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On Russian Accentuation

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In a paper that was published in 1973¹ I presented an extended treatment of the accentual patterns found in different classes of words. I have since had occasion to rethink some of the proposals made in that paper especially in the light of very helpful criticisms from my colleague Paul Kiparsky. This criticism has led us to undertake the preparation of a joint study outlining our views in detail. The present communication is based in large measure on that study and may be regarded as a preliminary report summarizing the most striking of our results.

1. There are nine distinct types of accentual pattern in the declension of Russian nouns, as shown in table 1. I outline my treatment of these patterns in the following two sections. At this point I digress briefly in order to forestall a possible objection questioning the need for yet another treatment of the Russian accentual patterns. Since the number of words in the language is finite and since the stress patterns of all but a vanishingly small percentage of the words can be found in readily accessible dictionaries, it might well be asked what use there is in yet another presentation of the facts. It seems to me that this objection overlooks the fundamental distinction between knowledge of facts and knowledge of principles. I believe that we know all the relevant facts about Russian accentuation but that we still have to learn the true principles that these facts exemplify. And it is the latter issue that my study addresses.

Factual knowledge need not, of course, be embodied in unstructured lists. There are all sorts of sophisticated schemes for classifying such knowledge, from the alphabetization employed in our dictionaries and telephone directories to the elaborate classification of books found in our libraries (Dewey Decimal) or the binomial nomenclature due to Linnaeus that is commonly used for the classification of plants and animals. These taxonomies, however, are quite different from the sort of collection of principles that, in the view of many, is an essential distinguishing feature of all scientific description. I believe that the overwhelming majority of past treatments of Russian accentuation have provided taxonomies rather than

TABLE 1. Accentual patterns of Russian nouns.

	MASCULINE	NEUTER	2ND DECL.	3RD DECL. FEM.
A. Stress on stem in all forms	горóх автомобíль (11,400) ²	крéсло эдáние издáтельство (4900)	кáрта корóва бригáда (10,700)	глúпость постéль печáть (100)
B. Stress on desinence in all forms	стóл черéд (1700)	божествó очкó (130)	госпожá чертá кочергá (340)	любóвь глúшь (6)
C α . Initial stress, except in loc. sing.	áд ра́й плéн (30)			св́язь дáль пéль (8)
C β . Initial stress in sing., on desinence elsewhere	вéчер бéрег (250)	зéркало мóре врéмя (20)		
C γ . Initial stress in sing. and nom plur., on desinence elsewhere	вóлк лéбедь вóлос (50)	óко úхо (2)		нóчь тéнь плóщадь (80)
C δ . Initial stress in acc. sing. and nom. plur., on desinence elsewhere			бородá рукá горá (18)	
C ϵ . Initial stress in nom. plur., on desinence elsewhere	гвóздь кóнь (5)	плечó таврó (3)	сковородá губá слезá (40)	
D. Predesinential stress in plur., on desinence elsewhere	казáк лíst (pl. лístья) (14)	колесó писъмó (70)	колбасá звездá (185)	
E. Initial stress in (acc.) sing., predesinential in plur., on desinence elsewhere	кóлос пóлос óбод (5)	óзеро знáмя (2)	водá душá (13)	

scientific descriptions of the facts, and it is this shortcoming that I have attempted to overcome in my own work. To illustrate the distinction I am trying to draw I sketch immediately below the main points of V. A. Red'kin's recent study of Russian accentuation,³ which is typical of efforts

at providing a taxonomy for the different accentual patterns. This can then be compared with my own attempt, outlined in sections 2 and 3 below, which pursues the quite different aim of discovering the small set of principles that underlie the rich variety of accentual patterns actually encountered.

