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Russian constructions with *nu i* in parallel corpora¹

1 Theoretical and conceptual framework

The theoretical aim of the present paper is to test a tenet of CxG concerning the linguistic status of phraseology: there is no strict borderline between free word combinations and phraseological units; i.e. idiomatity, fixedness and compositionality are a matter of degree. If language is conceived of as a system of constructions, then idioms, collocations and other phraseological units are special cases of constructions and do not need specific instruments for their description.

This idea goes back to Fillmore et al. (1988: 534): “It appears to us that the machinery needed for describing the so-called minor or peripheral constructions [...] will have to be powerful enough to be generalized to more familiar structures. [...] It can be hoped that the structure-building principles of the so-called core and the machinery for building the phraseological units [...] may be of a uniform type, the former being a generate instance of the latter”.

Fillmore sees one important difference between free word combinations and phraseological units formed on the basis of a pattern, which we call *constructional phrasemes*: free word combinations are generated, while phraseological units are coined: “We can distinguish two kinds of ‘creativity’ in language. In one case there is the ability of speakers, using existing resources in the language, to produce and understand novel expressions. In the other case, the one for which we use the term coining, a speaker uses existing patterns in the language for creating new resources. [...]” (Fillmore 1997). According to this idea, *constructional phrasemes* are coined but not generated. By *constructional phrasemes* are meant constructions with open slots whose meaning is generally close to their lexical meaning. The filling of open slots of syntactic structure is in principle free and subject only to certain morphosyntactic, semantic, and, in rare instances, lexical restrictions. In addition to open slots, such constructions have lexically filled positions, which also makes them similar to units

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traditionally regarded as belonging to phraseology. Cf. Dobrovol'skij (2011). They should be considered to be phrasal templates with constrained selection properties.

The focus of our investigation is the ability of native speakers to coin new expressions according to the same pattern. More specifically, we will describe a family of Russian constructions based on the pattern *nu i X* (literally: *well and X*). This pattern is a phrasal template with an abundance of instances. Templates of this kind realize the idea of pattern in its purest form: “[...] if we take pattern to mean a recurrent configuration containing some fixed and some variable components – which is presumably the standard sense of the term – only a phrasal template would seem to qualify.” (Michaelis 2019: 196).

A particular aspect of our investigation concerns how to pose the question of the degree of language specificity of the Russian constructions under analysis. The notion of language specificity and the means for its objective analysis, including the use of corpus data, has been treated in quite a few studies (Wierzbicka 1992, 1996; Zaliznjak, Levontina, and Šmelev 2005, 2012, Zaliznjak 2015, Šmelev 2015). Of interest to us here is how to determine the degree of language specificity on the basis of parallel corpus data. According to a view repeatedly expressed in the literature, the more different ways in which a given linguistic unit can be translated into other languages and the higher its level of scattering, the higher its degree of language specificity (Dobrovol'skij and Pöppel 2017, Sitchinava 2016, Šmelev 2015).

The empirical data have been collected from the corpus query system Sketch Engine, subcorpora of parallel texts OPUS2 (Russian, English, German and Swedish), the Russian National Corpus (RNC), Russian-English, English-Russian, Russian-German and German-Russian, Russian-Swedish, Swedish-Russian subcorpora of parallel texts. Both the RNC and Sketch Engine parallel corpora are sentence aligned.

The RNC is characterized by representative and well-balanced collections of texts. The RNC contains subcorpora of parallel texts in 14 languages. For the present analysis we use the following subcorpora: English-Russian (over 18 million words), Russian- English (over 10 million words), German-Russian (about 4 million words), Russian- German (about 6 million words), Swedish-Russian (about 5 million words) and Russian-Swedish (over 1,7 million words). The OPUS2 corpus in Sketch Engine contains parallel subcorpora in 40 languages. They are labeled according to one of the languages included, e.g. OPUS2 Russian, OPUS2 English, OPUS2 German, OPUS2 Swedish. The subcorpora do not mark the direction of the translation. All parallels are in the same corpus. The source language is not necessarily one of the languages in a language pair, it is often a third language, for example, English. The size OPUS2 Russian (all parallel corpora with Russian as one of the languages) is over 300 million words. OPUS2 English is over 1,1 billion words; OPUS2 German is over 125 million words; OPUS2 Swedish is over 120 million words. Monolingual data for the analysis

was collected from the main corpus of the RNC (about 300 million words). Some examples were taken from parallel corpora (the RNC and Sketch Engine) with their English translations for illustration.

