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A Structural Comparison of the Ukrainian and Russian Nominal Accentual Systems

1. Introduction.

Russian and Ukrainian are both East Slavic languages and share many linguistic features. Word stress plays an important role in both languages but there are also significant differences and major innovations of noun accent in Ukrainian as compared to Russian.

This paper will compare and contrast some of the major categories of Russian and Ukrainian noun stress, indicating what is similar in both languages, and what is new and different in the Ukrainian pattern as compared to Russian. The general approach to Russian and Ukrainian stress is based on several of my previously published papers on the subject (see Feldstein 1980, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2017). Additional information on the Ukrainian stress pattern has primarily come from Vyxovaneč' et al (1973) and Matvijas (1969). Generally speaking, Russian appears to be more conservative and bound to an older literary tradition, while Ukrainian has introduced many new stress patterns. Nominal stress patterns will be treated as separate units in terms of two subparadigms—singular and plural—which constitute the pattern of six cases in both numbers. Comparisons will be based on the six major cases, without the Ukrainian vocative and special numeral forms, not found in Russian.

2. Some basic principles of Russian stress patterns.

The singular subparadigms are the most similar in the two languages, but the plural has had the most innovation, especially in Ukrainian. One striking tendency of Ukrainian has been an increase in the contrast of singular vs. plural stress patterns, where one subparadigm consists entirely of stem stress on the same syllable, while the other subparadigm has ending stress throughout the subparadigm. This pattern makes stress an auxiliary marker of grammatical number. On the other hand, if stress types differ within a subparadigm, rather than across the two number subparadigms, this enhances the case opposition and can be referred to as case mobility. Remarkably, all case mobility (with a few anomalous exceptions) involves the opposition of one case form vs. all of the others. In the case of case syncretism, such as the direct case syncretism of the nominative and accusative, a single syncretic case ending is opposed to the other in the subparadigm. This is an additional argument for using the subparadigm, rather than the full paradigm as the basis for stress classification, since the structural pattern of one case form vs. all

others only applies clearly within a subparadigm. For example, the Russian accusative singular *го́лову* 'head' has an initial stress that is opposed to all other subparadigmatic stress, and the syncretic nominative-accusative plural stress of *зубы́* 'tooth' is similarly opposed to all other plural stress forms. Although Ukrainian stress has developed a number of differences from the Russian pattern, instances of Ukrainian case mobility within a subparadigm still adhere to the principle of a maximum one stressed case form (including syncretic cases), opposed to all others. Assuming the system of six cases per subparadigm, the pattern could have been two different forms vs. four or three forms vs. three, but the actual data show an adherence to the pattern of one stress form vs. all others within a subparadigm. If two cases are syncretic, this would mean one syncretic form vs. four; in the absence of such syncretism, the pattern is one stressed case form vs. five others.

Traditionally, Russian accentual types have listed without regard for complementary distribution. My work on the subject has introduced the concept of reducing the numerous listed types of stress to a minimum by means of using specific grammatical endings as predictable signals of the actual stress patterns. Here is a basic diagram of the three basic stress types of Russian within a subparadigm (singular or plural), where **x** refers to possible positions of stress (comparisons to Ukrainian will be shown later):

Type A #x x x x x + ___ # (e.g. *ко́рова*, 'cow' nom. sg.)

Type B # ___ x + x ___ # (*колбаса́~колба́сы*, 'sausage' nom. sg/nom. pl.)

Type C #x ___ + x ___ # (*голова́, го́лову* 'head' nom, acc. sg ~ *го́ловы, голова́м* nom, dat. pl.)

Type A stress is the simplest type of Russian stress and is defined as a constant stress on the same syllable of the word in all forms of both subparadigms. No special rules are needed, and a single stress mark is sufficient. Since A stress is defined as the same across both subparadigms, it can be called AA.

Type B stress is normally adjacent to the stem-ending boundary, referred to as pre-desinential when directly before the stem-desinence boundary and desinential when right after the boundary.

Type C stress directly follows either the initial word boundary or the stem-ending boundary and includes either initial stress, desinential stress, or a mobile combination of both within a subparadigm. Note that desinential stress refers to stress on the first desinential syllable in the case of a desinence that consists of more than one syllable.