Red'kin's classification is primarily based on the location of stress in the dative singular and dative plural forms. He distinguishes two stress locations: on the stem (indicated by +) and on the case ending (indicated by -). This yields a quadripartite classification, as shown in table 2. Except for the automatic retraction of stress from zero case endings to the last syllable of the stem (e.g., in the nom. sg. form of masculine nouns), stress in the four classes of nouns illustrated in table 2 remains on the same syllable as in the dative in all case forms of each respective number, i.e., the instr. sg. form is stressed on the same syllable as the dat. sg., and the instr. pl. as the dat. pl. This principle, however, does not cover all stress patterns actually found. Hence Red'kin postulates additional subcategories. Thus in the masculine declension he establishes the class B₁ (e.g., *gvózd'*) which differs from B in having stem rather than suffixal stress in the nom. pl. form, and the class C₁ (e.g., *vólos*) which differs from C in precisely the same fashion as B₁ differs from B. Among the feminine second-declension nouns the same distinction leads him to set up the class B₁ (*skovorodé* ~ *skovorodám* ~ *skóvorody*). Class B₂, on the other hand, is distinguished from B₁ in that it has stem rather than end stress in the accusative singular (e.g., *borodé* ~ *borodám* ~ *bórodu*), and it is this distinction that is used again in order to distinguish D₁ (e.g., *vodé* ~ *vódam* ~ *vódu*) from D. And similar subcategorizations are found in the remaining two declensions.

TABLE 2. Accentual patterns according to Red'kin.

	+		-		dative sing.
	+	-	+	-	dative plur.
	A	C	D	B	
MASC.	горóху горóхам	гóроду гóродám	казаку́ каза́кам	королю́ короли́м	
NEUT.	болóту болóтам	зéркалу зеркала́м	колесу́ колéсам	божеству́ божествáм	
FEM. 2ND DECL.	берёзе берёзам		колбасé колбáсам	госпожé госпожáм	
FEM. 3RD DECL.	постéли постéлям	брóви бровáм			

Red'kin's classification clearly provides the requisite number of pigeon-holes so as to isolate each accentual pattern. It fails, however, to bring out certain easily observed facts that play a fundamental role in the accentual system of Russian. First, the classificatory scheme fails to bring out the significance of the fact that in class D stem stress strikes always the pre-desinential syllable whereas in class C (and B₁ as well as C₁) stem stress is initial. Secondly, it does no more than record the fact that class A has no subclasses, unlike the other three classes. Thirdly, it fails to explain why stress retraction to the preposition (e.g., *zá ruku*) is found only in his classes B₁, C₁, and D₁. Fourthly, Red'kin's taxonomy tells us nothing about nouns such as *ózero* which have initial stress in the singular and pre-desinential stress in the plural. Finally, except for classes A and B, his classificatory scheme is not readily extended to accentual patterns of other classes of words. All this suggests that a better treatment of the facts is highly desirable.

2. The key to the solution proposed here is found in two principles:⁴

PRINCIPLE A. If a stressed syllable is deleted, the stress is transferred to the immediately preceding syllable.

PRINCIPLE B. If a word has more than one stress, it will appear in the output with stress on the leftmost stressed syllable; if a word has no stress, in the output it will have stress on the first syllable.

These two principles readily account for the stress patterns in classes A and B in the above tables if we make two assumptions:

ASSUMPTION 1. Case endings of nouns are inherently stressed.

ASSUMPTION 2. Nouns exhibiting stress pattern A have inherent stress; all other nouns lack inherent stress.

The stress pattern of nouns with fixed stem stress involves invocation of principle B, thus *goróx + ú* → B → *goróxu*, whereas the stress pattern of nouns with desinential stress can be read off directly: *gospož + á* → *gospožá*. We illustrate the effects of principle A with the derivations shown below. We assume that special vowels, called jers, appear in underlying representations and are subject to a special rule that turns jers into either e or o if the next syllable has also a jer, and deletes the jer elsewhere.

	molot+ík+é	molot+ék+á	zajím+é	zajím+á
JER RULE	o ø	ø	ó ø	ø
PRINCIPLE A	ó	NOT APPLICABLE	VACUOUS	á
PRINCIPLE B	МОЛОТÓК	МОЛОТКÁ	ЗАЁМ	ЗАЙМА

These preliminaries out of the way, we inquire next how we are to deal with nouns such as *kolbasá* (class D in table 1) that have stress on the case ending in the singular and on the syllable immediately before the case ending in the plural. By virtue of assumption 2 nouns in class D do not have inherent stress on the stem. In view of assumption 1 nouns in class D will,

therefore, have stress on the case ending, which is the correct result for the singular but incorrect for the plural. To account for the stress of the plural we postulate a special minor rule—i.e., a rule which applies only to words which are specifically marked to undergo that rule—which we name *METATONY* and which has the effect of retracting the stress one syllable (in certain special cases, two syllables) towards the beginning of the word. All plural forms of nouns in classes D and E of table 1 are subject to metatony, but these are not the only words in the language which are subject to metatony.

