

An Approach to Ukrainian Reading for Russian Students

Introduction

The following content is based on my experience teaching two summer courses of Ukrainian for reading to Russian language specialists in the late 1980's at the Department of Defense. After two successful sessions, Ukrainian was phased out of the government program as the Soviet Union was on the verge of ending its existence and it seemed that Ukraine would embark on a new and secure future as an independent nation, in contrast to its previous status as a republic of the Soviet Union. The newly independent status of Ukraine lasted for some decades and the Ukrainian language was viewed as less critical to national security. However, this came to an end with the Russian takeover of Crimea, the conflict in the Eastern regions of Ukraine, and the full-scale war against Ukraine that was launched by Russia in 2022. Now it would seem that the Ukrainian language is not only critical, but even endangered, along with the status of the entire country. The following material is designed as a brief introduction to the differences between the Ukrainian and Russian languages for students who already have a reading knowledge of Russian and would like to sample some Ukrainian texts.

Since both Russian and Ukrainian are East Slavic in origin, many everyday words are common to both languages, and this often helps a student who knows Russian and is attempting to read Ukrainian. However, Polish loan words represent a major second component of Ukrainian, and Polish is often even more helpful than Russian for reading certain types of Ukrainian texts. Of course, a prior reading knowledge of both Russian and Polish would offer the student the greatest possible advantage for learning to read Ukrainian.

After listing some of the major linguistic differences between the two languages, the views of Nikolai Trubetzkoy are presented, and a series of Ukrainian texts are examined with comments about how certain expressions can be analyzed by students of Russian. The important relationship of Polish to Ukrainian is also shown. The single most important point about the relationship of Russian and Ukrainian is that both languages tend to rely on their native East Slavic for everyday vocabulary, but Russian often uses Church Slavonic formations for its intellectual vocabulary, while Ukrainian tends to use Polish loans. The following two main sections, described in paragraphs II and III, can be summarized as follows:

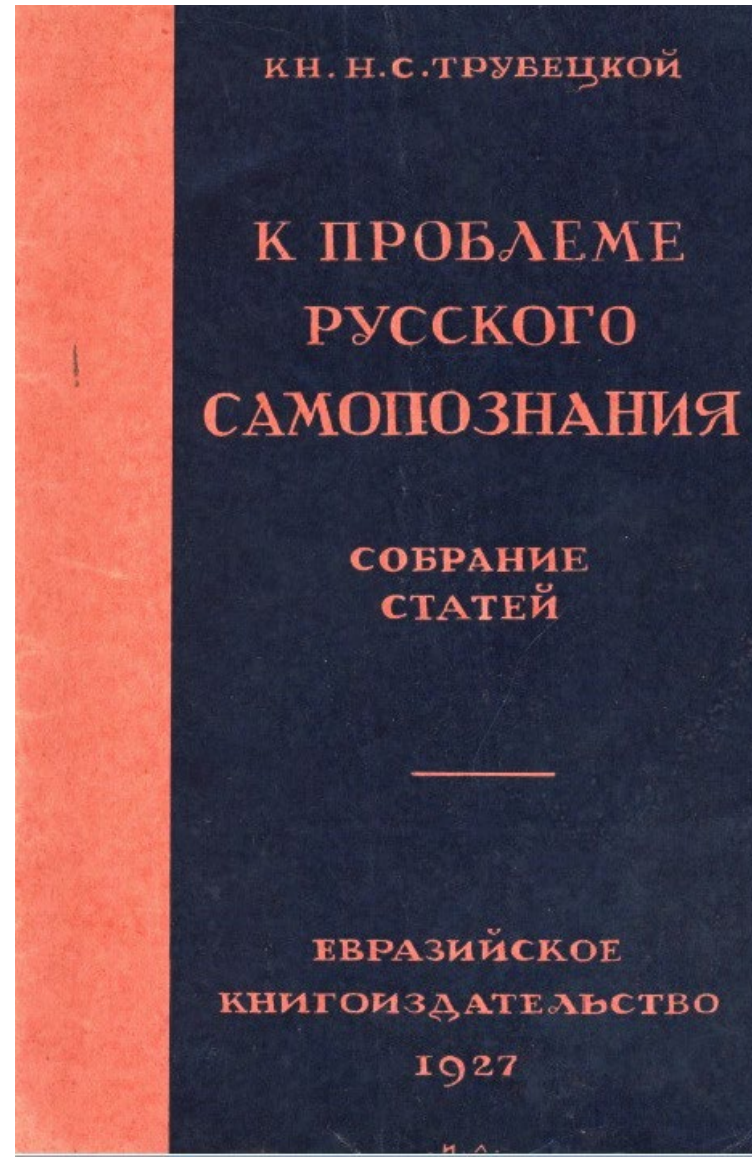
A. Understanding the structure of Ukrainian and vocabularies of Russian and Ukrainian.

