**Discovery-Enriched Curriculum (DEC) project**

**The Syntax of Russian**

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**Introduction**

This paper presents a brief introduction about basic Russian grammar to people who has little or no preceding knowledge in this language. In this paper, several topics regarding various grammatical relations, agreement, word order and sentence formation in Russian are covered. To better understand Russian in the syntax view, precise comparison between Russian and English is conducted after gaining a general understanding of Russian.

**Part One: Introduction to Russian**

1. **Gender and Case of nouns and pronouns**

**Gender of nouns**

Russian nouns have the different properties of gender which can be divided into masculine, feminine and neuter gender. But only singular forms of the noun have those difference and plural form do not exhibit gender characteristics (Wade, 2000; Liu, Wu, & He, 1982). Singular forms of nouns are distinguished as following conditions:

All nouns ending in a hard consonant or й are masculine. ‘Natural’ masculines ending in -а or -я such as ‘папа’ and many masculine first names are masculine nouns. In addition, diminutives and augmentatives based on masculine nouns are also contained. Masculine nouns also includes some masculine soft-sign nouns such as natural masculines, deverbal agent nouns and nouns in -аръ derived from verbs.

The nouns(except for natural masculines) ending in -а or -я are feminine. Many nouns which end in a feminine soft sign such as ‘natural feminines’ and -жь, -чь, -шь, -щь, -знь, -мь, -пь, -фь, -сть, -бъ, -вь, -дь, -зь, -сь, -ть(except for masculines such as ‘червь’(worm), ‘тать’(thief), ‘гостъ’ (guest).etc.) The deverbal nouns in -еть such as ‘метель’(snow storm) are also feminine. In addition, It also contains the nouns derived through deaffixation from adjectives and verbs such as ‘высь’ (heights ) from высокий(‘high’) and ‘гарь’(burning) from ‘гореть’(to burn).

There are also some neuter nouns which usually ending in -о, -е, -ё, -мя(except for some special nouns such as masculine ‘кофе’(coffee)) and parts of speech functioning as nouns such as ‘громкое’(a loud hurrah).

The nouns with -а(-я) ending are common gender which use a kind of typical behaviour or feature to present person. The syntax in context can tell us the gender of a particular noun in sentence. Sometimes the gender of nouns without obvious rules need memorizing specially.

**The case of nouns**

In general, Russian nouns have six cases including nominative, accusative, genitive, prepositional, dative and instrumental. The methods of distinguishing can be found in the table in II. Plural forms for nouns.

The nominative case denotes the subject and it may be introduced. It can also be used in possessive constructions, comparative constructions after ‘чем’ and generalizing constructions after ‘как’.

Here is an example of introduction:

Это моя жена

This my.M.SG wife(.NOM)

‘This is my wife’

The genitive case is used to denote possession, relationship and quantity. When the following adjectives govern the genitive, the nouns also use genitive case.

Here is an example of genitive with adjectives:

Он лишён остроумия.

He lacking.M.SG wit.GEN

‘He is lacking in wit.’

The dative case denotes the indirect object of a verb which is usually the person for whom an action is performed. For example: In ‘дать книгу Антону’(give the book to Anton), Антону(Anton) is in dative case.

The accusative case denotes the object of a transitive verb.

The instrumental case is used in constructions denoting movements of the body as well as the objects held with the hand. For example, ‘хлопать дверью’(to slam a door’. The instrumental can also be used to denote the agent in passive constructions and time/route in adverbial expressions.

The prepositional case is usually used together with the preposition words such as ‘в, на , о, при’. For example: ‘В прошлом году’((in the) last year)

**Case and gender of pronouns**

Personal pronouns

First person Second person Third person

singular plural singular plural singular plural

nominative я мы ты вы он,оно она они

genitive меня́ нас тебя вас его еѐ их

dative мне нам тебе вам ему ей им

accusative меня́ нас тебя вас его еѐ их

instrumental мной на́ми тобой вами им ей ими

prepositional обо мне о нам о тебе о вас о нѐм о ней о них

Possessive pronouns

Singular Plural Singular Plural

M neuter F N/A M neuter F N/A

nominative мой мо-ё мо-я мо-и́ наш наш-е на́ш-а на́ш-и

genitive мо-его́ мо-е́й мо-и́х на́ш-его на́ш-ей на́ш-их

dative мо-ему́ мо-ей мо-и́м на́ш-ему на́ш-ей на́ш-их

accusative 1/2 мо-ё мо-ю́ мо-и́(х) 1/2 на́ш-е на́ш-у на́ш-и(х)

instrumental мо-и́м мо-ей мо-и́ми на́ш-им на́ш-ей на́ш-ими

prepositional о мо-ём о мо-ей о мо-их о наш-ем о наш-ей о наш-их

‘твой’ declines like ‘мой’ and вам’ declines like ‘наш’.

‘Его’(his), ‘её’(her), ‘их’(their) are invariable.

Demonstrative pronoun

Singular Plural Singular Plural

M neuter F N/A M neuter F N/A

nominative этот это эта эти тот то та те

genitive этого этой этих того та тех

dative этому этой этим тому той тем

accusative этот(о) это эту эти(х) тот(о) то ту те(х)

instrumental этим этой этими тем той теми

prepositional об этом об этой об этих о том о той тех

There are also some other pronouns such as reflexive pronouns which also have canse difference but not gender difference.