To account for the stress patterns of the nouns in classes C_α through C_ϵ of table 1 as well as the singular forms of class E, we postulate a further minor rule:

Delete the stress on certain specially marked morphemes.

This rule will be referred to below as *STRESS DELETION*. Among the morphemes that are subject to stress deletion are the acc. sg. -u endings of the feminine nouns in classes C_δ , C_ϵ , and E, all singular case endings (except locative singular) of other nouns in C_β , C_γ , and E; the nom. pl. -i ~ -y ending of the nouns in C_γ and C_ϵ .⁵ Since these words have stems that are inherently stressless, principle B will assign initial stress to them. For example, $\text{borod} + \acute{u} \rightarrow \text{STRESS DELETION} \rightarrow \text{borod} + u \rightarrow B \rightarrow \text{bórodu}$; $\text{gorod} + \acute{o}m \rightarrow \text{STRESS DELETION} \rightarrow \text{gorod} + om \rightarrow B \rightarrow \text{górodom}$. Note that in certain special cases principle B assigns stress to a preposition, e.g., *zá ruku*; such prepositional stress is found only with nouns that are subject to the stress-deletion rule.

It is worth recalling that the case endings that are subject to stress deletion are those that in studies of Indo-European accentuation have traditionally been labeled strong cases.⁶ Nouns with inherent stress are known in standard treatises on Slavic accentuation as having acute intonation, those in class B are said to have oxytone stress, those subject to stress deletion are traditionally labeled as having circumflex intonation, while those subject to metatony are said to show the effects of the Law of deSaussure (–Fortunatov).

3. We have outlined a treatment of the accentuation of the Russian noun declension. We have postulated that Russian noun stems may or may not have inherent stress and that case endings generally have inherent stress. We have established two principles that regulate the position of stress in the output string when a stressed vowel is deleted, when there are more than one stressed morpheme, and when there is no stressed morpheme. And we have stated two minor rules, one governing the retraction of stress from case ending to stem and the other deleting the stress on certain case endings after specific stems.⁷ (We have also had occasion to mention one major phonological rule, the *jer* rule.) Schematically we may represent our proposals as

follows:

stress pattern	A	B	C	D	E
Inherently stressed stem	+	-	-	-	-
METATONY	-	-	-	+	+
STRESS DELETION	-	-	+	-	+

Clearly our next task is to show how these rules and principles account for other stress patterns found in the language. I shall limit myself to one problem, i.e., the accentuation of derived nouns. A good starting point is provided by Red'kin, who classifies derivational suffixes as follows:

Derivatives of class I. The accentuation of derivatives of class I depends on the accentuation of the base word. If the base word has nonfinal stress in all case forms, then stress in the derived word falls on the same syllable as in the base. If even one case form of the base word exhibits final stress, then in the derived noun stress falls either on the last syllable of the base stem, i.e., on the syllable preceding the derivational suffix (subclass 1), or on the suffix itself (subclass 2), or on the case ending (subclass 3). (p. 48.)

Derivatives of class II. The accentuation of derivatives of class II does not depend on the accentuation of the base word. In class II we distinguish three subclasses. . . . In the derivatives of the first subclass stress falls on the last syllable of the base word . . . in the second subclass on the derivational suffix, in the third subclass on the case endings. (p. 52.)

Examples are given in table 3.

Consider this classification in the light of the discussion above, especially in the light of principle B. The essential difference between Red'kin's classes I and II is that the stress of derived words in class I depends on that of the base word while that of words in II does not. In class I if the base word has nonfinal stress in all case forms, i.e., in terms of our discussion has

TABLE 3. Accentuation of derived nouns in Russian.

class	stressed stems	stressless stems
I,1	лáскaвoстн lásk+av+óst+í	здoróвoстн zdorov+óst+í
I,2	барáнищe barán+išć+ó	городíщe gorod+išć+ó
I,3	счáстъищe sčást+ěj+ec+ó	серебрeцó serebr+ec+ó
II,1	паравóзикн paravóz+ík+í	стóликн stol+ík+í
II,2	работáга rabót+jág+á	добрáга dobr+jág+á
II,3	циркaчí círka+ač+í	бородaчí borod+ač+í

