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CLASSIFICATION OF THE RUSSIAN VERBAL IDIOMS

Fukova T., Chornobay S., Baptista J.

University of Algarve – FCHS, Faro, Portugal, tatyana.fukova@gmail.com
Crimean Federal V.I. Vernadsky University, Simferopol, Crimea, svetoniya@gmail.com
University of Algarve – FCHS, Faro/ INESC-ID Lisboa - Spoken Language Lab, Lisbon, Portugal,
jbaptis@ualg.pt

This paper presents the description of the classification of the Russian verbal idioms that were classified with the help of using the Lexicon-Grammar framework suggested by M. Gross. Over 1,000 verbal idioms were collected from the Russian Idiomatic dictionaries. The idioms were formalized into a tabular format, aiming at their computational processing and automatic identification in texts.

Keywords: Russian, verbal idioms, classification, lexicon-grammar.

INTRODUCTION

To this date, more than 1,000 Russian verbal idioms have been collected from phraseological dictionaries (Molotkov, 1986; Fedosov and Lapisky, 2003) and other sources, and classified most of them using the Lexicon-Grammar framework (Gross, 1996). The idioms were formalized into a tabular format, aiming at their computational processing and automatic identification in texts. This database is called a *Lexicon-Grammar* and it consists of a fine-grained description of the syntactic structure of those idioms, the lexical content of their frozen elements, the distributional constraints (human/non-human) on their free syntactic slots, and the transformational properties of the construction, that is, the alternative, paraphrastically equivalent, forms (or alternations) they can yield (e.g. Passive).

For each idiom, a word-by-word English translation and the relevant morphosyntactic (part-of-speech) information is provided, along with a free translation (or gloss) or the English equivalent, when available or known. An illustrative, ‘artificial’ example, produced with just the essential elements of the idiom is also provided. In these examples, verbs are usually in the past tense, the human noun free slots are fulfilled by a proper noun, etc.

RELATED WORK

1. Classification of Russian verbal idioms

The classification here adopted is inspired in that proposed by M. Gross (1982; see a later synthesis in M. Gross 1996), and already adopted for several other languages or language varieties.

Since Russian nominal morphology includes cases, the classification was adapted so that, instead of (or along with) prepositions, cases are used to mark the syntactic function of the verbs’ arguments. Still, an effort has been made in order to ensure that the classification allows cross-linguistic comparison of data, so the classes thus construed are equivalent to those found in the references above.

Class **C1**, one of the largest classes, is defined by having a frozen direct object in the accusative case. In some cases the frozen noun cannot vary in number. For example, only the plural form is used in the following idioms:

Иван бьёт баклуши (Ivan b'et baklushi)
Ivan/N₀ beats/V spoons/N-acc
'Ivan is idle'
* *Иван бьёт баклушу* (Ivan b'et baklushu)
Ivan/N₀ beats/V spoon/N-acc
Иван дразнит гусей (Ivan draznit gusey)
Ivan/N₀ teases/V geese/N-acc
'Ivan stirs things up'
° *Иван дразнит гуся* (Ivan draznit gusya)
Ivan/N₀ teases/V goose/N-acc
'Ivan teases goose'

The use of these nouns in the singular form renders the meaning of the expressions literal or the sentences may even become unacceptable. Conversely, only the singular form is used in some idioms, for example:

Мариya бросила перо (Mariya broсила pero)
Mariya/N₀ threw/V feather/N-acc
'Mariya stopped literary activity'
° *Мариya бросила перья* (Mariya broсила per'ya)
Mariya/N₀ threw/V feathers/N-acc
'Mariya threw feathers'

Many idioms of *CI* class have a left modifier, which corresponds mostly to an adjective (*Adj*), namely *жалкий* (zhalkiy) 'poor', *кислый* (kisliy) 'sour' or a determiner, including determinative-adjective *весь* (ves') 'all', *каждый* (kazhdiy) 'every', *новый* (noviy) 'new', *чужой* (chuzhoy) 'another's' and numerals (*Num*):