**II. Plural Forms of Nouns**

Russian has the regular and irregular form of plural for nouns. Because Russian has three kinds of declensions and 6 cases, regular forms of plural of nouns are divided by its 6cases, declensions, and even gender, etc (Wade, 2000; Liu et al, 1982). The regular plural forms of nouns are discussed below.

Firstly, the following table show the regular form of nominative case

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Singular | Plural | Ending |
| Masculine:  Hard stem  Soft stem | диван (divan)  портфель (briefcase) | дивaн**ы**  портфeли | -ы  -и |
| Feminine:  Hard stem  Soft stem | Газета (newspaper)  Кyхня (kitchen) | газетаы  кyхняи | -ы  -и |
| Neuter  Hard stem  Soft stem | Крeсло (armchair)  Здание(building) | Крeсло  Здания | -а  -я |

Secondly, accusative case is discussed below:

As for first accusative case, the accusative case endings of first declension *inanimate* masculine, as well as neuter nouns, are same with the nominative case endings, in both singular and plural. The following tables show the details.

Masculine inanimate masculine

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Case | Singular  soft stem Hard stem | Plural  Soft stem Hard stem |
| Nom. | Стол портфель  (table) (briefcase) | Стольі портфели |
| Acc. =Nom | стол портфель | Стольі портфели |

Neuter nouns

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Case | Singular  soft stem Hard stem | Plural  soft stem Hard stem |
| Nom. | Окно здание | Окнa здания |
| Acc. =Nom | Окно здание  (window) (building) | Окнa здания |

The accusative case endings of first declension animate masculine nouns in both singular and plural are identical to the genitive case ending.

Animate masculine nouns

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Case | Singular  soft stem Hard stem | Plural  soft stem Hard stem |
| Nom | Студент писатель  (student) (writer) | Студенты писатели |
| Acc=Gen | Студентa писателя | Студентов писателей |

As for second declension, feminine nouns ending in –а/-я , as well as masculine nouns ending in –а/ -я, all take the ending –у/-ю in the accusative singular. Both masculine and feminine animate nouns in the plural have an ending in the accusative to the genitive plural

As for third declension, inanimate nouns in the singular and plural have an ending identical to the nominative. Third declension animate nouns, of which there are few (e.g. свекровь mother-in-law) have an ending in the accusative plural identical to the genitive plural

Feminine Nouns in - ь

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Case | Singular  animate inanimate | Plural  animate inanimate |
| Nom | Тетрадь свекровь | Тетрадьи свекрови |
| Acc | Тетрадь свекровь | Тетрадьи свекровеи |

Thirdly, when it comes to the genitive case, there are three possible endings in the genitive plural: (1). -ов (-ев) , (2) еи, (3)ф, which are discussed below.

In terms of those the genitive case with plural ending –ов, it should be divided into two situations. As for masculine nouns with ending in a hard paired consonant, for instance, the plural form of стоп is стопов, in the meaning of table; the plural form of дом is домов, in the meaning of house. As for the masculine nouns with the stressed suffix, for instance отецов is the plural form of Отец, in the meaning of father, певецов is the plural form of певец, in the meaning of singer.

In terms of genitive case with plural ending - ев, it should be divided into three situations. As for masculine nouns with the unstressed suffix –ец, the genitive plural form of nominative singular американец is американцев, in the meaning of American; the genitive plural form of nominative singular месяц is месяцев, in the meaning of month. As for the masculine nouns with a stem ending in -й, for instance, the genitive plural form of nominative singular Музей is музеев, in the meaning of museum; the genitive plural form of nominative singular Герой is героев, in the meaning of hero. As for the nouns whose nominative plural is stem-stressed and ends in -ья, the genitive plural form of nominative singular брат is братев, in the meaning of brother; the genitive plural form of nominative singular стул is стулев, in the meaning of chair.

In terms of genitive case with plural ending -ей , it should be divided into four situations. As for masculine and feminine nouns whose stem ends in the soft sign -ь, for instance, the genitive plural form of nominative singular словарь is словарей, in the meaning of dictionary; the genitive plural form of nominative singular тетрадь is тетрадей, in the meaning of notebook. As for masculine nouns ending in the unpaired consonants -ж -ч -ш -щ, for instance, the genitive plural form of nominative singular врач is врачей, in the meaning of doctor; the genitive plural form of nominative singular нож is нож, in the meaning of knife. As for those nouns whose nominative plural ends in stressed -ь, for instance, друзей is the genitive plural of друг, in the meaning of friend; сыновей is the genitive plural of сын, in the meaning of son. As for a few nouns that form their genitive plural from a different word, for instance, детей is the genitive plural of Ребенка, in the meaning of child.

In terms of the genitive case with plural zero ending -ф. Most feminine nouns in -а,-я and neuter nouns in-o, -e, drop this vowel in the genitive plural, with zero ending. For example: Кнйг is the genitive plural of nominative plural Кнйга, in the meaning of book. Газет is the genitive plural form of Газета, in the meaning of newspaper. Certain nouns with the zero ending in the genitive plural also “insert” the vowel -o- or -e- in order to break up a consonant cluster at the end of the word, for instance, Кухонь is the genitive plural form of Кухня, in the meaning of kitchen. As for those nouns whose nominative singular ends in stressed -ь and it have an inserted vowel -e- before a zero ending, for instance, семей is the genitive plural of nominative plural сеья, in the meaning of family. As for a few nouns whose genitive plural is identical to the nominative singular, for instance, глаз is the genitive plural form of глаз, in the meaning of eye.

