

# Analysis of the Russian Language

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- **Indo-European** Language
  - One of four living East Slavic languages
  - Cyrillic Script
- 160 million native speakers
- USSR influence in popularity

# Introduction and Language Family

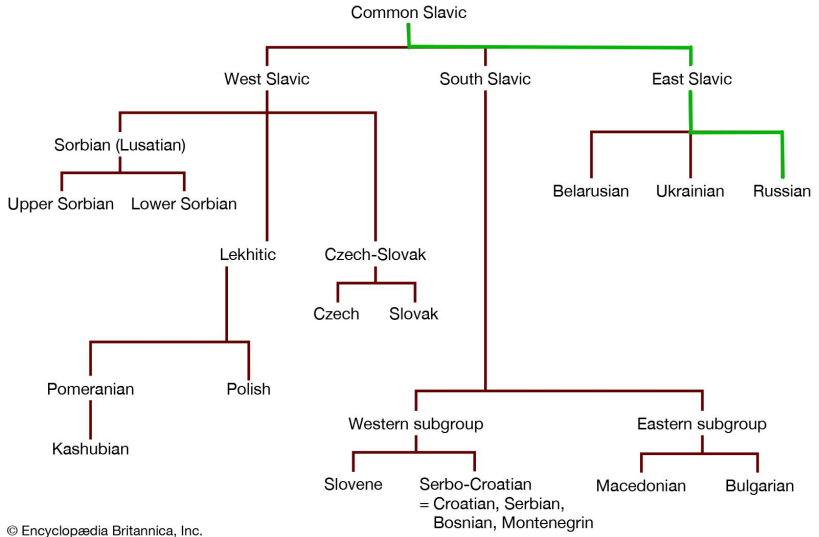


Figure 1: Family tree of the Slavic Languages

## Introduction and Language Family

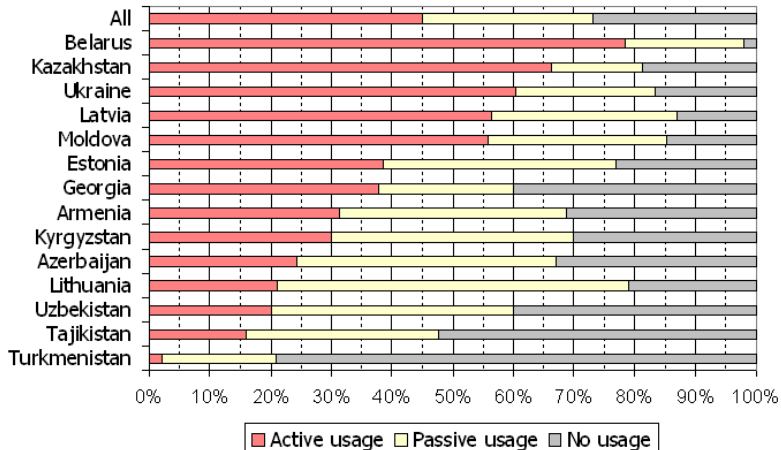


Figure 2: Competence of Russian in countries of the former Soviet Union

## Important Features of the Language

- Widespread palatalization of consonants (Also present in other Slavic Languages)
- Extensive nominal morphology
- Simple verb system

- Russian uses the **Cyrillic alphabet** (русский - ['ruskʲɪj])
- There are 32 letters and an *additional sign for palatalization*<sup>1</sup>
  - Ъ indicates palatalization of the previous consonant.
  - Ь is silent; it prevents palatalization of the preceding consonant.
- Stress is not normally indicated orthographically. An optional acute accent is used to mark it when distinguishing between homographic words.

