



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

What goes around, comes around: Cases that keep me going

Laura A. Janda

CLEAR

Cognitive Linguistics: Empirical Approaches to Russian



Threat-Defuser

(Norwegian Research Council)

Overview

- Case Semantics

Linguistic theory and description

- Two Tools

- The Russian Constructicon

- <https://constructicon.github.io/russian/>

Pedagogical applications

- The Strategic Mastery of Russian Tool (SMARTool)

- <https://smartool.github.io/smartool-rus-eng/>

- Putin Makes His (Grammatical) Case

Analysis of political discourse



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Case Semantics



Textbooks cite seemingly random long lists of prepositions and verbs to memorize for each case – but that can't be the whole story!



Philosophical questions

- Are grammar and lexicon really distinct?
- Does grammar have meaning?
- If grammar has meaning, how does it work?

Answers from the perspective of
Cognitive Linguistics

Are grammar and lexicon really distinct?

- Grammar and lexicon form a continuum
- Many functions are expressed grammatically in some languages, but lexically in others
 - case affixes vs. adpositions
 - aspect/tense/mood affixes vs. adverbs
 - in/definiteness affixes vs. articles
 - comparative/superlative affixes vs. adverbs

No clear boundary separating functions expressed
synthetically vs. analytically

Does grammar have meaning?

- **PURPOSE** of all language phenomena is to convey **meaning**
- **THEREFORE:** all morphemes, including grammatical ones, convey meaning
- **BUT:** grammatical meaning does tend to be more abstract, schematic, polysemous

If grammar has meaning, how does it work?

- Homonymy vs. structured polysemy
 - meanings are not random lists of disconnected items
 - meanings are related to each other
- Aristotelian categories vs. radial categories
 - meaning is not “+” vs. “-”
 - meaning is not about sets and boundaries
 - meaning is about prototypes and extensions from/relations to prototypes

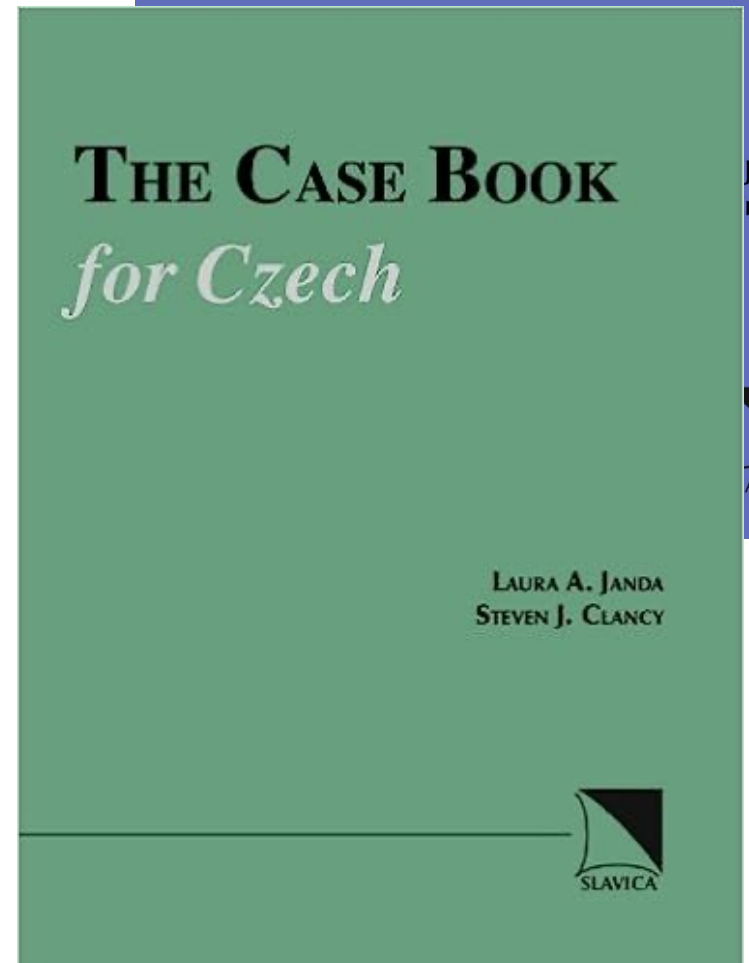
Eleanor Rosch on
Human Natural Categories



Case Meanings in Russian (and Czech)

- Janda, Laura A. 1993. *A Geography of Case Semantics: The Czech Dative and the Russian Instrumental* (=Cognitive Linguistics Research, v. 4). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Janda, Laura A. 1999. Peircean semiotics and cognitive linguistics: a case study of the Russian genitive. In: *The Peirce Seminar Papers*, ed. by Michael Shapiro. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 441–466.
- Janda, Laura A. 2000. A cognitive model of the Russian accusative case. In: *Trudy mezhdunarodnoj konferencii Kognitivnoe modelirovanie*, No. 4, part I, ed. by R. K. Potapova, V. D. Solov'ev and V. N. Poljakov. Moscow: MISIS, 20–43.
- Janda, Laura A. & Steven J. Clancy. 2002. *The Case Book for Russian*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers.
- Janda, Laura A. & Steven J. Clancy. 2006. *The Case Book for Czech*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers.

THE CASE BOOK *for Russian*



Overview of the case meanings (Russian)

For each case:

- Schematic meaning
 - Abstract overall idea
- Network of 1 to 4 meaning nodes
 - Structured polysemy: meanings are related to each other
 - Metaphorical and metonymic extensions, usually from space to other domains: time, purpose, etc.

Nominative: Identification

NOMINATIVE: A NAME

- Used to point out an item or call someone
- The grammatical subject, the active agent in a situation.

NOMINATIVE: AN IDENTITY

- With verbs meaning 'be' as in 'X is Y' (*Ivan **xorošij student*** 'Ivan is a **good student**'), where "X" (Ivan) is NOMINATIVE: A NAME as the grammatical subject, while "Y" (good student) is NOMINATIVE: AN IDENTITY.

Genitive: Backgrounded with respect to something in proximity

GENITIVE: A SOURCE

- Point of departure specified by prepositions meaning 'from' (*iz, s, ot...*), verbs expressing withdrawal (*izbogat' 'avoid', bojat'sja 'be afraid of' ...*); extended metaphorically to time, cause, human relationships.

GENITIVE: A GOAL

- Point of attainment specified by prepositions (*do 'up to, until', dlja and radi 'for', protiv 'against'...*), verbs and adjectives expressing (mostly metaphorical) approach (*ždat' 'wait for', želat' 'wish'...*); extended metaphorically to time, purpose, states of being.

GENITIVE: A WHOLE

- Part of a larger unit; 'of'; participant in a nominalized event (*poterja žizni 'loss of life'*); complex prepositional phrases; quantification (*sto studentov 'one hundred students'*); partitive expressions (*vypit' čaju 'drink some tea'*).

GENITIVE: A REFERENCE

- Proximal landmark (*u 'by, at' and other prepositions*); temporal setting; lack, as in the Genitive of negation, and verbs, nouns, and adjectives expressing lack, as well as the preposition *bez 'without'*; standard of comparison (*Ivan starše menja 'Ivan is older than I am'*).

Dative: Capacity to interact with surroundings

DATIVE: A RECEIVER

- indirect object (*Ivan podaril **mame** knigu* 'Ivan gave **his mother** a book'), includes many verbs without an overt direct object, such as verbs of communication and payment.

