

Russian constructional idioms of the pattern: independent infinitive + noun in Dative

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we examine some Russian phraseme constructions whose main elements consist of a syntactically independent infinitive and a noun (or personal pronoun) in the dative case. Due to the abundance of idiomatic constructions of this type in Russian, we have focused on just four, grouping them into two pairs of similar-looking constructions and analyzing each pair in detail. We approach the selected phenomena from the perspective of construction grammar, specifically as phraseological-syntactic units. We focus on their semantics, pragmatics, and morphology. Semantics and pragmatics are considered as an integrated complex. Among morphological features, we are particularly interested in the categories of animacy/inanimacy, grammatical tense, and verb aspect. Additionally, we try to find out whether the dative noun is an obligatory or an optional part of the construction. Our goal is to describe the general essential features of these phrasemes and highlight the differences between similar-looking constructions. In doing so, we rely on typical linguistic research methods, especially on the methods of Construction Grammar.

Keywords: phraseme construction; infinitive construction; slot; filler; anchor; pragmatics.

1. Introduction

This article has been prepared as part of a project concerning a special kind of phraseological units further called phraseme constructions (PhC).

They are linguistic patterns with idiomatic meaning that usually have one or more fixed syntactic and semantic elements (anchors), as well as one or several

open positions (slots) that are filled with lexemes (fillers) during the text production. For example: *What a beauty you are!* / *What a scoundrel you are!* / *What a snake she is!* with a general pattern: *What a N smb is/are/was/were!*

This phenomenon was first described in Soviet linguistics (Švedova, 1960; Šmelev, 1977) but has been studied in more detail much later (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij, 2024, 175–196; Bast, Janda *et al.*, 2021; Melikjan, 2016).

Our research is generally aimed at the creation of a Russian-German explanatory dictionary of PhC which in turn is a part of a new project concerning such idioms in several European languages¹. The bi- and multilingual dictionary of PhC has theoretical as well as practical goals. It will be useful for linguists and translators, as well as language and translation teachers.

In our study we make extensive use of corpus linguistics, as well as of all possible sources, written and oral². Thus, a vast corpus of PhC was collected and then classified and described with the help of semantic, pragmatic, morphologic, prosodic, and stylistic analysis.

In this paper, the Russian material is described. In the research presented here the close examination of Russian grammar, semantics, pragmatics, and phraseology was important. The main emphasis of the paper is the description of the corresponding examples from the point of view of a pattern consisting of anchors and fillers, with their stable parts and variations. Such research is especially relevant in the framework of rather new direction of linguistics, *Construction Grammar*, and of the research of cross points between grammar and phraseology (Dobrovol'skij, 2016, 2017).

The specific topic of this paper is the PhC whose main element is an independent infinitive accompanied by the dative case of a noun with the semantics of the agent (Dative-Infinitive Constructions, DIC). In our Dictionary, there are ca. 20 PhC-lemmas of type DIC.

This kind of PhC is rather common in Russian and has no direct parallels in English or German. For this reason, not to mention the linguistic and cultural problems of phraseological units in translation, an exact rendering of the constructions in question into other languages is impossible. The task of translators, especially those who work with fiction, is to find a rendering of a construction that is close to the corresponding Russian expression in style and meaning. For example, consider this passage from “The Master and Margarita” by M. Bulgakov, where a modal verb is used in translation: *II главное, и поделаться ничего нельзя было: не ругаться же с душевнобольным?!* In the German translation by Thomas Reschke: *Das Schlimmste war, er konnte nichts machen, er konnte doch nicht*

1 S. Project COST Action CA 22115 „A Multilingual Repository of Phraseme Constructions in Central and Eastern European Languages (PhraConRep)“, Action CA22115 - COST.

2 To facilitate readability, we do not provide information about the sources of the examples used in the text.

über einen Geisteskranken herziehen! In the English translation by Michael Glenny: *The worst of it was that he could not answer back; one mustn't swear at a lunatic!*

In our research on DIC constructions (as with the execution of our dictionary project in general), we primarily rely on various methods of Construction Grammar. In this article, we present the results of the methods employed.