Fourthly, prepositional case  is discussed below.

The endings of the prepositional plural are that -ax for all nouns ending in a hard stem and -ях for all nouns ending in a soft stem

The following table illustrates the endings of the prepositional case.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Nominative  Singular | Prepositional singular | ending | Prepositional plural | Ending |
| Masculine | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | стол | столе | -е | столах | -ах |
| Soft Stem | музей | музее |  | музеях | -ях |
| Stem in -цц | кафетерий | кафетерии | -и | кафетериях |  |
| Neuter | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | окно | окне | -е | окнах | -ах |
| Soft Stem | море | море |  | морях | -ях |
| Stem in -цe | здание | здании | -и | зданиях |  |
| Feminine | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | газета | газете | -е | газетах | -ах |
| Soft Stem | неделя | неделе |  | неделях | -ях |
| Stem in-ця | аудитория | аудитории | -и | аудиториях |  |
| Stem in -ь | тетрадь | тетради | -и | тетрадях |  |

Fifthly, pattern of plural noun of dative case  is listed below.

The dative plural endings are that **-ам** for all nouns with a hard stem and **-ям** for all nouns with a soft stem.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Nominative  Singular | Dative  Singular | Ending | Dative  plural | Ending |
| Masculine | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | стол | столу | -у | столам | -ам |
| Soft Stem | музей | музею | -ю | музеях | -ям |
| Neuter | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | окно | окну | -у | окнах | -ам |
| Soft Stem | здание | зданию | -ю | зданиям | -ям |
| Feminine | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | газета | газете | -е | газетам | -ам |
| Soft Stem | тётя | тёте |  | тётям | -ям |
| Stem in -ця | аудитория | аудитории | -и | аудиториям |  |
| Stem in -ь | мать | матерн |  | матерям |  |

Lastly, plural noun forms of instrumental case  are discussed. The instrumental plural endings are that **-ами** for all nouns with a hard stem and **-ями** for all nouns with a soft stem .

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Nominative  Singular | Instrumental singular | ending | Instrumental plural | Ending |
| Masculine | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | автобус | автобусом | -ом | автобусами | -ами |
| Soft Stem | трамвай | трамваем | -ем | трамваями | -ями |
| End-stress | секретарь | секретарём | -ём | секретарями |  |
| Neuter | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | окно | окном | -ом | окнами | -ами |
| Soft Stem | поле | полем | -ем | полями | -ями |
| Feminine | | | | | |
| Hard Stem | газета | газетой | -ой | газетами | -ами |
| Soft Stem | тётя | тётей | -ей | тётями | -ями |
| End-stress | семья | семьёй | -ёй | семьями |  |
| Stem in -ь | мать | матерью | -ью | матерями |  |

The singular and plural endings of nouns in the instrumental case are illustrated in the following table.

Furthermore, the irregular plural forms are discussed below. Firstly, in the situation of irregular nominative plurals in - ья, a few masculine and neuter nouns form their nominative plural irregularly with the ending -ья, listed in the table below. For instance, as for masculine, Брат (PL:братья), in the meaning of brother; муж (PL:мужья ), in the meaning of husband. As for neuter, Дерево (PL:Деревоья), in the meaning of tree; Перо (PL:Пероья), in the meaning of feather. It should be noted that their stem in two plural noun argument by adding the element –ер- (as in English mother and daughter) before the ending - и: one is мать (PL: матьери), in the meaning of mother; the other is дочь (дочьери), in the meaning of daughter.

A few nouns undergo a stem in the plural, such as друг (PL:друг), in the meaning of friend, and сын (PL: сынья), in the meaning of son.

Secondly, two nouns use totally different word for the plural. One is реоёнок (PL:детей), in the meaning of child and the other is человек (PL:люди), in the eaning of person.

Thirdly, as for plurals of neuter nouns in – мя, it undergoes a stem change in the plural. For instance, Время (PL:Времена), in the meaning of time; имя (PL:имена), in the meaning of name; семя (PL:семена), in the meaning of seed.

**III. The order of the Dependents in a Noun phrase**

The first order is that “Adjective + Noun”, for instance,

Полезный совет

helpful advice

‘A helpful advice’

The second order is that “ Noun + prepositional phrase ”, for example,

Книга над столом

Book.SG.NOM on table.SG.INSTR

‘A book on the table’

It should be noted that adjective will agree with nouns on gender, number and case. Adjectives in Russian usually have two forms, which are called long form and short form(long form is attributive and short form is predictive, and there also exists some differences on meaning and usage).

**IV. Word order**  
 Compared to English, Russian word order is very flexible. In English, the relationship between two elements is shown by their positions (Wade, 2000; Liu et al, 1982). But the relationship between two elements in the Russian sentence is shown by the word endings.

For example:  
Кошки е-дят мыш-ей.

cat.PL eat-3PL.PRS mouse-PL.ACC

‘Cats eat mice.’