DATIVE: AN EXPERIENCER

- With words denoting harm, benefit, belonging to, and needing; age; experience of environment, emotions, limitations on capacity (modals).

DATIVE: A COMPETITOR

- With words expressing matched competition or submission to a greater force; *k* 'toward' and *po* 'along' which identify a person or entity that exerts influence.

Accusative: Path toward a destination

ACCUSATIVE: A DESTINATION

- Direct object; path specified by prepositions (*v* 'into', *na* 'onto', *za* 'beyond', *pod* 'under'...); metaphorical extensions to domains such as time, purpose, change of state, mathematics, human relationships (joining of groups).

ACCUSATIVE: A DIMENSION

- Distance or size (*rasstojanie v dva kilometra* 'a distance of **two** kilometers'), duration (*interval v dve nedeli* 'an interval of **two** weeks'); prepositions specify path contours (*skvoz'* 'through', *čerez* 'across').

ACCUSATIVE: AN ENDPOINT

- Final point of a path (*v* and *za*, both indicating the end of a distance or duration) and postpositions (*nazad* 'ago').

Instrumental: Peripheral conduit or attachment

INSTRUMENTAL: A MEANS

- Conduit for an action (*idti lesom* 'go **through/by means of the forest**'); instrument that makes an action possible (*rezat' xleb nožom* 'slice bread **with a knife**'); with verbs signifying control and evaluation (*vladet' anglijskim jazykom* 'have mastery **of the English language**'); passive agent (*Mašina kuplena Ivanom* 'The car was bought **by Ivan**'); facilitator in a sentence lacking a grammatical subject (*Ivana zabilo molnjej* 'Ivan was killed **by lightning**').

INSTRUMENTAL: A LABEL

- With verbs denoting being, becoming, and seeming to identify a category that something belongs to (*koška javljaetsja mlekopitajuščim* 'a cat is **a mammal**').

INSTRUMENTAL: AN ADJUNCT

- Preposition *s* 'with' (*Marija prišla s Ivanom* 'Marija came with **Ivan**').

INSTRUMENTAL: A LANDMARK

- Prepositions *nad* 'above', *pod* 'under', *pered* 'in front of', *za* 'behind', *meždu* 'between'.

Locative: Location

LOCATIVE: A PLACE

- Locations in space or other domains specified by prepositions *v* 'in', *na* 'on', *pri* 'at', *o* 'about', *po* 'after' (*v Moskve* 'in **Moscow**', *v mae* 'in **May**').



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Two Tools



RUSSIAN

CONSTRUCTICON

<https://constructicon.github.io/russian/>



RUSSIAN CONSTRUCTICON

Team



Anna
Endresen



Daria
Mordashova



Ekaterina
Rakhilina



Valentina
Zhukova

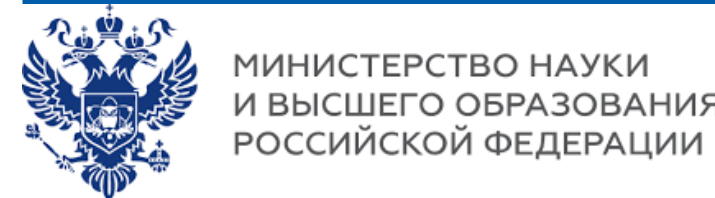
Plus: over 40 students

Financing and collaboration



CLEAR

Cognitive Linguistics: Empirical Approaches to Russian



What is a construction?

- A construction is:
 - any **conventionalized form-meaning pairing** in a language, at any level of complexity, from morpheme through lexeme through phrase to discourse structure (Goldberg 2006, 5)
 - **the basic** (though not elementary) **unit** that structures language

A construction may be **compositional or non-compositional**

All meaningful units of a language are constructions

An entire language can be described in terms of constructions

Examples of Russian constructions

- morphemes
-t' = INF
- lexemes
tancevat 'dance'
- multi-word idioms where all slots are fixed
tancevat' ot Adama 'start from the very beginning'
- **multi-word expressions with open slots**
VP pod NP-Acc
Ona tancevala pod muzyku 'She danced to the music'
- larger discourse units



Our project focuses
mainly on this type of
construction

Filling in the gaps

- Dictionaries, grammars, and textbooks focus primarily on lexemes, lexicalized idioms, inflectional paradigms, and grammatical patterns
- **Multi-word expressions with open slots** are less reliably represented in standard resources

We need a relatively large inventory of constructions of a single language, and a detailed description of this inventory, a constructicon.



What is a constructicon?

- A constructicon is:
 - a structured inventory of constructions in a given language
- Constructicons exist for:
 - English
 - German
 - Swedish
 - Japanese
 - Brazilian Portuguese

The Russian Constructicon
is by far the largest,
with over 2200
constuctions



- Browse
- Daily dose
- Advanced search
- Instructions (English)
- Instructions (Russian)
- Statistics
- About

Search in names and illustrations

Results

- 3 - (a) как же NP-Nom? - А как же мама?
- 4 - (a) при чём здесь/тут Cop NP-Nom? - При чём здесь наши отноше
- 5 - (a) Noun-Nom/кто (же) (PronPers-3.Асс) знает, Cl - Кто его знает, г
- 6 - (a/так) что насчёт XP? - Что насчёт пятницы? Какие у тебя плань
- 7 - NP-Nom Cop похожий-Short на NP-Асс (NP-Ins/по NP-Dat) - Вася п
- 8 - (вот) то-то и оно́, что Cl/XP - То-то и оно, что от меня ничего не за
- 9 - (всё) никак не VP-Ipfv - Задача всё никак не решалась.
- 10 - (единственное) (Prep) что (не) VP, так это (не) XP/Cl - Чего дочь
- 11 - (как) по мне, (так) Cl - Как по мне, это ещё не беда.
- 12 - (не/самое) время Cop VP-Inf - Самое время вершить большие д



Search in names and illustrations

Browse a list of over 2200 constructions

Select any construction, click on it and the description will appear at the bottom of the same page

Results

- 3 - (а) как же NP-Nom? - А как же мама?
- 4 - (а) при чём здесь/тут Cop NP-Nom? - При чём здесь наши о
- 5 - (а) Noun-Nom/кто (же) (PronPers-3.Асс) знает, Cl - Кто его зн
- 6 - (а/так) что насчёт XP? - Что насчёт пятницы? Какие у тебя п
- 7 - NP-Nom Cop похожий-Short на NP-Асс (NP-Ins/по NP-Dat) - В
- 8 - (вот) то-то и оно́, что Cl/XP - То-то и оно, что от меня ничего
- 9 - (всё) никак не VP-Ipfv - Задача всё никак не решалась.
- 10 - (единственное) (Преп) что (не) VP, так это (не) XP/Cl - Чего
- 11 - (как) по мне, (так) Cl - Как по мне, это ещё не беда.
- 12 - (не/самое) время Cop VP-Inf - Самое время вершить больш



ID-number

Name

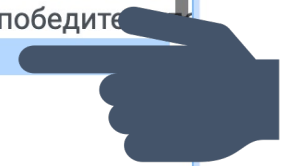
Illustration

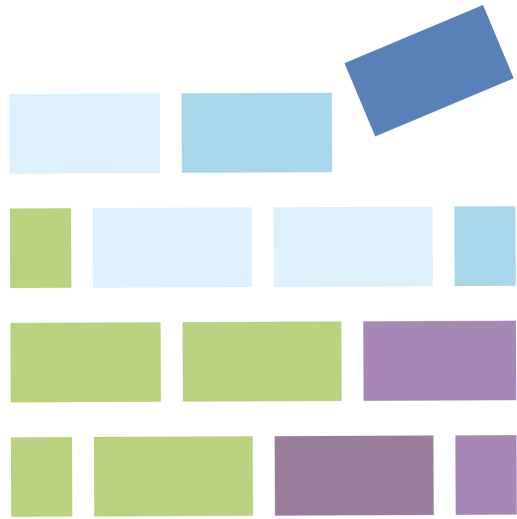
Search in names and illustrations

Results

For each construction we have an ID number, a name (a general morphosyntactic formula) and a short recognizable illustration.

