

# Delimiting and Demystifying Switch-Reference:

## on distinguishing form and function

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# Outline

1. Defining Switch-Reference
2. Previous research: regional distributions
3. Worldwide distribution
4. Typology and definition revisited

# Morphosyntax and Typology

- Question: What is “Switch-Reference” marking and how does it work?
- Problem 1: A theoretical analysis requires a representative range of descriptive data.
  - (What is the range of variation? What are the core properties?)
- Problem 2: Comparative data requires a consistent applicable definition. (Does a language “have” X?)
- Problem 3: What are the properties of SR? Origin?

# Defining Switch-Reference

- Switch-Reference marking encodes whether the subject of one clause is the same as or different from the subject of another clause.
- Well known for North America, Papua New Guinea, Australia and also now South America
- Working definitions used by different researchers vary greatly.

# Switch-Reference Examples

Koita (Papua New Guinea: Lynch 1983:210)

daka oro-go-nuge auki da era-ga-nu

1SG come-SG-DS 3SG 1SG.OBJ see-SG-PST

'I came and he saw me.' (DS)

daka oro-go-i era-ga-nu

1SG come-SG-SS see-SG-PST

'I came and saw him.' (SS)

**Overt suffixes for SS and DS**

# Switch-Reference Examples

Washo (United States: Jacobsen 1967)

gitʔá:t'u                      ʔéʔ-išda                      múwami  
his.older.brother    where.he.was.**DS**    he-ran-to  
'he ran to where his older brother was' (DS)

géyeweʔ-ida              ŋaŋáwŋaŋ    gayá:maʔ  
go.away-and.SS    children    tell  
'go away and tell the children' (SS)

**Morpheme indicating DS (š)**

# Switch-Reference Examples

Quechua (Assmann 2012)

chakra-chaw urya-pti-i,      María pallamurqu-n w.  
field-LOC      work-DS-1SG M.      picked-3SG flowers  
'While I worked in the field, M. picked flowers.' (DS)

chakra-chaw urya-shpa, pallamurqu-u waytakunata  
field-LOC      work-SS      picked-1SG      flowers  
'While I worked in the field, I picked flowers.' (SS)

**Subordinating suffixes for DS vs. SS**

# Defining Switch-Reference

- Jacobsen (1967) defined Switch-Reference as when “a switch in subject or agent is obligatorily indicated in certain situations by a morpheme, usually suffixed, which may or may not carry other meanings in definition”

# Defining Switch-Reference

- Jacobsen described SR for languages in the southwestern United States
  - Suggested possible areal influence
    - SR not shared by all languages in each family
    - Found in distantly related or unrelated languages
- Also indicated similarity to two Panoan languages in South America
- and languages in Papua New Guinea

# Defining Switch-Reference

- Haiman & Munro (1983:ix): “Canonical switch-reference is an inflectional category of the verb, which indicates whether or not its subject is identical with the subject of some other verb.”
- McKenzie (2015:409): “...a set of morphemes associated with the juncture of two clauses that indicates whether a certain prominent argument in each clause co-refers”
- But definitions vary substantially

# Defining Switch-Reference

- Typically morphological, often suffixing
- Now understood to refer to contrastive *same subject* (SS) **and** *different subject* (DS) marking
- SS and DS may be both overtly indicated by a special morpheme or by morphemes of another purpose, or one may be contrastively unmarked
- Extensive variation in form and usage, even in whether it necessarily indicates “subject”

# Defining Switch-Reference

- Relatively limited theoretical research, which varies by definition and what data is considered
- More descriptive research, especially in grammars in the regions where SR is prevalent
- Identification of SR apparently based on perceptual similarities to known SR languages in those regions
- Found in various types of subordinate clause, and also in clause-chaining (functionally coordination)

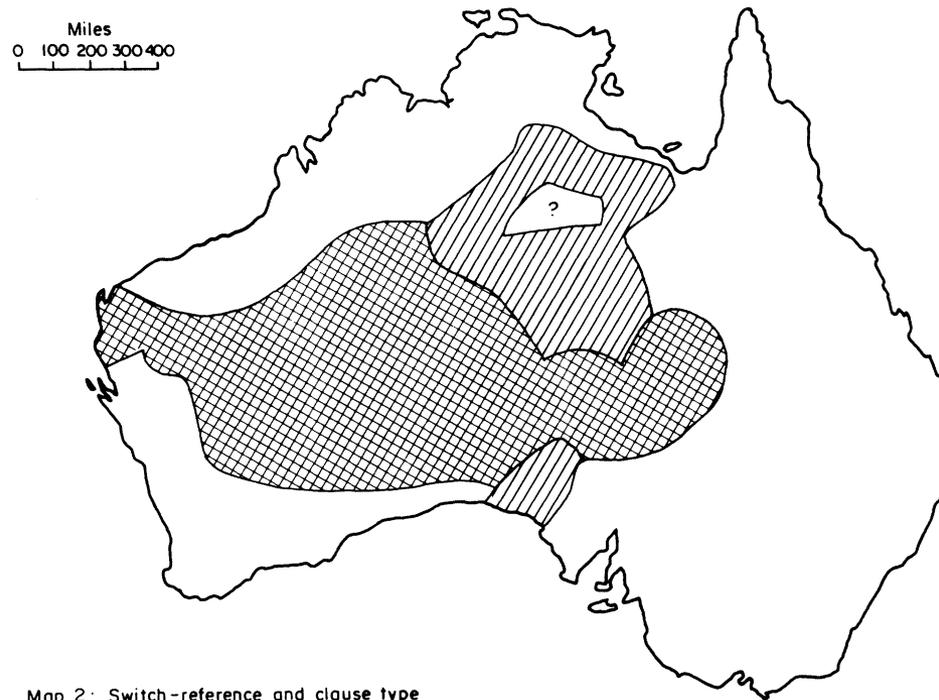
# Overlap with other phenomena

- Converbs: suffixed verb forms (like *-ing*) that function in clause-chaining or adverbial clauses  
*(Typically these would be the SS forms)*
- Subordination: SR markers can also indicate different subordinating relationships
- Coordination: SR markers can be used in the function of coordination
- Tense, aspect and agreement: SR markers can also encode various other verb-morphology features

# Previous Regional Studies

- Previous comparative research on SR typically limited to a specific area
- Influenced by common, prototypical types of SR in that region
- May include languages from that region with non-typical SR systems that, if found elsewhere, would not be considered SR
- No worldwide perspective published yet

