

A Geo-typological database of transitivity pairs: What is it and what does it do?

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The direction of morphological derivation between lexical pairs of intransitive and transitive verbs (aka inchoative-causative pairs, transitivity pairs, lexical sets etc.) such as *ak-u* : *ak-e-ru* (open: open), *yak-e-ru* : *yak-u* (burn: burn) and the motivation behind it has been a topic of intense discussion in typological literature (Jacobsen 1985, Nedjalkov 1990, Haspelmath 1993, Hook 1996, Nichols et.al. 2004, Comrie 2006, just to name few). It has been proposed that the notion of iconicity motivates the direction of derivation: categories that are cognitively marked tend also be structurally marked. Haspelmath (1993: 105) proposes a scale of increasing likelihood of spontaneous occurrence on which verbs can be arranged. Comrie (2006) offers a ranking of 30 verb pairs identified in Haspelmath (1993) on the spontaneity scale. At NINJAL we developed a database of 30 verb pairs from 44 languages of the globe. The geo-typological database of transitivity pairs displays the distribution of morphological relationships between the intransitive verb and its transitive counterpart across these languages and offers a visual picture of clustering of derivational patterns. It also allows one to test the validity of the ranking of 30 verb pairs on the spontaneity scale. In this presentation I demonstrate the database and its functionality.

Selected references:

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- Jacobsen, Wesley M. 1985. "Morphosyntactic transitivity and semantic markedness". *Chicago Linguistic Society* 21/2, 89-104.
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