English *tough*-constructions and their analogues in French and Russian

A parallel corpus investigation

Alina Tsikulina, Fayssal Tayalati and Efstathia Soroli
University of Lille (France) | STL lab – Savoirs, Textes, Langage – UMR 8163 (France)

Evaluative constructions involving *tough*-predicates (e.g., *This hill is difficult to climb*) present atypical structure-to-meaning mappings and vary across languages: in some languages (e.g., English/French), speakers typically use so-called *tough*-constructions (TCs) in which the syntactic subject of the matrix sentence is logically the missing object of the infinitive; in others (e.g., Russian), speakers opt for a variety of functional analogues (e.g., passive, impersonal constructions). The aim of this paper is to explore English TCs involving difficult and easy adjectives, compare them to French and Russian analogues based on a parallel-corpus, and investigate how specific semantic properties (animacy, transitivity, adjective scope) relate to specific (more or less compact) configurations. The results show that French and Russian have similar functional analogues and only partially share the structural properties of English TCs. The findings support a multidimensional account based on the inherent semantic properties of evaluative constructions and their degree of compactness.

Keywords: *tough*-constructions, functional analogues, crosslinguistic variation, semantics-syntax interface, parallel corpus English/French/Russian

1. Introduction

1.1 *Tough*-constructions and their structural characteristics

Evaluative *tough*-constructions (henceforth TCs) involving *tough*-adjectives such as *difficult* and *easy* (the focus of the present study) have posed considerable difficulty in theoretical linguistics because of their syntactic, semantic and functional idiosyncrasies (Boutault, 2011, 2012 among others) and their great crosslinguistic

https://doi.org/10.1075/lic.00041.tsi | Published online: 13 August 2024
Languages in Contrast ISSN 1387-6759 | E-ISSN 1569-9897

variability (Comrie and Mathews, 1990; Tayalati *et al.*, 2020). TC configurations such as (1)–(2) in English (EN) and French (FR) are defined by Comrie and Mathews (1990), and later by Hicks (2009), as complex constructions where the syntactic subject of the matrix sentence does not correspond to what can be interpreted as its semantic subject. From a structural point of view, TCs involve: (i) a matrix clause with a topicalized NP in subject position; (ii) a copular verb and a *tough*-adjective[1]; (iii) an embedded infinitival clause with an apparently 'missing' object (gap), coreferential to the matrix subject.

(1)	a.	These	hills	are	difficult	to climb.	(EN)
	b.	Ces	sommets	sont	difficiles	à escalader.	(FR)
		DEM-PL	peak-PL	be-3.PRS.PL	difficult-PL	to cross-INF	
	c.	This	house	is	impossible	to sell.	(EN)
	d.	Cette	maison	est	impossible	à vendre.	(FR)
		DEM-SG	house-F.SG	be-3.PRS.SG	impossible-SG	to sell-INF	
(2)	a.	This	book	is	difficult	to read.	(EN)
	b.	Ce	livre	est	difficile	à lire.	(FR)
		DEM-SG	book-M.SG	be-3.PRS.SG	difficult-M.SG	to read-INF	
	c.	This	game	is	easy	to play.	(EN)
	d.	Ce	jeu	est	facile	à jouer.	(FR)
		DEM-SG	game-M.SG	be-3.PRS.SG	easy-M.SG to	play-INF	

Alternatively, *tough*-adjectives may appear in non-*tough*-constructions (Rosenbaum, 1967; Postal, 1971; Wehrli, 1979), such as in intraposed constructions (henceforth INT) with a phrasal subject, or in synonymous impersonal constructions (henceforth EXT), providing that they do not select an external argument. Examples (3a)–(b) illustrate the two cases for English, one with a phrasal subject and one with an expletive *it*-subject and its equivalent in French (3c).

1. *Tough*-adjectives such as *easy, difficult, hard, tough,* etc. occur in both impersonal (e.g., *It's difficult to understand this book*), and personal constructions (e.g., *This book is difficult to understand*) in which the subject of the matrix is co-referential with the infinitival implicit object complement. This double use distinguishes them from control adjectives such as *eager*. The latter have no impersonal use, and the direct complement position of the infinitive in personal use can be saturated (ex. *Mary is eager to read this book*). In addition, *tough*-adjectives can take both animate and inanimate subjects (e.g., *You are difficult to understand, This book is easy to read*), as opposed to control adjectives like *eager* that require an animate subject (e.g., *Mary is eager to read*, vs. **The book is eager to be read*). In the former case there is no semantic relationship between the main clause subject and the *tough*-adjective, while in the latter there is one between the main clause subject (animate NP: *Mary*) and the control adjective (*eager)* (Becker *et al.*, 2012).

More specifically, with respect to extraposed constructions, a pragmatic distinction is typically made between *it* occurring in extraposition (e.g., *It is important to meet people*) and *it* occurring in so-called right-dislocation constructions (e.g. *It is interesting what you are saying*): the former does not involve an external argument/actant and provides a non-referential use of an expletive *it*-subject; whereas the latter (not taken into account here) involves an external argument and the use of a referential pronoun (Pekelis, 2018). In order to cover the above-mentioned case of extraposition with an expletive *it* but also to include other impersonal uses that do not necessarily involve an expletive *it* (e.g., Russian), the present paper focused on the non-referential content of the involved NP and constructions without external arguments.[2] For example, in Russian, although similar impersonal uses can occur in both impersonal constructions with a predicative and in extraposed configurations, the former requires an explicit NP, whereas in the latter, the NP is not scrambled into the preverbal position and can be easily omitted (Pekelis, 2018), as illustrated in (3d), coded as EXT in the data described below.

(3) a. [For him] to climb these hills is difficult. (INT)
b. It is difficult to climb these hills. (EXT)
c. Il est difficile d'entrer ici. (EXT)
"It is difficult to enter here."
d. Složno skazat'. (EXT)
"Difficult (to).say."

The syntactic-semantic unalignment of TCs has been the basis of generativist work which has considered that such constructions are obtained either by derivation and the raising of the internal argument to the position of subject (the so-called "*tough*-movement" proposed by Rosenbaum, 1967; Postal, 1971), or through the creation of a complex adjective composed of the adjective and its clausal complement which leaves a gap (Chomsky, 1981).[3] In this line of work, English

2. Since Rosenbaum (1967), the use with an impersonal subject has been one of the arguments put forward in the literature to support the idea that *tough*-adjectives are ergative (Cinque, 1990), i.e. assign only an internal thematic role to the complement of the infinitive. The fact that the position external to the AP is not thematically marked by the adjective implies that it can be saturated by the impersonal pronoun, the phrasal clause or even – although there is no consensus on this last analysis – the internal argument of the infinitive (see also Hicks, 2017, for a synthesis of the different approaches and more recently the introduction of Tayalati, Mostrov and Van de Velde, 2020).

3. According to another variant (Chomsky, 1977), the NP is an external argument coreferential to an operator (OP) which moves from the complement position, in which case the adjective and the infinitive do not form a complex predicate. According to this position, the infinitive clause is a reduced relative clause which contains an OP, analogue to what can be found in rela-

and French have been described as two languages with typical gap-constructions (Chung, 2001; Guérin, 2006; but see Van de Velde, 2020), as opposed to other languages (e.g., Russian (RU), Greek (GR), Arabic (AR)) that do not follow the above structural criteria or present *tough*-movement in rather restricted configurations, for instance with alternative uses of reflexives, clitics or deverbal nouns, as illustrated in (4)–(6) and discussed by Paykin and Van Peteghem (2020), Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (2020), Tayalati and Mostrov (2020), respectively.

(4) Èta doroga složno peresekaetsja. (RU)
DEM-F.SG.NOM road-F.SG.NOM difficult-O cross-INF.PRF.REFL
"This road with.difficulty (can.be) crossed." (use of reflexive)

(5) Afton to dromo ine diskolo na ton diashiso. (GR)
DEM the road-3.SG.ACC be-3.PRS.SG difficult-O to-SBJ him-3.SG cross-1.SG
"This road is difficult to cross it." (use of a clitic)

(6) hāḏā š-šāriʿ-u saʿb-un ʿubūr-u=hu. (AR)
DEM-M.SG road.M.SG-NOM difficult.M.SG-NOMcross- M.SGNOM=RP.M.SG
"(lit.) This road difficult crossing it." (use of a deverbal noun+clitic)

Evaluation can be expressed in very different ways across the languages of the world: in different 'form-to-meaning' mappings and in more or less compact configurations, as shown above. With respect to compactness, according to Khalifa (2004), there is a link between the possibility of extraposing completive infinitives and nominalization – a link that can be represented on a reversed cline of nominalization/extraposition: the closer a construction is located to the end of the extraposability continuum (e.g., *It is difficult to cross this road*), the less it is/can be nominalized; and the farther a construction is located to the end of the extraposability continuum, the more nominalized and compact it is (e.g., ?*This road is difficult for crossing*). As Boutault (2020) also suggests, the higher the degree of nominalization of a construction, the more difficult extraposition is. For instance, the intraposed '(for x) to V' (e.g., *(For older people) to cross this road is difficult*) could be placed closer to the end of the extraposability-continuum, and should be therefore easily extraposable as long as it can be separated from the adjective (e.g., *(For older people) it is easy to cross this road*). Following this argument, we hypothesize that the more compact the evaluative uses of a language are (e.g., deverbals),

tive clauses without explicit linking element (e.g., *The woman* $_i$*[Op*$_i$ *I saw yesterday t*$_i$*]*)).In TC, the OP is moving to the head of the infinitive and is coreferential to the NP-subject – the latter being the external argument of the adjective and not the internal argument of the predicate of the infinitive clause (cf. Akmajian, 1972; Lasnik and Fiengo, 1974; Williams, 1983; Rezac, 2006) – e.g., *Alexi is tough [Op*$_i$ *to please t*$_i$*]*.

the fewer the extrapositions and, conversely, the more extraposed strategies there are, the fewer the nominalizations.

1.2 *Tough*-constructions and their semantic properties

Most studies in this area focus on the derivation of TCs, and rarely the semantic restrictions or combination of semantic restrictions imposed on them: e.g., the animacy of the involved entity, the scope of the adjective, or the degree of transitivity of the infinitive verb (but see Boutault, 2020; Becker, Estigarribia and Gylfadottir, 2012; Kim, 2014).