Иван влечит жалкое существование
(Ivan vlachit zhalkoe sushchestvovanie)
Ivan/N₀ drags/V poor/Adj life/N-acc,
'Ivan languishes in poverty'
Иван делает кислую мину
(Ivan delaet kisluyu minu)
Ivan/N₀ makes/V sour/Adj countenance/N-acc
'Ivan becomes dissatisfied'

Some idioms of *CI* show possessive pronouns as determiners of the frozen noun, for example:

Олег сжигает свои корабли
(Oleg szhigaet svoi korabli)
Oleg/N₀ burns/V his_own /Pron-pos boats/N-acc
'Oleg is breaking resolutely with the past'

These possessive pronouns are always co-referent to the sentence's subject *NP*, otherwise the meaning becomes literal:

° *Олег сжигает его корабли*
 (Oleg szhigaet ego (not Oleg's) korabli)
 'Oleg burns his (not Oleg's) boats'

The largest class is **CP1**, where the first complement is either introduced by a preposition or it does not receive the accusative case (*acc*). For example:

Александр бьет в цель
 (Alexander b'et v tsel')
 Alexander/*N*₀ beats/*V* in/*Prep* goal/*N-acc*
 'Alexander is effective, he attains the desired result'
Александр живет бирюком
 (Alexander zhivet birukom)
 Alexander/*N*₀ lives/*V* wolf/*N-instrum*
 'Alexander is unsociable'

Only some few idioms in this class present determiners. So far, only possessive pronouns were found in this class. Usually, they appear after the preposition, if there is any, and before the noun. As we mentioned before, possessives refer to the subject *NP*:

Иван входит в свои берега
 (Ivan vkhodit v svoi berega)
 Ivan/ *N*₀ comes/*V* in/*Prep* his_ own /*Pron* shores/*N-acc*
 'Ivan takes the usual rhythm of life'
Иван отдувается своими боками
 (Ivan otduvaetsya svoimi bokami)
 Ivan/ *N*₀ is_answerable/*V* his_ own/*Pron* sides/*N-instrum*
 'Ivan pays for smb. else's doings'

A noun in the genitive case is sometimes found as a right modifier of the *C1* head noun, for example:

Иван краснеет до корней волос
 (Ivan krasneet do korney volos)
 Ivan/ *N*₀ turns_ red/*V* up_ to/*Prep* roots/*N-gen* hair/*N-gen*
 'Ivan is ashamed'

The idioms of *CP1* class do not admit *Passive*.

Similar remarks on determiners and modifiers could also be made for the remaining classes, but for succinctness, we do not repeat them. In the next paragraphs, we will then briefly present the defining features of those classes.

Class **CAN** is defined by having a frozen direct object in the accusative case and a free determinative complement, which can be used both in the genitive and dative cases, for example:

Иван забривает лоб Олегу
 (Ivan zabrivaet lob Olegu)
 Ivan/ N₀ shaves/V forehead/C-acc Oleg/N-dat|gen
 ‘Ivan conscripts Oleg into the army’

This genitive-dative transformation in Russian idioms corresponds to the *dative restructuring*, described by *Leclère* (1995) for French and by Baptista (2004) and Baptista *et al.* (2014) for Portuguese. The effect of this alternation is to render the free noun more closely related to verb, removing it from its dependency of the frozen element, and making it a new, autonomous constituent, depending directly on the verb. In most cases, there is a *meronymy* (part-whole) relation between the *C* element and the free noun. This free noun is always a human noun.

Class **CPN** is characterized by having a preposition, introducing a frozen object in the appropriate case, and a free determinative complement, which can feature both the genitive and the dative case:

Путешествие ударило по карману Ивана
 (Puteshestvie udarilo po karmanu Ivana)
 Travel/Nn₀ beat/V on/Prep pocket/N-dat Ivan/N-dat|gen
 ‘The travel caused financial damage, loss to Ivan’

This genitive-dative alternation is the same transformation already explained in CAN. The idioms included in this class do feature neither determiner, nor modifiers and do not admit Passive.

Class **C1PN** is defined by a structure where the verb presents a frozen direct object in accusative and a free prepositional complement, which can be in a variety of cases, depending on the preposition that introduces it:

Иван бросил перчатку Олегу
 (Ivan brosil perchatku Olegu)
 Ivan/ N₀ threw/V glove/N-acc Oleg/N-dat
 ‘Ivan challenged Oleg to smth.’

