

Perfects and imitatives in typological perspective: some recent developments

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The original paper

In 2016, Bernhard Wälchli and I published this paper in a Brazilian online journal *Letras de Hoje*):

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 <http://dx.doi.org/10.15448/1984-7726.2016.3.25454>

Perfects and iamitives: two gram types in one grammatical space

Perfeitos e iamitivos: dois tipos de gram em um espaço gramatical

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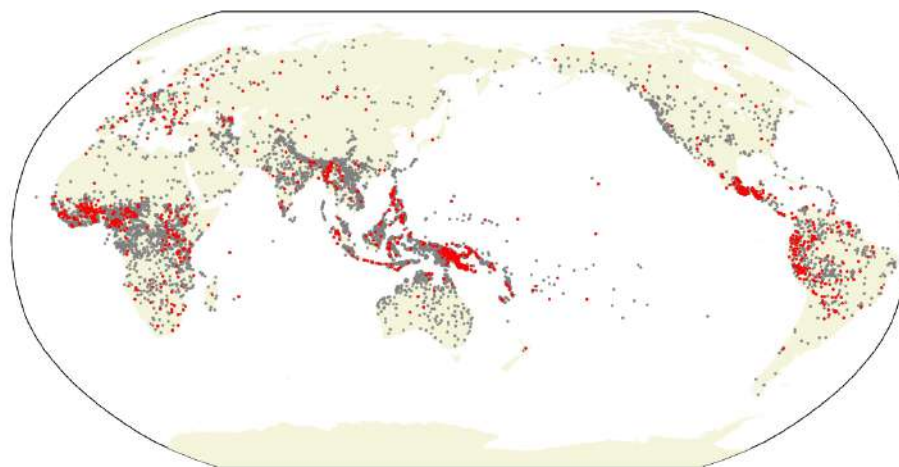
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Dahl & Wälchli (2016)

- In Dahl & Wälchli (2016), a large-scale and world-wide parallel corpus of Bible texts was used to look at items with distributions similar to perfects...
- ... including those labelled as “iamitives”
- resulting in a gram set of about 300 grams



Dahl, Östen & Bernhard Wälchli. 2016. Perfects and iamitives: two gram types in one grammatical space. *Letras de Hoje* 51(3). 325–348. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15448/1984-7726.2016.3.25454>.

Examples of purported iamitives (Olsson 2013)

- Before our paper, the notion of “iamitives” had been discussed by Bruno Olsson (2013), who looked at some markers in South-East Asian languages and elsewhere.

Language	ISO	Family	Iamitive marker
Central Khmer	khm	Austro-Asiatic	<i>ban</i>
Indonesian	ind	Austronesian	<i>sudah</i>
Lao	lao	Tai-Kadai	<i>laev</i>
Malay	zlm	Austronesian	<i>sudah</i>
Mandarin Chinese	cmn	Sino-Tibetan	sentence-final <i>le</i>
Paraguayan Guaraní	gug	Tupian	<i>-ma</i>
Thai	tha	Tai-Kadai	<i>læw</i>
Vietnamese	vie	Austro-Asiatic	<i>ròi</i>
Vietnamese	vie	Austro-Asiatic	<i>đã</i>
Yoruba	yor	Niger-Congo	<i>ti</i>

Olsson, Bruno. 2013. *Iamitives: Perfects in Southeast Asia and beyond*. Stockholm University. MA thesis.

What are iamitives?

- Iamitives differ from classical perfects (among other things) (but are similar to words like 'already') by referring to present rather than past states when used with stative predicates
- These uses imply a recent change ("change-of-state interpretation")

Indonesian

Maria sudah ada di sini.

Maria IAM COP in here

'Mary is already here'

not: 'has been here'

Differences between imitives and 'already'

- But grammaticalized imitatives also differ from words like English *already* by
 - having radically higher frequencies (2.5k-10k per mill. words rather than 0.1k-1k per mill. words)
 - having a weakened “earliness” implicature
- being “redundantly” used with predicates denoting “natural developments” such as ‘old’, ‘near (in time)’, ‘rotten’ etc.

