

The Stress of the Russian Verb

A New Interpretation

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- This presentation is focused on the stress of the Russian verb.
- It follows the same general procedure of my paper on Russian noun stress.
- I will first review the main principles of Russian stress opposition, which equally apply to noun and verb.
- Next, the stress of the Russian verb system will be compared and contrasted to that of the noun, by way of introduction to the subject, after which the various types of verb stems will be presented in terms of their accentual properties.

- The vast majority of Russian words—both verbs and nouns—have constant stress on a fixed stem syllable in all of their forms. For these words, you just have to remember where the stress is.
- This type is referred to as **type A**, e.g. *за́втракать*, *пла́кать*, *ста́вить*, etc.
- This can also be called “lexical” stress: a single accent mark on a word (lexical item) determines where the stress is in all its forms.

- In comparison to type A, Russian stress is more difficult when the accent is not on the same stem syllable in all forms.
- These types can be divided into types B and C for both the noun and verb.
- Both B and C stress types can have end-stress, defined as stress on the first syllable of the grammatical ending (desinence). They differ in that B can also stress the stem-final syllable, while C can stress the word-initial syllable, in addition to end-stress.

- This is grammatical or morphological stress: grammatical positions determine stress under certain phonological conditions.
- For the noun, singular and plural forms together are known as the **paradigm**. Singular or plural forms viewed separately are called **subparadigms**.
- The two main subparadigms of the verb are the non-past (including present and perfective future) and past; other non-conjugated forms to be looked at in this survey are the infinitive, imperative, verbal adverb, and past passive participle.
- The two basic types of morphological stress are called **type B** and **type C** for both the noun and verb.

- Types **B** and **C** each have two possible stress positions:
- 1. Type **B** can stress either the ending or the stem-final syllable (right before the ending).
- 2. Type **C** can stress either the ending or the word-initial syllable.
- Recalling that type **A** can stress any stem syllable, here is a diagram comparing all three, where the underline shows possible stress for each type:
- **A:** #_____ - # **B:** #.....__ - __ # **C:** # __..... - __ #
- The above scheme applies to the two major subparadigms of the noun and verb: nonpast and past. Past passive participles also have a shared B/C stress type which stresses the next-to-last stem syllable, e.g. *прочѐтан*.

- **Mobile and immobile stress in a subparadigm.**
- A given subparadigm can have identical stresses in all forms, in which case we say that the subparadigm has **immobile stress**.
- A subparadigm can also have a single deviating stress, opposed to all the others in the same subparadigm. In this case, we say that the subparadigm has **mobile stress**.
- Most instances of stress types B and C in the verb have two predictable realizations in either subparadigm—one mobile and the other immobile.
- In order to understand the Russian stress system, it is essential to be familiar with the immobile and mobile realizations of types B and C in the non-past and past tenses.

- **Immobile and Mobile Stress in Types B and C**
- **Type B immobility and mobility**
 1. Both in the non-past (present) and past tenses, stress type B can be either immobile or mobile, depending on certain phonological features of the verb stem. Type B **immobility** always means stem-final stress in the Russian verb (e.g. *чита́ю, чита́ешь; стри́гла, стри́гли*).
 2. Type B **mobility** in the non-past means end-stress on a single vowel ending (i.e. the 1st person singular) and stem-final in the other forms (e.g. *прошу́ ~ про́сишь*). Type B **mobility** in the **past** means end-stress on the feminine past ending and stem-final in the other forms (e.g. *забра́ла ~ забра́ли*).
- **Type C immobility and mobility**
 1. Type C only has immobile end-stress in the non-past (present); it does not have accent mobility in the non-past tense (e.g. *несу, несёшь*). The type C **immobile past** stress also has end-stress (e.g. *несло́, несли́*).
 2. Type C **mobile past** tense stress has a single end-stress on the feminine past ending, like the type B mobile past, but all of the other forms have **initial** stress in type C, instead of on the stem-final, as in type B (e.g. *прожи́ла ~ про́жили*). If the stem only has one syllable, the difference between initial and stem-final is neutralized and can only be seen if the stem is prefixed.

B and C Occurrence of Immobile/Mobile Stress

Stress Type	Subparadigm (Tense)	Immobile Type	Mobile Type
B	Non-past (Present)	Stem-final	Stem-final ~ end-stress on single vowel ending , e.g. 1 st person singular: <i>прó-сишь ~ прошу́ (-V#)</i>
	Past Tense		Stem-final ~end-stress on feminine past ending <i>-lá</i> (<i>забра́ли ~ забра́ла</i>)
C	Non-past (Present)	End-stress (<i>несёт, несло́</i>)	(No C Mobility in Non-past)
	Past Tense		Initial ~ end-stress (<i>про́жили ~ прожилá</i>)

- It may be recalled that the noun can have different realizations of accent types B and C, which depend on certain declensional endings, such as the genitive case for accent type B and the nominative case for accent type C.
- For example, if the subparadigmatic genitive is zero, then noun B stress is predictably realized as stem-final; but, if the genitive is not zero, then the B stress is final in the subparadigm. Type C has similar relations to the form of the nominative case.

- In the Russian verb, there are two main factors that determine the value of type B and C stress. They often correlate with the choice of a **mobile** or **immobile** stress pattern.
- 1. Stem length—the number of syllabic morphemes in the stem, not counting the prefix.
 - A. Long stems have syllabic roots plus a vocalic suffix, i.e. two syllabic stem morphemes.
 - B. Short stems have either a syllabic root or a syllabic suffix, but not both, and in some cases neither; i.e. they contain fewer than two syllabic stem morphemes.
- 2. The second main factor is the sonority of the stem-final segment. Long stems can only end in a vowel or sonorant.
- Short stems can end in a vowel, sonorant, or obstruent. Thus, a short stem can end in a higher sonority final (vowel/sonorant), or a lower sonority final (obstruent).
- Let us now look at some examples.

- The two criteria of stem length and stem final can be shown in the following charts with examples:

Verb Stem Length Types

Long:

Two post-prefix syllabic morphemes:
syllabic root + syllabic suffix (проси-ла)

Short:

One post-prefix syllabic morpheme:

1. Unaffixed syllabic root (нес-у)
2. Unaffixed syllabic root with deleted suffix (прос-ит)
3. Non-syllabic root + syllabic suffix (вр-ёт, вра-ла)

Short Stem Sonority Types

Low sonority final:

Basic stem ends in obstruent consonant.
(пек-у, пек-ла; нес-у, нес-ла)

High sonority final:

1. Basic stem ends in vowel (вра-ла)
2. Basic stem ends in sonorant (стан-у, жив-у, нача-ла, жи-ла, плы-ла)

- This gives us two binary features:
 - 1. Long stem vs. short stem
 - 2. Low sonority final vs. high sonority final
- The basic stress rule for B and C in the two verb tenses is as follows:

Basic Definitions of Type B and C Values for Non-past and Past Tenses	
Non-past Tense	
B = Mobile for Short Stems	B = Immobile for Long Stems
C= End-stressed (Single realization of stress in C Non-past)	
Past Tense	
B/C = Mobile for Short High Sonority Stems	B/C = Immobile for Long or Low Sonority Stems

- We shall now look at the various patterns of A, B, and C stress that occur. First they will be considered separately for the non-past and the past tenses.
- The reasons for variation (such as stem length and stem-final) will be indicated. It will be seen that our chart of the two major parameters can predict a large number of stress variations, using the minimal designations of B and C. This is the alternative to stress systems which do not establish systematic rules but list large numbers of stress types, many of which are predictable.

Non-past Realizations of Stress Types A, B, C.

Stress Type: A Fixed Stress		B Short Stem: Mobile	B Long Stem: Immobile (-ай- & -ей- suffixes)		C Immobile Non-past (All types)	
Non-past Singular	Non-past Singular	Non-past Singular	Non-past Singular	Non-past Singular	Non-past Singular	Non-past Singular
1 ста́влю	1 лéзу	1 прошú	1 чита́ю	1 белéю	1 несú	1 говорю́
2 ста́вишь	2 лéзешь	2 про́сишь	2 чита́ешь	2 белéешь	2 несёшь	2 говори́шь
3 ста́вит	3 лéзет	3 про́сит	3 чита́ет	3 белéет	3 несёт	3 говори́т
Plural	Plural	Plural	Plural	Plural	Plural	Plural
1 ста́вим	1 лéзем	1 про́сим	1 чита́ем	1 белéем	1 несём	1 говори́м
2 ста́вите	2 лéзете	2 про́сите	2 чита́ете	2 белéете	2 несёте	2 говори́те
3 ста́вят	3 лéзут	3 про́сят	3 чита́ют	3 белéют	3 несúт	3 говоря́т

Note: the non-past tense of чита́ю, etc., looks like it should belong to type A, fixed stress. However, the past passive participle form has a mobile stress shift to the pre-suffixal vowel (-чи́тан-), disqualifying it as a type A.

Past Tense Realizations of Stress Types A, B, C.

Stress Type: A Fixed Stress		B Immobile Past Long Stem: Syllabic suffixed	B Immobile Past Low sonority: Unsuffixed obstruent stem	B Mobile Past Non-syllabic suffixed stem.	B Mobile Past Unsuffixed sonorant stem.
Past Singular М ста́вил	Past Singular М лéз	Past Singular М про́сил	Past Singular М стрíг	Past Singular М забра́л	Past Singular М заплы́л
N ста́вило	N лéзлo	N про́сило	N стрíглo	N забра́ло	N заплы́ло
F ста́вила	F лéзла	F про́сила	F стрíгла	F забрала́	F заплы́ла
Plural ста́вили	Plural М лéзли	Plural про́сили	Plural стрíгли	Plural забра́ли	Plural заплы́ли

C Immobile Past: Unsuffixed Low Sonority (Obstruent) Stem (even when obstruent is deleted).		C Mobile Past Unsuffixed High Sonority (Sonorant) Stem (& Suppletives да-(ть), бы-(ть)	
Past Singular М нёс	Past Singular М мёл	Past Singular М про́жил	Past Singular М за́дал
N неслó	N мелó	N про́жило	N за́дало
F несла́	F мелá	F прожила́	F задалá
Plural несли́	Plural мели́	Plural про́жили	Plural за́дали

- Non-past and past stress subparadigms have been presented separately in the above tables, since they follow somewhat different rules for the realization of B and C types.
- Our next step is to consider a double letter designation for verb stress, where the first letter (A, B, C) represents the non-past, and the second letter shows past tense stress.
- If we attempt to inventory the major stress patterns in this way, we can see that the inventory is divided into two main groups of verb stems.
- The large group of stems never admits accentual mobility in the past tense (including A, B, and C past tense subparadigms), due to past stems that are either of the long type or less sonorous, obstruent type.
- The second group of stems has mobility in any past tense occurrence of B or C stress and includes short and more sonorous stems.

Sample Inventory of Non-past and Past Stress Types

<p>Group I: Types B and C admit only immobile stress in the past tense.</p> <p>a. Non-suffixed obstruent stems.</p> <p>b. Suffixed stems with syllabic root (CVC-V-)</p> <p>(c. If stem is long in the non-past, then B non-past is also immobile.)</p>	<p>Group II: Types B and C only mobile stress in the past tense.</p> <p>a. Non-suffixed sonorant stems.</p> <p>b. Suffixed stems with non-syllabic root (CC-a-)</p>
<p>AA léz-, stávi-, pláka-, délaj-</p> <p>BB prosi-, pisa-, verte-, kolo-</p> <p>(BB immobile non-past: čitaj-, belej-)</p> <p>CC gr'ob-, n'os-, v'oz-, p'ok-</p> <p>BC mog-, (po)-mog-</p> <p>CB gryz-, pad-, krad-, govori-</p>	<p>AA stán-, dúj-, dén-</p> <p>BB g/na- (short past stem only)</p> <p>CC (na)-č/n-, živ-, (u)-m/r-</p> <p>BC (s)-nim-, (ob)-nim-, (pod)-nim-</p> <p>CB (za)-č/n-, (so)-vra-</p>

Sample Full Paradigms

AA Non-past Singular 1 стáвлю 2 стáвишь 3 стáвит Plural 1 стáвим 2 стáвите 3 стáвят i-suffixed stem	Past Singular М стáвил N стáвило F стáвила Plural стáвили	AA Non-past Singular 1 лéзу 2 лéзешь 3 лéзет Plural 1 лéзем 2 лéзете 3 лéзут Unsuffixed Obstruent Stem	Past Singular М лéз N лéзло F лéзла Plural лéзли	AA Non-past Singular 1 дéлаю 2 дéлаешь 3 дéлает Plural 1 дéлаем 2 дéлаете 3 дéлают -aj-suffixed stem	Past Singular М дéлал N дéлало F дéлала Plural дéлали	AA Non-past Singular 1 стáну 2 стáнешь 3 стáнет Plural 1 стáнем 2 стáнете 3 стáнут Unsuffixed Sonorant Stem	Past Singular М стáл N стáло F стáла Plural стáли
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BB Non-past Singular 1 прошú 2 прóсишь 3 прóсит Plural 1 прóсим 2 прóсите 3 прóсят i-suffixed stem Mobile B Non-past & Immobile B Past	Past Singular М просíл N просíло F просíла Plural просíли	BB Non-past Singular 1 читáю 2 читáешь 3 читáет Plural 1 читáем 2 читáете 3 читáют -aj-suffixed stem Immobile B Non-past & Past	Past Singular М читáл N читáло F читáла Plural читáли	BB Non-past Singular 1 гоню́ 2 гóнишь 3 гóнит Plural 1 гóним 2 гóните 3 гóнят Irregular i-suffixed and C/C-a- stem Mobile B Non-past & Past	Past Singular М гна́л N гна́ло F гна́ла Plural гна́ли
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CC		CC	
Non-past	Past	Non-past	Past
Singular	Singular	Singular	Singular
1 занесу́	М занёс	1 начну́	М начал
2 занесёшь	N занесло́	2 начнёшь	N начало
3 занесёт	F занесла́	3 начнёт	F начала́
Plural	Plural	Plural	Plural
1 занесём	занесли́	1 начнём	начали
2 занесёте		2 начнёте	
3 занесу́т		3 начну́т	
Unsuffixed Obstruent Stem Immobile C Non-past & Past		Unsuffixed Sonorant Stem Immobile C Non-past & Mobile C Past	

BC		BC	
Non-past	Past	Non-past	Past
Singular	Singular	Singular	Singular
1 помогу́	М помо́г	1 обниму́	М обнял
2 помо́жешь	N помогло́	2 обни́мешь	N обняло
3 помо́жет	F помогла́	3 обни́мет	F обняла́
Plural	Plural	Plural	Plural
1 помо́жем	помогли́	1 обни́мем	обняли
2 помо́жете		2 обни́мете	
3 помо́гут		3 обни́мут	
Unsuffixed Obstruent Stem Mobile B Non-past & Immobile C Past		Unsuffixed Sonorant Stem Mobile B Non-past & Mobile C Past	

CB		CB	
Non-past	Past	Non-past	Past
Singular	Singular	Singular	Singular
1 украду́	М укрáл	1 назову́	М назва́л
2 украдёшь	N укрáло	2 назовёшь	N назва́ло
3 украдёт	F укрáла	3 назовёт	F назва;á
Plural	Plural	Plural	Plural
1 украдём	укра́ли	1 назовём	назва́ли
2 украдёте		2 назовёте	
3 украду́т		3 назову́т	
Unsuffixed Obstruent Stem		Non-syllabic Suffixed Stem	
Immobile C Non-past & Immobile B Past		Immobile C Non-past & Mobile B Past	

Note: the choice of B or C past stress for sonorant stems determines whether the final feminine stress alternates with stem-final or initial. In some verbs, this is a matter of free variation and stylistics. In other verbs, the same stem can have specific meanings associated with a B or C past. For example the B past stress (*запила́, запи́л, запи́ли*) is used in the meaning 'wash food down with a drink,' while the C past of the same stem (*запила́, за́пил, за́пили*) means 'drink to excess, become an alcoholic'.

