

## Russian among the European languages

*Holger Baumann*

*University of Erfurt, Germany*

*holger.baumann@uni-erfurt.de*

In this paper, the Russian language will be discussed from the viewpoint of areal linguistics. From the viewpoint of areal linguistics the Russian language belongs both to the European linguistic area and to the Eurasian linguistic area. In the following paper there will be special focus on the European linguistic area – following B. L. Whorf’s terminology also known as Standard Average European (SAE).

European linguistic area, Russian, German, Czech, Spanish

In this paper, the Russian language will be discussed from the viewpoint of areal linguistics. The central category of areal linguistics is the Sprachbund or the linguistic area (Russ. языковой союз). The linguistic area includes languages with common structural features which have developed on the basis of language contact. From the viewpoint of areal linguistics the Russian language belongs both to the European linguistic area and to the Eurasian linguistic area. In the following paper there will be special focus on the European linguistic area (for the Eurasian linguistic area cf. Jakobson 1962: 144). The European linguistic area – following B. L. Whorf’s terminology also known as Standard Average European (SAE) – includes the Indo-European languages of the European area (except Celtic); in addition Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian, Georgian and Maltese are also included. In scholarly literature the following features are quoted as the main features of SAE (cf. Haspelmath 2001: 1492):

- (1) definite and indefinite articles
- (2) relative clauses with relative pronouns
- (3) ‘have’-perfect
- (4) nominative experiencers
- (5) the participial passive
- (6) anticausative prominence
- (7) dative external possessors
- (8) negative pronouns and lack of verbal negation
- (9) particles in comparative constructions
- (10) relative-based equative constructions

- (11) subject person affixes as strict agreement markers  
 (12) intensifier-reflexive differentiation

The above-mentioned SAE features shall be compared here to Russian, German, Czech and Spanish. Further there will be special focus on the use of the verb 'have' in Russian, German, Czech and Spanish ('have'-perfect and other 'have'-constructions).

Definite and indefinite articles occur in German and Spanish, but not in Russian and Czech:

*der/ein Junge, die/eine Tür, das/ein Haus;*

*el/un muchacho, la/una puerta, la/una casa.*

In Russian and Czech there is no article. The determination/indetermination of the noun is expressed by other linguistic means, for instance by lexical means:

*этот/один мальчик, эта/одна книга, это/одно пальто;*

*ten/jeden chlapec, ta/jedna kniha, to/jedno dítě.*

Relative clauses using relative pronouns are a common feature of Russian and also of German, Czech and Spanish:

*Он знал, что нужно делать.*

*Es geschah, was geschehen musste.*

*Vyhrali, což nikdo nečekal.*

*Todo lo que me escribes es muy interesante.*

Perfect constructions using the transitive verb 'have' occur in German, Spanish and Czech, but not in Russian:

*Ich habe den Brief geschrieben.* (perfect 1 'have' as an auxiliary)

*He escrito la carta.* (perfect 1)

*Tengo la carta escrita.* (perfect 2 'have' as a copula)

*Mám dopis napsán.* (perfect 2)

For Russian cf.:

*Ich habe den Brief geschrieben. He escrito la carta. Я написал письмо.*

*Tengo la carta escrita. Mám dopis napsán. Письмо написано (мною).*

In SAE experience, feeling, state of health and the like are generally expressed by a construction where the experiencer is the subject of the sentence (nominative experiencer). Constructions of this type also appear in German and Spanish:

*Ich friere. Ich habe Hunger. Ich habe Kopfschmerzen. Ich bin müde. Ich mag das Lied.*

*Tengo frío. Tengo hambre. Tengo dolor de cabeza. Tengo sueño. Estoy cansado.*

At the same time, constructions appear quite frequently where the experiencer is the object of the sentence (dative/accusative experiencer):

*Mir ist kalt. Mich friert (archaic). Mir tut der Kopf weh. Das Lied gefällt mir. Es tut mir leid.*

*Me duele la cabeza. Me gusta la canción.*

In Czech there are subject constructions and, to a great extent, also object constructions for expressing the experiencer:

*Mrznu. Je mi zima. Mám hlad. Bolí mě hlava. Jsem unavený. Mám rád tu píseň. Líbí se mi ta píseň. Je mi líto.*

In Russian there are subject constructions for expressing the experiencer, but object constructions are the characteristic feature:

*Мёрзну. Мне холодно. Мне хочется есть. Мне хочется спать. Люблю эту песню. Мне нравится эта песня. Мне жаль. Меня знобит. Ребёнок лихорадил (archaic). Его лихорадило.*