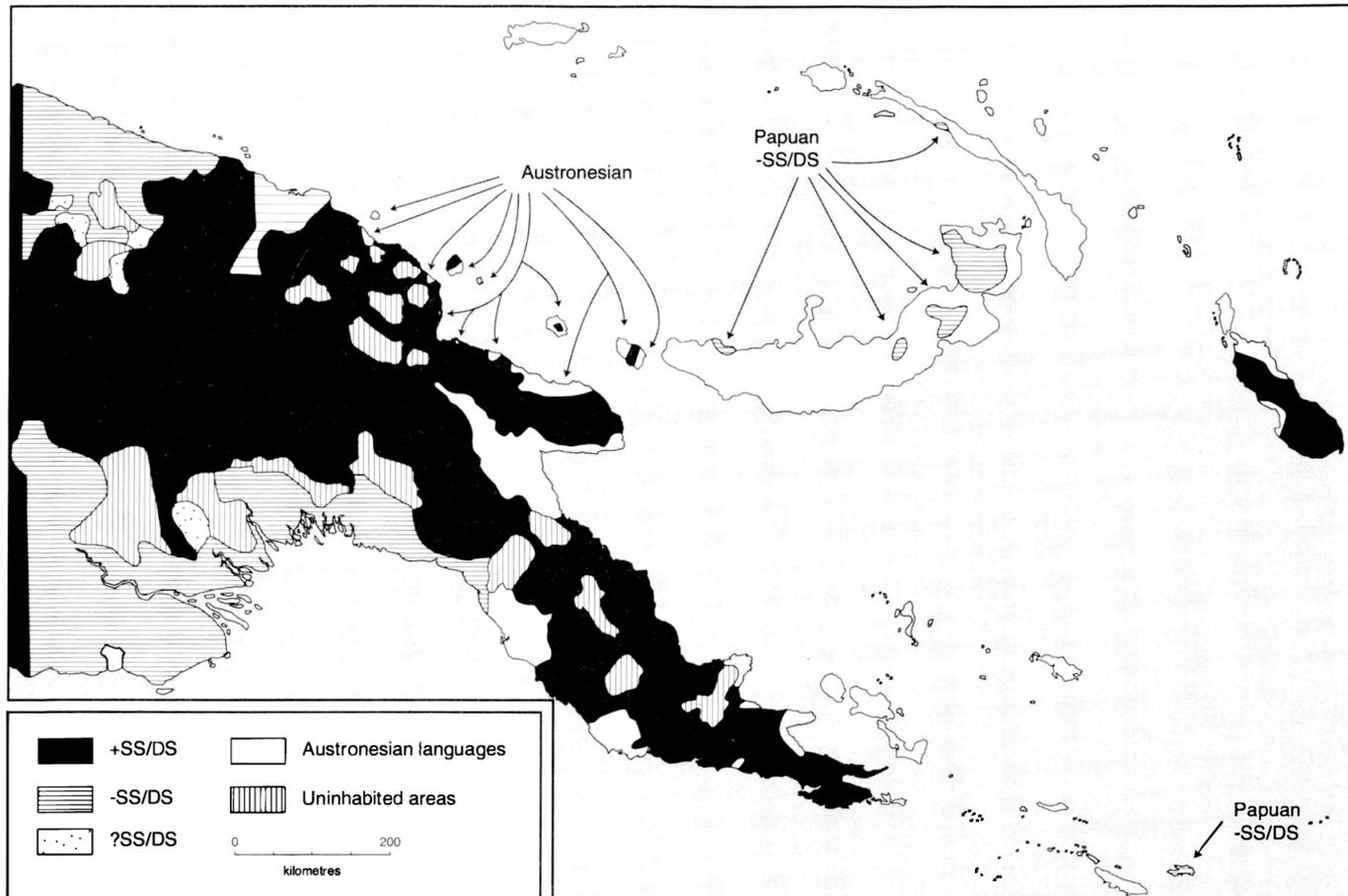
# Australia: Austin 1981



Map 2: Switch-reference and clause type

-  Relative clauses
-  Implicated/purposive clauses

# Papua New Guinea: Roberts 1997



MAP: DISTRIBUTION OF TYPES OF SWITCH-REFERENCE SYSTEMS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

# North America: McKenzie 2015

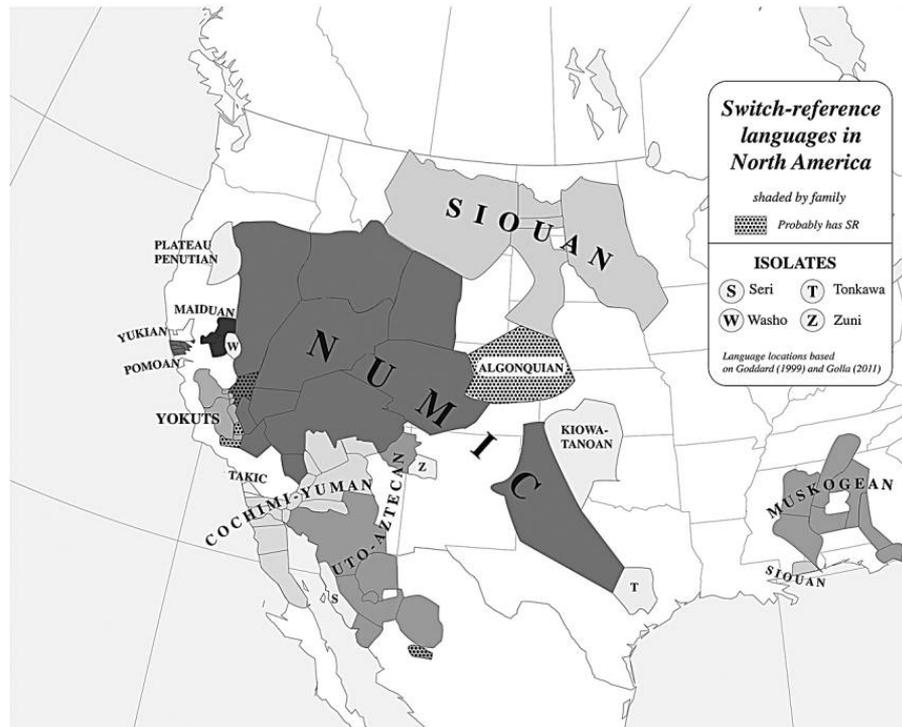
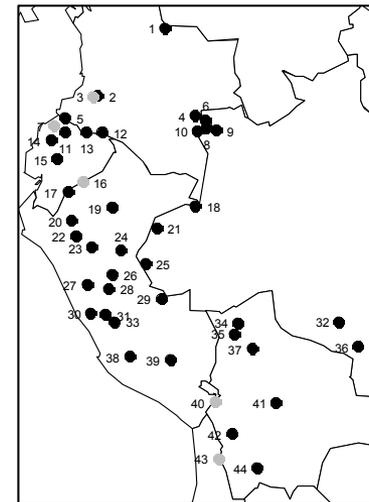


FIG. 2.—Map of switch-reference languages in North America.

Extension of earlier survey by Jacobsen (1983)

# South America

- No comprehensive overview, but discussed in descriptive grammars and reference works:  
e.g. Aikhenvald & Dixon 1999: *The Amazonian Languages*  
*Also the talk you just heard, Valenzuela & Vuillermet (SWL7)*
- Recently Overall (2015) and Van Gijn (in press) have studied the distribution around the Amazon:

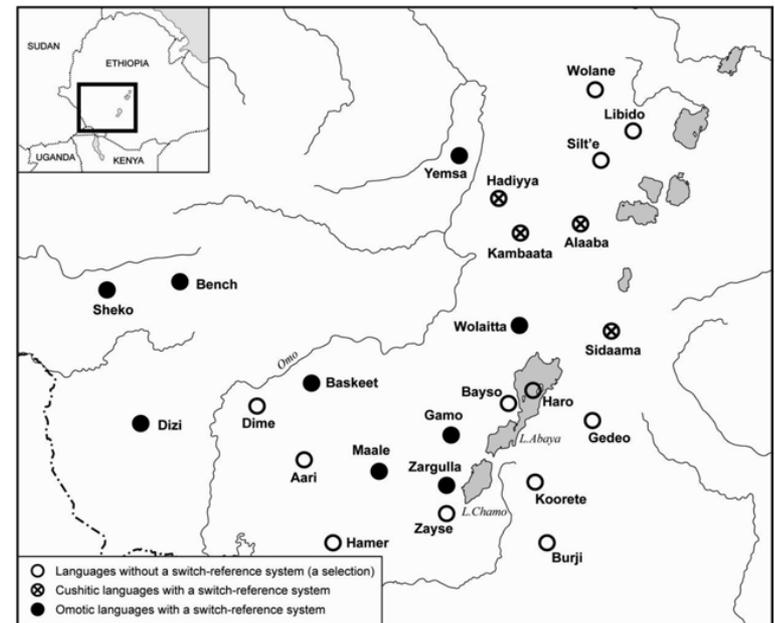


MAP 1: Sample used in this study

# Africa

➔ Not an area typically identified with SR

➔ Treis (2012) discusses the distribution in Ethiopia



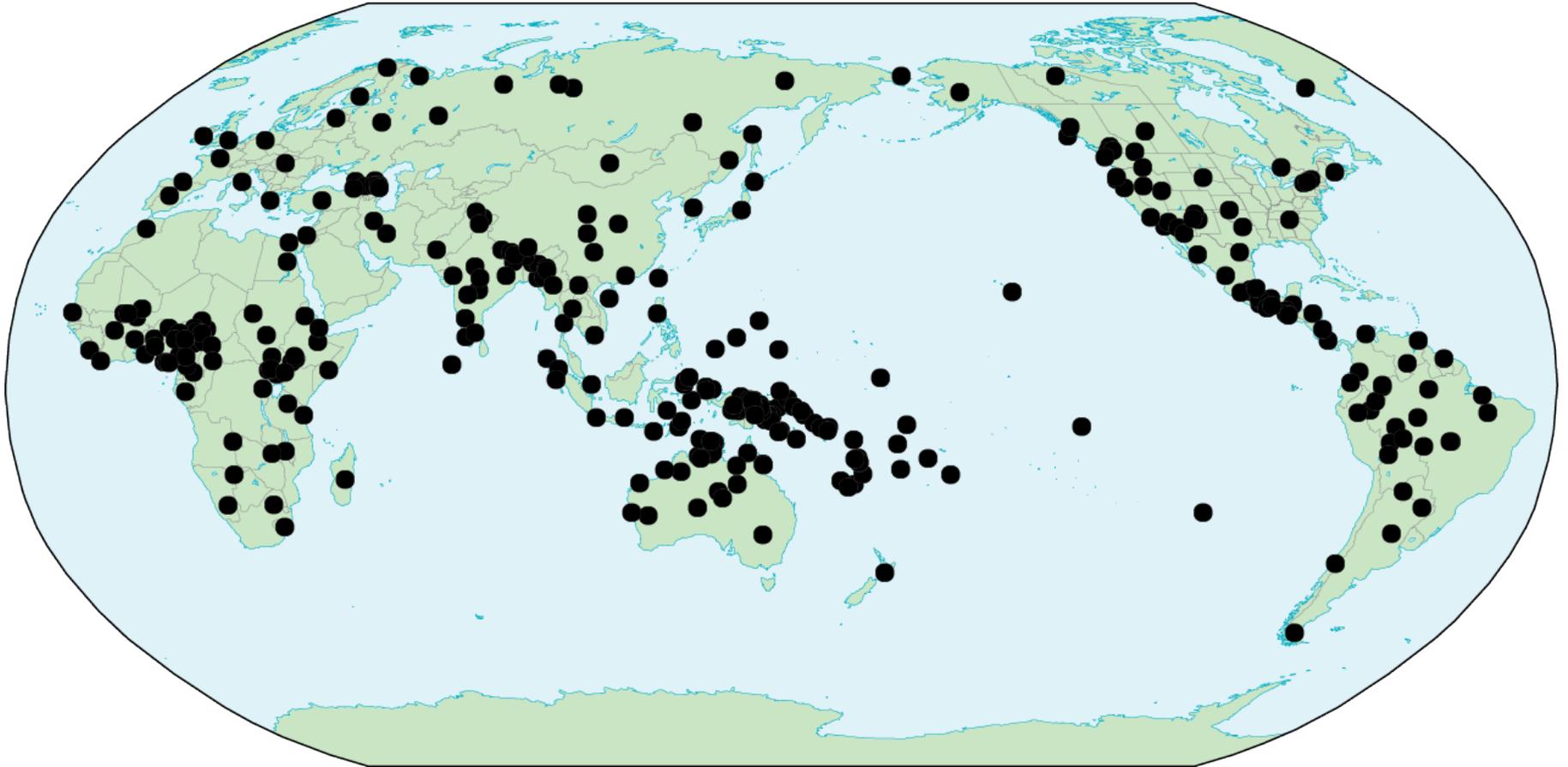
# Elsewhere?