In addition to the uniform AA, BB, and CC types with the same basic type in both singular and plural, types B and C can occur as mixed types, either with B singular and C plural (BC) or vice versa (CB). This means that the full inventory of basic Russian stress types consists of these five:

AA, BB, CC, BC, and CB. The actual total of more than five types is accounted for by various subtypes of B and C stress, depending on desinences in the direct (i.e. nominative/accusative) and genitive cases, as will be shown below.

3. Review of the basic stress types in Russian and Ukrainian.

Now let's proceed to look at some A, B, and C stress types in the two target languages. Each declension type (to be referred to as zero-nouns, *a*-nouns, and *o*-nouns, based on the nominative singular ending) has its specific manifestations of stress types A, B, C. As I have shown in previous publications, the variant manifestations are mainly dependent on either the direct (nominative/accusative) or genitive case endings in the respective singular and plural subparadigms. Thus, for each stress type, we will examine how this affects the various noun types.

For each stress type, the Russian type will be illustrated, and similar and deviating Ukrainian examples will be illustrated. For types A and C in particular, we will see how Ukrainian has introduced significant innovative and structurally new subtypes, aimed at contrasting the stress of the singular and plural subparadigms.

Type AA

In Russian, this type is characterized by the same stress in both subparadigms, and it can fall on any stem syllable, including the stem medial syllable, which is not common to the B and C types. For type A, there is no predictability based on certain case forms and a single stress mark on the stem is sufficient to indicate the stress in the various case forms of both subparadigms. E.g. *ра́к* 'crab', *ко́рова* 'cow', *ко́рыто* 'trough'. Ukrainian has the same constant stress pattern for its cognate equivalents of these words (*ра́к, ко́рова, ко́рыто*). Generally speaking, for each Russian stress type, there is an equivalent Ukrainian type for at least a subset, but in many cases, there are also large numbers of innovative Ukrainian accentual types, in addition to the older ones that match those of Russian. The AA stress type is a perfect example of this. Although the four illustrated examples and many others have the same constant stress as Russian, there is a large group of Ukrainian words in which the constant Russian stress pattern is matched by a Ukrainian stress shift to the ending in the entire plural subparadigm. This is especially common in *a*-nouns with the *-k*-suffix, where the plural shift has become a regular pattern. For example, nom. sg. *ді́вка* 'girl', nom. pl. *ді́вки*. As is usual for the *-k*-suffix, a vowel is inserted before the *k*, when followed by the zero ending of the gen. pl., so the result is *ді́во́к*. The gen. pl. mobile vowel stress is part of this novel Ukrainian pattern and guarantees a final syllable columnar stress, even when there is a zero ending. Thus, it has spread to other words with inserted vowels, e.g., *пі́сня* 'song' nom. sg., *пі́сні* nom. pl., *пісе́нь* gen. pl. The pattern has also spread to some *a*-nouns

without an inserted vowel, such as *ба́ба* 'woman', plural *ба́би*. Significantly, this would produce a lack of a columnar final stress in the zero-ending genitive plural (*баб*), due to the absence of an inserted vowel, which has then led to the substitution of the typical *o*-stem ending *-iv* in such words (i.e. *ба́бів*, which is more typical of masculine nouns). Some other Ukrainian singular-plural pairs that do not occur as such in Russian are as follows: *товáришка-товаришкі́, жі́нка-жі́нкі́, ка́ртка-картки́, це́рква-церкви́*. These examples are not easily accommodated in the AA category that is characteristic of Russian. Medial stem stress is not normally paired with end stress in the other subparadigm. However, a minor Russian stress type somewhat similar to this occurs with the agentive suffixes *-тель* and *-ор*, e.g., *учи́тель-учите́ля, инстру́ктор-инструктора́*. However, note that both of these Russian words also have variants with the standard constant AA stress in the plural, sometimes with a different nuance of meaning. Since it would be impossible to classify the large Ukrainian category of singular stem stress, paired to plural end stress as the AA type, one might add a new AB category for this Ukrainian type. The only potential problem would be that type B stress normally is realized as end stress when a non-zero genitive occurs. However, the Ukrainian pattern of a having a stressed mobile vowel or using an imported *-iv* ending might be proposed as a novel condition for Ukrainian type B end stress. We can note that the Russian AA stressed noun *болóто* 'marsh' has immobile AA stress but the Ukrainian cognate has acquired end stress in all forms of the plural, e.g. *болóто/болотá*.

