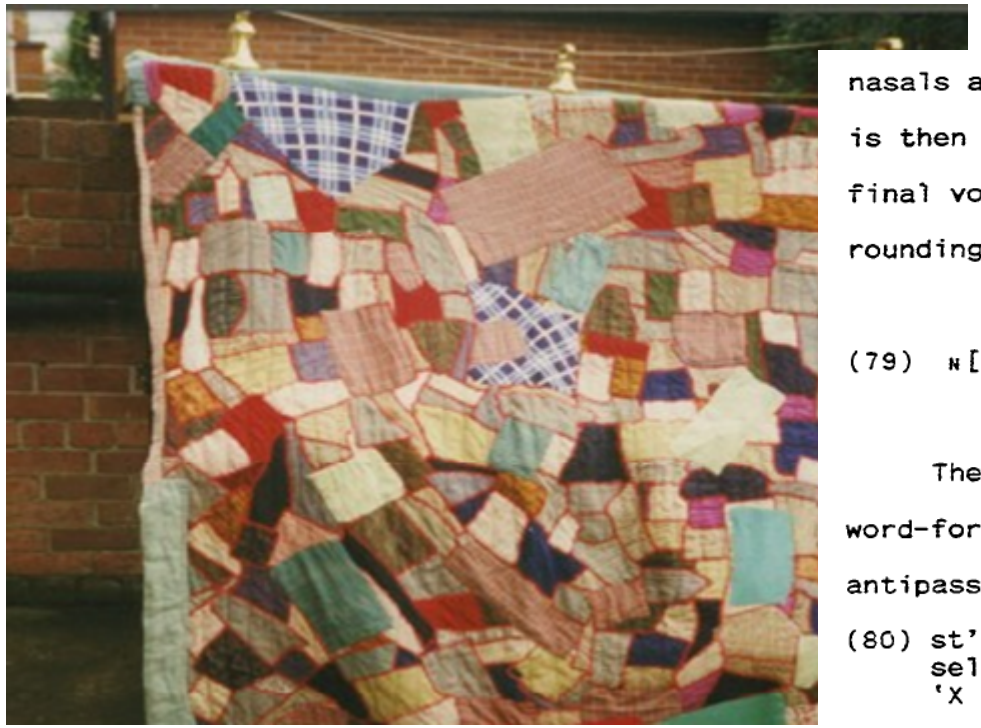
These factors facilitate the grammaticalization of ANCs, but:

i. The various pathways of change probably do not reflect a single overarching cognitive principle.

ii. The existence of multiple ANCs and splits within languages indicate that each construction may have its own diachrony, and synchronic systems are more like patchwork quilts (Spike Gildea).

iii. While all languages probably have some means of treating the agentive participant of an action as a referring expression, not all languages grammaticalize this possibility, and instead rely on other – syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic – cues.

Thank you for your attention!



nasals as presented in (32). To form an agent nominal
is then followed by a word-formation rule that lengthe
final vowel or adds a long vowel that agrees in backne
rounding with the preceding vowel (see Appendix):

(79) $_{N}[_{V[-trans]}[\ X(-n/)]]$ --> $_{N}[_{N}[\ X\ ]\text{-}VV]$

The following examples show the application of th
word-formation process with transitive verbs bearing t
antipassive suffix, *-nVn*:

(80)	st'a:-nan sell-AP(IMPF) 'X sells.'	(ha:)st'a:na: seller
	maqni:-nin kill-AP(IMPF) 'X kills.'	(ha:)maqni:ni: killer

Further evidence

In FM Totonac, the agentive nominalizer developed from the detransitivizer/habitual affix –nVn, (also described as an antipassive marker), which surfaces as –nV:.