2 Russian constructions *nu i X (well and X)* in monolingual corpora

The element *nu i* is fixed, while X is interchangeable. Some of the constructions are fully compositional, some are fully idiomatic. Many of them are somewhere in between. An example of a fully compositional construction is *nu i* + special question. Cf. (1) and (2).

- (1) *Ну и кто ж вам поверит, ну и какое у вас есть хоть одно доказательство?* / And who will believe you, and what single proof have you got?" [Ф. Достоевский. Братья Карамазовы | F. Dostoevsky. The Brothers Karamazov]
- (2) – *Ну и сколько будет делаться этот отчет?* – Я не знаю. – / So how long will that report take? – I have no idea. [Sketch Engine]

At the other pole is the idiom *nu i nu* expressing surprise. Cf. (3).

- (3) Бухгалтер [...] сделал такой вид, как будто и самое слово «Варьете» он слышит впервые, а сам подумал: «*Ну и ну!*...». / The bookkeeper [...] pretended it was the first time he had heard even the word ‘Variety’, while thinking to himself: “Oh-oh!...” [М. Булгаков. Мастер и Маргарита. | M. Bulgakov. Master and Margarita]

Between these poles is a broad intermediate zone: i.e., units that are not fully compositional but are not sufficiently irregular to be considered idioms. Cf. (4) and (5).

- (4) – Но мне подobaется, что этот мой комкор женится на совершенно чуждом человеке. – *Ну и пусть*, мне бы твои заботы, – сказала Галина Терентьевна. / “But it seems to me that this corps-commander of mine is marrying an alien and unreliable element himself.” “Well, let him!” said Galina Terentyevna. “What strange things you worry about.” [В. Гроссман. Жизнь и судьба. | V. Grossman. Life and fate]

- (5) *Ну и ладно*, ну и катись к своей Катерине и кланяйся ей в ножки! / Very well then, go and do your precious Katya's bidding, and leave me alone! [Р. Погодин. Мы сказали клятву. | R. Pogodin. We swore an oath]

Data from the main corpus of the RNC were previously analyzed to determine the parts of speech preferred in the *nu i X* construction (Dobrovol'skij, Kopotев, and Pöppel 2019). At the first stage, we gave a general characteristic of the X filler in terms of parts of speech according to the available morphological annotation. To make a list of fixed combinations, queries of the form “well + and + {V, N,...}”. Syntactic relationship between the elements was not explicitly specified. However, in the vast majority of cases, parts of the trigram are syntactically related. Four of the most well-known measures – pMI, t-score, Loglikelihood, and dice (Pivovарova et al. 2017) – were used to rank trigrams by their degree of stability. The lists for subsequent qualitative analysis included only those trigrams that were the most stable for all four measures (the sum of ranks). At the next stage, lists of semantically meaningful expressions were compiled for further analysis.

It was shown that the position of the variable X can be occupied by words of different parts of speech (verbs, adjectives, adverbs, particles, exclamations, nouns) and by phrases.

Noun: *nu i durak* (what a fool), *nu i molodec* (good for him), *nu i vopros* (what a question), etc. Cf. (6).

- (6) Моя любовь к мужу? – *Ну и вопрос!* – Хороший вопрос. / My love for my husband? – What a question! – Good question! [Sketch Engine]

The most frequent constructions with nouns in the X position are *nu i dela* (how do you like that?); *nu i gady* (the swine); *nu i frukt* (you sly-boots, you); *nu i balda* (what a dunderhead) etc. Cf. (7).

