UiT The Arctic University of Norway

CLEAR
Cognitive Linguistics: Empirical Approaches to Russian

RUSSIAN CONSTRUCTICON

How to build a constructicon in five years: The Russian recipe

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Team behind this project

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Francis M. Tyers (Indiana University; earlier affiliated with UiT The Arctic University of Norway and National Research University Higher School of Economics): Concept, Design, UD for Russian

Radovan Bast (UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Department of information technology): New user interface, design and programming

Marianne Lund: Translation of definitions to Norwegian

Valentina Zhukova (National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow): Content, Design, Data mining, Semantic and syntactic annotation, Dissemination of findings and results

Daria Mordashova (Lomonosov Moscow State University, Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences): Content, Design, Data mining, Semantic and syntactic annotation, Dissemination of findings and results

Anna Endresen (UiT The Arctic University of Norway): Content, Design, Data mining, Editing, Semantic and syntactic annotation, Usage labels, Dissemination of findings and results, Coordination of teamwork

Overview

- What is a construction?
- What is a constructicon?
- Why build a constructicon?
- How to build a constructicon:
  - Collection of constructions
  - Classification of constructions
  - Presentation of constructions

What is a construction?

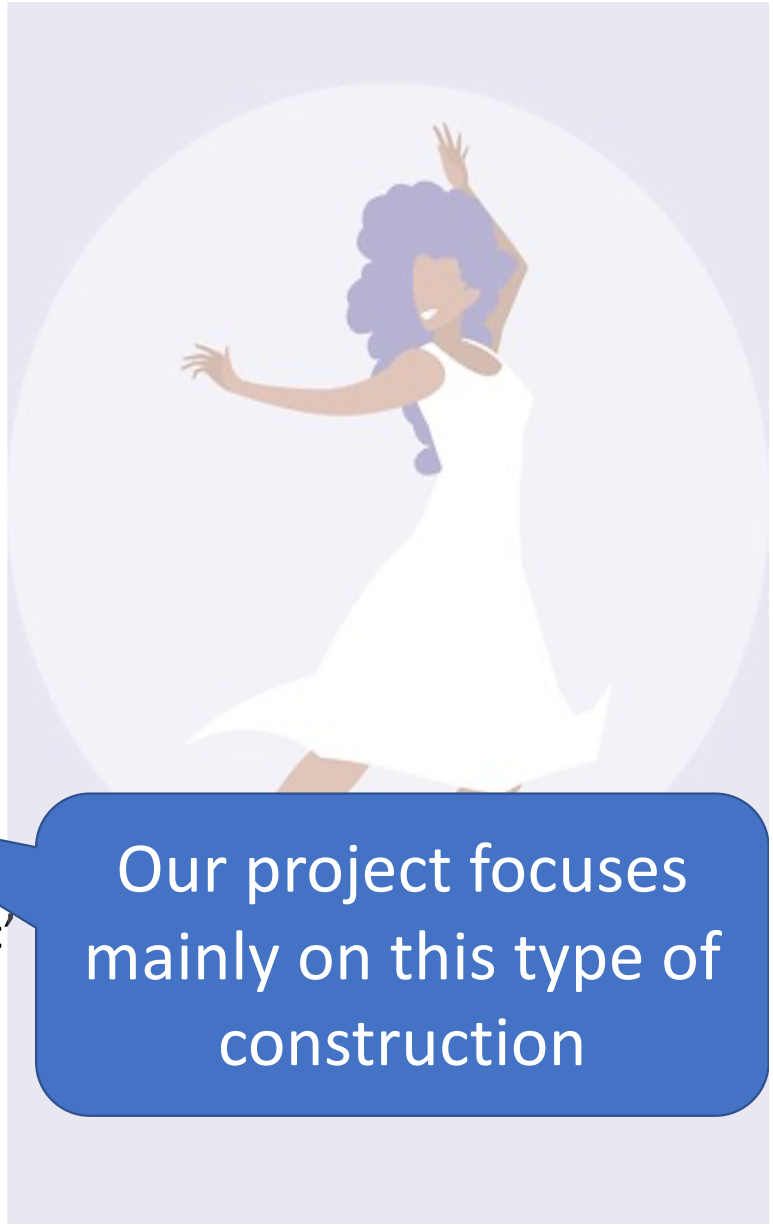
- A construction is:
  - any **conventionalized form-meaning pairing** in a language, at any level of complexity, from morpheme through lexeme through phrase to discourse structure (Goldberg 2006, 5)
  - **the basic** (though not elementary) **unit** that structures language

- 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

“It’s constructions all the way down” (Goldberg 2006: 18)

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

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

Why build a constructicon?