The object of the action is shown by -ей of the word мышей. Because of this feature, we can change the word order of Russian sentence without influencing the overall meaning. We can also say ‘Кошки едят мышей.’(SVO) in following forms:  
Мышей едят кошки. (OVS)  
Едят кошки мышей. (VSO)  
Едят мышей кошки. (VOS)  
 Though Russian word order is flexible, it has its own peculiarities. New information (or emphasized information) always comes at the end of the sentence. When verb has special meaning, it will be fronting. For example, in imperative sentence, subject is omitted and the verb is fronting.Here is an example of new information:  
 В Москв-у е-дет Мария.

It Moscow-ACC go-3SG.PRS Maria.

‘It is Maria who goes to Moscow.’

**V. Verbal Agreement**

As for verbal agreement in Russian language, predicate agrees with the subject in person, number, and in the past tense in gender as well (Bill, 1872).

**Gender agreement**

The situations that two personal pronouns or by a combination of personal pronoun and a noun are discussed below. Firstly, if the pronoun I or we enters into the composition for the subject, the predicate uses the first person plural. For instance, ты и я (thou and I), судья да я (the judge and I), мы с вами (we and thou), мы и они (we and you). Secondly, predicate assumes the forms of second person plural in the situation that the pronoun thou or you enters into the composition of the subject, such as и ты и он ( thou and he), вы и она (you and she). Thirdly, predicate uses the third person plural, if the pronounce they is a part of the subject, such as они и судья, они и судья, они с нами.

For instance:

судья да я докажем

the judge and 1SG prove.1PL.FUT

The judge and I will prove

вы и она докажете

2SG and 3SG prove.2PL.FUT

You and she will prove.

они и судья докажут

3PL and the judge prove.3PL.FUT

They and the judge will prove

The situation that the subject is the noun are discussed below.

Firstly, indeclinable geographical concepts and place names original form foreign (means non-Russian localities) with the ending **-е, -и, -о, -у** or stressed **-а**. The gender of predicate is determined by the gender of the geographical genetic word. For instance, if it is a town (город) or island (остров), the predicate is feminine. If a lake (озеро) or state (государство), the predicate is neuter.

For instance,

сирокко влажный

sirocco moist.INAN.ACC

The sirocco is moist.

Secondly, the predicate is neuter in the situation when the subject is a word-group or a part of speech used as a noun, or in the situation when the subject is an inanimate indeclinable noun original from foreign area with the ending **-е, -и, -о, -у, 0ю**, or stressed **а**.

Thirdly there are some categories of animate nouns whose predicate is either feminine or masculine depending on the sex of the person or animal: indeclinable proper names of foreign origin, indeclinable transliterated foreign nouns denoting animals (e.g. какаду, пони), indeclinable transliterated foreign nouns denoting persons. For instance, in the case of леди and мадам, the predicate is feminine, in the case of кули,денди, the predicate is masculine. There is a group of nouns with the ending -а or -я , which can be used in either sex, such as бродяга (tramp).

**Number agreement**

In the situation when the subject is expressed by a numeral or a combination of a numeral and a noun, followings are discussed whether verbal predicate uses singular or plural.

In the situations of numeral as subject, it can be divided into the situation of Cardinal numeral and collectie numeral. When it is cardinal numeral, the predicate is in the third person singular, in the past tense and in neuter gender. When it is collectie numeral, if it follows the subject the predicate is in the third person plural, however, if it precedes the subject the predicate is in the third person singular.

For example,

трое вошли

three enter.3PL.PFV.PAST

Three enter

вошло трое

enter.3SG.PFV.PAST three

Three enter

Secondly, when the subject is a combination of a numeral and a noun in the genitive case, the predicate is either singular or plural.

There are some cases that the predicate is in the singular. The subject is inanimate or animal, the subject indicates an interval of time and the predicate states that-or-how this time elapses, the subject indicates an appropriate quantity, and the case that one of these following words enters into the composition of the subject: только (only), всего (in all), более (more), менее (less), почти (almost), много (much), немного (some) сколько (how much), столько (so much), пол (half).

There are some cases that the predicate is in the plural. When the nominal part of the subject is the genitive case and it denotes persons, and the predicate means these persons’ action doings. For instance,

Восемь человек прибыли на Сахалин до 1870 года

Eight person.SG.NOM arrive.3PL.PFV.PAST on Sakhalin before 1870 year

Eight people arrived on Sakhalin before 1870.

The subject includes a pronoun or adjective, for instance,

Эти два романа были наши написаны

these two novel.SG.GEN be.PL.PAST POSS.1PL written.PL.

These two novels were written.

Thirdly, when the subject is a combination of несколько (several), сколько(how many), много(many), мало(a few), большинство(the majority), меньшинство(the minority), множество(a multitude), and a noun is in the genitive plural, the predicate is usually in plural, if it denotes active construction, and predicate is usually in singular if it denotes a passive construction. For instance,

Сколько людей вспоминают вас

how many people.PL.GEN remember.3PL.PRE you.ACC

How many people remember you.

множество убийц было сослано на Сахалин

A multitude murder.PL.GEN be.SG.PAST. exil.SG.PAST. to Sakhalin

A multitude of murders were exiled to Sakhalin

**VIII. Active and Passive sentences**

Unlike English, Russian does not has a regular active-passive structure opposition (Wade, 2000; Liu et al, 1982). There are different ways to form passive voice out of active and obscure a subject. Compared with active voice, passive voice is always used in business communication and formal styles of speech.

**Active voice**

Nominative subject/ Agent—Transitive verb—accusative direct object/ patient

For example:

студент-ы организ-ют клуб

student-PL organise-3PL.PRS club.ACC

‘The students are organizing a club.’