More specifically, with respect to the animacy of the involved NPs, TCs have a passive meaning since they qualify an entity by the way it undergoes an action, as realized with the combination of an adjective and a transitive infinitive (e.g., *This book is easy to read*: a book that is easy to read is a book that is read easily). This implies that the NP in such constructions has to be interpreted as a patient, qualified by its disposition to undergo an action exerted on it. Although animate entities can also undergo actions, it is mostly inanimate entities that are disposed to have certain actions exerted on them and play the role of patients. However, NPs and most importantly inanimate NPs in TCs appear typically in subject position making their interpretation difficult. For example, according to Becker (2014) and the thematic hierarchy hypothesis (Jackendoff, 1972), an inanimate entity in subject position, as this is often the case in TCs (e.g., *This book is difficult to read*), is not a prototypical agent, thus its occurrence in subject position favours its realization elsewhere in the sentence highlighting its possible displacement from the object position (much more prototypical for a patient) – a typical configuration in TCs which has been found to be challenging for first language learners (Chomsky, 1969; Becker, 2015). In addition to this asymmetry (agent/patient ambiguities) which seems quite problematic for some populations, there are some additional semantic restrictions imposed to TCs. TCs favour in subject position mostly inanimate NPs of natural entities (which naturally have properties that dispose them to undergo an action: to break, to melt, etc.), manufactured entities endowed with properties that dispose them to be involved in an action (e.g., *to drive, to build*, etc.) or intellectual entities that dispose them to undergo certain actions (e.g., *to read, to understand*, etc.), but also animate NPs (human or animal) involved in a limited range of potential actions. For instance, animate NPs can be involved in actions where they allow themselves to be educated, trained, etc. (e.g., *This boy is easy to train*), but they are less susceptible to allow themselves to be transported, touched, hit, etc. (e.g., *?This boy is easy to move*) unless they are unconscious or in incapacity to act for themselves (e.g., *This patient is easy to move*).

With respect to the scope of the adjective, TCs can be distinguished into two types (Boutault, 2020; Danckaert and Tayalati, 2023): single-scope TCs, as illustrated in (1), in which the involved *tough*-adjective describes the process denoted by the infinitive (e.g., *difficult to climb/*these hills are difficult*); and double-scope TCs, as in (2), in which the adjective can describe both the process/action expressed by the infinitive (e.g., *This man is difficult to understand*) and the NP (e.g., *This man is difficult*) – although in this last case, the deletion of the infinitive changes the meaning and makes sometimes the statement difficult to interpret correctly. Unlike natural and manufactured NPs which typically combine with single-scope adjectives, intellectual entities (e.g., *a book, a word,* etc.) have specific form-meaning properties that dispose them to undergo certain actions, prototypically linked to them, notably cognitive actions (*book – to read, word – to understand*, etc.), and typically occur in double-scope configurations. Similarly, humans and a few other animate entities (e.g., some trained animals such as dogs, cats, zoo monkeys, etc.) can be involved in double-scope constructions, although in these cases the NP described by the adjective reflects actually a metonymic use (e.g., *This dog is difficult (to walk)*: it's not the dog that is difficult. In such a double-scope configuration, it is the dog's attitude/character that is difficult and/or taking the dog out for a walk). In that sense, it is expected that double-scope uses should leave space for more variability in the translations we focus on here, as opposed to single-scope adjectives which should induce less ambiguous interpretations.

Finally, with respect to transitivity, TCs involve, by definition, a subject interpreted in relation to a postposed transitive verbal element, most often an infinitive (Tayalati *et al*., 2020:7). According to Russo *et al.* (1998) and Gahl (2002), speakers' performance in decoding transitivity depends, among other things, on the frequency and contexts of occurrence of the involved verbs. More specifically, Gahl (2002) tested this hypothesis about verb transitivity using a plausibility judgment task that varied the degree of frequency of occurrence of a verb in matched and mismatched contexts in terms of transitivity and found that speakers make more errors on sentences in which there is a mismatch between the verb type and the syntactic structure. In line with this work, Kim (2014) found that there is a strong correlation between the degree of transitivity of verbs and TC decoding: optionally transitive verbs that appear more often in intransitive contexts are more difficult to decode than highly transitive verbs (see also Quyen, 2018; Kim and Schwartz, 2022). In that sense, it is expected that low-transitive configurations (infrequent in TCs), should induce more variability in the translations, allowing for several alternative constructions to emerge.

To summarize, there seems to be an asymmetry in terms of animacy, transitivity and scope in the TCs but only little discussion on the restrictions these properties impose alone and in combination to each other. With respect to the

scope of the *tough*-adjectives, and as mentioned above, the infinitives occurring with double-scope adjectives can be deleted, as in examples under (2), but not those occurring within single-scope constructions (1). This distinction has been described in some theoretical papers and in a recent corpus-based study by Boutault (2020). However, none discusses the relative weight and distribution of single-scope vs. double-scope adjectives within TCs.[4] Similarly, although some research has been done on how speakers (children or second language learners) interpret English TCs with animate and inanimate NPs in transitively and intransitively biased contexts, little is still known about the role of these inherent semantic properties in combination and from a crosslinguistic perspective, in the domain of translation.

More specifically, acquisitional work has shown some interest in animacy and transitivity, and noted that processing of counter-intuitive contexts (e.g., configurations with optionally/low transitive verbs that appear in intransitive contexts, presence of an inanimate NP in subject position) lead to difficulties for the learners. By extension, our prediction here is that 'counter-intuitive' configurations (in which the syntactic subject of the matrix sentence does not correspond to what can be interpreted as its semantic subject), should be difficult for translators, especially for Russian translators that do not have a similar TC configuration in their target language, and even more difficult when the TC appears in non-prototypical configurations in the original texts (e.g., with an animate NP, with a double-scope adjective, with a low-transitive verb). Thus, those difficulties were expected to be reflected in the translation strategies: non-prototypical configurations (animate NP+double-scope adj.+high transitivity) should leave space for more functional equivalents in translation; prototypical TC configurations (inanimate NP+single-scope+transitivity) should lead to less variable alternative strategies.

1.3 *Tough*-constructions, variants, and functional analogues

In the domain of TCs, most studies discuss the problem of their syntactic derivation, focusing mostly on English, without taking into account the functional equivalents that other languages can offer in relation to differences in meaning,

4. Although Boutault (2020) in her corpus-based study focused on 1.050 utterances making explicitly the distinction between A-type (*tough*-constructions including single-scope and double-scope variants that modify a process), B-type (*pretty*-constructions which express a property of the referential argument and which are incompatible with the variant involving an expletive pronoun), and C-type adjectives (which modify an argument through the process), she does not discuss in detail how single-scope and double-scope are distributed among the 87 type-A reported adjectives.

and which structurally do not (or at least not always) follow the typical structural properties of TCs. For instance, one of the most discussed variants of TCs observed in English (Boutault, 2012) – but not systematically present across languages (7a) (e.g., Comrie, 1997) – concerns the *Tough-nut*-constructions (henceforth TN), in which the *tough*-adjective is used attributively in prenominal position as in (7b).

(7) a. *C'est un difficile sommet à escalader. (FR)
DEM be-3.PRES.SG a difficult-M.SG hill-M.SG to cross-INF
b. That is a difficult hill to climb. (EN)

One of the few works devoted to the semantics of TCs and their analogues is that of Van de Velde (2020). She states that the TC expresses a dispositional property, within which the complement of the adjective is similar to a part of the qualified entity indicating in what respect the quality is attributed to the subject, but also that similar meanings can be expressed with functionally equivalent constructions. French is of special interest in that respect. In that work, some functional analogues that support *tough* semantics and in which the adjective and the verb may take different forms and meanings are reported, such as: (a) constructions with action predicates which can be realized with a pronominal verb with passive meaning (henceforth PASS/RFLX) coupled with a manner adverb qualifying an entity by the way it undergoes an action (8a); (b) constructions involving deverbal nouns (henceforth DEV) realized as restrictive prepositional complements that express actions or states (8b); (c) compact constructions involving predicates either realized with the use of affixed adjectivals that combine both the meaning of the property of the action and that of modality such as the ability, capacity, possibility, likelihood, etc. the quality can be attributed to the subject (henceforth COMP) (8c), or realized in a more distributed way (henceforth DISTR) with the use of a suffixed adjective expressing modality and a manner adverb (8d):

(8) a. Ce livre se lit facilement. (FR)
DEM book-M.SG PRO.REFL read-3.PRS.SG difficult-ADV
"This book reads easily." (PASS/RFLX)
b. Ce livre est facile de lecture. (FR)
DEM.M.SG book-M.SG be-3.PRES.SG easy-M.SG PREP reading-F.SG
"This book is of easy reading." (DEV)
c. Cette eau est imbuvable. (FR)
DEM.F.SG water-F.SG be-3.PRES.SG undrinkable-SG
"This water is undrinkable." (COMP)
d. Cet outil est facilement maniable. (FR)
DEM.M.SG tool.M.SG be-3.PRES.SG easy-ADV handled-SG
"This tool is easily handled." (DISTR)

Similar functional analogues can be found also in other languages, such as Russian. According to Comrie and Matthews (1990), Russian is a language without *tough*-movement *per se* but with a main functional analogue to the English TC which involves a topicalization of the noun phrase in the accusative case, followed by impersonal expressions and dependent infinitives in perfective or imperfective forms that form one constituent with their argument (9). This is also supported by Paykin and Van Peteghem (2020), who demonstrate that the *tough*-element and the infinitive in Russian cannot function alone as one constituent (as they cannot be the answer to the question *How is this X?* *složno rešat′/difficult-O solve), as opposed to English and French that do not have this morphological restriction (10). In Russian, there is a very flexible word order, that allows free movement of the object of the infinitive without change of the accusative to the nominative form or agreement with the adjective – marked in the neutral form below (glossed here as: -O).[5]

(9) a. Ètu zadaču složno rešat′. (RU)
DEM-F.SG.ACC problem-F.SG.ACC difficult-O solve-INF-PFV
"This problem (is) difficult to.solve."

b. Ètu zadaču složno rešit′. (RU)
DEM-3.F.SG.ACCp problem-F.SG.ACC difficult-O solve-INF-IPFV
"This problem (is) difficult to.solve."

(10) a. This problem is difficult to solve. (EN)

b. Ce problème est difficile à résoudre. (FR)
DEM-M.SG. problem-M.SG be-3.PRS.SG difficult-SG. PREP. solve-INF
"This problem is difficult to solve."

Other researchers point out the similarities between *tough*-movement in Germanic languages and evaluative constructions in Russian (Serdobolskaya and Toldova, 2014) and suggest that the core of the evaluative construction in Russian is a predicative[6] – a separate class of words that function as predicative adverbials, such as *legko* 'easily', *slogno* 'difficultly', *ploho* 'badly', etc. (Ŝerba, 2004). Predicatives of this type (henceforth PRED) cannot be used with a canonical subject in the nominative case or function as modifiers of the infinitive.[7] They are combined with an object in the accusative case, analyzed as the attribute of an attributive phrase

5. This form of the adjective (e.g., *složno, trudno*) is considered as ambiguous as it can indicate, depending on the construction, either the neutral or the adverbial form of the adjective (Paykin and Van Peteghem, 2020: 76).

6. The predicatives themselves represent a debatable status in Russian linguistics because morphologically they can be similar to adjectives, participles, adverbs or nouns (Letuchiy, 2017).

