

# Study of Contrastive Analysis on English and Russian in Russian Teaching

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**Abstract:** There rises a boom of learning Russian in China's universities, and more and more students choose Russian as their second foreign language to improve their quality and competence. So it has been a concern how to enhance the teaching effect and make the students grasp it efficiently as soon as possible. Comparative analysis on English and Russian can get a better achievement through practice. From the relation of English and Russian, this paper has explained the inherent connection of the bilingual. Through probing into the bilingual contrast in the pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, it aims to help the second foreign language learning and teaching.

**Keywords:** contrastive analysis on English and Russian; Russian teaching; Russian

## 1. Introduction

There rises a boom of learning Russian in China's universities, and more and more students choose Russian as their second foreign language to improve their quality and competence. From its aspect, Russian is one of the working language of UN and official language of former Soviet republics and many countries in East Asia, and more than three hundred million persons take it as their mother tongue.

In Russian's external environment, China increases her communication and cooperation with Russia, Ukraine and some other countries speaking Russian in both politics, military, economy, culture, education and so on. As a permanent member of UN, Russia plays a significant role in the international politics. In national profits, China and Russia share many benefits in many aspects, so they hold Sino-Russian friendship Year respectively in 2009 and 2010, and state leaders visit each other more often than before.

Not long before, China and Russia enhance their strategic cooperative partnership to a new height. China's trade volume to Russia is increasing year by year, which has driven China's economy. As a result, more and more talents good at Russian are needed, and all these have a higher requirement to Russian teaching. So it has been a concern how to enhance the teaching effect and make the students grasp it efficiently as soon as possible. Comparative analysis on English and Russian can get a better achievement through practice.

Cognitive characteristics and learning theory reveal that adults would like to compare the language features, the similarities and differences of different languages so that they can master them better on a higher level besides employing memory, repetition and imitation when they are learning a new foreign language. For example, some learners always study the second foreign language by

referring to the experience of learning the first foreign language or its rules of word formation and grammar.

## 2. The Theory Foundation of Contrastive Analysis on English and Russian

Contrastive linguistics is an important branch resulted from the continuous development of linguistic research. It aims to describe the similarities and differences of two languages and study their similarities and differences in phonetics, lexicon, grammar and logics through comparison of two or even more languages. [1] Contrastive analysis in China started in 1950s and bloomed in 1980s. Pedigree classification of linguistics indicates that related languages from the same origin share some similarities in phonetics, lexicon, and grammar and so on. English and Russian both originated in Indo-European languages which can be reflected in some vocabularies of basic concepts today, such as mother -*мать*, sister -*сестра*, daughter -*дочь*, nose—*нос*, etc.. In phonetic typology, both English and Russian are in five-vowel system and both of them have no rounded vowel (u) and nasal vowel. In syntactic patterns, both the two languages belong to the type of SVO (subject+verb+object), e.g. I love you. (In Russian, it's *Я люблю тебя*). Therefore, English and Russian are very close in relationship and there are many movable elements in both of them. For example, there are many identical or similar elements in the sound of letter, lexicon, grammatical meaning and other aspects, and these identical elements compose the foundation of the contrast of English and Russian.

Both English and Russian are in Indo-European languages, but different families and branches. English is an analytic language belonging to the West Germanic branch of Germanic family, and Russian, an inflecting language, belongs to the east Slavic branch of Slavic

family. So there are many differences between these two languages, it's good for realizing the prominent properties, mastering them better and more clearly and avoiding the errors caused by confusion of two languages to compare them. For example, one of the most remarkable features of Russian is that a noun has a variation in gender, number and case, an adjective has to comply with its modified object in gender, number and case, and a numeral also shares variation in number. These differences, as one of the foundations of the contrast of English and Russian, are mainly reflected in phonetics, lexicon, grammar and other aspects.

### 3. The Phonetic Contrastive Analysis on English and Russian

Phonetics is an important part of foreign language teaching and also one of the basic skills to learn it well. Different from the hieroglyphics of Chinese, both English and Russian are alphabetic writing, whose letters are similar in sound and shape. Only *р, щ, ы* in the 33 Russian letters cannot find the counterpart in English. For good English learners, they only need pay much time practicing these three letters. In addition, special attention should be paid to the letters which are different in shape, but same in pronunciation, such as *a* [a:] in Russian and *a* [ei] in English, *o* [o:] and *o* [ou], *u* [i:] and *u* [ju:], and *y* [u:] and *y* [wai] and so on.

### 4. The Lexical Contrastive Analysis on English and Russian

The highlight performance of the vocabulary contrast between English and Russian are the spelling of Russian loanwords and word formations. During its development, Russian has borrowed lots of English vocabularies, especially since the 1980s. With the development of worldwide science and technology, many new loanwords flooded in Russian, especially English words under the influence of the dramatic changes in politics and economic system of Russia and the transformations in the ethos and values. Because of the similarities in English and Russian letters, it will be easy for learners to learn English loanwords in Russian after mastering corresponding form in pronunciation and writing of English and Russian, such as: sport-*спорт*, mobile telephone-*мобильный телефон*, businessman-*бизнесмен*, interview-*интервью*, talk show-*токшоу*, menu-*меню*, office-*офис*, hotdog-*хотдог*, express-*экспресс*, picnic-*пикник*, hobby-*хобби*, contract-*контракт*, and so on. [2]

In word formation of English and Russian, it is a method to compose new words adding affix (prefix and suffix) to root, and affixes express definite semantics. Some affixes have certain correspondence in English and Russian, such as anti- and *анти-* meaning "contrary" and

"defend": antibiotic —*антибиотик* ultra- and *ультра-* meaning of "outer", "extreme" and "exceed" : ultra-sonic—*ультразвук*, un-, dis- and *не-, без-* meaning of "not" : unwise-*неразумный*, -ism and *-изм* meaning of "doctrine": Marxism—*Марксизм*, -ation and *-ация* meaning of "changing": organization—*организация* and so on.