Indonesian

la tidak ada di sini. **la sudah bangkit!**

he not COP in here. he IAM rise

‘He’s not here. He has risen!’

(Matthew 16:6)

Indonesian

Kamu tidak bisa memakan-nya. Itu sudah busuk.

You not can eat-it that IAM rotten.

‘You cannot eat it. It is rotten.’

Iamitives – a gram type?

- The question, then, is how iamitives fit into a general theory of tense, aspect, and related categories.
- Joan Bybee and I proposed in the 1980's that grammatical systems in individual languages are built up by “grams” which are manifestations of cross-linguistic “gram types”.
- So are iamitives a gram type?

Eat your cake and have it?

- The problem is that while iamitives are not quite like perfects, they are not totally different from them either.
- In our paper, Bernhard and I said that perfects and iamitives were “two overlapping gram types in the same grammatical space”.
- This idea, like the notion of iamitives in general, has not gone undisputed.

Questioning iamitives

Iamitives are just like 'already'!

We suggest that a new category of iamitives is not warranted, as many of the properties Olsson discusses can be naturally explained under a focus-sensitive semantic analysis of *already*.

Vander Klok, Jozina and Lisa Matthewson. Distinguishing already from perfect aspect: A case study of Javanese *wis*. *Oceanic Linguistics* 54(1):172–205, 2015.

- 'iamitive' is not a valid lexical typological category:
 - positing a wide category of iamitives as a semantic category ignores complex interactions between semantics, pragmatics, and syntax
 - the meanings of perfect and 'already' can interact through many different pathways
 - we should focus on understanding these pathways

Iamitives are perfects!

Krajinović, Ana. The semantics of perfect in Nafsan. Paper presented at The Semantics of African, Asian, and Austronesian Languages (Triple A) 5, 27–29 June 2018, Konstanz, 2018.

https://semanticsofaaa2018.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/krajinovic_slides.pdf

More research needed

- In light of the critique, we think that we need both
 - more empirical data about the lexical-grammatical domain shared by perfects, progressives, and expressions for 'already'
and
 - a clarification of the theoretical notions needed in order to account for the behaviour of the incumbents of that domain

The PIA domain

- The new project, then, looks at what I call the “‘perfect-iimitive-already’ domain” or “PIA domain”.
- This notion is an explorative one, meant to subsume everything that has been treated as being either a perfect, a iimitive, a word meaning ‘already’, some or all of these combined, and other entities which appear to have similar meanings or uses.

Tasks

- Relative to the original project, this means:
 - including also translations of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) in the corpus
 - widening the perspective to include also non-grammaticalized expressions for 'already'
 - reviewing the old data and anchoring old and new data as far as possible in extant grammatical descriptions of the languages
 - trying to find more reliable ways of aligning the patterns between languages

A lot of work

- This means a lot of work!

Classification criteria

- I am trying to be agnostic about the internal classification of the domain, that is, what “gram types” or other entities we have to assume.
- It can be noted, however, that there are a number of criteria that could be used in such a classification.
- These criteria are to some extent correlated but also seldom coincide totally with each other and with traditional classifications.

Diachronic sources

- There are two common and a number of less common diachronic sources for markers/constructions in the PIA domain.
- The common ones are expressions for 'already' and resultative constructions, mostly involving auxiliaries such as 'have' and 'be'.
- The two sources correlate but do not coincide with the purported distinction between iamitives and (traditional) perfects.
- An example of a less common source is words meaning 'after' (e.g. Welsh *wedi*).

Morphosyntactic types

- There are at least three different types of PIA patterns with respect to their morphosyntactic realization:
 - invariable unbound markers ("particles"), such as Indonesian *sudah*
 - auxiliary constructions, e.g. the English Perfect (typically: an inflected auxiliary + a non-finite form of the lexical verb)
 - inflections (marked by affixes or stem changes)
- Again, this correlates but does not coincide with the iamitive-perfect divide (iamitives tend to be uninflected particles but some are auxiliaries or bound morphemes)

Usage distinctions

- The trickiest part is to find out how the PIA patterns are used and how they can be classified based on differences in their usage.
- Almost universally (including in my own writings), perfects are said to have four possible meanings or readings, to wit: 1) resultative; 2) experiential/existential; 3) recent past/hot news; 4) universal/continuative/persistent.

