

Russian Orthographic Reform

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To truly understand a society's culture, study their language. The history of how the Russian language developed mirrors how Russian society evolved and changed. The written record of how the orthography changed and what influenced it sheds light on milestones within the language and, thus, its cultural as well. This paper takes a historical analysis of the Russian language from the early beginnings of the Glagolitic alphabet to modern Russian Cyrillic. This paper shows that Russian leadership in the past not only knew that language was key to a unified society, but manipulated it in such a way that would prevent any diversion from their attempts to control orthographic development and thus control an increasingly literate society. The paper will conclude with the most recent official changes to the modern Russian alphabet, but with a greater understanding and appreciation for how it was forged in Russian society.

Very few alphabets have anything close to an equal correspondence between phonemes and written characters, where one character represents only one sound. If the language has a phonetic alphabet, where the characters represent the pronunciation of words, it can be a benefit to students. It has been a linguistic goal by writers in several languages at various times to approach a more phonetic representation of the spoken language. Benjamin Franklin proposed in a 1779 essay an early phonetic alphabet for English, but due to the lack of any overseeing body there have been no official reforms of the English language's orthography, only gradual refinements through private bodies like dictionaries. Spelling is usually the result of centuries of history and highly resistant to reform. Any change in the language requires

an overall standardizing body that all speakers of a language must recognize, as well as the promotion of the reform in a manner that speakers will accept and adopt. This is more difficult if the population has an established literary tradition, as compared to an illiterate population learning new spellings for the first time. One unusual example of multiple official spelling reforms in a language is Russian. This paper seeks to describe the history of Russian orthographic reforms and their implications for Russian pronunciation and Russian politics, with use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (Fig. 1.) to approximately describe the sounds of the characters.

The Cyrillic alphabet used to write the Russian language has been reformed several times over the last four centuries, with major official reforms in 1701, 1885,



I am a transplant from New England by way of Los Angeles. I work full-time at a real estate firm, and part-time at a public health clinic in addition to pursuing full time studies at the University of Hawai'i. I plan to graduate with a degree in Russian Studies and may pursue a graduate degree in the same. I wrote this piece after taking an introduction to linguistics along with my Russian major coursework and becoming fascinated with the origins of the language that I study. I wrote with the intention of taking what would otherwise be a dense, dull set of information and making it accessible and interesting for readers outside of my particular field. With the guidance of Dr. Anastasia Kostetskaya and the Russian Department I am pleased to have wrought this paper into a form that presents a brief look into a thousand years of language history in a manner that engages the audience.

GLAGOLITIC	IPA	NAME
ⱁ	/a/	Az
ⱂ	/b/	Buky
ⱃ	/v/	Vedi
ⱄ	/g/	Glagoli
ⱅ	/d/	Dobro
ⱆ	/ɛ/	Jest
ⱇ	/z/	Zhivete
ⱈ	/dz/	Dzelo
ⱉ	/z/	Zemlja
ⱊ	/i/, /j/	Izhe
ⱋ	/i/, /j/	Izhe
ⱌ	/i/, /j/	I
ⱍ	/dz/	Djervъ
ⱎ	/k/	Kako
ⱏ	/l/, /ʎ/	Lyudie
ⱐ	/m/	Myslite
ⱑ	/n/, /ɲ/	Nash
ⱒ	/ɔ/	On
ⱓ	/p/	Pokoj
ⱔ	/r/	Rtsi
ⱕ	/s/	Slovo
ⱖ	/t/	Tverdo
ⱗ	/u/	Uk
ⱘ	/f/	Fert
ⱙ	/x/	Kher
ⱚ	/ɔ/	Oht
ⱛ	/tʃ/, /ʃt/	Shta
ⱜ	/ts/	Tsi
ⱝ	/tʃ/	Cherv
ⱞ	/ʃ/	Sha
ⱟ	/w/	Yer
Ⱡ	/i/	Yery
ⱡ	/ə/	Yer'
Ɫ	/æ/, /ja/	Yat
Ᵽ	/jo/	Jo
Ɽ	/ju/	Ju
ⱦ	/ɛ̃/	Small Yus
Ⱨ	/jɛ̃/	Small Iotated Yus
ⱨ	/ɔ̃/	Big Yus
Ⱪ	/jɔ̃/	Big Iotated Yus
Ⱬ	/θ/	Fita
ⱬ	/ɣ/, /i/	Izhitsa