**Passive voice**  
Perfective verbs: construction with short past participles.   
 If you have a transitive sentence that uses a perfective verb, that sentence can often be transformed into a passive sentence: Firstly, the old direct object (accusative) becomes the new subject (nominative). Secondly, replace the transitive verb with a short-form participle which will have to agree with the new subject. Thirdly, the old subject (nominative) becomes agent (instrumental).The verb will have to agree with the subject of the sentence.

For example:

Письмо написано Иваном.

letter write.PPP Ivan.INS

‘The letter has been written by Ivan.’

Imperfective verbs: constructions with -ся.   
 The passive voice is formed by adding the reflexive postfix -ся to the imperfective verb. Nominative subject/patient—intransitive verb in ся—instrumental agent. The subject needs not to be mentioned.

For example: ‘Сальвадор Дали писал картину в течение всего 1931 года.’ (Salvador Dali was painting that picture during the whole year 1931.) can be rewritten as ‘Картина писалась Сальвадором Дали в течение всего 1931 года.’ (The picture had been painted by Salvador Dali during the whole year 1931.)

**IX. The form of Relative clause**

Relative clauses usually directly follow the constituents which are specified, locate in the main clauses or after the main clauses (Wade, 2000; Liu et al, 1982). There are many associated word in Russian such as который, чей,

К**оторый**

Который has changes of gender, number and case. Gender and number of Который agree with the constituent which is specified and its case is decided by its position in relative clause. For example:

Я виде-л мальчика, который учился в средней школе.

1SG see-M.SG.PAST boy.ACC who study.M.3SG.PAST in high school.PREP

‘I saw the boy who studied in the high school.’

Я видел мальчика, к которому мы ходили вчера.

1SG see-M.SG.PAST boy.ACC to who.PREP 1PL visit.PL.PAST yesterday

‘I saw the boy, to whom we visited yesterday.’

**Чей**

Чей expresses subordinative relationship(‘whose’)，which also has changes of gender, number and case. But the changes are only agree with the modified words in the relative clauses, not the specified words in the main clauses. который can also use at this time.

**какой**

какой emphasizes on the nature and characteristics of the object, which has variation according to the NATURE, NUMBER and CASE. It is used in the same way as который. Sometimes there are demonstrative pronouns такой, тот in the main clauses respectively. Like the following sentences show:

Это была такая ночь, какой я никогда не видел раньше.

It be.F.SG.PAST such night which 1SG never not see.M.SG.PAST before

‘It was a night I had never seen before.’

The NUMBER of какой can sometimes not agree with the word it modifies. It means when the word is in singular form while какой is in its plural form, the word is ‘one of’ the kind of objects.

The differences from который：

который means the thing described by который is the same thing. While какой means it is not the same thing which is described by it, instead, they are just similar. Therefore, it can not be replaced by который. The following sentences show the difference: ‘Я дал ему словарь, который я только что купил.’(I gave him the dictionary I just bought.) VS. ‘Я дал ему словарь, какой вы недавно купил.’(I gave him a dictionary that you just bought.)

**где, куда, откуда**

They illustrates there are nouns expressing location in the main clause. Sometimes it also illustrates nouns not containing location information. Like книга and статья. Sometimes it can be replaced by the indirect case of который in its preposition form.

**когда**

To illustrate the timing words in the main clause, like время, год, месяц, день, час, минута, секунда and so on. Under such circumstances, it can be replaced by который with preposition. Like the following sentences show: ‘Настала минута, когда (в которую) я понял всю цену этих слов.’(The minute came when (in which) I understood the full cost of these words.)

To illustrate the nouns containing mode in the main clauses. While, настроение, положение, случай can’t be replaced by который under such circumstances. Like the following sentences show: ‘Бывает настроение, когда человеку хочется остаться одному.’(There is a mood when a person wants to be left alone.)

**кто**

кто itself does not has variations in GENDER or NUMBER. It only has that in CASE. The position it gains in the relative clause decides the case it uses.

To illustrate the nouns in the main clauses. It can be replaced by the appropriate form of который, like: ‘Человек, о ком (о котором) вы говорите, находится в соседней комнате.’(The person about whom you are talking about is in the next room.)

To illustrate nominalized pronouns in the main clause, forming corresponding relationship together with тот, та, те, все, каждый, всякий, любой, первый, последний, like: ‘Я был последним, кому удалось попасть на выставку.’(I was the last person who managed to get to the exhibition.)

When кто is in subject position and the noun being described is in its plural form, the predicate in the sentence can also be in its plural form. Like the following sentences illustrate:

Все, кто собрался на экскурсию, пришли вовремя.

All.PL who(.SG) gather.M.SG.PPFV on tour.SG.ACC come.PL.PPFV timely

‘All the person who gathered for the tour came on time.’

**что**

что itself doesn’t have variation in GENDER or NUMBER. Only CASE is shown in the variations. The case is supposed to use depends on its position in the relative clause. It can be replaced by the appropriate form of который under such circumstances.

To illustrate the nouns in the main clauses. Under such situation, что is always in its NOMINATIVE or ACCUSATIVE form. When it is in NOMINATIVE case, the predicate in the relative clause does not agree with что, rather it agrees with the word being described. Like the following sentences show:

Они жили в доме, что стоял на берегу реки.