- 631 - VP как следует - Он работал как следует.
- 632 - VP лучше/не хуже PronPoss-Gen - Я знаю лучше вашего.
- 633 - VP на раз(-два)(-три) - Настоящий мастер может изготовить о
- 634 - VP по принципу NP-Gen - На конкурсе отбирают победите
- 635 - VP под NP-Acc - Она танцевала под музыку
- 636 - VP под NP-Acc - Она вернулась под утро.
- 637 - VP себе - А он идёт себе.
- 638 - VP себе (и) VP/~Verb - Я стою себе думаю.
- 639 - VP так себе - На пианино я играю так себе.





Construxercise!

Hands-on learning of Russian constructions

<https://constructicon.github.io/construxercise-rus/>

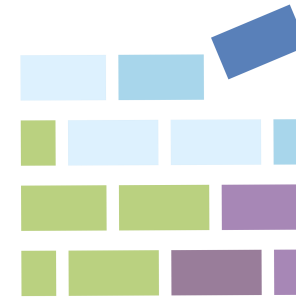
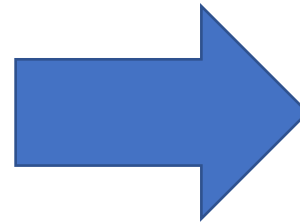


RUSSIAN CONSTRUCTICON

database with over 2200 Russian
grammatical constructions

<https://constructicon.github.io/russian/>

built in 2016-2021 / 2022,
launched in September 2021



Construxercise!

Hands-on learning of Russian constructions

practical exercises for students
learning Russian


<https://constructicon.github.io/construxercise-rus/>


built in January - June 2022,
launched in June 2022

- The exercises are aimed at the strategic groups of 57 Russian constructions
- All constructions included in the exercises are carefully described and illustrated in the Russian construction

Our choice: discourse constructions

| ID | Construction | Illustration | |
|------|------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 1087 | иными/другими словами, XP/CI | Наш корреспондент выехал в аэропорт, чтобы взять интервью. Другими словами , задать несколько вопросов. | Clarify your point |
| 1840 | к примеру, CI/XP | Вот, к примеру , мне нравится Мерилин Монро. | Give an example |
| 1872 | (и) кстати (говоря), CI | И кстати , он пришёл без подарка. | Add information |
| 6 | (а/так) что насчёт XP? | Что насчёт пятницы? Какие у тебя планы? | Introduce a topic |
| 2273 | в-NumOrd-ых, XP/CI | Во-первых , я бы хотел поблагодарить своего тренера. | Structure your argument |
| 1839 | таким образом, CI | Таким образом , наша команда за год добилась важных результатов. | Draw a conclusion |
| 11 | (как) по мне, (так) CI | Как по мне , это ещё не беда. | Express your opinion |
| 2281 | CI, не правда ли? | Интересный художник, не правда ли? | Ask someone for their opinion |
| 1133 | мягко говоря, CI | Он, мягко говоря , не подарок. | Hedge |

 **Construxercise!** предлагает студентам и преподавателям русского языка как иностранного более 150 упражнений, которые значительно улучшают навыки говорения и письма. В упражнениях отрабатываются стратегические группы русских конструкций (частотных моделей построения предложений и фраз), которые организуют текст и помогают достичь складности речи на уровне носителей языка.

 **Construxercise!** offers learners and teachers of Russian as a foreign language more than 150 exercises that significantly improve speaking and writing skills. In the exercises, strategic groups of Russian constructions (frequent patterns of sentence and phrase construction) are practiced, which help to achieve fluency in speech at the level of native speakers.

1. **Знакомство.** Introducing yourself
2. **Поездка за границу.** Traveling abroad
3. **Устройство на работу.** Getting a job
4. **Поход к врачу.** Going to the doctor
5. **Закрепление уроков 1-4.** Review lessons 1-4
6. **Транспорт.** Getting around
7. **Праздники.** Holiday celebrations
8. **Еда.** Cooking and eating
9. **Внешность.** Personal Appearance
10. **Характер.** Describing personality
11. **Одежда.** Getting dressed
12. **Закрепление уроков 6-11.** Review lessons 6-11

Construxercise! offers learners and teachers of Russian over 150 exercises that strengthen text production skills. The exercises target strategic sets of constructions (prominent patterns and phrase structures) that help to achieve fluency in speaking and writing.



Spin-offs from the Russian Constructicon



BROWSE

ADVANCED SEARCH

DAILY DOSE

STATISTICS

INSTRUCTIONS

ABOUT

Search in names and illustrations

за рахунок

Level

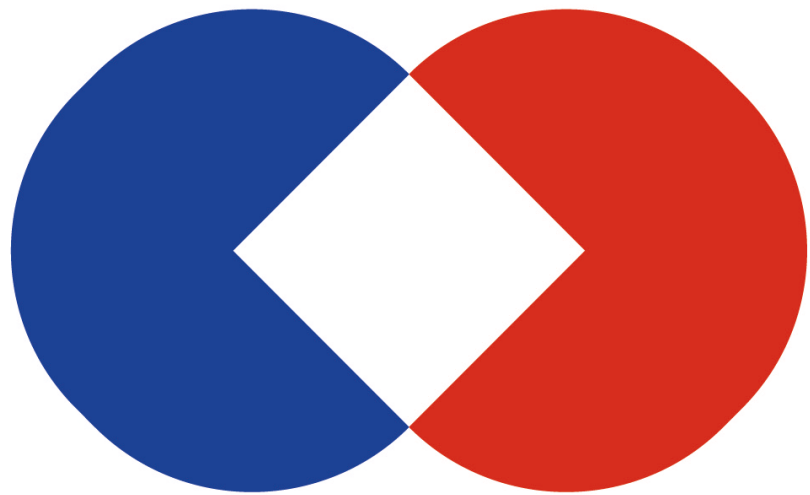
Select level

Results

1. чого доброго VP-Pfv.Fut | А то вони, чого доброго, подумают, що ти забув про них.
2. як та/те/той/то NP | Життя, як той цвіт, що землю красить.
3. невже (не) VP? | Невже люди говорять правду?
4. NP-Nom набиратися (набратися) NP-Gen | Хлопчик ріс і набрався сил.
5. з огляду на NP-Асс, Cl | Він не став цього робити, з огляду на банальність ситуації.
6. начебто/неначе XP/Cl | Про мене начебто забули.

