Russian (ISO 639-3 rus) is an Indo-European East Slavic language spoken by about 162 million people as their first language and about another 110 million as their second language (Lewis, Simons & Fennig 2013), mainly in the Russian Federation (where it is the native language of about 80% of the population, see Berger 1998, Federal’naja služba gosudarstvennoj statistiki (Federal State Statistics Service) 2012: 228–232) and in the other former republics of the USSR (among which it is co-official in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). Large groups of Russian speakers (so-called heritage speakers) also live in Europe (especially Germany: almost 3 million or 3.5% of the population, Brehmer 2007: 166–167), Israel (about 1 million or 20%, Glöckner 2008) and the United States (850,000 or 0.3%, Shin & Kominski 2010: 6).

Traditionally, two main pronunciation standards are recognised, those of Moscow and St. Petersburg (Comrie, Stone & Polinsky 1996, Verbickaja 2001). The differences between the two standards, while still fairly prominent in the first half of the 20th century, have greatly lessened in contemporary Russian. The emergence of a general pronunciation standard that integrates the features of both Moscow and St. Petersburg pronunciation is discussed in Comrie et al. (1996) and Verbickaja (2001).

The present Illustration is based on the recording of a male speaker in his early forties, born and college educated in St. Petersburg, whose pronunciation is representative of the St. Petersburg standard pronunciation. This illustration is thus representative of the younger pronunciation norm that has emerged in the past 30–40 years as opposed to the accounts of Russian phonetics found, for instance, in Jones & Ward (1969) and Avanesov (1972).

The examples below are transliterated according to the international scholarly system (see e.g. Kempgen n.d., Timberlake 2004) as follows:

абвгдеёжзийклмнопрстфхцчшщъыьэюя
abvgdeøjjiklmnoprstfewçchšš”ý’ýeýjaya

The broad transcriptions given below in slant brackets are phonemic (within the framework of the St. Petersburg School of Phonology, e.g. Bondarko 1998, 2009), while the narrow
transcriptions in square brackets represent finer phonetic details, and are based on the actual pronunciation of our speaker.

Consonants

The system of consonants in Russian is characterised by the phonological opposition of palatalised (‘soft’) and non-palatalised (‘hard’) consonants that encompasses almost all consonants, with very few exceptions. Thus, /ʃ ʒ ts/ have no palatalised counterparts, while /ʃʲː ʒʲː tʃ/ and /ʃʲː ʒʲː tʃʲː/ have no non-palatalised counterparts. All non-palatalised consonants are realised with velarisation (e.g. Bolla 1981) which is particularly noticeable in /v [f] and /ʒ ʃ [ʃʲ ʒʲ]/. The table below shows the consonant phonemes of Russian. Only the palatalisation of consonants is marked in transcription.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental/Alveolar</th>
<th>Post-alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p/pʲ</td>
<td>b/bʲ</td>
<td>t/tʲ</td>
<td>d/dʲ</td>
<td>ž/žʲ</td>
<td>k/kʲ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td>tʃ</td>
<td>tʃʲ</td>
<td>f/fʲ</td>
<td>v/vʲ</td>
<td>s/sʲ</td>
<td>n/nʲ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m/mʲ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trill</td>
<td>r/rʲ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f/fʲ</td>
<td>v/vʲ</td>
<td>s/sʲ</td>
<td>z/zʲ</td>
<td>ž/žʲ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral approximant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>l/lʲ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that in the examples above the consonants are represented before non-front vowels. Only palatalised consonants and /j/ occur before [i], and in indigenous words only palatalised
consonants and the non-paired consonants /f/ and /v/ occur before /e/, whereas in loanwords non-palatalised consonants can occur before /e/, e.g. *test [ˈtɛst] ‘test’, *tire [ˈtriːr] ‘dash’.

Non-palatalised dental consonants are laminal denti-alveolar, velarised. The affricate [ts] has no palatalised counterpart in the system of consonants, and its palatalisation, although evident in some regional accents of Russian, is considered emphatically non-standard.