7. See also the *How is this X?* test above which shows the status of *složno* in (9).

without explicit copula (e.g., *byt'* 'to be', *stat'* 'to become', *kazat'sja* 'to seem'), sometimes occurring with a sentential actant in the dative case which is assigned the thematic role of experiencer, coreferential with the silent agent of the infinitival clause (11) (Letuchiy, 2017).

(11) Tvoj golos (mne) složno zabyt'.
PRO.POSS-M.SG voice-M.SG.ACC PRO-1.SG.DAT difficult-O. forget.INF.PFV
"Your voice (for.me) (is) difficult to.forget." (PRED)

Semantically, as illustrated also in (12), in predicative constructions it is not the properties of the NP that are evaluated as difficult but rather the properties of the constituent inf+NP (e.g., *to remember this text*). In this case (12), as in (9), složno refers to a process (e.g., *the memorization of a text, the resolution of a problem*) without the ambiguity of (2) and (10).

(12) Ètot tekst složno zapomnit'.
DEM-M.SG.ACC text.M.SG.Acc difficult.O remember-INF.PFV
"This text difficult to.remember." (PRED)

Another issue, that has been only superficially discussed, concerns the word order in such constructions with predicatives and their syntactic particularities. In Russian, apart from the fact that the NP can appear after the embedded infinitive in its canonical argument position (13a) but also topicalized in initial position with a predicative preceding the dependent infinitive (13b), it is also possible to have the embedded infinitival preceding the predicative (13c).[8]

(13) a. Trudno rešat' ètu zadaču.
difficult-O to.solve DEM-F.SG.ACC problem-F.SG.ACC
"(It is) difficult to solve this problem."
b. Ètu zadaču trudno rešat'.
DEM-3.SG.ACC problem-F.SG.ACC difficult-O to.solve
c. Rešat' ètu zadaču trudno.
to.solve DEM-F.SG.ACC problem-F.SG.ACC difficult-O

More recently, Paykin and Van Peteghem (2020) suggested three additional constructions that can be considered as TC analogues, irrespective of word order: one with the use of prepositional phrases *dlja* 'for'+deverbal noun (14a), and two passive constructions involving adverbial *tough*-modifiers, the one with reflexive verbs and the other with present passive participles (14b, c).

8. This is called 'scrambling' in generative grammar (e.g., Ross, 1967; Boskovič and Takahashi, 1998) and is very common in Russian, even though the SVO order is considered as the unmarked one (Bailyn, 2003).

(14) a. Èta zadača složna dlja rešenija.
DEM-F.SG.NOM problem-F.SG.NOM difficult-F.SG PREP solving-F.SG.GEN
"This problem (is) difficult for solving." (DEV)

b. Èta zadača složno rešaetsja.
DEM-F.SG.NOM problem-F.S.NOM difficult-O solve-INF.REFL
"This problem with.difficulty (can) be.solved." (PASS/RFLX)

c. Èta zadača složno rešaema.
DEM-F.SG.NOM problem-F.S.NOM difficult-O solve.PR.PASS.PART-F.SG
"This problem (is) with.difficulty solvable." (PASS/RFLX)

2. Scope and aims of the study

The intriguing nature of TCs is not new. Many descriptive and introspective studies have been focused on their structural characteristics based mostly on English (e.g., Chung, 2001; Hicks, 2009; Giurgea and Soare, 2010), and only limited work has been done on the applicability of these findings to other systems from a corpus-based perspective (but see Biber *et al.*, 1999; Boutault, 2020; Popelíková, 2015).

The present paper aims to explore and contrast the syntactic and semantic features of English TCs and map their correspondences across two typologically different languages with little usage-based documentation in this domain: a language with TC (French) and a language without TC (Russian). Based on a parallel (movies and TV series subtitles) corpus, we aim to (a) identify the most typical patterns across these systems, (b) investigate how specific semantic properties (NP animacy, adjective scope, transitivity) relate to specific (more or less semantically compact and syntactically extraposable) evaluative configurations, and (c) verify the accuracy of previous descriptions additionally proposing a classification of the observed patterns.

With respect to the first aim, the study proposes to identify the functional analogues available in French and Russian and their most prototypical patterns. Although French is typically described as a gap-language, similar to English, some recent work (Van de Velde, 2020) has additionally described a multitude of alternatives (use of deverbals, reflexives, compact affixed adjectivals) that can function as analogues to TCs. Similarly, Russian has been described as a language without TC *per se* but with several, similar to French, functional analogues (passive uses, deverbals, etc.). The corpus investigation will help to identify the most frequent patterns and their distribution across these systems, as well as to verify to what extent French and Russian share commonalities despite their structural differences in this domain.

With respect to the second aim, the focus in this study is on the role the involved entities (animate vs. inanimate NPs), the scope of two very frequent adjectives *difficult* and *easy* (Mair, 1987) which can appear in both single-scope and double-scope constructions, and the degree of transitivity of the embedded infinitival (based on Gahl *et al.*, 2004) can play in the translations. Given the fact that TCs involve by definition a postposed transitive verbal element (most often an infinitive) (Tayalati *et al.*, 2020) and the fact that transitives tend to involve more likely inanimate complements as themes and patients (Givón, 1983; Langacker, 1991; Theakston *et al.*, 2012), for the source corpus (English), it was expected that inanimate NPs should be more frequent in such constructions. By extension, inanimate NPs were expected to relate mostly to single-scope uses with highly transitive verbs, as opposed to double-scope uses that were expected to leave some space to animate NPs as well (especially those referring both to the process/action and the characteristics of an individual) – the first being more prototypical of TCs than the latter. More specifically, for a double-scope reference to occur, the adjective has to be able to describe both the NP and the process the NP is involved in. Animate NPs combine systematically with double-scope adjectival uses (e.g., *You are difficult to understand/to read, She is easy to convince, This dog is difficult to walk*) as these adjectives can both characterize the animate entity and the process in which the entity is involved, notwithstanding the fact that an animate NP involved in a TC is often in metonymic usage (e.g., *Proust is difficult (to read)*).[9] In contrast, inanimate NPs, in order to get involved in a double-scope construction with such adjectives, they need to be strongly associated with a process or a prototypical action related to their use or their nature (e.g., *difficult book (to read), easy problem (to solve), easy word (to understand*)). Given that not all inanimate NPs provide direct mental access to a process or are associated with a prototypical action (e.g., **difficult house (to sell/to build), *easy village (to find/to cross*)),[10] inanimate NPs were expected to occur mostly within single-scope uses.

9. An animate entity can activate implicitly an inanimate one through metonymy. As also noted by Croft (2009), such double descriptions can often occur in cases where an animate (human) concept (e.g., Proust) activates another closely related one (that of reading his work) which belongs to the same domain matrix (e.g., *Proust is difficult to read / Proust is difficult*).

10. The term association, here, refers to the mental access a (source) concept provides to another (target) concept. This idea is based on the notion of metonymy, as a process that involves the activation of a target conceptual entity within the same or idealized cognitive domain as the source concept (Kövecses, 2002:145). More recently, metonymy has been described as a prototypical category (Peirsman and Geeraerts, 2006) that can be plotted against three dimensions, the strength of contact, the boundedness, and the domain of the involved concepts – a description that potentially has to gain a lot by taking into account other semantic

For the target corpus (Russian and French translations), it was expected that non-prototypical TC uses (e.g., configurations involving animate NPs, double-scope adjectives, low-transitive verbs) should leave some space for variability through the use of functionally analogue constructions – variability which should be larger in Russian (language without TC) than in French.

With respect to the third aim, the paper proposes a classification of the observed patterns according to their degree of extraposability following previous suggestions (Khalifa, 2004; Boutault, 2020), additionally taking into account the semantic and clausal compactness of evaluative expressions.

In the following sections, we first (Section 3) describe the methodology, dataset and annotation scheme, then in Section 4 we present the findings of the study, organized in two sub-sections: (a) Section 4.1 which describes TCs analogue patterns as observed in the French and Russian translations and their respective distribution in each language; (b) Section 4.2 which presents the inherent properties of English TCs (the scope of the *tough*-adjectives, the animacy of the involved NPs and the transitivity of the embedded infinitives) with special focus on specific semantic features or combinations of features that induce commonalities and/or differences in the translations across the target languages. Finally, Section 5 discusses the main findings of the study, proposes a classification of the observed patterns according to their degree of semantic and clausal compactness, and presents the limitations of the present investigation together with some future research perspectives.

3. Methodology

3.1 The data set

For the purposes of this study a parallel corpus was built using the Corpus Query Processor (CQP)[11] of the OPUS corpus (Tiedemann and Thottingal, 2020) and more specifically the oral subtitles data for movies and TV-series from the website opensubtitles.org.[12] The corpus is a derivative of the OPUS OpenSubtitles2018 multilingual corpus by Lison *et al.* (2018), accessible through the Virtual Language

parameters, specifically those related to the properties of the source concept (animate-inanimate, concrete-abstract, natural-manufactured, etc.).

11. A CQP query of a regular expression over 'attribute expressions'. For more information about the query syntax, see the Open Corpus Workbench (CWB) Tutorial: http://cwb.sourceforge.net/files/CQP_Tutorial/ Version 3.4.26 [last accessed 19 May 2022].

12. http://www.opensubtitles.org/ [last accessed 19 May 2022]

Observatory (VLO) platform[13] of CLARIN (Common Language Resources and Technology Infrastructure). The first step consisted in selecting the target corpus (OpenSubtitles2018) and the target languages – English as source language, French and Russian as target alignments. The second step consisted in extracting the two most frequently occurring adjectives, *difficult* and *easy*, with their immediate contexts, using queries such as: *"difficult"%c "to"%c* and *"difficult"%c [ ]? "to"%c* that helped extract both *Tough* and *Tough-nut-constructions*. The method included a cross-check with simple [word="difficult"], [word="easy"] queries respectively, in order to avoid neglecting any target segment. These queries, used to retrieve all occurrences of the two target words, were based on 34,377,064 sentence pairs/496.58 per million words in the English-French combination and on 21,223,864 sentence pairs/28.128 per million words in the English-Russian combination. They returned a total of 6,530 strings/sentences involving the target words (1,827 with *difficult* and 4,703 with *easy*).

3.2 Data annotation

The dataset of 6,530 strings in English was coded manually for constructions such as: *tough* (TC), *tough*-nut (TN), extraposed (EXT), intraposed (INT), and non-related clauses without any embedded infinitival clause (n). With respect to *difficult,* the analysis returned a total of 1,827 results of occurrences out of which the majority (79.7%) were irrelevant (n) constructions, 13.5% EXT and only 6.8% actual TC target segments (TC+TN). With respect to *easy*, the analysis returned a total of 4,703 results, out of which 86.9% were irrelevant (n), 7.8% were EXT, 0.1% INT, and 5.3% actual TCs (TC+TN). In total, 375 target segments (TC+TN) were identified (125 *difficult* and 250 *easy*)[14] in the source corpus (English) which were further mapped with the corresponding translations in French and Russian (see Table 1 for some examples of the aligned segments).[15]

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13. The CLARIN Virtual Language Observatory-VLO (https://vlo.clarin.eu) provides researchers access to hundreds of thousands of language-related resources. For the purposes of the present study, we used the parallel corpora portal: https://www.clarin.eu/resource-families/parallel-corpora#multilingual-corpora-1 [last accessed on September 7, 2022].