All of DIC constructions have a modal meaning (obligation, necessity, permission, possibility, etc.) with several nuances of semantics and pragmatics. E.g., such idioms as *тебе решать* 'you have to decide' ('it's up to you'), *тебе платить* 'you have to pay', etc., have a meaning of duty ('you must'), whereas the sentence *Не драться же с начальством* 'One cannot fight with the bosses' means that 'an action does not pay off, is senseless, or inappropriate'.

It is important to take into account that most PhC's have almost exclusively pragmatic-oriented meaning: they express illocutions. This observation also applies to the DIC patterns. The seemingly exclusive modal meaning always goes hand in hand with their pragmatic functions. Therefore, in our dictionary a distinction deliberately is not made between semantics and pragmatics.

Some patterns in the DIC category are very similar to each other, which pose particular challenges for learning Russian. Sometimes the difference between two PhC's consists in intonation, word order, or "little words", i.e., particles. Similar construction patterns can form groups of two or three. Cf.: *Тебе только лимоны есть!* (literally: 'you only have to eat lemons!', real meaning: 'you have stomach problems, and it's bad for you to eat lemons' as ironic remark) – *Тебе бы только лимоны есть!* (literally: 'you would only eat lemons!', real meaning: 'There's nothing you like more than lemons').

Such groups of PhCs, although similar in form, but differing in semantics deserve special attention. Two groups of such construction pairs were chosen here for closer consideration. Our analysis is aimed at revealing the semantics, morphology, usage possibilities of these constructions. The difference between the corresponding similar PhC will be demonstrated. The focal points of our particular interest are: the category of animate/inanimate reference, grammatical tense, and verb aspect. Furthermore, it is important to investigate whether the dative argument in the construction is always obligatory or sometimes optional. Many observations regarding time, animacy, and verb aspect in relation to DIC have been formulated in this article for the first time.

Unfortunately, prosody cannot be investigated within the scope of this short article.³

³ Cf. about this subject: Pavlova and Svetozarova (2017, 462–476).

2. Previous Research on the Dative-Infinitive Constructions

A recent typological overview of the syntactic functions of the infinitive in Slavic languages is provided by Shcherbii *et al.* (2023). Although not focused on modality or phraseme-like constructions, this study outlines the structural positions and functional distribution of infinitival forms across Slavic, offering a useful point of departure for more specific investigations.

The infinitive sentences were treated in several crucial Russian grammars (Grammatika russkogo jazyka, 1954, 43–57; Russkaja Grammatika, 1980, 372–377; Padučeva 2017), several articles on this subject have also appeared in the last decades.

In Zolotova and Durin (1994), several Russian constructions with independent infinitive are classified according to their modal meaning, e.g., intentional, optative, epistemic, etc.

In Maurice (1996, 313), it is claimed that in Russian, infinitive constructions with the independent infinitive are better preserved than in all other Slavic languages. The relative resistance of the modal infinitive in Russian during history is also due to the fact that in Russian, the dative is very productive for naming an agent-experiencer.

The newest research (Padučeva, 2017) in the most prestigious modern Russian grammar, “Corpus Grammar”, defines this construction as follows: “Independent infinitive is an infinitive not subordinate to anything”. The following examples are given:

- (1) Мне завтра рано вставать. ‘I must get up early tomorrow.’
- (2) Не разобраться нам в извивах новой экономической политики.
‘We cannot understand the twists and turns of the new economic policy’.

Typical for this pattern is the dative case of noun or pronoun denoting the actor. If it is missing it is assumed (syntactic ellipsis).

Thus, the dative of noun as actor in Russian infinitive sentences is not always assigned lexically, but is a built-in part of a syntactic pattern itself (Zimmerling, 2018, 8). It can be considered as a kind of subject of the phrase or its subject-like element (Zimmerling, 2009; Zimmerling and Trubicyna, 2015, 71–80).

