

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

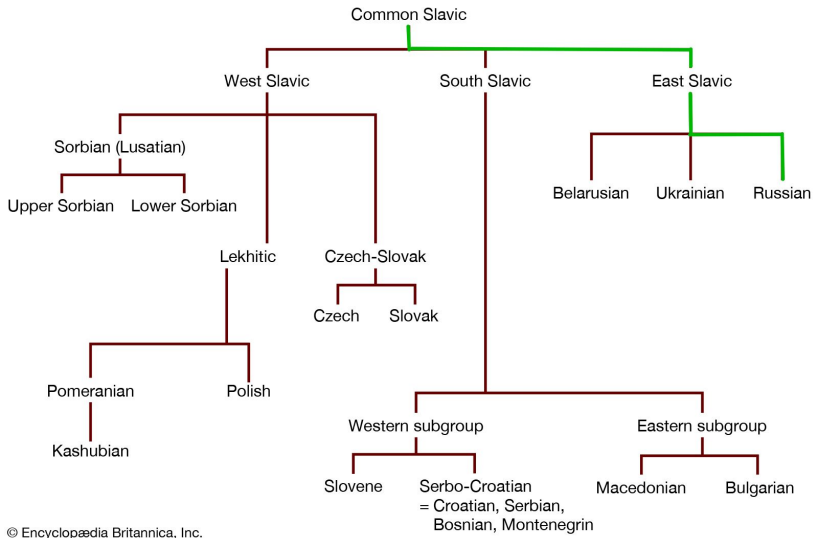


Figure 1: Family tree of the Slavic Languages

Introduction and Language Family

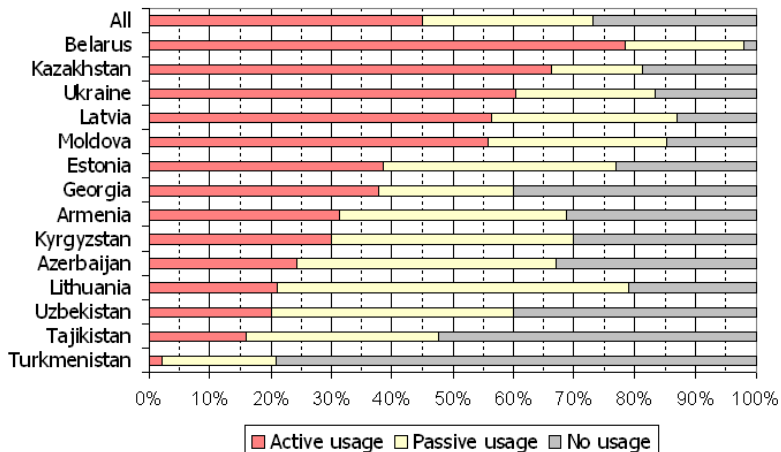


Figure 2: Competence of Russian in countries of the former Soviet Union

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*¹
 - 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.

¹This 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	

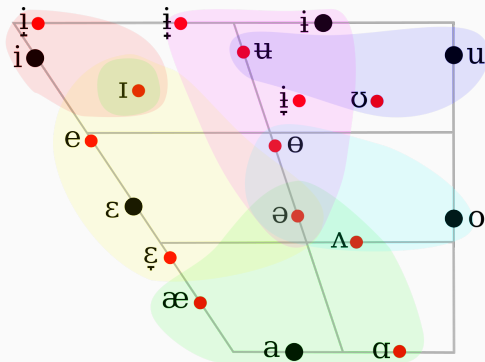


Figure 4: Russian Vowel Chart by Jones and Trofimov

- 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

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)

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

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)

Very flexible SVO

Case system is enough to indicate function of words in sentences

Prepositions, rather than postpositions

Subordinate clauses follow main clauses

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

No articles

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

Finite verbs agree with their subjects in:

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