3PL live.PL.PAST in house.PREP which stand.M.SG.PAST on shore.LOC river

‘They lived in a house that stood on the river bank.’

To illustrate nominalized pronouns in the main clause, forming corresponding relationship together with то, всё, главное, первое. Like this sentence: ‘Это главное, что нужно знать всем.’(This is the main thing that everyone needs to know.)

**X. WH-Questions and YES/NO Questions**

When it comes to the yes/no questions in Russian, word order does not change, and the only things need to do are to place a question mark and change the intonation of the sentence.

When it comes to the wh-question, the word order is that Question Word + Subject + Predicate + Complement. It should be noted that there is no auxiliary verb in the wh-question sentence, compared with English. The question words in Russian are: Кто (who), Что (what), Почему (why), Когда (when), Где(where), Как (how), Сколько (how much/many), etc. For instance:

Что Вы хотите?

what 2PL want.2PL.PRES

What do you want?

Что вы делаете?  
what 2PL make.2PL.PRES

What are you making?

It should be noted that the question word should agree with the noun that it refers to. As for Что (what), Что is nominative and accusative case, Чему is its dative case, Чего is its genitive case, Чем is its instrumental case, Чём is prepositional case. As for Кто (who), Кто is the nominative case, Кого is its accusative case, Кому is the dative case, Кого is the genitive case, Кем is the instrumental case, and Ком is the prepositional case.

**Part Two: Comparison between English and Russian**

After gaining a general concept about what Russian grammar is like, it is of great help to have a more comprehensive view about it by making comparison with English syntax. Therefore, the following discussion will focus on the similarities and differences between these two languages.

1. **Comparative adjectives**

**Similarities:**

First of all, Russian has comparative which is ONE-WORD attributive comparatives. It is the same as English like better and worse. There are six such comparatives in Russian as listed below:

хороший ‘good’ лучший ‘better’

плохой ‘bad’ худший ‘worse’

старый ‘old’ старший ‘older, senior’

молодой ‘young’ младший ‘younger, junior’

большой ‘big’ больший ‘bigger’

маленький ‘small’ маленький ‘smaller’

Second and the most similar characteristic Russian has with English comparative adjective is the way to form predicative comparative with a suffix ‘ee’ in Russian and ‘er’ in English. Such method is applied to most adjectives as the examples shown:

удобный-ee ‘more comfortable’

красив-ee ‘more beautiful’

It is worth to be noticed that comparative in -ee in Russian and -er in English are invariable, which means they are used to nouns of any gender and number.

Differences:

Since Russian adjectives agree with GENDER and NUMBER. For GENDER, Russian adjectives are divided into MASCULINE, FEMININE and NEUTER. Such as урок (course), рука (hand) is FEMININE and ухо (ear) is NEUTER. It is the same for adjectives in Russian. When an adjective is used to modify nouns in different GENDER, different suffixes will be added to the adjectives to agree with the GENDER, so is the NUMBER.

One of attributive comparative types is with более (more), which is invariable. While, the adjectives will agree with the nouns’ GENDER. The following set of phrases shows the difference.

Более красивый дом

1. more beautiful house

Более красивая девушка

1. more beautiful girl

Более красивое дерево

1. more beautiful tree

The comparative adjectives will also agree with the nouns’ NUMBER. The following two phrases demonstrate the variation.

Более красивый ребенок

1. more beautiful child

Более красивые дети

more beautiful children

In contrast with English, the form of adjectives in Russian is also affected by the CASE of the phrase, which is shown as below:

Нет более красивого сада.

no more beautiful.M.GEN garden.SG.GEN

‘There is no more beautiful garden.’

There is another difference between English and Russian which is related to the last consonant of the adjective and the affixes that are supposed to use. There is no restriction in that term in English. While in Russian, another suffix ‘s’ is used when the last consonant of adjective is not н, л, р, п, б, м or в.

**II. Reflexive verbs**

In English, reflexive verb refers to the verb whose semantic agent and patient are the same(typically represented syntactically by the subject and direct object). The general form is a transitive verb followed by a reflexive pronoun(myself, himself, herself, yourself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves). For example, ‘We enjoyed ourselves very much.’ But an English reflexive verb does not have any case marking to indicate its reflexive.

In Russian, reflexive verb has a reflexive ending ‘-ся’(follows the consonant or semi-consonant) and ‘-сь’(follows the vowel). Some -ся verbs have different meaning compared to original forms, such as ‘находить’(find)---находиться (locate). And there are also some verbs only have the forms which end with ‘-ся’ such as ‘городиться’ and ‘бояться’.

**The ‘true’ reflexives**

This kind of Russian reflexive has the agent which turns back the action upon himself/herself, just like an English one. The number of the ‘true’ reflexives is relatively small.

For example:

Мать купа-ет-ся.

mother bath.3SG.REFL

‘The mother bathes (herself).’

**Semi-reflexive verbs**

These verbs describe an action which the agent performs ‘for’ rather than ‘to’ himself or herself. For example: ‘укладываться к поездке’(pack for the trip)

**Intransitive reflexives**

This kind of reflexive refers to the form which comes from adding reflexive ending to a transitive verb. Many English verbs are both transitive and intransitive, but Russian verbs are distinguished clearly by using different verbs or reflexive endings.

For example:

Земля врашает-ся.

earth rotate.3SG-REFL

‘The Earth rotates.’