- All languages have means to indicate whether two subjects are the same
  - But are they grammaticalized systematically?
- Research concentrated on areas where SR is a known and expected phenomenon
- But is it found elsewhere? How does it arise?
- A few authors identify SR-like systems elsewhere
  - e.g. Nichols 1983 for the Caucasus, Wieseemann 1982 for Bantu

# Working Definition of SR

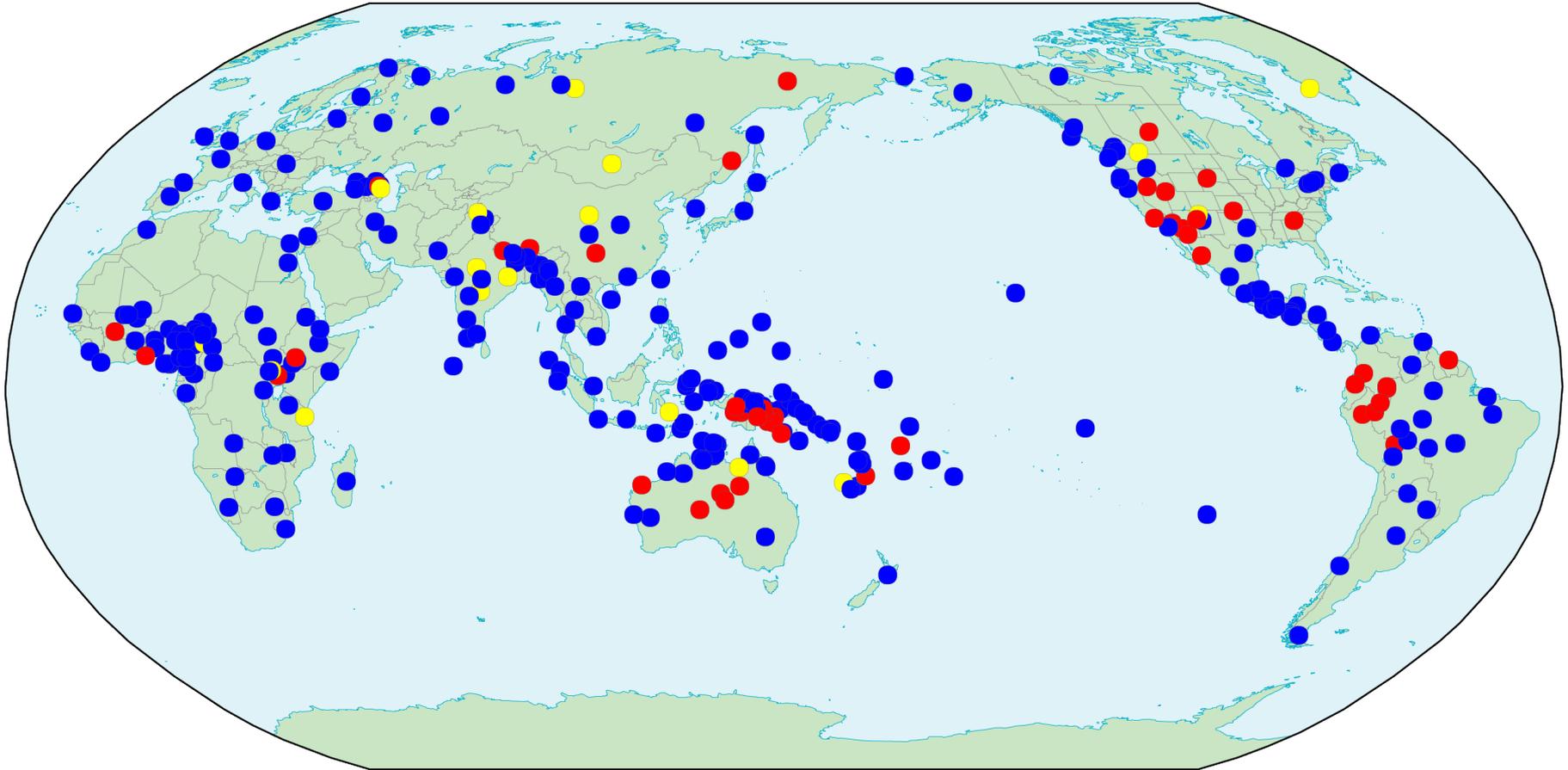
- Systematic morphosyntactic encoding
- Contrast between SS and DS
- Intentionally inclusive, not limiting

# Language Sample (325)



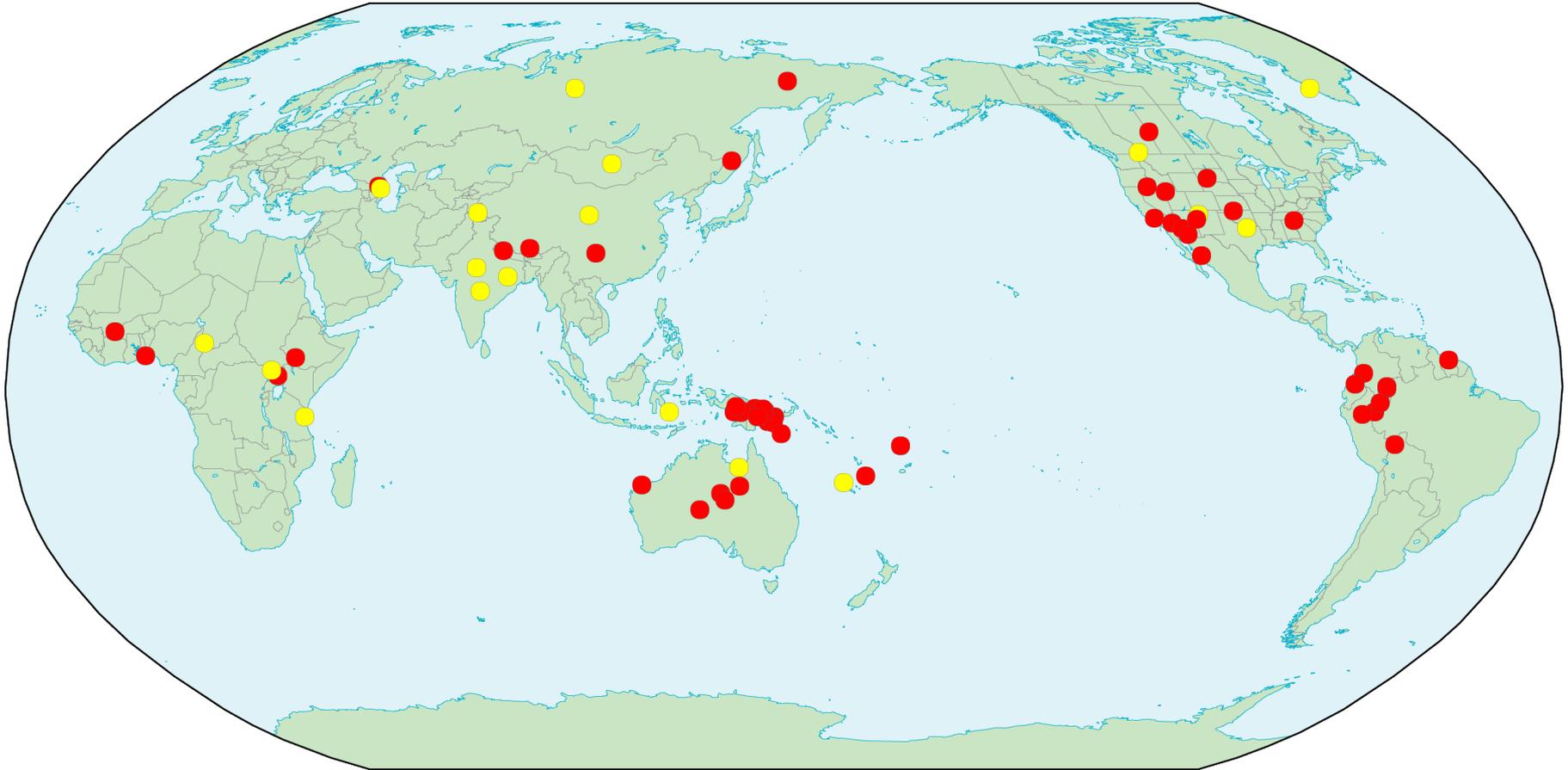
Based on Haspelmath (2005) and WALS recommended 100-language sample.  
Sample based on Ross et al. (2015).

