

Digging Deeper

The directional alternation in Dutch

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- **Problem of Precedence:** Which level takes precedence? The more abstract or the more concrete?
- **Problem of Prediction:** How can we predict the more concrete meaning differences from the abstract, given the flexibility of the abstract meaning?
- **Problem of Proliferation:** should we really assume the existence of constructions on each level of abstraction to account for all meaning differences? If so, by which mechanism do these constructions emerge?

STORY

Ik zoek slachtoffers

Transitive Construction

*Ik zoek **naar** slachtoffers*

Prepositional Intransitive
Construction

I'm looking for victims

Lakoff (1977)

Prototypical agent-patient sentences

- An agent does something
- A patient undergoes a change of state
- The change results from an action by the agent
- The agent's action is volitional
- The agent is in control
- ...

Hopper & Thompson (1980)

Transitivity

- 2 or more participants
- Action
- Telic
- Volitional
- Affirmative
- Realis
- ...

Langacker (1991)

*A subject is **prototypically** an agent, human, definite, and the primary figure, a [direct] object is a patient, a physical object, specific indefinite and the secondary figure*

Dowty (1991)

Proto-Agent

- Volitionally involved
- Sentient
- Causes change of state
- Moves
- Exists independently from event

Proto-Patient

- Undergoes state of change
- Incremental theme
- Causally affected
- Stationary
- Does not exist independently

The meaning of the transitive construction, or of any other argument construction, is a **prism with several facets**, or a prototype of several properties, such as volition, sentience, movement, etc., and when **contrasted with another argument construction, any particular facet may be highlighted** to fit the present communicational needs.

- Psych verb alternation: agentivity John ergert Elizabeth vs. Elizabeth ergert zich aan John
- Locative alternation: aspect Hij laadt het hooi op de kar vs. Hij laadt de kar met het hooi
- Dative alternation: movement Ze geeft hem bloemen vs. Ze geeft bloemen aan hem
- Transitive vs. Prepositional Intransitive: ?

Broccias (2001)

Conative alternation: *I kicked (at) the ball*

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Allative | Action does not necessarily take place | <i>He clutched desperately at the branch</i> |
| Ablative | Action takes place in a bit-by-bit manner | <i>James Bond sipped at his Martini</i> |
| Allative/ablative | Combination | <i>Sam sprayed at the trees</i> |

Perek (2015)

Conative alternation: *I kicked (at) the ball*

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Ingestion-conative | bit-by-bit | <i>James Bond sipped at his Martini</i> |
| Cutting-conative | minimal effect | <i>Killion sawed clumsily at the bird</i> |
| Pulling-conative | focus on the agent | <i>He saw the boy tugging at it</i> |
| Hitting-conative | lack of negative effect | <i>slapping at her cheeks and arms</i> |

...

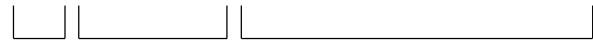
13 classes in total

Transitive
Construction

vs.