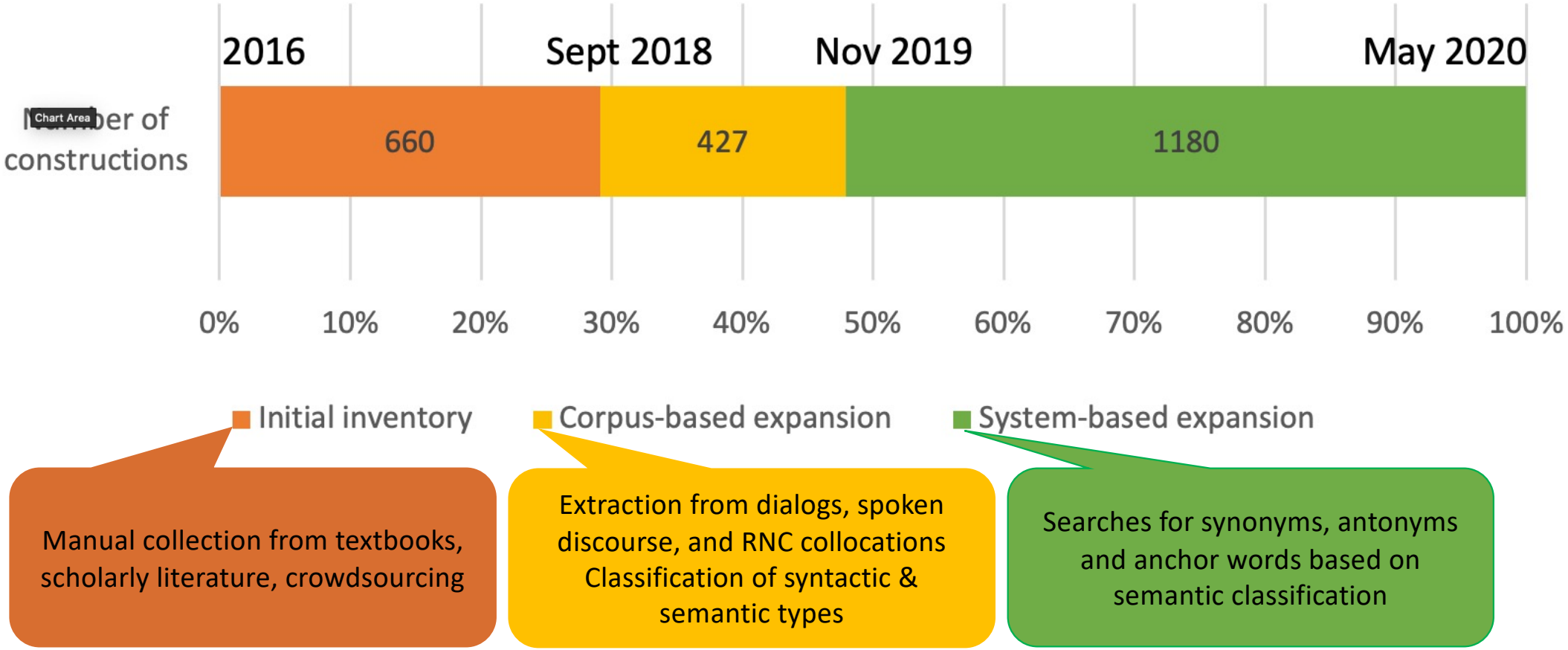
- For linguists
  - to achieve improved description of languages
  - to extend theory of construction grammar
  - to facilitate cross-linguistic typological comparison

- For L2 learners
  - to achieve greater language proficiency
  - to motivate use of specific wordforms
  - to fill in gaps in current language resources and pedagogy