# Distribution of Switch-Reference



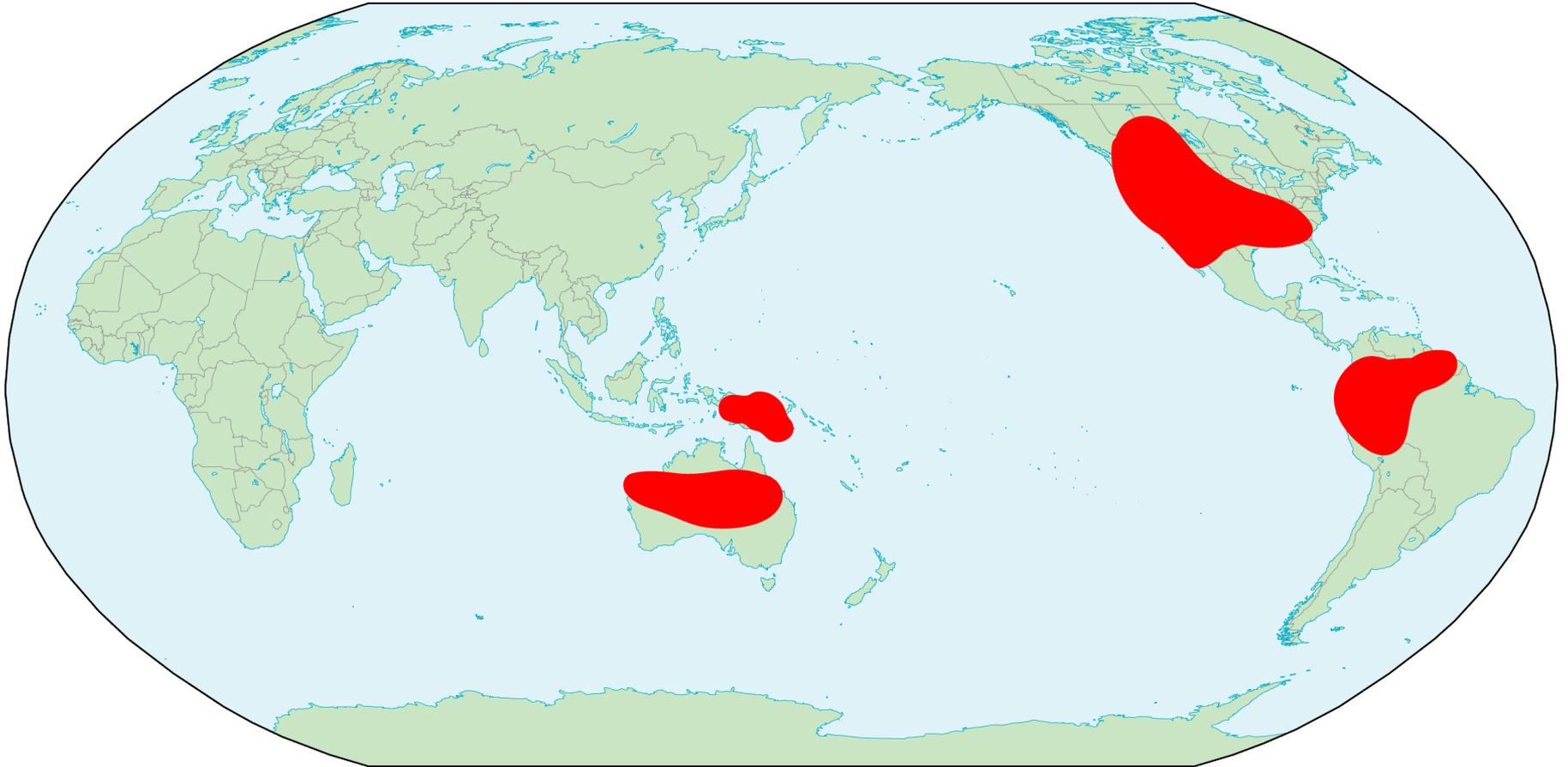
Red: Switch-Reference (55)    Yellow: borderline SR (18)    Blue: no SR (252)