The realisation of the palatalised (‘soft’) consonants involves the secondary articulation of palatalisation in its purest form (the rising of the front of the tongue to the hard palate) only in bilabials and labiodentals. In other consonants, palatalisation is accompanied by further articulatory adjustments that affect both place and manner of articulation (Bondarko 1998, 2005). For instance, the point of constriction of /t/ and /d/ is retracted compared to non-palatalised laminal denti-alveolar /t/ and /d/ and they are normally affricated [ts] [dз]; /t/ is an alveolar trill in careful pronunciation, but its palatalised counterpart /tʲ/ is usually realised as a tap [ɾʲ]. In the palatalised counterparts of velar /k g x/ the point of constriction is fronted so that they are realised as post-palatal [kʲ ɡʲ xʲ] (see Keating & Lahiri 1993). Note that [kʲ ɡʲ xʲ], while common in combination with front vowels (e.g. kislo [ˈkʲɪslo] ‘sour’, girja [ˈɡʲɪrja] ‘weight’, xityj [ˈxʲɪtʃɪj] ‘cunning’, kepka [kʲepka] ‘cap’, gercog [ˈɡʲɛrtʃok] ‘duke’, sxema [ˈsʲexəma] ‘scheme’) are rare before non-front vowels and occur in this position mainly in loanwords and foreign names, e.g. Gête [ˈɡʲeʃət] ‘Goethe’, Kjaxta [ˈkʲavaxta] ‘Kajakhta’ (a town in Buryatia, Russia), and a single indigenous verb: tkét [tˈkʲet] ‘(he) weaves’.

The combinations of non-palatalised velars and the /i/ vowel /ki gi xi/ are rare and found only in a handful of loanwords and across word boundaries, e.g. kys [ˈkʲis] ‘shoo’ (interjection), Arxiz [ˈaɾxiʒ] ‘Arkhyz’ (a territory in Karachay-Cherkessia); k Igor’u [kʲiˈɡɔrju] ‘towards Igor’, dvuxetàñnyj [dˈvʊxʲɪtəˈnʲnjɪj] ‘two-storied’.

Voicing is used contrastively in Russian; voiced consonants are fully voiced, voiceless plosives are always unaspirated, e.g. tok [tʰˈɔk] ‘current’, kor [ˈkʲɔr] ‘tomcat’. The distribution of consonants is such that only voiceless but no voiced obstruents occur word-finally, e.g. goda [gəˈdɐ́] ‘years’, god [ɡʲɔˈr] ‘year’.

In sequences of consonants, both within words and across word boundaries, various kinds of regressive assimilation take place. For example, if the second consonant is a voiced obstruent (other than /v vʲ/), the preceding consonant is also voiced, e.g. gorod [ɡʲɔˈrɔd] ‘city’ but gorod bol’soj [ɡʲɔˈrɔd bolʲˈsɔj] ‘(the) city is big’ (Verbizkaja 2001). Under certain conditions, assimilation can also affect palatalisation or even the whole place and/or manner of articulation, e.g. bandit [baŋʲɪˈdʲit] ‘bandit’, bez suma [bʲiˈsʊma] ‘without a noise’. In such cases we can also find sounds that otherwise represent gaps in the phoneme inventory, e.g. [j] as a voiced allophone of /x/ in mos zelënyj [ˈmɔsʲɛlʲnʲɪj] ‘the moss (is) green’, [y] as a voiced and palatalised allophone of /x/ in drugix gimnazij [drʊˈɡʲɪrʲɪx ɡʲɪmˈnʲasʲɪtʃɪ] ‘of other grammar schools’, [dз] as a voiced allophone of /ts/ in otec doma [ɔtˈɛtʃ ˈdʲʊʃma] ‘father is at home’, [ʃ] as an allophone of /s/ in s caem [ʃˈtʃɛm] ‘with tea’ (Kasatkin 2006: 44), [dз] as a voiced allophone of /tʃ/ in doč bol’na [dʲɔˈdʲɔr ˈbɔλ坦克a] ‘(the) daughter is ill’. Sonorants can be realised as devoiced when word-initial and word-final in the vicinity of voiceless obstruents, e.g. teatr [tˈɛatr] ‘theatre’.

Labiodental fricatives /v/ and /vʲ/ are often weakly articulated [y yʲ] or are realised as approximants [v vʲ], particularly in spontaneous speech. The palatal /j/ can be realised as an approximant [ɪ] (especially in the onset of a stressed syllable), a semivowel [ɪ] (especially when unstressed), or emphatically as a fricative [ʃ] or even a devoiced fricative [ɕ].

