Evaluative Tough constructions in English, French and Russian:
a parallel corpus investigation.

The languages of the world present great variability in *form-to-meaning* mappings. Such diversity comes out clearly when one examines how constructions are used. For instance, evaluative constructions involving *Tough* predicates (e.g., *This road is difficult to cross)* present atypical mappings and great crosslinguistic variability: in some languages (e.g., English/French), speakers typically use so-called *tough constructions* (TCs) – constructions involving sentences in which the syntactic subject NP of the matrix is logically the missed object of an embedded non-finite verb (Chung, 2001; Guérin, 2006 but see Van de Velde 2020 on the functional alternatives French offers); in others such as Russian (RU) – a language without such syntactic property – speakers opt for a variety of functional analogues (e.g., *use of deverbals, passives*) (Paykin & Van Peteghem, 2020; Comrie & Matthews, 1990).

Despite a growing interest in TC asymmetries and their high crosslinguistic variability, little is still known about the involvement of the semantic aspects of TCs (e.g., the scope of the adjective, the animacy of the involved NP, or the degree of transitivity of the non-finite verb) and their role in across- and within-language variation (Boutault, 2020; Becker, Estigarribia & Gylfadottir, 2012; Kim, 2014).

The aim of this paper is to explore and contrast the syntactic and semantic features of TCs and their analogues in English, French and Russian based on a parallel corpus, identify the most typical patterns across these systems, and investigate how specific semantic properties (*NP animacy, adjective scope, transitivity*) relate to specific evaluative configurations.

The corpus study, based on the *Opus corpus* subtitles database (Tiedemann & Thottingal, 2020), allowed to compare English *tough*-constructions as source patterns with French and Russian aligned translations. The results show that even though English and French have been thought to belong to the same language type, French seems to allow a multitude of functional equivalents that co-exist with typical TCs. With respect to Russian, this language offers mainly constructions involving an adjectival predicate, alternatively compact and reflexives uses, and marginally some other functional analogues (distributive adjectival uses, extraposition, etc.). Additionally, the data suggest that, although French and Russian offer similar functional patterns, their contexts of use differ to some extent. More specifically, the analysis showed that the animacy of the NP as well as the adjective-type does not seem to influence much the choice among different functional analogues as opposed to transitivity, which had a differential impact across languages: although highly-transitive verbs allowed for great functional variability in both Russian and French, less prototypical contexts for evaluatives (low-transitive ones) led to an almost unique functional strategy in Russian translations (use of predicatives).

This parallel corpus study allowed an in-depth investigation of a grammatical phenomenon that is only little discussed for Russian, and mainly explored from a syntactic point of view in English and in French. The findings support a multidimensional account of evaluative constructions that takes into account their inherent semantic properties, and further suggest a classification on a cline of tough-predication according to their degree of compactness and extraposability.

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