14. This difference is even more striking when we look at the whole corpus (TC and non-TC configurations). In total, 1,827 occurrences of difficult and 4,703 of easy were identified. One possible explanation to this asymmetry is the range of semantically related adjectives likely to appear in TCs: *difficult* has several (easily interchangeable) competitors, synonyms that can be used in similar contexts (e.g., *hard, tough,* etc.), as opposed to easy which does not have similar competitors, or probably only *simple* (e.g., ?*This book is simple to read*).

Table 1. Examples of aligned segments

Source segment	English	French	Russian
n	Don't make it too difficult.	Ne rends pas les choses plus dures.	Не усложняй все.
TC	Your attitude is difficult to understand.	Votre comportement est incompréhensible !	Твоё отношение трудно понять.
TN	Attachment is such a difficult thing to undo.	Qu'il est difficile de se défaire d'un attachement.	Привязанность бывает так сложно расторгнуть.
EXT	It's easy to cancel an order.	Il est facile d'annuler la commande.	Заказ можно легко отменить.
INT	With no passport, to cross the frontier wasn't easy.	Sans passeport, c'est pas facile.	Без паспорта пройти границу не просто.

The first aim of the study was to identify the functional analogues available in French and Russian translations, note the most prototypical patterns, and investigate in which contexts (semantic features or combinations of features) these functional analogues occur in the translations. For this purpose, after the identification of the 375 main segments (TC and TN) of English and their mapping to French and Russian through alignment, the corresponding translations were further coded as: typical *tough*-constructions (TC), *tough*-nut constructions (TN), extraposed (EXT), intraposed (INT), passives with a reflexive or a participle (PASS/RFLX), deverbal nouns (DEV), impersonal predicatives (PRED), compact predicates expressing modality (COMP) or combined with an adverbial (DISTR). More specifically, with respect to the latter compact categories, we distinguished among: (a) COMP constructions with a derived affixed adjective, e.g., *difficult to accept* → u*nacceptable* (French), *nepriemlivyj* (Russian) or with a compound e.g., *difficult to access* → *trudnodostupnom* (Russian); and (b) DISTR constructions involving either the use of a suffixed adjective combined with a derived adverbial e.g., *difficult to accept* → *difficilement acceptable*, litt. 'difficultly acceptable') in French (Van de Velde, 2020), or the use of a manner adverb combined with a modal verb that cover both the inherent modal meaning of TCs and the referring process (e.g., *I never knew money was so easy to get* → *Ne znal, čto tak legko možno zarabotat' '(Did).not know that so easily (one) could earn.money'*) in Russian. In some cases, the target TC/TN segments were paraphrased in the

15. Some of these target segments were not aligned: 17 in French and 13 in Russian, 4.53% and 3.47% respectively. These non-aligned segments were coded as N/A and were included in the analysis in order to keep the same number of analyzed forms across languages.

translations through the use of other expressions, or subject-reading structures, coded as 'other' (OTH) constructions in the data (*EN: You 're so easy to fool.* → *Quelle poire* '*What a fool*').

The second aim of this study was to analyze how specific semantic properties of the original TCs related to analogue (more or less semantically and syntactically compact) evaluative configurations. To do so, once the TC and TN constructions were identified in English, they were further analyzed for: (a) different types of NPs: animate (An) concrete humain (H) or non-human/animal (A) entities vs. inanimate (In) concrete (Concr) or abstract (Abstr) entities; (b) different types of adjective scopes: single- vs. double-scope adjectives; and (c) different degrees of transitivity: high- (T+) vs. low-transitivity (T–) (see Table 2 below for some examples).[16]

Table 2. Examples of target properties identified within TC and TN constructions in English

NP type	AnH/AnA	you, Mike, he/fish, rabbits
	InConcr/InAbstr	pill, vaccine/truth, the concept of relaxation
ADJ type	Single-scope	A helicopter is difficult to obtain
	Double-scope	Riddles are not easy to guess
Transitivity	T+	NP+adj+to find
	T–	NP+adj+to move

16. The degree of transitivity is a very controversial issue in linguistics and could be analyzed from different angles (Wang, 2015). In this work, the degree of transitivity of the embedded infinitive forms, including TCs with a stranded preposition (e.g., *John is difficult to discuss with*), was based on Gahl *et al*,. (2004) corpus-based estimations (accessible here: http://www.psychonomic.org/archive/ [last accessed 25 March 2022]). More specifically, for the purposes of our study, we only focused on the number of occurrences reported of verbs used in transitive and intransitive contexts (as identified by Gahl *et al.,* 2004 following a basic criterion: the presence of a direct object that is a noun phrase). Once the token scores were extracted, we further calculated the percentage of transitive uses of each verb as a function of the total number of occurrences in the corpus. In order to distinguish between high- and low-transitive verbs, an additional gap was set: low-transitive verbs (T–) were those that occurred less than 40% of the time in transitive configurations; high-transitive verbs (T+) were those that occurred more than 60% of the time in transitive configurations. For example, low-transitive verbs: drive, talk, jump, move; high-transitive verbs: find, forget, understand, say.

4. Findings

4.1 TCs and their analogues in French and Russian

The mapping analysis revealed great variability in the corresponding strategies across languages. With respect to the French translations (Figure 1), more than half of the target segments (54%) were translated in TCs (15a). However, the rest was characterized by great variability. Among the alternatives: Compact constructions (COMP) were the most frequent ones (13%) (15b), followed by 10% of other type (OTH), most often subject-reading constructions (15c), 10% of extraposed (EXT) constructions (15d), constructions, 4% of (PASS/RFLX) constructions involving a pronominal verb (15e), 2% of distributed (DISTR) (15f), 2% of deverbal (DEV) (15g), and 2% of intraposed (INT) (15h). 5% were non-aligned (N/A). Figure 2 shows the global distribution of French translations as occurred with *difficult* and *easy* adjectives.

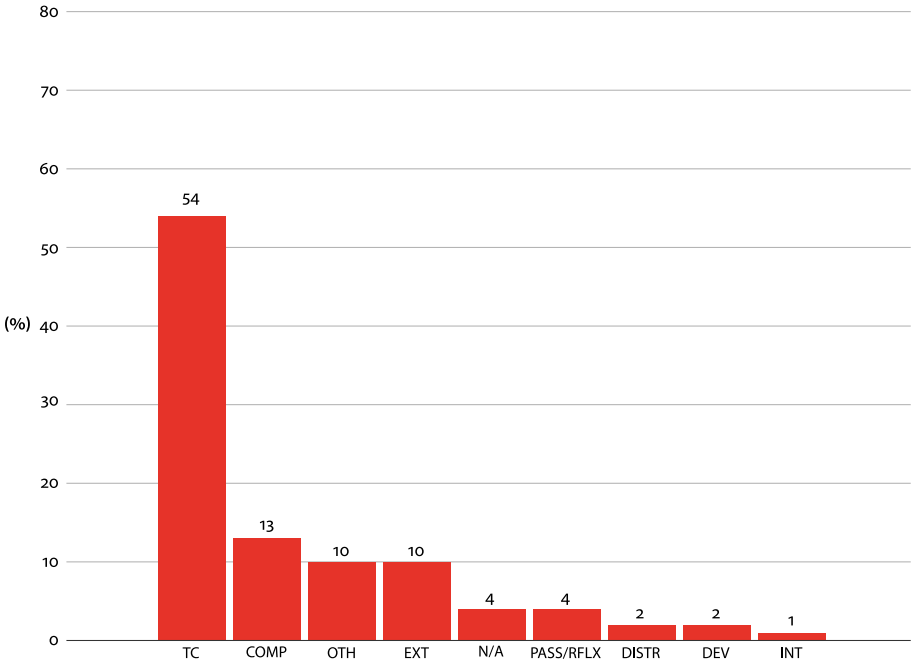

Figure 1. French translations. TC = *tough*-constructions, COMP = compact constructions, OTH = other type constructions, EXT = extraposed constructions, N/A = not aligned sentences, PASS/RFLX = passive or reflexive constructions, DISTR = distributive constructions, DEV = deverbal constructions, INT = intraposed constructions

(15) a. Such clothes are difficult to sell. →
De pareils habits sont difficiles à vendre.
"Such clothes are difficult to sell." TC

b. Your attitude is difficult to understand. →
Votre comportement est incompréhensible.
"Your behavior is incomprehensible." COMP

c. These things are so difficult to believe. →
Je ne peux y croire.
"I can't believe it." OTH

d. Accurate numbers are difficult to come by. →
Il est difficile de donner un chiffre précis.
"It is difficult to give an accurate number." EXT

e. I know my being here is difficult to understand. →
Ma présence s'explique difficilement.
"My presence (can) be.explained (with) difficulty." PASS/RFLX

f. The sufferings of the spirit are so difficult to communicate. →
Les souffrances spirituelles sont difficilement exprimables.
"Spiritual sufferings are expressible (with) difficulty." DISTR

g. Next target must be a location difficult to access. →
La prochaine cible doit être un lieu difficile d'accès.
"Next time target has to.be a place (with) difficult access." DEV

h. Fresh shipments of the herring become more difficult to obtain. →
Obtenir des envois frais de harengs est difficile.
"To.obtain shipments of fresh herring is difficult." INT

More specifically, with respect to *difficult* (Figure 2), half of the target constructions (50%) were also translated in TC, and in the other half: 16% were COMP, followed by EXT (14%), OTH (9%), PASS/RFLX (4%), not-aligned (N/A) (4%) and INT, DEV and DISTR (1% each). A similar distribution was found with *easy* in that 56% of the target constructions were translated in TCs, 11% involved a compact derived adjectival, 10% were other-type constructions, 8% were extraposed, followed by 5% of N/A, 4% of PASS/RFLX, 3% of DISTR, 1% of DEV, and 1% of INT.

With respect to Russian (Figure 3), the majority (64%) of the target segments was translated in constructions involving a predicative (PRED) (16a), 10% involved a COMP (16b), 8% corresponded to OTH types of constructions (16c), 6% to EXT constructions (16d), 3% were N/A, 3% DISTR (16e), and only few were translated with a DEV (16f), PASS/RFLX (16g), or INT (16h): 2% each.