Some idioms of C1PN have a left modifier, which corresponds mostly to an adjective (*Adj*) or a determiner, including numerals (*Num*):

Вбить осиновый кол
 (vbit’ osinoviy kol)
 hammer/V aspen/Adj stake/C-acc into/Prep smth/N-acc
 ‘destroy, put an end to smth.’

The class **CNP2** is the third largest class in the LG and it is defined by having a free direct object complement in the accusative case and a frozen prepositional complement:

Оля держит Ивана под каблуком
 (Olya derzhyt Ivana pod kablukom)

Olya/N₀ holds/V Ivan/N-acc under/Prep heel/C-instrum
 ‘Olya holds Ivan in complete subjection’

The class **C1P2** is defined by having a frozen direct object in the accusative case and a frozen prepositional complement; the case of this later complement depends on the preposition that introduces it, for example:

Александр берет быка за рога
 (Alexander beret byka za roga)
 Alexander/N₀ takes/V bull/C-acc of/Prep horns/C-acc
 ‘Alexander takes the bull by the horns’

The class **CPP** includes just a small number of idioms and it is defined by having two frozen prepositional complements:

Иван валит с больной головы на здоровую
 (Ivan valit s bolnoi golovy na zdorovuyu)
 Ivan/ N₀ heaps_up/V from/Prep sick/Adj head/C-gen to/Prep healthy/Adj
 head/C-acc
 ‘Ivan lays the blame on smb. else’

We found one idiom, where only the first complement is frozen but the second is distributionally free:

Иван попал в кабалу к Олегу
 (Ivan popal v kabalu k Olegu)
 Ivan/ N₀ appeared/V in/Prep bondage/N-acc to/Prep Oleg/N-Dat
 Ivan was in slave, depended on Oleg’

As it would not make much sense to create a new class just for one idiom, we provisionally included this expression in the CPP.

The idioms included in this class do not admit Passive.

The class **CADV** is defined by having an adverb as a frozen constituent, for example:

Иван высоко летает
 (Ivan vysoko letaet)
 Ivan/ N₀ flies/V highly/Adv
 ‘Ivan occupies a prominent position in society’

Most adverbs presented in the idioms of this class are adverbs of manner and only some few idioms contain adverbs of place/movement.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

The classification here adopted is inspired in that proposed by M. Gross (1982; see a later synthesis in M. Gross 1996), and already adopted for several other languages or language varieties: French and the four main varieties, from France, Belgium, Switzerland and Québec (Lamiroy, 2010), Greek (Fotopoulou, 1993), Italian (Vietri, 2015), Portuguese, both European (Baptista et al., 2004, 2014) and Brazilian (Vale, 2001) varieties.

To conclude this paper, the work of collecting the idioms from dictionaries and other sources is still going on, but, based on the length of the dictionaries already consulted to attain a reasonable lexical coverage, a reasonable estimate for the size of LG would consider around 2,000 and up to 3,000 of frequently occurring, frozen verbal idioms.

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КЛАССИФИКАЦИЯ РУССКИХ ГЛАГОЛЬНЫХ ИДИОМ

Татьяна Фукова, Светлана Чернобай, Жорж Батишта

Университет Альгарве, факультет социальных и гуманитарных наук, Фару, Португалия, tatyanafukova@gmail.com

Крымский федеральный университет им. В. И. Вернадского, Симферополь, Крым, svetoniya@gmail.com

Университет Альгарве, факультет социальных и гуманитарных наук, Фару / INESC-ID – Лаборатория разговорного языка, Лиссабон, Португалия, jbaptis@ualg.pt

В данной статье представлена классификация глагольных идиом русского языка, выполненная в рамках подхода исследования лексики и грамматики, предложенного М. Гроссом. Более 1000 глагольных идиом были отобраны из фразеологических словарей русского языка. Идиомы были представлены в формате таблицы с целью их последующей компьютерной обработки, а также автоматической идентификации в текстах.

Ключевые слова: русский язык, глагольные идиомы, классификация, лексика и грамматика.