# Distribution of Switch-Reference

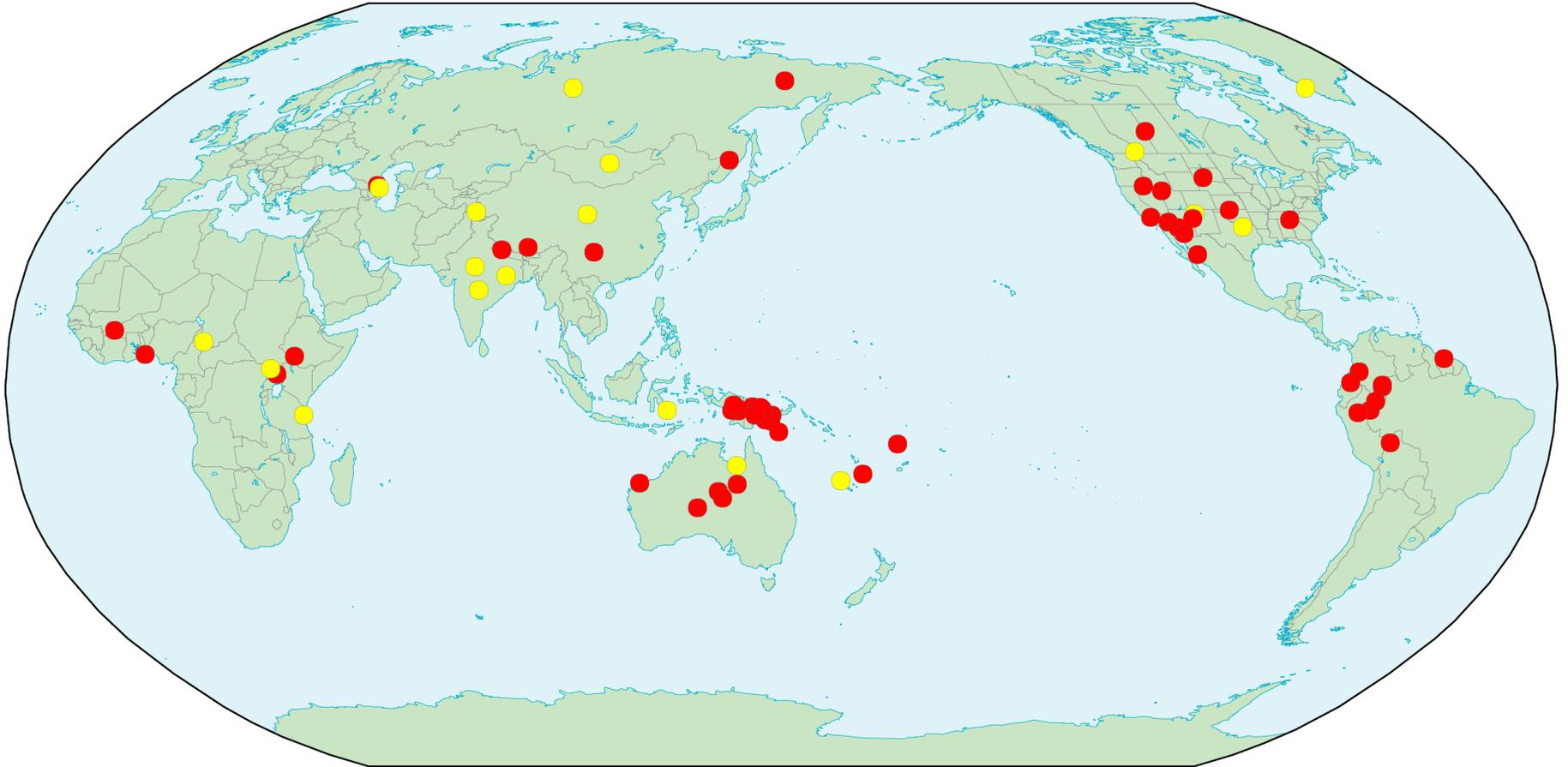


SR of some type found in about 22% of the languages in the sample

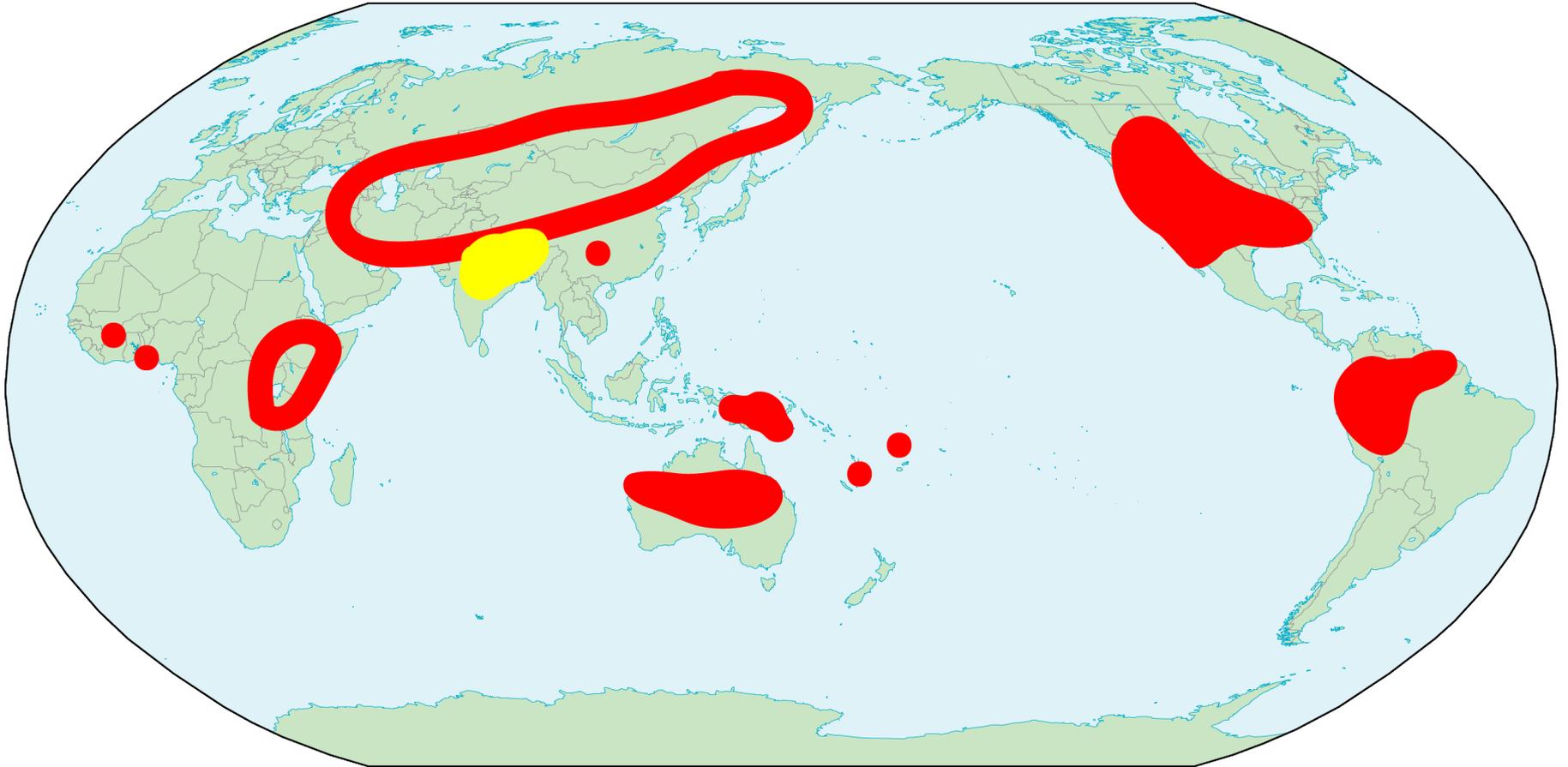
# Distribution of Switch-Reference



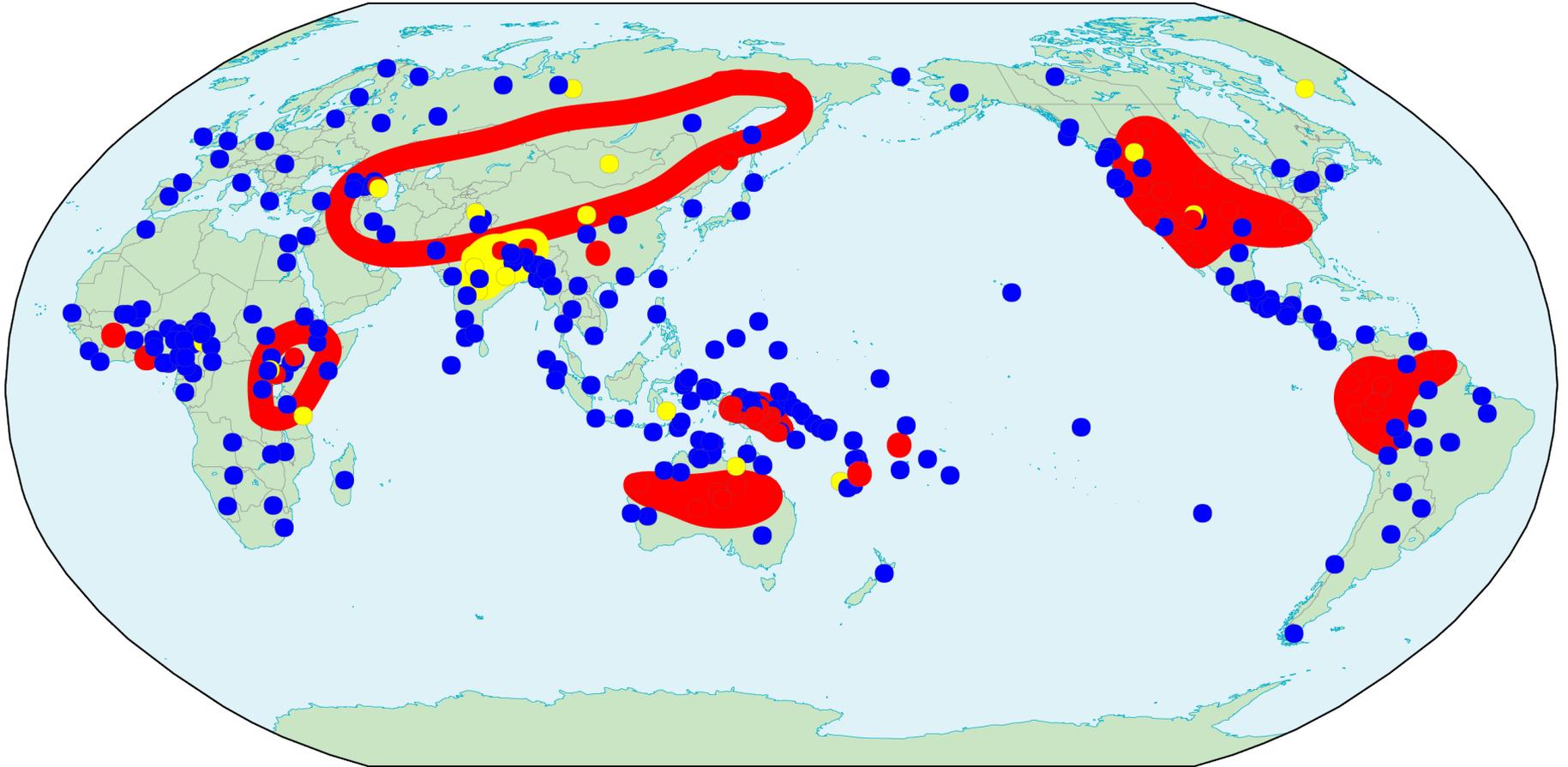
# Distribution of Switch-Reference



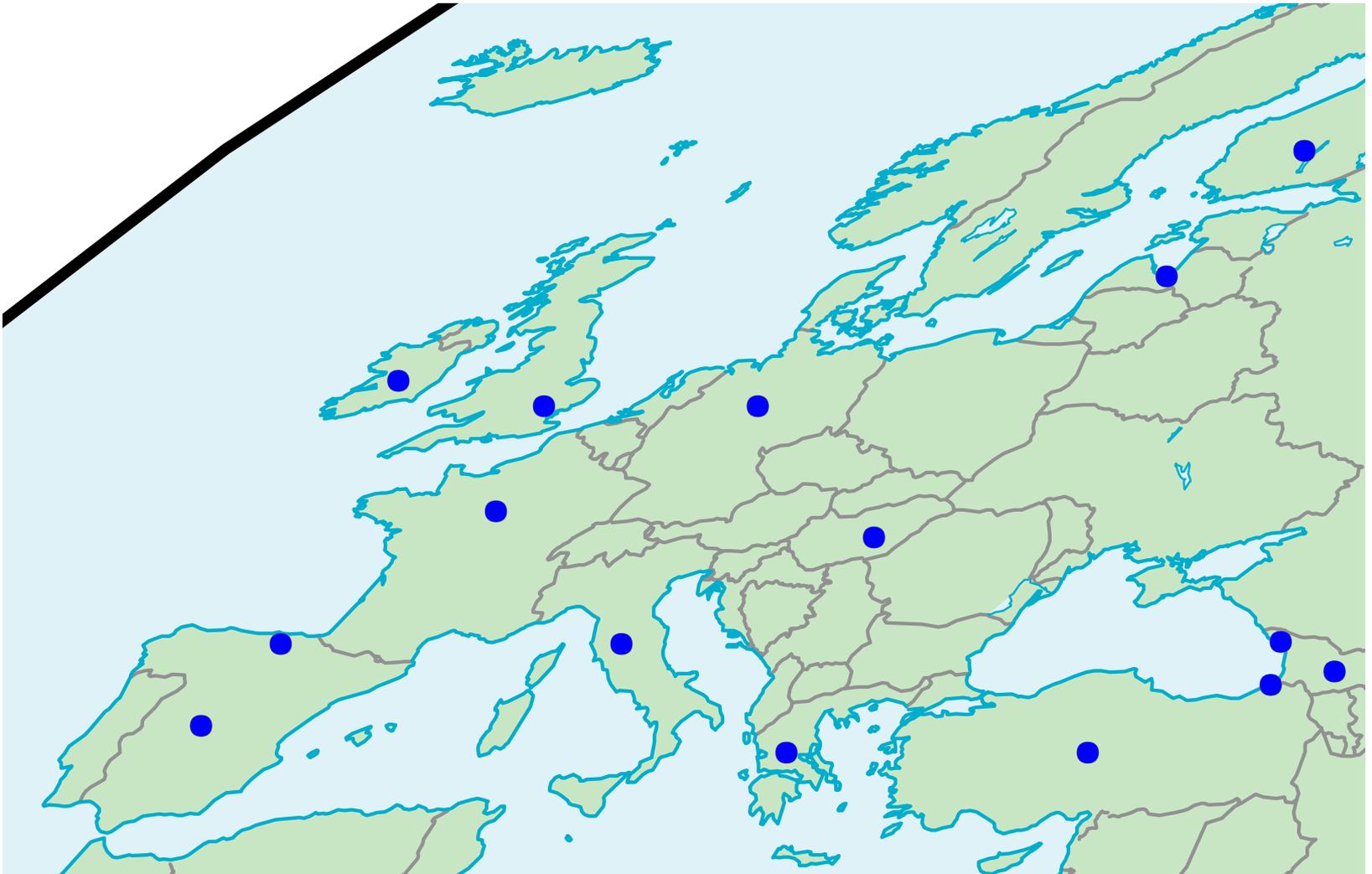
# Distribution of Switch-Reference



# Distribution of Switch-Reference

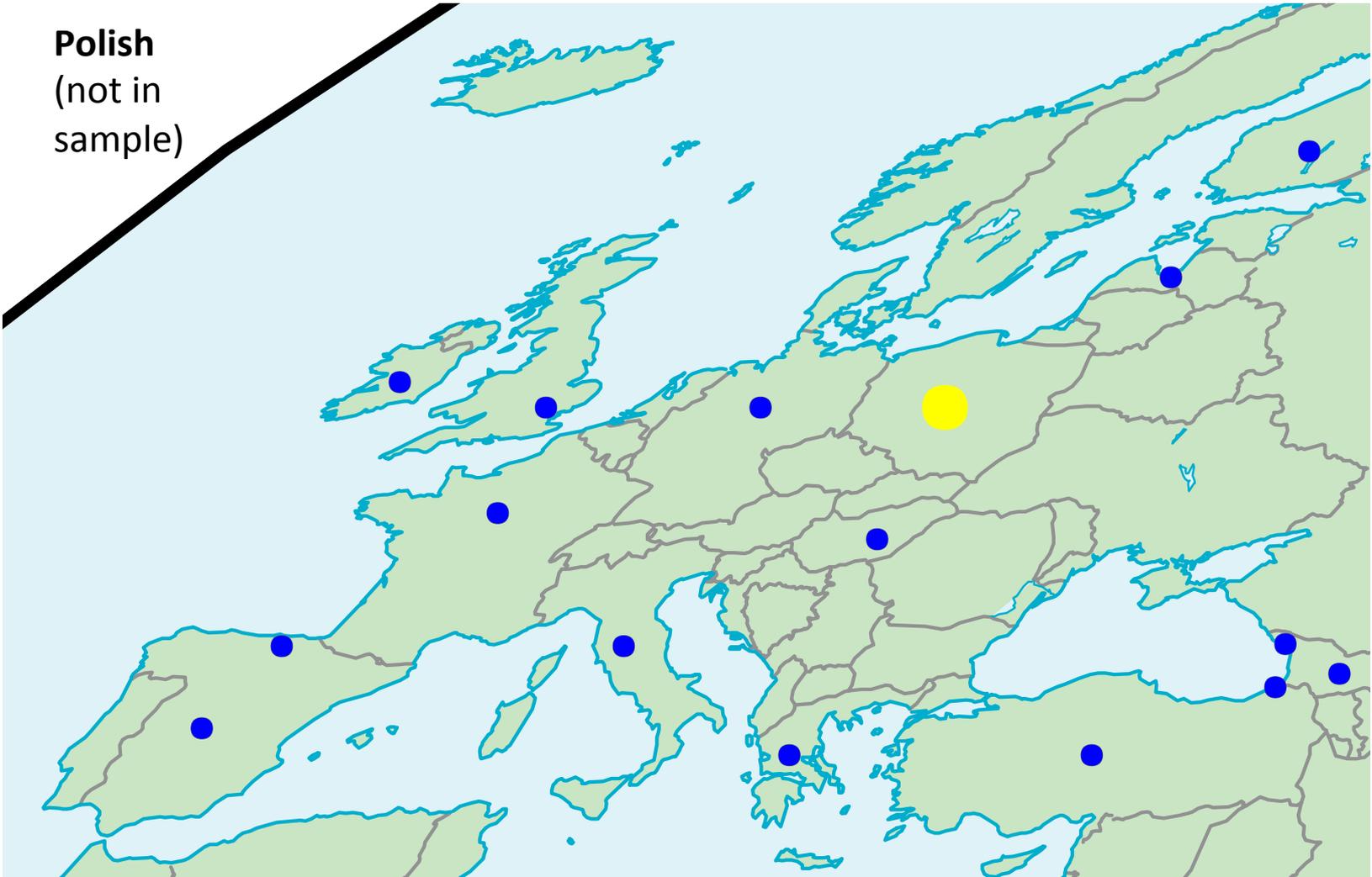


# Switch-Reference in Europe?



# Switch-Reference in Europe?

**Polish**  
(not in  
sample)



# Switch-Reference in Europe?

➤ Frajzyngier (1986) claims Polish has SR conjunctions

Jan(1) spotkał Piotra(2) w kawiarni

J. met P. in café

'J. met P. in a café.'

(i) on jak zwykle nie miał pieniędzy

