

HET INTERESSEERT ME GEEN ENE JE-WEET-WEL

MINIMIZING STRATEGIES IN PRESENT-DAY DUTCH

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OVERVIEW

The minimizing construction...

- Introduction
- Slot 1: The minimizer
- Slot 2: The predicate

... a productive construction in present-day Dutch?

- Central research question
- Methodology
- Productivity of the macro-construction
- Productivity of the micro-constructions
- Conclusion
- What's next?

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THE MINIMIZING CONSTRUCTION – INTRODUCTION

Het interesseert me geen zier 'It doesn't interest me a ZIER'



Ik begrijp er geen hol van 'I don't understand an arse of it'



Hij hoefde er geen seconde over na te denken 'He didn't have to think a second about it'



SLOT 1: THE MINIMIZER

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- “Modern Dutch, like many other languages, has a large number of indefinite negative polarity items intended to strengthen negation by making the statement more emphatic.” (Hoeksema 2002: 1)

SLOT 1: THE MINIMIZER

- “As minimizers, they only have this meaning: neg. + minimizer = zero.” (Bolinger 1972: 122)
- “Modern Dutch, like many other languages, has a large number of indefinite negative polarity items intended to strengthen negation by making the statement more emphatic.” (Hoeksema 2002: 1)
- Recruited from different semantic categories: money (*geen cent*), taboo terms (*geen hol*), distance (*geen centimeter*)...

SLOT 1: THE MINIMIZER

*Het interesseert me **geen zier*** 'It doesn't interest me a ZIER'

Lost its original meaning
No longer semantically transparent
Only used in negative polarity contexts

*Ik begrijp er **geen hol van*** 'I don't understand an arse of it'

*Hij hoefde er **geen seconde over na te denken*** 'He didn't have to think a second about it'

SLOT 1: THE MINIMIZER

Het interesseert me geen zier 'It doesn't interest me a ZIER'

Ik begrijp er geen hol van 'I don't understand an arse of it'

Taboo word

Also used in other contexts

Hij hoefde er geen seconde over na te denken 'He didn't have to think a second about it'

SLOT 1: THE MINIMIZER

Het interesseert me geen zier 'It doesn't interest me a ZIER'

Ik begrijp er geen hol van 'I don't understand an arse of it'

*Hij hoefde er **geen seconde** over na te denken* 'He didn't have to think a second about it'

Minimal amount on a scale of time

Lexical meaning still present

Based on a conventionalized implicature

“When these items occur in positive contexts (if they do), they denote a minimal quantity; when they occur in negative contexts, the negation denotes the absence of a minimal quantity, and hence the presence of no quantity at all.” (Horn 1989: 400)

SLOT 2: THE PREDICATE

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The minimizer can have a variable scope:

*U betaalt geen cent **extra*** ‘You don’t pay a penny extra’

*De stad wordt er geen centimeter **groener** van* ‘The city doesn’t get a centimetre greener’

*Hij heeft geen greintje **geduld*** ‘He doesn’t have a grain (of) patience’

EXCLUDED

SLOT 2: THE PREDICATE

Our focus: the reinforcement of predicates

(Complex) verbs:

*Het **kan** hem geen zak **schelen*** 'He doesn't give a ZAK – He doesn't give a damn'

Adjectival predicates:

*Dat **is** geen sikkepit **waard*** 'That's not worth a SIKKEPIT'

INCLUDED

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CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

- Theoretical framework: Usage-based Construction Grammar (Barðdal 2015; Goldberg 2019)
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How productive is the minimizing construction in present-day Netherlandic Dutch?

How does this productivity work?
(based on usage data and experiments)

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The productivity of the **macro-construction**: the range of items that fill the minimizer-slot, the range of predicates and the interaction between the two slots

The productivity of the **micro-constructions** (= the slot of the minimizer is filled): the range of items that fill the predicate-slot

geen

[NP]

bal
moer
snars
zier
...

[PRED]

aan vinden
doen
geven om
weten
...

geen

snars

[PRED]

aan hebben
begrijpen
geloven
snappen
...