For classification and description of infinitive sentences in Russian cf. Israeli (2013, 2014, 2016), where the taxonomy and the grammatic and semantic peculiarities of infinitive–dative constructions have been described.

In Maurice (1996), we find a similar approach to the one we are applying: Modality is considered here in connection with the illocutions of the corresponding speech acts in which infinitive constructions with independent infinitive occur. From this perspective, new types of modalities emerge, such as the

possibility of carrying out the action (V^{inf}) and advice to do it, possibility and criticism at the same time, etc.

Our approach is characterized by pointing to the phraseological aspects of material examined and the description of them as anchors–fillers models. The question is raised of general semantics of the corresponding pattern itself (the anchors with empty slots, i.e., without fillers) and the meaning of fillers, as well as the limits of the filler’s variation. The meaning of the examples themselves is, of course, also analyzed. As already mentioned, a distinction is not made between semantics and pragmatics.

The PhC’s being considered in the chapters 3 and 4 belong to colloquial language. They are used primarily in dialogues as a response to some event; they reflect somebody’s opinion expressed in highly emotional way. These PhC’s usually don’t start a text, being a part of a dialogue, like scene of a play.

3. Group 1: [HY] HE V^{inf} ZHE [Pron^{pers dat}/N^{dat}] and HE ВСЁ ZHE [Pron^{pers dat}/N^{dat}] V^{inf}

3.1 [HY] HE V^{inf} ZHE [Pron^{pers dat}/N^{dat}]. Prototypic example: HE спать ZHE (НАМ) НА ПОЛУ ‘One cannot, of course, sleep on the floor.’⁴

Semantics: Modality of inadmissibility, impracticality of a certain action V, or the evaluation of this action as senseless, inadequate, inappropriate, sometimes too labor-intensive, i.e., having explicitly negative consequences. PhC, thus, conveys indirect (negative) evaluation, even if the construct does not reveal semantically evaluative words. For example: *He спать zhe na polu* ‘One (we, he, she etc.) cannot, of course, sleep on the floor’ means, among other things, that sleeping on the floor is bad or inconvenient and that it should be self-evident and obvious to any person of sound judgment.

The upcoming or recommended improvement of the situation is often, but not always, mentioned in the left or in the right context. E.g., for the sentence above: *Kupi krovat’* ‘Buy a bed’.

In relation to the speech moment, the construct corresponds to any temporal layer – past, present, or future. It may happen that the action V (yet) has not occurred (including in narratives about the past), and the speaker expresses his opinion about it in advance as a common-sense statement. Another example: *He drat’sya zhe s nachal’stvom* ‘It is impossible to fight with the bosses’ has a common-sense meaning. The particle *zhe* (zhe) reinforces the impression of the speaker’s conviction of its correctness and the obviousness, simplicity of

4 This type of sentence was described by Israeli (2016, 329) as the “Infinitive constructions with *zhe*”. As already stated, we analyze the corresponding construction from another point of view, which does not contradict her detailed research.

the expressed assessment of what is happening. This semantic suggestiveness allows us to consider this PhC as a trigger for presupposition.

The construct can be used as justification (reason) for making an alternative decision: *Решили взять такси: не идти же пешком* ‘We decided to take a taxi: it was of course impossible to walk’. The decision may also relate to inaction: *Мы ничего не могли сделать: не звать же соседей на помощь* ‘We couldn’t do anything: it was futile to call neighbors for help’.

If PhC is used as a description of the reason for a past decision, it is as if it were made in the present, and the recipients were involved in what happened. However, a more narrative version with the verb *было* ‘was’ (past, 3rd person, neuter gender) is also possible: *Не спать же нам было на полу* ‘We could not of course sleep on the floor’. In this version, the effect of involving the recipient in the narration disappears.