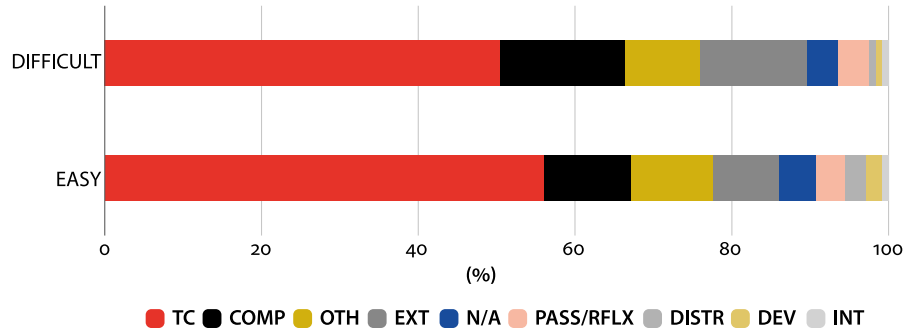

Figure 2. French translations in 'difficult' and 'easy' adjectives

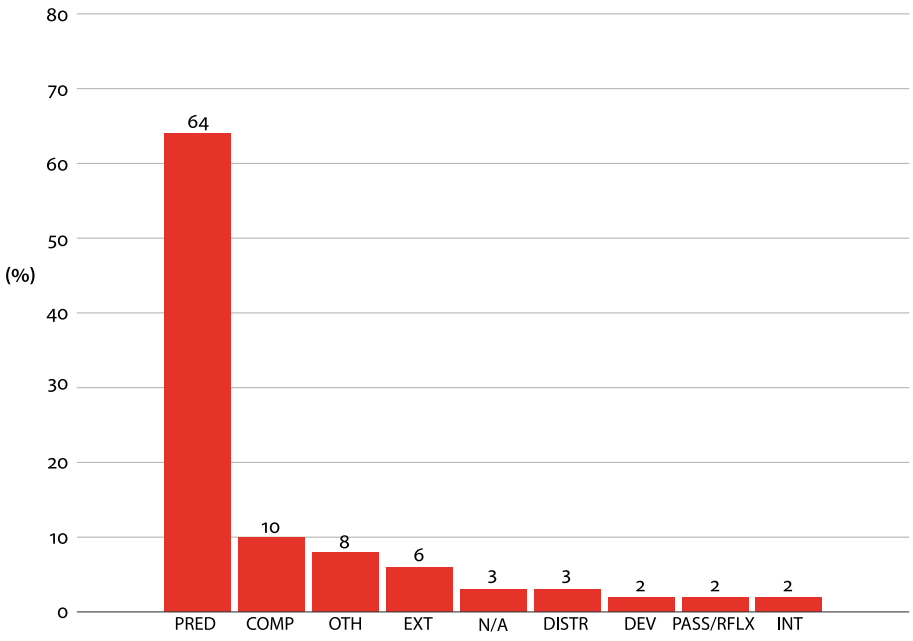

Figure 3. Russian translations. PRED = constructions involving a predicative, COMP = compact constructions, OTH = other type constructions, EXT = extraposed constructions, N/A = not aligned sentences, DISTR = distributive constructions, DEV = deverbal constructions, PASS/RFLX = passive or reflexive constructions, INT = intraposed constructions

(16) a. Such clothes are difficult to sell. →
Takuju odeždu trudno prodat′.
"Such clothes difficult to.sell." PRED

b. Next target must be in a location difficult to access. →
Sledujuŝaja cel′ dolžna byt′ v trudnodostupnom meste.
"Next target must be in hardly.accessible place." COMP

c. This is difficult for me to express. →
Ja ne znaju kak vam ob ètom skazat′.
"I (do) not know how to.you about this to.tell." OTH

d. He's difficult to live with. →
Trudno žit′ s nim.
"(It.is) difficult to.live with him." EXT

e. I never knew money was so easy to get. →
Ne znal, čto tak legko možno zarabotat′.
"(Did).not know that so easily (one) could earn.money." DISTR

f. The concept of relaxation is difficult for me to understand. →
Koncepcija rasslablenija javljaetsja trudnoj dlja moego ponimanija.
"Concept relaxation is difficult for my understanding." DEV

g. You're very difficult for me to read. →
I mne èto trudno daëtsja.
"And (for) me it difficultly managed." PASS/RFLX

h. My brain is difficult now to sharpen. →
Privesti mysli v porjadok mne trudno do sih por.
"To.put thoughts in order (for).me difficult even now." INT

More specifically, with the adjective *difficult* (Figure 4), the majority (66%) of the translations involved PRED, 7% corresponded to other-type structures, 6% were COMP, 6% EXT, 5% DEV, while only 3% were INT, 3% PASS/RFLX, 2% DISTR and 2% N/A. The distribution was somehow different with *easy*. Although more than half of the target sentences (63%) involved again PRED translations, 12% were COMP translations, 7% were OTH structures, 6% EXT, 3% DISTR, 2% PASS, 2% INT, and only 1% of the constructions were DEV.

Despite their great structural differences with respect to TCs, French and Russian shared many common analogues. The following continua illustrate the general tendencies across languages and types of adjectives:

FR: TC > COMP > OTH ≈ EXT > PASS/RFLX > DISTR ≈ DEV ≈ INT (both adjectives)

RU: PRED> COMP ≈ OTH ≈ EXT > DEV ≈ INT ≈ PASS/RFLX ≈ DISTR (*difficult*)

RU: PRED> COMP > OTH≈EXT > INT ≈ PASS/RFLX ≈ DISTR > DEV (*easy*)

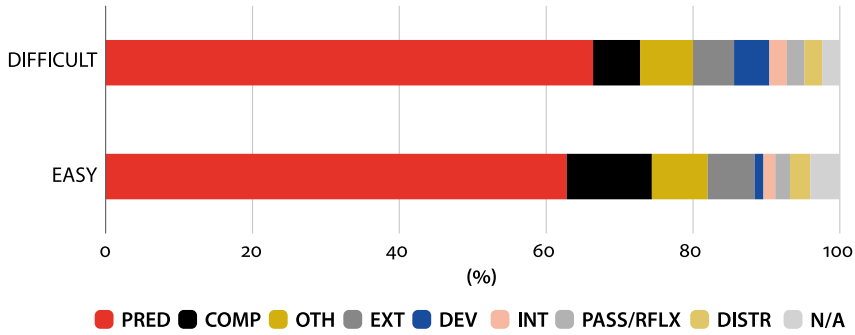

Figure 4. Russian translations in 'difficult' and 'easy' adjectives

More specifically, the two languages show some clear preferences for specific constructions. More than half of the translations were TCs in French and PRED in Russian (54% and 64% respectively). In French, irrespective context (*difficult/easy*), the alternative structures followed the same order: COMP > OTH ≈ EXT > PASS/RFLX, and only marginally organized information in DISTR ≈ DEV ≈ INT constructions. In Russian, some differences were observed with respect to *tough*-adjectives, in that COMP were twice more frequent with *easy* than with *difficult*, and DEV only marginally occurred within *easy*. Surprisingly, PASS/RFLX were more frequent in French than in Russian translations. Despite some differences across the two languages within 'difficult' and 'easy' contexts, the translators seem to follow some common analogues when they do not opt for the dominant constructions (TC / PRED). The most common were the compact uses (COMP), the extraposed (EXT) and some other (OTH) subject-reading alternatives.

Even though these two languages tend to use overall similar types of analogues, there are only few one-to-one correspondences (Table 3). The most striking ones, apart from the correspondence TC (French) – PRED (Russian), are the ones related to COMP and EXT translations, and less so the ones related to OTH or PASS/RFLX. More specifically, among the 375 target segments: 9 were translated using a compact construction in both languages, as illustrated in the examples under (17); 5 using extraposed (18); 4 with other subject-oriented constructions; and only 1 correspondence was found with a similar passive/reflexive use (19).

(17) a. You guys are very easy to predict. (EN)
b. Les mecs comme toi sont prévisibles. (FR) COMP
c. Takie, kak ty, očen′ predskazuemy. (RU) COMP
"Those, like you are very predictable."

Table 3. One-to-one correspondences between French and Russian translations. EXT = extraposed constructions, INT = intraposed constructions, TC = *tough*-constructions, PRED = constructions involving a predicative, PASS/RFLX = passive or reflexive constructions, DEV = deverbal constructions, DISTR = distributive constructions, COMP = compact constructions, OTH = other non-evaluative constructions, N/A = not aligned sentences

RU \ FR	EXT	INT	PRED	PASS/RFLX	DEV	DISTR	COMP	OTH	N/A
EXT	5	0	25	1	1	0	3	1	2
INT	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
TC	15	4	**140**	3	3	6	16	12	4
PASS/RFLX	0	0	9	1	0	1	0	2	1
DEV	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	0
DISTR	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	1	0
COMP	1	1	27	0	3	2	**9**	3	2
OTH	1	2	20	1	0	1	7	4	2
N/A	1	0	9	0	1	0	0	4	2

(18) a. This is a very difficult place to get in, but it's much more difficult to get out. (EN)
b. Il est difficile d'entrer ici mais plus encore d'en sortir. (FR) EXT
c. Sjuda byvaet nelegko vojti, no vyjti eŝë trudnee. (RU) EXT
"Here happens hard (to).in.get, but (to).out.get even harder."

(19) a. There's no way he's that easy to take control of! (EN)
b. Il ne se laisserait pas contrôler si facilement ! (FR) PASS/RFLX
c. čtoby on tak legko sdalsja! (RU) PASS/RFLX
"for he so easily given.up!"

4.2 TC semantic components in English and contrastive analysis

With respect to the semantic properties of the target segments, the coding was first focused on three main components in English: the animacy of the NP, the scope of the adjective, the transitivity of the embedded infinitive, and their distribution. With respect to the animacy of the NP, after distinguishing among animate and inanimate, concrete and abstract NPs, 130 animate and 245 inanimate NPs were identified (Table 4). Only few animal and concrete referents were observed (4 and 43 respectively) in the total of 375 NPs of the corpus.

Table 4. NP animacy in English *difficult/easy* TCs

	IN-abstr	IN-concr	AN-hum	AN-anim
Difficult	72	12	39	2
Easy	130	31	87	2
Total	**202**	**43**	**126**	**4**

With respect to the scope of the adjectives, for the analysis we distinguished among single- and double-scope adjectives. In the total of 375 adjectives, 63% occur in single-scope and 37% in double-scope contexts, with a difference in their distribution depending on the type of the adjective. Although *easy* occurs more often (65%) in single-scope uses (20a), *difficult* is used in a more balanced way (20b)–(c), for both single- (58%) and double-scope reference (42%). Table 6 below summarizes the distribution of *difficult* and *easy* in single and double scope uses respectively.

(20) a. The prints were easy to follow.
b. The pill is difficult to swallow.
c. You're very difficult to read.

An additional comparative analysis was performed with focus on the animacy of the NPs as combined with different adjective scopes (Table 5). The results from *difficult* and *easy* uses were very similar. More than half of the TCs involved an inanimate-NP combined with a single-scope adjective, followed by animate-NP with single-scope adjective, inanimate-NP with double-scope adjective, while the rarest combination was that combining animate-NPs with single-scope adjectives.