Two profiles of perfects

- In Dahl&Wälchli (2016), we suggest – following Laca (2010) – that uses of perfects can be characterized by one or both of the following “profiles”, which partly cross-cut the traditional readings: :
- The “transition to new scene” profile, which updates a representation of the world to a new one via the assertion that an event with non-trivial consequences has taken place.
- The “extended time span” profile, in which an assertion is made about some time span ending at reference time.

Laca, Brenda. 2010. Perfect semantics. How universal are Ibero-American Present Perfects? In *Selected Proceedings of the 12th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium*, 1–16.
<http://www.lingref.com/cpp/hls/12/paper2401.pdf>

Two profiles of perfects

- The ‘transition’ profile is primarily characteristic of perfects of result whereas the “extended time span” profile is characteristic of experiential perfects and perfects of persistent situation, but in many cases both profiles are relevant.
- Also, the “extended time span” profile comprises cases that are not easily subsumed under the traditional readings:
 - For most of human history, people have lived in stateless societies... (Wikipedia)
- Our claim was that imitatives (or patterns derived from ‘already’) are less commonly associated with the second profile than traditional perfects.

The transition profile

- It is thus the “transition” profile that is shared between iamitives and traditional perfects and also found with non-grammaticalized ‘already’.
- Let us look more closely at what it means, and then in particular at a somewhat more specific type that I shall call “change-of-state news”.
- But first, let us look at the Papal Code.

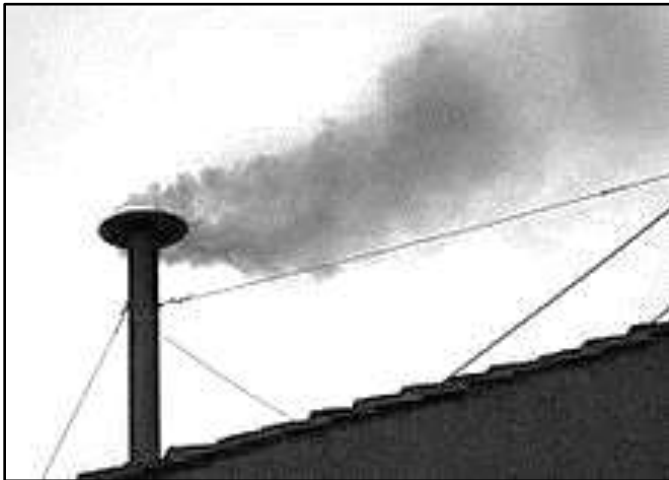
The Papal Code

- ” Beginning in the early 1800s, the ballots used by cardinals were burned after each ballot to indicate a failed election. The lack of smoke instead would signal a successful election. Since 1914, black smoke (*fumata nera*) emerging from a temporary chimney installed on the roof of the Sistine Chapel indicates that the ballot did not result in an election, while white smoke (*fumata bianca*) announces that a new pope has been chosen.” (Wikipedia)



Fumata nera e bianca

- Two possible messages:



Fumata nera =
Non habemus papam



Fumata bianca =
Habemus papam

Change-of-state news

- State 1:
 - p is not the case
 - The speaker knows that p is not the case
 - The audience knows that p is not the case
- State 2:
 - p is the case
 - The speaker knows that p is the case
 - The audience does not know that p is the case

Translation from smoke to speech

- In Latin, the white smoke message is traditionally rendered as *Habemus papam* 'We have a Pope'
- The Tagalog Wikipedia translates this as *Mayroon na táyong Papa*, which Google Translate says means 'We already have a Dad'.
- However, *na* here is a iamitive which signals that the message is a piece of change-of-state news
- *Mayroon* means 'have' or 'exist', that is, a stative predicate

Accepimus papam?