The Glagolitic alphabet was retained as Old Church Slavonic for several centuries, and the saints' names persisted into naming the evolving writing system Cyrillic after Saint Cyril. The alphabet spread over the next few centuries to provide literacy to other Slavic languages along with the Orthodox faith. The original Glagolitic alphabet was primarily used for liturgy in the Orthodox Church, with thick-lined images not far removed from their carved originating logographic glyphs, and Greek borrowed letters. As the alphabet evolved into early Cyrillic in order to better write the Old Slavonic Church language, several characters were dropped and the alphabet began to take a form that was easier to write in cursive with a quill. This evolution preserved some Macedonian and Bulgarian spelling and phonetic conventions (Sullivan 1996). It dropped the *yuses* (ⱊ /ja/, ⱋ /ju/, ⱌ /ja/, and ⱍ /ju/). Each of these presented a nasal variety of /j/ with or without palatalization (the softening of consonants by applying a larger amount of the tongue to the palate in the mouth during pronunciation). This set of phonemes can be found as a legacy in modern Cyrillic as Ъ, which also usually presents as /j/. Some parts of the original sounds of the *yuses* have unfortunately been lost entirely. Each of these characters represented a sound found elsewhere in the Cyrillic alphabet, and thus redundant. As the Glagolitic alphabet progressed into the form we now call Cyrillic, these redundancies only confused the spelling of words, as words could be spelled using a *yus* or another character. The loss of these characters reduced the nasal vowels available to the language, but standardized the spelling of words so that they could be understood more easily by a language community that was only slowly gaining literacy. Some of the original phonetic values of these vowels have, however, been lost entirely, and while one can surmise that the loss of the *yuses* to the language was no great change, it is reasonable to assume that variation in pronunciation was simplified by the loss of complexity and detail. One peculiarity of the phonology of the original Bulgarian origins has also persisted into modern Russian speech, as the suffixes -oro (-ovo) and -ero (-evo) are pronounced /ovə/ and /jevə/ respectively despite the orthographic indication (or spelling,) to pronounce these phonemes as /ogə/ and /jegə/ (Jakobson, 1955).

While the printing press was first introduced to Russia in 1564, it did not gain instant popularity and world-changing power as it had in Western Europe. Instead, the most well-known, if not the originator, of the Russian press, Ivan Fyodorov, languished and eventually quit printing after a failed attempt and expulsion

Figure 2 Glagolitic Alphabet with reconstructed IPA Pronunciation.

from Moscow and three more failed attempts in other cities. The printing press slowly gained more usage over the next few centuries until the reign of Peter the Great. Fyodorov's most notable addition to the earliest printed Russian was his *Primer* of 1574, which introduced the Cyrillic alphabet of the time along with grammatical and orthographic notes as the first book an educated child should read. This was followed by books of prayers and other ecclesiastical works that he also printed. This alphabet was presented in acrostic poems to aid memorizations of 45 characters, including two forms of *zemlya* /z/: one with a tail, **ѣ**, and one more resembling the modern **з**. Fyodorov accounted for two forms of /u/ which he called "ik" or "uk," for the characters **ѣ** and **ѣ**. He included various forms of the yuses, and he included both forms of /oy/ as **ѣ** and **ѣ** using the character *izhitsa*. His *Primer* however was contradictory as several characters were omitted or added to in subsequent sections, for a total of 45 or 44 characters depending on the part of the *Primer*. Fyodorov's *Primer* is a fascinating look into the contradictions of early Cyrillic letters and printing, and the relationship of Old Church Slavonic to Russian and other Slavic languages, especially as Church Slavonic continued to distinguish itself from the vernacular spoken languages of Muscovy and the surrounding territories over the next few centuries (Jakobson, 1955).

In the 18th century, Peter the Great introduced the first governmental orthographic reform as part of his highly protested Westernizing overhaul of reforms on Russian culture. Peter had been highly influenced by Western European culture and wanted to bring that culture to all Russia, and instituted many reforms during his reign. He found himself at odds with the power of the Orthodox Church and sought to wrest that power for himself, partially by undermining the Church's language.