Moreover, in Russian the experiencer may be expressed by means of an adverbial construction in combination with the preposition *у* (which requires the genitive):

*У меня болит голова. У меня ломит спину. У меня мёрзнут руки.*

Passive constructions with participles are common in Russian, German, Czech and Spanish:

*Окно было закрыто.*

*Das Fenster war geschlossen.*

*Okno bylo zavřeno.*

*La ventana estaba cerrada.*

Anticausative verbs provide another feature which is common to all the languages mentioned here. In the relation “inchoative verb – causative verb”, the causative verb is the derivational basis for the formation of the inchoative verb:

*измениться (from „изменить“), открыться (from „открыть“);*

*sich verändern (from „verändern“), sich öffnen (from „öffnen“);*

*změnit se (from „změnit“), otevřít se (from „otevřít“);*

*cambiarse en algo (from „cambiar“), abrirse (from „abrir“).*

In the Russian sentences “Он наступил ей на ногу. Она мыла ребёнку голову. Он сломал себе руку.”, the possessor is expressed by a separate noun phrase in the dative (dative external possessor).

This type of construction is also typical of German, Czech and Spanish:

*Er trat ihr auf den Fuß. Sie wusch dem Kind die Haare. Er brach sich den Arm.*

*On šlapl jí na nohu. Ona myla dítěti vlasy. On zlomil si ruku.*

*Él le pisó el pie. Ella lavaba al niño el pelo. (Ella le lavaba el pelo al niño.) Él se rompió el brazo.*

The combination negative pronoun + verb with lack of verbal negation occurs in the German language:

*Niemand kam. Er weiß nichts.*

In Russian and Czech there must be verbal negation:

*Никто не пришёл. Он ничего не знает.*

*Nikdo nepřišel. On nic neví.*

In the Spanish sentence verbal negation does occur or does not occur, according to the word order:

*No vino nadie. Nadie vino. No sabe nada. Nada le interesa.*

Comparative constructions with particles and relative-based equative constructions are common in the Russian language and also in German, Czech and Spanish:

*Мой брат моложе чем я. Он такой же большой, как я.*

*Mein Bruder ist jünger als ich. Er ist so groß wie ich.*

*Můj bratr je mladší než já. Je tak velký jako já.*

*Mi hermano es más joven que yo. Es tan alto como yo.*

In German, personal affixes only act as markers of agreement between the verb and the verb's subject. They cannot have a referential function on their own. In the sentences “*Wohin gehst Du? Ich gehe in die Stadt.*”, the personal pronouns cannot be omitted.

In Russian, personal affixes can have a referential function on their own. Personal pronouns can be omitted (in detail, in constructions of the first and second person, singular/plural, present/future tense; in the past tense there are no personal affixes):

*Куда идёшь? Иду в город.*

In Czech and Spanish personal pronouns are usually omitted:

*Kam jdeš? Jdu do kina. Kam jste jel? Jel jsem do Prahy.*

*¿Adónde vas? Voy al cine. ¿Cómo te llamas? Me llamo Pedro.*

The formal differentiation of intensifiers and reflexive pronouns is a feature that applies to all the languages examined here:

*сам (intensifier, determinative pronoun) – себя (reflexive pronoun), selbst – sich,*

*sám – se, mismo – se;*

*Он сам себя судил. Er hat sich selbst gerichtet. Soudil sám sebe. Él mismo se juzgaba.*

Russian belongs to the European linguistic area as it shares a number of features of Standard Average European, such as relative clauses with relative pronouns, the participial passive, anticausative prominence, dative external possessors, particles in comparative constructions, relative-based equative constructions, intensifier-reflexive differentiation. On the other hand, there are some features that the

Russian language does not share with SAE, such as definite and indefinite articles, ‘have’-perfect, nominative experiencers, negative pronouns and lack of verbal negation, subject person affixes as strict agreement markers. Further there will be special focus on the polyfunctional use of the verb ‘have’ as an example of a feature that Russian does not share with SAE.

Most of the European languages use several ‘have’-constructions, including ‘have’-perfect and so they are classified as ‘have’-languages. All Germanic and Romance languages are ‘have’-languages. There are also ‘have’-languages among the Slavic languages (Czech, Slovakian). Russian makes use of the transitive verb ‘have’ with a large number of restrictions. It is a ‘be’-language.