- Notice that in English, we could also use a perfect combined with a dynamic predicate to express essentially the same message:
 - We have obtained a Pope
- Thus:
 - change-of-state news can be expressed using either stative or dynamic predicates
 - the expression of change-of-state news is a use that is common to iamitives and perfects
 - with iamitives both stative and dynamic predicates are possible, with perfects only dynamic ones

Change-of-state news is not always perfect

- But not all grams labeled “perfects” are equally prone to be used for change-of-state news.
- Consider a clear case from the story about the Prodigal Son from the New Testament.

Example of change-of-state news: The Prodigal Son

- “Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the slaves and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has gotten him back healthy.’ (Luke 15:25-27)
- Lithuanian ecumenical translation:

Sugrįžo	tavo	brolis
return.PST.3SG	your	brother



Languages with a de-resultative perfect that do not use it in Luke 15:27

- Greek: Koine Greek (?), Modern Greek
- Baltic: Latvian (1/2), Lithuanian
- Slavic: (Old) Church Slavonic, Bulgarian, Macedonian
- Albanian
- Armenian: Western Armenian
- Iranian: Persian, Tajik
- Afro-Asiatic: Neo-Aramaic
- Uralic: Finnish (2/3)

an areal phenomenon?
further research needed

Lithuanian present perfects in the Parallel Bible Corpus

- Comparatively low frequency: around 700 in HB+NT (850 per mill. words)
- Pluperfects are about three times as frequent
- About 30 % in main declarative clauses
- Seem to be frequent in
 - relative clauses
 - questions
 - clauses introduced by
 - *kaip* 'like, (just) as'
 - *nes* 'because, as, since'
 - *kad* 'that'

Retrospective uses

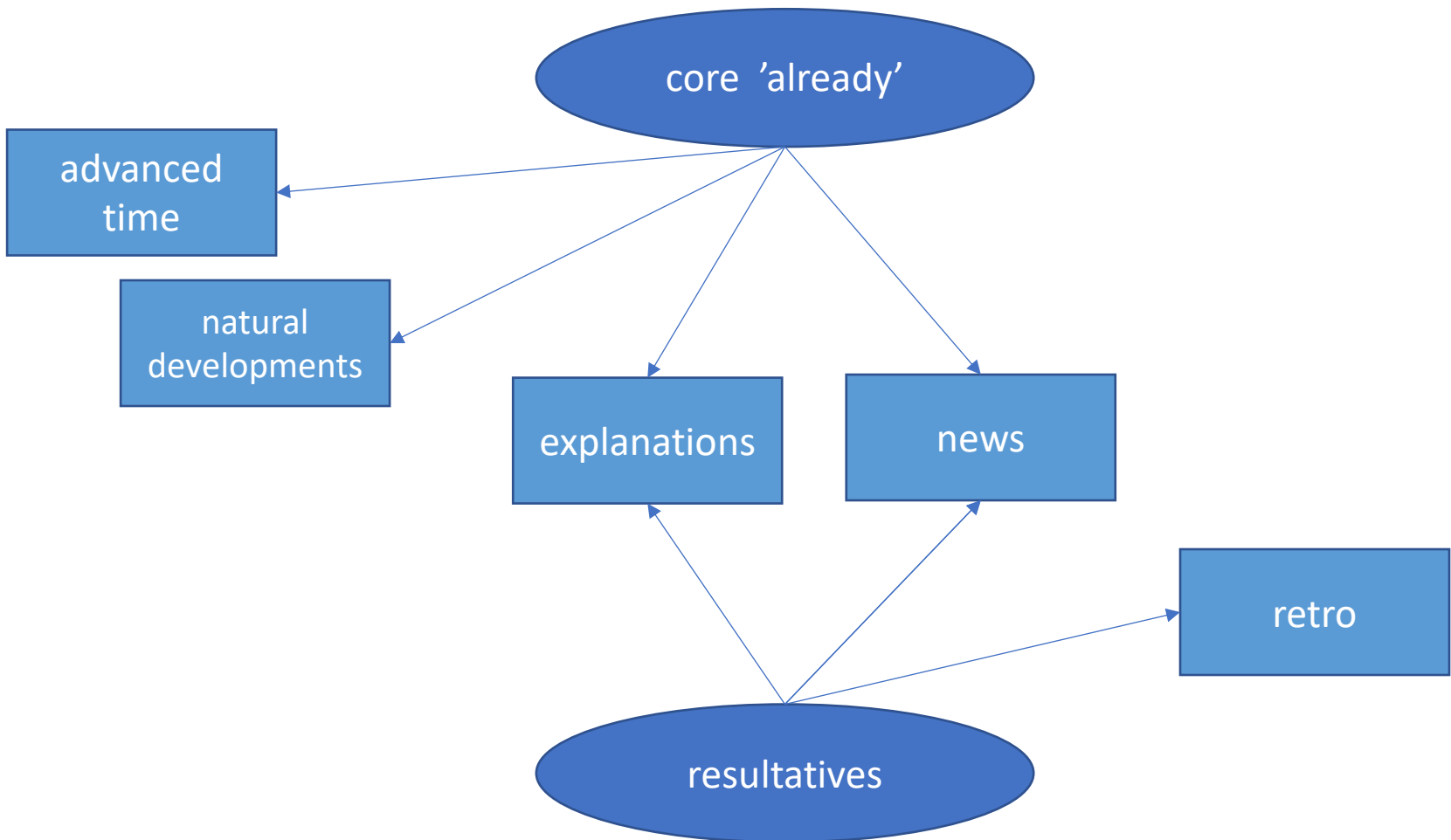
- My suggestion is that Lithuanian perfects are particularly frequent in what I want to call retrospective uses, in which the speaker looks back at the past, generalizing over it or referring in one way or other to events or sets of events that tend to be presupposed rather than asserted.
- A typical example:

“Come, see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Perhaps this one is the Christ?” (John 4:29)

Lithuanian ecumenical translation:

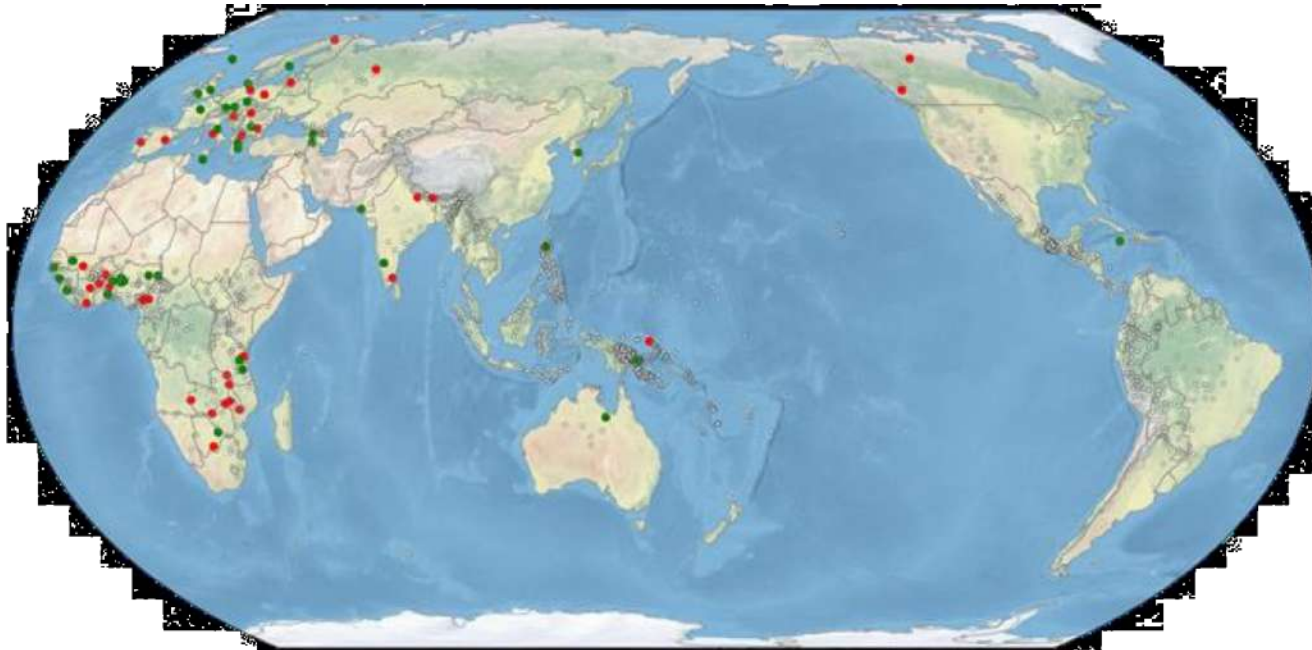
Eikite		pažiūrėti		žmogaus ,		
go.IMP.2PL		watch.INF		man.GEN.SG		
kuris	pasakė	man	viską,	ką	esu	padariusi.
who	tell.PST.3	me	everything	REL	be.PRS.1SG	do.PSTPART