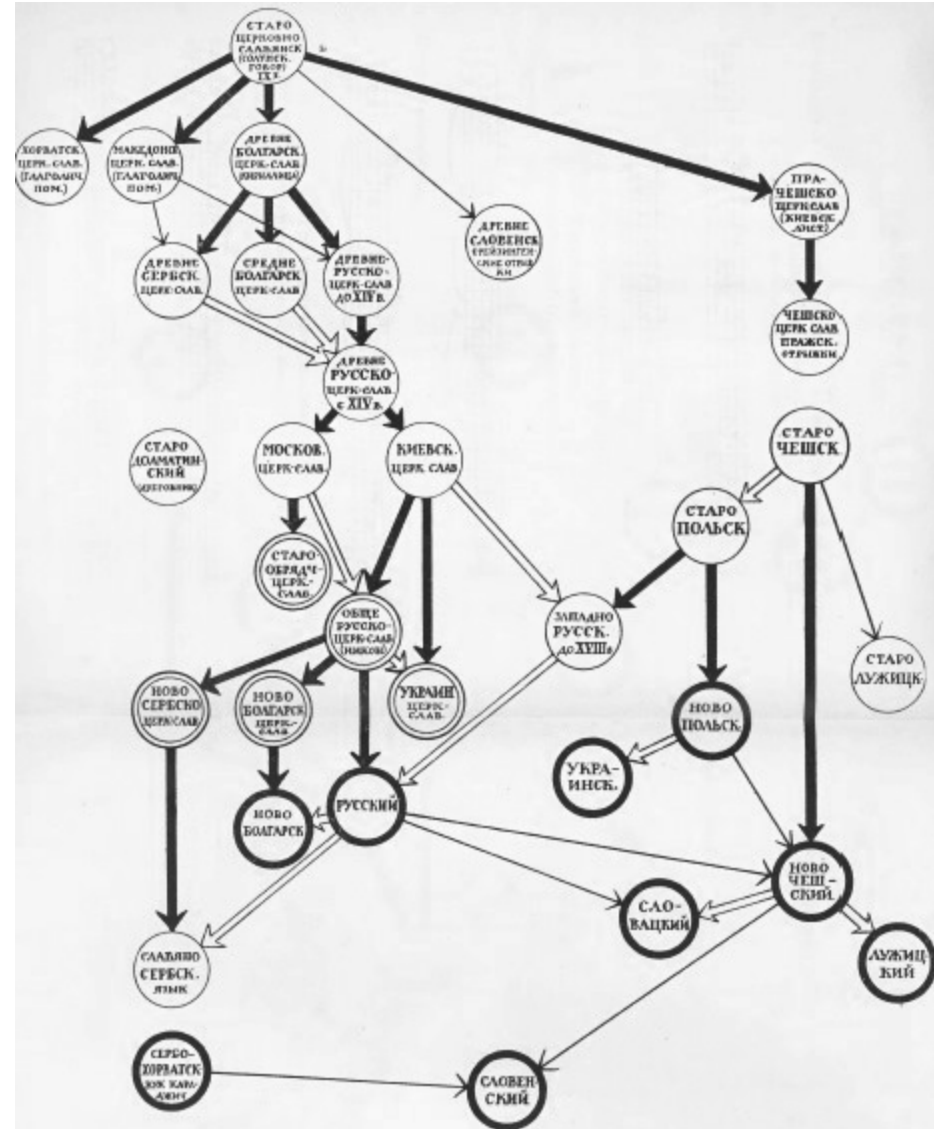
1. Both use East Slavic but are based on differing zones and dialects.
2. Trubetzkoy's views. The intellectual vocabulary of Russian (CSR) tends to use Church Slavonic, but Ukrainian uses native East Slavic or Polish loans.
3. A list of the major features differentiating Ukrainian and Russian.