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<sup>1</sup>This is sometimes reported as 33 letters. I have kept the 'additional sign for palatalization'

А а	Б б	В в	Г г	Д д	Е е	Ё ё	Ж ж	З з	И и	Й й	К к
a	b	v	g	d	e	ë	ž	z	i	j	k
[a]	[b]	[v]	[g]	[d]	[je]	[jo]	[ʒ]	[z]	[i]	[j]	[k]
Л л	М м	Н н	О о	П п	Р р	С с	Т т	У у	Ф ф	Х х	Ц ц
l	m	n	o	p	r	s	t	u	f	x	c
[l]	[m]	[n]	[o]	[p]	[r]	[s]	[t]	[u]	[f]	[x]	[ts]
Ч ч	Ш ш	Щ щ	Ъ ъ	Ы ы	Ь ь	Э э	Ю ю	Я я			
č	š	šč	"	y	'	è	ju	ja			
[tɕ]	[ʃ]	[ɕ/ʃɕ]	[-]	[ɨ]	[-]	[ɛ]	[ju]	[ja]			

Figure 3: The Cyrillic Script, transliteration, and IPA transcription

- 5 vowels or 6?
- Phonemic status of the i/i alternation:
  - i occurs only after non-palatalized consonants
  - i only after palatalized ones and word-initially
  - They could be considered complementary sounds and not separate phonemes.
- The reduced i and u vowels of the ancestral Slavic language were lost in Russian.



Table 1: Vowel Chart in Russian

	Front	Central	Back
Mid	i	(ɨ)	u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

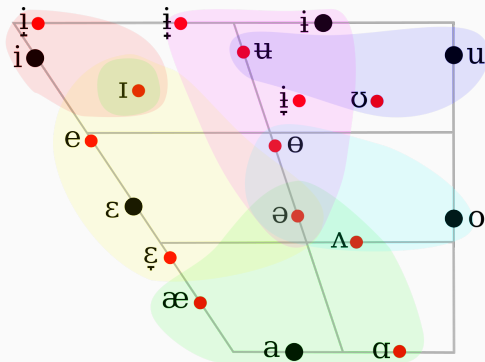


Figure 4: Russian Vowel Chart by Jones and Trofimov

- There are 36 consonants.
- Consonant palatalization is widespread
  - [tʰ], [ʃ], [ʒ] lack palatalized counterparts.
  - [tɕ], [ɕ], [j], are always palatalized, lacking counterparts.
- Palatalization is represented by an accent mark over the letter.

# Phonology and Phonetics - Consonants

Table 2: Consonant chart

		Labial	Dental	Alveopalatal	Palatal	Velar
Stop	Voiceless	p p'	t t'			k k'
	Voiced	b b'	d d'			g g'
Affricate	<i>Voiceless</i>		ts		tʃ	
Fricative	<i>Voiceless</i>	f f'	s s'	ʃ	ç	x x'
	<i>Voiced</i>	v v'	z z'	ʒ		
Nasal		m m'	n n'			
Trill			l l'			
Approximant			r r'		j	

Stress can fall on any syllable and it may serve to differentiate lexical or morphological forms. For instance, muká ('flour') versus múka ('torment'), rukí (genitive singular) versus rúki (nominative plural).

Stress is not normally indicated orthographically. An optional acute accent is used to mark it when distinguishing between homographic words.

Syllable structure can be complicated, with initial and final consonant clusters of up to 4 consecutive sounds: CCCCVC CCC

These clusters are not very common. Examples: - взгляд ([vzglʲat], 'glance') - государств ([gəsʊ'darstf], 'of the states')

Syllables cannot span multiple morphemes.

Russian Morphology is **highly fusional**

Russian nominal morphology has retained part of the complexity of Old Church Slavonic:

- It has lost the vocative case
- The number of declension types has been reduced
- The dual number has disappeared

Definite and Indefinite Articles do not exist



Table 3: General characteristics covered under Nominal Morphology

Property	Values
Gender	masculine, neuter, feminine
Number	singular, plural
Case	nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental, locative/prepositional
Adjectives	masculine singular, neuter singular, feminine singular, plural
Pronouns	personal, possessive, demonstrative, interrogative, relative

Russian noun cases may supplant the use of prepositions entirely. Furthermore, every preposition is exclusively used with a particular case (or cases).

Russian has four major types of noun declension: a-stem, masculine o-stem, neuter o-stem and i-stem.

