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List Constructions: a semantic network

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*E metto in lista tutto quello che mi manca
e mi sembra quasi una preghiera
oppure folle amore
(Baustelle, Piangi Roma, 2008)*

*Niente omologa come una lista.
(Giorgio Boatti, Preferirei di no, 2001)*

1. List phenomena

This work in progress, which is part of a larger research project on grammatical meaning in discourse constructions, focuses on **List Constructions**. With this label we refer to an abstract linguistic pattern shared by a number of linguistic phenomena detectable at different levels of structure that are not normally studied together and are illustrated below.

Lexical level

- Reduplication (Hurch ed. 2005, Stolz 2004, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008)
- Co-compounding (Wälchli 2005)
- Irreversible binominals (Malkiel 1959, Lambrecht 1984, Masini 2006, 2007)

Sentence level

- Syntactic coordination (Abeillé Godard 2006, Haspelmath 2008, Mauri 2008)

Discourse configuration level (for this notion, see Blanche-Benveniste et alii 1979, Duvallon 2005, Masini & Pietrandrea, 2010)

- List constructions (Jefferson 1991, Selting 2007)
- Repetitions (Tannen, 1989 (2007), Bazzanella 1996, 1999)
- Self-repairs (Levelt 1983, De Fornel & Marandin 1996, Blanche-Benveniste 1987)
- Reformulations in spoken language (Blanche-Benveniste et alii 1979, 1990, Blanche-Benveniste 1995, Loufrani & Roubaud 1990, Ambroso & Bonvino, forthcoming)

1.1. A definition of “list”

All these phenomena share a common structural pattern, namely: **a combination of two or more units of the same type realizes one and the same constructional slot.**

Let us see some examples.

- a. Multiple realization of the ARG₃ constituent in the ditransitive construction (sentence level)

In (1), we have a classical phenomenon of coordination that can be described as the multiple realization of the ARG₃ slot in a syntactic ditransitive construction.

- (1) *I will give a letter to John, Mary and Peter*

<i>I</i>	<i>will give</i>	<i>a letter</i>	<i>to John</i>	X ₁ X ₂ CO X ₃
			<i>Mary</i>	
			<i>and Peter</i>	
ARG ₁	PRE	ARG ₂	ARG ₃	

b. Multiple realization of a categorial slot in a multiword expression (lexical level)

In (2) and (3) we have two examples of listing not at the syntactic, but at the lexical level: the ADJ constituent in (2) is realized twice (*vivo*, *vegeto*) yielding an irreversible binomial adjectival construction [ADJ₁+CONJ+ADJ₂]_{ADJ}. The ADJ constituent in the reduplicating construction *bello bello* (3) ‘very beautiful’ is realized twice with the result of yielding the intensified adjectival constructions [ADJ_j+ADJ_i]_{ADJ} construction.

- (2) [[*vivo*]_{ADJ1} [*e*]_{CONJ} [*vegeto*]_{ADJ2}]_{ADJ}
 X_1 CO X_2
 ‘alive and kicking (lit. alive and hale)’

- (3) [[*bello*]_V [*bello*]_V]_N
 X_1 X_2
 ‘very beautiful’

c. Multiple realization of the ARG₂ constituent in a transitive construction reiterated and reinstantiated in discourse (discourse configuration level)

The combination of two or more units of the same type can sometimes take place in upper level domains. Let us examine (4): the ARG₂ slot is realized by combining four elements: *hamburger*, *insalata*, *patatine*, *macedonia*. These are not syntactically coordinated and there are many insertions between them. Furthermore, while *hamburger* and *insalata* realize the ARG₂ position in the construction centered around the verb *vuoi* ‘you want’ (line 1), *patatine* and *macedonia* realize the ARG₂ position in the construction centered around another verb, *mangi* (line 7). Still we can recognize a list. These elements, in fact, realize one and the same syntactic position not within a sentence, but within a discourse configuration, that is within the discourse level unit mainly identified by the GARS equipe in Aix en Provence, which can be defined as the sequence of elements that instantiate or repeat a given predicate-argument-adjunct structure(cf. Blanche –Benveniste et alii 1979, Duvallon 2005, but also Pietrandrea 2008, Masini & Pietrandrea 2010). This kind of unit defines a domain where many phenomena of listing can be detected, even if scattered throughout the text.

- (4) ***Tu vuoi di tutto un po’***, sbaglio? *Un hamburger eh? Di la verità! Un po’ di insalata poi ti mangi patatine macedonia e chi più ne ha più ne metta*
 ‘You want a bit of everything, don’t’ you? A hamburger, uh? Tell the truth! Some salad, then you eat French fries, fruit salad and whatever have you’

1	<i>tu</i> ‘you’	<i>vuoi</i> ‘want’	<i>di tutto un po’</i> ‘a bit of everything’	PRE-DETAILING
2			<i>sbaglio?</i> ‘don’t you?’	INSERTION
3			<i>un hamburger</i> ‘a hamburger’	X_1
4			<i>eh?</i> ‘uh?’	INSERTION
5			<i>di’ la verità!</i> ‘tell the truth!’	INSERTION
6			<i>un po’ di insalata</i> ‘some salad’	X_2
7		<i>Poi ti mangi</i> ‘then you eat’	<i>patatine</i> ‘French fries’	X_3
8			<i>Macedonia</i> ‘fruit salad’	X_4
9			<i>e chi più ne ha più ne metta</i> ‘and whatever have you’	CO POST-DETAILING
	ARG ₁	PRE	ARG ₂	

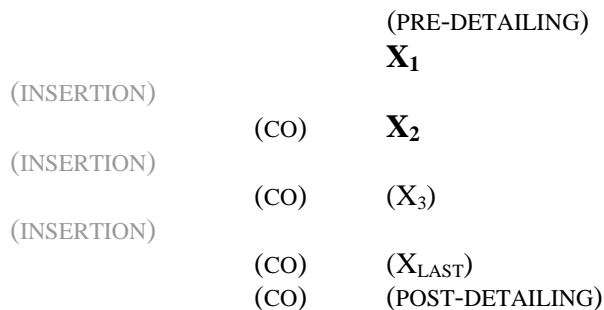
All in all, we can define a **list** as a **linguistic pattern characterized by the multiple realization of one and the same constructional slot, at any level of linguistic structure.**

1.2. List structure

Examples from (1) through (4) tell us how a list can be structurally defined. As illustrated in Figure 1, a list is a linguistic pattern defined by a minimal structure made up of X₁ and X₂, two conjuncts (or, better, two listees) that have the same categorial properties and occupy the same constructional position. The list in (3) represents a realization of this minimal structure (*fuggi fuggi*). Then there is a number of optional elements that concur to structure the list: firstly, the coordinators (conjunctions, disjunctions, etc.); secondly, what Selting (2007) calls predetailing and post-detailing elements.