(a)	st'a:-nan sell-IMPF 'X sells'	(b)	(ha:)st'a:-na: 'seller'

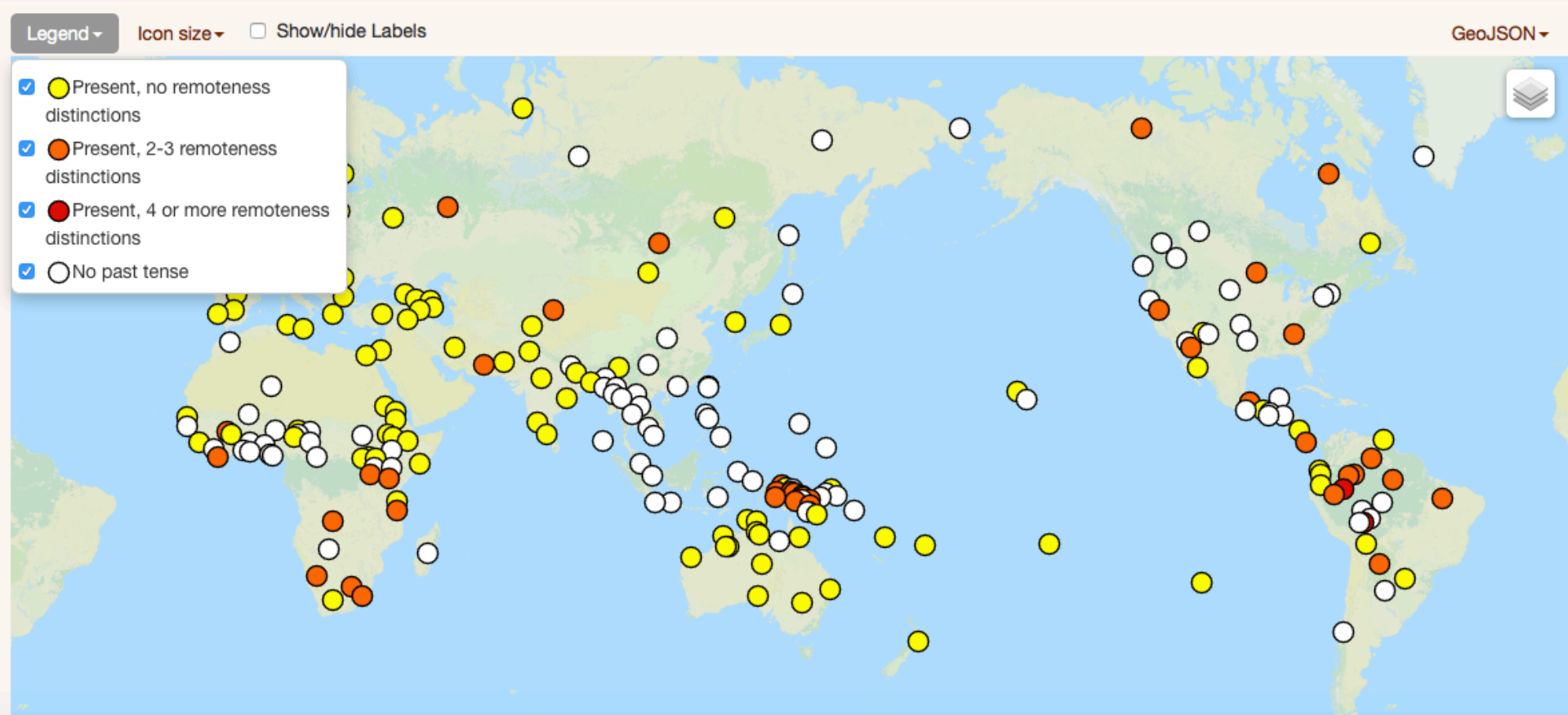
Intransitive verbs cannot occur with the detransitivizer –nVn.

