A Constructicon for Ukrainian: Objectives, Strategies, Results

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We report on a project to build a distinct linguistic resource to promote the Ukrainian language in general and empirical data on Ukrainian multi-word constructions in particular: the Ukrainian Constructicon (UkrCon, https://constructicon.github.io/ukrainian/, currently under construction). This is an open-access free digital database of Ukrainian constructions that are described and illustrated for the benefit of linguists, second language learners, and software applications for automatic translation.

We adopt the constructionist approach (Croft 2001, Goldberg 2006) and view constructions as central units of language structure and language description. We follow Construction Grammar in understanding constructions as pairings of form and meaning (or function) learned in the process of language use (Goldberg & Herbst 2021). The project entails constructicography research (Fillmore et al. 1988, Lyngfelt et al. 2018), where the term c*onstruct-i-con* refers to both a structured repertoire of constructions in a language and a description of this repertoire and its organization.

The Ukrainian Constructicon focuses primarily on multi-word recurrent patterns of phrases and sentences characteristic of the Ukrainian language, such as:
(1) *čas vid času VP* 'do something occasionally' [literally: "time from time do something"];
(2) *nivroku Pron-Dat* 'not to wish someone anything bad' [literally "no eye to someone"];
(3) *anitrišky/anitrohy ne VP/Adv* 'do not do at all' [literally: "in no way do something"]
(4) *zaive kazaty/pevna ri*č, *ščo Cl* 'it goes without saying' [literally "it is taken for granted"].

In this talk we 1) explain how we have progressed from the idea to the product and 2) contribute to the discussion of what the most efficient methodology for collecting and analyzing constructions might be. As opposed to existing constructicons, UkrCon is the first to systematically compare construction-mining methodologies: analysis of full authentic texts vs. searching for equivalents to constructions in other languages vs. analysis of most frequent word combinations and sequences attested in corpora (bigrams and trigrams).

The constructicon entries in UkrCon are based on the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of Ukrainian – GRAC and the Corpus of the Ukrainian Language – Mova. UkrCon is built upon comparison and contrast with the Russian Constructicon, and likewise departs from a strict FrameNet approach, following instead a bottom-up data-driven approach.

References

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