Fricatives /ʃ zʃ/, as in šar /ʃar/ ‘ball’ and žar /ʒar/ ‘heat’, can be realised either as flat velarised postalveolars [ʃ ʒ] or as retroflexes [ʃ z] (Ladefoged & Maddieson 1996, Hamann 2004) and tend to be slightly labialised even in the context of unrounded vowels. They have no palatalised counterparts in the system of consonant phonemes; their palatalisation is considered non-standard. This also precludes their assimilation to a following palatalised consonant, e.g. roždenie [rɐʒʲɪˈnʲɪj] ‘birth’, bašnya [ˈbɐʃnʲɪj] ‘tower’. The long fricative /ʃv/, as in ščuka [ʃˈʃʊkɐ] ‘pike’, ščasťe [ʃˈʃɛstʃˈtʃɪj] ‘happiness’, is a laminal palatalised post-alveolar (or alternatively, an alveolo-palatal [ɕ]). (The former bisegmental pronunciation of
\[ /\ddagger/ \text{ as } [\ddagger\ddagger \ddagger], \text{ often cited as a characteristic feature of the older St. Petersburg norm (e.g. Jones \& Ward 1969), is now clearly obsolete (see Comrie et al. 1996, Verbickaja 2001, Timberlake 2004).} \] The /\ddagger/ consonant has no voiced counterpart in the system of phonemes. However, in conservative Moscow standard and only in a handful of lexical items the combination /\ddagger\ddagger/ may be pronounced with palatalisation, e.g. drožži ‘yeast’ as [‘dr̩u⁻̑õʒː] instead of [‘dr̩u⁻̑], although this realisation is now also somewhat obsolete.

Long consonants are found as realisations of biphonemic sequences particularly across morpheme boundaries, e.g. otdel [‘ʌd̩‘ɛ̃] ‘department’ and rassada [‘ʌsəd̩a] ‘seeding’, and also in foreign words, e.g. massa [‘mãa] ‘mass’, kolonna [‘kʌ̃nə] ‘pillar’ (where the current general tendency appears to be for the Russian speakers to shorten them, see Cubberley 2002).

Clusters of three or more underlying consonants are often simplified, e.g. pozdno [‘pzõ.'] ‘late’, peterburgskij [‘p̩t̩rʌ̃sθk̩j] ‘of St Petersburg’. Consonants and consonant clusters before /o/ and /u/ are labialised, e.g. stul [‘sʊ̃.’ũ] ‘chair’.

### Vowels

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{CVC} & \text{C}^{0} \text{VC}^{1} \\
/i/ & [‘pĩ] & [‘pĩ]\text{i] & \text{pili} & \text{‘(we, you, they) drank’} \\
/i/ & [‘pĩ] & [‘pĩ] & \text{pili} & \text{‘(we, you, they) drank’} \\
/e/ & [‘ẽst] & \text{šest} & \text{‘pole’} & [‘ẽst]\text{čest]} & \text{čest’} & \text{‘honour’} \\
/o/ & [‘st̩r̩pi] & \text{stopy} & \text{‘feet’} & [‘st̩r̩pĩn] & \text{St̩epin} & \text{‘of Stêpa’ (name)} \\
/u/ & [‘ũk] & \text{luk} & \text{‘onion’} & [‘ũk]\text{ljuki]} & \text{ljuki} & \text{‘hatches’} \\
/a/ & [‘s̩rant] & \text{sad} & \text{‘garden’} & [‘s̩rant]\text{sjad}] & \text{sjad’} & \text{‘sit’ (imperative)} \\
\end{array}
\]

Russian has six vowels, /i i e a o u/ (the above chart is based on Bondarko 1998). Vowel quality varies substantially depending on whether the vowel occurs in stressed or in unstressed syllables: in unstressed syllables, all vowels are subject to reduction. Furthermore, the realisation of the vowels varies as a function of consonantal context: vowels are morefronted after or before and particularly between palatalised consonants than when surrounded by non-palatalised consonants. Thus, for example, the /a/ vowel gets progressively more front in CVC\(^1\), C\(^2\)VC, and C\(^3\)VC contexts relative to CVC context. When adjacent to only one palatalised consonant (CVC\(^1\) or C\(^2\)VC), it is a diphthongoid because it accommodates both to the velarisation and to the palatalisation of the adjacent consonants, e.g. sad [‘s̩rant] ‘garden’, brosät, [‘br̩ãs̩rant] ‘to throw’, vprisjadku [‘f̩p̩r̩s̩rant̩k̩u] ‘in squatting position’, sjad’ [‘s̩rant]\text{‘sit down!’}.