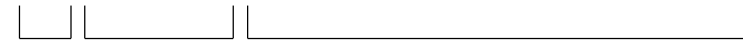
Prepositional Intransitive
Construction

Ik zoek slachtoffers



NP V NP

Ik zoek naar slachtoffers

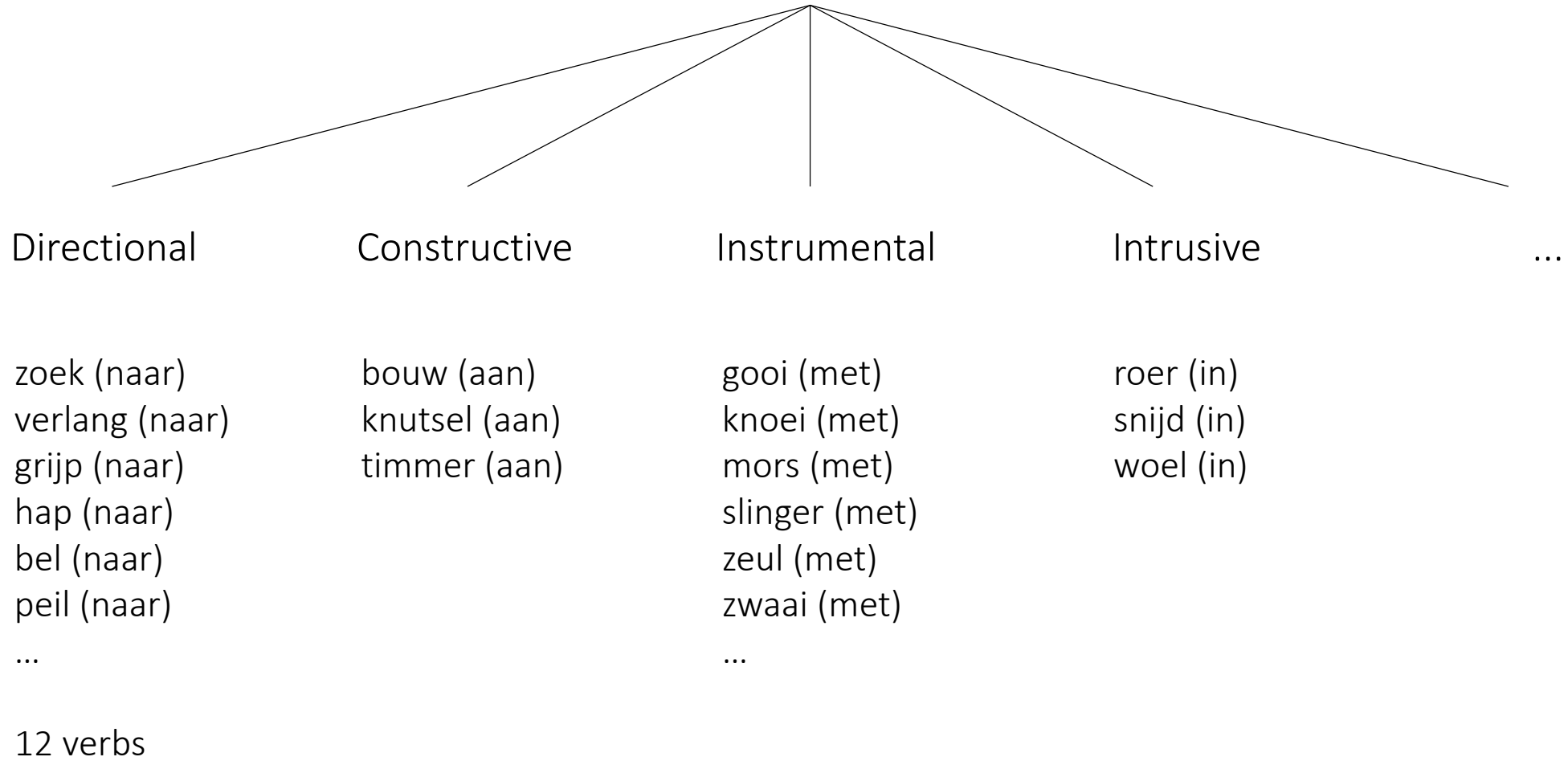


NP V PP

Transitive
Construction

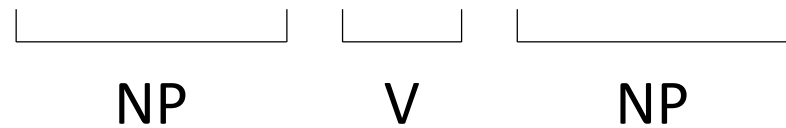
vs.

Prepositional Intransitive
Construction

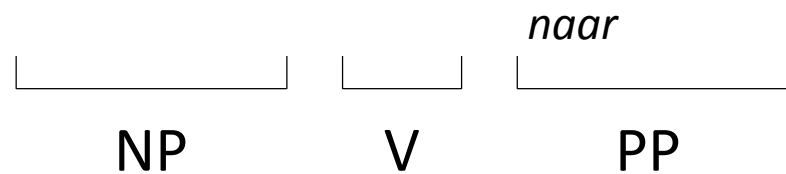


Goldberg (1995)

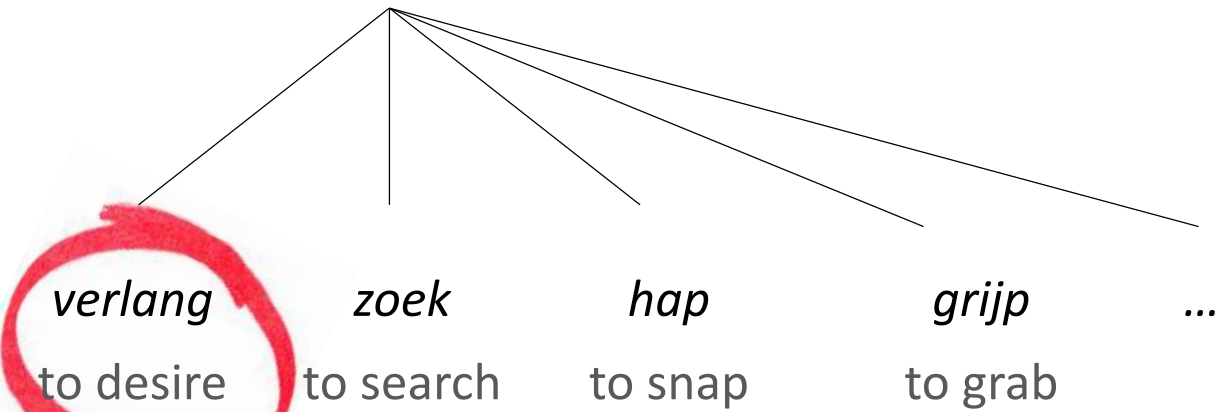
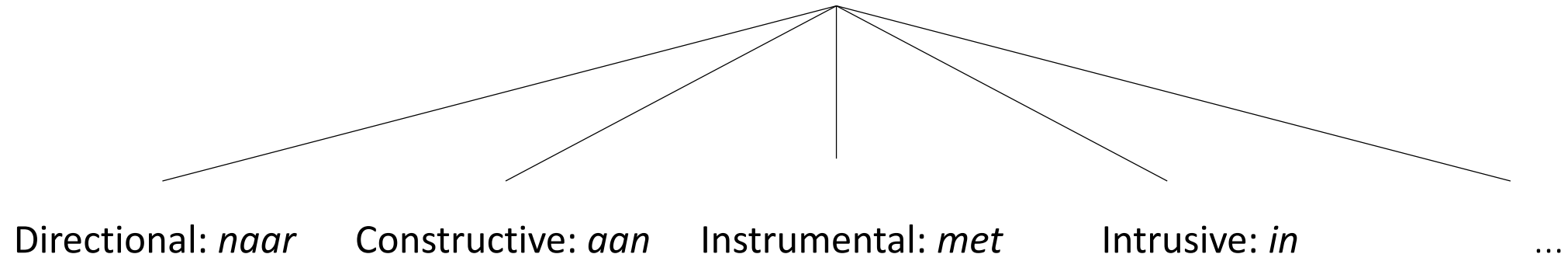
- Transitive Construction: ACT-ON, **profiles action**