If the filler – a noun or a personal pronoun in the dative – is not used, then the construct becomes a common-sense remark or can relate to the speaker or to the actor. E.g.: *Не стоять же в очереди* = ‘I (we etc.) don’t want to stand in line / it is futile to stand in line.’ But even in this case, the speaker prompts their conversation partner to agree, presenting their opinion as something self-evident.

The noun in dative can be attributed to both animate and inanimate objects: *Не лежать же мне весь день на диване* / *Не лежать же вещам в шкафу годами* ‘I do not want to lie on the couch all day’ / ‘These things should not lie in the cupboard for years’.

However, in spite of a formal reference to an inanimate object, there is an implicit decision about this object by a living being: *Не лежать же вещам в шкафу годами* means that somebody decided to get rid of these things. In the idiom based on this PhC *Не пропадать же добро* ‘Don’t let things go to waste’, the formal agent is the referent of the word *добро* (‘good’, ‘things’, ‘personal belongings’), but the chief acting person is a human being or an animal making the corresponding decision. For this reason, non-normative phrases like **Не синеть же морю* ‘The sea should not shimmer blue’ or **Не возвышаться же горам* ‘The mountains should not rise’ (cf.: *Не возводить же здесь гору* ‘We cannot erect a mountain here’ would be a completely normal and plausible sentence) are considered. Interestingly, with certain additions, non-normative phrases like **Не лить же дождю* ‘It can’t rain’⁵ can become acceptable and permissible, e.g.: *Не лить же дождю вечно* ‘Rain cannot persist indefinitely’. The addition of the adverb *вечно* changes the logic: the phrase becomes evaluative, with the evaluation given from the perspective of human experience. For the same reason, the phrase *Не замерзает же воде на морозе* can be interpreted as meaningful only if one assumes that the speaker intends to bring a bowl of water from outside

5 In English, this sentence with modal meaning is acceptable, but the Russian original sentence is a nonsense.

(where it is freezing) into the house to prevent the water from freezing (‘Let the water not freeze in the frost’). It is impossible to interpret this statement as an assertion that water cannot freeze in the frost; such an interpretation would render the phrase nonsensical.

Grammar: The verb in the infinitive is predominantly in the imperfective aspect. As for perfect verb in this construction, “it is on the verge of becoming obsolete” as A. Israeli (2016, 330–331) stated. *Не прогнать же тебе его, коли он был прежде меня и ты его любишь* (Dostoevsky. *The Gambler*, 1866) (‘You could not possibly throw him out, if he was [your lover] before me and you love him’.) (ibid.) The perfect form is also usual in the phraseological expression *не разорваться же* + pronoun dat. meaning ‘it is impossible for somebody to be in several places or to do several works at once’.

The infinitive can be a part of a collocation: for example, *Не звать же на помощь* – ‘It was futile to call for help’; *Не падать же перед ним ниц* – ‘We wouldn’t want to kneel before him’ or even an idiomatic expression: *Не ждать же у моря погоды* – ‘It is impossible to wait forever’, literally: ‘Not to wait for the good weather at the sea’.

A filler-noun or pronoun in the dative case indicating the agent, when used in the present tense, is optional: *Не спорить же с ним* = *Не спорить же мне с ним* ‘I cannot argue with him’. However, when used with the verb *было* (‘was’) and denoting past, the dative agent is usual: *Не спать же нам было на полу* ‘We could not/ didn’t want to sleep on the floor’. The dative agent is obligatory in cases when it concerns inanimate objects: *Не лежать же этим тряпкам здесь вечно* ‘These rags really can’t lie around here forever.’

Conclusions: The noun in dative is in this type of PhC often omitted: sometimes because of the common-sense meaning of the action; however, in many cases a certain person is implied but is not named by a noun or a pronoun. PhC can refer to an animate, as well as to inanimate subject expressed by the dative case. But even in the latter its illocutive part and the following implicit decision-making is connected with a living being. The anchor *же* is obligatory and is used immediately after the infinitive.

