

Russian Alphabet in Latin

Michael M. Silaev

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Vorobievsky Gory, Moscow 119991, Russia

ABSTRACT

An alternative transliteration of Russian letters in Latin is proposed, including only four digraphs, which differs favorably from previous ones in using all 26 letters of the Latin alphabet (plus an apostrophe) and in lacking diacritical marks above the letters and allows the Russian text of any complexity to be transmitted in Latin letters (and vice versa) with the maximum simplicity extremely unambiguous. This transliteration can become parallel Russian spelling on a Latin basis in those sometimes vitally important cases when the letters of the Russian alphabet cannot be used.

KEYWORDS: alphabet, transliteration, digraphs, diacritical marks.

New Russian-Latin Transliteration System

The problem of accurate, full-fledged transmission of Russian texts, documentary and legal materials of the Cyrillic script in Latin script on global telegraph and Internet information communications does not lose its relevance. The proposed transliteration of Russian letters in Latin favorably differs from the totality preceding the use of only four double letters (digraphs) instead of seven or nine and one polygraph (to represent the letter ш), as in other transliteration systems (see reviews on this subject in collections [1–3]), as well as the use of all 26 letters of the modern Latin alphabet and the absence of accents over letters, the role of which in the case of two letters e''(e) and e'(e) is performed by an apostrophe, unlike diacritics, is always present together with Latin letters in international telegraph and print inventory and on a standard computer keyboard, on which there are no letters of the Russian alphabet abroad. The correspondence of Russian letters to Latin is given in the Table below.

Table: Alternative Russian-Latin Transliteration¹

ABC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	№
Russian	а	б	в	г	д	е	ё	ж	1
Latin	a	b	v	g	d	e	e''	j	2
Russian	з	и	й	к	л	м	н	о	3
Latin	z	i	y	k	l	m	n	o	4
Russian	п	р	с	т	у	ф	х	ц	5
Latin	p	r	s	t	u	f	h	c	6
Russian	ч	ш	щ	ы	ь	э	ю	я	7
Latin	ch	sh	q	w	x	e'	yu	ya	8

Notes: ¹Digits – the coordinates of the letters. ²In the case of transfer of out of text in a row of individual letters **ьб** they are separated by a space: ' '. The second letter of an unseparated digraph included in an abbreviation can be lowercase or placed in uppercase to the right of the first letter, e.g., МЧС – MChS (or MCh^s). The apostrophe separating the consonant and vowel letters in foreign surnames in the Cyrillic text can be transmitted by a double apostrophe to distinguish it from the letter **ь** during retransliteration (for example, *д'Эстен* – *d'E'sten*). ³Letters of the old spelling *decimal i*, *yat ѣ*, *theta ѳ*, and *izhitsa ѵ* can be noted in the Latin text by means of a circumflex, respectively, as *î*, *ê*, *ƒ*, and *ÿ*.

For example, the name of this Table: *Alternativnaya russko-latinskaya transliteraciya*. Or: *часть – chastx*, *Цхалтыбо – C'haltubo*; *шоры – shorw*, *сход – s'hod*; *это – e'to*, *мэр – me'r*; *еуѐ – eue''*, *объём – ob'e'm*; *дюйм – dyuyt*, *Гуйџс – Guy'us*; *Майя – Mayya*, *Майџми – May'ami*; the pronoun **я** is *ya*, or *Y*; the letter **ь** – '.

In this transliteration, the apostrophe ' acts as the letter ь only if it separates the consonant and vowel, including the “semivowel” **ы**(Cyrillic **й**), letters (but not **ы**(**й**) and vowel, vowel and consonant, two vowels or consonants)². An apostrophe acts as an apostrophe if it divides a vowel (except for **е**, with no space after it) and a consonant or a digit, two consonants (except **с'н** and **с'н**), a consonant and a digit (but not the **ы**(**й**) and a vowel). The apostrophe divides the letters in the letter combinations **с'н**, **с'н**, **ы'у**, and **ы'а**, coinciding with digraphs, if each letter in them acts as an independent phonetic unit³. Thus, the apostrophe in this system of transliteration is performed, taking into account its previously indicated role as a modifier, or diacritic, with the letter **е**, four regulated functions at once.

As can be seen from the Table, in the alternative transliteration system there are only four digraphs (**ch**, **sh**, **yu**, and **ya**) and there are no diacritics, which can serve as a demonstration that the Latin alphabet is no less adequate to the Russian language than the Latin itself (there are often two digraphs in it, and vowels are often supplied with diacritical marks), and even less adequate to English (with at least nine two-letter designations of individual sounds) and especially German or French, in which, respectively, from six to 10 digraphs, one by one a trigraph and used from three to 13 letters with diacritical marks [4].

The presented new Russian–Latin transliteration alphabet, which for brevity (and by analogy with the Cyrillic alphabet) can be allow yourself in everyday life to call, in view of the name of the author, Michaelic, makes it possible to write in Russian in Latin as freely as Cyrillic (as, for example, in the case of the Serbian-Croatian language, in which two graphics – Cyrillic in the Serbian option and Latin in Croatian).

The question of whether the new alphabet (through cyberspace, for example, which uses Latin symbols) will press the Cyrillic alphabet in its modern form, sequestered after 1917, when several letters were removed from it, including “yat – ѣ”, which carried the cross over the Russian line, remains open.

If we recall that the civil alphabet in Cyrillic, in turn, arose at the beginning of the XVIII century by converging with the Latin font (Antiqua) of its former church Slavic form (and also excluding a number of letters from it), and the latter, in its turn, ousted from the Slavic writings a graphically more complex Glagolitic alphabet, in such a retrospective, the paths of the alphabets seem to be inscrutable, and free competition between them is a guarantee of their improvement in development.

CONCLUSION

The presented alternative Russian–Latin transliteration allows you to transmit Russian text of any complexity in Latin letters (and vice versa) with maximum simplicity (and this is the main criterion for writing) is exclusively unambiguously (which compensates for the phonetic inconsistency in the interpretation of the letters **ш** – **q**, **ы** – **w**, and **ь** – **x**) and can become parallel Russian spelling on a Latin basis in those sometimes vitally important cases when the letters of the Russian alphabet cannot be used.

REFERENCES

1. Uspensky, V.A., “To the problem of transliteration of Russian texts in Latin letters”, Scientific and Technical Information, Ser. 2, Information Processes and Systems, 1967, no. 7, pp. 12–20.
2. Reformatsky, A.A., “On the standardization of transliteration in Latin letters of Russian texts”, Ibid., 1972, no. 10, pp. 32–36.
3. Beloozerov, V.N., Radkovsky, G.N., Kosarskaya, Yu.P., “Practical transliteration of the Russian text in the Latin alphabet”, Ibid., 1997, no. 12, pp. 28–34.
4. Gilyarevsky, R.S., Grivnin, V.S., “An Identifier for World Languages from Their Writing”, Ed. Prof. G.P. Serdyuchenko, 3rd Ed., rev. and add. [in Russian], Moscow: Nauka, 1965, 375 pp.