



**The Expression Of Modality Of Possibility And Impossibility Of Infinitive
Constructions**

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ABSTRACT

Modality is one of the most interesting categories in linguistics for researchers. The key provisions determining the essence of the category of modality in the modern Russian language, were outlined in the work by V. V. Vinogradov "On the category of modality and modal words", where he characterizes this concept as follows: "Every sentence includes modal value as a significantly designed characteristic, that is, contains an indication of the relationship to reality" (Vinogradov,1950). Modality is included in predicativity and is one of the main features of any sentence that makes it a syntactic category. Following V. V. Vinogradov's concept modality means the ratio of the content of the narrative to reality (reported to its real implementation) from the point of view of the speaker. There are objective-modal meaning of reality/unreality, subjective modal value of reliability/probability, predicate modality of possibility, impossibility, etc.

Our appeal to folk sayings as a specific material of the study isn't just a coincidence. Proverbs are a widespread genre of oral folk poetry where the experience of any nation is briefly, succinctly and convincingly accumulated and at the same time, fixed and transmitted from generation to generation over the centuries; it is also the history, ideology, spiritual values, in-depth features and peculiarities of Russian character and identity of the Russian soul, highly organized thinking culture of the Russian people. Thus, we consider this material is warranted.

Key words: Proverbs, infinitive, possibility, impossibility, modality.



1. METHODS

The material of the study consists of 150 sustainable units (proverbs and sayings), extracted from the "Dictionary of Proverbs of the Russian nation" by V. I. Dal.

As with any modal meaning in Russian language, the value of the possibility – impossibility in proverbs and sayings can be expressed lexically, using a special vocabulary, morphologically – special modal words, syntactically – special designs.

In this article we will focus on constructions with the infinitive in the role of predicative centre. The infinitive construction in this paper refers to one-impersonal and infinitive sentence with infinitive as predicate. It must be noted that the expression of the modal relation to the action of the infinitive is the basic content of a variety of constructions formed with the participation of the infinitive.

The study of the modality of possibility and impossibility is the subject of many research works in linguistics: (V. V. Vinogradov, A.V. Bondarko, G. A. Zolotova, O. L. Kamenskaya, I. B. Khlebnikova, Yu. S. Stepanov, V. V. Gurevich, E. I. Belyaeva, V. V. Panfilov, N. M. Poppyhead Coates (Coates J.1983, Coates J.1987, Coates J.1983, Coates J.1990), Halliday (2015), Hockett (2016) Leech (1980), Mair (1990) and many others etc.). For the analysis of infinitive constructions various scientific methods are used, e.g. the methods of conceptual analysis, modeling, generalization and comparison, analysis of the lexicographic definitions, the method of free associative experiment, the elements of quantitative analysis, etc.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The possibility of action in linguistics refers to its potentiality: effects that may be realized under any conditions, and, accordingly, will become a reality, and possibly not feasible, and thus will remain only an unrealized possibility, or potentiality. The actual ability is determined by the ability or inability of the subject to this action, or terms, in which the action occurs. The modal value of impossibility and impracticability of action or the lack of conducive conditions for the realization of an action are taken as the sense of "impossibility" (Makovka, 1972).

As you know, the compounds with the verbs can, dare, to be able be distinguished according to the range of using among the constructions with modal meaning of possibility and impossibility. This fact was already noted by V. V. Vinogradov. The



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modal value of possibility of action is implemented within the sentences with the following words: *мочь/смочь, уметь/суметь, успеть/успевать, ухитриться/ухитряться, удаться/ удаваться, догадаться, управиться, рисковать, умудриться, иметь возможность, в состоянии, в силах* (can/be able to, to be able to/to be able to catch/keep up, to contrive/to manage, manage/ work out, to guess, to manage risk, to manage, be able, able, able) (Vinogradov, 1950): *Умел пожить, умей и умереть. Умел потерять, умей и найди. (If one was able to live, one could learn to die. Could lose, learn and find.)* The use of the infinitive in the construction to be able, can, could, able + infinitive in perfect tense represents a potential action, as the value of the potentiality is inherited in the infinitive itself. In the presented example, the form of the imperative of the auxiliary verb "be able" brings the connotation of obligation, recommendation, persistent advise, prescribed action to the sentence, although the value of the ability to perform action is: "learn to die, learn to find" means that the person should seek the opportunity to commit these actions. The speaker himself does not take the action, and calls for his execution. The action is surreal, it is required with a touch of prescribed action.

In the following example, the imperfect form of the verb indicates that the action expressed by this construction should be submitted to it in the process of fulfillment, and thus in the duration or occurrence: *Кто умеет домом жить, тот не ходит ворожить* (*The one who knows a house to live does not go conjuring*). This refers to the following: "the man who lives in the family peacefully (as a rule, the term "family" implies the continued people's existence together) and keeps to the family tradition doesn't go to the fortune-tellers". The combination with the infinitive of the verb "to know" has the meaning "to have an ability that forces to do something, to be able to" due to situational opportunities: "walk and work magic" could walk, but not walking, as "able to live in the house." The action is represented as a potential with a hint of acceptable possibilities, the approval of the actions: "who knows how to live."