- Most a-stem nouns are feminine (but those that refer to a male are masculine).
- Almost all i-stems are feminine.
- O-stem nouns are masculine or neuter.

## Morphology - Nouns and Adjectives

- Plural forms do not distinguish gender
- Neuter and Masculine adjectives differ in nominative and accusative
- Feminine sing. adjectives: one form for genitive, dative, instrumental, locative

	<i>masc. sg</i>	<i>neuter sg.</i>	<i>femin. sg</i>	<i>plural</i>
nom	staryj	staroe	staraja	starye
acc	staryj	staroe	staruju	starye
gen	starogo	starogo	staroj	staryx
dat	staromu	staromu	staroj	starym
instr	starym	starym	staroj	starymi
loc	starom	starom	staroj	staryx

Figure 5: Declension of *staryj* (old)

# Morphology - Nouns and Pronouns

## Personal Pronouns

- Declined in all 6 cases
- Distinguish Gender in 3rd Person Singular
- 2nd plural form may be used as a polite singular

	<i>nom.in.</i>	<i>accusat.</i>	<i>genit.</i>	<i>dative</i>	<i>instr.</i>	<i>locat.</i>
1s	ja	menja	menja	mne	mnoj	mne
2s	ty	tebja	tebja	tebe	toboj	tebe
3s m.	on	(n)ego	(n)ego	(n)emu	(n)im	nëm
3s f.	ona	(n)eë	(n)eë	(n)ej	(n)ej	nej
3s n.	ono	(n)ego	(n)ego	(n)emu	(n)im	nëm
1p	my	nas	nas	nam	nami	nas
2p	vy	vas	vas	vam	vami	vas
3p	oni	(n)ix	(n)ix	(n)im	(n)imi	(n)ix

Figure 6: Personal pronouns in Russian

# Morphology - Nouns and Pronouns

## Possessive Pronouns/Adjectives

- Declined in all cases
- Distinguish gender in the singular, **Exception** of 3rd person forms

	<i>masc. sg</i>	<i>neut. sg.</i>	<i>femin. sg</i>	<i>plural</i>
mine/my	moj	moë	moja	moi
ours/our	naš	naše	naša	naši
yours/your	tvoj	tvoë	tvoja	tvoi
yours/your	vaš	vaše	vaša	vaši
his/its	ego	ego	ego	ego
her, hers, its	eë	eë	eë	eë
their, theirs	ix	ix	ix	ix

Figure 7: Possessive Pronouns

## Demonstrative Adjectives

Neuter single forms are *used as demonstrative pronouns*

	<i>masc. sg</i>	<i>neuter sg.</i>	<i>femin. sg</i>	<i>plural</i>
this (pl. these)	etot	eto	eta	eti
that (pl. those)	tot	to	ta	te

Figure 8: Demonstrative Adjectives as Pronouns

## Interrogative Pronouns

Mainly: kto ('who?') and čto ('what?')

Others: kotoryj ('what?/which?') and kakoj ('what kind of?').

All of the above can also function as relative pronouns.

### **Indefinite pronouns**

Formed by adding **-to/-nibud** to interrogative pronouns.

### **(The only) Reflexive Pronoun**

**sebja** ('himself, herself')



**Animacy** is relevant in nominal and adjectival declensions.

The Accusative has two possible forms depending on animacy of the referent

- For Animate referents (persons, animals), accusative is generally identical to genitive
- For Inanimate referents, accusative is identical to nominative

Far simpler than Nominal Morphology

The infinitive is the only non-finite form widely used.