In German the transitive verb ‘have’ occurs in constructions of the type *Geld haben, ein Motorrad haben, Freunde haben, Kinder haben* (implying “possession”). Constructions of this type occur also in Spanish, Czech and in Russian:

*tener dinero, tener una motocicleta, tener amigos, tener hijos;*

*mít peníze, mít motocykl, mít přátele, mít děti;*

*иметь деньги, иметь мотоцикл, иметь друзей, иметь детей.*

There are highly formal expressions in German, such as *die Ehre haben, das Wort haben, Bedeutung haben, den Wunsch haben, die Fähigkeit haben, die Möglichkeit haben, das Ziel haben, die Aufgabe haben*.

The same highly formal expressions using the verb ‘have’ also exist in Spanish, Czech and Russian:

*tener el honor, tener la palabra, tener importancia, tener el deseo, tener la aptitud, tener la posibilidad, tener como meta, tener la función;*

*mít čest, mít slovo, mít význam, mít přání, mít schopnost, mít možnost, mít cíl, mít úkol;*

*иметь честь, иметь слово, иметь значение, иметь желание, иметь способность, иметь возможность, иметь цель, иметь задачу.*

In German the verb ‘have’ can be used to mean “to hold”:

*die Tasche in der Hand haben, das Kind im Arm haben, die Hände in den Taschen haben.*

This use of ‘have’ is also common to Spanish and Czech, but not to Russian which uses the verb *держатъ*:

*tener la bolsa en las manos, tener la hija/el hijo en los brazos, tener las manos en los bolsillos;*

*mít v ruce tašku, mít dítě v náručí, mít ruce v kapsách;*

*держатъ сумку в руке, держатъ ребёнка на руках, держатъ руки в карманах.*

German, Spanish and Czech utilize the verb ‘have’ in constructions with the meaning “to be dressed”:

*eine Jacke anhaben, ein Kleid anhaben, einen Mantel anhaben;*

*tener puesta la chaqueta, tener puesto el vestido, tener puesto el abrigo;*  
*mít na sobě kabát, mít na sobě šaty, mít na sobě plášť.*

In Russian there are no ‘have’-constructions with that meaning, but to express this idea, there are ‘be’-constructions or other alternatives:

*(на+prepos.case+быть) куртка, платье, пальто;*  
*носить куртку, платье, пальто.*

In German, Spanish and Czech, attributes of a person (outside, inside qualities) are expressed by a ‘have’-construction:

*blaue Augen haben, eine schöne Stimme haben, kurzes Haar haben, ein ruhiges Gewissen haben, ein gutes Herz haben;*

*tener ojos azules, tener voz hermosa, tener pelo corto, tener la conciencia tranquila, tener un corazón de oro;*

*mít modré oči, mít krásný hlas, mít krátké vlasy, mít čisté svědomí, mít dobré srdce.*

In Russian, attributes of a person are expressed by a ‘be’-construction:

*(у+gen.+быть) синие глаза, красивый голос, короткие волосы, чистая совесть, доброе сердце.*

In German, Spanish and Czech, a physical or mental state of a person is expressed by ‘have’-constructions:

*Husten haben, Fieber haben, Hunger haben, Angst haben, Lust haben, gute Laune haben;*

*tener tos, tener fiebre, tener hambre, tener miedo, tener ganas, tener buen humor;*

*mít kašel, mít horečku, mít hlad, mít strach, mít chut’, mít dobrou náladu.*

Russian in this context doesn’t use ‘have’-constructions:

*(у+gen.+быть) кашель, жар, хорошее настроение; быть голодным;*  
*(dat.+быть) страшно; (dat.) хочется.*

In Spanish, the age of a person is also expressed by a ‘have’-construction:

*Tengo 20 años.*

In Czech, there is a ‘be’-construction, and a ‘have’-construction too:

*Je mi 20 let. Mám 20 let.*

For Russian and German cf.:

*Мне 20 лет. Ich bin 20 Jahre alt.*

In German, Spanish and Czech, the verb ‘have’ occurs in constructions where it means “to participate in”:

*Unterricht haben, Vorlesung haben, Seminar haben, Prüfung haben, (Unterricht im Fach) Russisch haben;*

*tener clase, tener un seminario, tener examen, tener clase de ruso /tener ruso;*

*mít vyučování, mít přednášku, mít seminář, mít zkoušku, mít ruštinu.*

In Russian, the verb ‘have’ is not used with the meaning of “participation”:

*(у+gen.+быть) занятия, лекция, семинар, экзамен, русский язык.*

Furthermore, in Czech, the verb ‘have’ occurs in constructions with prepositional phrases where it means “have passed, do not have anymore/any longer”:

*mít po zkoušce, mít po starostech*

*(have + prepositional phrase with after).*

Germ.: *die Prüfung hinter sich haben, keine Sorgen mehr haben, ausgesetzt haben.*

Span.: *haber aprobado el examen, ya no tener más preocupaciones.*

Russ.: *выдержать, пройти экзамен, освободиться от забот, отлучиться.*

Existential relation in German, Spanish and Czech may be expressed by the verb ‘have’:

*Heute haben wir schönes Wetter. Heute haben wir Mittwoch.*

*Hoy tenemos buen tiempo. Allí hay un teatro. Mañana no hay clase.*

*Dnes máme hezké počasí. Dnes máme středu.*

In Russian there is no ‘have’-construction for denoting existential relation:

*Сегодня хорошая погода. Сегодня среда.*

In German, Spanish and Czech, the verb ‘have’ may appear in combination with an adjective (adverb):

*es eilig haben, es nötig haben, es weit haben, es satt (genug) haben;*

*tener libre, tenerlo difícil, tenerlo fácil, tenerlo claro, tenerlo oscuro;*

*mít naspěch, mít zapotřebí, mít daleko, mít dost.*

In Russian, there are no constructions corresponding to this use:

*(dat.+быть) к спеху, нужно, далеко; (dat.) надоело.*

Perfect constructions using the verb ‘have’ occur in German, Spanish and Czech, but not in Russian (see above).

Last but not least ‘have’ in German, Spanish and Czech serves as a modal verb (“to have to, to be obliged”):

*Du hast zu antworten. Tienes que responder. Máš odpovídat.*

Russ.: *Тебе следует отвечать.*

In Czech, the construction *have + prepositional phrase with to* means “to oblige so. to do sth.”:

*mít k práci, mít k učení.*

Germ.: *zur Arbeit anhalten, zum Lernen anhalten.*

Span.: *obligar a trabajar, obligar a estudiar.*

Russ.: *заставлять работать, заставлять учиться.*

As mentioned before, most of the languages in Europe are ‘have’-languages. In contrast to this, most of the languages in the world – amongst them Finno-Ugrian and eastern Indo-European – are ‘be’-languages.

Russian is a European ‘be’-language. Together with other European ‘be’-languages, it is placed on the periphery of SAE, where it acts as a bridge that connects the European languages to the languages of the world.

## References

- Filipec, J., Daneš, F.: *Slovník spisovné češtiny pro školu a veřejnost*. Praha 1998
- Giger, M.: *Resultativa im modernen Tschechischen*. Bern 2003
- Haspelmath, M.: The European linguistic area: Standard Average European. In: Haspelmath, M., König, E. (eds.): *Language Typology and Language Universals*. Volume 2. Berlin/New York 2001, 1492-1510
- Hinrichs, U. (ed.): *Handbuch der Eurolinguistik*. Wiesbaden 2010
- Isačenko, A. V.: On ‘have’- and ‘be’-languages. In: Flier, M. S. (ed.): *Slavic Forum*. The Hague/Paris 1974, 43-77
- Jakobson, R.: К характеристике евразийского языкового союза. In: Jakobson, R.: *Phonological Studies*. The Hague 1962, 144-201
- Moliner, M.: *Diccionario de uso del español*. Edición abreviada. Madrid 2000
- Paul, H.: *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Tübingen 2002
- Stadnik, E.: Das Slawische im eurasischen Zusammenhang. In: Gladrow, W. (ed.): *Die slawischen Sprachen im aktuellen Funktionieren und historischen Kontakt*. Frankfurt/M. 2003, 51-67
- Sternemann, R., Gutschmidt, K.: *Einführung in die vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft*. Berlin 1989
- Trubetzkoy, N.: Proposition 16. In: *Actes du Premier Congrès International de Linguistes*. Leiden (1928). Reprint Nendeln/Liechtenstein 1972, 17-18
- Whorf, B. L.: The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language. In: Whorf, B. L.: *Language, thought, and reality*. Cambridge, Mass. 1962, 134-159
- Wiemer, B., Giger, M.: *Resultativa in den nordslawischen und baltischen Sprachen*. München 2005
- Арутюнова, Н. Д.: Язык и мир человека. Москва 1999 (Часть IX: Пространство и бытие, 737-792)
- Ожегов, С. И., Шведова, Н. Ю.: *Толковый словарь русского языка*. Москва 1992