There are conflicting views on the phonological status of the [i] and [i] vowels in Russian linguistics. As the two vowels [i] and [i] are in near-complementary distribution, with [i] occurring after palatalised consonants and [i] after non-palatalised consonants, they may be seen as one phoneme /i/ only, having two allophones [i] and [i] (Avanesov 1972, 1974;
Stress and intonation

The prominence of the stressed syllable in Russian is achieved primarily through the duration and quality of the stressed vowel; the vowels in the stressed syllables are full quality /i e a o u/ and usually half-long whereas the unstressed vowels (only /i e a o/ are possible in this position) are subject to various degrees of qualitative and quantitative reduction (see above). The stress is free and can fall on any syllable in a word. In the majority of cases, the stress is stable, that is it falls on the same syllable in the word within its paradigm or in its derivatives, e.g. brat’ja [brɐ’tʃii] ‘brothers’, brat’jami [brɐ’tʃim’i] ‘brothers (instrumental case)’, bratskij [bɐr’tʃskii] ‘brotherly’, bratstvo [bɐr’tʃtvo] ‘brotherhood’. There is, however, a large number of common words where the stress moves within the word’s paradigm or in derived forms, e.g. gorod [ɡɐ’ɾʊd] ‘city’ but goroda [ɡɐ’ɾʊ’də] ‘cities’, gorodskoj [ɡɐ’ɾʊ’skɐ’ɾʊj] ‘of (the) city (ADJ), urban’ (Bondarko 1998).

There are several descriptions of Russian intonation. The classic is by Bryzgunova (1977), who impressionistically differentiates five basic ‘intonational contours’. Further descriptions include Odě (1989) and Svetozarova (1998). Odě’s (2008) ToRI (Transcription of Russian
Intonation) project is an attempt at a comprehensive description of Russian intonational phonology within the autosegmental-metrical framework. One of the main functions of Russian sentence intonation is to mark the information structure of a sentence. A conspicuous feature of Russian is that wh-questions have a falling contour similar to statements, and even yes/no-questions are not characterised by a final rise but rather a rise-fall (H↑L) on the focally accented syllable.

**Transcription of the recorded passage**

In the transcriptions below, stressed syllables are marked, but intonation is not marked.

**Broad transcription**

a'dnaʃdi ˈsʲevʲirnij ˈvʲetʲir iˈsonʃi pja'spoɾilˈi | 'kto izlˈnix ˈsʲilˈh-nej | ʰkak ˈras ˈvʲe_taj ˈvʲ-emˈa | anˈi zamˈetˈili zaˈkutanaˈf ˈplaʃ| ʰputˈnˈika | ʰkaˈtorj ˈjol ˈpaˈdroqi | i riˈʃilˈi | ʰjeto tɔt izˈnix buˈdʲi tʰiˈtafsa ˈsamim ˈsʲilˈnim | kəˈmuˈranʃj ˈuˈdastfsa zaˈstawʲi tʰ ʰputˈnˈika ˈsʰnaʃˈplaʃ | ʰtut sʲeˈvʲirnij ˈvʲetʲir prʲinˈilsə aˈdut izˈfsˈex ˈsʲil | ʰno tʃəm ˈsʲilˈh-nej ˈon ˈdul | ʰtəm ˈsʲilˈh-nej ˈkutsə ʰputˈnˈika ˈf ˈsvoj ˈplaʃ | ʰtak ʰjeto ʰkənˈʃə kənˈʃof ʰi ˈdəviˈvʲirni ˈvʲetʲir ˈdoljənˈbʲil ətkaˈzatsə aˈsvəjˈɛj zəˈtɛj | ʰtaˈɡda zəsəˈjala ˈsəlnɨkə | ʰputˈnˈikan pənˈlˈmənuˈgətəˈgrəlsə | i ʰʃkərˈi ˈsʰnaʃˈvʲoʃ ˈplaʃ | ʰtəkˈim ˈobrazam ʰi ˈdəviˈvʲirni ˈvʲetʲir ˈvinuʒˈdəi ˈbʲil prʲiˈznət | ʰjeto ˈsonʃsi ˈsʲilˈh-nej jɪˈvo