METHODOLOGY - CORPUS



- Synchronic research
- Dutch Web 2014 (nlTenTen14) – Sketch Engine: 2,616,836,538 tokens
- **Netherlandic Dutch** subcorpus: 1,955,672,191 tokens
(74.734% of the entire corpus)

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- Search syntax - example:

```
[lemma="geen|gene|genen|geene|geenen"] [] {0,2} [word="bal"] within <s/>
```

- About 200 minimizers in my dataset, selection based on literature, exploratory searches in the corpus (“*geen* N”) and searches based on frequent predicates

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PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MACRO-CONSTRUCTION

The productivity of the **macro-construction**:

- the range of items that fill **the minimizer-slot**
- the range of items that fill **the predicate-slot**
- the **interaction** between these two slots (covarying collexeme analysis)

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A lot of types (= minimizers) with a low token frequency:

57 hapax legomena, i.e. nouns that occur only once in the construction

& 11 dis legomena, i.e. nouns that occur twice in the construction

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MACRO-CONSTRUCTION

Different types of hapax and dis legomena:

- 1) Context-specific variants of existing minimizers
- 2) Newly created minimizers, context-related
- 3) Newly created minimizers, based on semantic analogy with existing minimizers
- 4) Nonsense words

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MACRO-CONSTRUCTION

Types of hapax and dis legomena:

1) Context-specific variants of an existing minimizer: e.g. *geen drol*

*Sommige dierenartsen snappen er **geen hondendrol** van*

'Some veterinarians don't understand a dog turd about it'

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*Sommige dierenartsen snappen er **geen hondendrol** van*

‘Some veterinarians don’t understand a dog turd about it’

2) Newly created minimizers, context-related

*Hij lijkt **geen graspol** te geven om het amateurvoetbal*

‘He doesn’t seem to give a clump of grass about amateur soccer’

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MACRO-CONSTRUCTION

Types of hapax and dis legomena:

3) Newly created minimizers, based on semantic analogy with existing minimizers, e.g. the taboo words:

*Het maakte me eigenlijk **geen ene aars** uit* 'It didn't matter for me a single arse'

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*Het maakte me eigenlijk **geen ene aars** uit* ‘It didn’t matter for me a single arse’

4) Nonsense words, e.g. the “dummy-minimizers”, used instead of taboo words (Hoeksema 2002: 36)

*De kamerleden interesseert het **geen ene je-weet-wel***

‘It didn’t interest the members of the Parliament a single you-know-what’

*Dat helpt **geen ene bleep*** ‘That didn’t help a single bleep’

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MICRO-CONSTRUCTIONS

The productivity of the **micro-constructions** (= the slot of the minimizer is filled): the range of items that fill **the predicate-slot**