- (7) И необыкновенный этот старик [...] протянул нам руки, и Смуров [...] неожиданно с ним обнялся. – *Ну и дела...* Вот чудной! / And the astounding old fellow [...] proffered us both hands. Smurov [...] unexpectedly embraced him. “How do you like that? There is a queer one for you!” [В. Набоков. Сogлядатай. | V. Nabokov. The Eye]

Verb: *ну и стреляйте* (so shoot me); *ну и льет* (boy, it's pouring); *ну и защищайте* (go ahead and protect), etc. Cf. (8).

- (8) – Не хочешь – *ну и сиди*, глупая голова! – сказал Виталик и вернулся домой. / “You won’t? All right, you can stay there hungry,” said Vitalik and went home in a huff. [Н. Носов. Карасик. | N. Nosov. The Crucian Carp]

Adjective: *ну и глупо* (that is silly); *ну и чудно* (that’s wonderful), etc. Cf. (9).

- (9) *Ну и прекрасно*, теперь я спокоен. / Well, that’s all right then; now I’m satisfied. [Л. Толстой. Анна Каренина | L. Tolstoy. Anna Karenina]

Adverb, particle, interjection (invariable parts of speech): *ну и довольно* (come, that’s enough); *ну и ладно* (fine); *ну и пусть* (I don’t mind/ whatever). Cf. (10).

- (10) *Ну и довольно*, прощай, что болтать-то! / Come, that’s enough. Goodbye. It’s no use talking! [Ф. Достоевский. Братья Карамазовы | F. Dostoevsky. The Brothers Karamazov]

Quantitative methods were used to identify different parts of speech serving as frequent fillers of the *nu i X* construction. Because they are cognitively available and mentally accessible as chunks, constructions with high-frequency fillers are formulaic units. They can represent at least two different groups that we can agree to call constructions of surprise and indifference. In the first group we find constructions such as, *nu i nu* (oh, oh), *nu i žara* (it’s hot/some heat this is), *nu i denek* (what a day/some day!), *nu i šutočki* (some sense of humor/you’ve got to be kidding), *nu i povezlo* (well, we got lucky/just our luck), etc. in the second – *nu i ladno* (fine), *nu i pust’* (well, let him/her/whatever), *nu i chren s nim* (screw it/him, to hell with it), *nu i plevat’* (to hell with it), *nu i čert s tobom* (to hell with you/screw you), etc.

It was shown in our analysis of constructions based on parts of speech with less frequent fillers that constructions expressing surprise, admiration or bewilderment dominated in some groups, whereas in others they communicated only indifference. This will be demonstrated on the example of the two constructions *nu i N* and *nu i + an invariable part of speech*.

2.1 The constructions *nu i N*

The two basic groups of *nu i N* consist of constructions expressing surprise, bewilderment or admiration and those with a negative nuance. One interesting property of the combination of *nu i* with nouns is that they practically never express indifference. Cf. (11) – (15).

- (11) *Ну и гараж!* / Call this a garage? [Н. Носов. Приключения Незнайки и его друзей | N. Nosov. The Adventures of Dunno and his Friends]
- (12) *Ну и голова.* / He has a head. [Л. Толстой. Воскресение] | L. Tolstoy. The Awakening]
- (13) *Ну и голос!* / So loud! [K. Vonnegut. Hocus Pocus | К. Воннегут. Фокус-покус]
- (14) «*Ну и шик!*» заметила моя вульгарная красотка, шурясь на лепной фасад. / “Wow! Looks swank,” remarked my vulgar darling squinting at the stucco [...] [V. Nabokov. Lolita | В. Набоков. Лолита]
- (15) *Ну и жара!* Мы на экваторе? / It’s hot! Are we on the equator? [Sketch Engine]

Often the notion of surprise is accompanied by a strongly expressed (generally negative) judgment. Sometimes the evaluative component is so strong that it more or less crowds out the element of surprise. This is especially typical of combinations of *nu i* with nouns in which the noun is itself pejorative. Cf. (16) – (18).