PETRINE	IPA	NAME
А	/a/	A
Б	/b/	Be
В	/v/	Ve
Г	/g/	Ghe
Д	/d/	De
Е	/je/	Ie
Ж	/z/	Zhe
С	/dz/	Dze
І	/i/	I
К	/k/	Ka
Л	/l/	El
М	/m/	Em
Н	/n/	En
О	/o/	O
П	/p/	Pe
С	/s/	Es
Т	/t/	Te
У	/u/	U
Ф	/f/	Ef
Х	/x/	Ha
Ц	/ts/	Tse
Ч	/tʃ/	Che
Ш	/ʃ/	Sha
Щ	/ʃʲ/	Shcha
Ѣ		Soft sign
Ѥ	/ja/	Yat
Ѧ		Hard sign
Ѣ	/i/	Yeru
Э	/e/	E
Ю	/ju/	Yu
Я	/ja/	Ya
Ѧ	/θ/	Fita

Figure 3 Petrine Civil Script, c. 1708, with reconstructed IPA pronunciation.

He also sought to establish a European identity for Russia while modernizing the country to adhere to the Enlightenment principles that were sweeping the European continent. Heavily influenced by his Western European advisors, Peter built upon the ideals and reforms of his father Alexis (Smithers, 1904). Peter's reform of Cyrillic spelling was called "civil script." From its conjunction with his forcible Orthodox church reforms and disregard for the traditional Old Ways, it encountered protests like many of the Petrine reforms. Peter attained the label of the Anti-Christ from the traditionalist *Расколники* (Raskolniki)—the resistant conservative Old Believers who rejected any modernization of liturgy and even language in pursuit of traditional Russian values and history they feared would be lost in reform—of the Orthodox Church. Smithers (1904) states "adoption [was mandated] of the modern Russian alphabet in which to express the language as spoken—long before departed from its Slavonic vocabulary and with but great difficulty expressible by the ancient Cyrillic script". A new, widespread education system was implemented to impart this revised orthography along with Western knowledge. Civil script eliminated more Glagolitic and obvious Greek characters and all diacritics except for **Ѣ**, which persists into modern Cyrillic. The largest changes were to replace the Greek characters with more Russian characters, producing a more recognizable form of Cyrillic from the Old Slavonic Glagolitic alphabet. This change also introduced the symbols

of the hard sign **Ѥ** and soft sign **Ѧ**, which lead to later clarification of pronunciation in the hard and soft vowel and consonant system of the modern Russian language. Some of the removals were originally from Greek, **Ω** /o/, **Ξ** /ks/, **Ψ** /ps/, and **Σ** /z/. Three of these phonemes persist into modern Russian, and only two as separate characters in the Cyrillic alphabet; **О** and **З**. **Ψ** is written out

as Пс. This reduced calligraphy and updated the Russian alphabet for use with moveable type printing presses (Greenberg, 2016). There was a loss of diacritics that also made printing easier, and continued to spread literacy via the printing press' accessibility to more speakers of the Russian language. "A Russian print culture as something distinct from manuscript cultures was a product of the Petrine revolution. Petrine civic type not merely looked different; it was used for new kinds of books, a new type for a new culture." (Franklin, 2011.) Peter instituted a policy of using print for all mass-distributed government proclamations, and thus required standardized symbols for the Russian alphabet. It also served the purpose of removing control of written language from the Orthodox Church, which continued to use Old Slavonic for liturgy. Petrine reforms placed writing and literacy into larger and more public domains with consistent spelling and therefore consistent meaning. Franklin (2011) notes that the new alphabet resembled common cursive forms that developed outside of the Church, but the new printed alphabet did not. Peter's "civil script" came to be "predominantly associated not just with secular content but specifically with print." This diversity of cursive manuscript prevented clarity and understanding of written Russian, requiring future reform and standardization.