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MICRO-CONSTRUCTIONS

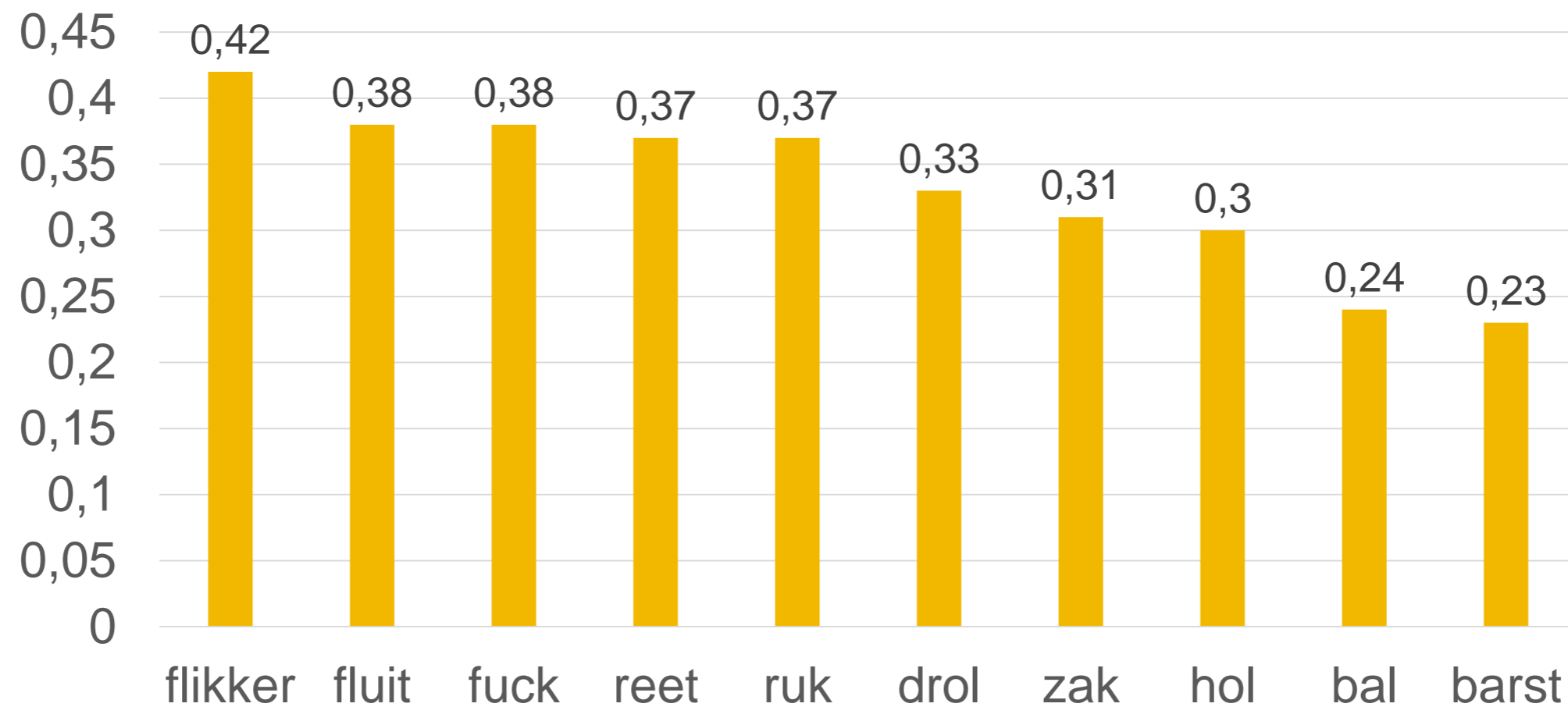
The productivity of the **micro-constructions** (= the slot of the minimizer is filled): the range of items that fill **the predicate-slot**

- Subset of 10 taboo minimizers: *bal, barst, drol, flikker, fluit, fuck, hol, reet, ruk, zak*
- Stable token frequency = 100
- Type/token ratio
- and hapax/token ratio