3.2 не всё же [Pron^{pers dat} / N^{dat}] V^{inf}. Prototype example: *Не всё же тебе на полу спать. Пора кровать купить.* ‘You can’t forever sleep on the floor. It is time to buy a bed.’

Semantics: As in 3.1 an activity or an event must be replaced by another. Often, the construct has an admonitory-reasoning and/or condemning character: the habitual activity, according to the speaker, is somehow worse than the new one. In other cases, the construct is used as an explanation, a reason to justify the need for different types of activities than those named in the filler. The filler V should be chosen in such a way that its meaning is situationally antonymous to the designation of any other type of activity mentioned in

the immediately left or right context. Often, phrases are used that semantically represent exaggerations (hyperbole) from a realistic perspective. For example, the construct *He всё же Дюма и Гарри Поттера читать!* ‘One really can’t read only Dumas and Harry Potter forever!’ means that somebody, probably a child, must read serious literature. Similarly, *He всё же тебе в коротких штанишках ходить* ‘you don’t always have to wear short pants’ means ‘you must become a grown-up’.

Often, an improvement in the situation has already occurred (e.g., a boy who used to only wear shorts has been given long pants), and the construction serves as justification or affirmation of this new situation, explaining the action of the person who changed the previous situation (in this case, by giving the pants).

The dative case of a noun can be attributed to both animate and inanimate objects. Phrases like *He всё же цветам цвести* ‘The flowers really can’t bloom forever’ or *He всё же доллару падать* ‘The dollar exchange rate really can’t fall indefinitely’ are correct. But also here, like for the similar construction 3.1., there is a thinking person who makes the corresponding decision or estimation of a situation. In terms of frequency, phrases whose content implies the presence of consciousness on the part of the agent performing the action, prevail for this PhC.

Grammar: The verb in infinitive is of the imperfective aspect. Optionally, a personal pronoun or (less frequently) a noun in the dative case, indicating the agent, can be included in the construct. If the agent is represented by a noun denoting an inanimate object, then the dative filler is mandatory. A new type of activity (proposed, recommended, or simply replacing the previous one) is sometimes mentioned in the left context and sometimes in the right.

Conclusions: The noun in dative is often omitted: sometimes because of common-sense meaning of the action. In many cases a certain person is implied but is not named by a noun or a pronoun. PhC can refer to an animate, as well as to an inanimate subject expressed by the dative case.

3.3 Comparison of two similar PhC 3.1 and 3.2

Both construction patterns can include animate as well as inanimate objects as agents, and in both, the dative filler is mandatory when the agent is an inanimate referent. The use of inanimate nouns as “dative agents” in 3.1 as well as in 3.2 presupposes that the decision to do something or the estimation of something is made by a thinking and decision-making subject. Indirectly, these PhC’s therefore refer exclusively to living beings.

The verb aspect for both patterns is an imperfective one.

In spite of the grammatical and semantic similarity of the PhC 3.1 and 3.2, there are several differences. The 3.2 type conveys the semantics of prolonged action: the particle *всё* means ‘always’, ‘all the time’. The speaker decides that this

action has to be interrupted or stopped or explains why the situation has been changed.

Pattern 3.1 can be used not only in the present but also in the past tense, while for PhC 3.2, the past tense is not allowed. For 3.1, the dative filler is mandatory when using it in the past tense.

4. Group 2: $N^{dat}/Pron^{pers\ dat}$ ТОЛЬКО V^{inf} and $N^{dat}/Pron^{pers\ dat}$ БЫ ТОЛЬКО V^{inf}

4.1 $N^{dat}/Pron^{pers\ dat}$ ТОЛЬКО V^{inf} Prototype examples: *Тебе ТОЛЬКО шоколад есть с твоим диабетом.* Literally: ‘You have only to eat chocolate with your diabetes’, real meaning: ‘You should not eat chocolate because of your diabetes’.