The pre-detailing is an element external to the list proper that works as a projecting “more-to-come” element, which is detailed and expanded by means of the list itself (an example is in (4): *di tutto un po’* ‘a bit of everything’). The post-detailing component as well is an external element that has the function of closing, completing the list and most often of linking back to the pre-detailing component (an example is the expression *e chi più ne ha più ne metta* in (4)).

Figure 1. *List structure*



1.3. Lists as constructions

We have recently proposed to consider the linguistic pattern “list” as a construction in the technical sense of Construction Grammar. In Construction Grammar, the **construction** is a conventionalized association of a form and a meaning. Therefore, constructions go from simple words to more complex and abstract structures (Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor 1988, Kay & Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995, 2006, Croft 2001, Östman, 2005, Masini and Pietrandrea 2010).

As we have observed, “[t]he abstract [...] pattern “list” has the very general meaning of “relation among the conjuncts” and may assume more specific meanings according to the exact way in which it is instantiated” (Masini & Pietrandrea 2010). So, for example, a conjunction turns the relation between the listed items in an additive relation, whereas a disjunction turns it into an alternative relation, and so on so forth (cf. Figure 2).

Figure 2. *List Constructions*

List Construction

Form: X₁, X₂,...X_{LAST}

Meaning: <relation between listed elements>

Conjunctive List Construction

Form: X₁, (CONJ) X₂,...(CONJ) X_{LAST}

Meaning: <additive relation between listed elements>

Disjunctive List Construction

Form: X₁, (DISJ) X₂,...(DISJ)X_{LAST}

Meaning: <alternative relation between listed elements>

1.4. Objectives

Our analysis of list constructions has a long-term objective, that is building a complete typology of List Constructions and defining the inheritance network that relates one List Construction to the other.

The simpler objective of the present paper is to focus on some non compositional List Constructions, i.e., lists whose meaning cannot be simply derived as a sum of the parts.

2. Analysis

In order to provide a typology of List Constructions we have first identified eight parameters.

First of all, we have distinguished between syndetic and asyndetic List Constructions, that is lists in which a coordinator does occur (as in (6)) and lists where a coordinator does not occur (as in (5)).

(a) Presence vs. absence of syndesis

ASYNDETIC LIST CONSTRUCTION	SYNDETIC LIST CONSTRUCTION
(5) <i>Qualcuno gli farà compagnia: <u>un cane</u>, <u>un gatto</u>, <u>un canarino</u></i> 'Someone will keep him company: a dog, a cat, a canary-bird'	(6) <i>Mi sono già iscritto <u>a quel canale</u>, <u>o gruppo</u>, insomma quello che è</i> 'I have already registered to that channel, or group, whatever it is'

In the case of syndetic list constructions we have distinguished between conjunctive (7), disjunctive (8) and adversative (9) coordinators, basically conveying an additive, an alternative and a contrastive meaning respectively.

(b) Nature of the syndetic conjunction (conjunctive/disjunctive/adversative)

CONJUNCTIVE SYNDETIC LIST CONSTRUCTION	DISJUNCTIVE SYNDETIC LIST CONSTRUCTION	ADVERSATIVE SYNDETIC LIST CONSTRUCTION
(7) <i>È un volume <u>per grandi e piccini</u></i> 'It is a volume for anyone (lit. for adults and children)'	(8) <i>Compra <u>il pane</u> <u>o il latte</u></i> 'Buy the bread or the milk'	(9) <i><u>Siamo poveri</u>, <u>ma siamo belli</u></i> 'We are poor but beautiful'

We have also looked at the prosodic marking of the list. Whether produced within a single tonal unit as in (10) or in more than one tonal unit as in (11), the prosodically unmarked list presents a falling pitch on the tonal syllable of the last listed element. This marks the closure of the list (cf. (10) and (11)). Instead, when there is no falling tone on the tonal syllable of the last item, the list is said to be prosodically open (cf. (12)-(13)).

(c) Prosodic marking of the list (closure vs. openness)

PROSODICALLY CLOSED LIST	PROSODICALLY OPEN LIST
(10) [<i>giorno e <u>nòtte</u></i>] _{TU} 'Night and day'	(12) [<i>cammina cammina <u>cammina</u></i>] _{TU} 'After a long long walk (lit. walk, walk, walk)'
(11) [<i>ho visto <u>un cane</u></i>] _{TU} [<i>un gatto</i>] _{TU} [<i>e un <u>tòpo</u></i>] _{TU} 'I have seen a cat, a dog and a mouse'	(13) <i>non capisco [<u>cosa dice</u>]_{TU} [<u>cosa non dice</u>]_{TU}</i> 'I don't understand anything of what he says (lit. I don't understand what he says what he doesn't say)'

We have also looked at the number of listed elements: basically there may be two or more than two listed elements.

(d) Number of the listed elements

BINARY LIST	TERNARY LIST	LIST WITH MORE THAN THREE ELEMENTS
(14) <i>ho un cane e un gatto</i> 'I have a dog and a cat'	(15) <i>ho un cane e un gatto e un topo</i> 'It's very very beautiful (lit. it is beautiful beautiful beautiful)'	(16) <i>Vuole mangiare mangiare mangiare mangiare e ancora mangiare</i> 'he wants to eat and eat and eat and eat again'

Another parameter is the category of the listed elements: whether they are words, phrases or entire clauses.