Also under construction: Hill Mari, Persian

The Strategic Mastery of Russian Tool



language

SMARTool

<https://smartool.github.io/smartool-rus-eng/>

Team



Radovan Bast



Tore Nasset



Francis Tyers



Mikhail Kopotev



Valentina
Zhukova



Elizaveta
Kibisova



Svetlana
Sokolova



Evgeniia
Sudarikova



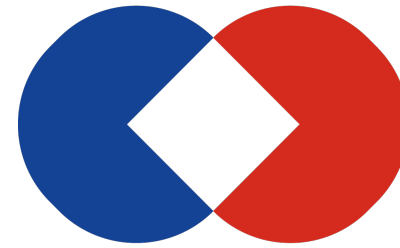
Ekaterina Rakhilina



Olga
Lyashevskaya



James
McDonald



language
SMARTool

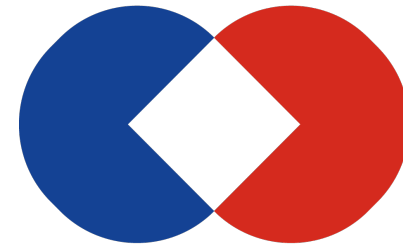
Financing and collaboration

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Cognitive Linguistics: Empirical Approaches to Russian

Diku



SMARTool: Empirical Basis



language
SMARTool

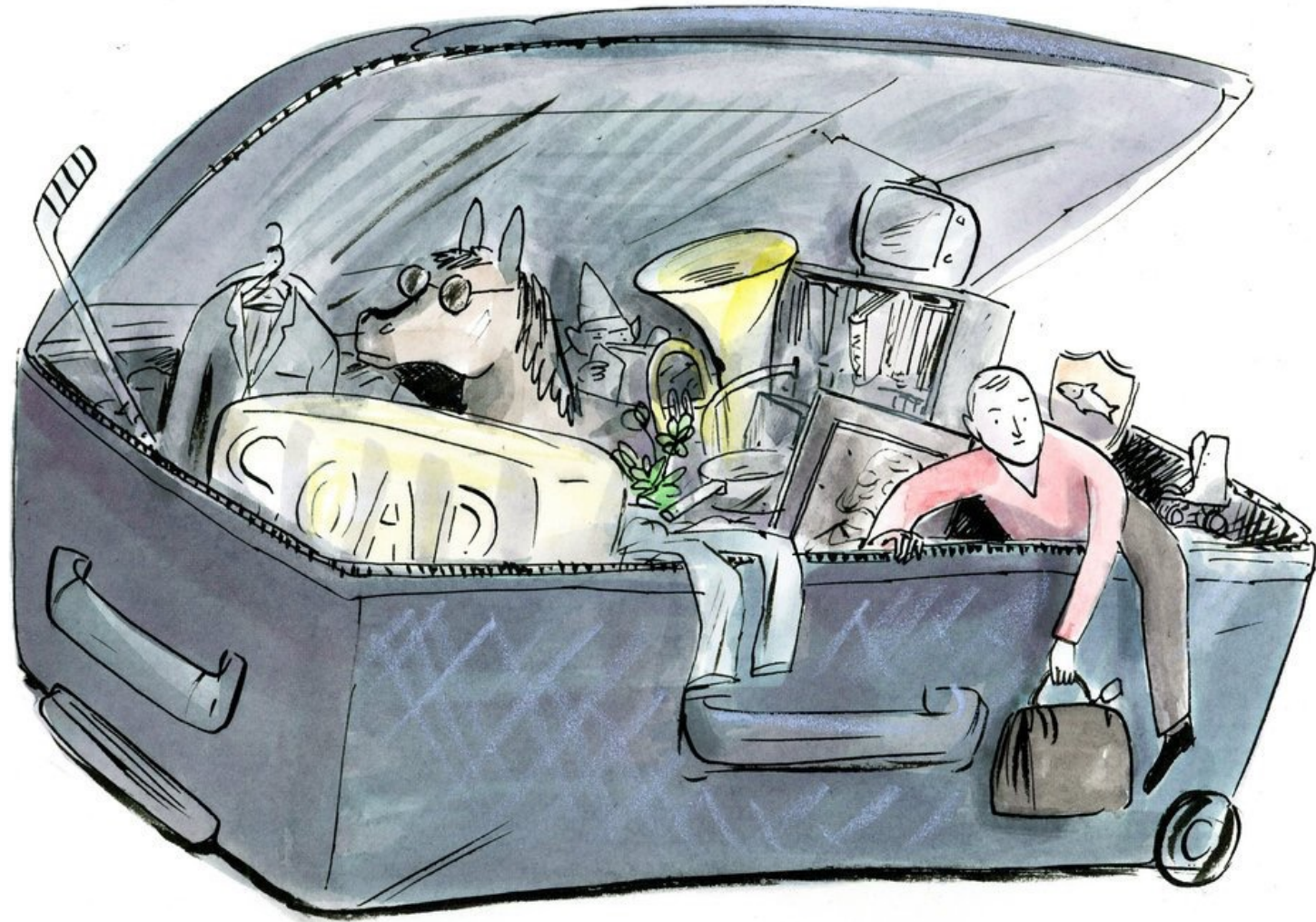
- Russian has rich inflectional morphology
 - Nouns, adjectives, and verbs have many forms
 - Even a small vocabulary of a few thousand words has >100,000 potential forms
 - But 90% of these forms are rarely used
 - Machine learning indicates that focus on the most frequent word forms is the best path to full mastery
 - Language technology resources make it possible to identify the most frequent word forms and the grammatical constructions and collocations that motivate their use
 - The SMARTool presents over 3000 words at the A1 through B2 levels
 - Freely available: <http://uit-no.github.io/smartool/>

Computational Learning Experiment

- Learning is potentially enhanced by focus **only on the most typical wordforms** attested for each lexeme: **accuracy increases** and **severity of errors decreases**
- This finding is **consistent with a usage-based cognitively plausible model**

How Can We Escape From Overstuffed Paradigms?

- Textbooks have always focused on certain forms and constructions
- Now we can do this in a scientific, consistent way



Introducing the SMARTool



Strategic Mastery of Russian Tool

- The user can browse 3000 Russian words according to proficiency level, topic, and grammatical categories.
- For each word, the SMARTool provides the three most common forms, plus example sentences that show typical collocations and grammatical constructions.

Find the SMARTool here:

<https://smartool.github.io/smartool-rus-eng/>

SMARTool for English-speaking learners of Russian



Search by topic

Search by analysis

Search by dictionary

List of abbreviations

About

Level

Topic



Show translation male voice female voice



First, choose a Level

SMARTool for English-speaking learners of Russian



Search by topic

Search by analysis

Search by dictionary

List of abbreviations

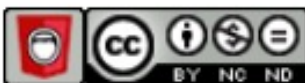
About

Level

Topic

- ✓ A1
- A2
- B1
- B2
- all levels

Show translation male voice female voice



Next, you can search by topic, analysis, or dictionary

SMARTool for English-speaking learners of Russian



Search by topic

[Search by analysis](#)

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[About](#)

Level

B1



Topic

Show translation male voice female voice





Search by topic

Search by analysis

Search by dictionary

List of abbreviations

About

Level

Topic

B1

Show translation



- ✓ **внутренний мир (mental experience)**
- время (time)
- еда (food)
- животные/растения (animals/plants)
- жильё (home)
- здоровье (health)
- люди (people)
- магазин (shopping)
- мера (measurement)
- общение (communication)
- одежда (clothing)
- описание (description)
- погода (weather)
- политика (politics)
- путешествие (travel)
- свободное время (leisure)
- транспорт (transportation)
- учёба/работа (study/work)



Search by topic

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[About](#)

Level



B1

Topic

еда (food)

 резать

Show translation male voice female voice

Для салата Катя **режет** лук, а Петя — помидоры. (Imperf.Sing.3  

Она не любит **резать** лук, потому что плачет от этого. (Imperf.Inf  

Он так громко кричал, как будто его **режут**. (Imperf.Plur.3  



Search by topic

Search by analysis

Search by dictionary

List of abbreviations

About

Level

B1

Topic

еда (food)

↔ резать

Show translation male voice female voice

Для салата Катя **режет** лук, а Петя — помидоры. (Imperf.Sing.3 ?) 