- Intransitive Motion Construction: GO-TO, **profiles path**



Transitive vs. Prepositional



Preference for **Transitive**

| | | Transitive | Intransitive Motion | Collocational Strength |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>bewijs</i> | proof | 17 | 0 | 3.98 |
| <i>bijdrage</i> | contribution | 14 | 0 | 3.27 |
| <i>gegeven</i> | datum | 13 | 0 | 3.04 |
| <i>antwoord</i> | answer | 10 | 0 | 2.34 |
| <i>garantie</i> | garanty | 10 | 0 | 2.34 |
| <i>vergoeding</i> | compensation | 10 | 0 | 2.34 |
| <i>informatie</i> | information | 9 | 0 | 2.10 |
| <i>tegenprestatie</i> | reciprocation | 9 | 0 | 2.10 |
| <i>verklaring</i> | explanation | 9 | 0 | 2.10 |
| <i>excuus</i> | excuse | 8 | 0 | 1.87 |
| <i>offer</i> | offer | 11 | 1 | 1.82 |
| <i>inlichting</i> | information | 7 | 0 | 1.63 |
| <i>maatregel</i> | measure | 9 | 1 | 1.43 |
| <i>inspanning</i> | effort | 6 | 0 | 1.40 |
| <i>onderzoek</i> | investigation | 6 | 0 | 1.40 |

Preference for **Intransitive Motion**

| | | Transitive | Intransitive Motion | Collocational Strength |
|----------------|-------------|------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>kind</i> | child | 4 | 30 | 7.78 |
| <i>dood</i> | dead | 0 | 19 | 7.30 |
| <i>huis</i> | house | 2 | 23 | 6.81 |
| <i>leven</i> | life | 2 | 21 | 6.10 |
| <i>rust</i> | rest | 2 | 17 | 4.72 |
| <i>bed</i> | bed | 0 | 12 | 4.60 |
| <i>dag</i> | day | 1 | 12 | 3.69 |
| <i>liefde</i> | love | 0 | 7 | 2.68 |
| <i>moeder</i> | mother | 0 | 7 | 2.68 |
| <i>moment</i> | moment | 0 | 7 | 2.68 |
| <i>vrouw</i> | woman | 0 | 7 | 2.68 |
| <i>man</i> | man | 1 | 9 | 2.65 |
| <i>vroeger</i> | bygone days | 0 | 6 | 2.29 |
| <i>einde</i> | end | 1 | 7 | 1.97 |
| <i>seks</i> | sex | 1 | 7 | 1.97 |

Preference for Transitive

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Demand

Preference for Intransitive Motion

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| <i>kind</i> | child |
| <i>dood</i> | dead |
| <i>huis</i> | house |
| <i>leven</i> | life |
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| <i>bed</i> | bed |
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Long for