The modal meaning of impossibility is formed by the presence of the negative particles, pronouns and adverbs with the negative prefix and the words like "no", "not", and some other predication with the prefix "non". T. V. Markelova identifies the following devices of negative expression: the particles no and not, a negative word "no" of verbal formation, the negative pronouns nobody, nothing, etc., adverbs of nowhere, once, etc.



(Markelova,1981): *На что с тем мириться, кто не умеет браниться. Худу быть, кто не умеет домом жить (There's no need to make up with one who can't argue. It's no good to be the one who can't be home).* In these examples, the imperfect infinitive denotes situational inability of the act: the first example tells us that: "we will not be able to make peace with someone who doesn't know how to argue as there is no occasion for reconciliation, because we were not arguing". In the next example, the value of inability is complemented by a hint of disapproval and cautions of doing the action: "If a person is not able to live at home, in the family circle, following family rules and established standards and customs, then some trouble might happen."

The cases of expression of modality of possibility and impossibility in one proverb are also frequently found: *Говорить бы сумел, да не смел. Говорить умею, да не смею (One was able to speak, yet don't dare. I am able to speak, yet don't dare).* From the presented examples we understand that "a man who had (has) the ability to speak, to express the opinion, but it was not possible to do the action in virtue of any subjective or objective circumstances."

All in all, proverbs and sayings, containing a combination of the verbs "to be able, can, dare to" and the infinitive, respond to all reality, reflect the life and the people's outlook, actualize the value assumptions which often have didactic features, transfer the domestic, social, philosophical, ethical, aesthetic people's views, carry modal semantics of possibility and impossibility of the act with differences of meaning: approval, disapproval, recommendation, the advice for accepting or omission of the actions: *Умел пожить, умей и умереть. Дело делать и за себя не сможет, а кричит один за всех (If you are able to live, then learn to die. One can't do a thing for oneself and yet cries more than others).*

Further the functioning of the impersonal predicative adverbs in the infinitive constructions is analyzed. It has the value in the impersonal constructions in combination with the infinitive "the opportunity to do (make) something what is allowed" *Добыть грех можно, а избыть тошно (It's able to produce sin and is sick to flee).* In the presented example it has been suggested that "to sin, do something bad is not difficult, but to get rid of sin will be difficult." The use of the predicate in postposition *шт КГЫШФТ* in Russian emphasizes the infinitive and enhances the modal meaning of



possibility, and the word "sick" is used in postposition to the infinitive "to flee" gives a touch of judgment to the whole statement: "sick, ill atone for sin."

The following example refers to the physical ability to perform the action: (*Мост не великий пост, можно и объехать*) *A bridge is not a great lent, and you can avoid it.* The speaker evaluates the possibility of implementation of the action named by the infinitive: "the bridge is just a bridge, an obstacle that can be overcome in comparison with the lent, which is impossible to violate".

Next, consider an example where we observe the inversion of the infinitive with preposition and postposition of the impersonal predicative adverb *можно* ("possible"), that characterizes the statements of the conversational genre, in our case of proverbs and sayings: *Батожье – дерево божье: терпеть можно.* (*Rods are trees of God, one can endure them*). Rods are defined in the V. I. Dal's interpretation as following: "*Батожок* (rods) in painters' lexics, is a thin stick, to support the writing hand, maulstick. *A shot with rods. To beat someone with rods, to punish.* (Dahl,1993) In the presented example, it is reported that: "we can endure the punishment with a whip, because it's God's creation." The action is seen as a potential.

The modifier *можно* (it is allowed) is often used in the impersonal sentences and can be seen in the popular sayings, where it is presented as verbal faintness of the subject; the subject of the situation and action is depicted as independent figure: *Лихо беде напасть, скоро можно пропасть* (*A trouble gets you fast; you can go to the bad soon*). In this example, the semantic emphasis in the construction without "dative subject" isn't put at the figure in the construction, but at the action, minding the possibility of its implementation regardless of who has the opportunity to make it. Here the doer is "placed over" as if it is suspended (Askochensky,1998), that's why the meaning of possibility in the impersonal sentence is given in a generalized form: *Можно поправитъ, да будет хуже. Эту беду можно с хлебом съестъ* (*It is possible to improve, yet it will be worse. This trouble can be bread to eat (this might apply to anyone)*).