inherent stress, then stress in the derived word falls on the same syllable as in the base. Since according to principle B the leftmost stressed morpheme is the one that will exhibit stress in the output, we expect that words derived from bases with inherent stress will have the same stress as the base regardless of whether or not the derivational suffix also has inherent stress. This takes care of the stressed stems of class I (see table 3). The remaining nouns in class I are derived from base words that lack inherent stress. In the light of the discussion above we would expect two stress patterns. If the derivational suffix has inherent stress, then principle B predicts that stress will reside on the suffix (Red'kin's I, 2). If on the other hand the derivational suffix does not have inherent stress, then stress will end up on the case ending (I, 3), since, as argued above, case endings generally have inherent stress. This leaves still to be accounted for words of class I, 1 formed from stressless bases. As will be recalled, such derivatives do not exhibit stress on either derivational suffix or the case ending; they exhibit stress on the presuffixal syllable instead. We have, however, already seen such cases above: the plural forms of the nouns in D, e.g., *kolbásy*, show stress one syllable to the left of where originally expected. We accounted for such stress patterns by marking the nouns in question as being subject to METATONY. The obvious move, therefore, is to do the same here, i.e., to mark the derivational suffixes of the nouns in class I, 1 as being inherently stressed AND subject to metatony.

The nouns in Red'kin's class II are even simpler. The surface stress is the same in the three classes regardless of the accentual character of the base (stressed or stressless). Moreover, it is the pattern of the stressless bases of class I that is found throughout. In other words, if a class II suffix is attached to a base with inherent stress, the base loses its stress. In our discussion of stress patterns in the noun declension we already found occasion to remove stress from case endings, which possess inherent stress. We postulated the minor rule of STRESS DELETION for the purpose of removing stress from morphemes in certain idiosyncratically marked words. In order to account for the stress patterns in Red'kin's class II we need only to assume that suffixes of class II mark stems which they follow as subject to STRESS DELETION. Given such a marking the actual stress placement will be obtained exactly in the same way as in the class I stressless stems: it will depend on whether or not the derivational suffix has inherent stress and, in the former case, whether or not the suffix is subject to METATONY.

We are now in a position to account for the stress pattern of nouns in our class C α . These nouns have stem stress in all forms except in the locative singular, where they have stress on the case ending, e.g., *v adú*, *v dalí*. (It is characteristic of the locative case endings to be always stressed.) In order to account for this fact we need only assume that like derivational suffixes in

Red'kin's class II, these locative singular endings cause the stem to undergo stress deletion.

In summary, we have attempted to show that Russian accentuation is based on a bipartition of all morphemes, stems as well as suffixes, into those with and those without inherent stress. If a word has more than one stressed morpheme, the leftmost stress alone appears in the output; if it has no stressed morpheme, stress goes on the first syllable. In addition, in certain idiosyncratically marked words inherently stressed morphemes lose their stress, whereas in other, also idiosyncratically marked words, stress is retracted from a stressed morpheme to the preceding syllable. This simple system accounts for all stress patterns observed in the language.⁸

NOTES

- 1 "The Accentuation of Russian Words," *Language*, 49 (1973), 312-48.
- 2 The figures in parentheses indicate the approximate number of items in each category. The figures are basically those given in A. A. Zaliznjak, *Russkoe imennoe slovoizmenenie* (M.: Nauka, 1967), with a few corrections from Horace Lunt (personal communication).
- 3 *Akcentologija sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo jazyka: Posobie dlja učitelej* (M.: Prosveščenie, 1971).
- 4 The justification of these two principles and their integration into linguistic theory is a matter of considerable complexity and would take us far beyond the issues that are of interest here. These problems are dealt with in the forthcoming study by Kiparsky and Halle mentioned above.
- 5 The stress pattern of the nouns in $C\alpha$ is discussed at the end of this paper, p. 110.
- 6 *Cas forts*, according to Jerzy Kuryłowicz, *L'Accentuation des langues indo-européennes*, 2nd ed. (Komitet językoznawczy PAN, Prace językoznawcze, 17; Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1958), 17.
- 7 We underline that the application of these minor rules to a given word is not, in general, predictable: it is rather an idiosyncratic property of each word. In other words, there is no general principle that allows us to determine whether or not acc. sg. *skovorodu* will have stress on the initial syllable rather than on the case ending. It is a fact that the speaker of the language must learn, much as he must learn that the stem belongs to the feminine second declension rather than to some other declension.

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