**(and.SS)** he as usual NEG had money

'As always, he(1) didn't have money.'

**A** on jak zwykle nie miał pieniędzy

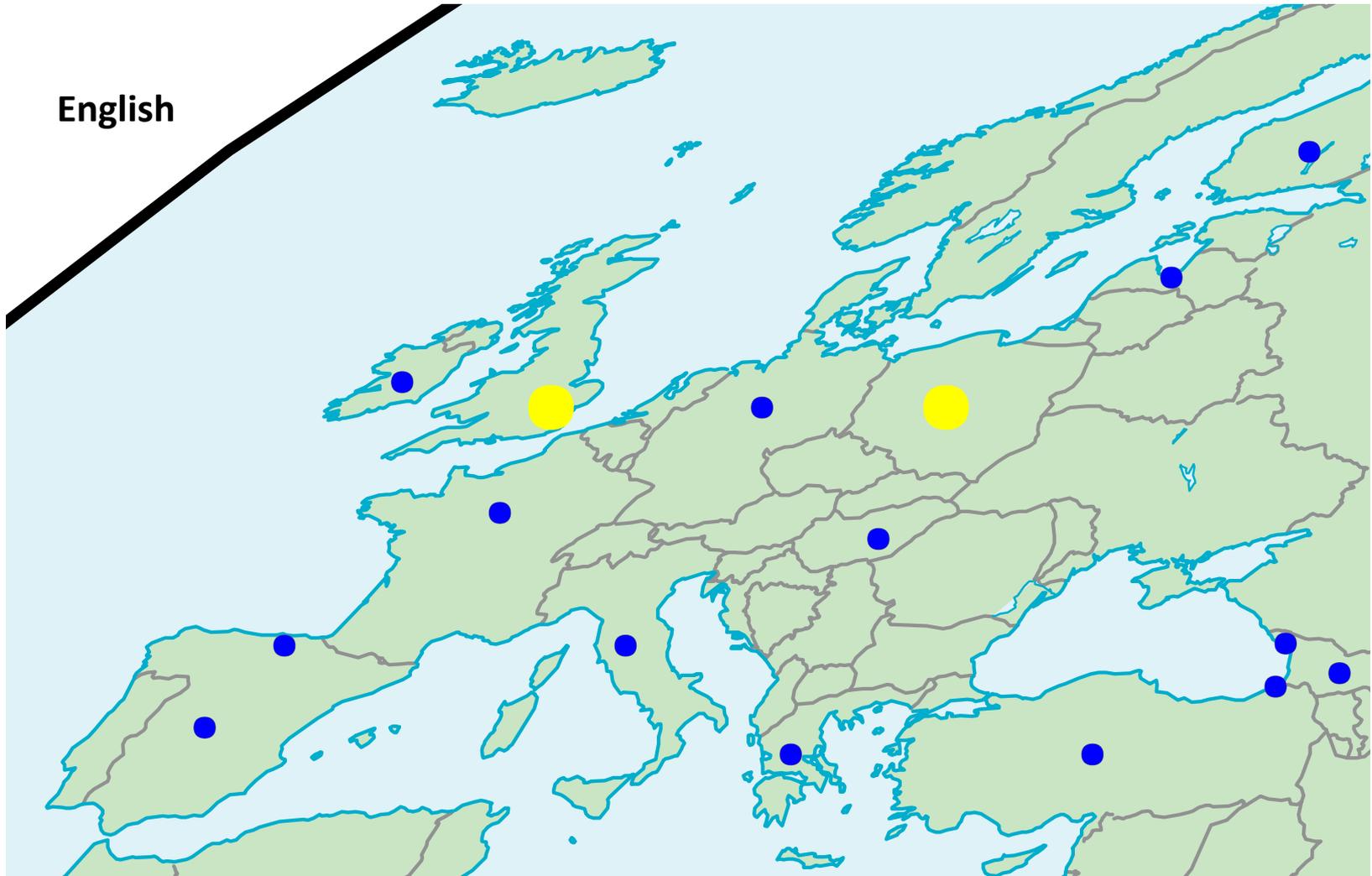
**and.DS** he as usual NEG had money

'As always, he(2) didn't have money.'

# Switch-Reference in Europe?

- But more generally the conjunctions *i* and *a* indicate parallel or contrastive coordinated phrases
  - SR is only one meaning of *a*
- Similar usage for *a* in Russian (but not as grammaticalized?):
  - “*a* connects... but semantically differentiates... shifts the focus to another subject of narration”  
(subject *is used here in the sense of topic*)  
(Dengub & Rojavin 2010)
  - DS tendency for Russian *a* confirmed by native speaker, while *i* may be SS or DS (Tania Ionin, p.c.)