(e) Category of the listed elements

LIST OF WORDS	LIST OF PHRASES	LIST OF CLAUSES
(17) <i>bianco e nero</i> 'black and white (lit. white and black)'	(18) <i>C'erano un francese, un tedesco, un inglese e un americano</i> 'There were a Frenchmen, a German, an Englishman and an American'	(19) <i>Io ho chiesto spiegazioni e lui ha rallentato</i> 'I have asked for an explanation and he slowed down'

In the case of nouns and noun phrases in the list structure, we have looked at the nature of the determination: so we could distinguish between lists of definite, indefinite or bare nouns.

(f) Nature of the determination (for nouns)

LIST OF DEFINITE NPs	LIST OF INDEFINITE NPs	LIST OF BARE NOUNS
(20) <i>Ho visto il cane e il gatto</i> 'I have seen the dog and the cat'	(21) <i>Ho visto un cane e un gatto</i> 'I have seen the dog and the cat'	(22) <i>Ho visto cane e gatto</i> 'I have seen dog and cat'

A crucial criterion for our analysis has been identified in the semantic relation between the listed items. We have distinguished between non-natural and natural listing, i.e listing of semantically unrelated vs. semantically related elements.

(g) Semantic relation between the listed elements

NON-NATURAL LIST	NATURAL LIST
(23) <i>Il pifferaio e le automobili</i> (Gianni Rodari) 'The piper and the cars'	(24) <i>La maestra e gli scolari</i> 'The teacher and the pupils'

In the case of natural listing, we have in particular distinguished between lists of semantically **opposite** items (as in (25)), lists of **co-hyponims** (as in (26)) and lists of **identical** elements (as in (27)).

LIST OF OPPPOSITES	LIST OF CO-HYPONYMS	LIST OF IDENTICAL ELEMENTS
(25) <i>Siamo condizionati tutti <u>belli</u> e <u>brutti</u>, <u>grassi</u> e <u>magri</u></i> 'We are all influenced: beautiful people and ugly people, fat people and slim people'	(26) <i>Qualcuno gli farà compagnia: <u>un cane</u>, <u>un gatto</u> <u>un canarino</u></i> 'Someone will keep him company: a dog, a cat, a canary-bird'	(27) <i>Era <u>buono</u> <u>buono</u> <u>buono</u></i> 'He was a really good guy (lit. he was good good good)'

The last important parameter we have taken into consideration is the nature of the elements filling the pre- and post-detailing positions and of the insertions. This (mostly discourse) markers can be conjunctive or disjunctive general extender in post-detailing position (cfr. Overstreet 2005), indicators of reformulation in insertion (Bazzanella 1994), and so on. They can refer to the ideational plan or to the metatextual plan with important effects on the interpretation of the list.

(h) Markers in pre-detailing position, post-detailing position, insertions

CONJUNCTIVE GENERAL EXTENDER IN POST-DETAILING POSITION OPERATING ON THE IDEATIONAL PLAN	DISJUNCTIVE GENERAL EXTENDER IN POST-DETAILING POSITION OPERATING ON THE IDEATIONAL PLAN
(28) <i>Non credo a <u>lettura della mano</u>, <u>delle carte</u> e <u>cose del genere</u></i> 'I don't believe in the reading of people's palm, of cards and stuff like that'	(29) <i>Lo dico per non sprofondare <u>nella pigrizia</u>, <u>nella depressione</u> o <u>quello che è</u></i> 'I say that not to sink into laziness, depression or whatever it is'

DISJUNCTIVE GENERAL EXTENDER IN POST-DETAILING POSITION OPERATING ON THE METATEXTUAL PLAN	REFORMULATION MARKER IN INSERTION OPERATING ON THE METATEXTUAL PLAN
(30) <i>Sono <u>tempofobico</u> o <u>cronofobico</u> o <u>come cavolo si dice</u></i> 'I am timephobic or chronophobic or how the hell it is called'	(31) <i>attraverso delle dei sistemi co- <u>di argani</u> di insomma di <u>di come si chiamano</u> di <u>non mi viene la parola</u> eh no <u>ascensori</u> vabbè <u>montacarichi</u> <u>montacarichi</u></i> 'through some some systems co- of capstans of well of of how to say this of I can't find the word ehm no lifts well hoists, hoists'

3. List Constructions

The parameters just discussed characterize both compositional and non-compositional cases of listing. As mentioned before, here we want to concentrate on the latter type and in particular on the five non compositional List Constructions that we have identified and analysed so far and that are listed below.

- Non compositional List Constructions
 - Conjunctive
 - GENERALIZING
 - COLLECTIVE
 - INTENSIFYING
 - Disjunctive
 - CONCEPTUALLY APPROXIMATIVE
 - METATEXTUALLY APPROXIMATIVE

As we can see, we have both conjunctive and disjunctive types of lists. We will begin with the Generalizing List Construction.

3.1. Generalizing List Construction (GLC)

This construction can be identified by the features illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Features of the Generalizing List Construction

(a) presence of syndesis	(b) nature of syndesis	(c) prosodic marking	(d) number of Xs	(e) category of Xs	(f) determination (for nouns)	(g) semantic relation	(h) markers & insertions
±	conjunctive	closed	2	words phrases arg. clauses	esp. bare nouns	opposites	(universal quantifier)

First, the construction may or may not display a syndetic element and this syndetic element is of the conjunctive type.¹

Second, the list is prosodically closed and is made up of only 2 elements, differently from all other List Constructions, that may instead present more elements.

Third, a crucial property of this construction is the kind of semantic relation that holds between the two listed elements: they should be opposites. These two opposite elements represent two poles of a domain which is universally quantified by the whole construction. This is precisely the **function of the Generalizing List Construction**: to create a universal quantifier that is defined by two opposite poles, which correspond to the two listed elements. Sometimes, the corresponding universal quantifier can also occur as a pre-detailing element, but this is not an obligatory features.

Finally, and most importantly, the constituting elements of this construction can belong to different categories and different structural levels: we may find words, but also phrases and argumental clauses.

In (32) and (33), we have complex lexical units, and more precisely binomial expressions (as defined by Malkiel 1959, Lambrecht 1984 and Masini 2007 for Italian). In some languages, the very same kind of construction can be found among co-compounds, and in fact the term ‘generalizing’ is taken from Wälchli’s (2005) semantic classification of co-compounds.