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Type/token ratio

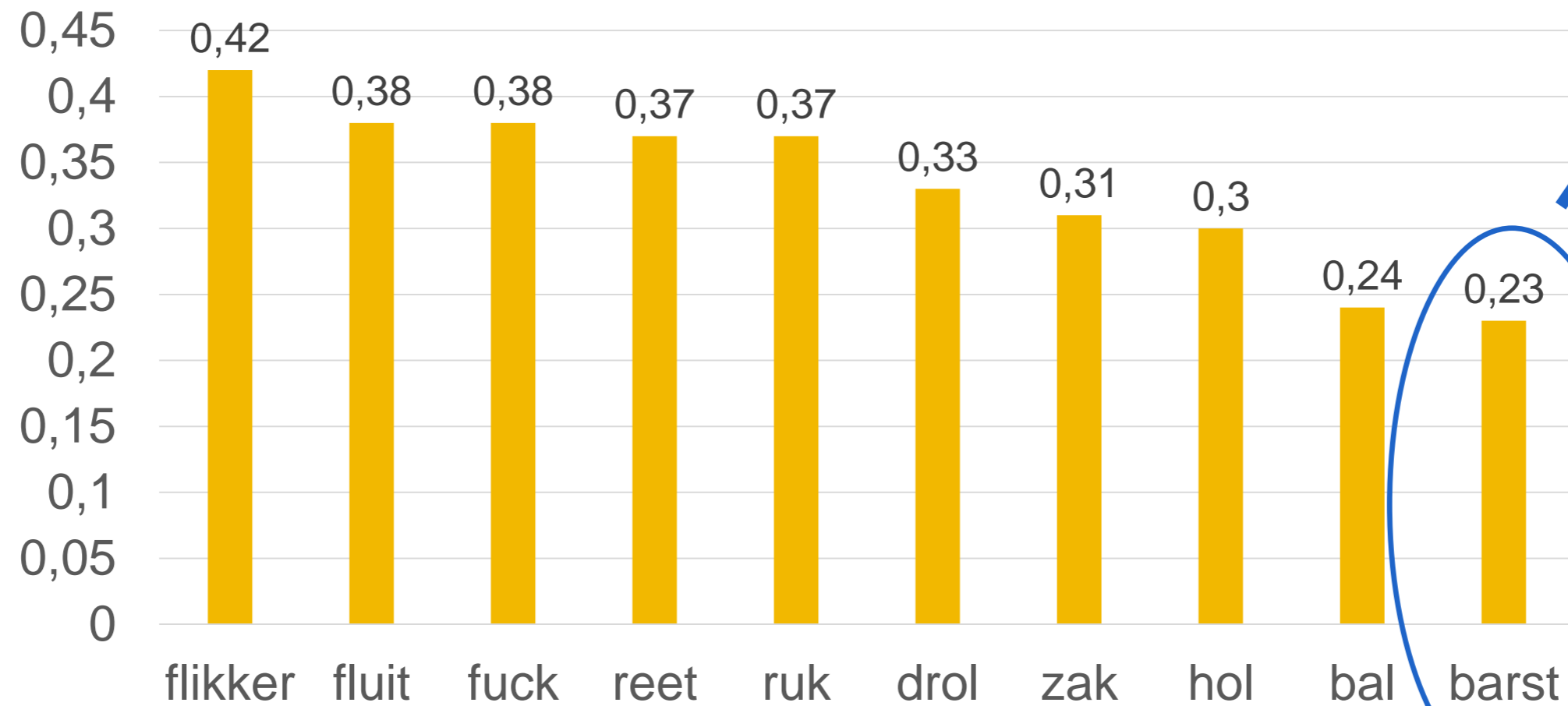


the number of different