After the Petrine reforms, literary Russian continued to evolve especially under Catherine the Great's continued push for printed media, introducing the letter ё /jo/, replacing в /i/ with и /i/ as they were the same sound, and replacing ѣ /e/ with е, and ѳ /f/, with ф /f/ or т /t/, both with similar if not exact phonetic value (Sullivan, 1996). The textbook of Yakov Karlovich Grot in 1885 introduced a codification of Russian literary orthography that lasted until the next major spelling reform of the October Revolution in 1917. This textbook was used to standardize written Russian in twenty-one successive editions for innumerable students. His orthographic rules persist in the convoluted but consistent Russian spelling conventions to the modern day, especially in the choice of which vowel to use based on hardness or softness (palatization) of the preceding consonant (Grigorovich-Barsky 1962, Cheshko 1963). The palatalization of the consonant preceding the vowel were enshrined in Grot's textbook, which continues to define spoken pronunciation to this day. Soft consonants are palatal, pronounced with the tongue lifted to the palate in the mouth, creating a much softer sound that can be difficult to hear if one is unfamiliar with the language, and in Russian are denoted by the following vowel or with

a special following character ь. Grot's vowels created a system of 6 hard vowels with their own signifier ь if not assumed hard by the subsequent vowel, which could be indicated to be soft with a matching set of vowel characters. Hard А /a/ becomes я /ja/, Э /ɛ/ becomes soft Е /jɛ/, О /o/ becomes Ё /jo/, У /u/ becomes Ю /ju/, Ы /ɨ/ becomes И /i/, and the persisting Ъ /j/ is considered a near-silent consonant. After Grot's work was interrupted by his death, little changed in written Russian until the Revolution, but spoken Russian continued to increasingly have contact with other languages and continued to change according to the nature of language.

Alexei Shakhmatov in the Assembly for Considering Simplification of the Orthography took the occasion of the Bolshevik overthrow of the Russian government in 1917 to work to update Russian orthography to fit the new Soviet rule. These regular spoken language changes created phonetic dissonance from the alphabet as Grenoble (2003) notes in her thesis on Soviet language policy, "making a poor match between orthography and sounds." Certain phonemes had fallen into disuse and others were not used at all, so that learning Russian was very difficult for the population, and for the Soviet campaign for literacy. The reforms of 1917 from the Assembly for Considering Simplification of the Orthography were adopted by the Ministry for Popular Education in 1918 (Vinogradov 1963). These reforms also decreed that the new orthography be used in all publications in the newly formed USSR, removing all the old characters from printing offices just as Peter the Great had done, thus insisting on consistent spelling and usage despite regional variations by lack of printed options. The changes eliminated further characters such as the І /i/ that was replaced with И /i/, and the "mute yer" ѣ as an inflection signifier in the final position was almost completely eradicated except in some arcane words (Perelstvaig 2017).

As Russian became the lingua franca, the language of common communications, of the Soviet Union through shifting policies from a right to native language instruction under Lenin, to increased Russification under Stalin and finally compulsory Russian instruction (and the replacement of native and Latin-based alphabets, which were briefly used in the 1930s). Under Khrushchev after Stalin, and Brezhnev after Khrushchev, the Cyrillic alphabet dominated all languages, and the codification of orthography became even more important to forming a unified Soviet national identity. Lenin had placed great emphasis on how language was to be used in the new Soviet Union, and imparted his views to Soviet language

planners. Under the influence of the linguist Nicholas Yakovlevich Marr and his unsupported theories, Lenin had at first placed emphasis on the “natural right” of the non-Russian speakers of the USSR to develop their own lexicon and orthography to adapt to the great changes of Socialism and the new political realities (Grenoble, 2003.) Linguists documented previous unwritten languages, and provided latinate alphabets to record them, as a political distance from the recently overthrown Tsarist empire. Marr proposed in his disproven Japhetic theory of language development in the 1920s that language families supported one universal language underneath, which was best expressed in Indo-European languages, particularly Russian, and purported that all languages would eventually evolve into large zonal languages, before further evolving in “leaps and bounds” to one universal language—which under Russian Socialism would naturally be the Russian language. This supported the principles of Socialism well, as it stated that language itself would evolve to be Socialist. After Marr’s death however, the Soviet Union under Stalin reversed course as Marr’s Japhetic theory was discarded when language change was shown to be too gradual to support Socialist goals. Instead Soviet language planners began to provide Cyrillic alphabets and Russified other languages in the Union as much as possible in a lexical purge of foreign words as Russian was established as the only acceptable lingua franca of the Soviet Union to the detriment of previous “culture languages” (Ornstein, 1959.) This Russification was seen from outside perspectives as a continuation of previous policies under Tsarist Russia, and remains a force today now for economic reasons.

