The ‘feel like’ construction in Russian and its kin: implications for the structure of the lexicon

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ABSTRACT

Russian has a family of reflexive constructions that have non-canonical syntax and express a variety of meanings that range from disposition (‘I feel like working’) to ability (‘I cannot work here’) and generic assessment of quality (‘I work well here’). Previous analyses assume that these constructions are derived by a regular syntactic rule and postulate a null modal in the structure to account for their semantics (Benedicto 1995; Franks 1995; Rivero and Arregui 2012). Focusing on the ‘feel like’ construction, I show that derivational analyses have difficulty explaining its idiosyncratic properties, including non-canonical agreement (independent of the structural subject), as well as the interpretation of aspect. Moreover, derivational analyses overgeneralize, since only a subset of predicates occur in the ‘feel like’ construction in Russian, as the data from the Russian National Corpus indicate. In order to account for their idiosyncratic properties and semi-productivity, I propose that the ‘feel like’ construction and its kin are stored in the lexicon as CONSTRUCTIONS (Goldberg 1995; Jackendoff 1997, 2008). The proposed analysis clarifies the status of reflexive constructions in Russian and establishes the scope of cross-linguistic semantic variation by comparing reflexives in Russian to that in other Slavic languages.
1. **The Dispositional Reflexive Construction in Russian**

Russian has a dispositional reflexive (DR) construction whose meaning can be paraphrased as ‘feel like V-ing’, where V is an activity denoted by the reflexive verb. For example, the sentence in (1) with the negated reflexive predicate *ne rabotaet-sja*, which consists of the stem *rabotaet-* ‘work’ and the reflexive suffix *-sja*, means that the experiencer, referenced with the dative pronoun *mne* ‘I’, does not feel like working. Similarly, the sentence with the reflexive verb *spit-sja* in (2) translates as ‘I feel like sleeping’. The urge to sleep is so strong that the implicit experiencer can barely keep her eyes open, as the following context indicates.

(1) Mne ne rabotaet-sja.

`I.DAT NEG work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL`

‘I don’t feel like working.’

(adapted from Franks 1995: 364, ex. (58))

(2) Spit-sja. Glaza slipajut-sja.

`sleep.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL Eye.NOM.PL stick.together.IMPRF.3PL.PRES-REFL`

‘I feel like sleeping. My eyes are closing.’

(http://archive.diary.ru/~SanSanna/?order=frombegin)

The puzzle is to explain how the dispositional meaning in (1) and (2) arises.

It is often assumed that sentences such as (1) and (2) have a null modal

(Schoorlemmer 1994; Benedicto 1995; Franks 1995; Rivero & Arregui 2012) or a
null verb ‘feel like’ (Marušič & Žaucer 2006 on Slovenian), and are derived by a regular syntactic rule (cf. Benedicto 1995, Franks 1995 on Russian; Marušič & Žaucer 2006 on Slovenian; Kallulli 2006 on Albanian). Yet, the DR construction has a number of syntactic and semantic properties that cannot be easily explained by these derivational analyses.

First, the verb in the DR construction shows default 3rd person singular neuter agreement (3a), while in the corresponding non-reflexive sentence (3b) the verb obligatorily agrees with the subject in person and number. (The gender agreement shows up in the past tense singular form only.)

(3) (a) Nam ne rabotal-o-s’ /*rabotal-i-s’.

we.DAT NEG work.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL /work.IMPRF.PAST-1PL-REFL

‘We didn’t feel like working.’

(b) My ne *rabotal-o / rabotal-i’.

we.NOM NEG work.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT / work.IMPRF.PAST-1PL

‘We didn’t work.’

If, however, the object is expressed, the verb agrees with it in person, number, and gender, as in (4). Note also the unusual case marking: the logical object argument is in the Nominative, while the experiencer argument is in the Dative.
(4) (a) Mne ne pel-o-s’.

I.DAT NEG sing.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL

‘I didn’t feel like singing.’

(b) Mne ne pel-i-s’ eti pesni.

I.DAT NEG sing.IMPRF.PAST-3PL-REFL these song.NOM.PL

‘I didn’t feel like singing these songs.’

Second, while in the previous literature the DR construction is assumed to be derived by a process akin to passivization (Skorniakova 2008 on Russian; Marušić & Žaucer 2006, Rivero & Milojević Sheppard 2003 on South Slavic), there are semantic and syntactic differences between non-active constructions and the DR construction: (i) unlike the passive, the logical subject in the DR construction is an experiencer; (ii) syntactically, passives and impersonals can be derived by the reflexivization process that applies only to transitive verbs in Russian (Fehrmann, Junghans & Lenertová 2010: 214), while in the DR construction the reflexive applies to intransitive roots, as in (1) and (2). These facts challenge the idea that the DR construction is derived by the same reflexivization process that derives non-active constructions.

Third, imperfective verbs in the DR construction take over the function performed by perfective verbs: they denote temporally bounded events that require the perfective viewpoint, as shown by umiraet-sja ‘die’ in (5). Any
derivational analysis needs to explain the mismatch between the form – the imperfective – and meaning – perfective.

(5) Mne ne umiraet-sja.

I.DAT NEG die.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

‘I don’t feel like dying.’

In the subsequent sections I develop an analysis that accounts for these idiosyncratic properties of the DR construction.

The second goal of this paper is to clarify the status of the Russian DR construction with respect to the Quality Reflexive construction in (6) and the Ability Reflexive construction in (7).

(6) Mne *(horošo) spit-sja zdes’. [Quality Reflexive]

I.DAT well sleep.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL here

‘I sleep well here.’

(7) Mne *(ne) spit-sja. [Ability Reflexive]

I.DAT NEG sleep.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

‘I cannot sleep.’

The Quality Reflexive (QR) construction assesses the individual’s experience of the activity denoted by the reflexive verb and carried out by the experiencer. The adverb of quality is obligatory. The Ability Reflexive (AR) construction in (7) expresses the experiencer’s psychological inability to perform the activity denoted
by the reflexive verb. The obligatory negation is a hallmark of this construction. While it is often assumed in the literature on Russian that there is one reflexive construction that is ambiguous, and that the disposition, ability, and quality interpretations are derived from a covert modal in the structure (Schoorlemmer 1994; Benedicto 1995, but see Rivero & Arregui 2012 on a different view), I show that the constructions in questions have incompatible semantic properties and should be recognized as distinct construction types.

By clarifying the range of meanings that Russian reflexive constructions can express, I am also able to assess the scope of cross-linguistic variation of reflexives in the Slavic family. While it has been previously observed that non-canonical reflexive constructions in Slavic languages have different interpretations, the extent of these differences has not been fully understood (cf. Norman 1972, Georgiev 1979, Dimitrova-Vulchanova 1999 on Bulgarian and Russian; Wierzbicka 1979 on Polish and Russian; Shibatani 1999: 72 on Croatian; Rivero & Milojević Sheppard 2003 on South and West Slavic; Marušič & Žaucer 2006 on Slovenian and other Slavic languages; Rivero & Arregui 2012 on Slavic languages). Thus, Rivero & Arregui (2012) assume that Russian lacks the DR construction and group it together with West Slavic languages that have the QR construction only. I show that Russian differs from West and South Slavic languages in the range of meanings that its reflexive constructions exhibit.
The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, I show that the core semantic properties of the DR construction can be accounted for with the assumption that there is a ‘feel like’ predicate in the semantic structure. In section 3, I present the data problematic for the derivational analyses. Section 4 is the analysis of the DR construction in the construction grammar framework (Goldberg 1995, 2006; Jackendoff 1997, 2008). Section 5 compares the DR construction to QR and AR constructions and argues that they should be analyzed as distinct albeit related construction types. Section 6 discusses the distribution of DR, QR, and AR constructions in Slavic languages and formulates new cross-linguistic generalizations. The paper concludes with a literature overview in section 7 and the discussion of wider implications in section 8.

2. SEMANTICS OF THE DR CONSTRUCTION

The core semantic function of the DR construction is to express dispositions that cannot be controlled. Its closest semantic paraphrase is the construction with the reflexive verb *hotet’-sja* ‘feel like’, as shown in (8).

(8) Context: It’s late night but for some reason you don’t want to sleep.

(a) Mne ne spit-sja. [DR construction]

I.DAT NEG sleep.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

‘I do not feel like sleeping.’
A number of facts indicate that the DR construction behaves as if it had a ‘feel like’ predicate in semantics (cf. Marušič & Žaucer 2006 on Slovenian). First, similarly to constructions with hotet’sja ‘feel like’, the DR construction lacks an actuality entailment: predisposition in itself is not sufficient to trigger event realization. Therefore, the DR construction can refer to eventualities that cannot take place under normal circumstances, as in (9), but also to eventualities that are actualized, as in (10). In the latter example, the context makes it clear that the author habitually walks in Paris and writes about the city.

(9) Mne guljaet-sja po lune.

‘I feel like walking on the moon.’

(10) V Pariže mne hodit-sja,

in Paris.PREP I.DAT walk.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

a pro Pariž – pišet-sja.

and about Paris write.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

‘I feel like walking in Paris, and I feel like writing about Paris.’