**Reflexive verbs with passive meaning**

Generally, the reflexive verbs with passive meaning are formed by adding reflexive endings to imperfective transitive verbs. The agents of actions in reflexive sentences are usually in the forms of instrumentals, which can be hardly found in transitive sentences.

For example:

Кииги возврашают-ся в библиотек-у ученик-ами.

book.PL return.3PL.IPFV-REFL to library.ACC (by)pupil-3PL.INS

‘The books are returned to the library by the pupils.’

**Reciprocal meaning**

Some reflexive verbs denote reciprocal or joint action, which means the participants are both agent and patient. C+instrumental may combines with such verbs and the subject of the verb maybe either singular or plural. For example: ‘Мы собираемся.’ (We gather.)

**Reflexive verbs which express feelings and attitudes**

They express or reflect feelings and attitudes. Some of them can only used as reflexive verbs but the other can also used as transitive verbs without reflexive endings. For example: ‘Я бесцокою-съ.’(I am worried)

**Intense or purposeful action**

This kind of reflexive verbs denote intense or purposeful action which can be interpreted as ‘to do(something)’ such as ‘to achieve’, ‘to apply’ and ‘to try’.

For example:

Мы должны добиться того.

1PL must.1PL achieve.REFL that.GEN

‘We must achieve it.’

**Reflexive verbs that emphasize thoroughness**

These verbs are mostly prefixed ‘вы’, ‘до’or ‘на’ and they emphasize thorough completion of an action. The ones prefixed ‘за’ express absorption in an activity such as ‘задумыватъся/задуматъся’(to be lost in thought). For example: ‘Я не высыпа́юсь.’(I don't get enough sleep.)

**Reflexive verbs that denote potential to denote natural action**

This kind of reflexive verbs describe a normal behaviour of agents which are usually the aggressive behaviours of animals.

For example:

Собаки куса-ют-ся.

Dog.3PL bite-3PL.PRS-REFL

‘Dogs bite.’

Compared with English reflexive verbs, Russian reflexive verbs are intransitive and most of them are formed by adding reflexive endings to transitive verbs. Beyond that, Russian reflexive verbs have various semantic meanings which English ones may not be able to express.

**III. The syntax of infinitive**

**Similarities:**

First of all, in both Russian and English, the subject is shared by both verbs in the sentences. As the following examples show:

Я хочу спать.

1S want.1S.PRES sleep.PERF

I want to sleep.

Она любит читать.

3F.S like.PRES read.INF

She likes to read.

The other similarity between these two is that under some occasions, there are different logical subjects for each verb. Examples are given as below:

Он всех заставляет работать.

3M.SG everyone compel.3SG.PRES work.INF

Не makes everybody work.

There are more differences between the two languages as for the infinitive verbs. The first one is that they have different ways of expressing beginning or continuation of a ver. In Russian, the verbs are in their complement form standing for the incomplete action. While in English, such form only cannot express the meaning successfully. Examples are given below:

Он начинает ходить.

3M.SG begin.3SG.PFV.PRES walk.INF

Не is beginning to walk.

Я продолжал писать.

1SG continue.3M.SG.IPFV.PAST write.INF

I continued to write.

The second difference is that in Russian, ‘to’ in English is sometimes omitted in expression, especially with the verbs of motion like ‘go’. The example below elaborates this point:

Он пошёл купить хлеба.

3M.SG go.3M.SG. IPFV.PAST buy.INF bread.SG.GEN

Не went (**to)** buy some bread.

One of the most distinctive differences between the two is the way to express interrogative sentences with infinitive verbs in Russian and that in English. In Russia, a model particle ‘He’ is used in the phase ‘He + infinitive verb + ??’. ‘He’ used here gains no negation meaning, but doubt.

**IV. The Form of Perfective and Imperfective**

In Russian, some words only have imperfective. For example, эависеть (to depend), повиноваться (to obey), etc. Some words only have perfective. For example, воспрянуть (to cheer up), хлынуть (to gush). Most words have both perfective and imperfective aspects. There are some patterns to form the perfective aspect.

Firstly, prefixation is the way that the perfective is formed by adding a prefix to the imperfective. There are various forms of prefixes: вы-, за-, нс-, на-, по-, прн-, про-, раэ-, c- , y-,

For example:

**Imperfective Perfective Meaning**

лнть **вы**лнть to drink

плнтнть **за**плнтнть to pay

печь **нс**печь to bake

печатать **на**печатать to print/to type

звонисать **по**звонисать to telephone

готовить **прн**готовить to prepare дeлать **c**дeлать to do, make

видеть **y**видеть to see

Secondly, through internal modification, it insert a syllable to the word, or changing conjugation

For example:

* Inserting a syllable

**Imperfective Perfective Meaning**

завязать завяз**ыв**ать to tie

разоить разои**ва**ть to smash

* Change in conjugation

орос**а**ть оросить to throw

эагор**а**ть эагор**е**ть to acquire a tan

Third one is suppletion, which means that the perfective and imperfective are totally different.

For example:

**Imperfective Perfective Meaning**

говорить сказать to say

орать взять to take

Compared with Russian, **English** does not have general imperfective and perfective aspect. Its aspects includ simple, progressive, perfect, perfect progressive, all of which have three tenses: past, present and future.