The PIA network – a first attempt



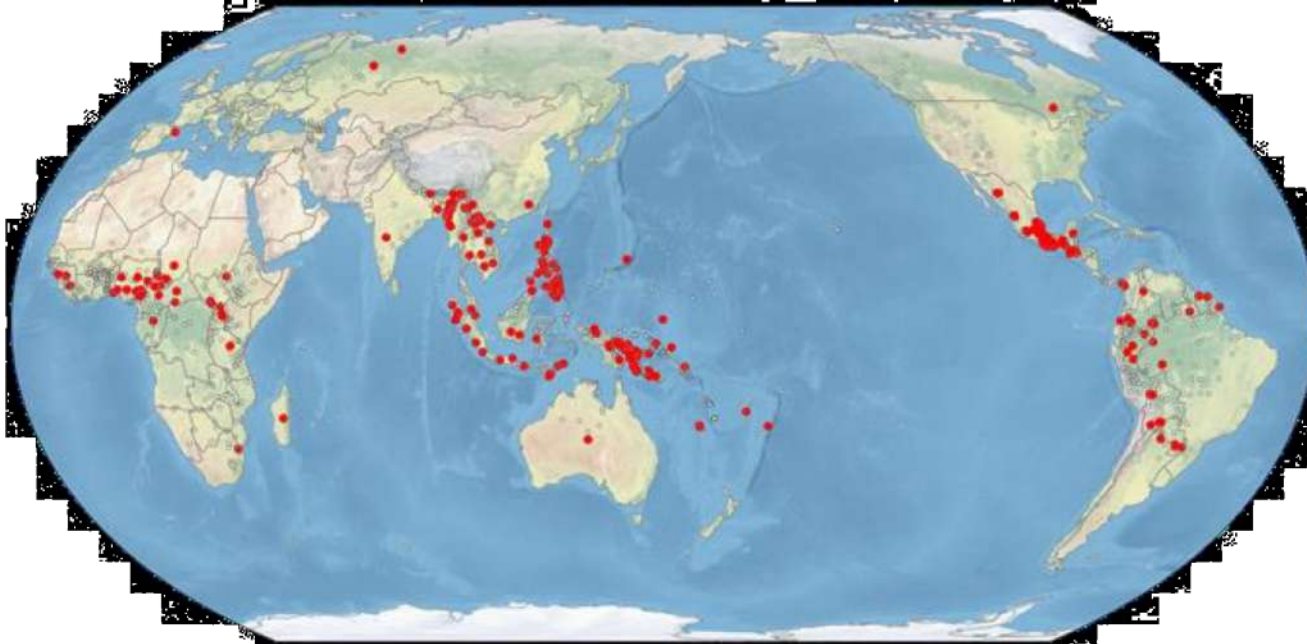
The distribution of non-expanded 'already' expressions

- This map shows the distribution of patterns that occur in at least 7 out of 9 of the core examples of 'already' but do not have more than 200 occurrences in the New Testament.
- These can be said to be 'already' expressions which have not undergone any significant expansion.



The distribution of grammaticalized iamitives

- This map (based on an earlier version of the database) shows patterns with have expanded to become quasi-obligatory in what we call “natural development” contexts (that is, with predicates such as 'near' (about time), 'old', 'rotten' etc.).
- These can be taken to be highly grammaticalized iamitives.



- Comparing the maps, we see a tendency towards a complementary distribution.
- Although it is just a tendency, it shows the importance of areal factors in the evolution of grammatical patterns.