predicates divided by the number of tokens (= 100)

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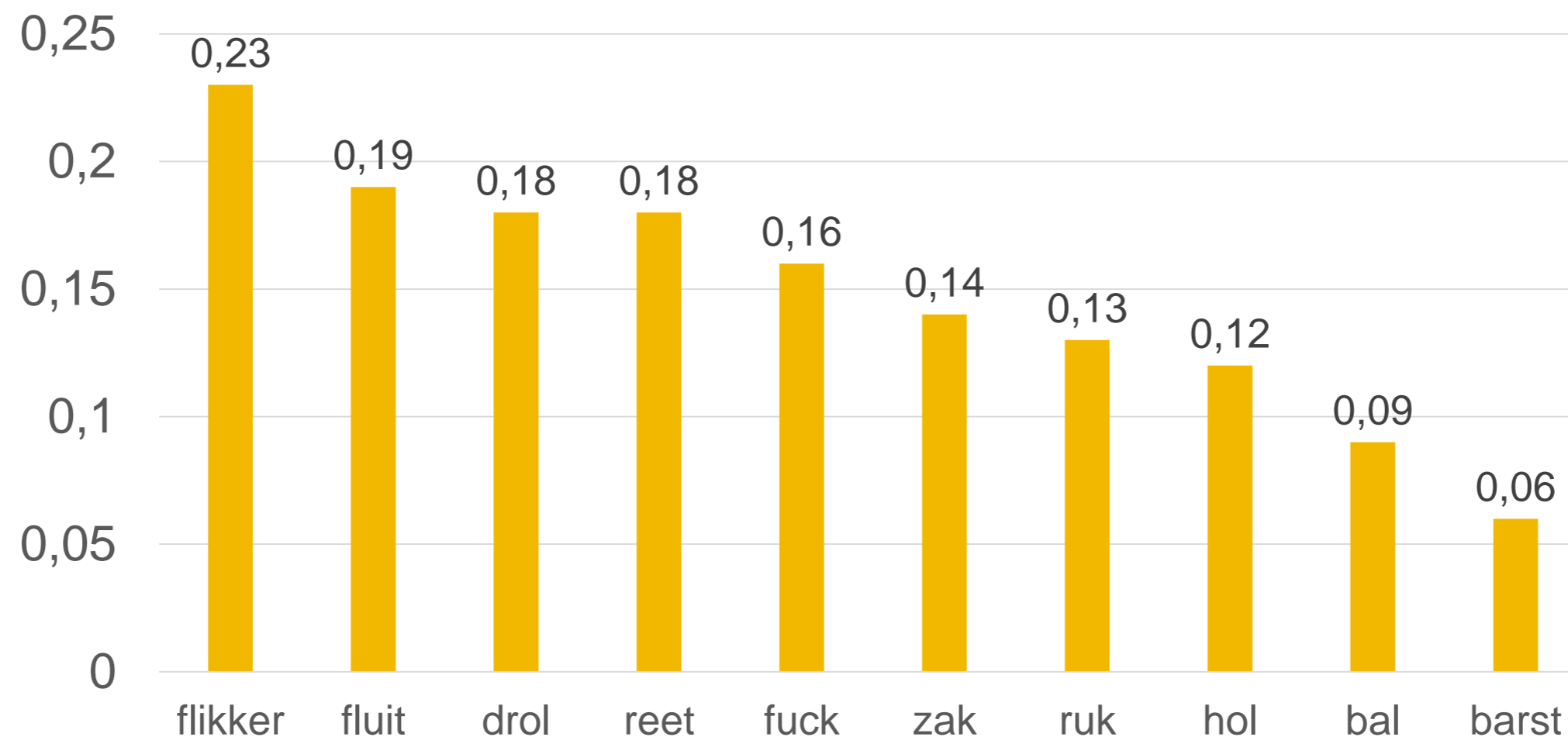