Preference for Transitive

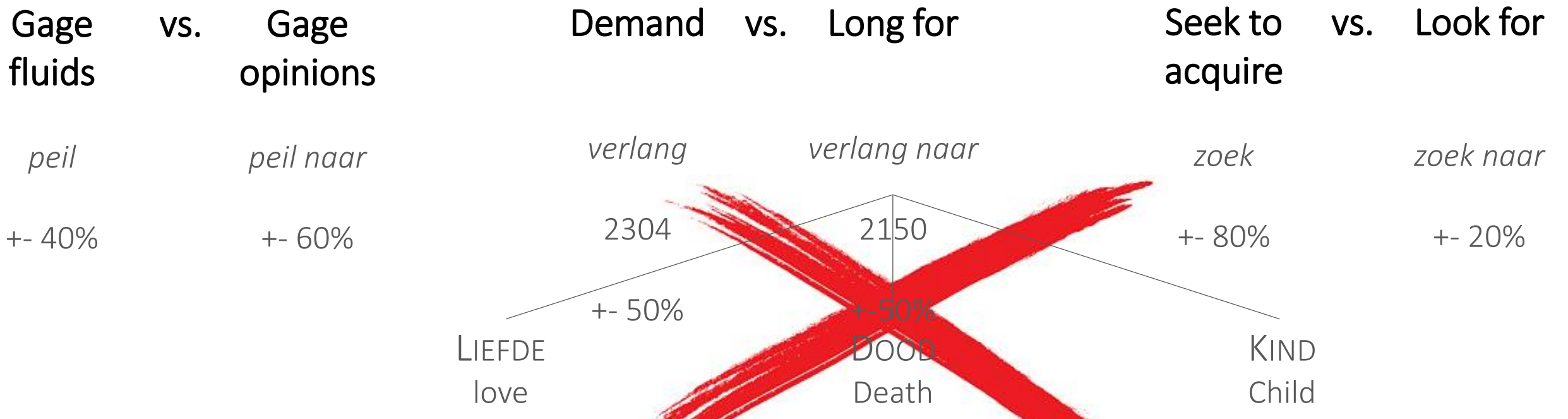
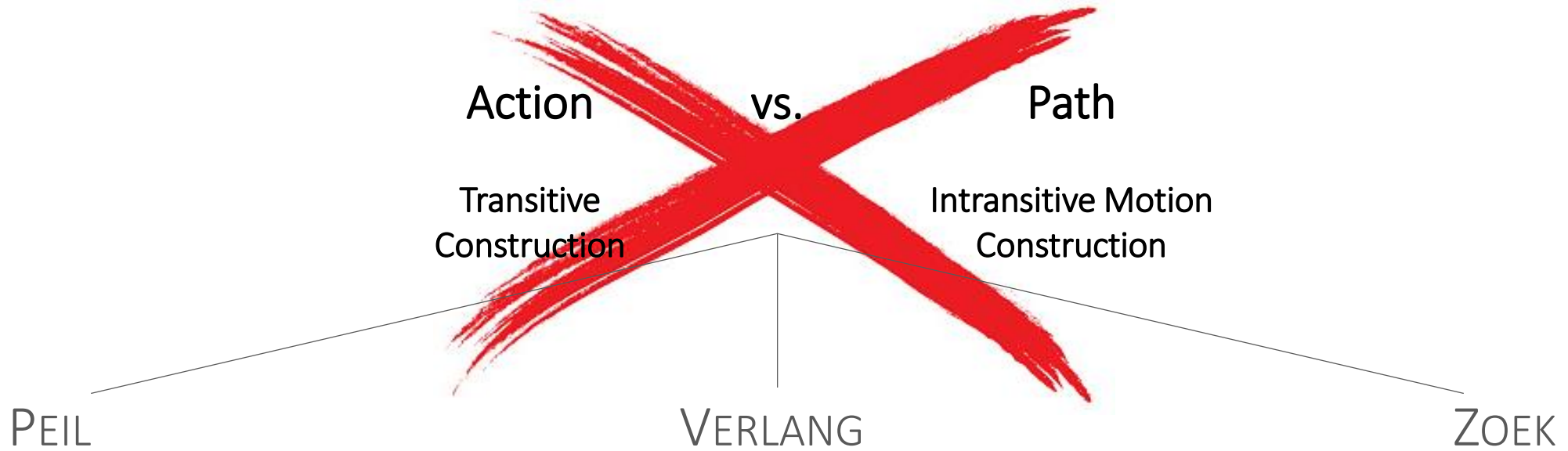
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Problem of Precedence

- If you fully utilize the alternation to express a meaning difference at one particular level, you can no longer use it at the other levels