Table 5. Adjective scope as a function of animacy in English

	Difficult		Easy	
	Single-scope	**Double-scope**	**Single-scope**	**Double-scope**
Inanimate	56.00%	12.00%	56.00%	8.00%
Animate	2.40%	29.60%	8.80%	27.20%

One of the most central properties of the TCs is that they occur mostly with a transitive verbal element (Tayalati *et al.,* 2020:7). Based on the transitivity measures proposed by Gahl *et al.* (2004), 174 constructions were identified and further analyzed with respect to their degree of transitivity (high- (>60%) vs. low-transitive (<40%)). More specifically, in the English corpus (TC/TN target segments): 86% of the embedded infinitives involved a highly-transitive verb (e.g., *to accept, to read, to see*) and only 14% involved a low-transitive verb (e.g., *to jump,*

to prove, to move). Additionally, a more fine-grained analysis coupling transitivity, animacy and adjective scope shows that highly-transitive verbs combine systematically with inanimate NPs when the adjective (*difficult* or *easy*) is single-scope (21a) (Figures 5 and 6), and with animate NPs when the adjective is double-scope (21b) (Figures 7 and 8). The pattern seems more complex in cases where some low transitive verbs (19.5%) occur with inanimate NPs, mostly with single scope difficult (21c) (Figure 5), and with animate NPs in some double-scope (34.5%), in particular with *easy* (21d) (Figure 8).

(21) a. The "why" was very difficult to figure out.
(inanimate, single-scope, high-tr)
b. You were easy to impress.
(animate, double-scope, high-tr)
c. These things are so difficult to believe.
(inanimate, single-scope, low-tr)
d. She's not easy to talk to.
(animate, double-scope, low-tr)

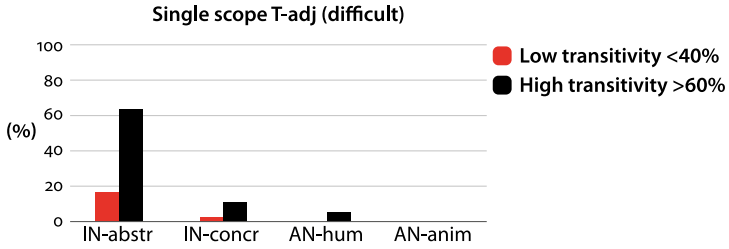

Figure 5. NP-type as a function of transitivity with single-scope *difficult*

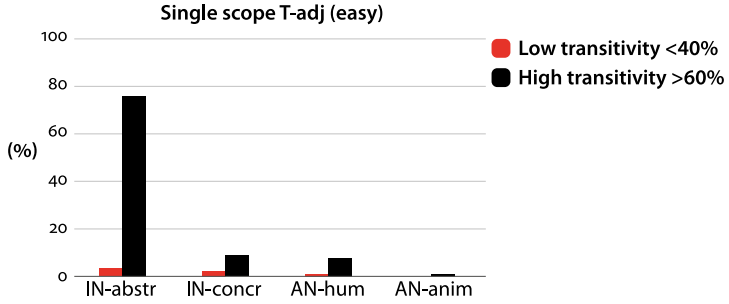

Figure 6. NP-type as a function of transitivity with single-scope *easy*

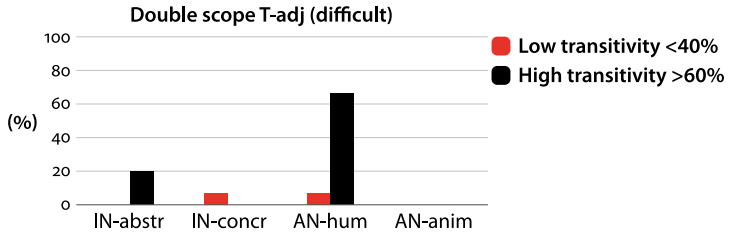

Figure 7. NP-type as a function of transitivity with double-scope *difficult*

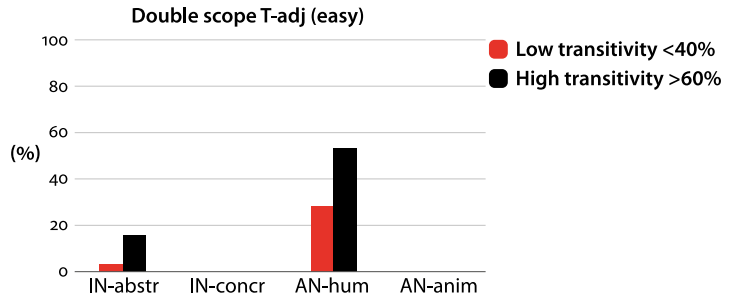

Figure 8. NP-type as a function of transitivity with double-scope *easy*

With respect to French and Russian, overall, the animacy of the NP alone does not seem to influence much the choice among different functional analogues. Overall, French translations follow the TC pattern, at least for half of the target segments, and present a rather mixed pattern for the other half, with a preference however (around 18%) for COMP with animate NPs (*Vous êtes prévisible* 'You are predictable'). Russian translations are even more homogeneous, with a clear preference for PRED, equally distributed among animate and inanimate NPs. Figures 9 and 10 show the translations as a function of NP-types in French and Russian respectively.

The adjective-scope alone does not seem to influence the selection of functional analogues either. Overall, the French translators follow the TC pattern for more than half of the target segments, and present a rather distributed pattern for the other half, with a preference however (around 15%) for COMP constructions mostly in cases of double-scope (e.g., *He is difficult to understand → Il est incompréhensible),* as opposed to Russian translators who seem to follow the opposite pattern (8.5% of COMP with single-scope adjectives: *Next target must be in a location difficult to access → Sledujuŝaja cel' dolžna byt' v trudnodostupnom meste* 'Next target must be in hardly.accessible place.'). Figures 11 and 12 show the distribution of different constructions as a function of adjective-scope in French and Russian respectively.

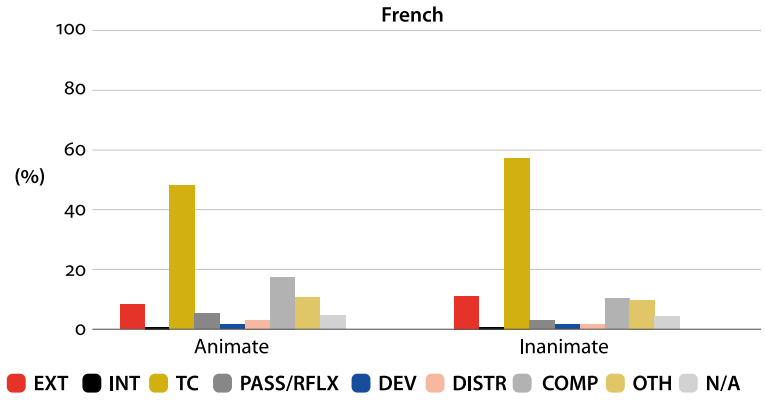

Figure 9. French translations as a function of NP-types

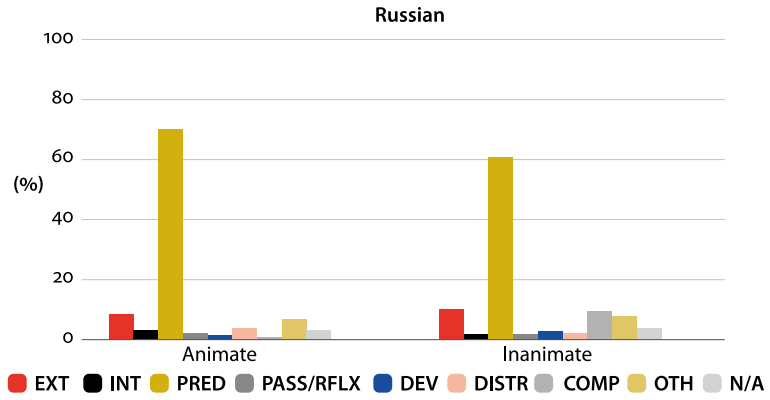

Figure 10. Russian translations as a function of NP-types

With respect to transitivity, the analysis shows great variability as a function of transitivity. Although French TC constructions mostly occur with highly-transitive verbs (63.82%) and leave only limited space for alternative choices in these contexts (mostly EXT and COMP), low-transitivity induces a larger variety of functional analogues (EXT, COMP, DISTR, OTH and DEV). This difference is probably explained by the fact that low-transitive verbs are not very frequent in TC configurations (see also Table 6 below), and as non-prototypical they leave some space to French translators to opt for functional equivalents. In Russian, low-transitive verbs (T–) systematically led to PRED translations (91.3%) and only marginally to PASS/RFLX or DISTR analogues. Highly-transitive verbs induced mainly PRED (67.7%), but in this case the variability was larger, in that this type of verbs also led to other analogues as well (EXT, COMP, OTH and DEV). This distribution shows that although highly-transitive verbs allow for

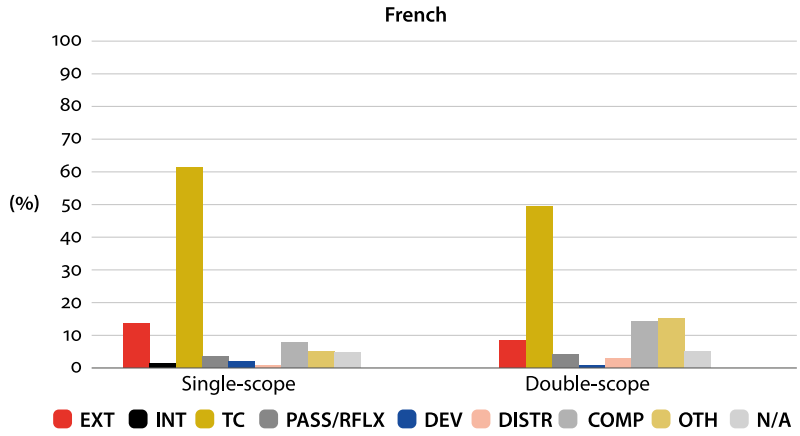

Figure 11. French translations as a function of adjective-scope

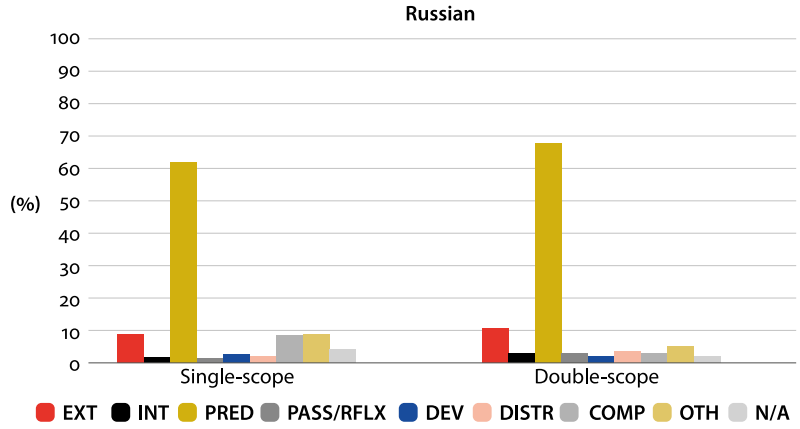

Figure 12. Russian translations as a function of adjective-scope

great functional variability in both Russian and French, less prototypical contexts for TCs (low-transitive ones) lead to an almost unique functional strategy in Russian translations: PRED. Figures 13 and 14 illustrate the distribution of translations as a function of transitivity in French and Russian respectively.