(http://www.voyagemagazine.ru/articles/387)
Second, the negation in the DR construction conveys the absence of the disposition on the part of the experiencer (cf. Gerritsen 1990: 183). The absence of the disposition does not preclude the activity from being carried out:

(11) Emu ne rabotal-o-s’, a on vsje Že

he.DAT NEG work.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL but he.NOM yet
rabotal ne tak už i ploho.
work.IMPRF.3SG.PAST.MASC NEG so PART and badly
‘He didn’t feel like working. Yet he worked not badly (after all).’

(Veyrenc 1980: 305, cited in Gerritsen 1990: 175, ex. (266))

These data can be explained if semantically negation scopes over a disposition predicate rather than over the verb expressing an activity.

Third, frequency adverbs, such as často ‘often’ in (12), modify the disposition rather than the event denoted by the reflexive verb.

(12) Mne často plačet-sja,

I.DAT often cry.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL
no ja nikogda ne plaču.
but I.NOM never NEG cry.IMPRF.1SG.PRES
‘I often feel like crying but I never cry.’

Other modifiers that occur in the DR construction are sil’no ‘strongly’ and katastrofičeski ‘catastrophically’. They function as intensifiers of the disposition,
yielding the meaning ‘strongly feel like V-ing’.

(13) Emu sil’no dermal-o-s’ [...] 

he.DAT strongly doze.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL

‘Už uvažim popa,’ – dumal on, zevaja.

PART please.PRF.3PL.PRES priest, think.IMPRF.3SG.PAST he yawning

‘He strongly felt like dozing. [...] “Well, we will please the priest”, he thought while yawning.’

(Mamin Sibirjak, From Ural’s olden time (1885);


Fourth, aspectual prefixes, such as the inchoative za-, appear on the reflexive verb but semantically they modify the disposition:

(14) Na polu tebe soloma.

on floor you.DAT straw.NOM

Za-dreamal-o-s’, tak ložis’.

INCH.PRF-doze.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL so lay.down.2SG.INF

‘There is some straw on the floor. If you start feeling like dozing, lay down.’

(A.T. Tvardovskij, Vasilij Terkin (1945);

http://lib.ru/POEZIQ/TWARDOWSKIJ/terkin.txt)

When za- is prefixed to the reflexive verb hotet’sja ‘feel like’, as in (15a), it has the same semantic effect – it modifies the disposition. On the other hand, za- in a
non-DR construction, such as (16), has as its scope the event denoted by the verb, yielding an inchoative interpretation (cf. Zaliznjak 1995; Braginsky 2008).

(15) Mne za-hotel-o-s’ drem-at’.

I.DAT INCH.PRF-want.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL doze.IMPRF-INF

‘I started feeling like dozing.’

(16) Ivan za-pel.

Ivan.NOM INCH.PRF-sing.3SG.PAST.MASC

‘Ivan started to sing.’

Finally, tense in the DR construction specifies the temporal location of the disposition. Consider first the semantics of tense in non-DR constructions. Assuming that tense locates Reference Time (RT), a contextually salient time in a given discourse, with respect to Speech Time (ST) (Reichenbach 1947, Klein 1994), the past tense on ne rabotala ‘not work’ in (17) locates the RT of not-working in the past of ST and at the temporal interval specified by ‘first week’, as shown in Figure 1.

(17) Context: Three weeks ago Ivan started a new job. Unfortunately, he got sick after the first day at work and spent the first week on a medical leave.

Ivan ne rabotal pervuju nedelju.

Ivan.NOM NEG work.IMPRF.PAST.3SG.MASC first.ACC week.ACC

‘Ivan didn’t work during the first week.’
Tense in the DR construction in (18), on the other hand, locates the RT of the disposition with respect to ST. Thus, (18) means that the experiencer didn’t feel like working during the first week at work, not that he didn’t work (see Figure 2).

(18) Context: Three weeks ago Ivan started a new job. He didn’t feel like working during the first week on the new job.

Ivan DAT ne rabotal-o-s’ pervuju nedelju.

Ivan.DAT NEG work.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL first.ACC week.ACC

‘Ivan didn’t feel like working during the first week.’

To summarize, the data presented in this section suggest that while the DR construction has only one verb in the syntactic structure, it behaves as if additionally it had a ‘feel like’ predicate in the semantic structure. This observation is similar to the proposal by Marušić & Žaucer (2006), who derive the properties of the Slovenian DR construction from a phonologically null verb ‘feel like’. The crucial difference is that while the current analysis assumes the presence of the ‘feel like’ predicate in the semantic structure, it does not postulate a null verb in syntax. In what follows, I first show how the derivational analysis of Marušić & Žaucer (2006) can be extended to Russian, and then discuss the data that cannot be explained by such an analysis.
3. CHALLENGES FOR DERIVATIONAL ANALYSES

3.1 Derivational analysis of Marušič & Žaucer (2006)

According to Marušič & Žaucer (2006), the DR construction in Slovenian is bi-clausal. It has a phonologically null ‘feel like’ verb in the upper clause, and an activity verb in the lower clause. If applied to Russian, such an analysis would yield the following structure for the DR construction:

\[(19) \{[cP[TP\{AspP[NP\{DAT:\{\text{NON-ACT.}\{VP\{feel like[\{R-ModP[\{AspP[\{vP (non-active)]\{\text{PRO}\{v\{VP NP]\{\}\}]}]}]}]}]}]}]}]}\]

(adapted with modifications from Marušič & Žaucer 2006: 1114, ex. (32))

This analysis can explain the following properties of the DR construction. First, the null ‘feel like’ verb in the upper clause accounts for Dative case on the subject and for default 3rd person singular morphology on the verb. It also explains the lack of actuality entailment. These are essentially the properties of the overt ‘feel like’ verb. Second, if we assume with Marušič & Žaucer that the lower clause has a passive structure – the reflexive morpheme -sja in this case would be a morpho-syntactic reflex of the passive – then this would explain why the object argument receives Nominative rather than Accusative case. (In Marušič & Žaucer’s analysis the internal NP gets Nominative by checking its features against the finite T in the upper clause.) Third, the assumption that the lower clause lacks TP implies that tense morphology belongs to the upper clause, which explains why tense on the activity verb in fact modifies the disposition. These are strong aspects of the
derivational analysis. I now turn to the discussion of the properties of the DR construction that derivational analyses cannot explain.

3.2 Agreement dependency on argument realization

One challenge for derivational analyses is to explain why in the absence of the logical object the verb shows 3rd person singular neuter agreement (20a) but agrees with the logical object when the latter is present, as in (20b).

(20) (a) Nam ne tantseval-o-s’.

we.DAT NEG dance.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL

‘We didn’t feel like dancing.’

(b) Nam ne tantseval-a-s’ samba.

we.DAT NEG dance.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.FEM-REFL samba.NOM.FEM

‘We didn’t feel like dancing samba.’

The contrast between (20a) and (20b) escaped the attention of linguists working on Russian, because it has been assumed that the Russian DR construction does not express the direct object argument (Galkina-Fedoruk 1958; Pariser 1982; Růžička 1988; Schoorlemmer 1994; Franks 1995). Yet DR constructions with overt objects are possible, as (21) shows (see also Skorniakova 2008).

(21) (a) Mne ne pišut-sja stihi o tebe.

I.DAT NEG write.IMPRF.3PL.PRES-REFL poem.NOM.PL about you.PREP

‘I don’t feel like writing poems about you.’
When considered separately, the agreement pattern in (20a) and that in (20b)/(21) are easy to explain. For example, (20a) can be analyzed on a par with Russian impersonal constructions, which are assumed to have a null 3rd person singular neuter expletive pronoun *ono* as a subject (cf. Perlmutter & Moore 2002, Fleisher 2006, Skorniakova 2008). Such an analysis would explain the neuter morphology on the verb.

In order to explain agreement in (20b) and (21), one might assume that the DR construction with the Nominative logical object has a passive structure (cf. Skorniakova 2008 on Russian; Marušič & Žaucer 2006, Rivero & Milojević
Sheppard 2003 on South Slavic; Kallulli 2006 on Albanian). This proposal is consistent with the fact that -šja surfaces in a variety of non-active constructions: it functions as a passive marker for imperfective verbs (cf. Babby & Brecht 1975; Fehrmann, Junghanns & Lenertová 2010) and as a middle marker (cf. Spencer & Zaretskaya 2001). However, this analysis cannot explain why the verb bears 3rd person singular neuter morphology when the logical object argument is unexpressed, as in (20a) or when the verb is intransitive. Nor can the analysis of the intransitive DR construction account for the agreement pattern of the transitive variant.

3.3 Interpretation of Aspect

In Marušić & Žaucer’s (2006) analysis, sketched in section 3.1, aspect on the overt activity predicate modifies the event denoted by this predicate. In what follows, I show that Russian shows a different pattern.

I assume, following Smith (1991) that the imperfective aspect ‘focuses on part of a situation, excluding its initial and final endpoints’ (Smith 1991: 302), while the perfective aspect ‘presents events with both initial and final end-points’ (Smith 1991: 301). (22) and (23) are examples of the contexts in which the disposition is toward a temporally bounded event. Such contexts require the perfective aspect (cf. Dahl 1985: 78); the imperfective is ungrammatical.