aan hebben	3
aan zijn	2
begrijpen	3
deugen	1
doen	3
ertoe doen	1
geloven	25
geven om	2
helpen	2
interesseren	10
kloppen	5
kunnen schelen	10
opschieten	4
snappen	9
te maken hebben	1
toevoegen	1
uitmaken	4
veranderen	1
voorstellen	1
weten	2
zeggen	2
zich aantrekken	4
zien	4
Total	100

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MICRO-CONSTRUCTIONS

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Hapax/token ratio



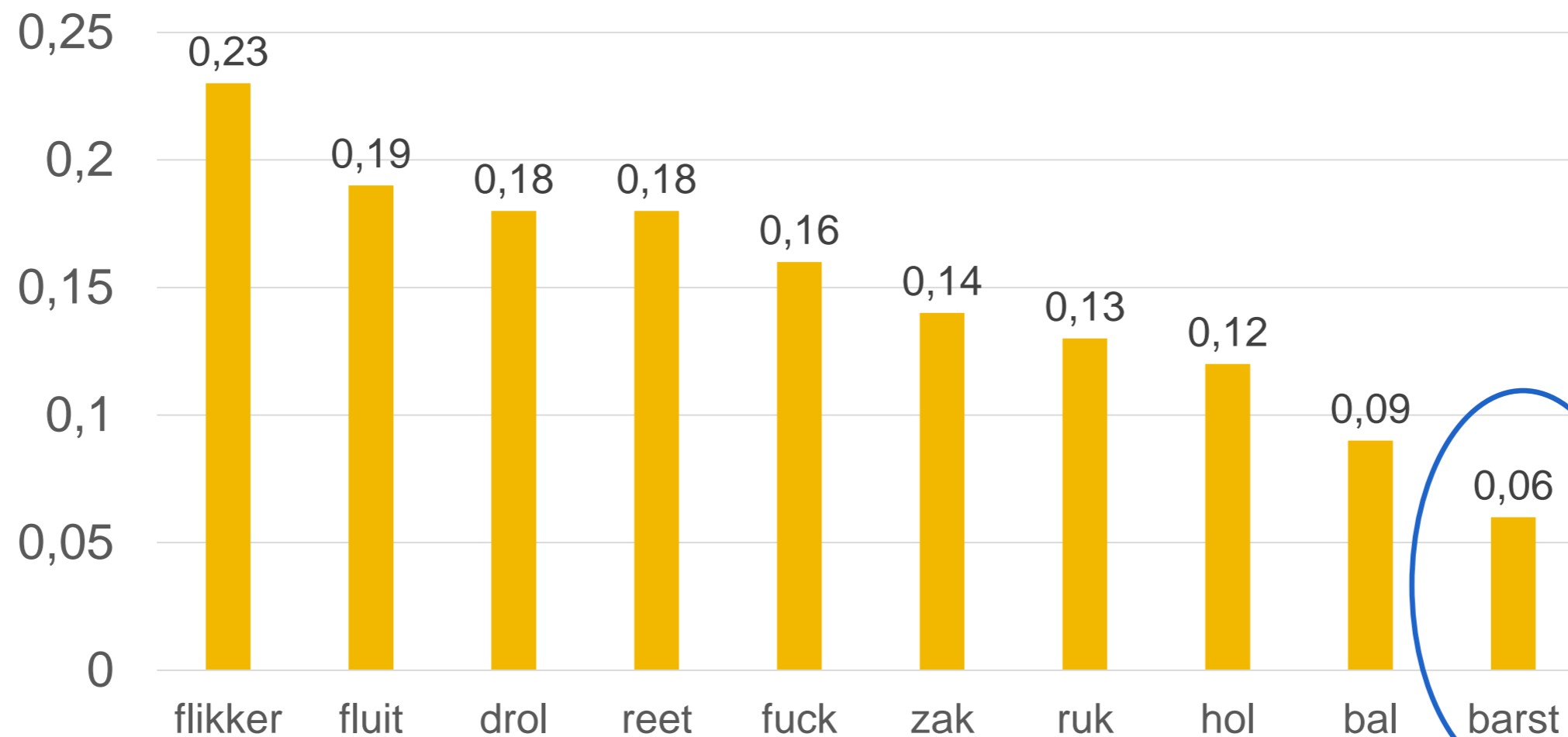
the number of different predicates that are only combined once with the minimizer divided by the number of tokens (= 100)

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE MICRO-CONSTRUCTIONS

The productivity of the **micro-constructions** (= the slot of the minimizer is filled): the range of items that fill **the predicate-slot**

the number of different predicates that are only combined once with the minimizer divided by the number of tokens (= 100)

Hapax/token ratio



deugen	1
ertoe doen	1
te maken hebben	1
toevoegen	1
veranderen	1
voorstellen	1

CONCLUSION

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“Minimizers, those ‘partially stereotyped equivalents of *any*’, occur within the scope of a negation as a way of reinforcing that negation. [...] Indeed, it would appear that any entity whose extension is small enough to be regarded as atomic in an accessible set of contexts can be used productively in this frame as a means of negative reinforcement.”

(Horn 1989: 452-453)

CONCLUSION

At the macro-level:

- high type frequency of the minimizer-slot, many of the minimizers low in token frequency (large number of hapaxes)
- creative extensions, based on analogy, context-related

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- high type frequency of the minimizer-slot, many of the minimizers low in token frequency (large number of hapaxes)
- creative extensions, based on analogy, context-related

At the micro-level:

- varying productivity of the minimizer-predicate combinations (continuum)
- type/token and hapax/token ratio

WHAT'S NEXT?



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Principal Component Analysis



Principal Component Analysis

Vector Space Semantics: to enrich the classical frequency-based productivity measures by semantic information to better understand **the role of meaning in syntactic productivity**

- *What is the internal semantic structuring of the fillers of the predicate-slot within the minimizing construction?*
- *What is the semantic range of each minimizer in terms of predicates?*
- *Do we find semantic clusters built around one particular tokenfrequent attractor?*
- *Which semantic clusters are particularly prone to hapaxes (extensibility)?*



Psycholinguistic experiments: to analyse the links between **attested productivity** (i.e. the corpus counts) and **mental productivity** (i.e. the way the frequency spectrum is processed by the average speaker and how it is actually extended)

- *Do highly frequent minimizer-predicate combinations result in faster reading times and higher acceptability ratings?*
- *How easily can a construction be extended after being primed?*



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Thank you for
listening!
Any questions?

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