

Analysis of the Russian Language

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Introduction and Language Family

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

Introduction and Language Family

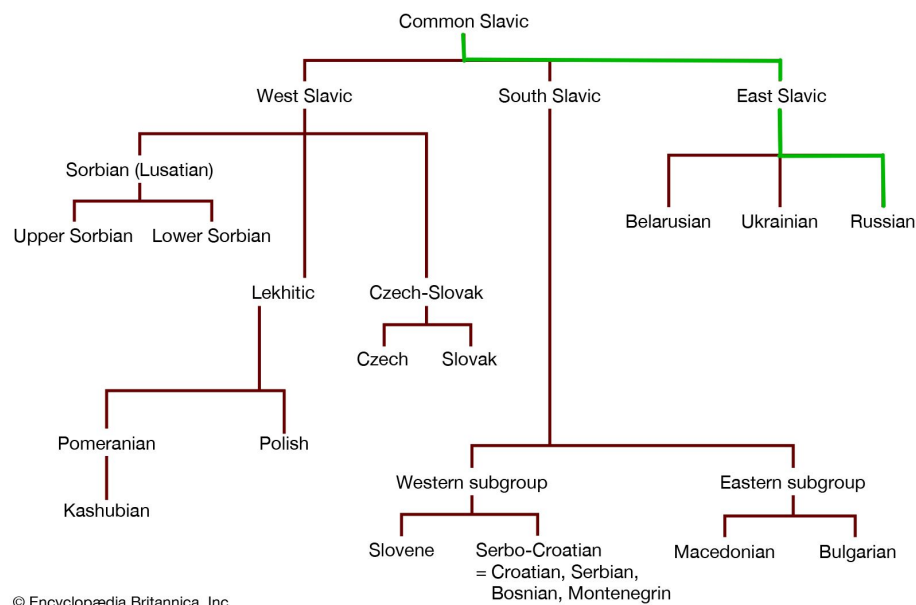


Figure 1: Family tree of the Slavic Languages

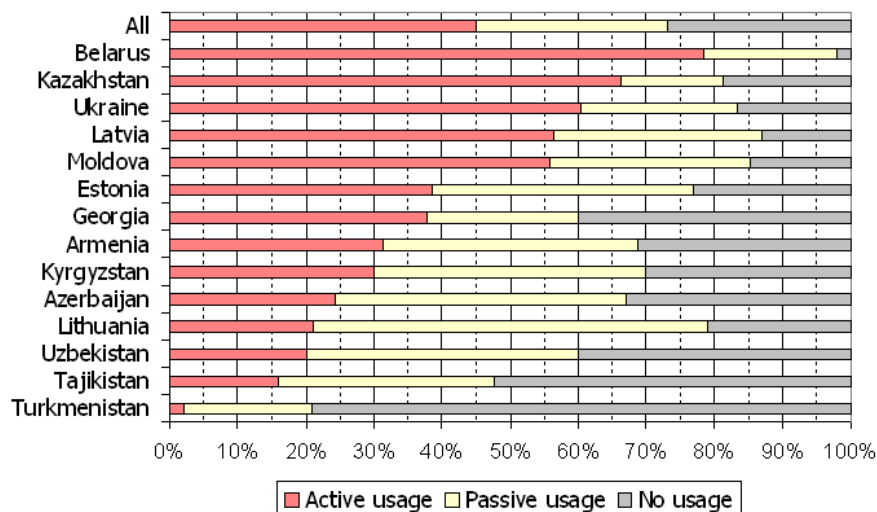


Figure 2: Competence of Russian in countries of the former Soviet Union

Introduction and Language Family

Introduction and Language Family

Important Features of the Language

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

Orthography

- Russian uses the **Cyrillic alphabet** (- [rusk j])
- There are 32 letters and an *additional sign for palatalization* ¹
 - indicates palatalization of the previous consonant.
 - 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.