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

How to build a constructicon: Collection of constructions

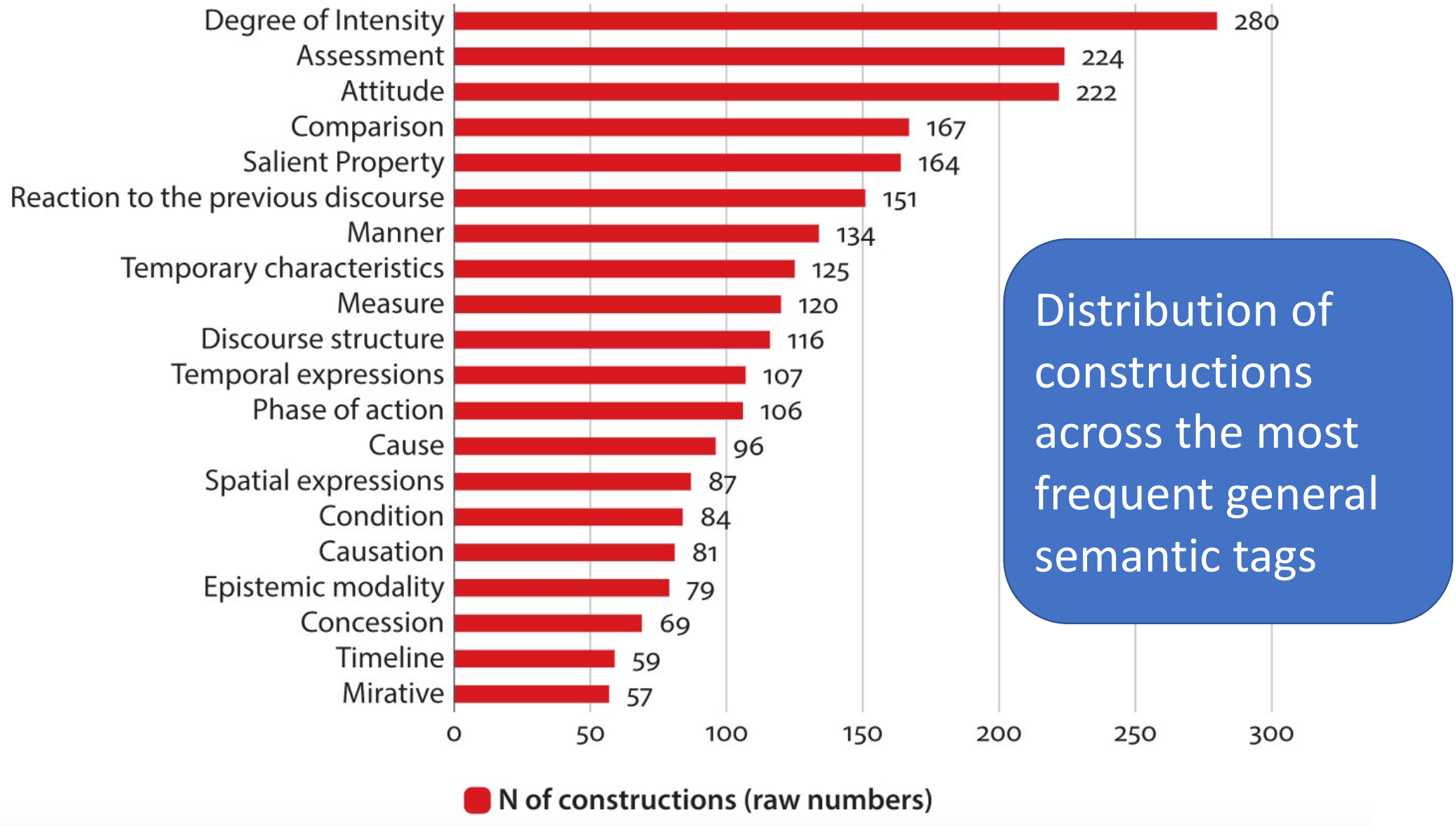


How to build a constructicon: Classification of constructions

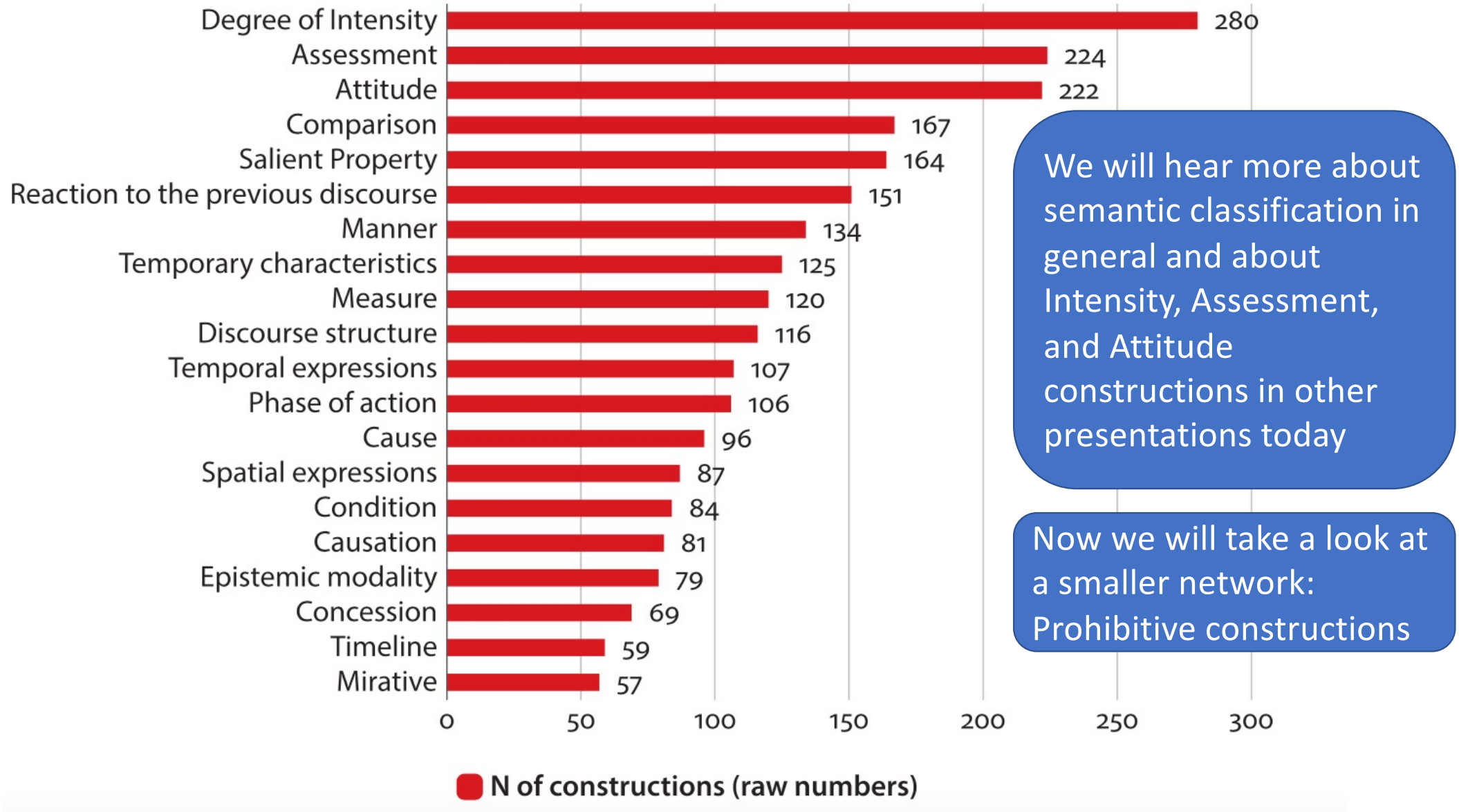
- Families
  - a family is a relatively homogeneous group of approx. 2-9 constructions that share some semantic, syntactic, and/or structural properties
  - the constructions in a family share various subsets of these properties
  - semantic and syntactic tags facilitate identification of families
  - annotation by a panel of three native speakers
- Clusters
  - a cluster is a group of families that are linked to through semantic and/or syntactic similarities in a prototypical vs. peripheral distribution, usually corresponding to semantic subtypes in annotation
- Networks
  - a network is a group of clusters that share a general semantic tag

Constructionalization as grammaticalization

- Conventionalization of form-meaning pairings can be understood as an early stage in the process of grammaticalization
- The semantic tags are quasigramatical meanings that are distributed across constructions and their (partially bleached) anchor words
- Classification rests on lexical functions (cf. Mel'čuk, Apresjan) which are comparable across languages