Type BB

Let us now take a look at the B accentual category. This type has final stress in the singular and follows the rule that a non-zero genitive with B stress predicts ending stress in the singular or plural subparadigm (cf. both subparadigms of *сто́л/столá* 'table' nom./gen. sg. and *столы́/столо́в* nom./gen. pl.) Conversely, a zero genitive predicts stem-final (or predesinential) stress (*вдовá* 'widow' nom. sg. but plural *вдо́вы, вдо́в*, etc.). This means that mostly masculine type B zero-nouns have end stress in the plural, but type B *a*-nouns and *o*-nouns have stem-final (or predesinential) stress. In other words, *a*-nouns and *o*-nouns already had an inherited accentual opposition of singular and plural, which was retained without significant innovation in both Russian and Ukrainian. Since the main thrust of Ukrainian accentual innovation has been increasing the opposition of singular and plural, this was not a priority for many nouns of type B. Here are some examples of BB nouns that have similar stress patterns in both Russian and Ukrainian:

Masculine zero nouns with end-stress in both numbers:

Rus. *сто́л – столá/столы́, столо́в*; Ukr. *сти́л – столá столі́ – столі́в* 'table' nom., gen. sg./nom., gen. pl

Feminine and neuter *a*- and *o*-nouns with singular end stress but stem-final stress in plural:

Rus. *колбаса́ – колбасу́/колбасы́ – колбас* Ukr. *ковбаса́ – колбасу́/колбаси́ – ковбас* 'sausage'
nom., acc. sg./nom., gen. pl.

Rus. and Ukr. *полотно́ – полотна́; полотна – полотен* 'cloth' nom., gen. sg./nom., gen. pl.

Type CC

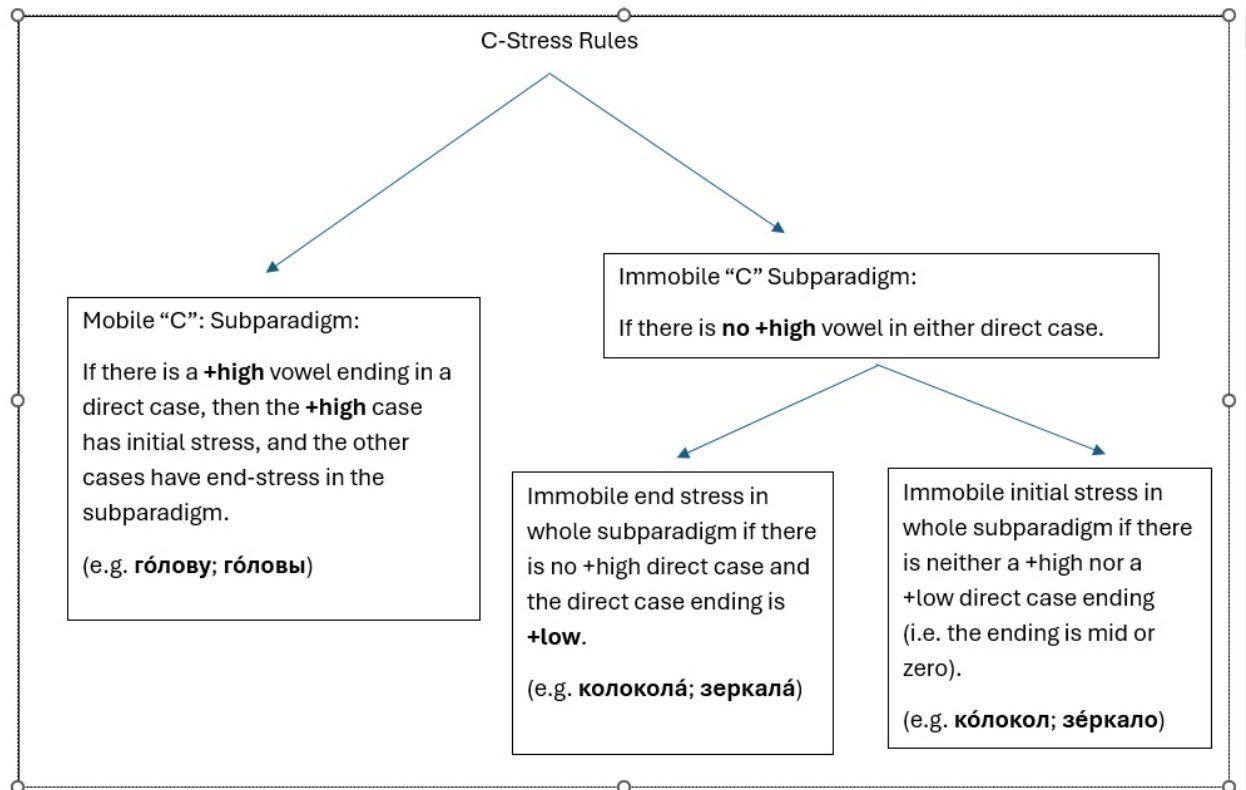
The final accent type, CC, is the most complex and has had major innovations in both Ukrainian and Russian. Ukrainian tends to be a two-track language with respect to both AA and CC stress patterns. In other words, a smaller set of words often retains an older accent type and agrees with Russian, while an innovative Ukrainian type departs from the Russian pattern and appears to be more productive by opposing singular and plural subparadigms.