### 5. The grammatical Contrastive Analysis on English and Russian

Grammar is the structural form of language. It is a rule which people rely on to make sentences when they use language to communicate with each other. It is also a rule which offers language specific meaning and help people understand each other. Every kind of language forms its own unique grammatical rules in the long-term development, the grammar of English and Russian is no exception. But from the same origin, English and Russian have comparability, mainly in the contrast of nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions (prepositions in Russian).

From classification of words, both English and Russian have nouns, verbs and adjectives. However, the same parts have their own characteristics, for example, the typical feature of nouns in Russian is that the nouns have changes in gender, number and case, but in English nouns, apart from a part of animal nouns which are divided according to gender, most English nouns have no difference in gender. English nouns and Russian nouns both have the singular and the plural; the nouns which have no plural are often abstract, material, collective and proper ones. The gender in English only has the nominative case and the objective case, but in Russian the nouns are divided into 6 genders according to changes of suffix, for example, *учебник* can be changed to several forms of gender: *учебника(учебников), учебнику(учебникам), учебник(учебники), учебником(учебниками), о учебнике(о учебниках)*.

The forms of verbs express different tenses in English and Russian. In English, the 16 tenses are expressed through the help of several changing forms of verbs and auxiliary verbs such as "be", "have" and "will". The Russian verbs mainly depend on two kinds of aspect (perfective aspect and imperfective aspect) and three times (the present tense, the past tense and the future tense) to constitute five tenses and aspects. But there are some corresponding relations between them. The present tense in Russian amounts to the present simple tense and the present continuous tense in English, for example, *Каждый день мама работает в школе*. (It can be expressed as "Mama works in the school everyday" in English.) The imperfective aspect past tense in Russian amounts to the past simple tense and the past continuous tense in English, for example, *Мой брат читал рассказ, когда учитель пришёл*. (It was expressed as

“My brother was reading the story when the teacher came” in English.) The perfective aspect past tense in Russian amounts to the present perfect tense and the past perfect tense in English, for example, *Я прочитал эту статью.* (It was expressed as “I have read the article” in English.) The future tense in Russian amounts to the simple future tense and the past future tense in English, for example, *Моя сестра будет читать эту книгу.* (It was expressed as “My sister is going to read the book” in English.) Besides, the form of active adjectives in Russian amounts to the form of present participles –ing being as attributes, but the form of passive adjectives amounts to the form of past participles –ed being as attributes.

Adjective is also the common substantive between English and Russian which is used as predicative in attribute and predicate. Their most distinctive distinction lies in the changes of gender, number and case of Russian adjectives and the differences of long or short tails. But, English adjectives don't have these changes. Their sameness is that they both have property adjective and relation adjective among which property adjective can form the comparative degree and superlative degree. Besides, their structure and usage are very similar. The comparative degree can be divided into the singular form (synthetical form in English grammar) and the plural form (analytic form in English grammar). The singular form of the comparative degree is made up of the primary form of adjective plus suffix (in Russian + *ее* (*ей*)), in English +er), for example *длинный—длиннее* //tall –taller. The plural form of the comparative degree is made up of *более* or *менее* (more or less in English) plus the primary form of adjective, for example *более (менее) красивый* //more(less) beautiful. And the singular form of the superlative degree is made up of the primary form of adjective + *ейший* (est in English), for example *умный—умнейший* //clever – cleverest; the plural form of the superlative degree is made up of *самый* (most in English) plus the primary form of adjective, for example *самый красивый* //most beautiful. Their differences are mainly reflected that when the singular form of the comparative degree in Russian has the comparative object, it can be expressed by noun, pronoun of the second case of the comparative object except the connective *чем* while for the plural form of the comparative degree, connective *чем* can be only used. However, the comparative object can be added whether the analytic form of the comparative degree or the synthetical form. In addition, in Russian both the comparative degree and the connective should be separated by comma, while in English no signs should be separated, for example *Анна более умная, чем Машиа* .// Anna is more clever than Marsha.

The prepositions in English and Russian belong to particle class, but they have a strong collocation ability and wide-range usage that they play an important role in the structural significance of the sentence. Therefore, it is of great sense to analyze and master this kind of words. The prepositions in English and Russian are corresponded to each other. They are both unchanged word class and cannot be used as sentence component alone. In addition, they are commonly collocated with noun and pronoun which are used to show the relation between noun or pronoun and another element of the sentence. In terms of structure, the prepositions in English and Russian have singular form, synthetical form and plural form; in terms of significance, there exist equal relation in some prepositions of English and Russian (as the following paradigm); in terms of usage, the English composition should be connected with its accusative and only several pronouns' accusatives have reflections while other words don't. But the different preposition in Russian should be accordant with the corresponding case, for example, *благодаря* ask for the third case, while *в, на* ask for the fourth case or the sixth case. [3]

## 6. Conclusion

Certainly, there exist more contrasts in many other aspects for English and Russian. In this discourse, only the very important aspects are compared for the limit length. From their comparison and usage, we can see that the application of the contrast between English and Russian can not only decrease the difficulty of the teaching and learning of Russian as a second foreign language but also motivate students' enthusiasm in order to master two kinds of languages better. The contrast between English and Russian, as a branch of contrast linguistics, has a bright application prospect on which base the contrast between English and Russian can be used to help students master the second language more conveniently and more efficiently. Therefore, the contrast study between English and Russian should be further explored deeply and systematically.

## References

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