- (32) [[giorno]_{N1} [e]_{CONJ} [notte]_{N2}]_{ADV}
 X_1 CO X_2
‘day and night, all the time’

- (33) [[a destra]_{ADV1} [e]_{CONJ} [a manca]_{ADV2}]_{ADV}
 X_1 CO X_2
‘all over the place (lit. on the right and on the left)’

In (34) we have the conjunction of two phrases, instead, but the effect is quite the same: *a book for adults and for children* means in fact *a book for everyone*.

- (34) *Questo è un libro per grandi e per piccini*
‘This is a book for everyone (lit. for adults and for children)’

1	<i>Questo</i> ‘This’	<i>è</i> ‘is’	<i>un libro</i> ‘a book’	<i>per grandi</i> ‘for adults’	X_1
2				<i>e per piccini</i> ‘and for children’	CO X_2
	ARG ₁	PRE	ARG ₂	ADJ	

¹ It may be disjunctive under wide-scope negation, but in this case there is a logical equivalence of disjunction and conjunction with narrow-scope negation, as Haspelmath (2007) reminds us.

A similar reasoning can be done with argumental clauses such as those in (35) and (36): *those coming*, *those leaving* means ‘all of us’ here and *what he says what he doesn’t say* means ‘everything he says’ or ‘exactly what he says’.

- (35) *Cercheremo di salutarci tutti, chi viene, chi parte [...]*
‘We will try to say hello to all of us, those coming, those leaving [...]

1	<i>Cercheremo di salutarci</i> ‘we will try to say hello to each other’	<i>tutti</i> ‘everybody’	PRE-DETAILING
2		<i>chi viene</i> ‘who comes’	X ₁
3		<i>chi parte</i> ‘who leaves’	X ₂
	PRE	ARG	

- (36) *non capisco i suoi rapporti con gli altri cosa dice, cosa non dice eccetera eccetera*
‘I don’t understand his relationship with the others, everything he says, etc etc’

1	<i>Non capisco</i> ‘I don’t understand’	<i>I suoi rapporti con gli altri</i> ‘his relationship with the others’	
2		<i>Cosa dice</i> ‘what he says’	X ₁
3		<i>Cosa non dice</i> ‘what he doesn’t say’	X ₂
4		<i>Eccetera eccetera</i> ‘etc etc’	POST-DETAILING
	PRE	ARG	

3.2. Collective List Construction (CLC)

We obtain a Collective List Construction under the conditions given in Table 2.

Table 2. Features of the Collective List Construction

(a) presence of syndesis	(b) nature of syndesis	(c) prosodic marking	(d) number of Xs	(e) category of Xs	(f) determination (for nouns)	(g) semantic relation	(h) markers & insertions
±	conjunctive	open	2 or more	words phrases clauses	esp. bare nouns	co- hyponyms	(conjunctive general extender)* (hyperonym)

* E.g., among others, *e quant’altro* ‘and what have/and all that jazz’, *e X del genere* ‘and things like this’, *e X di questo tipo* ‘and things like this’, *insomma* ‘in brief’.

First, like the Generalizing List Construction, also the Collective List Construction may or may not display a conjunctive syndetic element. However, in the collective case the list is prosodically open, can be made up of 2 or more (especially 3) elements.

As for the semantic relation among the listed elements, they should be co-hyponyms. Then the whole construction – made up of this list of co-hyponyms – refers to the corresponding hyperonymic expression. Therefore, the **function of the Collective List Construction** is to **create a hyperonymic expression starting from a list of two or more co-hyponyms** (cf. again Wälchli 2005 for the term “collective”).

This semantic effect is independent from the category to which the listed elements belong, since we may find words, phrases and clauses as input.

Also in this case we may have lexicalized examples, as illustrated in (37) and (38): these are, again, binomial expressions. So, for instance, we have the binomial *knife and fork* that may mean ‘cutlery in general’.

- (37) [[*coltello*]_{N1} [*e*]_{CONJ} [*forchetta*]_{N2}]_N
 $\mathbf{X_1}$ **co** $\mathbf{X_2}$
 ‘knife and fork, cutlery (lit. knife and fork)’

- (38) [[*mutande*]_{N1} [*e*]_{CONJ} [*reggiseno*]_{N2}]_N
 $\mathbf{X_1}$ **co** $\mathbf{X_2}$
 ‘underwear (lit. panties and bra)’

The same mechanism can be envisaged when we have phrases. (39), for instance, contains a list of phrases made up of bare nouns (which by the way is a property shared also by the lexicalized examples). In (39) we have a list of animals (*dogs*, *cats*, *canary-birds*, *turtles*) that in fact refers to animals in general, and not the specific types mentioned. This becomes clearer if we look at the rest of the sentence: it is evident that the court for animals will not protect only dogs, cats, canary-birds and turtles, but the whole category of “animals”, or at least we hope so.

- (39) *Cani, gatti, canarini, tartarughe saranno tutelati con la nascita dei tribunali per animali*
 ‘(Animals like) dogs, cats, canary-birds, turtles will be protected thanks to creation of the court for animals’

1	<i>Cani</i> ‘dogs’			$\mathbf{X_1}$
2	<i>gatti</i> ‘cats’			$\mathbf{X_2}$
3	<i>canarini</i> ‘canary-birds’			$\mathbf{X_3}$
4	<i>tartarughe</i> ‘turtles’	<i>saranno tutelati</i> ‘will be protected’	<i>con la nascita dei tribunali per animali</i> ‘thanks to creation of the court for animals’	$\mathbf{X_4}$
	ARG	PRE	ADJ	

The creation of a “category” is at issue also in the three remaining examples, even though in a less canonical way. In (40), *studying the stars*, *reading people’s palm*, *reading cards* etc. are all specific actions that refer to the general activity of “being a magician”.

- (40) *Potrebbe diventare un mago se si dedicasse allo studio degli astri, alla lettura della mano delle carte eccetera.*
 ‘He might become a magician if he devoted himself to the study of the stars, to the reading of people’s palm, of cards etc.’