- (16) *Ну и гады*, чуть свет – уже гавкают. / The swine – hardly light yet and they’re at it again. [Н. Островский. Как закалялась сталь | Nikolai Ostrovsky. How the Steel was Tempered]
- (17) Я тебе по совести, как перед богом... а ты, тово... *Ну и дура!* Возьму вот и не повезу к Павлу Ивановичу! / I tell you on my conscience, before God,...and you go and... Well, you are a fool! I have a good mind not to take you to Pavel Ivanitch! [А. Чехов. Горе | A. Chekhov. Sorrow]
- (18) Она орала на тебя, когда ты бегала за ее обедом, а сама при этом знала, что будет есть в другом месте? *Ну и стерва!* / She yelled at you because you ran to get her lunch – just like she asked – and then couldn’t possibly have known that she’d already eaten somewhere else? What a bitch! [L. Weisberger. The Devil Wears Prada | Л. Вайсбергер. Дьявол носит Прада]

In such cases we have to do with fully compositional word combinations. The noun is responsible for basic semantics and evaluation, and the semantic and pragmatic function of *nu i* amounts to ensuring discourse coherence by explicating the connections between the different utterances of the dialogue.

In the construction *nu i N* the position of the variable is often occupied by diminutives (N_{dim}), less frequently by augmentatives (N_{aug}). It has already been noted in (Dobrovol’skij, Kopotev, and Pöppel (2019: 13) that the construction *nu i N_{dim}* generally signifies ‘negative surprise’. Cf. (19) and (20).

- (19) *Ну и денек!* Кажется, я постарела на 10 лет. / What a day. In one day I've grown 10 years older. [Sketch Engine]
- (20) *Ну и работа,* скажу я вам. / [...] and that was my hardest job. [J. Fowles. The Collector | Дж. Фаулз. Коллекционер]

We also found several examples expressing surprise or admiration (21), sometimes with a negative nuance (22).

- (21) Разве только какой-нибудь дяденька, обтерев губы от пивной пены, воскликнет: «*Ну и пиво,* восторг!» / Except maybe some old codger exclaiming as he wipes the beer foam off his lips “Now that is what I call beer, delightful!” [В. Розов. Удивление перед жизнью. RNC, main corpus]
- (22) Вот их руки, *ну и лапищи,* и в то же время не лишены своеобразного изящества. / “So their hands are just big paws, yet they do not lack a certain peculiar elegance.” [Ю. Буйда. Город палачей. RNC, main corpus]

As the construction *nu i N_{dim}*, the construction *nu i N_{aug}* can also express a negative judgment. Cf. (23) – (24).

- (23) Фу, *ну и духотища!* / Phew! How it smells in here [C. S. Lewis. The Chronicles of Narnia. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe | К. Ст. Льюис. Хроники Нарнии. Лев, колдунья и платяной шкаф]
- (24) *Ну и жаруша.* / It's hotter'n hell on the road. [J. Steinbeck. The Grapes of Wrath | Дж. Стейнбек. Гроздь гнева]

2.2 The constructions *nu i + an invariable part of speech*

Unlike the construction *nu i N*, in most cases *nu i + an invariable part of speech* expresses ‘indifference on the part of the speaker toward the evaluated circumstances of the situation’ (Dobrovol'skij, Kopotев, and Pöppel 2019: 16). Cf. (25) and (26).