(22) Context: yesterday you had an impulse to do a recreational parachute jump.
Mne hotel-o-s’ prygn-ut’ / *pryg-at’
I.DAT want.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL jump.PRF-INF / jump.IMPRF-INF

s parašuta.

with parachute

‘I wanted to jump with a parachute.’

(23) Context: a patient on a suicide watch complains to the doctor.

Mne hočet-sja umer-et’ / *umir-at’.
I.DAT want.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL die.PRF-INF / die.IMPRF-INF

‘I want to die.’

Yet in the DR construction the pattern is reversed: despite the fact that the events of jumping and dying in (24) and (25) require the perfective viewpoint, only the imperfective aspect is possible (cf. also Pariser 1982: 47; Gerritsen 1990: 180).³

(24) Context: yesterday you had an impulse to do a recreational parachute jump.

Mne prygal-o-s’ /prynul-o-s’
I.DAT jump.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL /jump.PRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL

s parašuta.

with parachute

‘I felt like jumping with a parachute.’
(25) Mne umiraet-sja / *umrjet-sja segodnja.

I.DAT die.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL / die.PRF.3SG.PRES-REFL today

‘I feel like dying today.’

(adapted from http://www.stihi.ru/2008/10/13/2339)

Marušič & Žaucer (2006: 1138) suggest that the ungrammaticality of perfective forms might be due to the fact that in the Russian DR construction ‘the disposition can presumably only be directed towards an atelic event’. Yet, this position cannot be maintained in light of the data in (24) and (25), where the disposition is directed toward a bounded (telic) event and the context requires the perfective viewpoint. These examples show that the aspectual meaning of the imperfective in the DR construction is truly idiosyncratic: it is used to refer to temporally bounded events that require the perfective viewpoint.

3.4 Semi-productivity of the DR construction

If the DR construction in Russian is derived by a regular syntactic rule, we expect it to be fully productive. In this section I empirically test this prediction.

The productivity of reflexive constructions with dative experiencers is a matter of a debate. According to Peškovskij (1956), any Russian verb can occur in the reflexive construction with non-canonical meaning. However, his position has been subsequently challenged in the literature (Galkina-Fedoruk 1958; Pariser 1982). Statements about the productivity of the DR construction specifically are
hard to assess mainly because the authors usually do not single out this construction as an independent class. Those who do, often make conflicting assessments. Thus, Rivero & Arregui (2012: 302) argue that Russian does not have the DR construction, while Marušić & Žaucer (2006) assume that it does, but are uncertain about the scope of its distribution.

My conclusion is that the DR construction is not fully productive in Russian. Out of 50 most frequent verbs in the Russian National Corpus, semantically compatible with a ‘feel like V-ing’ interpretation, only 56% occur in the DR construction, based on my own judgments and on the corpus data. For comparison, 94% of these verbs occur in the DR construction in Bulgarian (see the Appendix). Moreover, the frequency of the DR construction in Russian is low compared to other reflexive constructions, such as QR and AR constructions. For example, only 12.4% of tokens of the reflexive rabotat’ sja ‘work’ have a ‘feel like V-ing’ interpretation, and 78% of these tokens are negated.⁴

The comparison with the reflexive hotet’ sja ‘feel like’ highlights the limited scope of the DR construction. For example, verbs that denote uncontrollable physiological processes, including rasti ‘grow’, vyzdoravlivat’ ‘get better’, staret’ ‘get older’, molodet’ ‘get younger’, sedet’ ‘turn grey’, istekat’ krov’ ju ‘bleed’, and potet’ ‘sweat’ are ungrammatical in the DR construction but they freely appear as complements of the reflexive hotet’ sja ‘feel like’.:⁵
(26) (a) *Mne rastet-sja /molodeet-sja.

I.DAT grow.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL /get.younger.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

Intended: ‘I feel like growing / getting younger.’

(b) Mne hočet-sja rasti /molodet’.

I.DAT want.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL grow.IMPRF.INF/get.younger.IMPRF.INF

‘I feel like growing / getting younger.’

Besides lexical restrictions that cannot be explained on semantic grounds, the DR construction also shows what on first sight appears to be a morphological restriction. Specifically, verbs that exist in the reflexive form only, such as

nravit’sja ‘like’ (*nravit’), snit’sja ‘dream’ (*snit’), smejet’sja ‘laugh’ (*smejet’), and bojat’sja ‘be afraid’ (*bojat’), as well as derived reflexive verbs with self-directed meaning, such as myt’-sja ‘wash oneself’, do not occur in the DR construction in Russian (cf. also Pariser 1982: 52): 6

(27) (a) *Ivanu smejet-sja.

Ivan.DAT laugh.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

Intended: ‘Ivan feels like laughing.’

(b) *Ivanu moet-sja.

Ivan.DAT wash.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

Intended: ‘Ivan feels like washing himself.’

Peškovskij (1956) argues that this restriction is morphological: in order to occur
in the DR construction a reflexive form would have to be reflexivized for the second time. He proposes that there is a rule that blocks multiplication of identical syllables. However, this explanation can hardly be maintained in light of the data from Bulgarian. In the Bulgarian DR construction, inherently reflexive verbs, such as *smeja se* ‘laugh’ (*smeja*), as well as derived reflexives, such as *mija se* ‘wash oneself’, are perfectly grammatical:

(28) (a) Na Ivan mu se smee. [Bulgarian]
    to Ivan he.CL.DAT REFL laugh.IMPRF.3SG.PRES
    ‘Ivan feels like laughing.’

(b) Na Ivan mu se mie. [Bulgarian]
    to Ivan he.CL.DAT REFL wash.IMPRF.3SG.PRES
    ‘Ivan feels like washing himself.’

I conclude that the DR construction in Russian does not enjoy full productivity. The next section proposes the analysis that captures this fact.

4. The analysis: DR construction as a constructional idiom

4.1 The syntax and semantics of the DR construction

The discussion in the previous sections has shown that the analysis of the DR construction needs to take into consideration the following facts. First, the construction expresses dispositions, even though there is no volitional verb in the syntactic structure. Second, it has idiosyncratic structural properties, which
present a challenge for derivational analyses. Third, the DR construction is semi-productive. These properties naturally lend themselves to an analysis within the construction grammar framework (cf. Goldberg 1995, 2006; Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004; Jackendoff 1997, 2002). Specifically, I propose that the DR construction should be analyzed as a construction, i.e. the pairing of structure and meaning stored as a unit in the lexicon, as shown in (29).

(29) Structure and meaning of the DR construction:

Syntax: [NP_1-DAT [VP V-IMPRF-TENSE-REFL (NP_2-NOM)]]
Semantics: ‘NP_1 feel like V-ing (NP_2)’

This analysis derives the meaning of the DR construction from the ‘feel like’ predicate in the semantic structure. Importantly, since the construction grammar framework allows for mismatches between syntax and semantics (see also the Parallel Architecture framework developed in Jackendoff 1983, 1990, 2002, and Culicover & Jackendoff 2005), there is no null predicate in syntax. In what follows, I show how this analysis captures the properties of the DR construction. While at this point I do not present a formal semantic analysis, the latter is not incompatible with a constructionist account (cf. Sag 2010 on application of Montague semantics within Sign-Based Construction Grammar), and can be developed based on the proposal presented here.

The core semantic properties of the DR construction – volitionality and the lack of actuality entailment – follow straightforwardly from (29). As a volitional
predicate, ‘feel like’ does not entail event realization. Consequently, negation, when it scopes over ‘feel like’, has no effect on the actuality entailment.

If an adverb is present, it scopes over the ‘feel like’ predicate in semantics and modifies the frequency or intensity of the disposition. Mismatches between syntax and semantics, as the one observed in the DR construction, – the adverb appears to modify the activity but in fact it modifies the disposition – are commonly found in constructional idioms. For example, Jackendoff (2008) in his analysis of the *day after day* construction observes that the adjective *miserable* in (30) structurally appears to be a modifier of the second noun. Semantically, however, it modifies the entire NP: the construction means not ‘a succession of days followed by miserable days, but rather a succession of miserable days’ (Jackendoff 2008: 21).

(30) Day after miserable day

Jackendoff (2008) explains the syntax-semantics mismatch by proposing that the construction means ‘many Ns in succession’. Under this analysis there is only one counterpart of the noun in the semantic structure, and it is the semantics of the construction that is responsible for the modification pattern in (30). An argument along these lines also explains adverbial modification in the DR construction.

The unusual aspectual pattern – the ability of the imperfective to refer to temporally bounded events – is explained by the idiosyncratic properties of the
DR construction. Note that Russian is not unusual in this respect. In English, too, progressive forms do not refer to telic events, but the ‘feel like’ construction overrides this semantic property: jumping in (31) has a bounded (telic) reference.

(31) I felt like jumping into the water when we were flying above the lake.

From this perspective, the semantics of the construction determines the type of the aspectual reference of the imperfective verb form. If the context is right, the imperfective form would be coerced into a telic interpretation.

The fact that tense on the reflexive verb modifies the disposition and not the eventuality denoted by the verb is a consequence of the syntax-semantics mismatch. In the proposed analysis, there is no verb corresponding to the ‘feel like’ predicate in syntax, and, by default, the temporal information is realized on the only available predicate – the reflexive verb. The temporal location of the eventuality denoted by the reflexive verb – future with respect to the disposition time – is determined by the semantics of the construction.