Semantic specialization

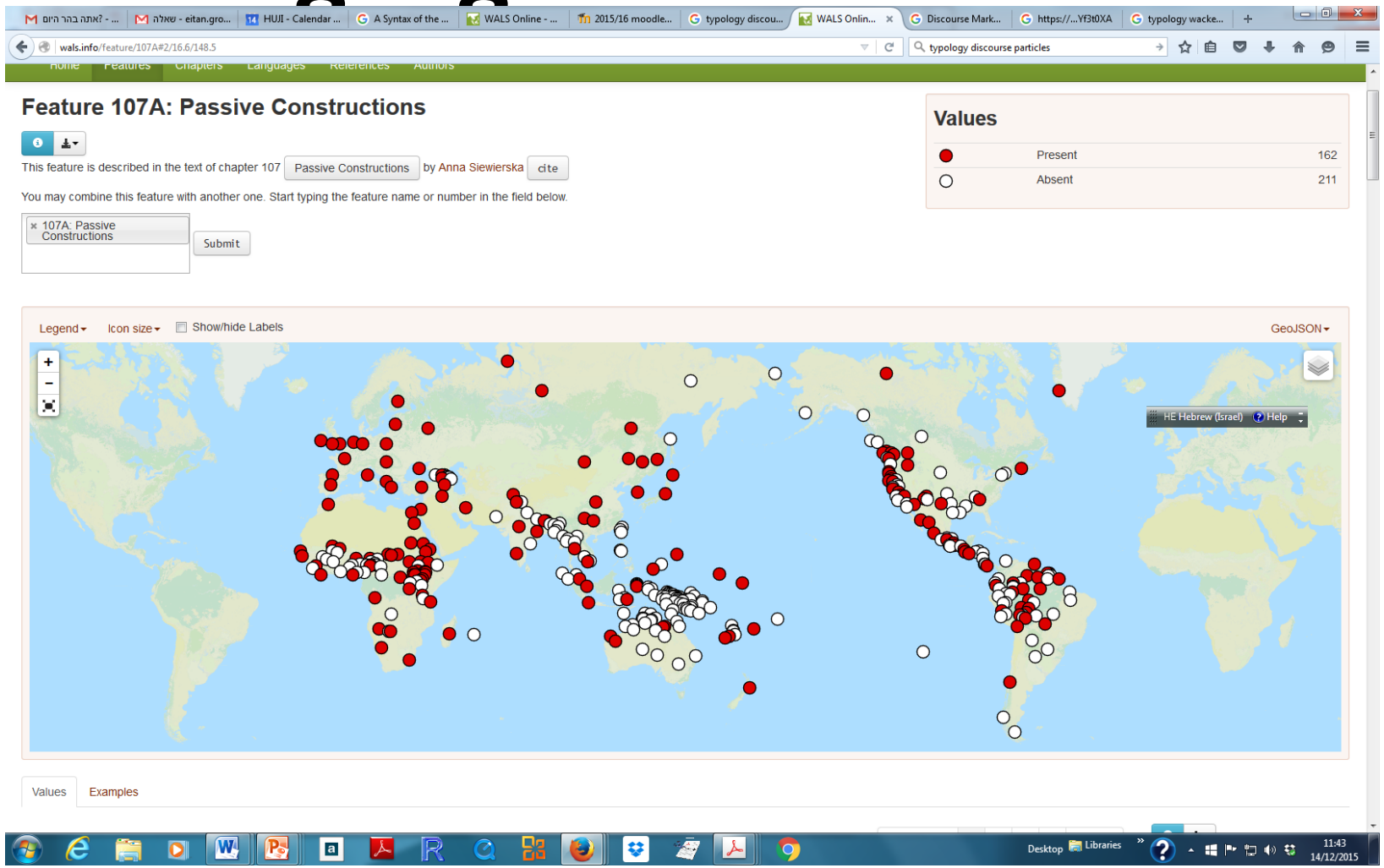
Some languages, on top of a pre-existing ANC, grammaticalize yet another ANC, usually semantically restricted.

This can create paradigms of ANCs, each of which has a disinctive function and grammatical distribution.