B. Sample Ukrainian texts with notes about how to analyze words and phrases in three areas to facilitate comprehension:

1. Words and phrases understandable from Russian, but which may require the ability to derive a Russian cognate through knowledge of Ukrainian-Russian sound correspondences (e. g. Ukrainian *i* can correspond to either Russian **е**, **о** (in closed position), Russian **е** (from **јаѣ**'), or initial Russian **и**.
2. Words and phrases understandable from Polish (assuming some Polish knowledge by the student).
3. Other items may not be understandable from Russian or Polish and may require a dictionary.

II. Trubetzkoy said some interesting things about the comparison of Russian and Ukrainian in his 1927 publication. He produced a chart of the Slavic languages, showing that literary Russian stems is linked to Church Slavonic, while Ukrainian has no much Polish influence that is more linked to Polish and West Slavic than East Slavic.





Родословие славянских литературных языков.
(К статье „Общеславянский элемент в русской культуре“).

- Тонкие стрелы обозначают направление влияния.
- ⇒ Толстые белые стрелы—направление сильного влияния.
- Толстые черные стрелы—преемственность.
- Круги, обведенные тонкой линией—мертвые языки.
- Круги, обведенные двумя толстыми линиями,—языки, живущие и поныне, но лишь в церковно-богослуж. употребл.
- Круги, обведенные толстой линией—живые литературные языки.

In the establishment of literary Ukrainian, the first thought was to use native Ukrainian dialects as the basis of the literary standard, but a more established source of loan words became necessary.

If the Russian model was followed, Ukrainian would have used native Ukrainian plus Church Slavonic, but this would have made it uncomfortably close to Russian. To distance it more, it used a combination of native Ukrainian East Slavic plus loans from the Polish literary tradition. This positioned the language as different from both Polish and Russian, although it looked very much like Polish in the area of intellectual vocabulary. Value judgements about this choice are beside the point. The only relevant facts are the results for reading knowledge.

По необходимости приходилось примкнуть к какой нибудь уже существующей и хорошо отделанной литературноязыковой традиции. А т. к. к русской литературноязыковой традиции примыкать ни за что не хотели, то оставалось только примкнуть к традиции польского литературного языка. И действительно, современный украинский литературный язык, поскольку он употребляется вне того народнического литературного жанра, о котором говорилось выше, настолько переполнен полонизмами, что производит впечатление просто польского языка, слегка одобренного малорусским элементом и втиснутого в малорусский грамматический строй. Благодаря этому особому направлению в создании и развитии украинского литературного языка, — направлению, не только противоестественному, но и противоречащему основной тенденции истории Украины, состоявший всегда в обороне и борьбе против ополячения,*) — современный украинский литературный язык должен быть отнесен к литературным языкам западно-славянской (чешско-польской) традиции.

Major Ukrainian Linguistic Features Within East Slavic

- (Some are important for reading—others are irrelevant to reading ability.)
- 1. Consonant hardening before original *i/e*. (мене, тебе, несе, носити, занéсти, говорить, темно, липа vs. Russian palatalized consonants.
- 2. Change of *i/y>i*. (липа, дим, бик vs. Russian [i] and [y] (липа, дым, бык).
- 3. Historic *jať* (ě)>*i* (тіло, тісто, сніг, стіна) vs. Russian *e* that does not become *ě*.
- 4. Closed position change of *o/e>i*. (віз/воза́, сіль/соли, біб/бо́бу).
- Prothetic *v*- when *o>i* is initial. (овес/вівса; вівця/овець) (Russian овёс/овса овца/овец)
- 5. Lack of final and preconsonantal obstruent devoicing. (віз, біб, молодший)
- 6. *e>o* only after hushings and jot (with rare exceptions). (жона, йогó, but зелений, овес, береза).
- 7. No reduction of mid vowels outside stress vs. Russian vowel reduction. (E. g. Ukrainian [vodá] vs. Russian [vadá])
- 8. Masc./Neut. dative form spreads to locative. (на чорному морю, у зеленому полі)
- 9. Generalization of palatals in root velar stems. (печу, ляжу, біжу)
- 10. Innovative future in *-(и)му*: ходитиму.
- 11. Alternation of glides *w/j* and their paired vowels *u/i*. Україна can appear as Вкраїна in some contexts. E.g. він іде, but вона йде; був у нас, but була в нас.