Past tense:

past simple: V-ed. E.g. I walked.

past progressive: be (was/were) + V-ing. E.g. “I was walking at that time”

past perfect: had + V-ed. E.g. I walked

past perfect progressive: had been + V-ing. E.g. I had been walking.

Present tense:

present simple: V. E.g. I walk to school every day.

present progressive: be (am/are/is) + V-ing. E.g. “I am walking”

present perfect: have/has + V-ed. E.g. I have walked

present perfect progressive: have/has been + V-ing. E.g. I have been walking.

Future tense:

future simple: will + V. E.g. I will walk.

future progressive: will + be + V-ing. I will be walking.

future perfect: will + have + V-ed. I will have walked

future perfect progressive: will have been + V-ing. E.g. I will have been walking.

**V. Negation**

‘не\ни’ are used in Russian to negate(and also нет). They can be modal particle, prefixes of negative pronouns and negative adjectives and so on. **не,** as a modal particle, can go with any constituent to express total negation or partial negation. In the total negation, ‘не’ appears before predict verb in the sentence (Levine, 2009; Wade, 2000). For example,

Брат не ходил вчера в библиотеку.

Brother not go.3M.SG.IPFV.PAST yesterday to library.ACC

My brother did not go to library yesterday.

In the partial negation, ‘не’ can also express the negation of minor constituent rather than verb. For example,

Не Брат ходил вчера в библиотеку.

Not brother go.PAST yesterday to library.SG.ACC

The person who went to library yesterday is not my brother.

**Ни** means noun, it can be used in the following two way:

First one is “ни + noun(second case)”

На небе ни звёздочки.PL.NOM

On sky no stars.

There is no star on the sky.

Second one is “ни + noun(second case) + imperative verb/infinitive”

Ни шагу дальше！

No step.SG.DAT farther!

Don’t step farther!

**Нет** means ‘not have’, “there is not” for example,

В доме ничего нет.

At house.PREP nothing.GEN not

There is nothing at home.

It should be noted that the negation in Russian usually use these negative words, but some sentences can still express negative meaning without these words. The reason is some nouns, verbs or adverbs have negative meaning themselves.

In English, except different case of person, there is no marked in the case of object in the situation of the negated verb. However, in Russian, it has some rules about the case of object in the negated verb. In Russian, both genitive and accusative can be used after a negated transitive verb, but there are situations where one case or the others is preferable. In those situation that does not mention below, either case is possible.

In some situations, the accusative is preferred. Firstly, when the object(s) is (are) specific, for example:

Я не вижу  стол

1SG not see.1SG.PRES table.SG.ACC

I do not see the table.

Secondly, when the object indicate a person, accusative is preferred, for example,

он не встретил мою сестру

3M.SG not meet.3S.PFV.PAST 1SG.PRES sister.SG.ACC

He did not meet my sister.

Third one is in the case of “false” negatives, such as едва не/чуть не(almost), не могу не (I can’t help, cannot but), for example:

он чуть не пропустил трамвай

3M.SG almost miss.3SG.PFV.PAST train.SG.ACC

He almost missed the train.

не могу не простить его поведение

1S cannot but forgive 3M.SG.POSS behavior.SG.ACC

I cannot but forgive his behavior.

Fourthly, when the object is limited by an instrumental predicate, it prefer using accusative, for example,

я не считаю эту статью интересной

1SG not calculate.1SG.PRES this.SG.ACC article.SG.ACC interesting.F.INSTR.

I do not calculate this article interesting.

Fifth situation is that a part of sentence, other than verb is negated, for example,

Он не вполне усвоил урок

3M.SG not completely master.3M.SG.PFV.PAST lesson.SG.ACC

He has not completely assimilated the lesson

Last situation is in the existence of set phrase: палец о палец не ударить (not to do a stroke of work).

Furthermore, in other situation, the direct object may prefer using genitive when translated verb is negated.

Firstly, in the situation that the object is an abstract noun, it prefers genitive, for example:

Вы не имеете права так говорить.

2PL not have. PRES right. ACC so talk.INF

You don’t have the right to talk that way.

Second situation is when the object is the abstract pronoun это, for example

я этого не понимаю

1S it not understand.1S.PRES

I don’t understand that.

Third one is that the object is the indefinite or nonspecific, for example:

Мы не ели мяса целый месяц.

1PL. not eat.1PL mean.SG.GEN whole.M.NOM month.SG.NOM

We didn’t eat any meat for a whole month.

Fourthly, the object follows an emphatic negation with ни, for example,

он не сказал ни слова.

3M.SG not say.3SG.FUT not word.SG.GEN

He didn’t say a word.

Last situation is that the object follows a negated verb of perception for example,

Она не слышала вопроса

3F.SG NOT hear.3F.SG.IPFV.PAST question.SG.GEN

She didn’t hear the question.

In addition, Genitive can be used to express the meaning of absence in the location or nonexist in the possessive sentence, such as нет (there is no), не было (there was/were no), не будет (there will be no).

For example,

Дома нет компьютера.

home.GEN.SG there is no computer.GEN.SG

There is no computer at home.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, Russian, as an East Slavic language has preserved an Indo-European syntactic structure. From the above discussion, we can see the flexible application of the three GENDER and six CASES in Russian. Compared to English, Russian has a rather flexible word order regarding to passive, relative clauses and WH-questions. There are also similarities between these two languages in terms of negation and so on. Based on such an introduction about Russian syntax, more facts about it are looking forward to being discovered.

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