1	<i>se si dedicasse</i> ‘if he devoted himself’	<i>allo studio degli astri</i> ‘to the study of the stars’	$\mathbf{X_1}$
2		<i>alla lettura della mano</i> ‘to the reading of people’s palm’	$\mathbf{X_2}$
3		<i>delle carte</i> ‘of cards’	$\mathbf{X_3}$
4		<i>eccetera</i> ‘etc.’	POST-DETAILING
	PRE	ARG	

Similarly, in (41), *I love Veltroni* and *I will vote for Veltroni* are ways of “supporting” him.

- (41) *Il che non vuol dire che amo Veltroni, che voterò Veltroni, eccetera eccetera.*
 ‘And this fact doesn’t mean that I love Veltroni, that I will vote for Veltroni, etcetera etcetera’

1	<i>Il che</i> 'And this fact'	<i>non vuol dire</i> 'doesn't mean'	<i>che amo Veltroni</i> 'that I love Veltroni'	X₁
2			<i>che voterò Veltroni</i> 'that I will vote for Veltroni'	X₂
3			<i>eccetera eccetera</i> 'etcetera etcetera'	POST- DETAILING
	ARG₁	PRE	ARG₂	

Finally, in (42), the sentences *she [my ex-wife] slept every day until 2pm, she didn't prepare the lunch, she didn't houseclean, she didn't wash the linen* all refer to the fact that the ex-wife of the speaker was a good-for-nothing.

- (42) *Nel mio caso specifico, mia ex-moglie non faceva niente di tutto ciò, dormiva ogni giorno fino alle 14, non mi preparava il pranzo, non puliva la casa, non lavava la biancheria, insomma non faceva niente di niente, ma non solo, usciva con le sue amiche a bere fino alle 23 passate e tornava a casa ubriaca*
'In my specific case, my ex-wife didn't do any of these things, she slept every day until 2pm, she didn't prepare the lunch, she didn't houseclean, she didn't wash the linen, in brief she was a good-for-nothing, but not only, she used to go out drinking with her friends until past 11pm and come back home drunk'

1	<i>Nel mio caso specifico</i> 'In my specific case'	<i>mia ex-moglie</i> 'my ex-wife'	<i>non faceva niente di tutto ciò</i> 'didn't do any of these things'	PRE-DETAILING
2			<i>dormiva ogni giorno fino alle 14</i> 'she slept every day until 2pm'	X₁
3			<i>non mi preparava il pranzo</i> 'she didn't prepare the lunch'	X₂
4			<i>non puliva la casa</i> 'she didn't houseclean'	X₃
5			<i>non lavava la biancheria</i> 'she didn't wash the linen'	X₄
	<i>insomma</i>			INSERTION
6			<i>non faceva niente di niente</i> 'in brief, she was a good-for-nothing'	POST-DETAILING
7	<i>ma non solo</i> 'but not only'			INSERTION
8			<i>usciva con le sue amiche a bere fino alle 23 passate</i> 'she used to go out drinking with her friends until past 11pm'	X₅
9			<i>e tornava a casa ubriaca</i> 'and come back home drunk'	CO X₆
		ARG₁	PRE	
	ADJ	CLAUSE		

As is evident from (42), the corresponding hyperonymic expression may optionally occur as a pre-detailing or post-detailing element: in this example the speaker is first saying that his ex-wife *didn't do any of these things*, then the list of co-hyponyms follows, and finally he says that she *was a good-for-nothing*.

In post-detailing position one may also find so-called conjunctive general extender, namely markers such as *quant'altro* 'and what have you'/and all that jazz', *e X del genere* 'and things like this', *e X di questo tipo* 'and things like this', *etcetera* 'eccetera. This happens in both (41) and (42).

3.3. Intensifying List Construction (ILC)

The next List Construction we are going to deal with is the Intensifying List Construction. This construction is different from all the others because the listed elements must be identical to each other. Therefore, we are in front of a sort of reduplicating pattern.

The defining properties of the Intensifying List Construction are to be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Features of the Intensifying List Construction

(a) presence of syndesis	(b) nature of syndesis	(c) prosodic marking	(d) number of Xs	(e) category of Xs	(f) determination (for nouns)	(g) semantic relation	(h) markers & insertions
±	conjunctive	Open	2 or more (esp. 3)	words phrases clauses	bare noun	identity	(focalizer)*

* E.g. *e ancora* ‘and again’, *molto* ‘much’.

First of all, also this construction belongs to the conjunctive type, but it is generally asyndetic.

The list is prosodically open and can be made up of 2 or more (especially 3) elements, which, as just mentioned, are identical to each other.

As in other cases, these elements can be words, phrases and clauses and can work at different levels of analysis: lexicon, syntax and discourse. (43) and (44) detail two lexicalized reduplications in Italian: we mentioned the *bello bello* example before; here we have also *piano piano*, meaning ‘very slowly’.

- (43) [[*bello*]_{ADJ1} [*bello*]_{ADJ2}]_{ADJ}
 X_1 X_2
 ‘very beautiful’

- (44) [[*piano*]_{ADV1} [*piano*]_{ADV2}]_{ADV}
 X_1 X_2
 ‘very slowly (lit. slowly slowly)’

The **function of the Intensifying List Construction** is to **stress the meaning of the (same) listed element**. What is interesting about this construction is that the general stressing effect associated with it becomes more specific according to the kind of syntactic category the listed elements belong to.

For instance, in (45) and (46) we have lists of adjectival and adverbial elements. In both of these cases, we obtain a superlative meaning, exactly like in the *piano piano* example.

- **Adjectives** (superlative)

- (45) *Era bello bello bello*
 ‘It was very beautiful’

1	<i>Era</i> ‘(it) was’	<i>bello</i> ‘beautiful’	X_1
2		<i>bello</i> ‘beautiful’	X_2
3		<i>bello</i> ‘beautiful’	X_3
	PRE	ARG	

- **Adverbs** (superlative)

- (46) *Lo avevano sistemato in alto in alto in alto*
 ‘They put it very on high’

1	<i>Lo avevano sistemato</i> 'they put it'	<i>in alto</i> 'on high'	X₁
2		<i>in alto</i> 'on high'	X₂
3		<i>in alto</i> 'on high'	X₃
	PRE	ARG	

In (47) and (48), instead, we have nominal elements. In this case we may obtain two meanings: a 'high quantity' meaning and a 'distributive' meaning. In (47) the repetition of *work* means 'a lot work' (high quantity). In (48), instead, *kiwi kiwi kiwi* means 'always kiwi' or 'kiwi all the time' (distributivity).