- (25) Я с тобой в ссоре! – кричал ему вдогонку Незнайка. – *Ну и пожалуйста!* – отвечал Гунька. – Сам первый придешь мириться. / “I won't play with you any more!” Dunno cried after him. “Don't!” called back Gunky. “You'll be the first to come and make it up.” [Н. Носов. Приключения Незнайки и его друзей | N. Nosov. The Adventures of Dunno and his Friends]
- (26) Я вам выиграла ваше пари, да? *Ну и прекрасно!* А до меня вам никакого дела нет. / I've won your bet for you, haven't I? That's enough for you. I don't matter, I suppose. [В. Шав. Pygmalion | Б. Шоу. Пигмалион]

Our analysis of the two groups (*nu i N* and *nu i + an invariable part of speech*) revealed clear semantic preferences inherent in the units of each group: surprise for *nu i N* and indifference for *nu i + an invariable part of speech*. The exceptions are the idiom *nu i nu*, whose meaning arose out of a complete semantic reinterpretation, and the phraseme *nu i dela*, which is close to it with respect to degree of reinterpretation.

The next step is to analyze constructions that are not fully compositional.

3 English, German and Swedish equivalents: corpus analysis

Four constructions were selected for the present analysis—*nu i nu* (literally ≈ well and well); *nu i dela* (literally ≈ well and things); *nu i pust'* (literally ≈ well and let) and *nu i ladno* (literally ≈ well and fine). Semantically they build two distinct groups – ‘surprise’ (*nu nu*, *nu i dela*) and ‘indifference’ (*nu i pust'/puskaj*, *nu i ladno*). The semantic difference correlates with a prosodic difference: surprise constructions and indifference constructions follow different prosodic patterns.

Using parallel corpora of the RNC and Sketch Engine for English, German and Swedish equivalents in both directions, we are going to search for translation equivalents, as none of these constructions can be translated word for word; i.e., they are language specific. The analysis of translation equivalents allows us to identify possible systematic equivalents. Within each group the analysis proceeds as follows: first, RNC materials from and to Russian, then data from Sketch Engine (which do not indicate the direction of translation; the examples are often translations from English).

3.1 *Nu i nu* in parallel corpora (level 2)

Tab. 1. *Nu i nu*: English equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		
	<i>RNC: Russian- English</i>	<i>RNC: English- Russian</i>	<i>Sketch Engine</i>
oh-oh/ uh-oh	1	1	1
well and well	1		
(oh) well		9	6
well, well		9	6
(oh) gee		7	4
well, gee/gee, well		1	1
my, my		3	1
dear me		2	

christ	2	
say	2	
zero equivalent	2	7
wow		25
(oh) boy		14
(oh) crikey		4
(oh) my God	1	3
holy cow		3
great Scott	1	2
oh, man		4
come on		3
what		3
gosh	1	1
well, well, well	1	1
what an idea		2
golly	1	1

Besides the examples in Table 1, the following ones were encountered in only one of the corpora:

RNC English-Russian: *yo, yo, yo; ding-dong; ah me; cripes; well, really; phew; whys; upon my word; what a to-do; by Jove; dear, dear; Tst! Tst! Tst!; oh, rats; there; d'ye tell o't; hoity-toity; how now.*

Sketch Engine: *coo; my, my, my; isn't that amazing; way to go; holy cats; just like that; brother; oh, great; oh, dear; I say, that's rich; how is that possible; goodness; oh, my; my, oh, my; say, boy; good gracious me; oh, really; indeed; fucking hell; pussy; I'll be damned; I don't know; say; oh for fuck's sake; my god; that's so lame; all right and all right; son of a bitch; watch it; well, now; look; okay; what a rush.*

The first thing that stands out here is the large number of different English parallels to the Russian construction. In all we found 74 such equivalents. The second important feature is that of these 74, 50 occur only once, which indicates significant scattering in these English parallels.

Tab. 2. *Nu i nu*: German equivalents

Equivalents	Number of occurrences		Sketch Engine
	RNC: Russian- German	RNC: German- Russian	
pah!		1	
is dös a Hetz		1	
dausend		1	
nun		1	
oho		1	
zero equivalent			3
mein Gott			2
na, na, na			1

einfach so	1
absoluter Wahnsinn	1
tut mir Leid	1
soso	1
sieh mal einer an	1
gut, gut	1
wow	1

The Russian-German data are considerably smaller in scope. In Sketch Engine we found 9 German parallels and in the RNC 5. Parallels from the two corpora do not coincide. Two of them occur more than once – the zero equivalent and *mein Gott*. The results exhibit tendencies similar to those observed in the English data – i.e., significant scattering.