III. Ukrainian online newspaper text with translation and comments.

Росія <u>готує</u> інформаційну атаку на "Азов" <u>за участі</u> <u>заляканих</u> <u>батьків</u> .	Russia is preparing an information attack on the "Azov" regiment with the participation of intimidated parents.
<p>1. Spelling ує. Note Ukrainian letters for [je] and [ji]. Cf. Russian, where е and и palatalize preceding consonants or are preceded by [j-].</p> <p>2. Ukr. готова- follows the -ova- suffix model, like Polish, in contrast to Russian use of the -i- suffix.</p> <p>3. інформаційну: Follows the Polish suffixal model -ijn-, rather than Russian -ion-n-.</p> <p>2. Russian neuter участие, Ukr. feminine zero участь. Russian участь ('судьба, fate') is a false cognate.</p> <p>3. The phrase "за участі" ('with the participation of...') is debated by Ukrainian proscriptive grammarians. Some favor з/із ('with') instead of за, others debate whether за should take the genitive or instrumental (за участі or за участю?). The use of за with the genitive is found in Ukr. time expressions, as in Polish (за часів, cf. Russian во времена). This appears to be extended from temporal to spatial use in за участі above.</p> <p>4. Ukr. залякати 'Russian запугать, frighten', cf. Polish lęk, lękać 'fright, frighten'</p> <p>5. <u>батьків</u> 'родителей', cf. Russ батюшка.</p>	

Росіяни готують масштабну дезінформаційну атаку для <u>міжнародної спільноти</u> для дискредитації українських воїнів полку "Азов".	The Russians are preparing a large-scale disinformation attack for the international community to discredit the Ukrainian soldiers of the Azov Regiment.
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1. Ukr. prefix між- is East Slavic while Russian между- has Church Slavonic -жд-. Ukr. -і- due to change of e/o > i in closed syllable.

2. спільноти Note relation of спіль- to Polish spół-. Russian equivalent **сообщество** uses Church Slavonic features co- (not c-) and щ for East Slavic -ч- (<tj).

Frequent Ukrainian choice of native East Slavic or Polish models instead of the Russian use of Church Slavonic.

<p><u>Про це повідомив радник мера Петро Андрющенко.</u></p> <p>Для цього окупанти <u>хочуть використати</u> батьків дітей, <u>яких депортували до Росії</u> і вивезли до тимчасово окупованого Донецька.</p>	<p>This was reported by mayoral advisor Petro Andryushchenko.</p> <p>In order to do this, the occupiers want to use the parents of children who were deported to Russia and taken to the temporarily occupied Donetsk.</p>
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1. це = Russian это. Ukr. про used for 'about', cf. colloquial Russian.
2. повідомив, cf. Russian осведомить. Note masc. sg. past tense in -в, phonetically similar to the Polish -ł ending ([w]), although Ukr. -в has both [w] and [v] variants in closed position.
3. Ukr. рада on Polish model. Russian uses совет with Church Slavonic co- prefix.
4. Note that Ukr. мер 'mayor' has -e- without softening of the preceding consonant, but Russian uses э (мэр), since -e- normally does palatalize the preceding consonant.
5. хочуть Ukr. regularizes first conjugation; Russian has irregular first conjugation in singular, second conjugation in plural (хотят).
6. використати has an exact parallel in Polish wykorzystać.
7. який, cf. который. Also, Ukr. як for Russian как, similar to Polish jak, jaki.
8. Ukr. депортували shows that the -u- present tense -uje- is generalized in infinitive and past tense forms, in contrast to both Russian and Polish, which retain -ova-.

9. до Росії. Follows the Polish model of **до plus genitive** for motion to a location. Polish **do Rosji**, but Russian **в Россию**.

10. тимчасово illustrates Ukr. and Polish shared **час/czas**, as compared to Russian **время** (another Slavonicism).

<p>"<u>Через погрози</u> розлучення з дітьми <u>назавжди</u> батьків примушують записувати <u>відеозвернення</u>, де вони будуть "свідчити", що розлучення батьків і дітей провели самі бійці "Азову" та військові націоналісти України.</p>	<p>"Using the threat of permanent separation from their children, parents are being forced to record video appeals, where they will "testify" that the separation of parents and children was carried out by the Azov fighters and military nationalists of Ukraine.</p>
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1. Через погрози Shows the agent of a passive phrase, equivalent to Polish **przez** or the Russian instrumental case. The Russian might have been translated as **Угрозами**, instead of 'из-за'. I.e. Threats of separation from their children were used to force parents to record videos, rather than parents were forced "because of threats".
2. Ukr. **завжди/назавжди**, close to Polish **zawsze/na zawsze**.
3. Ukr. **примушують** (**примушувати/примусити**), equivalent to Polish **przymuszać/przymusić**, except for the fact that Ukr. perfectivizes with -uva-, while Polish uses the -aj- suffix. Unlike Russian **заставить**, another instance of Ukr/Polish similarity.
4. відеозвернення Compare similar Ukr. and Polish phrases for "pay attention": **звертати увагу/zwracać uwagę** vs. Russian **обращать внимание**. A noun from the same verb is used in **відеозвернення/видеообращение**. Note that the Ukr. equivalent of Russian nouns in consonant+ие is double consonant plus -я, due to the Ukrainian loss of consonant plus jot after jer-fall. (cf. also **розлучення** vs. Russian **разлучение**).