- **Nouns**

- High quantity

(47) *La sua vita era lavoro, lavoro, lavoro*
'His life was made up of just a lot work'

1	<i>La sua vita</i> 'if he devoted himself'	<i>era</i> 'was'	<i>lavoro</i> 'work'	X₁
2			<i>lavoro</i> 'work'	X₂
3			<i>lavoro</i> 'work'	X₃
	ARG	PRE	ARG	

- Distributivity

(48) *Lunedì e giovedì gelato, gli altri giorni, invece kiwi, kiwi, kiwi*
'On Monday and Thursday (we have) icecream; on other days, instead, (we have) always kiwi'

1	<i>Lunedì</i> 'Monday'			
2	<i>e giovedì</i> 'and Thursday'	<i>gelato</i> 'icecream'		
3	<i>gli altri giorni invece</i> 'on other days, instead'	<i>kiwi</i> 'kiwi'	X₁	
4		<i>kiwi</i> 'kiwi'	X₂	
5		<i>kiwi</i> 'kiwi'	X₃	
	ADJ	PRE		

Finally, when it comes to verbs, we still have another specialization of meaning: by listing the same verb form we obtain either continuous aspect (as also noted by Bertinetto 2001) – basically with durative verbs – or iterative aspect – with non durative verbs. In (49) *rideva rideva rideva* means 'kept on laughing' (continuous aspect). In (50), instead, *bussò bussò bussò* means 'knocked many times, repeatedly' (iterative aspect).

- **Verbs**

- Continuous aspect

(49) *La guardava e rideva, rideva, rideva*
'He looked at her and kept on laughing'

1	<i>La guardava</i> 'He looked at her'	
2	<i>e rideva</i> 'and laughed'	X₁
3	<i>rideva</i> 'laughed'	X₂
4	<i>rideva</i> 'laughed'	X₃
	PRE	

○ Iterative aspect

- (50) *Bussò, bussò, bussò, ma non c'era nessuno*
'he knocked many times, but nobody was there'

1	<i>Bussò</i> '(he) knocked'	X₁
2	<i>bussò</i> '(he) knocked'	X₂
3	<i>bussò</i> '(he) knocked'	X₃
4	<i>ma non c'era nessuno</i> 'but nobody was there'	
	PRE	

The continuous aspect conveyed by this construction can also be detected in (51): here the continuous aspect meaning ('she kept on sleeping') is scattered throughout the whole discourse configuration made up of a sequence of sentences (*and she was sleeping, and she was sleeping*).

- (51) *Lui pregava, e lei dormiva. Lui si infuriava, e lei dormiva. Lui andava e tornava da quel capezzale, e lei dormiva. Dormiva, dormiva, dormiva e lui era impotente, fragile e pazzo*
'He prayed, and she was sleeping. He got angry, and she was sleeping. He went to and fro her deathbed, and she was sleeping. She was sleeping all the time and he was helpless, fragile and mad'

1	<i>lui</i> 'he'	<i>pregava</i> 'prayed'	Y₁
2	<i>e lei</i> 'and she'	<i>dormiva</i> 'was sleeping'	X₁
3	<i>lui</i> 'he'	<i>si infuriava</i> 'got angry'	Y₂
4	<i>e lei</i> 'and she '	<i>dormiva</i> 'was sleeping'	X₂
5	<i>lui</i> 'he'	<i>andava e tornava da quel capezzale</i> 'went to and fro her deathbed'	Y₃
6	<i>e lei</i> 'and she '	<i>dormiva</i> 'was sleeping'	X₃
7		<i>dormiva</i> 'she was sleeping'	X₄
8		<i>dormiva</i> 'she was sleeping'	X₅
9		<i>dormiva</i> 'she was sleeping'	X₆
10	<i>e lui</i> 'and he'	<i>era impotente, fragile e pazzo</i> 'was helpless, fragile and mad'	Y₄
	ARG₁	PRE	
	CLAUSE		

3.4. Approximative List Construction (ALC)

3.4.1. Conceptually Approximative List Construction

The last Construction we are going to analyse is the Approximative List Construction. Its identifying properties are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Features of the Conceptually Approximative List Construction

(a) presence of sindesi	(b) nature of syndesis	(c) prosodic marking	(d) number of Xs	(e) category of Xs	(f) determination (for nouns)	(g) semantic relation	(h) markers & insertions
±	disjunctive	Open	2 or more	words, phrases clauses	-	co- hyponym	disjunctive general extender

* E.g. *una roba/cosa così* ‘something like this’, *o quello che è/sia* ‘or whatever it is’, *o cose di questo tipo* ‘or things like this/of this sort’.

Firstly, the Approximative List Construction may or may not display a syndetic element.

Secondly, like the Collective List Construction, also the Approximative List Construction is prosodically open, can be made up of 2 or more (especially 3) elements, may be both syndetic and asyndetic, and its listed elements are co-hyponyms. However, in this case we have a disjunctive, not conjunctive, list.

Therefore, we have a different **function**, a function of approximation. So, quoting Denison (2002), we may say that the *Approximative List Construction* “is used to **refer not to a normal member of the class [...]** **but to a possible member, or perhaps an arguable member, or a peripheral member, or a near-member**” (the boldface is ours). This is what we have called **conceptual approximation**.

As other List Constructions, also this abstract construction works at different levels.

In (52) ad (53) we have two lexicalized binomial expressions: *two or three* meaning ‘few’ and *little or nothing* meaning ‘very little, barely nothing’.

- (52) [[due]_{NUM1} [o]_{DISJ} [tre]_{NUM1}]_{ADV}
X₁ CO X₂
‘few (lit. two or three)’

- (53) [[poco]_{ADV1} [o]_{DISJ} [niente]_{ADV1}]_{ADV}
X₁ CO X₂
‘very little (lit. little or nothing)’

In (54) two phrases are listed (*this fly this mosquito*) followed by a disjunctive general extender (*or whatever it is*). Here the speaker refers to an insect by listing types of insects: in this way he is saying that the referent is arguably a member of the same insect class. The same reasoning holds for (55) and (56).