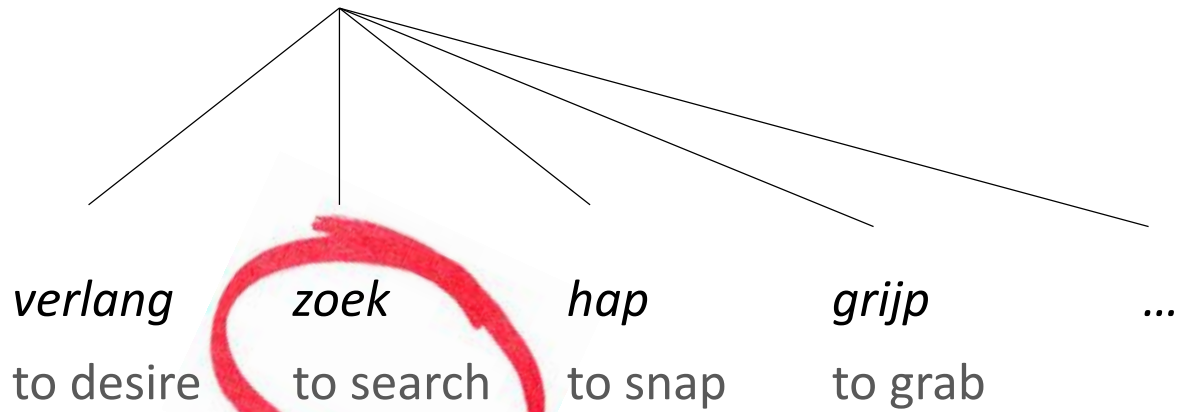
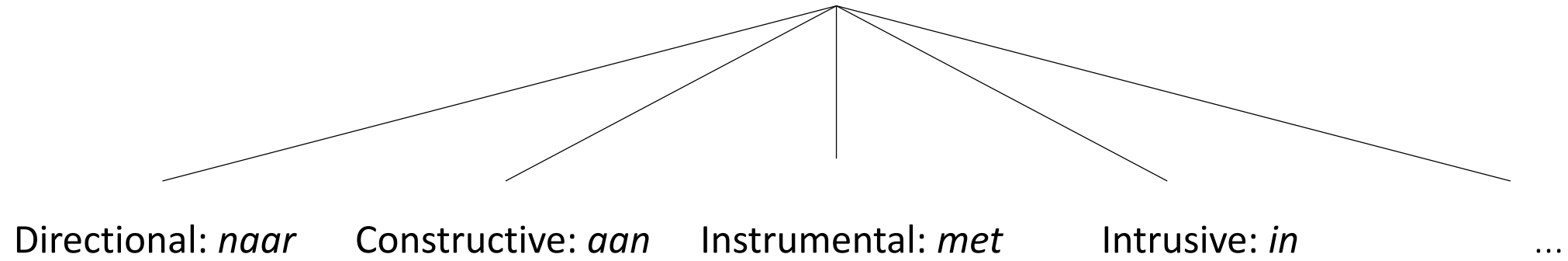


to escape current suffering vs. to obtain future bliss

Problem of Precedence

- If you fully utilize the alternation to express a meaning difference at one particular level, you can no longer use it at the other levels
- Should we just assume that, for the Dutch directional alternation, the level of the verb takes precedence?

Transitive vs. Prepositional



Preference for Transitive

| | | Transitive | Intransitive Motion | Collocational Strength |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| <i>contact</i> | contact | 1478 | 8 | 98.62 |
| <i>toevlucht</i> | refuge | 1478 | 8 | 98.62 |
| <i>heil</i> | salvation | 943 | 0 | 71.82 |
| <i>hulp</i> | help | 934 | 0 | 71.13 |
| <i>niets</i> | nothing | 810 | 5 | 53.09 |
| <i>toenadering</i> | overture | 551 | 0 | 41.82 |
| <i>steun</i> | support | 547 | 0 | 41.52 |
| <i>weg</i> | way | 660 | 8 | 38.48 |
| <i>aansluiting</i> | association | 1003 | 42 | 34.24 |
| <i>iemand</i> | someone | 445 | 2 | 30.32 |
| <i>inspiratie</i> | inspiration | 640 | 28 | 21.34 |
| <i>bescherming</i> | protection | 279 | 1 | 19.47 |
| <i>geluk</i> | happiness | 226 | 1 | 15.53 |
| <i>onderdak</i> | shelter | 251 | 3 | 14.93 |
| <i>troost</i> | comfort | 243 | 3 | 14.36 |

Preference for Intransitive Motion

| | | Transitive | Intransitive Motion | Collocational Strength |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| <i>oplossing</i> | solution | 2274 | 1101 | 133.89 |
| <i>woord</i> | word | 90 | 160 | 64.95 |
| <i>mogelijkheid</i> | possibility | 69 | 142 | 61.94 |
| <i>manier</i> | manner | 357 | 268 | 57.24 |
| <i>spoor</i> | track | 45 | 115 | 55.08 |
| <i>overlevende</i> | survivor | 5 | 76 | 53.63 |
| <i>vorm</i> | form | 55 | 105 | 44.40 |
| <i>alternatief</i> | alternative | 295 | 200 | 38.30 |
| <i>aanwijzing</i> | clue | 19 | 41 | 18.78 |
| <i>vermiste</i> | missing person | 8 | 32 | 18.21 |
| <i>middel</i> | means | 112 | 80 | 16.74 |
| <i>slachtoffer</i> | victim | 84 | 68 | 16.26 |
| <i>weg</i> | way | 2 | 22 | 15.24 |
| <i>methode</i> | method | 26 | 30 | 9.98 |
| <i>lichaam</i> | body | 17 | 25 | 9.75 |