Tab. 3. *Nu i nu*: Swedish equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		<i>Sketch Engine</i>
	<i>RNC: Russian- Swedish</i>	<i>RNC: Swedish- Russian</i>	
nej, verkligen	1		
nå nå nå nå		1	
nej men		1	
ja, ja		1	
ja jag säger då det		1	
har ni hört, va!		1	
i all sin dar		1	
nej, minsann		1	
det är besynnerligt		1	
se så där ja		1	
zero equivalent		1	10
(åh) jösses			3
det må jag säga			1
herregud			1
tamejfan			1
sådär ja			1
ser man på			1
nej nej			1

We found 18 Swedish parallels, the most frequent of which is the zero equivalent. This testifies to considerable scattering and to a certain non-translatibility of *nu i nu*.

3.2 *Nu i dela* in parallel corpora

Tab. 4. *Nu i dela*: English equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>
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	<i>RNC: Russian- English</i>	<i>RNC: English- Russian</i>	<i>Sketch Engine</i>
how do you like that	1		
well		1	
great Scott		1	
that is strange		1	
It's a fair do		1	
dear me		1	
well		1	
nasty business			1
I'll be damned			1
gee			4
whoa			1
zero equivalent			2
look here			1
how interesting			1
what do you know			1
I cannot believe this shit			1
blimey			1
oh, wow			1
damn it			1
holy shit			1
oh, my			1

We found 22 English parallels, and only two equivalents occur more than once – *gee* and the zero equivalent.

Tab. 5. *Nu i dela*: German equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		<i>Sketch Engine</i>
	<i>RNC: Russian- German</i>	<i>RNC: German- Russian</i>	
das ist ja reizend		1	
Seht mal!			1
zero equivalent			2
(du liebe) Scheiße			2
okay			1

The Russian-German data are very small in scope. We found only 1 equivalent in the RNC and 4 in Sketch Engine. Two of them occur twice – *Scheiße* and the zero equivalent.

Tab. 6. *Nu i dela*: Swedish equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>
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	<i>RNC: Russian-Swedish</i>	<i>RNC: Swedish-Russian</i>	<i>Sketch Engine</i>
jösses			1
herregud			1
titta här			1
zero equivalent			4
okej			1
det här är allt en riktig soppa			1
det här var en värre historia		1	
det här blir just månljust		1	
det var det värsta		1	
men vad i all sin dar			
aldrig har jag varit med om slikt		1	

Among 11 Swedish parallels found in both corpora only the zero equivalent occurs more than once (4 occurrences), which also indicates considerable scattering.

3.3 *Nu i ladno* in parallel corpora (level 2)

Tab. 7. *Nu i ladno*: English equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		<i>Sketch Engine</i>
	<i>RNC: Russian-English</i>	<i>RNC: English-Russian</i>	
(that's) fine	1	1	15
(it's/that's) okay/o.k.		1	10
Whatever		1	9
(oh) well			5
(it's/that's) all right	1	2	5
(so) all right		1	3
zero equivalent		1	3
okay then			2
ok. fine/fine, okay			2
never mind		1	2
that's cool			1
I'm through			1
doesn't matter			1
what matter			1
tough			1
forget it			1
(very) well then	1	1	
let him/her V	1	1	
enough	1		
I don't care		2	

anyway	3
so what	1

We found a total of 22 parallels, 8 of which occur once in one corpus. The most frequent equivalents are the zero equivalent (17 occurrences), followed by *(it's/that's) okay/o.k.* (11 occurrences) and *whatever* (10 occurrences).