Она не любит **резать** лук, потому что плачет от этого. (Imperf.Inf ?) 

Он так громко кричал, как будто его **режут**. (Imperf.Plur.3 ?) 



Search by topic

Search by analysis

Search by dictionary

List of abbreviations

Level

B1

Analysis



рецепт

Show translation

Это очень лёгкий рецепт

It's a very easy recipe! It v

Я попробовал больше д

I tried more than twenty

Ане нравились рецепты

Anya liked the baking rec

- ✓ Acc.Fem.Sing
- Acc.Masc.Sing
- Acc.Plur
- Acc.Sing
- Adverb
- Anim.Acc.Plur
- Comparative
- Dat.Fem.Sing
- Dat.Masc.Sing
- Dat.Neut.Sing
- Dat.Plur
- Dat.Sing
- Fem.Sing
- Gen.Fem.Sing
- Gen.Masc.Sing
- Gen.Neut.Sing
- Gen.Plur
- Gen.Sing
- Imperf.Fem.Sing.Past
- Imperf.Gerund
- Imperf.Imper.Plur.2



Search by topic

Search by analysis

Search by dictionary

List of abbreviations

About

Level

B1

Analysis

Imperf.Gerund

Show translation male voice female voice

Прощаясь, не забудьте улыбнуться. (Imperf.Gerund ?) 


When saying goodbye, don't forget to smile.

Любую трудность она преодолевала, сохраняя улыбку. (Imperf.Gerund ?) 

She managed to overcome any difficulty with a smile on her face.

Костя не спеша пошёл к дому. (Imperf.Gerund ?) 

Kostya slowly walked toward his house.

Сравнивая три надписи, он понял значение иероглифов. (Imperf.Gerund ?) 

By comparing the three inscriptions, he figured out the meaning of the hieroglyphs.

Он нёс тяжёлую сумку, то и дело ударяя ей себе по коленке. (Imperf.Gerund ?) 

He was carrying a heavy bag, which was hitting his knee every now and then.

<https://smartool.github.io/exercises/>



SMARTool exercises

Home

Treasure
Hunt

Story
Time

Visit
SMARTool

About

Treasure Hunt

The Treasure Hunt design launches users on explorations into various corners of the Russian language. Treasure Hunt activities are stratified for proficiency level, and even A1 users (with a vocabulary of only a few hundred words) have ample opportunities to go on Treasure Hunts.

They can be undertaken in groups or individually, in the classroom or self-study.

Each Treasure Hunt begins with a simple Prompt, an instruction on how to use a SMARTool search function to extract a target set of sentences, and a question to consider. After deducing an answer

Story Time

The goal of Story Time is to build up skills and confidence in productive communication in Russian. Story Time helps learners to become confident writers, and, when used in the classroom – speakers.

Story Time activities take advantage of the fact that all lexemes in the SMARTool are searchable according to Topic, and many lexemes belong to more than one Topic. Filtering lexemes by Topic facilitates the targeting of word forms that learners can use to construct coherent narratives.

[Home](#)[Treasure
Hunt](#)[Story
Time](#)[Visit
SMARTool](#)[About](#)

1. *Choose your level.*
2. *Choose the topic you would like to focus on.*

... [Show more](#)

Topic:

✓ All topics

Sounds and Letters
Meanings of words
Morphology
Case and Prepositions
Singular vs. Plural

Level:

All levels ▾

[Choose](#)

8. Sounds and Letters A1

Choose: Search by dictionary (all levels)

Find all the words that begin with э-

What do these words have in common?

Answer key

All of the words that begin with э- in the SMARTool dictionary are borrowed words in Russian.

Native Russian words do not begin with э-. the only exceptions are: этот 'this/that' and other forms of this word (эта, эти, etc.)

In general, most Russian words begin with a consonant. This includes words that begin with е-, ю-, я-, which begin with the consonant j- (sounds like y- in English). If a Russian word begins with a vowel, it is one of these: и-, о-, or у-.

Take-away idea

If you encounter a long new word that begins with a vowel, it is probably a borrowed word. If you sound it out, you will probably recognize it. For example, экономический means 'economic', and you don't need a dictionary to figure that out.



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Putin Makes His (Grammatical) Case

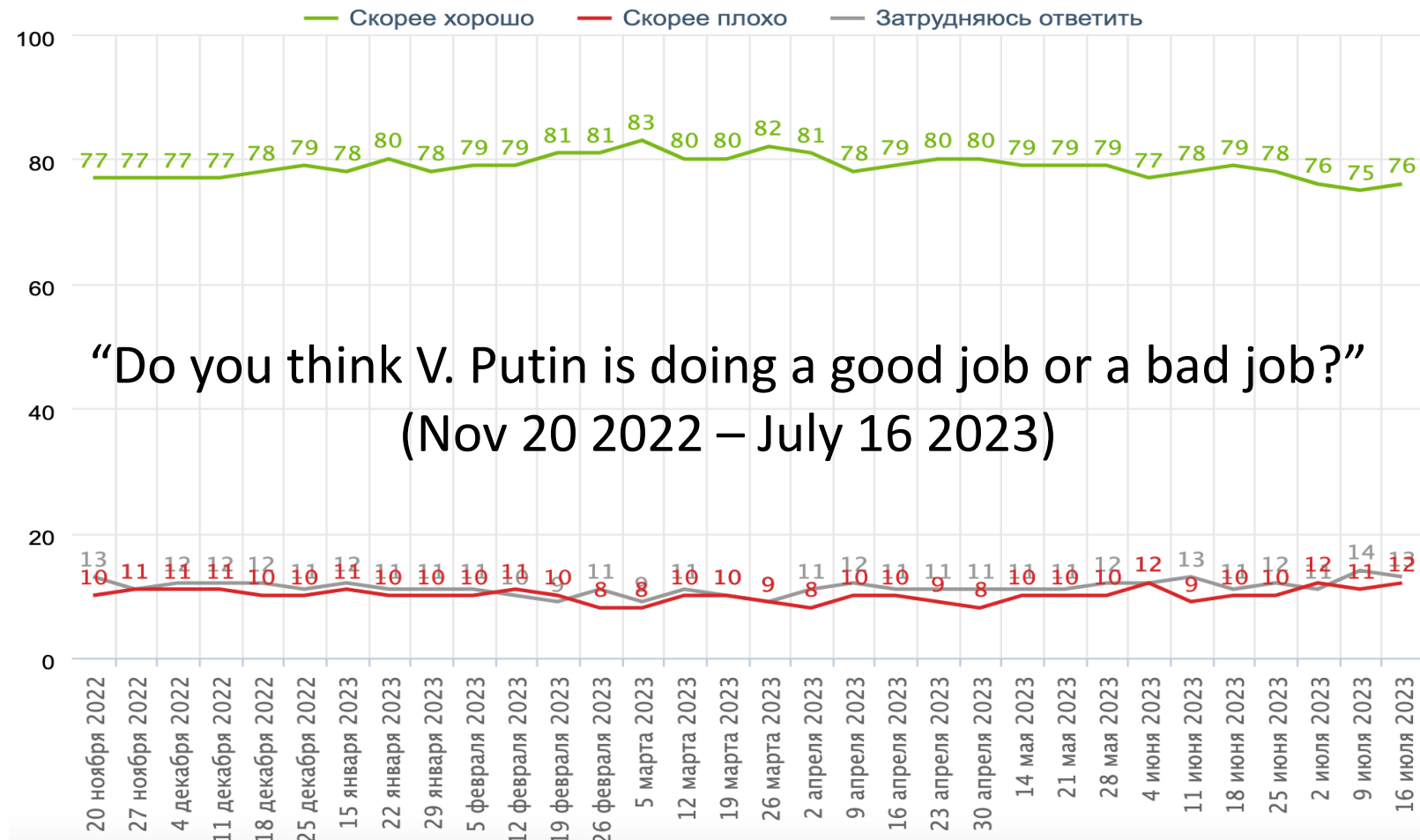
Why is Putin so popular? Why do Russians find him convincing?