Preference for **Transitive**

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**SEEK TO
MAKE/ACQUIRE**

Preference for **Intransitive Motion**

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| <i>oplossing</i> | solution |
| <i>woord</i> | word |
| <i>mogelijkheid</i> | possibility |
| <i>manier</i> | manner |
| <i>spoor</i> | track |
| <i>overlevende</i> | survivor |
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| <i>weg</i> | way |
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**LITERAL:
LOOK FOR**

Preference for Transitive

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Preference for Intransitive Motion

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|---------------------|----------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| <i>oplossing</i> | solution | 2274 | 1101 | 133.89 |
| <i>woord</i> | word | 90 | 160 | 64.95 |
| <i>mogelijkheid</i> | possibility | 69 | 142 | 61.94 |
| <i>manier</i> | manner | 357 | 268 | 57.24 |
| <i>spoor</i> | track | 45 | 115 | 55.08 |
| <i>overlevende</i> | survivor | 5 | 76 | 53.63 |
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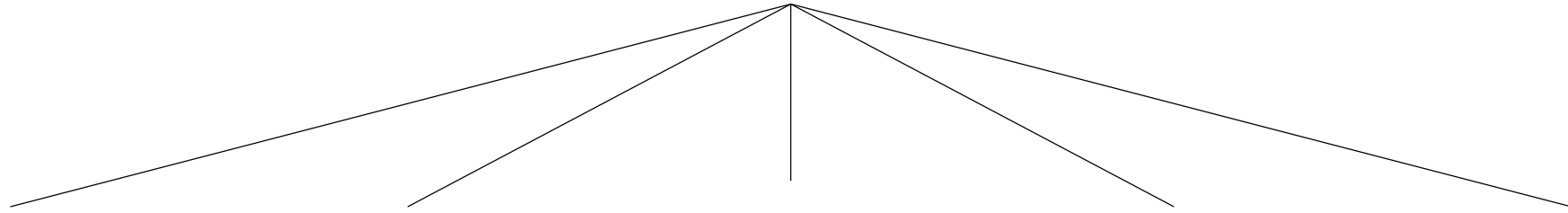
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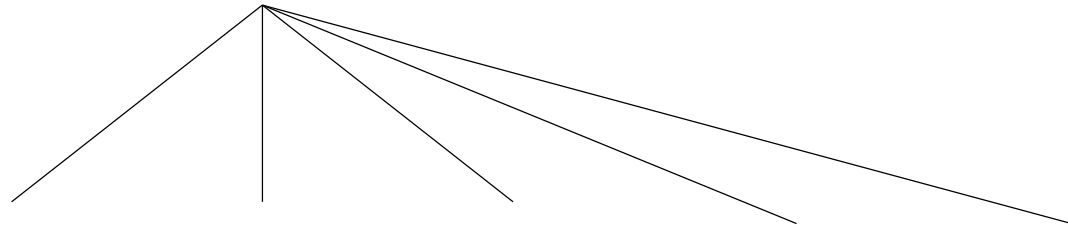
Directional: *naar*

Constructive: *aan*

Instrumental: *met*

Intrusive: *in*

...



verlang

zoek

hap

grijp

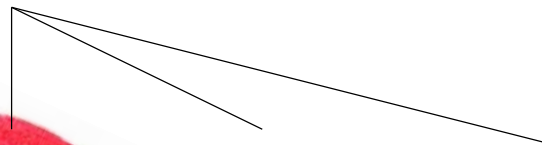
...

to desire

to search

to snap

to grab



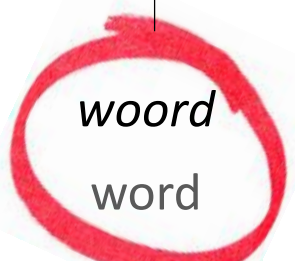
woord

slachtoffer

...