Russian was not the only spoken language of the Soviet Union, however, as it dominated the public domains of education, administration and government, it supplanted many of the minority languages found within the vast expanse of Russia especially after the education reforms of 1958–59 under Khrushchev. These educational reforms posited that Russian should be the language of all education and thus no longer supported instruction in the native language of many areas; Russian language gradually or immediately became a compulsory subject from the earliest ages of education. Other languages also had their own writing systems—as an example, Mongolian had a centuries-old literary tradition with its own alphabet, but with the Soviet system of forcible relocation especially enforced upon minority populations, minority language communities were severely weakened through loss of speakers, forced disuse of their own orthography,

and loss of heritage. Gilyak, or Nivkh, in Siberia also had a writing system, but it was converted to Cyrillic in 1953. The Baltics and Georgia had high literacy and their own long history of written tradition, but also relatively large Russian populations that led to easy integration into the Soviet Union and bilingualism, especially once Cyrillic was mandated as the alphabet of all languages in Union states. Up to 80% of the population in the Soviet Union by the 1980s claimed fluency as first or second language speakers of Russian. Almost every language was required to use the Cyrillic alphabet, regardless of phonetic appropriateness, after the failed shift to latinate alphabets. Behind the Iron Curtain, the Soviet Union had absorbed these many smaller republics with their own national identities and languages, and replaced these identities and languages with uniform Russian through state-provided education and government and other public domains of language use. These languages often had to borrow many words to adopt the new Soviet lexicon, and the *Common Rule* was issued in the 1940s to insist that any spelling of loanwords follow the Russian spelling, irrespective of how those words were spelled or pronounced in the native language. This led to significant confusions especially in education for young children who had to learn Russian spelling and grammar in order to spell their own native languages, and the *Common Rule* was repealed shortly thereafter (Grenoble, 2003.)

A smaller codification was initiated by the Academy of Sciences in 1956 under the linguist Vinogradov, with suggestions and an amendment in 1964. These built on the earlier reforms of 1917, seeking to further reduce and remove foreign words, or to make loanwords significantly more Russian in spelling and pronunciation. This last official codification sought to make the alphabet more phonetically resemble spoken Russian. This formalized several of the rules first instituted by Grot in his textbook, as laid out in “A Pedagogical Journal of Russian” in 1956, in an article entitled “Toward Reform of Russian Orthography,” originally found in the 1964 publication of *Русский язык в национальной школе*, *Russkii iazyk v national’noy shkole* (Russian Language in National Schools), number 6. This reviews the 1956 reforms and suggests further reforms that were not officially taken up by the Soviet Union policy makers. These suggested reforms follow and expand upon the rules first instituted by Grot, asking for official ruling on several items that had already been a literary standard and suggesting further clarifications of spelling and grammar.