Table 6 presents the combinations of the three parameters (NP animacy, adjective scope, transitivity), their distribution in the source corpus, and reveals that the most frequent combinations in English were: type-A configurations involving an inanimate NP, a single-scope adjective and a highly-transitive infinitive; and type-B configurations that involved an animate NP, a double-scope adjective and a highly-transitive infinitive. These two configurations represent the vast majority (76%) of possible combinations, thus further analysis focused only on those two configurations: type-A and type-B.

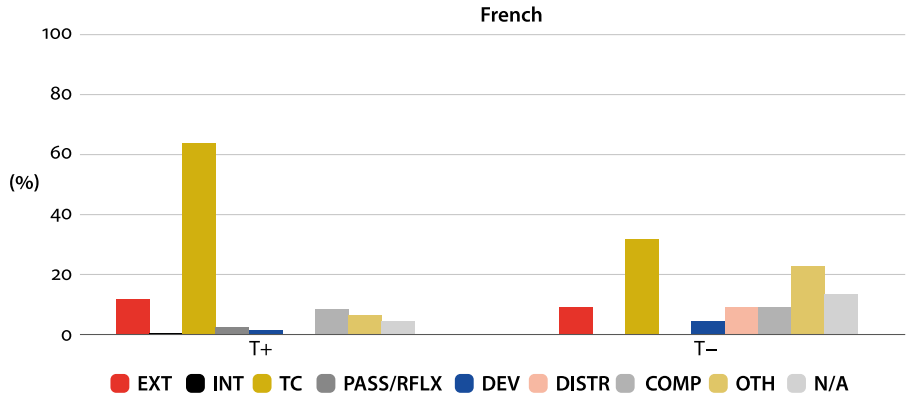

Figure 13. French translations as a function of transitivity

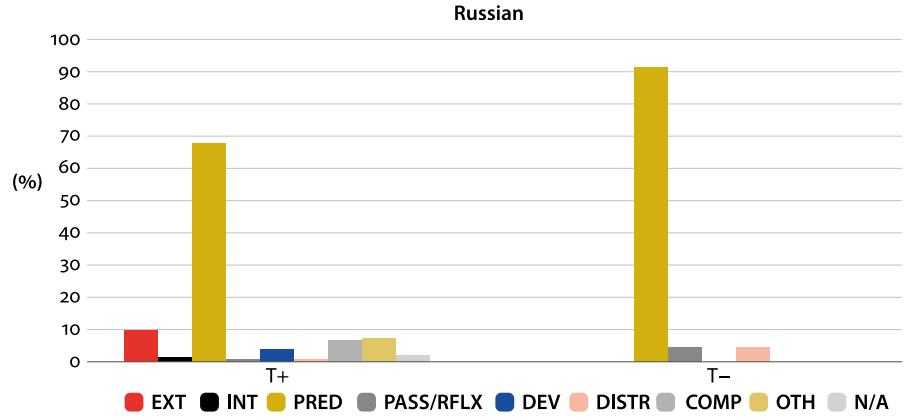

Figure 14. Russian translations as a function of transitivity

Table 6. Combinations of parameters (animacy, scope and verb transitivity) and their distribution in English TCs

Single-scope adjective	**Low-transitive infinitive (T–)**	**High-transitive infinitive (T+)**
Animate NP	1 (0.5%)	10 (6%)
Inanimate NP	12 (7%)	104 (60%): type-A
Double-scope adjective	**Low-transitive infinitive (T–)**	**High-transitive infinitive (T+)**
Animate NP	10 (6%)	27 (15%): type-B
Inanimate NP	2 (1%)	8 (4.5%)

With respect to their translations, it was expected that specific configurations, especially those involving more ambiguous double-scope adjectives and animate NPs (type-B configurations), should lead translators to choose among functional analogues (extraposable or compact constructions). Indeed, overall, extraposability (EXT, INT, PRED) in Russian was found to be higher (72%) than the one occurred in French (65%) – a configuration that seems to be linked to differences in the use of compact analogues such as PASS/RFLX, DEV, DISTR, COMP which were more frequent in French than in Russian translations (21% vs. 17% respectively). However, extraposability and compactness can apparently co-occur in type-A and type-B configurations, as shown below in Figure 15 for French and Russian. More specifically, in French, type-A and type-B configurations led mostly to TCs translations (59% and 62% respectively), followed by extraposed (15% and 7%) and compact constructions (9% and 10%). In Russian, type-A and type-B configurations led mostly to PRED translations (65% and 83% respectively), followed by extraposed (13% and 3%), compact (7% and 3%) and some other type alternatives in a more marginal way (7% each).

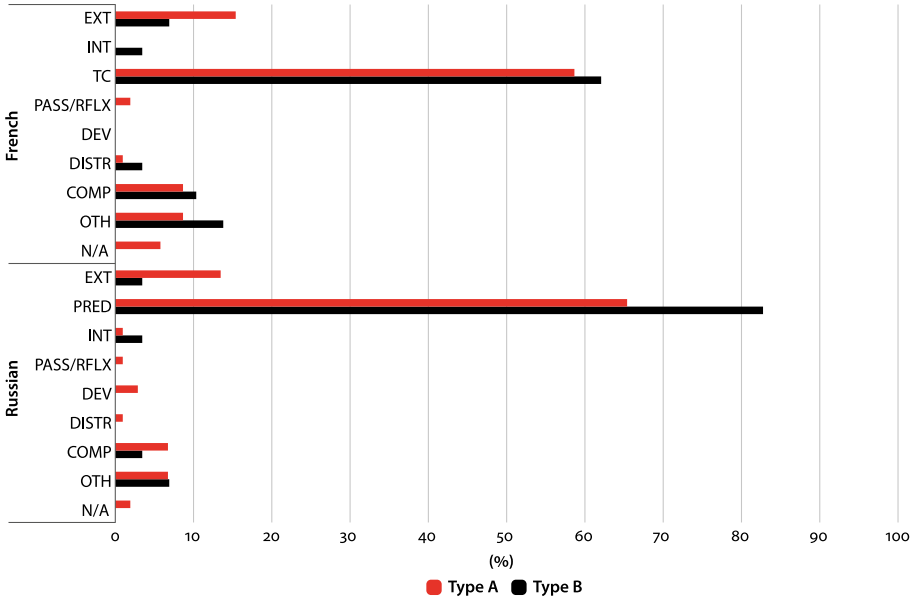

Figure 15. Constructions used for the translation of type-A and type-B configurations in French and Russian. Type A: inanimate NP + single-scope adjective + highly-transitive infinitive; Type B: animate NP + double-scope adjective + highly-transitive infinitive

Overall, type-A and type-B configurations do not seem to influence the French translators, as TCs were systematically chosen irrespective configuration. When other functional analogues occurred, it was mostly EXT > COMP > PASS/RFLX in type-A, and COMP > EXT > INT = DISTR in type-B configurations. With respect to Russian, different configurations led to different translation strategies. With the prototypical (type-A) configuration, and contrary to the initial predictions, Russian translators opted for a variety of strategies: PRED > EXT > COMP > DEV > PASS/RFLX=DISTR, as opposed to the non-prototypical configurations (type B) which led them to more homogeneous translations: overuse of PRED and no use of deverbal, passive or distributed constructions. In other words, the more complex the configuration, in the sense of counter-intuitive and non-prototypical (type-B), the less variable the translation strategy for Russian translators.

5. Discussion

5.1 General remarks

The present exploratory study focused on a parallel corpus (subtitles data) and investigated the way evaluation is encoded in three typologically different languages (English, French and Russian). More specifically, the study explored how a grammatical phenomenon (*tough*-movement) in English, characterized by great syntactic and semantic asymmetries, is translated (eventually through functional equivalents) in French and Russian. The results show that even though English and French have been thought to belong to the same language type (gap-strategy languages), French seems to allow a multitude of functional analogues (extraposed constructions, compact adjectival uses, passives, distributed strategies) that co-exist with typical TCs. With respect to Russian, although some researchers suggest that this language offers mainly topicalization of the NP with case marking (Comrie and Mathews, 1990) and alternatively passive and deverbal uses (Paykin and Van Peteghem, 2020), the findings of this study only partially support these views and shed light to some other functional analogues this system offers (compact and distributed uses of affixed adjectivals, extraposition, etc.) and reveals the marginal use of some of these analogues (e.g., passives, deverbals).

More specifically, with respect to French, the data show a clear preference for TC (54%), compact (13%) and extraposed constructions (10%), and only limited passive-reflexive, deverbal, intraposed or distributed uses. With respect to Russian, and in line with previous descriptions by Comrie and Mathews (1990), the findings suggest that the most commonly used analogue is a predicative construc-

tion (64%)—extended here to several types of PRED involving accusative and dative marking. As in French, the next most popular construction is the compact one (10%)—extended here to constructions allowing affixed derived adjectivals as well as non-derived ones—followed by extraposed (6%). Additionally, the data suggest that, although these two languages offer similar functional patterns, their use differs. For instance, although the dominant translations were TC and PRED in French and Russian respectively, when TC or PRED were not chosen by the translators, COMP and EXT were the next most frequent alternatives. However, there was no one-to-one correspondence (see also Table 3 above), in the sense that when French translators opted for EXT, Russian translators did not, obligatorily, select the same construction.

The second part of the analysis gave some insights into the properties of TCs and those involved in the choice of functional analogues. Overall, TC/TN original segments involved mainly inanimate NPs (65% of the whole corpus) – an observation in line with previous crosslinguistic descriptions (Givón, 1983; Langacker, 1991; Theakston *et al.*, 2012 among others). Although, inanimate NPs combined mostly with single-scope adjectives in highly transitive clauses, and animate NPs mostly with double-scope ones, the data show additionally some crosslinguistic differences only partially linked to specific semantic properties of TCs.

More specifically, the animacy of the NP only partially explains the variability in the functional analogues used. Although French translations follow the TC pattern at least for half of the target segments, and present a rather distributed pattern for the other half with a preference for COMP alternatives especially when animate NPs are involved in the source constructions, Russian translations show less variability in that respect. Russian translations are rather homogeneous, with a clear preference for PRED constructions, equally distributed among animate and inanimate NPs, and the use of alternative COMP constructions only with inanimate NPs.

Similarly, the adjective scope only partially explains the variability observed in the translation data. Overall, in the French and Russian translations, the most frequent alternative used was EXT, and this irrespective of adjective scope. However, the next more frequent analogue used was COMP, and its' frequency varied across languages as a function of scope. More specifically, when COMP constructions were used, it was with double-scope adjectives in French, and with single-scope ones in Russian.