Semantics⁶. Skepticism, irony, warning, pseudo-advice corresponding to the danger of doing something. Somebody (agent, expressed with dative case of a noun or a pronoun) lacks sufficient competence or the right to do something (V), according to the speaker. Or somebody is not allowed, or it doesn’t suit him to do something. PhC often implies an implicit refusal to act, e. g.: *Мне только на телефонные звонки отвечать!* ‘I have nothing better to do than to take phone calls’. It is often used ironically in situations where the undesirable action has already occurred or is only being planned. E. g.: *С твоей изжогой только лимоны жрать на голодный желудок!* ‘With your heartburn you should only eat lemons on an empty stomach!’.

The PhC often includes illocutions of concern, worry for someone, arising from empathy, sympathy, or a sense of responsibility: beneath the grumbling dissatisfaction lies concern. Thus, in the example *Тебе только тяжести таскать!* (literally: ‘It suits you only to carry heavy things!’; real meaning: ‘You should not carry heavy things!’) is expressed not only, and even not so much, dissatisfaction as concern and the wish to prevent the addressee from undermining his /her already weak health.

Speakers can direct their skeptical remark towards themselves (self-criticism), for example: *Мне с моей нервной системой только учителем работать!* ‘With my nervous system, I should only be a teacher!’

In the meaning we describe here, only human beings and animals can be referred to the dative-noun.

Grammar: The PhC can relate to the present and the future. The irony is expressed by 1) the particle *только* (*только*); 2) intonation, 3) the construction itself,

6 The same pattern can have other meanings; it is polysemous. Here, we are considering only one of three meanings that appears to us as the first and primary. The other meanings can be looked up in our Dictionary once it is published.

4) logic, semantics of contradiction between a starting point and the action V. The Dative-Anchor is optional, but it is used abundantly.

Conclusions: The agent in dative is optional but frequent. PhC can refer only to a person (animated subject) who executes the action V. The verb V is imperfective. The PhC is suitable only for the present or future.

4.2 PhC $N^{dat}/Pron^{pers\ dat}$ *БЫ ТОЛЬКО* V^{inf} $N^{dat}/Pron^{pers\ dat}$ *ТОЛЬКО БЫ* V^{inf} .
Prototype examples: a) *Тебе бы только шоколад есть!* ‘Your wish is to eat only chocolate’; b) *Тебе только бы спорить!* ‘You always want to argue.’

Two versions of word order are available: Beside this, there is a variant with another (synonymic) anchor: $N^{dat}/Pron^{pers\ dat}$ *ЛИШЬ БЫ* V^{inf} (*лишь* instead of *только*). The rearrangement of *бы* and *только* is allowed (*только бы* / *бы только*), while the word order variation with *лишь* and *бы* is not allowed; their word order is fixed.

Semantics⁷: Criticism, ironic pointing to constant misbehavior or to bad habits and actions of somebody. The meaning of the PhC is “constant predisposition to some action as a favorite” (Grammatika russkogo jazyka, 1954, 53, paragraph 1067). In Israeli (2014, 146) this construction is called “disparaging statement”. The PhC expresses dissatisfaction with someone’s behavior, actions, or intentions: someone performs an action or expresses an intention without considering its possible negative consequences or the fact that the action is not justified by circumstances and therefore inappropriate, condemnable, or unjust.

The construct is often addressed to the second person (interlocutor) but can also be directed towards somebody else. The agent is usually explicitly expressed in the dative case: *Тебе лишь бы что-нибудь сказать!* ‘You always want to say something’. *Тебе бы только своих Битлов слушать!* ‘You have only one desire – to listen to The Beatles!’

Grammar. As in patterns above, the PhC is related to present and to future. The grammar of the PhC is close to optative. It is possible that the action did not take place, it is only a wish of a person to whom the speech is directed or the one who is being spoken about.