5. свідчити: cf. свідок 'witness', cf. identical Polish formation świadek, different from Russian свидетель/свидетельствовать.
6. бійці, equivalent to Russian бойцы, but note Ukr. o>i, due to lost jer and newly closed syllable (bojьcy > bojcy > bijcy).
7. Ukr. військові agrees with Polish wojskowi. Russian военные.

І що саме українські військові стали на заваді з'єднання сімей, зокрема батьків з дітьми, які перебували в лікарнях", - пише Андрющенко.

And that it was the Ukrainian military themselves that hindered the reunification of families, including parents with children who were in hospitals", Andryushchenko wrote.

1. І. Normally, the Ukr. equivalent of Russian и is the central vowel [ɪ], but in initial position, the vowel is front [i], spelled і.
2. стали на заваді. Polish has the exact equivalent **stać na zawadzie**. Russian has the Slavonicism воспрепятствовать.
3. зокрема 'in particular, especially" Not similar to either Russian or Polish. Related to Ukr. крім, Russian кроме.
4. пише: Note the absence of final –т(ь) in the 3rd sg. of Conjugation I. Cf. Polish **pisze**.

From the Preface of Shevelov's *Historical Phonology of the Ukrainian Language*.

Систематичне зіставлення звукозмін, що відбулися в українській мові та в інших слов'янських и суміжних неслов'янських мовах, не є в студіях такого гатунку річчю звичайною.

Original English:

A systematic confrontation of Ukrainian sound changes with those in other Slavic and adjacent non-Slavic languages is not common practice in books of this kind.

- Notes:

1. Звукозміна- і shows the jat' reflex, cf. the Russian root -мен-. Зміна has a Polish cognate **zmiana**, also with the jat' reflex.

2. Що used, translated with a participle (or который) in Russian.

Відбулися. Note that Russian от-, Polish od-, is **від-**, with the change of closed o>i plus the prothetic в- in initial position, like **вівса**, Відбутися is 'happen, occur' formed like its Polish equivalent **odbyć się**.

3. не є...річчю звичайною. Note present tense of verb "to be" with instrumental, as in Polish.

4. Гатунок and звичайний. Two more Ukrainian words with Polish cognates, gatunek and zwyczajny, even they were not used in the machine translation shown above.

Історичну фонологію української мови здебільшого розглядають ізольовано або ж у порівнянні тільки з російською та білоруською мовами. За першого підходу предмет дослідження опиняється у вакуумі, за другого він не виправдано перехиляється лише в один бік.

Original:

Usually, the historical phonology of Ukrainian is treated in isolation or is compared with Russian and Belorussian alone. The former approach places the subject in a vacuum; the latter makes it lopsided.

1. Здебільшого is close to Russian “большей частью”
2. у порівнянні. Note that this is not the equivalent of Russian *у*, but rather *в*.
 - In initial position there is a Ukrainian alternation of glides *w/j* and their paired vowels *u/i*, based on the preceding and following sounds, so as to avoid vowel hiatus or consonant clusters, and to favor the sequence CVCV. Thus, even Україна can appear as Вкраїна in some contexts. E.g. він іде, but вона йде; був у нас, but була в нас.
3. Порівняння. Equivalent to Polish *porównanie*. Note Russian *сравнение* has the Church Slavonic root *-rav-*, rather than East/West Slavic *-rov-*, which has the reflex of long *o* in both Ukrainian and Polish.
4. За першого підходу. Used in a temporal sense, close to Polish.
5. за другого. Другий ‘second’ is also like Polish, unlike Russian *второй*.
6. Він. Note that він looks very different from Russian (and Polish) *он*, but is simply due to the reflex of initial closed position *-o-*, which first took the prothetic consonant *-w-* and later lengthened, eventually producing the *-i-*.