Not all inverses are born equal. Dealing with direction marking patterns and empathy hierarchies in order to capture their synchrony and explain their diachrony.

One of the aspects of the direct-inverse opposition that have been relatively neglected in the past is the fact that, in global direction systems (i.e. those in which S[pee] A[ct] P[articipant]s as well as proximate and obviative 3rd persons are involved), core direction (SAP↔3rd; Gildea’s “inverse alignment”) and non-local direction (3rd↔3rd; Gildea’s “inverse voice”) can, but need not, be expressed by the same morphosyntactic means. Gildea (1994) suggests a number of possible diachronic developments that may give rise to the different attested systems of oppositions, but little work has been done since then in this respect (cf. Zúñiga 2006). The present paper will address the relevance of these kinds of syncretisms and splits for typological databases and for the purposes of synchronic and diachronic explanations of inverse systems.

References: