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Common Mistakes for Russian Speakers

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Differences between Russian and English. This is sparse at the moment. Please add more examples!

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Grammar

Literal Translations From Russian

- I feel myself well / Я чувствую себя хорошо.
- I am agree / Я согласен
- I want that you do something / Я хочу, чтобы ты сделал...
- Tell me, please. Give me, please. (considered impolite in English, but the direct translation is acceptable in Russian)
- To decide a problem / решить проблему (overused instead of solve)

Reduced Use of Present Simple

Russian omits the verb 'to be/быть' in the present simple form.

Articles

There are no articles in Russian.

See [Articles](#)

Word Order

Russian has a less-strict word order than English. Additional errors come from English question word order and usage of auxiliary verbs. E.g.

- Why you no help me? vs Why don't you

Overuse of will for future tenses

Mirroring Russian usage, students frequently substitute 'will' in cases where any of the following constructions will sound more natural.

- Present Continuous
- Going to
- About to / due to
- Present simple with future meaning.

Misuse of what vs that

In Russian, there is one word, что, which can serve the functions of both 'what' and 'that' depending on the context.

Common mistakes involving usage of 'what' and 'that':

- The car what I wanted to buy... (incorrect usage)
- He said what? vs He said that? (difference in meaning)
- It was amazing, what he spoke. vs It was amazing that he spoke. (meaning)
- See: [What vs That](#)

Double Negative

In Russian, usage of the double negative is common practice. In English, it can only be used in specific situations. See [Double Negative](#)

Perfect vs Perfective Aspect

English has the [Perfect tenses](#), while Russian does not. In Russian, each verb has a [Perfective Aspect](#), which indicates whether or not the action is completed.

Vocab

Some words do form a one-to-one match between English and Russian. Students may or may not realize the distinction, and will often search for the non-existent or not-commonly-used English translation. For example:

- turtle/tortoise = черепаха
- boots = сапоги ('high' boots) / ботинки ('low' boots)

Other phrases commonly misused:

- useful food (полезная еда) / healthy food
- I have big experience
- There was big traffic

False friends

- actual vs topical (актуально)
- accurate vs neat (аккуратно)
- magazine vs shop (магазин)
- concourse vs competition (конкурс)
- chef (шеф-повар) vs chief (шеф) vs boss (шеф) vs cook (повар) vs cooker (плита)
- lunatic vs sleepwalker (лунатик)
- preservative vs condom (презерватив)

Similar Idiomatic Expressions

English	Russian
crow's foot	goose foot (гусиные лапы)
tone-deaf	a bear/elephant stepped on your ears (медведь/слон на уши наступил)

Spelling

Written Russian is largely phonetic. Beginner students especially will have trouble spelling English words.

Pronunciation

Stress is more important in Russian.

Short vs long vowel sounds

/θ/ and /ð/ /w/ and /v/

Falling/rising intonation and politeness

[Category: Common Mistakes](#)



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