The objectified nature of the impossibility in proverbs and sayings is passed with an antonymous of the impersonal predicative adverb *можно* (it is allowed) modal adverb *нельзя* (you cannot), it is subjected to a denial of the very possibility of the realization of the situation. A. M. Peshkovsky considers this word is remarkable in that, "not being an adverb, that is, not labeling the symptom, however, is used only with verbs"



(Peshkovsky,2001) *Что о том тужить, чего нельзя воротить (Why grieve about something, that cannot be changed)*. In this example, the impersonal predicate *cannot* is used with the perfect infinitive form, where this form actualizes the value of impossibility, adding a shade of recommendation, desirability, advice not to perform the action: "to grieve is not necessary, it is not relevant to perform this action, nothing to fix, time passed, circumstances changed, so there is no need to worry." It should be noted that in some cases, in folk sayings the perfective infinitive used with the non - modifier indicates that the implementation of the value of impossibility is due to the circumstances, so the action is represented as a potential. Thus, sentences with an infinitive of the perfect verb and impersonal predicate *нельзя (you aren't allowed)* do not mean the impossibility of carrying anything and in fact are correlated with a negative infinitive sentences *Соврать можно, а перевернуть нельзя (It is possible to lie but not to misinterpret)*. This example as well as the previous reports of the inability to perform actions due to certain conditions: "if have once told a lie, then you need to stick to this line, so as to lie one more time, to come up with something new or to convince someone of the correctness is no longer possible, or any other preferred conditions, circumstances and so forth." The action is represented as a potential with a hint of warning action.

In the following example, the infinitive of the perfective presents a situation as a single failing: *Все можно, нельзя только на небо взлезть (Everything is possible, but not to go to heaven)*: "from the situation, it is obvious that a person can do a lot, but really, nobody can climb the sky". The action is presented as a potential, infeasible and thus impossible under any circumstances.

When it comes to the sentences where the infinitive of the verb together with the imperfective impersonal predicate is used in the same sense (the impossibility of performance), these statements are correlated with the sentences with non- possibility: *Песня вся, больше петь нельзя (That's the whole song, no more singing)*. "The song ended and there's no way to sing along, to continue, (you shouldn't sing, and it is unlikely to be possible)". In the presented example, the action is meant as potential, and it implies the impossibility to act with a connotation of "lack of hope for success."

The opinion expressed by I. G. Osetrova is interesting to us on the above-described self-predicative adverbs. Scientist includes the combinations of non-infinitive imperfect statements that express a modal meaning of obligation (Osetrov,1985):): *В убыток*



торговать (продавать) нельзя. Нельзя земле без царя стоять(It can't be possible to trade for the own loss. You cannot let the land to stand without a king). Indeed, in the examples, along with the modality of impossibility the modality of obligation also can be considered. Such sentences can also mean the prohibition, and then they are compared with the sentences of optional negation "not allowed to do" or the one without negation "it is forbidden". The examples of action are provided as potential. In our opinion, in such constructions the importance of the impossibility of action with the connotation of prescribed action is expressed. It is possible to note the complication of the modal type of a connotation as "lack of hope for success": *Сказать не весят, утаить нельзя. (It can't be told, and it cannot be hidden as well).*

3. CONCLUSIONS

It is important to note that in proverbs and sayings there is a large number of implementations of the presented expressive sentences with the predicate infinitive, in which the infinitive form is imposed first and dependent word remains in the last place. These sentences are called "sentences with the framework accent structure" (Russian grammar,1980). This inversion with the infinitive preposition and postposition of the predicate *нельзя (not allowed)* presents the deviation from the standard that is more typical for expression from conversational style. This mismatch of linguistic phenomena standard, which is lying in this expressivity, is non - typical, and therefore the singularity, the expressiveness of speech, elements of style are met in proverbs and sayings: *Мать сыра земля, говорить нельзя. И крута гора, да миновать нельзя. (Mother earth, it is not allowed to speak. A steep mountain is impossible to avoid).* In these examples the action is presented as a potential.

There's a curious fact that in the statements that transmit the double negation of the opportunities both the modal relation of the opportunity and the implementation of the designated actions are denied. In this regard, the statements with a "double negation" convey the meaning of the impossibility of non-action expressed by the infinitive, resulting in the meaning of a categorical necessity, the inevitability of the action: *Около печи нельзя не нагреться (You can't help heating near the furnace).* A combination of the predicate with the negative particle with the infinitive has the meaning of "should, must, have to," and is the bookish expression of the modal meaning of obligation. A. M. Peshkovsky notes the weakening of negation: "...the repetition of denial ... creates a



positive sense" (14). The action is represented as a potential with a tinge of obligation: "it is impossible not to warm, meaning you can heat up".

Thus, we can conclude that the semantic specificity of the predicate "not" is the implementation of the values of objective possibility "not to have the capacity and conditions to carry out the action", the modifier is characterized by the detachment of the actions, independence of the process, and by the state of the active worker: *Попятлива да окарачлива коня впрягать нельзя (о неустойке) (Jibbing and backing horse is not to harness (about the penalty).*

4. SUMMARY

Summing up the above information, it should be noted that the semantics of the modality of possibility and impossibility of the infinitive constructions in proverbs and sayings may create various private modal values and shades allowed for the possibility, the possibility of action with a hint of evaluation, the potential impossibility, the impossibility to act with a connotation of "lack of hope for success," approval, disapproval, predicament, recommendation, advice, warning, etc. The combination of modal components and infinitive can express the surreal and potential actions depending on the forms of mood and tense, a functional type of sentences, the lexical meaning of the modal component.

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