**Narrow transcription**

ʻdənəʊɡ̊d̪i ˈsʲevʲirnij ˈvʲetʲir iˈsonʃi pəˈspʰorilˈi | ʻkʰtəlˈnix ˈsʲilˈh-nej | ʰkəˈkʂəs ˈvʲe_taj ˈvʲemˈe | ʻanˈi zamˈetˈili zaˈkʰəɾˈtənəvəʃ ˈf ˈplaʃ| ʰpʰutˈnˈika | ˀkʰəˈtɕi ˈʃʲəɾ ʰpəˌdələˈvəʃ| ʰiˌrʲiˈʃilˈi | ʰʃəˈtɕə ˈsʰnaʃˈplaʃ | ʰkəˈmuˈraŋʃj ˈuˈdəstfsə zaˈstawʲi tʰ ʰpʰutˈnˈika ˈsʰnaʃˈplaʃ | ʰtut sʲeˈvʲirnij ˈvʲetʲir prʲinˈilsə ˈdəˈvʲut ʰizˈfsˈex ʰsʲiˈl | ʰnə ʰʃəˈtɕ ʰtəm ˈsʲilˈh-nej ˈoʊn ʰdəˈvʲut | ʰtəm ˈsʲilˈh-nej ˈkʰəɾˈtənəvəʃ ʰpʰutˈnˈika ˈf ˈsvoj ˈplaʃ | ʰtək ʰʃəˈtɕə ʰkənˈʃə kənˈʃof | ʰi ˈdəviˈvʲirni ˈvʲetʲir ˈdəˈvʲut ʰbʲil ətkaˈzatsə ʰəˈsvəjˈɛj zəˈtɛj | ʰtaˈɡda zəsəˈjala ʰsʲəˈlɨntʃəkə | ʰpʰutˈnˈikan pənˈlɨmˈwɔvəˈʃuˌaɡʲeˈtəsə | ʰi ʰfsˈkʰərˈi ˈsʰnpq ʰsvəˈw ʰpʰuˈʃər | ʰtəkˈim ʰoˈbrazam ʰi ˈdəviˈvʲirni ˈvʲetʲir ˈvʲiˈnəʒˈdəi ʰbʲil prʲiˈznət | ʰʃəˈtɕə ʰsʲəˈlɨntʃəkə ʰsʲəˈlɨntʃəkə ʰjɪˈvo

**Orthographic version**

Однашды северный ветер и солнце поспорили, кто из них сильнее. Как раз в это время они заметили закутанного в плащ путника, который шёл по дороге, и решили, что тот из них будет считаться самым сильным, кому раньше удается заставить путника снять плащ. Сут северный ветер принялся дуть изо всех сил; но, чем сильнее он дул, тем сильнее кутался путник в своем плаще, так что в конце концов северный ветер должен был отказаться от своей затеи. Тогда засияло солнечно, путник понемногу отогрелся и вскоре снял свой плащ. Таким образом, северный ветер вынужден был признать, что солнце сильнее его.

**Transliteration**

Odnazhdy severnyj veter i solnce posporili, kto iz nix sil’nee. Kak raz v eto vremja oni zametili zakutannogo v plaš putnika, kotoryj šel po doroge, i resili, čto to iz nix budet šcitat’sja samym sil’nym, komu ran’še udastja zastavit’ putnika snjat’ plašč. Tut severnyj veter prinjal’sja dut’ izo vseh sil; no čem sil’nee on dul, tem sil’nee kutalsja putnik v svoj plašč, tak čto v konce koncov severnyj veter dolžen’ byl otkazat’sja ot svoej zatei. Togda zasijalo solnyško, putnik ponemnogu otogrelja i vskore snjal svoj plašč. Takim obrazom, severnyj veter vynужden byl priznat’, čto solnce sil’nee ego.
Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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