- (54) *Poi torna sempre ‘sta mosca, ‘sta zanzara, quello che sia*
‘and then this sort of fly or mosquito or whatever it is is always coming back’

1	<i>Poi torna sempre</i> ‘and then it always come back’	‘ sta mosca ‘this fly’	X ₁
2		‘ sta zanzara ‘this mosquito’	X ₂
3		quello che sia ‘whatever it is’	POST-DETAILING
	ADJ	PRE	

- (55) *Sarà mille lire, cinquemila lire diecimila lire una cosa del genere, la quota di adesione all’associazione*
‘The membership fee of the association might cost one thousand liras, maybe five thousand liras or ten thousand liras, something like this’

1	<i>Sarà</i> 'it might be'	<i>mille lire</i> 'one thousand liras'		X₁
2		<i>cinquemila lire</i> 'five thousand liras'		X₂
3		<i>diecimila lire</i> 'ten thousand liras'		X₃
4		<i>una cosa del genere</i> 'something like this'		POST-DETAILING
5			<i>la quota di adesione all'associazione</i> 'the membership fee of the association'	
	PRE	ARG	ARG	

- (56) *Vorrei veramente prendere un furgone, un camion, un TIR [...]*
'I would really like to take a van or a lorry or a truck [...]

1	<i>Vorrei veramente prendere</i> 'I would really like to take'	<i>un furgone</i> 'a van'	X₁
2		<i>un camion</i> 'a lorry'	X₂
3		<i>un TIR</i> 'or a truck'	CO X₃
	PRE	ARG	

Example (57), instead, contains a list of full sentences (questions in this case), which can be regarded as co-hyponyms of a general 'bad behaviour'.

- (57) *Ma questo utente [...] ha insultato qualcuno? Ha mandato messaggi minatori? Cose del genere?*
'Anyway, did this user insult someone? Did he send threatening messages? Anything of the sort?'

1	<i>questo utente</i> 'this user'	<i>ha insultato qualcuno?</i> 'did he insult someone?'	X₁
2		<i>ha mandato messaggi minatori?</i> 'did he send threatening messages?'	X₂
3		<i>cose del genere?</i> 'anything of the sort'	X₃
	ARG	PRE	

The general approximation meaning still holds even at the discourse level. Take for instance (58). Here the speaker is trying to define how many days a worker can take as a normal leave in a year. The approximation that operates on the figures (*thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-five*) holds despite of the insertion of both text and markers such as *I don't know*.

- (58) *no assolutamente no il congedo ordinario oggi e' trentasei giorni lavorativi all'anno [...] _ # domani_ # potrebbero anche essere trentasette potrebbero essere trentotto_ [partendo dal presupposto che un sindacato serio si fa <?> non e' disponibile a fare marcia indietro] ma [...]potrebbero essere anche [[che so io]]? Trentacinque*
'No, absolutely not, today casual leave includes thirty-six working days per year [...] _ # tomorrow_ # they might well be thirty-seven they might be thirty-eight, [if we take it for granted that a serious trade union <?> is not willing to back down], but [...] they might even be [[I don't know]]? Thirty-five'

1	<i>il congedo ordinario</i> 'normal leave'	<i>oggi</i> 'today'	<i>è</i> 'is'	<i>trentasei giorni lavorativi all'anno [...]</i> thirty-six working days per year	X₁
2		<i>domani</i> 'tomorrow'	<i>potrebbero anche essere</i> 'they might well be'	<i>trentasette</i> 'thirty-seven'	X₂
3			<i>potrebbero essere</i> 'they might be'	<i>trentotto [...]</i> 'thirty-seven'	X₃
4			<i>ma [...]</i> <i>potrebbero essere anche</i>		
5	[[che so io]] 'I don't know'				INSERTION
6				<i>trentacinque</i> 'thirty-five'	X₄
	ARG	ADJ	PRE	ARG	

3.4.2. Metatextually Approximative List Construction

The same approximation mechanism can operate not only on the conceptual, ideational plan, but also on the metatextual plan. This is why we also have a separated Metatextually Approximative List Construction. Its features, as illustrated in Table 5, are identical to the Conceptually Approximative List Construction apart from the type of markers used as insertions, which are typically metatextual (e.g. *how do you say, I can't find the word (for this), etc.*).

Table 5. Features of the Metatextually Approximative List Construction

(a) presence of syndesis	(b) nature of syndesis	(c) prosodic marking	(d) number of Xs	(e) category of Xs	(f) determination (for nouns)	(g) semantic relation	(h) markers & insertions
±	disjunctive	open	2 or more	words, phrases clauses	-	co-hyponym	(markers of reformulation*; disjunctive metatextual general extenders**; hesitations)

* E.g. *come si chiama/dice* 'how do you say/call this', *non mi viene la parola* 'I can't find the word (for this)', etc.

** E.g. *o come si chiama* 'or how it is called'.

Hesitations are also very common in the metatextual construction, as illustrated by example (59). Here the speaker approximates the word *montacarichi* (*hoist*) by exploring a paradigm of co-hyponyms (*argani* 'capstans', *ascensori* 'lifts') with many hesitations (*of ... of ... of*) and reformulation markers (*how to say this*) in between.

- (59) *attraverso delle dei sistemi co- di argani di insomma di di come si chiamano di non mi viene la parola) eh no ascensori vabbè montacarichi montacarichi*
'through some some systems co- of capstans of well of of how to say this of I can't find the word ehm no lifts well hoists, hoists'

1	<i>attraverso delle</i> 'through' 'some'		
2	<i>dei sistemi co-</i> 'some systems co-'	<i>di argani</i> 'of capstans'	X₁
3		<i>di</i> 'of'	HESITATION
3	<i>insomma</i> 'well'		INSERTION
4		<i>di</i> 'of'	HESITATION
5		<i>di</i> 'of'	HESITATION
5	<i>come si chiamano</i> 'how to say this'		INSERTION
6		<i>di</i> 'of'	HESITATION
6	<i>non mi viene la parola</i> 'I can't find the word'		INSERTION
7	<i>eh</i> 'ehm'		HESITATION
8	<i>no</i> 'no'		INSERTION
9		<i>ascensori</i> 'lifts'	X₂
10	<i>vabbè</i> 'well'		INSERTION
11		<i>montacarichi</i> 'hoists'	X₃
12		<i>montacarichi</i> 'hoists'	X₄
	ADJ	ADJ	

In our view the metatextual approximative construction might be the link towards reformulation phenomena. We didn't go deeper into this. However, we should say that this hypothesis has also been put forward by other authors (such as Blanche-Benveniste 1987, Gerdes & Kahane ms. and Guenot 2006), who advocate for a unified treatment of reformulation and coordinating structures.