Specifically, the reforms prohibited the use of the

soft consonant marker ь after any word with elements of *сверх-* (*sverkh-* /*svɐrx*/), *меж-* (*mez-* /*mɛz*/), *трех-* (*trekh-* /*trɛx*/), *четырёх-* (*chetyrekh-* /*tɕɪtʲɪrɛx*/), *пан-* (*pan-* /*pɐn*/), *транс-* (*trans-* /*trɐns*/), and *контр-* (*kontr-* /*kɐntr*/). These suggestions also posited that *ц* should always be followed by *и*, confirming *ц* and some of the other characters as universally soft consonants by mandated use of the soft vowel. Similarly, these suggestions posited that after the husher consonants *ж*, *ч*, *ш*, and *щ*, *о* /*o*/ should be written when the syllable is stressed, and *е* (/jɛ/ or /i/) should be written when not stressed, a familiar rule to students of Russian. Like the rule on *ц*, the suggestions prohibited the use of ь after the same husher consonants, affirming their status as soft palatalized consonants as well. Alternation was prohibited in root spellings such as *гар-* (*gar-* /*ɡaɪ*/), *гор-* (*gor-* /*ɡoɪ*/), *раст-* (*rast-* /*raɪt*/), *рост-* (*rost-* /*roɪt*/), and *зор-* (*zor-* /*zoɪ*/), *зар-* (*zar-* /*zaɪ*/) so that only one root was used for consistency, which while confusing accurate linguistic tracing of the Russian language would encourage a more consistent spelling and pronunciation. These root words change pronunciation based on the location of emphasis in the word, so that as an example either /*ɡaɪ*/, /*ɡaɪ*/ or /*ɡoɪ*/ could also be pronounced /*ɡaɪ*/ or /*ɡəɪ*/, depending on the stress, thus Vinogradov's suggestion to remove alternate spellings of the root makes more sense. The suffixes *-инский* (*-inskiĭ* /*ɪnski*/) and *-енский* (*-enskiĭ* /*ɛnski*/) were suggested to combine to only *-инский*, as the suffixes *-ец* (*-ets* /*ɛts*/) and *-иц* (*its* /*its*/) were to combine to only *-иц*, which would have forced a slight change in pronunciation as well, but more phonetic consistency with current pronunciation.

There was reiteration of eliminating doubled consonants in foreign loanwords, however permitting them in certain Russian words. The grammatical note also permitted doubled consonants in suffixes, but not in prefixes. Another requested change was to combine genitive case nouns and ordinal numbers with hyphens to form one synthetic word and increase understanding by attaching the one part to another. It was also suggested to combine compound nouns (especially from foreign roots like *унтер-* and *обер-*, *unter-* and *ober-* from German) beginning with *вице-* (*vitse-* /*vitɕɛ*/), *унтер-* (*unter-* /*ʊntɐr*/), *обер-* (*ober-* /*oɐbɐr*/), *экс-* (*ex-* /*ɛks*/), *лейб-* (*leib-* /*leɪb*/), and *штаб-* (*shtab-* /*ʂtab*/) together with prefixes including *вне-* (*vne-* /*vnʲɛ*/), *после-* (*posle-* /*poslɐ*/), *ультра-* (*ul'tra-* /*ʊltrɐ*/) and initial composite parts *пан-* (*pan-* /*pɐn*/), *квази-* (*kvazi-* /*kvazɪ*/), and *псевдо-* (*psevdo-* /*psʲɛdɐ*/). Some of these suggestions were accepted, like the repeated request to eliminate doubled consonants in loan-

words, but the continued existence of adjectives ending with *-енский* show that others were not.

The original reforms declared the letters *ы* /i/ and *и* /i/ are to follow prefixes. Joint and separate spelling slightly changed some pronunciation rules by mandating that verbs must keep the negative particle *не* separate, but adjectives, like nouns and adverbs, may attach *не* when expressing a complete idea, with the acknowledgement that it is acceptable to substitute any joined spelling with separated spelling if the word can also be used without the negation *не*. Since these words are pronounced with the negation run into the beginning of the next word, only the slowest or most particular of speakers would have been affected, but it did seek to clarify spoken and written Russian and distinguish negation between verbs and other parts of speech, especially for a nation of many new Russian learners.

Adverbs were likewise standardized. The new rules stated adverbs which come after prefixes with a following part that is not used separately like nouns, should be written together; that adverbs with solid and temporary meaning should be written together; and adverbs formed with the combination of prepositions or verbal nouns (with roots in *к* or other suffixes) should be written together. Words with separate adverbial meanings, when placed with prepositions and adverbial nouns that do not change meaning with the inserted attribute and when the noun is not declined, were also instructed to be written together, but it was permitted to write together or separate adverbial units which represent transitive parts of speech, such as between adverbs and particles as in case constructions (Vinogradov, 1963).

There were additional spelling and punctuation conventions for the use of quotation marks and capitalization, as well as new rules for printed media concerned hyphenation and carrying letters to the next line in print—new concerns for better readability of Soviet publications. One specification instructed not to break off the characters ь or ъ from preceding syllables. The 1956 reforms also purported to finally remove the ъ from print, however modern usage of the character persists as a matter of phonetic necessity to indicate hard consonants when there is not a succeeding vowel, and doubled consonants also remain in more words deriving from Russian roots (Grigorovich-Barsky 1962, Cheshko 1963.)