# Switch-Reference in Europe?



# Switch-Reference in Europe?

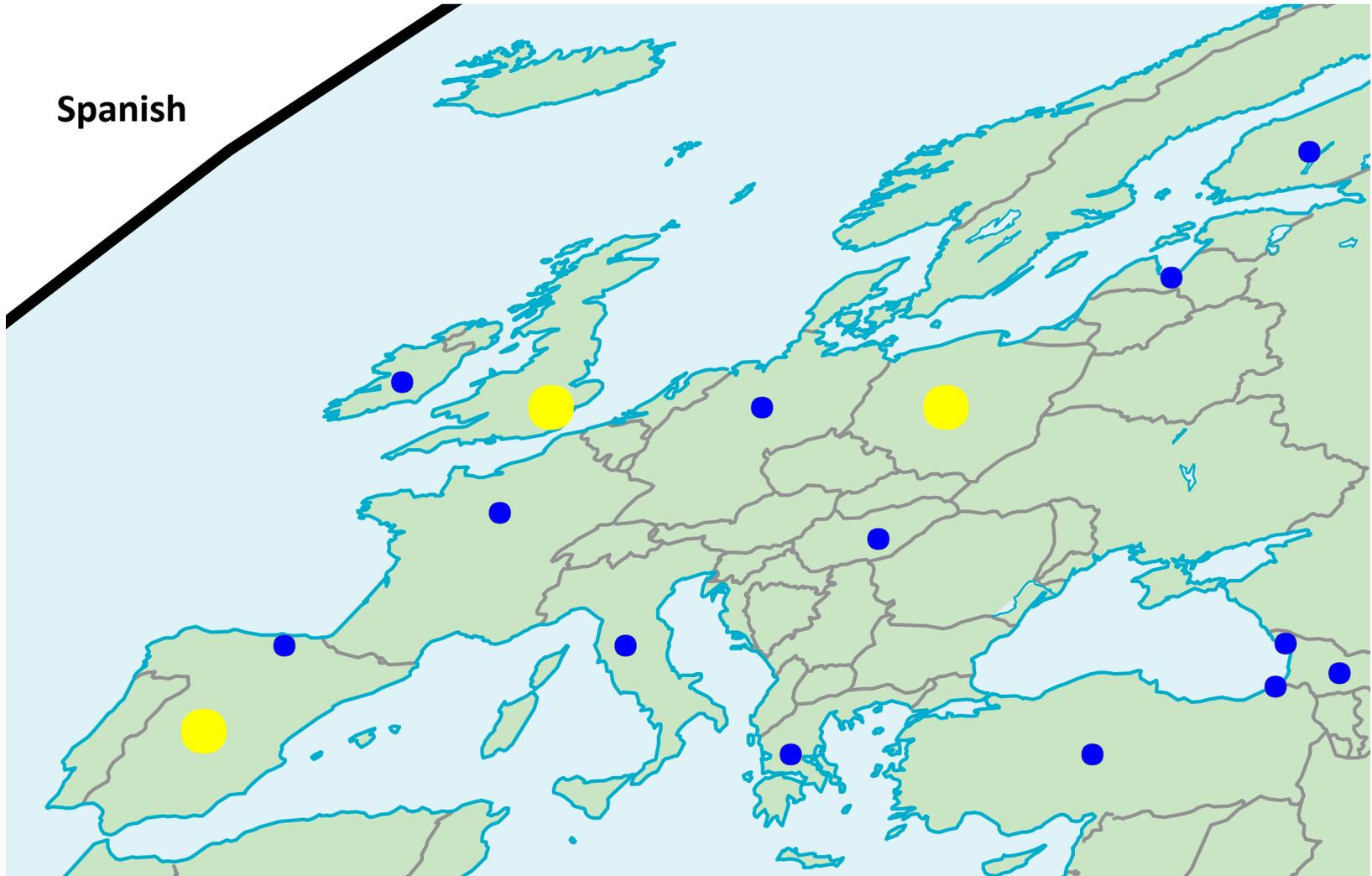
- Hayashi (1989, reported in Givón 1990:849-851) identified a pattern of reference relationships with English conjunctions:

Cataphoric referential continuity and contrastive conjunctions in written English (Hayashi 1989)

Conjunction type	% subject switch (DS) across the conjunction
<i>and</i> (all punctuations)	29
<i>, while</i>	77
<i>but</i> (all punctuations)	85
<i>, though</i>	100
<i>. Yet</i>	100

and vs. but : *tendency, but not a rule*

# Switch-Reference in Europe?

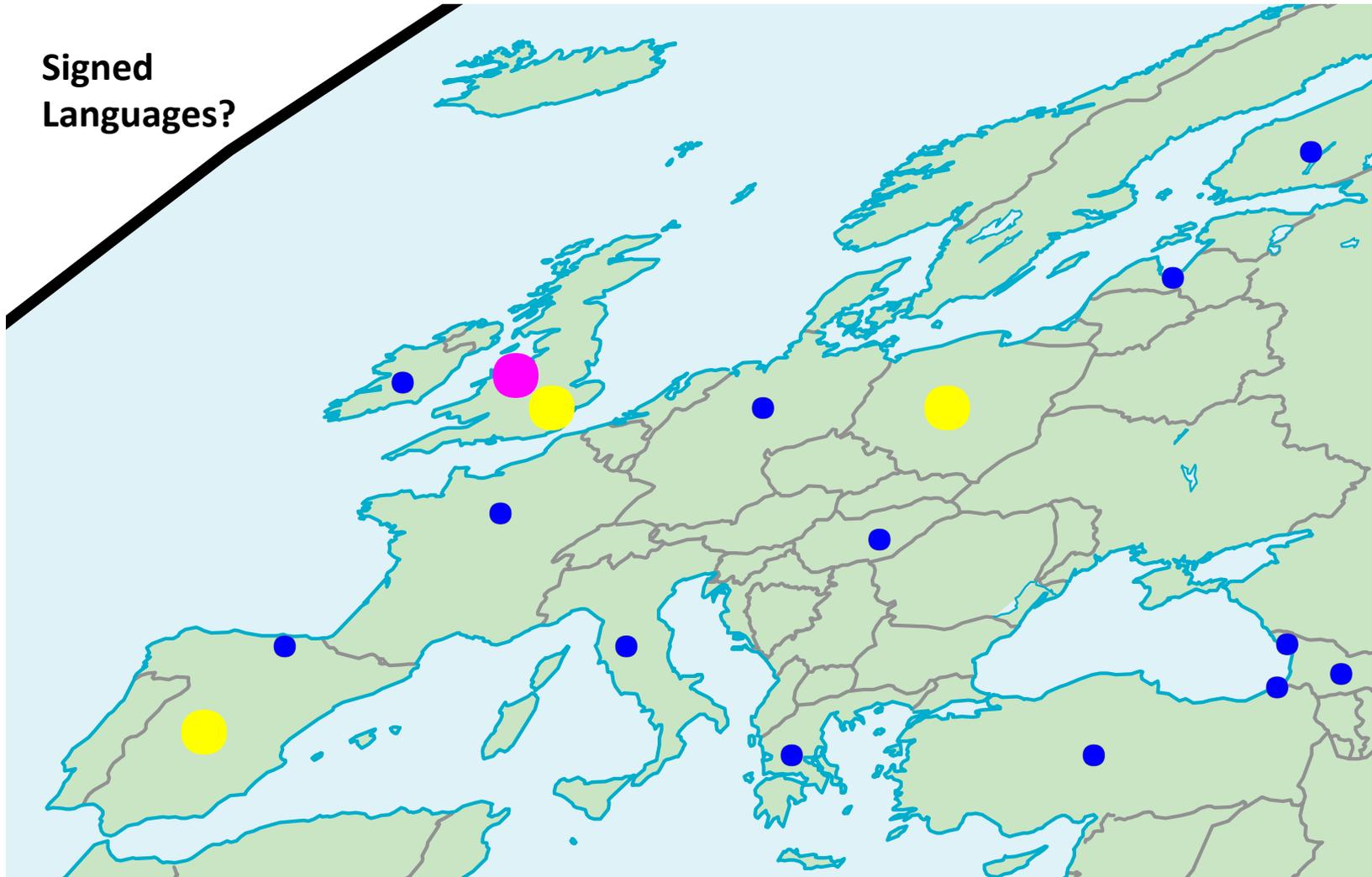


# Switch-Reference in Europe?

- Cameron (1995), among others, describes a function of Switch-Reference as a discourse function for pronoun usage in Spanish
- Omission (dropping) a pronoun indicates SS
- Overt pronouns indicate DS

# Switch-Reference in Europe?

Signed  
Languages?