Last but not least, the proposed analysis allows us to explain semi-productivity of the DR construction. The structure in (29) contains open variables that can be filled in by the members of the respective phrasal and lexical categories. However, what verbs occur in the construction must be learned on a case-by-case basis. Mechanisms along these lines have been previously applied to explain semi-productivity of a wide range of constructions, including the N to N
construction, such as hand to hand (cf. ?finger to finger) (Jackendoff 2008),
sluice-stranding, such as what about? (cf. *who about?) (Culicover & Jackendoff
2005; Culicover 2013), and adjectival reflexives, such as yell oneself hoarse
(Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004).

4.2 The inheritance hierarchy of dative reflexive constructions in Russian

The advantage of a construction grammar approach is that it also allows us to
explain why the specific set of structural properties, i.e. a reflexive verb plus a
Dative experiencer, are used to convey the dispositional meaning. When the DR
construction is evaluated within a broader context, it becomes apparent that
Russian routinely utilizes reflexive morphology and Dative case to convey the
lack of control on the part of the experiencer.⁸ For example, the reflexive hotět’śja
‘feel like’ in (32a), when compared to its non-reflexive counterpart hotět’ ‘want’
in (32b), is characterized by the lack of control over the disposition. Wierzbicka
(1986: 410) observes that the corresponding construction in Polish expresses
‘unintentional wantings’.

(32) (a) Mne hotět-śja spat’.
I.DAT want.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL sleep.INF
‘I feel like sleeping.’
Another class of predicates that utilize reflexive morphology to convey the lack of intentionality are cognitive verbs such as vspomnit’ ‘remember’. Thus, the reflexive verb in (33a) refers to a non-volitional process (cf. Wierzbicka 1986; Gerritsen 1990: 27–28, 140–151): this construction is not compatible with adverbs that presuppose control over recollection, such as soznatel’no ‘consciously’. No such effect is observed with the non-reflexive vspomnit’ ‘remember’ in (33b).

(33) (a) Ivanu #(soznatel’no) vspomnil-a-s’ molodost’.  
Ivan.DAT consciously remember.PRF.PAST-3SG.FEM-REFL youth.NOM.FEM  
‘Ivan experienced the memory of his youth.’

(b) Ivan (soznatel’no) vspomnil molodost’.  
Ivan.NOM consciously remember.PRF.PAST.3SG.MASC youth.ACC.FEM  
‘Ivan (consciously) remembered his youth.’

Perception verbs, such as videt’ ‘see’ and slyšat’ ‘hear’, when reflexivized, also undergo a semantic shift in the predicted direction. The difference between the reflexive and the non-reflexive form is ‘a difference in control’ (Gerritsen 1990: 144; cf. Galkina-Fedoruk 1958; Pariser 1982: 44–45; Paducheva 2011: 7).
(34) (a) Ja videl-a dom.
   I.NOM see.IMPRF.PAST-1SG.FEM house.NOM.MASC
   ‘I saw a house’.

(b) Mne videl-sja dom.
   I.DAT see.IMPRF.PAST.3SG.MASC-REFL house.NOM.MASC
   ‘I visually experienced a house.’

Gerritsen (1990: 144) comments that the reflexive construction ‘turns the person into an experiencer, rather than a (more active) perceiver’. This observation is consistent with the fact that Dative case is a standard means to express experiencers in Russian, and as such commonly appears in constructions with psych predicates:

(35) Detjam byl-o interesno / skučno / strašno / veselo.
    children.DAT be.PAST-3SG.NEUT interesting / bored / afraid / merry
    ‘Children were interested / bored / afraid / merry’.

This discussion shows that psych predicates and reflexive cognitive and perception verbs have the same structural features as the DR construction and similar semantics: they denote a psychological state over which the experiencer has limited volitional control. I propose that the sharing of idiosyncratic structural and semantic features among these constructions is enabled by inheritance hierarchies, i.e. organizational principles that link structurally and semantically
similar constructions in the lexicon (cf. Goldberg 1995; Michaelis & Lambrecht 1996; Jackendoff 1997; Jackendoff 2008; Sag, Wasow, & Bender 2003 on inheritance hierarchies within the constructionist and the HPSG frameworks, respectively). As an example, consider how an inheritance hierarchy explains semantic similarities between the way-construction, such as *Emma elbowed her way into the room* (Jackendoff 1997: 547), and the resultative construction *Emma cooked the pot dry*. In both constructions, shown in (36) and (37), the verb is interpreted as being ‘a means or manner modifier’ (Jackendoff 1997: 555).

(36) (a) \[[VP \[V [\text{bound pronoun}]’s way PP]]\] \[[\text{Way-construction}]
(b) ‘go PP (by) V-ing’
(Jackendoff 1997: 554, ex. (98))

(37) (a) \[[VP \[V NP AP/PP]]\] \[[\text{Resultative construction}]
(b) ‘cause NP to become AP / go PP by V-ing (it)’
(Jackendoff 1997: 554, ex. (100))

Jackendoff proposes that this property is inherited by the resultative and the way-construction from a verb subordination archi-construction in (38):

(38) (a) \[[VP V ]\] \[(Jackendoff 1997: 555, ex. (101))
(b) ‘act by V-ing’

The structure in Figure 1 shows how inheritance hierarchies can capture family resemblance among Russian constructions with non-volitional meaning.

<Insert Figure 3 about here>

The top node specifies the core structural and semantic properties shared by all constructions in the hierarchy, while the leaves capture variation. Thus, while
some members of the hierarchy, such as the DR construction, have open variable slots, individual predicates, such as hotetsja ‘feel like’, are fully productive.

In the next section, I compare the DR construction to the structurally similar QR and AR constructions. This discussion prepares the ground for assessing the scope of cross-linguistic variation in reflexive constructions (section 6) and the overview of the previous analyses (section 7).

5. Typology of Reflexive Constructions in Russian

A common view in the literature is that Russian reflexive constructions with Dative subjects are ambiguous (Pariser 1982; Benedicto 1995; Franks 1995). For example, according to Pariser (1982: 83–84) reflexive constructions ‘encompass […] an entire range of simultaneously expressive meanings […] desire, capability, possibility, propensity], none of which are separable from the whole’. More recent literature (cf. Rivero & Arregui 2012) distinguishes between different types of reflexive constructions, but there is a confusion about what meanings Russian reflexive constructions can express. The goal of the subsequent discussion is to clarify this question.

5.1 The Quality Reflexive construction

Besides dispositions, reflexive sentences with Dative subjects express how the activity denoted by the reflexive verb feels to the experiencer. The sentence in (39), for example, assesses the experience of living together, and the one in (40) –
the quality of singing. I refer to such constructions as Quality Reflexives (QR).

(39) Horošo nam s toboj živet-sja.
    well we.DAT with you live.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

‘We live happily together.’

(A. P. Chekhov, *Summer residents* (1885))

(40) Borisu horošo pel-i-s’ narodny-je pesn-i.
    Boris.DAT well sing.IMPRF.PAST-3PL-REFL folk-NOM.PL song-NOM.PL

‘Boris sang folk songs well.’

(adapted from Skorniakova 2008: 6, ex. (7b))

The perceived quality is not under the experiencer’s direct control (cf. Švedova 1970: 354; §860, Vinogradov 1972: 371; Skorniakova 2008). This is evident from the fact that the QR construction is incompatible with purpose clauses, as shown in (41) (cf. also Bulygina 1982: 80; Benedicto 1995).

(41) *Mne horošo rabotal-o-s’,
    I.DAT well work.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL
    čtoby ugodit’ svoemu načal’niku.
    so.that please.INF self.DAT boss.DAT

Intended: ‘I worked well so that to please my boss.’

(adapted from Benedicto 1995: 7, ex. (22b))

Despite structural and semantic similarities with the DR construction,
including case assignment and agreement as well as non-volitional semantics, the QR construction has a set of properties that distinguish it from the DR construction. First, the hallmark of the QR construction is the obligatory presence of an adverbial modifier expressing quality. In the absence of the modifier the construction gives rise to the ‘feel like V-ing interpretation’ (42a) or is simply infelicitous if the predicate in question does not occur in the DR construction (cf. dumat’sja ‘think’ in (42b)). A quality adverb makes the construction in (42b) felicitous under the QR interpretation, as shown in (42c).

(42) (a) Mne spal-o-s’.

I.DAT sleep.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL

= ‘I felt like sleeping.’

≠ ‘I slept well.’

(b) #Mne dumaet-sja.

I.DAT think.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

(c) Mne prekrasno dumaet-sja po nočam.

I.DAT wonderfully think.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL at night.DAT

‘I think easily at night.’

(http://oxab.livejournal.com/9224.html)

Benedicto (1995: 14) argues that the adverb in the QR construction must refer to a psychological state. However, the data from the Russian National Corpus
show that virtually any adverbial modifier can appear in the DR construction as long as it can be coerced to denote positive or negative experience (cf. also Wierzbicka 1986: 418 on Polish).11

Second, the DR and the QR constructions have different entailment patterns. The QR construction entails that event is realized and thus cannot be felicitously continued by the negation of the action, as in (43) (cf. also Rivero & Arregui 2012, who refer to the QR constructions as ‘factual’). No such restrictions apply to the DR construction in (44).