- Russians are usually skeptical of their government
- Public opinion polls not entirely reliable, but a lot of people support Putin, at least passively
- Sociologists say people are “hypnotized”
- Independent media shut down, replaced by 24-hour TV propaganda

Putin is not a brilliant orator, but his speech consistently deviates from norms



Data from:
Фонд Общественное Мнение
(Public Opinion Foundation)



Philosophical issues: norms, meaning, and grammar

- A corpus as a proxy for experience and expectations of native speakers
- Speakers may be sensitive to deviations from norms
- Words can be consciously chosen, grammar less under conscious control and more systematic
- Grammar and meaning: the semantic continuum lexicon – grammar

Overview

- Keymorph Analysis as an extension of Keyword Analysis
- Meanings of Russian grammatical cases
- 2022 “The case for case in Putin’s speeches”
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11185-022-09269-2>
 - Macro-level quantitative comparison: Putin’s use of case vs. reference corpus
 - Micro-level qualitative interpretation of Putin’s use of case
- 2023 Comparison with Putin’s speech Feb 21, 2023
 - Media have reported that this speech was more of the same
 - But we found some stark differences


2022

Russian Linguistics

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11185-022-09269-2>



The case for case in Putin's speeches

Laura A. Janda¹  · Masako Fidler² · Václav Cvrček³ · Anna Obukhova¹

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Abstract

Vladimir V. Putin has banned the use of the word ‘war’ to refer to the conflict in Ukraine. While one’s choice of words is deliberate and conscious, grammatical categories are obligatory and pivotal to signaling the roles notions have in a discourse. Over- and underrepresentation of grammatical cases can be identified by Keymorph Analysis, which measures deviations from corpus norms analogously to Keyword Analysis. This first application of Keymorph Analysis to Russian data compares the use of grammatical case for the nouns meaning ‘Russia’, ‘Ukraine’, and ‘NATO’ in Putin’s speeches in the period leading up to and immediately after the invasion of Ukraine. Our analysis reveals a narrative in which Putin depicts Russia as a dynamic, agentive, foregrounded actor, a reliable partner for collaboration, but also the victim of unfair geopolitical maneuvers. Ukraine, by contrast, is dehumanized

Keymorph Analysis as an extension of Keyword Analysis

- Keyword Analysis (cf. Egbert & Biber 2023):
 - widely used in corpus-assisted discourse analysis
 - focus on the distribution of words, identifying as “keywords” those that are unusually frequent in a target text vs. reference corpus
 - Keywords reveal the “Aboutness” of a text
 - mostly used with English, which has little morphology
 - it is customary to remove English function words, also known as “stopwords”
- Keymorph Analysis:
 - takes advantage of the morphological expression of grammatical categories
 - developed by Fidler & Cvrček (2017, 2018, and Cvrček & Fidler 2019) on the material of Czech
 - this is the first pilot study/proof-of-concept using Russian data



Meanings of Russian grammatical cases

- Based on previous publications (Janda 1993, 1999, 2000, Janda & Clancy 2002)
- Meanings most relevant for analysis of Putin's speeches in 2022
 - Nominative (NOM): agent (subject); label
 - Genitive (GEN): agent or patient; possession
 - Dative (DAT): potential agent (usually human)
 - Accusative (ACC): patient (direct object); destination
 - Instrumental (s + INS): collaborator
 - Locative (LOC): a place