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
[tʃ]	[ʃ]	[ʃʃ]	[-]	[i]	[-]	[e]	[ju]	[ja]

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

Orthography

Phonology and Phonetics - Vowels

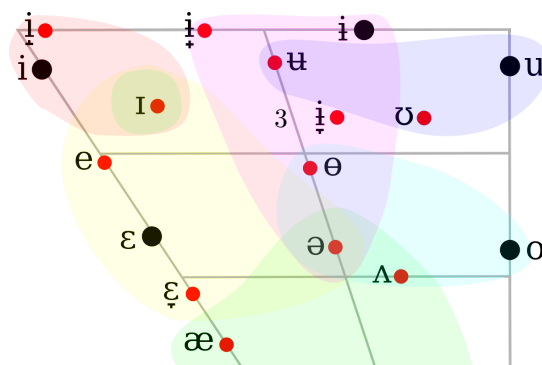
- 5 vowels or 6?
- Phonemic status of the i/ alternation:
 - occurs only after non-palatalized consonants
 - i only after palatalized ones and word-initially
 - They could be considered complementary sounds and not separate phonemes.
- The reduced i and u vowels of the ancestral Slavic language were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

Phonology and Phonetics - Vowels

Table 1: Vowel Chart in Russian

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

Phonology and Phonetics - Vowels



Phonology and Phonetics - Consonants

- There are 36 consonants.
- Consonant palatalization is widespread
 - [ts], [tʲ], [tʲʲ] lack palatalized counterparts.
 - [tʲ], [tʲʲ], [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		t	
Fricative	<i>Voiceless</i>	f f'	s s'			x x'
	<i>Voiced</i>	v v'	z z'			
Nasal		m m'	n n'			
Trill			l l'			
Approximant			r r'		j	

Phonology and Phonetics - Stress

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.

Phonology and Phonetics - Syllable Structure

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

These clusters are not very common. Examples: - ([vzgl at], 'glance') - ([gəs darstf], 'of the states')

Syllables cannot span multiple morphemes.

Morphology

Russian Morphology is **highly fusional**

Morphology - Nouns

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

Morphology - Nouns

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

Morphology - Nouns and Case

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

Morphology - Nouns and Case

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>nomin.</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	něm
3s f.	ona	(n)eě	(n)eě	(n)ej	(n)ej	nej
3s n.	ono	(n)ego	(n)ego	(n)emu	(n)im	něm
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

Morphology - Nouns and 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.

Morphology - Nouns and Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns

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

(The only) Reflexive Pronoun

sebjä ('himself, herself')

Morphology - Nouns and Animacy

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

Morphology - Verbal

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)

Morphology - Verbal, Tense

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

Morphology - Verbal, Aspect

imperfective, perfective

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

		I Conjugation <i>čítat'</i> (to read)	II Conjugation <i>govorit'</i> (to say)
1) Non-Past	1sg	čítaju	govorju
	2sg	čítaeš'	govoriš'
	3sg	čítaet	govorit
	1pl	čítaem	govorim
	2pl	čítaete	govorite
	3pl	čítajut	govorjat
2) Past	masc.sg	čítal	govoril
	fem. sg	čítala	govorila
	neut. sg	čítalo	govorilo
	plural	čítali	govorili
3) Imperfective Future	1sg	budu čítat'	budu govorit'
	2sg	budeš' čítat'	budeš' govorit'
	3sg	budet čítat'	budet govorit'
	1pl	budem čítat'	budem govorit'
	2pl	budete čítat'	budete govorit'
	3pl	budut čítat'	budut govorit'
4) Imperative	2 sg	čitaj	govori
	2pl	čitajte	govorite

Figure 9: Tenses

Morphology - Verbal, Aspect

perfective = prefix + imperfective

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

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

Morphology - Verbal, Voice and Non-Finite forms

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.

Syntax

Very flexible SVO

Case system is enough to indicate function of words in sentences

Syntax

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.

Syntax

Agreement of finite verbs

Finite verbs agree with their subjects in:

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

Semantics

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	

10,1-9	11-19	20,21,(30,90,10)	100,147, (200,900,100)	1000,2000
devyat'	devyat'nadtsat'	devyanosto	devyatsot	

Semantics

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 -> *chernyj* -> *krasnyj* -> *zelenyj* -> *zeltyj* -> **sinij** -> **goluboj** -> *koricnevyj* -> *fioletovyy* -> *rozovyy* -> *oranzevyj* -> *seryj*

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

Semantics

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

Cultural Significance

Literature

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