Across all languages in the Soviet Union, “When a new term is needed...it must not be created anew but must boldly be taken from Russian, which is the richest of languages and which in the Soviet Union is the inter-

national language” (Bolshevik No.8, 1952; cited in Grenoble 2003.) This introduced a large expansion of Russian words into the lexicon of all the languages of the USSR, and introduced Russian spellings wherever possible as well as pronunciation. Between specifications of grammar and spelling for a new mass printed media era, the Soviets sought absolute control over the language and information consumed in their associated lands. Any action that encouraged a single Russian national identity in the USSR and rejected foreign influence continued a tradition of Russian identification through its speech community, and further encouraged the cohesion of the Soviet Union. These reforms were not as effective as removing objectionable letters from the printing presses, which enforced spelling absolutely. Further Soviet reforms had to be enforced by censors watching every piece of written language, striking any incorrect spellings, grammatical errors, and their writers.

Marked shift to Russification of language in the second half of Soviet Union’s existence further decreased any influence that other languages had in the Soviet sphere. Russian was the dominant language, and Soviet language planners sought to clarify and expand the influence of the Russian language ostensibly so all citizens of the Soviet Union could participate in their government, understand official media, and communicate with one another. The grand goal of Stalin’s linguistic policy to see Socialism play out in the reduction of languages and eventual emergence of one global language of communication was furthered by his and later Soviet policy: of Russian as the official language, of print media mostly if not only available in Russian, of education available but only in the Russian language, and of deportations and relocations of possibly problematic populations and speech communities. Through the end of the Soviet Union’s regime these policies guided the development and spread of the Russian language, with strict rules if not on pronunciation but on print, in spelling and grammar (Grenoble, 2003). The Soviet paradigm is only beginning to be usurped by the continued natural development of the Russian language past the fall of the Iron Curtain,

with the addition of new foreign loanwords and the gradual linguistic changes of all languages.

Despite reforms across several centuries, current spelling is still not entirely phonetic (Lizubugova, 1964). Current orthography shows some phonetic changes such as palatalization with the use of the silent signifier *ь*, the persistence of the character *ѣ* to indicate a lack of palatalization, segment deletion in certain word structures when declined, and the replacement of dental or velar consonants with palatal versions of the same sounds (Derwing & Priestly, 1980). Certain phonetic changes found in spoken Russian are however not shown by orthography and must simply be learned as esoteric rules, such as vowel reduction, which shows a change in pronunciation that alters the sound of a vowel depending on where the stressed syllable is located in a word, and final consonant devoicing, where voiced consonants are pronounced as their voiceless equivalents if at the end of a syllabic unit (Elson, 1975). Compared to the originating alphabets of Glagolitic, Old Slavonic, and Old Cyrillic, each reform has purported to reduce duplicated phonemes and approach as close as possible to a 1:1 correspondence between sound and character.

Conclusion

Each spelling reform, whether official or due to the natural evolution of the written language, has sought to simplify the complexities of Russian orthography and to bring it more in line with the actual pronunciation of the spoken language. The Petrine and Soviet reforms were very political, striking power from the Russian Orthodox Church and any perceived outside linguistic influences, and seeking a more solidified, codified Russian identity through the spelling of the language. Both reforms also served to increase the literacy of the Russian language community by providing simpler and standardized spelling for the vast vocabulary of the language, specifically through printed medium in a growing number of public domains. While modern Russian continues to adopt loanwords and stray towards variations of spelling, as does any living language, the reduction of redundant characters and the attempts to simplify already complex Russian orthography serve to effectively communicate the phonology of the Russian language throughout its continuing evolution.

А	Б	В	Г	Д	Е	Ё	Ж	З
И	Й	К	Л	М	Н	О	П	Р
С	Т	У	Ф	Х	Ц	Ч	Ш	Щ
Ъ	Ы	Ь	Э	Ю	Я			

Figure 4 Modern Cyrillic Script

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