The construct can include the designation of the agent in the dative case (*him, you, a proper name, etc.*), but this anchor is optional. The slot V is filled with an infinitive or an infinitive group of a verb of any aspect: *Тебе бы только спорить!* – imperfective / *Тебе бы только поспорить!* – perfective, although the imperfective aspect is more common. The anchor *бы* by (or *б* *в*) is frequent but can be omitted in the combination with *только*, and then this construction becomes a homonym of the construction 4.1. Cf.: *Тебе бы только спорить!* = *Тебе*

7 This PhC is polysemic, but we consider here only one of its three meanings. The meaning we describe here is comparable to that of PhC 4.1.

только спорить! In the combination with *лишь*, the particle *бы* is mandatory: *Тебе лишь бы спорить!*

The particle *бы* (*by*) in this PhC is not a feature of the Russian subjunctive mood (*soslagatel'noe naklonenie*); rather, it is part of the construction itself.

Conclusions: This PhC can only refer to living beings. Both verbal aspects are allowed in the infinitive, although the imperfective aspect is more typical. The PhC can not be related to past.

4.3 Comparison of two similar constructions 4.1. and 4.2

Both PhCs express a negative evaluation of an action that has already happened or is currently being planned. The illocutions conveyed by both PhCs are comparable. However, 4.1. can express concern and empathy in addition to criticism and displeasure, while 4.2. only conveys some kind of criticism.

The actual meaning of the anchor *только* is not identical in 4.1. and 4.2.: in 4.1., the particle *только* does not preserve its restrictive meaning ‘only’. In 4.2., however, its lexical meaning can still be felt: the opponent is accused of having nothing better to do than V / not coming up with anything better than V, fulfilling only an inappropriate action and not something else, more useful.

Finally, it must be noted that the possibility of exchanging *только* with *лишь* is exclusively possible in PhC 4.2., while 4.1. does not exhibit such synonymy. This is probably related to the points mentioned above: the lexical meaning of both particles (‘restriction’) is more clearly noticeable in 4.2., hence the possibility of interchange.

5. Concluding Remarks

We have examined some Russian non-finite phraseme constructions, characterized by a syntactically independent infinitive and a noun or a personal pronoun in the dative case (Dative-Infinitive Constructions, or DIC). Since there are many such non-finite clauses in Russian, we focused on two pairs of similar-looking PhC in order to highlight differences among individual pair members:

- Group 1, consisting of the patterns 3.1. [*ny*] *ne V^{inf} же [Pron^{pers dat} / N^{dat}]* and 3.2. *не всё же [Pron^{pers dat} / N^{dat}] V^{inf}*

Prototypic examples: 3.1. *Не спать же (нам) на полу* ‘We cannot, of course, sleep on the floor’ and 3.2. *Не всё же тебе на полу спать.* ‘You could not forever sleep on the floor.’

- Group 2, consisting of the patterns 4.1. *N^{dat} / Pron^{pers dat} только V^{inf}* and 4.2. *N^{dat} / Pron^{pers dat} бы только V^{inf}*

Prototypic examples: 4.1. *Тебе только шоколад есть с твоим диабетом.* ‘You have only to eat chocolate with your diabetes’ = ‘You should not eat

chocolate because of your diabetes'. 4.2. *Тебе бы только шоколад есть!* 'You want to eat only chocolate'.

The sentences based on these constructions are (formally) impersonal syntactically. The verb in all analyzed constructions is of the imperfective aspect, exclusively or most likely (cf. Melnikova, 2018)⁸. The noun (or pronoun) in dative expresses the agent who executes the action V^{inf} . The dative-agent is often not mentioned (omitted), but it remains a built-in part of the construction.

All constructions considered here are associated with usage in the present, even when the narrative in which such a construct is used reports events from the past. This allows these constructs to be employed as stylistically marked means for a present reference, shaping the corresponding passages as if the recipient is directly involved in the situation.