word

victim



Zoek (naar) woord



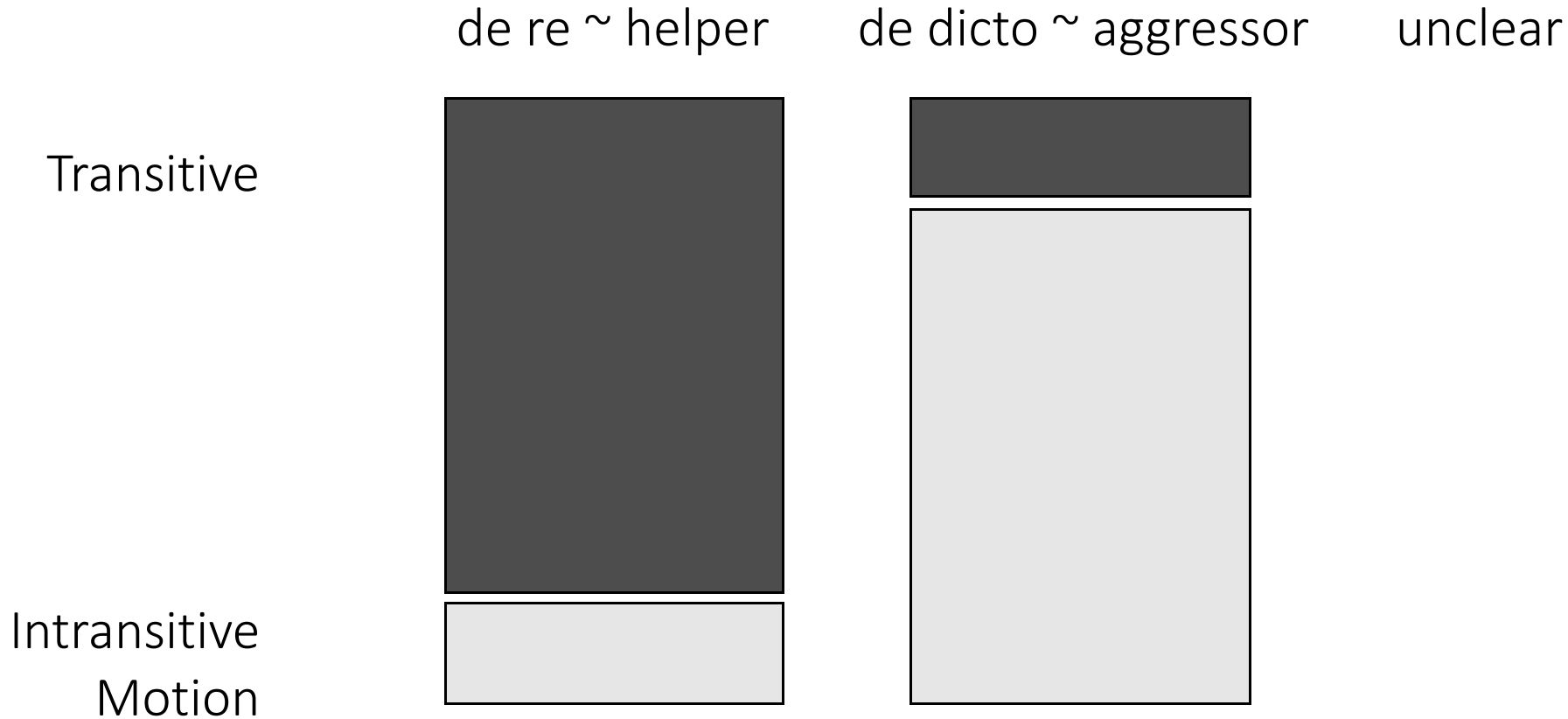
Problem of Precedence

- If you also want to use the alternation at the level of the object, that goes at the expense of the meaning difference at the level of the verb
- For the Dutch directional alternation, the level of the verb does not necessarily take precedence
- How do we know which level will take precedence?