Macro-level quantitative comparison: Putin's use of case vs. reference corpus

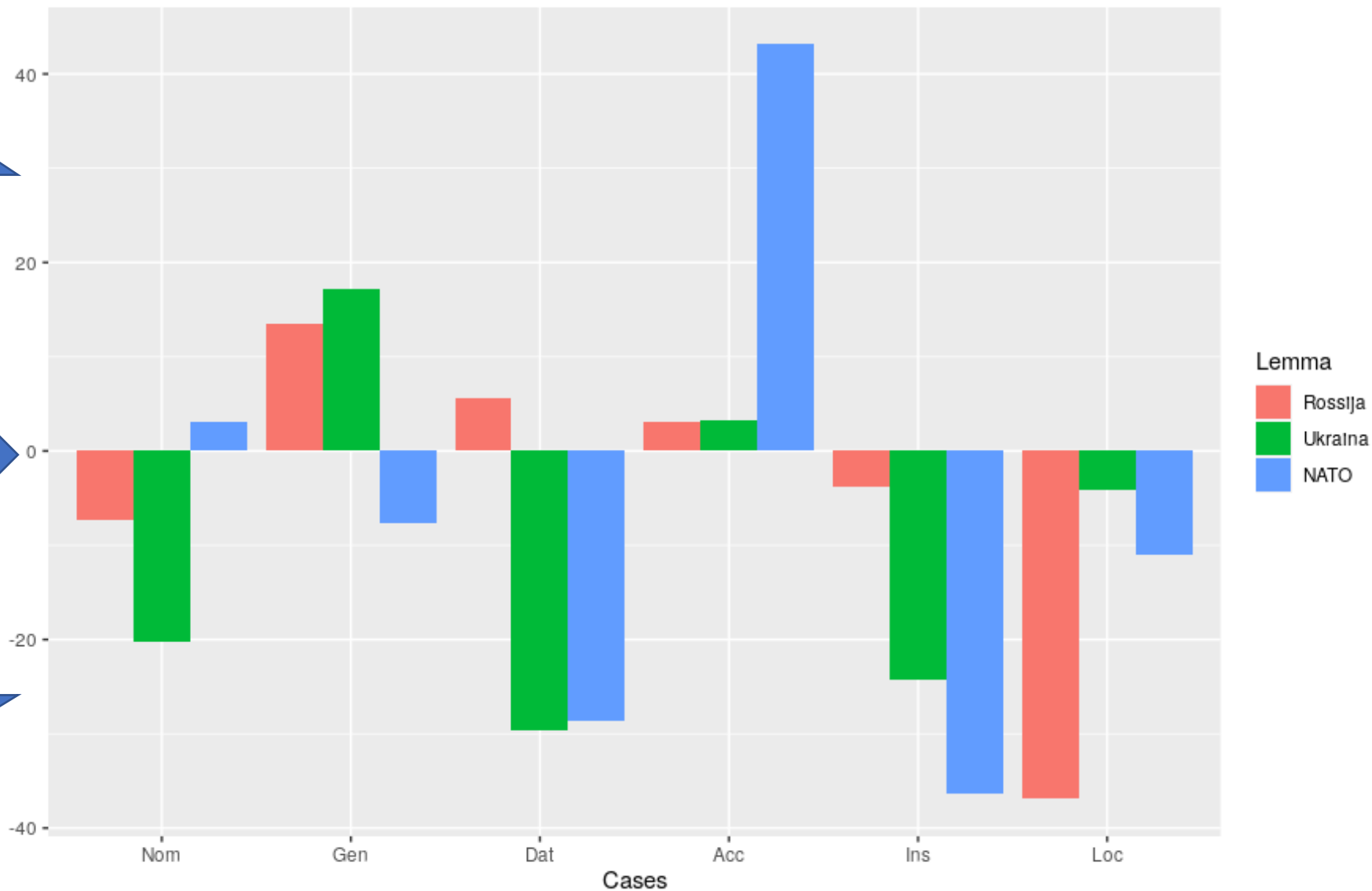
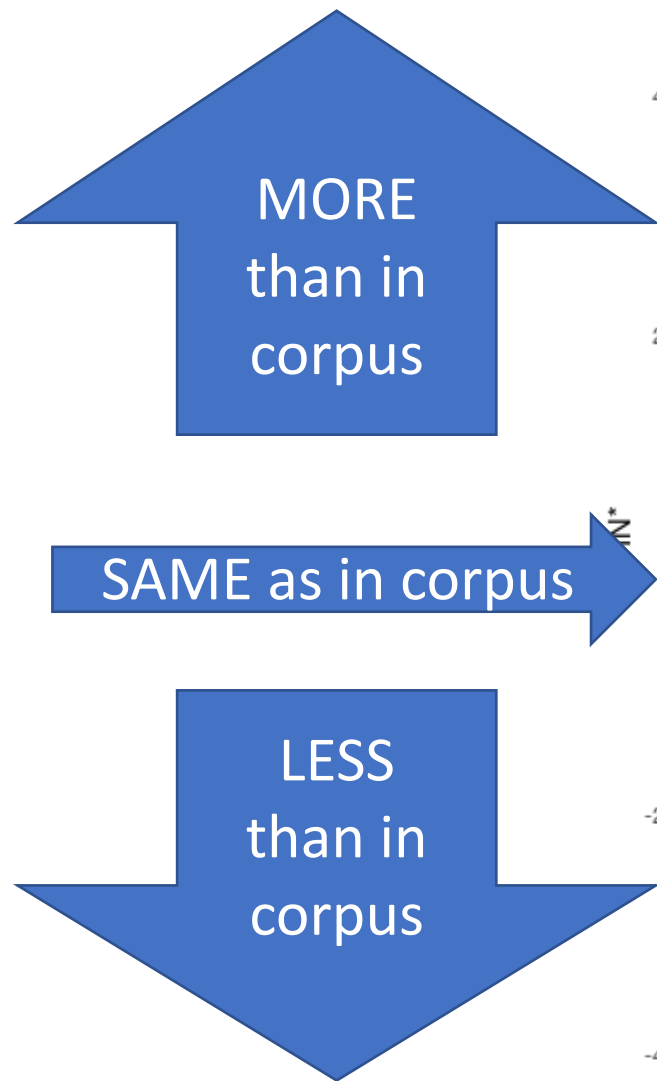
- Data: scope and source
- Raw data
- Difference Index keyed to frequency (DIN*)
- Visualizations

Data: Putin's speeches 10.02.-02.03.2022

- 10.02.2022: Russia launched its “largest military exercise since the Cold War, holding joint maneuvers with Belarus, close to the Belarus/Ukrainian border” (Walker 2022: 27).
- 02.03.2022: height of the first phase of invasion when Russian forces in Ukraine moved “to tighten their siege of key cities, including the capital, Kyiv, and the southern port of Mariupol” (Walker 2022: 39)
- Size of target corpus: 34,720 tokens
- Focus on three words:
 - Россия ‘Russia’
 - Украина ‘Ukraine’
 - НАТО ‘NATO’
- Reference corpus:
 - Russian InterCorp (Czech National Corpus www.korpus.cz) 20.1 M tokens

Comparison with reference corpus

Case prominence In Putin's speeches 2022



Micro-level qualitative interpretation of
Putin's use of case

Representation of

- NATO
- Ukraine
- Russia

Every example manually tagged for case
submeaning

NATO in 2022



- NATO represented as
 - just a label, not an agent (NOM)
 - a threat (GEN)
 - a destination or container (ACC, LOC)
 - not a collaborator, dehumanized (little INS and DAT)

Ukraine in 2022

- Ukraine represented as
 - passive (NOM with stative verbs)
 - manipulated (ACC)
 - dehumanized (little DAT)
 - not a collaborator (little *s* + INS)
 - just a location, a region (*na* + LOC, GEN)



Russia in 2022

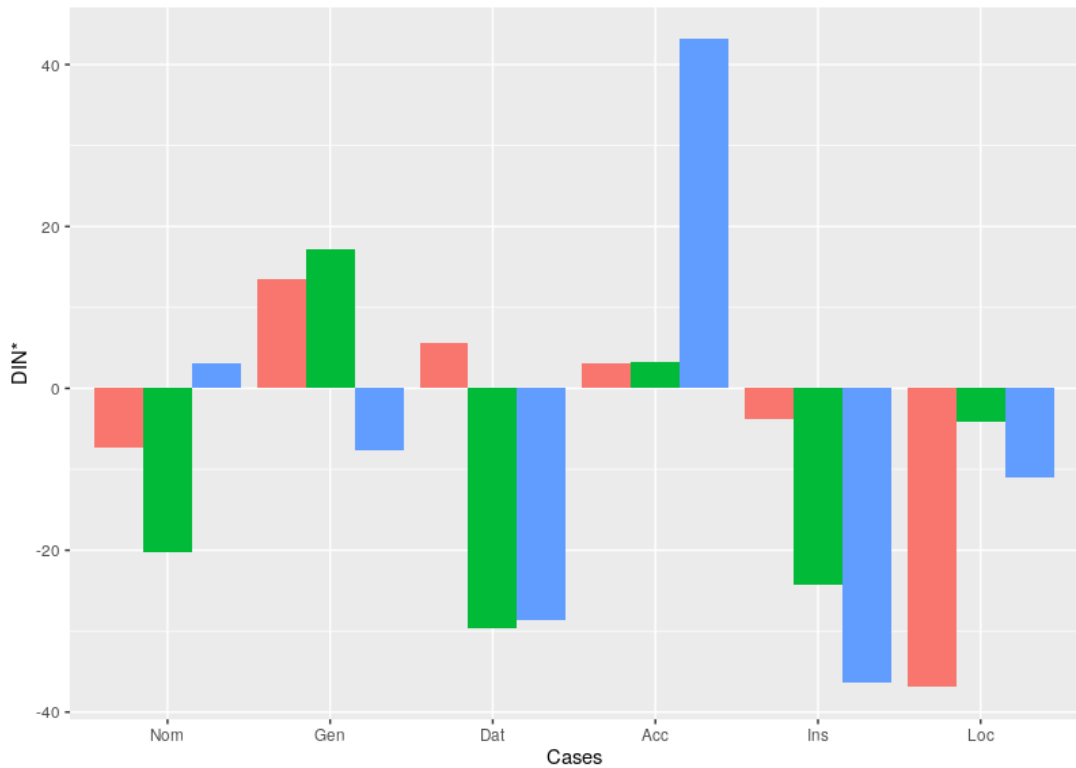


- Russia represented as
 - a dynamic agent (NOM)
 - a collaborator (INS)
 - treated unfairly (ACC) and therefore in need of a strong leader
 - humanized, inspires empathy (DAT)