**Table 4:** General characteristics covered under Verbal Morphology

Property	Values
Person and Number	1s, 2s, 3s; 1p, 2p, 3p
Modality	indicative, imperative
Tense	past, non-past, imperfective future, conditional
Aspect	imperfective, perfective
Voice	active, passive (infrequent)

*past, non-past, imperfective future, conditional*

- *past, non-past*: only tenses formed without auxiliary
- *non-past*: verbs agree with subject in **person, number**
- *past*: verbs agree with subject in **gender, number**
- *imperfective future*: auxiliary=**budu**('will be') + future form of verb + infinitive
- *conditional*: past tense + 'by'

# Morphology - Verbal, Tense

		I Conjugation <i>čitat'</i> (to read)	II Conjugation <i>govorit'</i> (to say)
1) Non-Past	1sg	čitaju	govorju
	2sg	čitaš'	govoriš'
	3sg	čitaet	govorit
	1pl	čitaem	govorim
	2pl	čitaete	govorite
	3pl	čitajut	govorjat
2) Past	masc.sg	čital	govoril
	fem. sg	čitala	govorila
	neut. sg	čitalo	govorilo
	plural	čitali	govorili
3) Imperfective			
Future	1sg	budu čitat'	budu govorit'
	2sg	budeš' čitat'	budeš' govorit'
	3sg	budet čitat'	budet govorit'
	1pl	budem čitat'	budem govorit'
	2pl	budete čitat'	budete govorit'
	3pl	budut čitat'	budut govorit'
4) Imperative			
	2 sg	čitaj	govori
	2pl	čitajte	govorite

Figure 9: Tenses

*imperfective, perfective*

- **imperfective**: incomplete/ongoing action
- **perfective**: completed action

perfective = prefix + imperfective

The prefix is unpredictable: May change meaning of verb, or not.

1. to read: čitat (imperfective), to read: pročitat (perfective)
2. to write: pisat (imperfective), to write: napisat (perfective)
3. to write: pisat (imperfective), to describe: opisat (perfective)

## **Voice**

There is Active and Passive voice, but usage of Passive is infrequent.

## **Non-Finite forms**

The only common one is the *infinitive*

Participles and Gerunds are only used in literary language.

Very flexible SVO

Case system is enough to indicate function of words in sentences



## **What's missing**

No articles

Copula ('to be' verb) is omitted in the present tense # Syntax

## **Positions of structures**

Prepositions, rather than postpositions

Subordinate clauses follow main clauses

Adjectives precede nouns, agree in gender, number, case.

## **Agreement of finite verbs**

Finite verbs agree with their subjects in:

- Person and number in non past tense
- Gender and number in past tense

## Numbers

Table 5: Numbers in Russian

10,1-9	11-19	20,21,(30,90,10)	100,147, (200,900,100)	1000,2000
'desyat'			sto	tysyacha
a'deen	o'dinnatdsat'	d'vadtsat'	sto sorok sem'	
dva	dve'nadtsat	dvadsat' odeen	dvesti	dve tysyachi
tri	tri'nadsat'	t'ridtsat'	treesta	
chetyre	che'tyrnadsat'	sorok	chetyresta	
pyat'	pyat'nadtsat'	pyatdesyat	pyat'sot	
shest	shet'nadtsat'	shestdesyat	shestsot	
sem'	sem'nadtsat'	'semdesyat	sem'sot	
vosem'	vosem'nadtsat'	vosemdesyat	vosemsot	
devyat'	devyat'nadtsat'	devyanosto	devyatsot	

## Colours

Russian appears to be an exception to Berlin and Kay's suggestion that languages should have a maximum of 11 basic colour terms.

Russian has 12. There's distinction between light and dark blue.

*belyj* → *cernyj* → *krasnyj* → *zelenyj* → *zeltyj* → **sinij** → **goluboj** → *koricevyj*  
→ *fioletovyj* → *rozovyj* → *oranzevyj* → *seryj*

white → black → red → green → yellow → *dark blue* → *light blue* → brown  
→ purple → pink → orange → grey

## **Kinship terms**

Relationship terms exist for:

- Immediate blood relations
- Great uncles/aunts
- In-laws
- Paternal/maternal distinction of grandparents/cousins
- No Paternal/maternal distinction of uncles/aunts
- Male/female distinction of cousins
- Male/female distinction of second cousins
- Step-family
- Great grandparents/grandchildren

## Literature

- Pushkin, poetry
- Nikolai Gogol, novelist
- Leo Tolstoy
- Anton Chekhov