Distribution of constructions across the most frequent general semantic tags



We will hear more about semantic classification in general and about Intensity, Assessment, and Attitude constructions in other presentations today

Now we will take a look at a smaller network: Prohibitive constructions

An example of a Prohibitive construction

1247
NAME хорош VP-Ipfv.Inf! - *Эй, наверху! Хорош прыгать!*

DEFINITION (Russian) Конструкция используется, когда говорящий побуждает собеседника прекратить выполнять [некоторое действие]$_{Action}$. Говорящий оценивает это действие отрицательно, так как оно причиняет ему дискомфорт или кажется слишком длительным. Конструкция подразумевает отсутствие между говорящим и собеседником социальной иерархии и произносится в дружеском тоне.

DEFINITION (English) The construction is used when the speaker prompts the interlocutor to stop performing [some action]$_{Action}$. The speaker evaluates this action negatively, as it causes them discomfort or seems too long. The construction implies the absence of social hierarchy between the speaker and the interlocutor and is pronounced in a friendly tone.

DEFINITION (Norwegian) Konstruksjonen anvendes når taleren anmoder samtalepartneren om å slutte å utføre [en handling]$_{Action}$. Taleren har et negativt syn på handlingen fordi den volder ubehag eller synes å vare for lenge. Konstruksjonen forutsetter fravær av rangsforskjeller mellom taleren og samtalepartneren og fremføres i en vennskapelig tone.

EXAMPLES

1. Я им говорю — вы что, мужики. Хорош [слушать]$_{Action}$ этот концерт по радио!
2. — Хорош [ссориться]$_{Action}$! — прервал девушек Илья. — Неконструктивно.
3. — Эй, Артем! Хорош [спать]$_{Action}$! Ну-ка вставай давай! Ты уже семь часов кряду дрыхнешь… Вставай же, соня!
4. — Хорош там [скакать]$_{Action}$! — крикнул Степан девочкам. Он сидел на корточках перед новой газовой плитой, читая руководство по эксплуатации.
5. — Васька, хорош [тормозить]$_{Action}$! — крикнул Андрей. — Открывай скорее двери!