(43) Mne легко плакать, #но ja не плака

I.DAT easily cry.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL but I.NOM NEG cry.IMPRF.1SG.PRES

Intended: ‘I cry easily but I don’t cry.’

(adapted from http://olga-nebel.livejournal.com/1198337.html)

(44) Плакать, но не плака

cry.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL but NEG cry.IMPRF.1SG.PRES

‘I feel like crying but I don’t cry.’

(http://www.stihi.ru/2004/02/28-1128)

Third, the QR and the DR constructions behave differently under negation. The negated DR construction signals the lack of disposition. Negation in the QR construction, on the other hand, scopes over the quality adverb and changes the polarity of the expression. Thus, in (45) negation scopes over horošo ‘well’ and
triggers the interpretation that the quality of living is poor. Crucially, the actuality entailment is preserved in this case.

(45) U nas liberalam ne živet-sja horošo.

at we.gen liberals.dat neg live.imprf.3sg.pres-refl well

‘In our country the liberals do not live well.’

(adapted from http://vk.com/wall-33732208_40950)

Finally, the two constructions differ in terms of their productivity. According to Gerritsen (1990: 193), the QR construction is more productive compared to the DR construction. A pilot corpus study confirms this observation. Out of 303 examples of the reflexive verb rabotat’sja ‘work’ from the Russian National Corpus, 86% are tokens of the QR construction; the rest are the DR and the reflexive construction that expresses ability (see the next section).\(^\text{12}\)

5.2 The Ability Reflexive construction

The example in (46) shows that negated reflexive sentences are ambiguous between a dispositional interpretation, i.e. ‘NOT feel like V-ing’ and an inability to perform an action interpretation, i.e. ‘cannot V’ (cf. Borras & Christian 1971; Pariser 1982; Janda 1993; Benedicto 1995: 2; Franks 1995: 364; Rivero & Arregui 2012: 309). I refer to the latter as the Ability Reflexive (AR).
(46) *Ej ne sidit-sja doma segodnja.*

she.DAT NEG sit.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL home today

‘She doesn’t feel like staying at home today.’ [Dispositional Reflexive]

‘She can’t stay at home today.’ [Ability Reflexive]

(adapted from Pariser 1982: 83, ex. (101))

The ability interpretation is only possible under negation (47); non-negated sentences can only give rise to a dispositional interpretation (48):

(47) *Da i ne spit-sja kak-to.*

PART and NEG sleep.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL somehow.

Navernoje u menja bessonnitsa.

Possibly at I.GEN insomnia.NOM

‘I cannot sleep for some reason. Possibly, I suffer from insomnia.’


(48) *#Mne spit-sja.*

I.DAT sleep.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

= ‘I feel like sleeping.’

≠ ‘I am able to sleep.’

The inability to perform an action conveyed by the AR construction is psychological rather than physical. The AR construction is infelicitous in the context that requires a physical ability interpretation (49a). In order to express the
intended meaning, a root possibility modal should be used instead (49b).

(49) Context: Anna, a professional dancer, sprained her leg. You say:

(a) #Anne ne tantsuet-sja.
   Anna.DAT NEG dance.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL
   Intended: ‘Anna cannot dance.’

(b) Anna ne možet tantsevat’.
   Anna.NOM NEG can.PRES dance.IMPRF.INF
   ‘Anna cannot dance.’

These observations echo Wierzbicka’s (1979: 375) comment that ‘the peculiar impotence of the subject is presented as purely internal’ (cf. also Benedicto 1995) and suggest that a common semantic feature shared by the AR and the DR constructions is that they both denote uncontrollable psychological states.

While the ability interpretation has been previously subsumed under the meaning of DR and QR constructions (cf. Pariser 1982; Benedicto 1995; Rivero & Arregui 2012: 308), the AR construction has a different entailment pattern. Specifically, the negated AR construction entails that the activity denoted by the reflexive verb was not realized: *I couldn’t do X* entails *I didn’t do X*. Thus, it is infelicitous to continue the AR construction in (50), which translates as ‘I couldn’t sleep’, with the assertion that the experiencer managed to sleep.
(50) У меня бессонница. Мне не спиться,

at I.GEN insomnia.NOM I.DAT NEG sleep.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

#no мне удал-о-с’

but I.DAT manage.PRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL sleep.PERF.INF

Intended: ‘I suffer from insomnia. I cannot sleep but I managed to sleep.’

The negated DR construction, on the other hand, is compatible with the situations in which the eventuality denoted by the reflexive verb was realized, as in (51).

(51) Ему не работал-о-с’, а он всё же

he.DAT NEG work.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL but he.NOM yet

rabotal ne takuž i ploho.

work.IMPRF.3SG.PAST.MASC NEG so PART and badly

‘He didn’t feel like working. Yet he worked not badly (after all).’

(Veyrenc 1980: 305, cited in Gerritsen 1990: 175, ex. (266))

These data suggest that the ability interpretation cannot be derived from the DR construction.

The AR construction also differs from the QR construction: the latter always entails event realization, even when negated. These facts challenge the analysis in Gerritsen (1990), in which the quality and the ability readings are derived from the same construction. In her analysis, negation, the obligatorily element of the AR construction, is viewed as a type of adverbial modification: ‘не is a qualifier,
ne spitsja [not sleep] being the extreme variant of ploho spitsja [sleep badly]’ (Gerritsen 1990: 185). Such an analysis cannot explain the conflicting entailment patterns of the QR and AR constructions. The same criticism also applies to Rivero & Arrevui (2012: 309), who assume that Russian has the QR construction only and subsume the ability reading under the latter.

I conclude that the AR construction has a set of distinctive properties, which are incompatible with that of the DR and the QR constructions. It should be recognized as yet another member of the family of reflexive constructions with dative experiencers (cf. also Korolev 1969a, 1969b; Wierzbicka 1979: 376–377).

5.3 Typology of reflexive constructions in Russian

Table 1 summarizes the discussion in this section. It shows that despite certain similarities, reflexive sentences with Dative subjects have different properties.

<Insert Table 1 about here>

The next section discusses the distribution of DR, QR, and AR constructions in Slavic languages with the goal to clarify the scope of cross-linguistic variation.13

6. Cross-linguistic comparison: reflexive constructions in Slavic

Early work on reflexive constructions with Dative subjects in Slavic languages focused on their syntactic properties rather than on their fine-grained semantics. As a consequence, different types of reflexive constructions were treated as one,
which often obscured cross-linguistic generalizations. For example, Růžička (1988: 175) observes that: ‘the impersonal sentence type [52] is found in all Slavic languages’ and that ‘Czech and Russian (and other Slavic languages) share the “dispositional” construction [53]’ (Růžička 1988: 175).

(52) (a) Sestře se tam pracuje výborně. [Czech]

sister.DAT refl there work.3SG excellently

‘My sister is working excellently there.’

(b) Sestre tam rabotaet-sja prekrasno. [Russian]

sister.DAT there work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL excellently

‘My sister is working excellently there.’

(Růžička 1988: 175, ex. (83) and (84) with Franks’ glosses 1995: 364)

(53) Ne-hraje se mi dobře. [Czech]

NEG-play.3SG refl me.DAT well

‘Not play(s) (to) me well.’

(Růžička 1988: 175, ex. (80), with Franks’ glosses 1995: 364)

Růžička (1988) uses ‘dispositional’ as an umbrella term, subsuming different types of reflexive constructions, including the QR construction in (52) and (53), under one label. However, such an approach fails to recognize that Slavic languages exhibit variation in the type of meanings that reflexive constructions can express. In what follows I present data that clarify the status of DR, QR, and
AR constructions in Slavic languages.

6.1 QR construction in East and West Slavic only

The data in (54) show how the QR construction is distributed in languages of the Slavic family. The examples in (54) where presented in the context of the question ‘How do children work here?’, which explicitly targets an assessment of quality interpretation. Note that this question also presupposes that the working activity is realized, which is consistent with the actuality entailment of the QR construction. If the constructions in (54) are indeed QR constructions, then they should be incompatible with the sentence continuation ‘but they do not work’, which cancels the entailment.

(54) Context: How do children work here?

(a) Detjam horošo rabotaet-sja zdes’. [Russian]
   children.DAT well work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL here

   (#no oni ne rabotajut).
   but they.NOM NEG work.IMPRF.3PL.PRES

   ‘Children work here well (#but they do not work).’

(b) *Na decata dobre im se raboti tuk. [Bulgarian]
   to children well they.DAT REFL work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES here

   Intended: ‘Children work well here.’
These data show that unlike West and East Slavic languages, South Slavic languages do not have equivalents of the QR constructions (cf. also Rivero & Arregui 2012).

6.2 DR construction in South and East Slavic only

The status of the DR construction in Slavic languages is surrounded by controversy. For example, Franks (1995: 364) applies Růžička’s generalization to the DR construction: ‘as discussed by Růžička (1988: 175–176), the impersonal sentence type illustrated in [55] is found in all the Slavic languages.’