As noted above, the rules for nouns marked for B-stress revolve around the zero or non-zero genitive, with desinential stress in the case of a non-zero genitive in the subparadigm, but pre-desinential stress if the genitive is zero.

The Russian stress rules for nouns marked C can be stated in terms of the vowel height of direct case desinences (i.e., nominative and accusative), as follows:

1. A high vowel direct case desinence (-*i* or -*u*) means that the given subparadigm has mobile stress, with initial stress in the high vowel direct case form and end stress elsewhere in the subparadigm. (e.g., Russian *го́лову, голова́, головы́, головé* 'head' acc., nom., gen., loc. sg.; *во́лки, волко́в, волка́м* 'wolf' nom., gen., dat. pl.).
2. If there is no direct case high vowel desinence, stress depends on whether the desinence is a low vowel or not:
 - a. If low, the subparadigm has immobile end stress. (e.g., *зеркала́, зерка́лам* 'mirror' nom., dat. pl.; *города́, города́м* 'city' nom., dat. pl.)
 - b. If non-low (i.e. mid or zero), the subparadigm has immobile initial stress. (e.g., *го́род, города, городе́* 'city' nom., gen., loc. sg.; *зе́рцало, зе́ркала, зе́ркале* 'mirror' nom., gen., loc. sg.).

This can be summarized in the following diagram:



Thus, there are two binary splits. The first is between high and non-high, leading to mobile and immobile subparadigms. The second is between low and non-low, leading to immobile end stress and immobile initial stress.

Since the type C stress pattern is tied to the nominative and accusative, we can review the different type C situations in terms of the relevant singular and plural direct case endings, as follows:

1. Nominative/accusative singular *-a/-u*, plural *-i*. (e.g. *рукá* 'hand, arm')
2. Nominative/accusative singular *-∅* (zero), plural *-i*. (e.g. *во́лк* 'wolf')
3. Nominative/accusative singular *-∅* (zero), plural *-a*. (e.g. *го́род* 'city')
4. Nominative/accusative singular *-o*, plural *-a*. (e.g. *сло́во* 'word')

When type one has CC stress in Russian, this results in the mobility of both subparadigms, with the initial accusative singular opposed to end stress of all other cases and the syncretic nominative/accusative plural likewise opposed. The accentual similarity of the two numbers contradicts the tendency to oppose the two numbers. Several very basic and high frequency Russian words have retained this pattern (e.g. *голова*, *борода*, *гора*, *нога*, *рука*, *сторона*, *щeka*), but a large number of words have either abandoned the mobility of the singular by

adopting immobile singular end stress and/or changing the plural to stem stress, both characteristic of stress type B. Thus, if the singular gives up its mobility but the plural retains it, we wind up with a BC pattern (e.g. *слезá* 'tear'); conversely, if the singular retains mobility and the plural adopts stem stress, we have a CB pattern (e.g. *водá* 'water'). The number opposition is strengthened in the process.