With respect to transitivity, depending on the language, the verb type influenced the selection of functional analogues differently. Although in French, variability occurred in both types of transitivity but was more striking in contexts of low-transitivity, in Russian, it was mostly in highly-transitive sentences that translators opted for other functional analogues beyond the predicative one. More

specifically, in French, highly-transitive uses seemed to induce more homogeneous choices in translations than lower-transitive ones: 64% of the translations were TCs when the verb was highly-transitive, as opposed to only 32% with low-transitive ones. In Russian, low-transitive verbs led to the over-use of the predicative construction (91%), as opposed to high-transitive uses which left some space for more functional variability (68% of PRED). Thus, contrary to our predictions, Russian translators sticked to a unique translation strategy (PRED) in cases of mismatch (low-transitivity in source TCs), and rather opted for variability in more prototypical contexts (high-transitivity).

Finally, the analysis of the two most frequent transitive configurations found in the English data (type-A: inanimate NP + single-scope adjective + highly-transitive infinitive; type-B: animate NP + double-scope adjective + highly-transitive infinitive) showed that they do not influence French and Russian translators in the same way. In French, TCs were systematically chosen irrespective of configuration. When other functional analogues occurred, it was mostly EXT in type-A, COMP, DISTR and OTH in type-B configurations. One of the explanations could be linked to the nature of the investigated corpora and the need for economy, especially in cases of less prototypical configurations (e.g., with animate and double scope adjectives/type-B). Indeed, subtitles need to be short, thus COMP as well as OTH were the most adequate short equivalents (e.g., COMP: *You are very easy to predict → Vous êtes prévisibles;* OTH: *That's easy for you to say → Tu t'en fous, toi).* In Russian, the most complex/non-prototypical configuration (type-B) induced an increase in the predicative uses. When other analogues occurred, it was either EXT or COMP but mainly in type-A (prototypical) configurations.

To summarize, the semantic properties (animacy, scope, transitivity) taken in isolation are not sufficient to explain the big picture in the choice of functional equivalents of TCs. However, when taken together and jointly considered with language-specific factors (the specificities of the target language) and the nature of the corpus, it is easier to understand the verbal strategies of the translators.

5.2 Towards a classification

The identification of several TC analogues allows us to enrich previous classifications and take into account other functional alternatives in the description of evaluative constructions. Figure 16 summarizes the observed patterns in Russian and French (agrammatical in most cases in English with easy/difficult adjectives) and proposes to classify evaluative alternatives along a continuum that takes into account both the syntactic and the semantic density of the constructions (cf. extraposability and compactness).

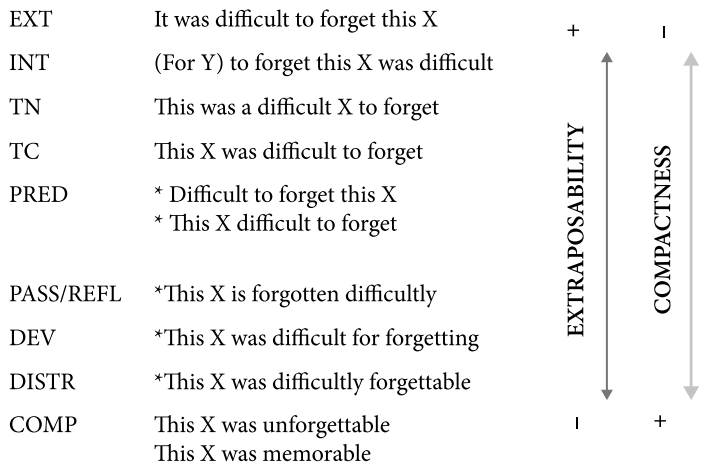

Figure 16. Proposed classification of the observed patterns. EXT = extraposed constructions, INT = intraposed constructions, TN = *tough-nut*-constructions, TC = *tough*-constructions, PRED = constructions involving a predicative, PASS/RFLX = passive/reflexive constructions, DEV = deverbal constructions, DISTR = distributed constructions, COMP = compact constructions

More specifically, following this continuum (Figure 16), at least two types of constructions can be identified according to their syntactic and semantic density: (a) semantically loose and highly extraposable bi-/multi-clausal constructions such as EXT, INT, TN, TC and PRED; and (b) semantically compact, mono-clausal constructions such as COMP, DISTR, DEV, PASS/RFLX.[17] Overall, French and Russian translators choose complex loose constructions to translate English TCs and TNs (65% and 72% respectively), but when they opt for compactness they do so in very similar ways (21% and 17% respectively).[18]

As mentioned above (see also end of Section 1.1), according to Khalifa (2004), there is a link between the possibility of extraposing completive infinitives and nominalization. This link can be represented on a reversed cline of

17. COMP, DISTR, DEV and PASS/RFLX are considered here as categories close to the 'Compactness +' pole as they offer 'mono-clausal' alternatives, with the most compact of all the COMP construction which is both syntactically and semantically very dense.

18. The alternatives illustrated in Figure 16 are specific to *difficult/easy* adjectives. As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, if the adjective *hard* (>*hardly*) was taken into account in this study, PASS/RFLX and DISTR would be also acceptable in English (e.g., *This X can hardly be forgotten, That X is hardly forgettable*). Additionally, the French and Russian reflexive Middles correspond to the English non-reflexive Middle (*X is easy to wash* > *washes easily*). In sum, similar 'functional analogues' can also occur in English with some adjectives (except DEV).

nominalization/extraposition. Here we replace nominalization by the possibility of a construction to be semantically dense and syntactically compact. In other words, it was initially hypothesized that the more a language offers highly extraposable constructions (e.g., *It is difficult to forget this trip*), the less the available nominalized alternatives should be (**This trip was difficult for forgetting*); and the more a language offers constructions located closer to the lower end of extraposability, the denser the alternatives should be (e.g., *This trip was unforgettable/memorable*). As suggested by Boutault (2020), the lower the degree of nominalization, the easier the extraposition of a construction is. For instance, the intraposed construction '(for X) to V' (e.g., *(For me) to forget this trip was difficult*) in English could be placed closer to the end of the continuum (high extraposability), as such a construction can be separated from the adjective, and thus be easily extraposable (e.g., *It was difficult (for me) to forget this trip*). Although French and Russian both offer analogous extraposable impersonal constructions, they also offer other possibilities to express evaluation, with Russian being even more flexible than French, allowing for instance, alternatives such as compact affixed/compound adjectivals, reflexive uses, participles with or without manner adverbials, deverbals, thus showing that extraposability and compactness are not incompatible.

5.3 Limitations and future perspectives

This study was based on the investigation of a written corpus of subtitle translations consisting of a limited number of utterances (6.530 extracted utterances/+50 million sentence-language pairs) and which contained only a small number (375) of target segments involving *difficult* and *easy* in TC/TN constructions. The exploration of a larger corpus involving other *tough*-adjectives (e.g., *hard, tough, simple*) could help refine and verify the results reported and expand to features and potential factors not covered here (e.g., explore to what extend animate NPs are mostly selected in TCs in metonymic uses, whether inanimate NPs that relate to prototypical actions combine systematically with double-scope adjectives and induce difficulties in interpretation/translation, to what extend other functional analogues to TCs are also available in English, whether the choice of functional analogues depends on the nature of the corpus or the specificities of the involved languages, etc.).

More specifically, and as briefly mentioned above, some of the findings can be due to the nature of the investigated corpus. For instance, the frequent use of COMP and OTH analogues in both French and Russian translations (at least when TC and PRED were not used), could be linked to the nature of the investigated corpus (subtitles) and the need for economy. Indeed, subtitles need to be

short and informative, thus COMP as well as OTH seem to be the most adequate short equivalents in these cases (e.g., COMP: *You are very easy to predict → Vous êtes prévisibles* 'You are predictable'; OTH: *That's easy for you to say → Tu t'en fous, toi* 'You don't care').

Given the intrinsic passive meaning of TCs, which interacts with the readiness of the qualified referent to undergo an action, the link found between double-scope adjectives and animate (human) NPs is rather intriguing. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that some animate/human NPs (e.g., *You are difficult to read*) are used metonymically and that the qualification is not attributed directly to the human NP (you) but to an entity linked to it (your thoughts).

The use of other types of corpora (e.g., reference corpora, real usage oral corpora), not restricted to the relatively limited topics addressed in TV series and films, could further shed light on the possible analogue evaluative constructions, potential metonymic uses and their relative distributions. Future work should expand investigations in other directions, as well. For example, in translation studies, using French and Russian as source languages and not only as target languages would help explore the phenomenon in a bi-directional way. Another direction could be to triangulate parallel corpora with experimental studies[19] in order to further explore the inherent properties of evaluative constructions (e.g., the relationship between animacy and interpretability; animacy and scope; animacy and transitivity), as well as other factors related to the translators' training or the idiosyncratic uses that can emerge due to crosslinguistic transfers that may occur in the productions of bi-/multi-lingual people with high exposure to L2/L3/Ln.

5.4 Concluding remarks

To summarize, this parallel corpus study allowed an in-depth investigation of a grammatical phenomenon (*tough*-constructions) – a phenomenon explored in previous literature mainly from a syntactic point of view in English and in French and only little discussed from a semantic perspective and in relation to other languages, such as Russian, that do not offer such configurations. This comparative, evidence-based approach highlighted some of the inherent properties of TCs (not accessible on the surface), and revealed some commonalities and differences across the investigated languages. Surprisingly, French and Russian both support several functional strategies that can be considered as analogues to typical TC and TN due, in part, to the inherent modal meaning of the verbs involved in such constructions, the adverbial status of the adjective and the restrictive nature of the complement. Overall, the findings show that the formal devices

19. For a recent attempt see also Tsikulina and Soroli (2023).

used to express evaluative relations vary not only across languages but also within systems, and suggest a holistic approach in the investigation of evaluative constructions and their properties: the inherent semantic features (animacy, scope, transitivity) should be take into account systematically and considered together with language-specific factors—the syntactic, semantic, morphological specificities of the target languages—, as variation in this domain may correlate with other typological properties of the involved languages (e.g., their morphological richness that determines the degree of semantic density as realized through derivation; their syntactic flexibility that determines the degree of extraposability/ clausal compactness, etc.).

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Address for correspondence

Alina Tsikulina
STL UMR 8163 – CNRS
Université de Lille
Domaine du Pont-de-bois
Rue de Barreau
BP 60149
Villeneuve d'Ascq Cedex 59653
France

alina.tsikulina@univ-lille.fr
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8602-872X

Co-author information

Fayssal Tayalati
STL UMR 8163 – CNRS
Université de Lille

fayssal.tayalati@univ-lille.fr
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6608-648X

Efstathia Soroli
STL UMR 8163 – CNRS
Université de Lille

efstathia.soroli@univ-lille.fr
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2747-9368

Publication history

Date received: 18 January 2023
Date accepted: 27 February 2024
Published online: 13 August 2024