Tab. 8. *Nu i ladno*: German equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		<i>Sketch Engine</i>
	<i>RNC: Russian- German</i>	<i>RNC: German- Russian</i>	
(na/ist schon) gut			3
fein			2
zero equivalent			2
okay			2
nun denn			1
alles klar			1
nun gut		1	

We found 7 parallels, 3 of which occur once.

Tab. 9. *Nu i ladno*: Swedish equivalents

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		<i>Sketch Engine</i>
	<i>RNC: Russian- Swedish</i>	<i>RNC: Swedish- Russian</i>	
zero equivalent		7	8
(det) gör inget/ ingenting		2	3
(helt) okej		2	2
varsågod			1
jaha			1
toppen			1
nåja		1	
verkligen		1	
tja		2	
nå, då så	1		

In the Swedish corpora we found 10 parallels, 6 of which occur once in one corpus. The zero equivalent leads by a large margin (15 occurrences).

3.4 *Nu i pust'* in parallel corpora (level 2)

Tab. 10. *Nu i pust'*: English equivalents.

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>
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	<i>RNC: Russian- English</i>	<i>RNC: English- Russian</i>	<i>Sketch Engine</i>
let him/them/it P		5	12
(it) doesn't matter		1	2
I don't/she didn't care		2	2
zero equivalent		9	2
(ah) well		2	
well, then		1	
whatever			1
so be it		1	1
that's all right			1
so what			1
fine			1
sure	1	1	
good	1	1	
all right	1	1	
it will be all one to me	1	1	

A total of 15 equivalents were found, 9 of which occur once in one of the corpora. Most often the construction *nu i pust'* is translated with the similar English construction *let him/them/it P*. The zero equivalent is the second most frequent equivalent.

Tab. 11. *Nu i pust'*: German equivalents.

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		<i>Sketch Engine</i>
	<i>RNC: Russian- German</i>	<i>RNC: German- Russian</i>	
(nun) gut	1		1
lass/lasst sie/ihn P	3		1
eben			1
zero equivalent	2		1
sollen sie	4		
na, in Gottes Namen	1		
wenn schon		1	
von mir aus		2	
dann mag er		1	
das tut nichts		1	

Of 10 German equivalents 5 occur once. The zero equivalent and the construction *lass/lasst sie/ihn* occur 4 times each.

Tab. 12. *Nu i pust'*: Swedish equivalents.

<i>Equivalents</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>		<i>Sketch Engine</i>
	<i>RNC: Russian- Swedish</i>	<i>RNC: Swedish- Russian</i>	

låt honom/ henne/ dem P	2	3	3
bra			1
än sen då			1
eller hur			1
det gör inget		1	1
zero equivalent		1	1
det får N gärna P		2	
må de göra det		1	
det gjorde ingenting		3	
det betyder ingenting		1	
zero equivalent		3	
spelar ingen roll		1	
får det vara		1	

A total of 13 equivalents were found, 7 of which occur once. The construction *låt honom/ henne/ dem P* is the most frequent (8 occurrences), followed by *det gjorde ingenting* (3 occurrences) and the zero equivalent (3 occurrences).

The English, German and Swedish equivalents of constructions expressing indifference all translate them with a similar construction in the corresponding target language - *let N + P*; *lass/lasst N + P* and *låt N + P*. These equivalents are the most frequent for all of the languages we investigated. Cf. (27) and (28).

- (27) Англичане могут вернуться. *Hy u nysť.* / The English might come back. Let them. / Die Engländer kommen vielleicht zurück. Lasst sie. [Sketch Engine]
- (28) У него положение. – И у него ваш сын. – *Hy u nysť.* / He's got the position. – And he's got your son. – Let him have him then. / Han har makten. – Och han har din son. Låt honom ha honom då. [Sketch Engine]

The English, German and Swedish equivalents of constructions expressing indifference all translate them with a similar construction in the corresponding target language - *let N + P*; *lass/lasst N + P* and *låt N + P*. These equivalents are the most frequent for all of the languages we investigated. Cf. (27) and (28).