(55) Mne ne rabotaet-sja

Me.DAT NEG work-REFL

‘I don’t feel like working’

(Franks 1995: 364, ex. (58))

Yet Kortland (1983), Rivero & Milojević Sheppard (2003), Rivero & Arregui (2012) observe that West Slavic languages do not have the DR construction.

Rivero & Arregui (2012) go even further and claim that Russian is like Polish and
other West Slavic languages in that it also lacks the DR construction.

The data in (56) helps to clarify this debate. The reflexive sentences in (56) were presented in the context of the question that targets dispositional meaning. The sentence continuation ‘children do not work’ is used as a control: a DR construction should be compatible with this assertion.

(56) Context: Do children feel like working here?

(a) Detjam rabotaet-sja [Russian]

children.DAT work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

(no oni ne rabotajut).

but they.NOM NEG work.IMPRF.3PL.PRES

‘Children feel like working (but they do not work).’

(b) Na decata im se raboti [Bulgarian]

to children they.CL.DAT REFL work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES

(no te ne rabotjat).

but they NEG work.IMPRF.3PL.PRES

‘Children feel like working (but they do not work.)’

(c) *Dzieciom się tu pracuje. [Polish]

children.DAT REFL here work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES

Intended: ‘Children feel like working.’

I conclude that Russian and Bulgarian have the DR construction, while Polish
6.3 AR construction in East Slavic only

Marušič & Žaucer (2006) correctly observe that the AR construction does not exist in South Slavic languages. With respect to Polish, the authors suggest that reflexive constructions do have a ‘root possibility reading’, citing (57) as an example (Marušič & Žaucer 2006: 1148; cf. also Dziwirek 1994: 61; Rivero & Milojević Sheppard 2003: 137).

(57) Jankowi czytało się tę książkę z przyjemnością.[Polish]

Janek.DAT read.3SG.NEUT REFL this book.ACC with pleasure

‘Somehow, Janek was able to read this book with pleasure.’

(adapted from Marušič & Žaucer 2006: 1149, ex. (85b))

Note, however, that the construction in (57) contains a quality modifier, and thus can be an example of the QR construction. Moreover, Marušič & Žaucer’s observation contradicts Wierzbicka (1979: 377), who compares Polish to Russian and observes that Polish reflexives do not have an ability interpretation. The data in (58) help to clarify the status of the AR construction in Slavic. The examples were presented in the context that targets the ability interpretation. Since the negated AR construction entails that the activity in question was not realized, it should be incompatible with the assertion to the contrary.
(58) Context: Are the children able to work here?

(a) Detjam ne rabotaet-sja zdes’, [Russian]

children.DAT NEG work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL here

(#no oni rabotajut).

but they.NOM work.IMPRF.3PL.PRES

‘Children can’t work here (#but they work).’

(b) #Na decata ne im se raboti.14 [Bulgarian]

to children NEG they.CL.DAT REFL work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES

Intended: ‘Children can’t work.’

(c) *Dzieciom się tutaj nie pracuje. [Polish]

children.DAT REFL here NEG work.IMPRF.3SG.PRES

Intended: ‘Children cannot work here.’

The data in (58) show that the AR construction is attested in Russian only.

6.4 Summary

The discussion in this section, summarized in Table 2, reveals a previously unobserved fact: Russian differs from both West and South Slavic languages in that it has the AR construction, as well as the QR and the DR construction, even though the latter is less productive compared to e.g. Bulgarian.

<Insert Table 2 about here>

While the previous studies highlighted some of the differences among Slavic
languages (cf. Georgiev 1972: 99; Norman 1972: 71; Marušič & Žaucer 2006; Rivero & Milojević Sheppard 2003; Rivero & Arregui 2012), the comparison was obstructed by the fact that the dispositional, the ability, and the quality of experience interpretations were often treated as different readings of a single construction. With this observation in mind, I now turn to the discussion of the previous analyses.

7. **Previous analyses of the semantics of DR, QR, and AR**

The analyses I review in this section fall into two groups: (i) those that derive the dispositional, the ability, and the quality of experience meaning from a single semantic element – modal, as in Benedicto (1995), or a null verb, as in Marušič & Žaucer (2006), and (ii) the analyses that postulate different semantic ingredients for different construction types (Rivero & Arregui 2012). The problem with the former is that different constructions have different entailment patterns and thus cannot be derived from the same modal / null verb. The latter derives the dispositional meaning from the semantics of plans, but plans and dispositions are different, and the two constructions do not have the same entailment pattern.

7.1 *Benedicto (1995)*

Benedicto (1995) assumes that the dispositional, ability, and quality of experience readings are different interpretations of one construction that is ambiguous. She proposes that these different interpretations are derived from the presence of a
null possibility modal in the structure. In her analysis, couched within the framework of modal semantics (Kratzer 1981, 1991), the null modal has the same modal force as *can* (existential) but differs from the latter in that its modal base, i.e. the set of propositions with respect to which the modal claim is evaluated, is restricted to psychological circumstances. Under this analysis the sentence in (59) has the meaning in (60).

(59) Mne ne čitaet-sja.

I.DAT NEG read.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

‘I can’t read.’

(adapted from Benedicto 1995: 1, ex. (1))

(60) ‘Given my psychological circumstances, I can’t read (there is no possibility for me to read)’ (Benedicto 1995: 9, ex. (25)).

While Benedicto’s analysis explains the meaning of the AR construction, it does not provide the right semantics for the QR construction. In the QR construction the proposition in the scope of the null possibility modal is interpreted with respect to the set of propositions (modal base) that refer to the experiencer’s psychological circumstances. The quality adverb provides a scale based on which the propositions in the modal base are ranked. Under these assumptions, the QR sentence in (61) has the meaning in (62).

(61) Mne udobno čital-o-s’, (sidja pod lampoj).
My translation: ‘I read comfortably, sitting under the lamp.’

(62) ‘Given my psychological state, the possibility exists for me, given what feel comfortable for me, of reading’ (Benedicto 1995: 15, ex. (41b))

According to the analysis in (62), the QR construction asserts a possibility of an action without entailing its realization. This is due to the fact that the null modal in Benedicto’s analysis has an existential modal force. However, his interpretation is too weak, and it cannot capture the core semantic property of the QR construction – its actuality entailment. The examples in (63) show that the QR construction crucially differs from the possibility modal moć ‘can’ in that the activity denoted by the former cannot be negated. Benedicto predicts that the two constructions should behave the same.15

(63) (a) #Mne udobno čital-o-s’,

I.DAT comfortably read.IMPRF.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL

no ja ne čital-a.

but I.NOM NEG read.IMPRF.PAST-FEM

Intended: ‘I read comfortably, but I didn’t read.’

(b) Ja mogu čitat’, no ja ne čita-ju.

I.NOM can.1SG.PRES read.IMPRF.INF but I.NOM NEG read.IMPRF.1SG-PRES
‘I can read, but I don’t read.’

Finally, while Benedicto acknowledges that reflexive constructions can express dispositions, she doesn’t explain how her null modal can derive the ‘feel like’ interpretation. I conclude that Benedicto’s (1995) uniform analysis is untenable due to the fact that reflexive constructions in question have incompatible semantic properties.

7.2 Marušič & Žaucer (2006)

While Marušič & Žaucer (2006) are primarily concerned with the meaning of the DR construction in Slovenian, the authors tentatively propose how their analysis can be extended to Russian. They focus on the dispositional and the ability interpretations and suggest that these meanings are derived from the null reflexive verb ‘give’. The analysis is based on the fact that in Serbian the reflexive verb ‘give’ acquires an ability reading when it appears with Dative subjects, as shown in (64a), while in Slovenian, the reflexive ‘give’, when negated, can give rise to a ‘feel like’ interpretation, as in (64b).

(64) (a) Ne da mi se da odem kući. [Serbian]
   N.3SG give I.DAT REFL that go home
   ‘I cannot go home /something prevents me from going home.’

(adapted from Marušič & Žaucer 2006: 1148, ex. (85c))

(b) Danes se mi *(ne) da delat. [Slovenian]
Based on these data and operating under the assumption that the dispositional meaning arises only when the reflexive verb is negated, – the assumption that cannot be maintained in light of the data in section 2 – Marušič & Žaucer (2006: 1149) tentatively propose that ‘the Russian null GIVE thus receives two interpretations, the “feel like” interpretation of the Slovenian/Croatian […] and the root possibility interpretation of the Serbian […] “give”’.

One objection to this analysis is the fact that DR and AR constructions have conflicting entailments, which cannot be derived from a single predicate. Another objection pertains to the choice of ‘give’ as a null predicate. One fact overlooked by the authors is that Russian does have a construction with the reflexive verb davat’sja ‘give’. However, such a construction does not trigger the dispositional meaning, as shown in (65).

(65) Mne ne dajet-sja matematika.

I.DAT NEG give.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL math.NOM

‘I can’t do / master math for some reason.’

≠ ‘I don’t feel like doing math for some reason.’

Moreover, the reflexive verb davat’sja ‘give’ expresses a different nuance of
inability than the one observed in the AR construction: it presupposes that the activity in question presents some difficulty for the agent, such as e.g. doing math in (65), and is best translated as ‘I cannot master X’. The construction is degraded for some speakers with verbs that denote trivial activities such as relaxation in (66a). No such effect is observed in the corresponding AR construction in (66b).