The auxiliary particles in the anchor position play an important role in the patterns of the constructions. In the constructions examined, in anchor positions, the particles *только* or *лишь* are present, which, as part of the non-finite clauses, either contribute their own meaning to the pattern or lose it altogether. Thus, the sememe of restriction shines through as a relic. The particle *бы* in 4.2. is not a feature of the Russian subjunctive mood (*soslagatel'noe naklonenie*); rather, it is part of the construction itself.

The semantics of modality (necessity, possibility, cause, allowance, recommendation etc., expressed indirectly) is present in each PhC of the type DIC.

Presumably, it is precisely due to the modal semantics (necessity, possibility, estimation) that all the PhC of the DIC type considered here, as well as others, tend towards the interpretation 'animate agent is meant'. Even when a dative object is mentioned that does not represent a person or an animal (such as *дождь* 'rain' in the sentence *Не лить же дождю вечно* – 'Rain cannot persist indefinitely', 'The rain must stop at some point'), the speaker's opinion is implied in this statement because only a conscious person can decide whether the rain must stop soon or not.

It can be observed that, while in the case of animate dative objects, it mostly involves internal modality (i.e., the agent mentioned in the dative must, can, wants, etc., perform action V), in the case of inanimate dative objects, it involves external modality: the speaker expresses an opinion that the situation should unfold in a certain way (could, must, might, etc.).

The category of 'animacy' does not have specific grammatical markers; it belongs to the type of 'hidden' grammatical categories.

The modal meaning is never the only one in the non-finite clauses; it is enriched by various illocutions that can already be described at the pattern level.

8 However, this does not necessarily mean that in all DIC constructions, the verb in the infinitive is exclusively imperfective. There are counterexamples in this regard that we have not investigated here.

The irony in 4.1 does not have parallels in 4.2. There are semantic and pragmatic nuances. Whereas 4.1 can express concern and empathy in addition to criticism and displeasure, 4.2 only conveys displeasure, anger and criticism expressed, however, in rather mild form: several examples seem to be directed to children.

Generally, we have shown numerous examples where phraseological units can be used as syntactic elements having their own meaning. Being syntaxemes, they have their own semantics: as, e.g., in the following examples:

- a statement of an action's inappropriateness: *'to sleep on the floor'*;
- an ironic advice (anti-advice) pointing to a future harm entailed by an action: *'to eat chocolate even if it is harmful'*;
- critical (disparaging) statement of somebody's wish, habits, or permanent behavior: *'to eat always only chocolate'*;
- reason, justification or affirmation of a new situation, explaining the action of the person who changed the previous situation.

It is evident that these constructions are situated on the border between the syntax and the phraseology. Typically, the corresponding general semantics remains in their anchor (frame) structure even with empty slots and becomes developed after adding the fillers.

Because of their closeness to phraseology, i.e. to the lexical layer of language, PhC constructions convey a more concrete situation than the syntactic ones, which are more abstract. The PhC of type DIC can be imagined as a scene of a play. We often can reconstruct the situation on the basis of one sentence.

The examples above belong to colloquial style, they stimulate speaker's creativity (Pavlova, Naiditch and Pöppel, 2022). The cited sentences are vivid, well suitable to dialogue, full of humor and irony.

It became evident that the considered PhC's do not have literal correspondences in other languages, e.g., in English and German. In each individual case, translators propose purely individual solutions. In translations, there is generally active use of modal verbs, which is typical of translations of Russian infinitive constructions. The examples form a challenge for translators. Thus, our research will be useful for translators, as well as for teachers and students of Russian. At the end, Maurice's prophecy would be appropriate:

If the observed development were to continue in this form, individual sentence types would solidify more and more. The tense paradigm would likely completely disappear in declarative sentences. Individual sentence types would become increasingly phraseologized. Thus, eventually, the modal existential sentence would only be possible with a strictly defined group of nouns in the dative position. *БЫЛО* might still persist in certain interrogative sentences. (Maurice, 1996, 313).

This prediction aligns well with our observations presented in this article.

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