Past tenses in a sample of the world's languages



Passive constructions in a sample of the world's languages



(b) Weak noun/verb distinction

In Nzadi, the head-noun is not required:

(1) yǎ bvǐm
2SG theft
'You thief'

The broad question

Greenberg's Question (Haspelmath 2014):

Why are languages the way they are?

(Bickel 2007: "what's where why?")

Greenberg's Second Question (Grossman & Noveck 2015):

Why do languages they way they change?

Grammaticalization: lexical sources

The most frequent source for agentive nominalizers in the sample is a **lexical item denoting a human referent.**

There are several subtypes of this source construction. The first is a general nominal item that means ‘person’ or ‘man.’

In Paumari, the ANC comprises a general nominalizer (zero, -i, or –hi) and the free morpheme abono ‘person, self.’

(20) Paumari

soko	‘wash’
kodi-soko-i	‘my washing’ (1sg-wash-NMLZ)
soko-i abono	‘washer, one who washes’
	(wash-NMLZ person)

Pronouns

Kannada (Drav

Rawang

àng-dálē

nmlz-be.foolis

‘fool’

The agentive nominalizer *-shú* creates agentive nominals where the person involved normally does the action as a job or regular activity. Compare *rúngshú* 'one who sits (a retired person)' and *rúnggǿ* [sit+CL(people)] 'the one sitting'. Other examples are *kà vwálshú* [word divide+person] 'mediator', *lègā lv̀ngshú* [letter/book take+person] 'postman', *zàywà wáshú* [song/hymn sing+person] '(professional) singer', *mvkún shǿlshú* [song lead+person] 'one who leads the singing', and *dvzárshú* 'helper' (< *dvzv́ròē* 'send', with change of vowel). This form can occasionally be used adnominally, e.g. *dvzárshú vsàngrì* ‘people who are helpers’, and can take the gender and plural markers, e.g. *dvzárshúpè* 'male helper', *dvzárshúrì* ‘helpers’.

The nominalizing prefix *àng-* (< Proto-Tibeto-Burman **aŋ-;* = the third person pronoun and third person possessive prefix) is used quite productively to form nominals.[5] Some of these have become lexicalized, such as *àngdál* 'fool (n.)' (< *dálē* 'to be foolish'), *àngwv̄m* 'lid' (< *wv̄m* 'to cover'). This prefix is actually more of a general formative prefix, and so can be used on some nouns as well, such as in *àngtì* 'liquid' (< *tì* 'water'), and on classifiers, e.g. *àngchv̀ngrì* 'the trucks' (< *chv̀ng* ‘classifier for lump-like objects’, with the plural marker *-rì)*.

The intransitivizing prefix *v-* (see LaPolla 2000) is involved in some deverbal nominals as well, such as *vngǿ* 'one who cries easily' (< *ngǿē* 'to cry'; note the tone change) and *vkǿ* 'thief' (< *kǿē* / *kǿòē* 'to steal'), though it is not very productive.

We saw above that in a few cases nominalization by a suffix also involved a tone change. In a few cases nominalization is achieved by tone change alone, as in *dvshī* 'a spirit who can make you die' (< *dvshí* 'cause to die'), and *vyá* 'lier' (< *vyàē* 'to lie').

Degree of semantic specialization

Specific vs. general (‘chronic’)

(9) Yagua (Peb-Yaguan,Peru, Payne & Payne 1989: 354-357)

specific act
dapúúñu
dapuuy-nù
hunt-CL:ANIM:SG
'one who is hunting, hunting person'

general characteristic
dapuuy-ra
hunt-cl:neut
‘hunter’

muur	na	ŋga	láà
person	DET	WH.HAB	cook

‘a cook’ (lit. ‘a person who cooks’)

muur	na	ŋga	sûm
person	DET	WH.HAB	buy

‘buyer’ (lit. ‘a person who buys’)

muur	na	ŋga	yɛɛ
person	DET	WH.HAB	sell

‘seller’ (lit. ‘a person who sells’