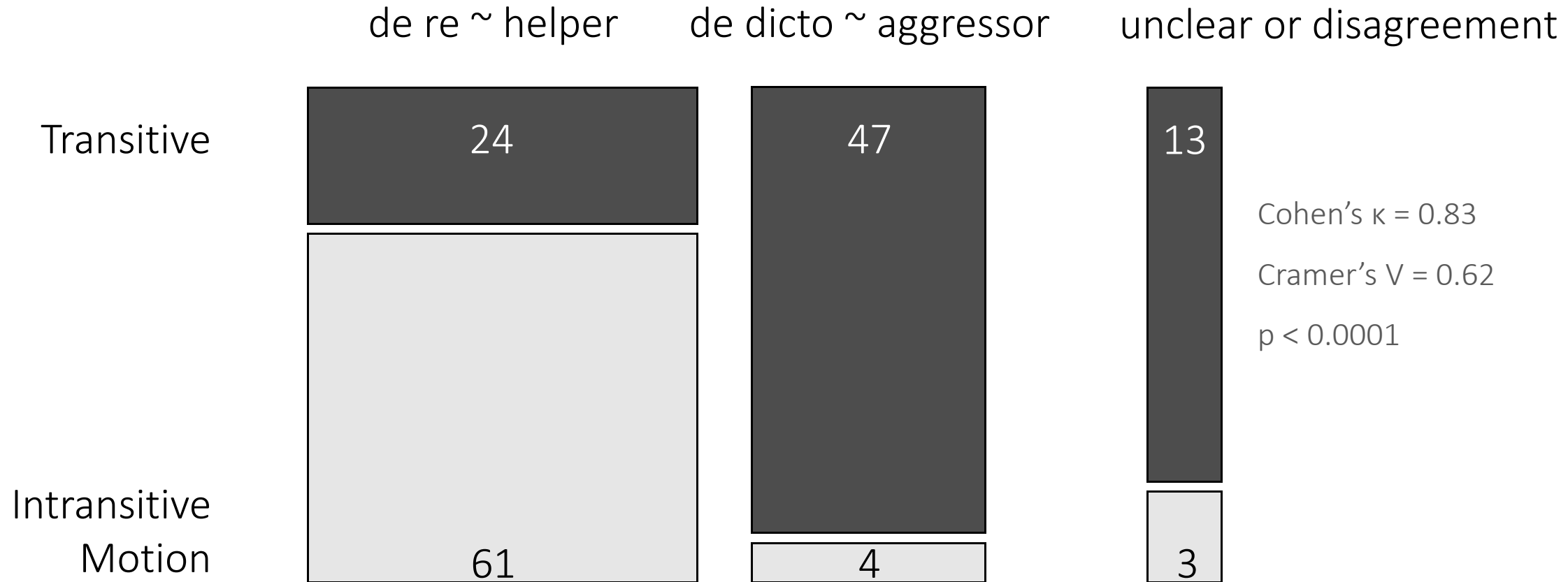
Problem of Prediction

How can we predict the more concrete meaning differences from the abstract?

Zoek (naar) slachtoffer



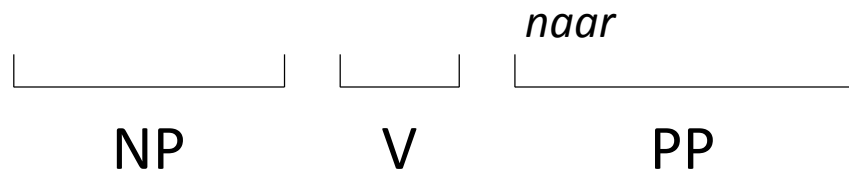
Zoek (naar) slachtoffer



Problem of Prediction

How can we predict the more concrete meaning differences from the abstract, especially given the apparent possibility to predict both ways?

INTRANSITIVE MOTION CONSTRUCTION



profile path

+

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Ik zoek naar slachtoffers

I'm searching victims to help them

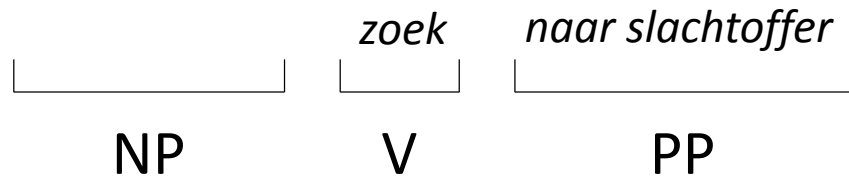
Ik zoek slachtoffers

I search victims

Problem of Prediction

- **If we cannot predict the exact meaning** differences at the concrete levels based on fully abstract constructions, how should we account for these meaning differences?
- Should we assume the existence of **constructions at each level of abstraction?**

ZOEK-NAAR-SLACHTOFFER CONSTRUCTION



search victim to help them

+

=

Ik zoek naar slachtoffers

I'm searching victims to help them

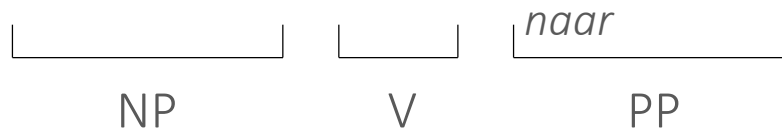
Ik

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Prepositional Intransitive Construction



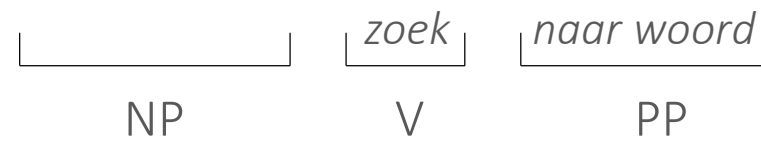
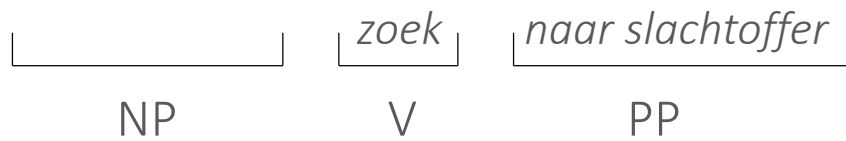
Intransitive Motion Construction



Intransitive Zoek Construction



Intransitive Verlang Construction



Problem of Proliferation

- Should we assume the existence of **constructions at each level of abstraction?**
- If so, by which **mechanism** do these more concrete constructions emerge?

3 Problems

- **Problem of Precedence:** Which meaning difference takes precedence? The abstract or the concrete?
- **Problem of Prediction:** How can we predict the more concrete meaning differences from the abstract, especially given the apparent possibility to predict both ways (e.g. *zoek naar slachtoffer*)?
- **Problem of Proliferation:** Should we really assume the existence of constructions on each level of abstraction to account for all meaning differences? If so, by which mechanism do these constructions emerge?

Thanks!

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