CEFR LEVEL C1

1247

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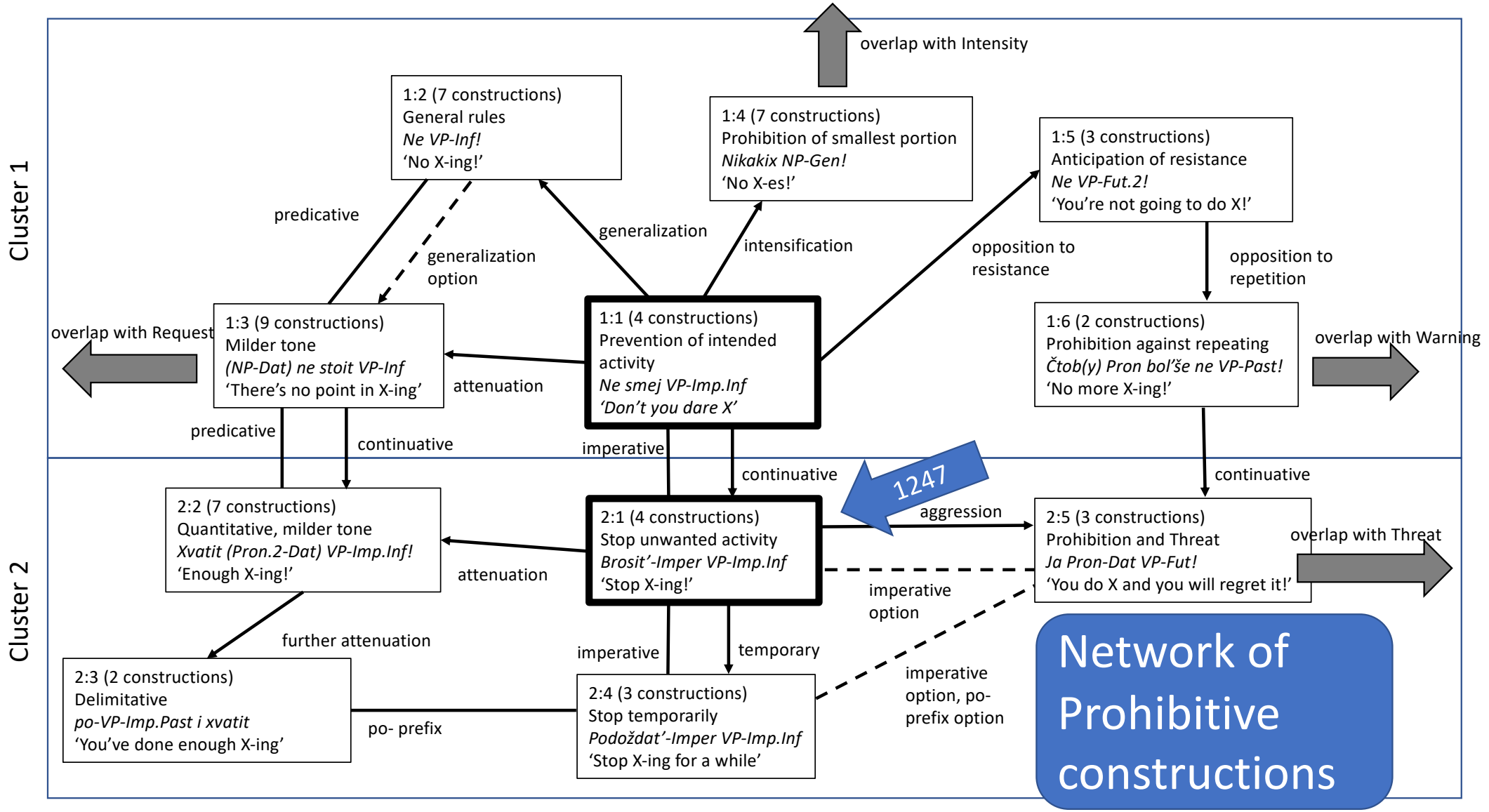
Cluster 1
Cluster 2
overlap with Intensity
1:2 (7 constructions)
General rules
Ne VP-Inf!
'No X-ing!'
1:4 (7 constructions)
Prohibition of smallest portion
Nikakix NP-Gen!
'No X-es!'
1:5 (3 constructions)
Anticipation of resistance
Ne VP-Fut.2!
'You're not going to do X!'
predicative
generalization option
generalization
intensification
opposition to resistance
opposition to repetition
overlap with Request
1:3 (9 constructions)
Milder tone
(NP-Dat) ne stoit VP-Inf
'There's no point in X-ing'
1:1 (4 constructions)
Prevention of intended activity
Ne smej VP-Imp.Inf
'Don't you dare X'
1:6 (2 constructions)
Prohibition against repeating
Čtob(y) Pron bol'še ne VP-Past!
'No more X-ing!'
overlap with Warning
attenuation
predicative
continuative
imperative
continuative
continuative
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2:2 (7 constructions)
Quantitative, milder tone
Xvatit (Pron.2-Dat) VP-Imp.Inf!
'Enough X-ing!'
2:1 (4 constructions)
Stop unwanted activity
Brosit'-Imper VP-Imp.Inf
'Stop X-ing!'
aggression
2:5 (3 constructions)
Prohibition and Threat
Ja Pron-Dat VP-Fut!
'You do X and you will regret it!'
overlap with Threat
attenuation
imperative option
further attenuation
imperative
temporary
2:3 (2 constructions)
Delimitative
po-VP-Imp.Past i xvatit
'You've done enough X-ing'
2:4 (3 constructions)
Stop temporarily
Podoždat'-Imper VP-Imp.Inf
'Stop X-ing for a while'
po- prefix
imperative option, po- prefix option
Network of Prohibitive constructions

How to build a constructicon: Presentation of constructions

- Create a user interface
  - User-friendly for linguists, teachers, learners
  - Searchable according to semantics, anchor words, syntax
  - Open-source, publicly archived data

- More about this at the launch later today

Conclusions

- Multi-word expressions with open slots are inadequately represented in standard resources (dictionaries, grammars)
- There are thousands of such constructions that form a complex system
- Once a critical mass of constructions is gathered, systematic patterns emerge that facilitate more efficient collection and classification
- Access to a database of grammatical constructions can address the needs of both linguists and learners
- The classification is potentially comparable across languages, facilitating future efforts in linguistic typology