(66) Context: For some reason, you are unable to relax. You say:

(a) Mne ne dajet-sja otdyh.
I.DAT NEG give.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL relaxation.NOM

Intended: ‘I cannot master relaxation.’

(b) Mne ne otdyhaet-sja.
I.DAT NEG relax.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL

‘I cannot relax.’

More importantly, while both the AR construction and the construction with davat'sja ‘give’ are restricted to negated contexts, they have different entailment patterns. The reflexive ‘give’ entails that the activity in question was realized but that the experiencer is not satisfied with the outcome, while the negated AR construction entails that the activity in question did not occur. Consequently, the reflexive ‘give’ construction but not the AR construction is felicitous in contexts that assert event realization, such as (67).

(67) Context: You spent all morning practicing Un bel di but you are not happy
with the result.

(a) Mne ne dajet-sja eta aria.

I.DAT NEG give.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL this.NOM aria.NOM

‘I cannot master this aria.’

(b) #Mne ne poet-sja eta aria.

I.DAT NEG sing.IMPRF.3SG.PRES-REFL this.NOM aria.NOM

Intended: ‘I cannot sing this aria.’

I conclude that the reflexive ‘give’ cannot capture the meaning of the Russian dispositional construction or the meaning of the Russian ability construction for that matter. The construction with the reflexive ‘give’ is just another member of the family of reflexive constructions in Russian that should be granted an independent status in the grammar.

7.3 Rivero & Arregui (2012)

Rivero & Arregui (2012) focus on the DR and QR constructions in Slavic (their desideratives and factuals, respectively). They propose that these two meanings arise from the interaction of a null circumstantial modal (CM), a backbone of impersonal reflexive constructions, and the imperfective operator (IMPF) with modal flavor, shown in (68).

(68) \[ [\text{IMPF}] = \lambda \Phi_{<l, s, r>} \lambda s. \forall s': MB_{\alpha} (s)(s') = 1, \exists e: P(e)(s') = 1. \]

(Rivero & Arregui 2012: 323, (12.62))

The different interpretations arise because the IMPF operator combines with
different modal bases: with MB\textsubscript{P-inertia} in the DR construction and with MB\textsubscript{ongoing} in the QR construction. The intuition is that these modal bases capture the core aspects of the meaning of these respective constructions: MB\textsubscript{ongoing} supplies a set of situations in progress (this is consistent with the actuality entailment of the QR constructions), while MB\textsubscript{P-inertia} supplies a set of situations in which the targeted event is in its preparatory stage (this is consistent with the fact that dispositions are future-oriented). Cross-linguistic variation is explained in terms of the availability of these modal bases in particular languages. It is assumed that West and East Slavic languages lack the DR construction because they lack MB\textsubscript{P-inertia}, while South Slavic languages lack the QR construction because MB\textsubscript{ongoing} is unavailable in these languages. These assumptions are summarized in Table 3.\footnote{Insert Table 3 about here}

While Rivero & Arregui’s analysis is the most comprehensive formal semantic analysis up to date, it is not problem free. First, according to the authors, the activity denoted by the DR construction is in its preparatory stage: ‘P-inertia modal bases target events that have been set in motion’ (Rivero & Arregui 2012: 331). This analysis, while appropriate for constructions that refer to future plans, such as \textit{John was going to the movies tomorrow but he changed his mind} (Rivero & Arregui 2012: 324; cf. also Copley 2002 on futurates), makes incorrect predictions for desideratives. Specifically, desideratives that denote
unrealistic inclinations (cf. *I feel like walking on the moon*), as well as desideratives that refer to realistic events but for which the experiencer chooses not to take any actions (cf. *I feel like lighting a cigarette but it’s bad for my health*) do not have preparatory stages, and cannot be accounted for by Rivero & Arregui’s (2012) analysis.

Second, since in Rivero & Arregui’s analysis the imperfective operator plays the key role, the analysis holds as long as the constructions in question have imperfective predicates. Yet, the QR construction permits perfective verbs freely, as the authors themselves point out (p. 304). Moreover, the DR construction permits perfective verbs with aspectual prefixes, as shown in (69).  

(69) (a) Pri-jadoha  

\[
\text{INCH.PROF-eat.3PL.PAST me.CL.DAT REFL apple.PL} \\
\text{‘I came to feel like eating apples.’} \\
\text{(Dimitrova-Vulchanova 1999: 204, ex. (6a))}
\]

(b) Za-dremal-o-s’, tak ložis’.  

\[
\text{INCH.PROF-doze.PAST-3SG.NEUT-REFL so lay.down.2SG.INF} \\
\text{‘If you start feeling like dozing, lay down.’} \\
\text{(A. T. Tvardovskij, *Vasiliy Terkin* (1945))}
\]

If the semantics of the QR and the DR constructions is tied to the imperfective morphology, the data in (69) and the meaning of perfective QR constructions
remain unexplained.

Third, in order to explain cross-linguistic variation the authors propose that imperfectives in Slavic languages differ in terms of what modal base they can combine with. Specifically, ‘in West Slavic and Russian, IMPF does not have access to the preparatory MB we call P-inertia, so cannot receive an intentional reading’ (Rivero & Arregui 2012: 328). This proposal is based on the observation that past imperfective sentences in Russian and West Slavic languages cannot refer to future plans (cf. Spanish *Juan llegaba mañana* ‘John was arriving tomorrow’ (Rivero & Arregui 2012: 321)). Since future plans require P-inertia modal base, the authors conclude that Russian and West Slavic languages lack what they call Intentional imperfectives. The problem, however, is that Russian and West Slavic languages can use imperfectives to refer to future plans, as long as the verb is in the present tense, as the following examples show:

(70) (a) *Ja vyhožu v otpusk čerez nedelju.* [Russian]

_I. NOM go.out.IMPF ISG.PRES_ to vacation after week.ACC_

‘I take a vacation in a week.’

(b) *Biorę za tydzień urlop.* [Polish]

_take.ISG for week vacation.ACC_

‘I take vacation in a week.’

(Łazorczyk 2010: 88, ex. (64b))
Rivero & Arregui (2012: 321, ft. 12) explicitly exclude constructions with imperfective present tense from their analysis, but these constructions are directly relevant for their proposal. Specifically, the authors assume that the futurate meaning is possible if MB\textsubscript{p-inertia} is available in a language. The examples in (70) show that futurate meaning is possible when the imperfective combines with the present tense. Therefore, MB\textsubscript{p-inertia} should be available in Russian and Polish. But then it is a puzzle why reflexive constructions in West Slavic cannot express dispositions.

A similar concern challenges the authors’ explanation of the absence of the QR construction in South Slavic languages. Recall that the quality of experience meaning is derived because the imperfective is associated with MB\textsubscript{ongoing}. Another important function of this modal base is to derive an ongoing interpretation in non-modalized imperfective constructions (cf. John is singing). Since imperfective verbs in South Slavic are routinely used to refer to on-going events, these languages should have MB\textsubscript{ongoing}. But then the unavailability of the quality of experience interpretation cannot be due to the absence of MB\textsubscript{ongoing} in these languages.

In conclusion, Rivero & Arregui (2012) operate under the assumption that the distribution of reflexive constructions is a categorical phenomenon. The discussion in the previous sections showed that reflexive constructions differ in
terms of their productivity and thus require a more nuanced approach.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper discussed a family of reflexive constructions in Russian that have non-canonical syntactic properties and express a variety of meanings, including disposition (‘I feel like sleeping’), ability (‘I cannot sleep’), and quality of experience (‘I sleep well here’). I have argued that these constructions show fine-grained semantic differences and should be treated as distinct construction types (contra Pariser 1982, Benedicto 1995). In order to account for idiosyncratic syntactic and semantic properties of these constructions and their semi-productivity, I proposed that they are stored in the lexicon as constructional idioms. On the theoretical grounds, this analysis supports the view that lexicon contains not only words but also complex expressions with rich syntactic structure (cf. Jackendoff 1997, 2002, 2008). On the empirical side, the recognition of distinct construction types, dispositional, ability, and quality reflexives, helped to better understand the scope of cross-linguistic variation. The emerging cross-linguistic generalization is that reflexive constructions with Dative subjects in East, West, and South Slavic languages express a different range of meanings. This variability presents further evidence against a uniform approach that derives these constructions by a run of the mill syntactic and semantic analyses.
APPENDIX: PRODUCTIVITY OF THE DR CONSTRUCTION IN RUSSIAN COMPARED TO BULGARIAN

In order to assess the productivity of the Russian DR construction, I compared its distribution to the corresponding construction in Bulgarian. Using the frequency data from Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009), I constructed the list of the most frequent verbs in the Russian National Corpus and checked whether they occur in the DR construction, using Russian National Corpus and online data as a source.

The following classes of verbs were excluded:

(i) verbs that are semantically incompatible with the ‘feel like V-ing’ interpretation, including: (a) predicates that refer to activities towards which the experiencer cannot have a disposition such as znat’ ‘know’, ponimat’ ‘understand’, dumat’ ‘think’, ljubit’ ‘love’, bojat’sja ‘be afraid’, zametit’ ‘notice’, umet’ ‘can/be capable of’, and (b) verbs that require inanimate subjects such as proishodit’ ‘happen’ and byvat’ ‘occur’.