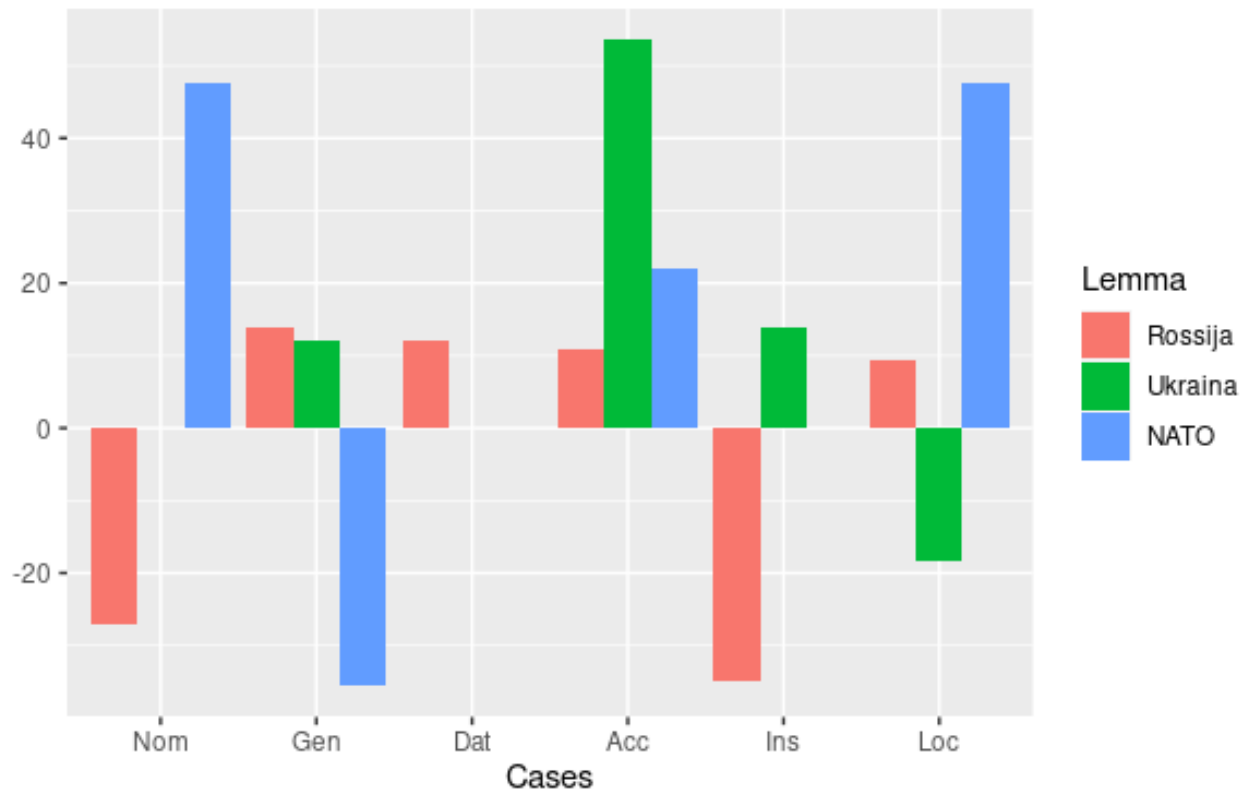
Putin's speech to the Federal Assembly Feb 21, 2023: 10,538 tokens



Case prominence In Putin's speeches 2022



Case prominence in Putin's speech (Feb 21, 2023)



Caveat: some distortion due to much smaller dataset

No data for

- 'Ukraine' Nominative, Dative
- 'NATO' Dative, Instrumental

NATO in 2023



- NATO represented as
 - an aggressor, placing weapons on Russia's borders, directly stating that it wishes to defeat Russia, equated with USA and the West (NOM)
 - having expanded to Russia's borders and having representatives who are liars and deceivers (GEN, ACC)
 - the location of multiple nuclear arsenals (LOC)
 - strongly dehumanized (no s + INS, no DAT)

Ukraine in 2023

- Ukraine represented as
 - non-existent as an actor (no NOM)
 - entirely manipulated, the destination of NATO's weapons (ACC, *na*)
 - dehumanized (no DAT)
 - not a collaborator (no *s* + INS), a name rendered "just for now" (subject to change) (INS)
 - the location of a conflict and a neonazi regime (*na* + LOC)

‘Ukraine’ appears only 12 times in 2023 speech:

Мы не воюем с народом Украины...

‘We are not fighting with the people of **Ukraine (GEN)**...’

А в наше время из Украины они стали делать <<анти-Россию>>.

‘At present they have started to make **Ukraine (GEN)** into an “Anti-Russia”’

этот проект ... с одной целью - оторвать эти исторические территории, которые сегодня называются Украиной, от нашей страны.

‘this project ... [has] one goal – to tear away from our country the historical territories that are now called **Ukraine (INS)**’

Запад использует Украину и как таран против России, и как полигон.

‘The West is using **Ukraine (ACC)** both as a battering ram against Russia, and as an artillery range.’

Russia in 2023



- Russia represented as
 - an agent that helps others, remembers, depends on its citizens, an open country (NOM)
 - a land of great potential and people, unfairly targeted (GEN)
 - united (s + INS)
 - being exploited but cannot be defeated, the place to invest (ACC)
 - humanized and victimized, in no need of cooperation with western economies (DAT)
 - a place with a strong economy and values (LOC)

Putin 2022 vs. Putin 2023: What has changed?

- NATO
 - no longer the destination of Ukraine
 - foregrounded as the aggressor
- Ukraine
 - sinks further into background
 - Russia's "historical territories", the West's "Anti-Russia"
- Russia
 - self-sufficient economy with great potential
 - unfairly targeted by the West

What does this buy us?

- Proof-of-concept for Keymorph Analysis applied to Russian data
- Keymorph Analysis is unique, can complement Keyword Analysis and other traditional methods of discourse analysis
- Analysis of grammatical case reveals roles of social actors in discourse
- Consistent deviation from norms likely has an impact on hearers
- Useful not only for linguistics, but for history, political science, and other disciplines in the social sciences
- Invites further comparisons (Putin vs. other politicians, etc.)
- Method could be used to analyze other types of manipulative texts

Thank you!

- Threat-Defuser: <https://threat-defuser.org/>
Funded by the Norwegian Research Council
- CLEAR: Cognitive Linguistics: Empirical Approaches to Russian:
<https://site.uit.no/clear/>