4. Network of List Constructions

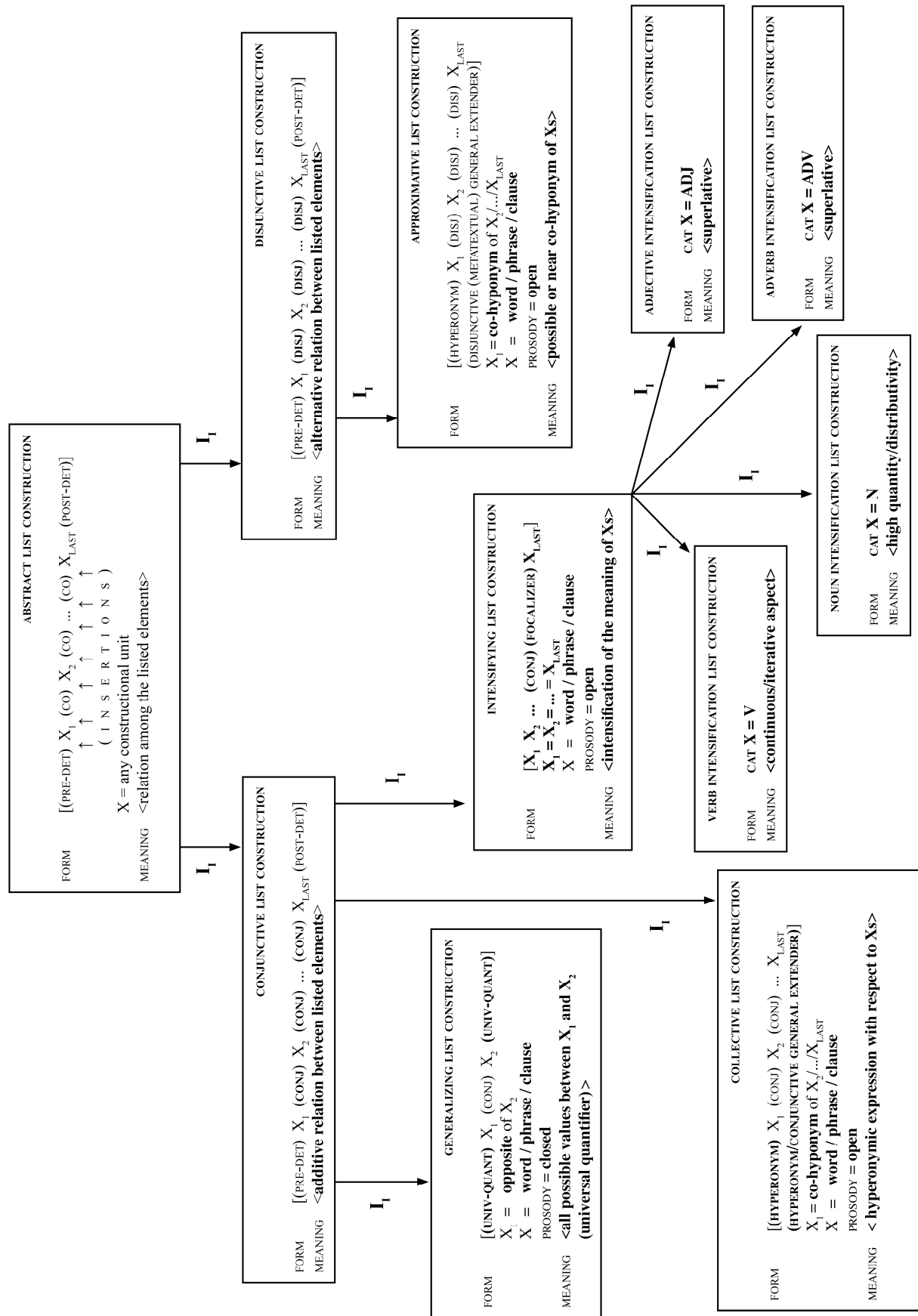
All the List Constructions that we have analysed can be inserted into an inheritance network like the one in Figure 3.

In this network, we have a maximally general and abstract List Construction, that can then specialize either as a conjunctive list or a disjunctive list. The constructions that we have analysed are then represented as special instances of these two lists.

The Generalizing, Collective and Intensifying List Constructions are special instances of the conjunctive type and of its additive meaning. Also note that the Intensifying construction is further instantiated by other sub-constructions in which the category of X is specified and the meaning is also more specific.

Instead, the Approximative List Construction is a special instance of the disjunctive type and of its alternative meaning, whether at the conceptual or at a metatextual level.

Figure 3. A network of List Constructions



5. Conclusions

In conclusion, we have identified a number of **grammatical meanings** that are conveyed by constructions of different size and complexity. There are:

- GENERALIZATION
- CATEGORIZATION (intended as the creation of a hyperonymic expression)
- INTENSIFICATION
- APPROXIMATION

The detection of these constructions has a clear applicative, and in particular **computational, interest**. This interest lies of course in that it has consequences on the syntactic and semantic annotation of corpora. A first experience in this direction is being carried out by the Rhapsodie project on the syntactic annotation of spoken French (Gerdes & Kahane ms.).

From the **theoretical point of view**, our analysis shows that grammatical meaning can be detected even in very abstract constructions that are not only lexically underspecified but also underspecified as for syntactic category, size and complexity of internal constituents.

These constructions therefore prove to be transversal to traditional structural levels. This has as an extreme consequence that grammatical meaning can be detected not only in morphological and syntactic constructions, but also in very abstract discourse level constructions.

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