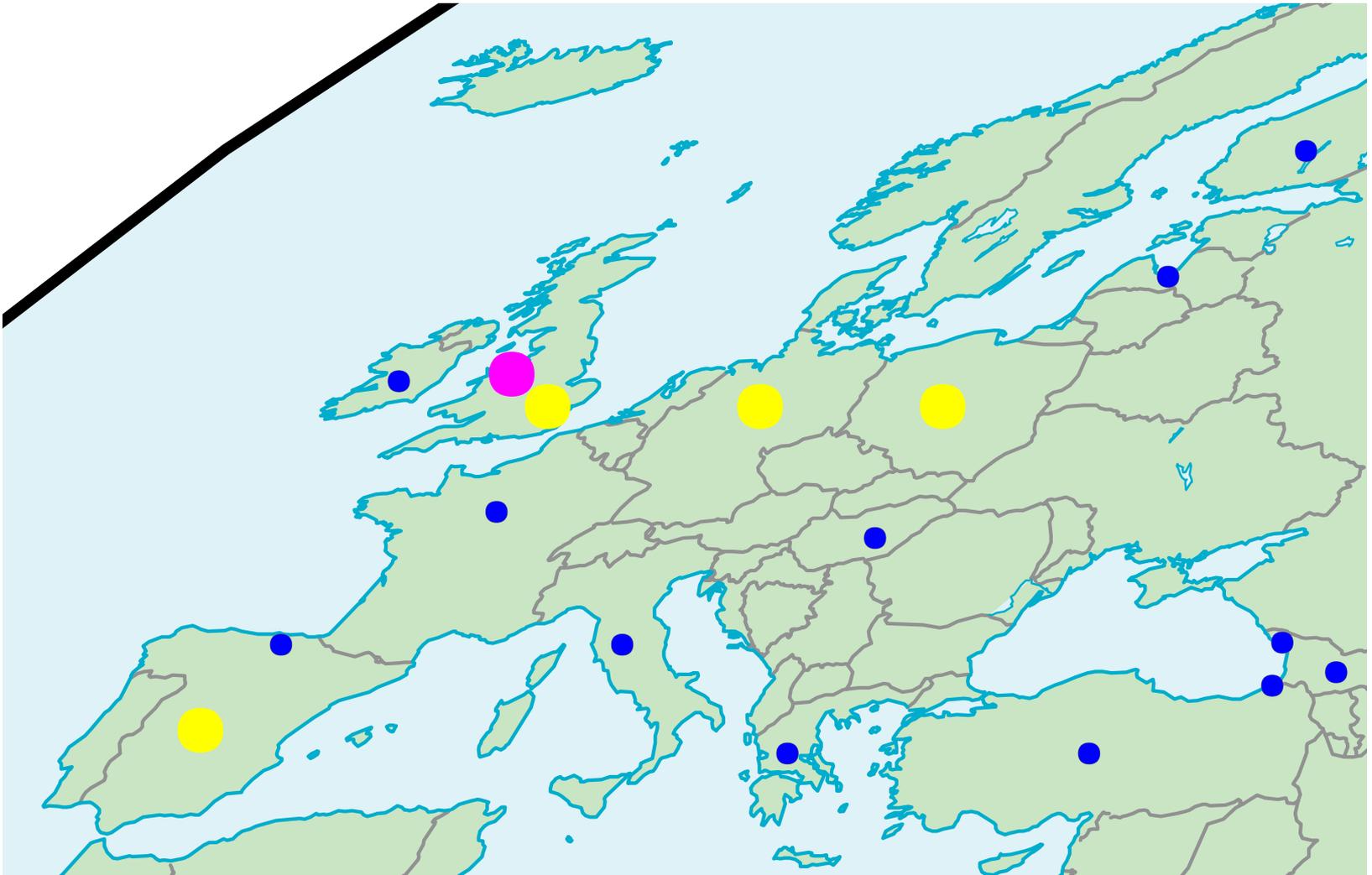
# Switch-Reference in Europe?

- For British Sign Language (BSL), Cormier, Smith & Zwets (2013) describe a similar function
  - Used in a certain type of imitative, quotative discourse
  - Omitted subjects preferred for SS
  - Overt subjects typical for DS
- Different modality introduces questions about the form and implementation of Switch-Reference

# Switch-Reference in Europe (?)

- Even in German, SR argued to exist based on ordering of matrix clause and subordinate clause (Barnickel & Opitz 2012)
- Do these cases count as “real” Switch-Reference
  - Hard to draw the line... Some but not all? Which?
- Given the research bias for European languages, similar structures likely found elsewhere too!

# Switch-Reference in Europe (?)



# Switch-Reference Complexity

- No SR found in creoles as far as I know
  - at least not morphologically
- We might call it a “complex” type of construction
- Also not common in globalized languages
  - Maybe a complex feature that disappears with larger speech communities, L2 learning and globalization (cf. McWhorter 2007; & Trudgill 2011)

# Switch-Reference Development

- There are clearly some kind of areal effects
- In terms of development little is known, but suggested the morphology might come from conjunctions (Haiman 1983)
  - Supported by isolated cases in the sample including Hmong and Lakota
- No necessary reason to exclude such types (or others)

# Switch-Reference Development

Lakhota (Siouan, United States: Dahlstrom 1982:72)

Joe wĩyã wã hãska č<sup>h</sup>a wãyãkĩ

Joe woman REL tall INDEF see

‘Joe saw a woman who was tall,

{ na / yũk<sup>h</sup>ã } heye ...

{ and.SS / and.DS } say

and { he / she } said ...’

# “Echo-Subject” in Vanuatu

- A similar phenomenon is common in the languages of southern Vanuatu, indicating grammaticalization
- A historical conjunction *\*ma* has become an “Echo-Subject” prefix indicating SS.
  - Typologically unusual because this system is prefixing, centered around coordination (not subordination), and marked for SS, not DS
  - But otherwise similar, and possible to integrate this type into the typology of SR constructions

# “Echo-Subject” in Vanuatu

Lenakel (Oceanic, Vanuatu: Lynch 1983:211)

i-im-vin (kani) r-im-apul

1-PST-go (and) 3SG-PST-sleep

‘I went and he slept.’ (DS)

i-im-vin (kani) m-im-apul

1-PST-go (and) SS-PST-sleep

‘I went and slept’ (SS)

# “Echo-Subject” in Vanuatu

- Probably should be considered a region with SR
- But unusual form:
  - Primarily coordinating, not subordinating
  - Prefix
  - Overtly indicates SS, rather than DS
- Found in many southern Vanuatu languages (de Sousa 2008)

# Typology and Definition

- There does not even need to be any specific marking for either *SS* or *DS*
- Salt-Yui (Papua New Guinea; Irwin 1974) indicates:
  - *SS* with no subject agreement on dependent verbs
  - *DS* with subject agreement on dependent verbs

bol-ere

fight-DEP

'fighting (*SS*)...'

bo-m-g-ere

fight-1-PERF-DEP

'when I/we fight... (*DS*)'

# Typology and Definition

- Is SS or DS more prominent? Is one default?
- Some languages seem to emphasize DS
  - Where a specific DS morpheme is added to verb inflection (as Jacobsen showed for Washo)
- Other languages seem to emphasize SS
  - Where SS is marked consistently and DS by normal verb inflection (e.g., full subject agreement)
  - Echo Subject marking in Vanuatu
  - In some cases, SS is robust, while DS marking may optionally also allow SS interpretations (see Chechen below)

# Typology and Definition

- The typological anomaly of SR seems to be DS marking
  - The name “switch-reference” emphasizes this too
  - This is the rarer function across languages
  
- Many languages have SS constructions
  - Serial Verb Constructions are often SS
  - English infinitives are typically SS
    - But is *for* (‘I hoped *for* him to...’) a DS marker?

# Typology and Definition

- Mithun (1993, 1999:270) and others question whether SR is really *reference* tracking
- “subject” better thought of as topic or event
- Some thematically connected events with different subjects can be marked as SS
- Some thematically disconnected events with the same subject can be marked as DS
- Also, weather verbs, etc., can take SR marking

# Typology and Definition

- The form of SR can vary across languages
- The function and use (in different syntactic constructions) of SR can vary across languages
- Unclear what common thread ties together the various SR systems in languages of the world
  - Theoretical analyses for one language may not work for others

# Typology and Definition

- There are two ways to go from here:
  1. reject the traditional category of SR cross-linguistically in favor of details (and consider instances of “SR” to be *emergent*)
  2. use an approach like Corbett’s Canonical Typology (Corbett 2005; Brown, Chumakina & Corbett 2013) to include and identify variation.
  
- Either approach requires breaking the SR phenomenon down into its component parts

# The form of SR

- SR is typically **verbal morphology**
  - usually suffixes
- But **conjunctions** may also be used
- And sometimes **no marking** is used
- We might even consider use of pronouns or word order
- Overlap with other functions like verbal inflection

# SR vs. converbs

- SR marking is very similar to the use of converbs
- Except that converbs are usually SS only
- In some cases, we could say morphological SR is a converb system plus a DS form
- Some DS converbs for SR have been proposed (For example, in the Caucasus and Ethiopia)

# SR vs. converbs

Chechen (Nakh, Caucasus: Nichols 1983:250)

a:raväl-la      cuo: iza e:lira

went.out-CVB he this said

‘he went out and said this.’ (SS)

a:raväl-ča      cuo: iza e:lira

went.out-CVB he this said

‘he<sub>i</sub> went out and he<sub>j,i</sub> said this’ (DS or SS)

# Functions of SR

- Functions can include:
  - subordination (adverbial, relative clauses, etc.)
  - clause chaining
  - coordination
  - complex predicates
- Some languages mark SR for many of these types
- Some languages may be limited to only one type
  - Austin (1981:326-7) finds SR for only relative clauses in Alyawarra (Australia)

# Conclusions

- Range of SR constructions from more prototypical to less prototypical
- SR can be broadly defined as indicating continuity and discontinuity of reference or discourse topic and may be realized by a wide variety of forms
- Overlap with other phenomena
- Areal phenomenon
  - The traditional areas for SR are supported, and limited instances elsewhere suggest origin

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# Questions?