The semantic basis of the constructions *let N + P*; *lass/lasst N + P* and *låt N + P* is an appeal to the interlocutor not to change anything in the current situation, to leave everything as is. These constructions are explicitly addressed to communication partners. If the situation is fraught with some negative elements and the speaker is expressing a negative attitude toward these circumstances, the sense of the constructions *let N + P*; *lass/lasst N + P* and *låt N + P* is a recommendation to ignore the situation. The pragmatic result is a characterization of the situation (particularly its negative aspects) as something insignificant that is not worthy of attention and active involvement. The idea of indifference is thereby incorporated in these constructions on the implication level. The Russian constructions *nu i ladno* and *nu i pust'* differ from these English, German and Swedish near-equivalents in that they lack explicit

dialogicity; that is, they are not explicitly addressed to an interlocutor. When speakers utter *nu i ladno* or *nu i pust*, they are stating the triviality or insignificance of a situation. Purely semantically, therefore, these constructions express the speaker's view of the situation itself, whereas *let N + P*; *lass/lasst N + P* and *låt N + P* are directed at the potential reaction of someone else to this situation.

The analysis has enabled us to determine the frequency of translation equivalents. For constructions expressing surprise, it is above all the zero equivalent that occurs in the English, German and Swedish parallels. Cf. (29), (30) and (31).

- (29) Взгляни- ка. *Ну и ну!* И на кого ж ты ставил? / Take a look at this. Who were you betting on? [Sketch Engine]
- (30) *Ну и ну*, так много пушек в городе, и так мало мозгов. / So viele Pistolen in der Stadt und so wenig Verstand. [Sketch Engine]
- (31) *Ну и дела*. Как нам с этим конкурировать? / Det här är allt en riktig soppa! Hur kan vi tävla mot det där? [Sketch Engine]

The most frequent equivalents in the English materials are *wow*; *boy*; *well*; *well, well*; and *gee*. This applies above all to the idiom *nu i nu*. The most frequent parallels found in Sketch Engine – *wow* and *boy* – do not occur in the RNC; *well*; *well, well*; and *gee* occur in both corpora. These divergences are quite natural. Sketch Engine is much larger than the RNC, while the RNC is much cleaner. In addition, the texts in these corpora differ with respect to genre. The RNC contains almost exclusively fictional texts, whereas non-fiction dominates in Sketch Engine. The German and Swedish corpora are too small to allow us to identify high-frequency equivalents.

What most convincingly argues that *nu nu*, *nu i dela*, *nu i ladno* and *nu i pust* are language-specific with respect to English, German and Swedish is a significant scattering of equivalents and the partial absence of a translation equivalent in the parallel texts.

4 Conclusions

We have analyzed two groups of constructions based on the phrasal template *nu i X*. The first group denotes 'surprise', the second, 'indifference'. Within each group, constructions have different degrees of idiomaticity ranging from full idioms to free word combinations. That is, we have to do with a gradual transition from free word combinations to phraseology. A question that arises in this connection concerns the efficacy of this sort of description. From the perspective of language comparison, translation, bilingual lexicography, language teaching, etc., what is critical is not the

degree of phraseologicity, but the degree of language specificity. This is determined not by contrasting idioms vs. non-idioms, but by any deviation from full compositionality; i.e., by the predictability of meanings. For such contrastive purposes it is more effective to describe such units in terms of Construction Grammar.

The higher the degree of language specificity, the more approximate is any way to translate a given unit into another language. This problem is significant both in theory and in practice. From a practical point of view, it is directly related to bilingual lexicography (especially if it is not a traditional dictionary, but a constructicon), as well as to the teaching of foreign languages and translation studies. From a theoretical point of view, an in-depth study of the phenomenon of language specificity will allow us to develop an empirical basis for the discussion about the validity of the linguistic relativity hypothesis, which has become extremely relevant again in recent years.

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