In Ukrainian, even fewer monosyllabic stems retain type C in both numbers and are semantically related as body parts, e.g. *рука* 'hand, arm', *нога* 'foot, leg', *щока* 'cheek'. A more radical and typical Ukrainian innovation of this type involves the retention of accusative singular case mobility (where all the rest of the singular cases are end stressed), but a wholesale change to initial stress in the plural, with the exception of the genitive plural in bisyllabic stems, even for body parts. For example, *головá* 'head' and *бородá* 'beard' both have initial stress in all plural forms except the genitive, e.g. nom./dat. pl. *голови, головам; боро́ди, боро́дам*, but genitive plural *голів, борід*. The genitive plural forms suggest a stressed zero, which takes the place of the nominative/accusative as the isolated mobile end stressed case. However, when the stem is monosyllabic, there is no difference between a first syllable stress and a retracted stress from a stressed genitive zero, so one could interpret ambiguously stressed *гóri, гóрам, гír* either as immobile with initial stress or as having the same stressed zero genitive plural end stress as *борід*. In any case, the initial stress in most plural forms is a major innovation in comparison to the cognate Russian words.

In the case of the direct case singular zero, paired with a plural *-i* ending, both Russian and Ukrainian have undergone considerable changes from the earlier pattern of singular initial stress and plural mobility. Russian retains the older pattern in words such as *волк, бог*. Both Russian and Ukrainian have initial stress in the singular, but only Russian keeps plural mobility by having initial stress in the plural direct cases, in contrast to the Ukrainian end stress in the entire plural. Thus, Russian has the nom. and gen. pl. *во́лки/бо́ги, волко́в/бого́в*, but Ukrainian has *вовки́, боги́*, with end stress in the entire plural, making this a CB type, rather than the CC of Russian. Note that these nouns do not end in "soft" palatal or palatalized consonants. The latter more often retain CC mobility in both Russian and Ukrainian, as exemplified by Russian *го́сть, го́сти, госте́й* and Ukrainian *гíсть, гóсті, госте́й*. In fact, the one outstanding hard consonant stem with retained plural mobility in Ukrainian is the isolated *зуб, зу́би, зубі́в*, said to have retained mobile stress on the pattern of *a*-nouns referring to body parts.

One of the most characteristic Russian patterns involved the change of plural mobility to end stress with the introduction of direct case low vowel *-a*. This ending was once more characteristic of the neuter plural but spread to large numbers of Russian masculine nouns, e.g. *бе́рег/берега́, го́род/города́, ве́к/векá*. Cognate Ukrainian examples have plural end stress, but retain the older ending, rather than the new *-a* of Russian, e.g. *береги́, віки́*.

Primarily neuter nouns with direct case singular *-o* and plural *-a* present a simple pattern for both Russian and Ukrainian, since singular initial stress is already contrasted with plural end stress. Ukrainian did not have to change anything here in order to achieve its usual goal of opposing singular and plural. Examples in both Russian and Ukrainian show this neuter contrast, such as Russian and Ukrainian singular *сло́во – слова́* ‘word’ nom., gen. sg. and plural *слова́ – слова́м* nom., dat. pl. However, this simple pattern is more complex for Ukrainian neuter stems longer than monosyllables. Interestingly, the Russian word *о́зеро* ‘lake’ nom. sg., *озёра* nom. pl., has an exceptional stress pattern in Russian that is like this Ukrainian type. I would classify it as CB, and this is the only Russian neuter *o*-noun of this type. However, Ukrainian has several more words of this type, including words that are BB or CC types in Russian. The Russian BB words *колесо́-колёса* ‘wheel’ nom. sg., pl. and *решето́-решёта* ‘sieve’ occur as CB in Ukrainian, with the same stress pattern as *озеро*. Cf. Ukrainian nominative singular and plural *ко́лесо/колёса*, *ре́шето/решёта*. The Russian CC *зе́рцало/зерка́ла* ‘mirror’ nom. sg./pl. also occurs as CB in Ukrainian: *дзе́рцало/дзерка́ла*. This word class is unusual in opposing number by means of initial vs. predesinential stem stress, which can only occur in a stem larger than a monosyllable. Ukrainian *де́рево/дерёва* also belongs to this type. Russian agrees with the C type singular stress but uses an old collective type for the plural: *дерёвья*.

This has been a brief survey of the major nominal stress types of Russian and Ukrainian with a concentration on how Ukrainian has introduced accentual changes to provide redundant support for the singular vs. plural opposition. Perhaps Russian remained more conservative due to its stricter adherence to the norms of the literary language, as compared to a more colloquial approach to the Ukrainian literary language over the decades.

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