- Comments on forms outside the non-past and past tenses: infinitive, imperative, and verbal adverb
- Verbs do not differentiate B and C types in the imperative. The stress usually is the same as that of the first person singular non-past, the form in which B and C types usually coincide as end-stressed.
- Imperative stress is related to the choice of *-i* or zero as the imperative ending. When the B or C stress types use the *-i* ending, it is stressed; when the zero ending is used (in B/C stems ending in *-j*, except for *-i-* suffixed stems), the stress is stem-final (e.g. *пеки́(те)*, *говори́(те)*, *проси́(те)*, *рой́(те)*, but *рису́й(те)*, *чита́й(те)*, etc.
- The stress of the present gerund (деепричастие) follows the same rule (e.g. *говоря́*, *прося́*, *роя́*, *рису́я*, *чита́я*).

- The real reason behind the coincidence of the forms of the first person singular non-past, the imperative, and the present gerund lies in the fact that these three forms all have a simple vowel ending of the type *-V#*.
- A number of gerunds are lexical exceptions and have irregular stresses, which cannot be predicted by the general rules (the best known being *сто́я, ле́жа, си́дя*), all of which should be end-stressed by the usual rules, in view of their end-stressed present tense.

- Like the imperative, infinitive stress generally depends on whether the infinitive ending has a zero vowel or the vowel *-i*.
- If the infinitive ending is *-ti*, the ending is stressed. The infinitive stress is closely related to that of the past tense.
- Verbs with past tense B stress and past mobile C stress have infinitive stress on the stem-final syllable, but verbs with past tense C end-stress (except velars) have the stressed *-tí* ending (e.g. *проси́ть, говори́ть, нача́ть, грызть, пасть, те́чь*; but *гrestí, нести́, везти́*).

- Past passive participle
- The stress of the past passive participle (PPP for short) depends on whether the stem is short (or truncated) or long (with an undeleted suffix vowel).
- When a short stem occurs in the PPP form, the stress follows the A, B or C **past tense stress** for unsuffixed verbs (obstruent or sonorant) (*укра́дено, принесено́*).
- But, the stress follows the A, B, or C **non-past tense stress** for short stems with a deleted *-i*-suffix (*опро́шено, приговорено́*).
- When a long stem occurs, with an intact suffix vowel, the stress retracts to the stem-penult position in both B and C types, but not in A, since the A type retains its stress position in the entire paradigm, including the PPP. These situations can be illustrated as follows:

- 1. Short or truncated stem in the PPP form.
- A. Unaffixed obstruent and sonorant stems: PPP matches the past tense stress.

-‘on PPP suffix for obstruent stems		
A past stress: pereléz-‘on-(a) перелéзена Cf. перелéзла	B past stress: ukrád-‘on-(a) укрáдена Cf. укрáла	C past stress: prines-‘on-ó принесенó Cf. принеслó
-t PPP suffix for sonorant stems		
A past stress: odé-t-a одéта Cf. одéла	B past stress: za-čá-t-o~za-ča-t-á зачáто~зачатá Cf. зачáло~зачалá	C past stress: pró-ži-t-o~pro-ži-t-á прóжито~прожитá Cf. прóжило~прожилá

- B. Truncated *-i*-suffix stems: PPP matches the non-past tense stress.

A non-past stress: ras-kúpor-‘on-(a) раскúпорена Cf. раскúпорила	B non-past stress: o-próš-‘on-(a) опрóшена Cf. опрóсит	C non-past stress: pri-govor-‘on-ó приговоренó Cf. приговорít
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- 2. Undeleted suffix in the PPP form: A retains its fixed stress, but B and C merge with retracted, stem-penult stress.

A (non-past) stress:	B (non-past) stress:	C (non-past) stress:
vos-trébovan(a) вострéбован(a)	organizóvan(a) организóван(a)	s-kóvan(a) скóван(a)
o-plákan(a) опла́кан(a)	na-rísan(a) напи́сан(a)	osméjan(a) осме́ян(a)
do-stígnut(a) достíгнут(a)	za-t'ánut(a) затя́нут(a)	s-tólknut(a) стóлкнут(a)
u-víden(a) уви́ден(a)	pere-smótren(a) пересмо́трен(a)	pere-sížen(a) переси́жен(a)

- Thanks for your attention.