(ii) verbs that cannot occur in the Russian DR construction for morphological reasons, including inherent reflexive verbs such as pytat’ ‘try’ and sobirat’ ‘get together’, and perfective verbs (perfective and imperfective stems have different frequencies and sometimes different roots cf. govorit’ ‘tell’ (imperf.) vs. skazat’ ‘tell’ (perf.)).

(iii) ambiguous verbs such as sčitat’ ‘count’ / ‘consider’, provodit’ ‘conduct’ / ‘walk somebody’, predstavljat’ ‘imagine’/ ‘introduce’.
The first 50 verbs from Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009) that met the relevant semantic and morphological criteria made the list. (I considered a total of 163 verbs). In Table 4 below, the construction is marked as possible if it occurs either in positive or negative context, i.e. ‘I feel like V-ing’ / ‘I don’t feel like V-ing’.

For Bulgarian, grammaticality judgments are based on on-line data native speakers’ judgments.

*IPM = instances per million words

<Insert Table 4 about here>
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FOOTNOTES

1 I am grateful to Ray Jackendoff for inspiring me to work on this topic, and for his insightful feedback on every stage of this project. I also thank Adele Goldberg for a fruitful discussion and comments on an earlier draft of the paper, as well as four anonymous *Journal of Linguistics* reviewers, whose comments helped me to improve the manuscript. Special thanks go to Barbara Tomaszewicz, and Rumen Iliev and Tanya Ivanov-Sullivan for their help with Polish and Bulgarian data, respectively. The usual disclaimer applies.


3 Borik (*2002*) challenges the assumption that imperfective verbs cannot encode bounded events. Her examples, however, either refer to annulled actions or require some special aspectual markers, such as e.g. *uže* ‘already’ in (i). What is important is that imperfective verbs in the DR construction considered here lack these characteristics, so it is a true puzzle why these verbs can refer to bounded events that otherwise require perfective aspect.

(i) Petja uže peresekal ètot kanal za polčasa / *polčasa.

Peter already cross.IMPRF.PAST.3SG.MASC this channel in half-hour / *half-hour

‘Peter (has) already crossed this channel in half an hour / *for half an hour.’

(Borik 2002: 47, ex. (15a))

4 These numbers are based on a comparison between DR, QR and AR constructions with *rabotat’sja* ‘work’. A total of 303 examples from the Russian National Corpus were
This observation echoes a claim in Faulhaber (2011), who argues that valency patterns in English cannot be explained by the semantics of the verbs alone.

For corpus study of reflexive verbs and construction grammar analysis see Kyröläinen (2013).

This approach is based on the assumption that frequency is indicative of productivity (cf. Goldberg 1995, 2006). There are several alternative ways to measure productivity. For example, Barðdal (2008) suggests that productivity should be measured as a function of semantic coherence and type frequency, and the inverse correlation between these two variables. Kyröläinen (2008) assesses productivity in terms of category coverage, measuring how many members of a closed semantic class, such as motion verbs, participate in the construction. These alternative measures can be used as complementary tests in future studies on productivity of the Russian DR construction.

An anonymous reviewer observes that the reason DR construction utilizes these particular morphological features might be due to the fact that ‘non-volitional experiencer is construed as more of a recipient (dative case) and patient (reflexive) than a prototypical agent’.

Other members of this class are predstavljat’ ‘imagine’ / predstavljat’-sja ‘experience an image’, voobražat’ ‘imagine’ / voobražat’-sja ‘experience an image’, grezit’ ‘(day)dream’ / grezit’-sja ‘experience an image in a (day)dream’, and verit’ ‘believe’ / verit’-sja ‘be inclined to believe’. Inherently reflexive cognitive verbs such as snit’ sja (snit’) ‘experience something in a dream’, javljat’ sja (*javljet’) ‘appear’ / ‘haunt’, kazat’ sja (*kazat’) ‘appear’ and merešit’ sja (merešit’) ‘loom’ refer to processes over which the experiencer has no volitional control, and thus fit the general pattern shown by derived reflexive cognitive predicates.

Wierzbicka (1986: 410) in her discussion of constructions with cognitive reflexive verbs in Polish paraphrases their meanings as ‘X thought/imagined something because something
happened in his mind, not because he wanted to’ (cf. also Wierzbicka 1979: 375 on Russian).

11 For example, in (i) below from the Russian National Corpus the comparison phrase that refers to a social status (‘as a prosperous collective farmer’) implies positive experience.

(i) Tut mne živet-sja kak zažitočnomu kolhozniku.

‘I live well here.’ (Lit: ‘I live here as a prosperous collective farmer.’)

(E. G. Kazakevič, Star (1946))

While adverbs ‘easily’ and ‘difficult’ are the most frequent ones, as shown by Kyröläinen (2008: 189), idiosyncratic adverbial expressions as in (i) are nevertheless also possible.

12 While this pilot study has obvious scope limitations, as it focuses on infinitives and past and present 3rd person singular forms only, these data help to quantify to some extent statements in the previous literature.

13 One interesting question is why we observe these particular types of ‘modal’ meaning. One possible line of inquiry, suggested by an anonymous reviewer, is to consider the role of volitionality as defined by Dowty (1991) and considered by Skorniakova (2008) to be the main factor responsible for the meaning of Russian impersonal constructions. For Skorniakova (2008), the following two conditions should be met for a construction to have a volitional subject: (i) control over the action (situation), and (ii) intention to act. If either of these conditions is not met, the construction is non-volitional; the logical subject is realized in the Dative case, and the verb has reflexive morphology. The reviewer points out that the violation of condition (i) and (ii) above gives raise to the meanings conveyed by the AR and DR constructions, respectively. If the condition (i) is not met, then ‘the actor is unable to perform the action due to lack of control, producing the “cannot” (AR) interpretation’. If the condition (ii) is not met, ‘the actor does not intend to perform the action, producing the “doesn’t feel
like” (DR) interpretation’. While the reviewer points out that volitionality as formulated above does not allow one to account for the meaning of the QR construction, this is a promising direction for future research.

14 The Bulgarian sentence is grammatical but it can only receive a ‘feel like’ interpretation: ‘Children don’t feel like working’ and therefore is infelicitous in the context in (58), which targets the ability interpretation.

15 Note that changing the modal force to universal would not solve the problem, since modal operators with universal modal force do not entail event realization. Thus, John must be in his office does not mean that John is in his office.

16 To get a computational flavor of the analysis, consider how the meaning of a dispositional construction in (i) is derived. The IMPF operator with a preparatory inertia (P-inertia) modal base in (ii) is taken as argument by the null modal in (iii). The result is shown in (iv).

(i) Janezu se je plesalo. [Slovenian]
   ‘John was in the mood for dancing.’ (Rivero & Arregui 2012: 330, ex. (12.73a))

(ii) MB \( P\text{-inertia} = \lambda s. \lambda s'. s' \) is a P-inertia situation for \( s \) (where \( s' \) is a preparatory inertia situation for \( s \) iff all the events that are in preparatory stages in \( s \) continue in \( s' \) in the way they would if there were no interruptions). (Rivero & Arregui 2012: 324, ex. (12.64))

(iii) For all properties \( P \) of type \(<e, <s, t>>\), entities \( x \) and worlds \( w \):
   \[ [CM]^f_{circ}(P)(x)(w) = 1 \text{ iff } \{ w' : w' \in f_{circ}(w) \} \subseteq \{ w : \exists s : P(x)(s) = 1 \& s \leq w \} \]
   (Rivero & Arregui 2012: 330, ex. (12.74))

(iv) (a) \([\text{Applp} \text{ John} [\text{Appl} CM^0 [\text{TP i Past} [\text{IMPF [Voicep Refl] [VP dance]]]]]]])
   (b) For all worlds \( w \), \( [i] \)(w) = 1 \text{ iff } \{ w : w \in f_{circ}(w) \} \subseteq \{ w : \exists s : s \text{ precedes the speech time.} \)
∀s': MB_{P-\text{inertia}}(s)(s') = 1, \exists e: e \text{ is a dancing by agent } \text{John (human)} \text{ in } s' \text{ and } s \leq w} \}

(Rivero & Arregui 2012: 331, ex. (12.76))

According to (iv), for all worlds \( w \) in the circumstantial modal base \( f\text{-circ} \), there exists a situation \( s \) located in the past, such that for all situations \( s' \) that were in a preparatory stage in \( s \), there exists an event of John’s dancing in \( s' \).

The scope of this phenomenon varies from language to language. Aspectual prefixes are not very common in the Russian DR construction. The examples I found are primarily from poetry and folk songs. The Serbian DR construction allows the inceptive prefix \( pri \) (Marušić & Žaucer 2006: 1128), while the Slovenian DR construction does not allow aspectual prefixes (Rivero 2009: 186). Bulgarian appears to be the least restricted, since it allows \( pri \) ‘come to, get to’, \( do \) ‘start, begin’, and \( ot \) ‘not continue, stop’. Importantly, these prefixes carry perfective interpretation.