

The integration of foreign words from European languages into the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets

There are several ways of integrating foreign words (including proper names) graphically. The aim of practical transcription is to represent the foreign pronunciation with native orthographic rules, whereas transplantation, transliteration, and exact phonetic transcription conserve the orthography and/or pronunciation of the original. A special feature of Cyrillic writing systems as opposed to Latin ones seems to be that they completely rely on native pronunciation rules and do not allow the integration of foreign orthographic conventions. That this is indeed a matter of alphabet rather than of language type becomes quite obvious when comparing Serbian with Croatian: The two languages essentially have the same grammar and the same orthography, but Croatian is always written in the Latin alphabet and Serbian uses Latin and Cyrillic letters equally, i.e. it has one orthography but two scripts (with biunique correspondences between the graphemes). Consequently, foreign words are always transcribed according to their pronunciation in Serbian (e.g. *Cirih* or *Цупух*), whereas into Croatian especially proper names are usually transplanted in their original orthography (e.g. *Zürich*). However, due to globalization and the use of computer-based text processors, transplantation of Latin-alphabet (especially English) words into Cyrillic texts is becoming more frequent, particularly in Russian.

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the peculiarities of graphical integration of foreign words into languages written in a Cyrillic alphabet, as opposed to languages that use the Latin alphabet. The features discussed here are primarily found in foreign words that are in the early stages of primary integration (according to Filipović 1990: 28, 48), rather than in adapted borrowings that are already in the process of secondary integration. Therefore, special attention is paid to foreign proper names, because they usually retain a connection with the source language for a very long time.

Different traditions of integrating foreign words into languages with different writing systems, in this case Cyrillic and Latin, are shown in this paper. Languages

that use the Latin alphabet prefer to preserve the original spelling of loanwords and readily introduce foreign grapheme-phoneme correspondences, whereas languages that use the Cyrillic alphabet prefer to convey the pronunciation of foreign words using their own spelling and never go beyond its boundaries.

To demonstrate this hypothesis and as a benchmark, three languages were selected that have different relationships to the Cyrillic alphabet: Russian (which uses exclusively Cyrillic), Serbian (which uses both Cyrillic and Latin script in parallel and equally), and Croatian (which is very close to Serbian but uses only the Latin alphabet). The languages of the former □ 123 Soviet Union, which adopted the Cyrillic script in the 20th century, were not taken into account.¹ Foreign words from non-European languages, which are few in number in the languages of interest to us, were also left out of consideration.²

2. General possibilities for the graphic integration of foreign words

Before we turn to the peculiarities of Cyrillic, let us first have a general look at how foreign words (and names) can be integrated graphically. There are four different ways to do this: 1. transplantation, 2. transliteration, 3. practical transcription, and 4. scientific transcription.

2.1. Transplantation

Transplantation is a term borrowed from Superanskaja (1978: 26), defined as “direct inclusion of a foreign name in the text while preserving its spelling” (“непосредственное включение в текст иностранного имени с сохранением его графики”, Giljarevskij & Starostin 1985: 11), as in the following examples:

- (1) Сперва *madame* за ним ходила, ⟨*Sperva madame za nim hodila,*
Потом *monsieur* ее сменил. *Potom monsieur ee smenil.*⟩
(Puškin, *Evgenij Onegin*, I, 3) ‘At first *madame* looked after him,
Then *monsieur* took her turn.’
- (2) After the concert, the crowd headed *en masse* for the parking lot.
(Webster 1993: 1355)
- (3) “The cooking here is *wunderbar*,” he said. (Webster 1993: 1355)

¹ □ 141 For more details on the features of these languages, see note 29.

² Thus, we are primarily dealing with foreign words from the languages that Giljarevskij & Starostin (1985) write about integrating: English, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Dutch, Danish, Spanish, Italian, German, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Finnish, French, Czech, and Swedish. For other languages, see Serdjučenko (1967).

Sometimes the graphic image of a foreign element changes slightly due to typographical issues:³

- (4) German *Königstraße* ‘King Street’ > *Koenigstrasse* (or, incorrectly: *KonigstraBe*)
Croatian *đuveč* ‘rice dish with vegetables’ > *djuvec*

A problem arises when you have to add inflection or other native morphemes to transplanted words because then two different sets of grapheme-phoneme correspondences appear within one word. For example, in Croatian when a native morpheme is added to a foreign word stem the last letter of the stem is adapted to suit Croatian pronunciation:

- (5) *Casablanca*, gen. sg. *Casablanke*
Kennedy, gen. sg. *Kennedyja*
Haag, adj. *haaški*

▣ 124 Slovene goes even a step further in that it treats foreign names like native nouns, i.e. if possible they are integrated into a native noun paradigm, for which the end of the foreign stem has to be reinterpreted morphologically:

- (6) *Max Weber*, gen. sg. *Maxa Webra*
Harold Pinter, gen. sg. *Harolda Pinterja*
Olie in Stanley ‘Olie and Stanley’, gen. sg. *Olieja in Stanleyja*

In Polish, the graphical word stem is left untouched, but where necessary the boundary between foreign and native pronunciation rules is indicated by an apostrophe (for more details, see Bartmińska & Bartmiński 1978: 40–50):

- (7) *Harry*, gen. sg. *Harry'ego*, pronounced without the ⟨y⟩: [xa'rɛgɔ];
but loc./instr. sg. *Harrym* pronounced with the ⟨y⟩: ['xarim]

Such problems become even more complex when words are transplanted from one alphabet into another one that uses identical letter shapes with different denotations; e.g. the Serbian dative ending -y ⟨-u⟩ would be read as ⟨-y⟩ in a Latin context. Consequently, in Serbian orthography there is the following rule:

“Само изузетно се и у ћириличком тексту понеко име може навести и у изворној латиници (нпр. кад не можемо сазнати како се чита и преозвучава). Ако се таком имену додаје наш наставак, он се одваја цртицом, нпр.

“Only in exceptional cases can a name sometimes also be cited in original Latin script in a Cyrillic text (e.g. if we cannot find out how it is read and pronounced). If such a name is given our ending, it is separated by a hyphen, e.g. *Huet-a*, za

³ This method can also be used to represent Cyrillic letters using Latin letters and numbers, e.g. *COBETCKUÛ COIO3* < *COBETCKИЙ COIO3*. However, this approach is usually only used when the shapes of the letters are identical, as in the title of Paul McCartney’s 1987 album *ЧOBA B CCCP* on non-Cyrillic web pages: <https://www.mcbeatle.de/macca/a/choba.html> (last checked 22 Mar 2026; note the file name!).

Нует-а, за Нует-овог противника [...].”⁴ *Huet-ovog protivnika [...].*”⁴
 (Pešikan et al. 1995: 103 f.)

Russian in such cases also uses a separating hyphen, but usually an apostrophe is used before case endings:

- (8) IBM-совместимость (IBM-sovmestimost') ‘IBM compatibility’
 Laptop, gen. sg. Laptop’а

2.2. Transliteration

▮ 125 If the source has to be rewritten in another alphabet, the best way to enable the educated reader to restore the original orthography is through transliteration (cf. Superanskaja 1978: 16–25), i.e. an expression written in a foreign alphabet is transferred into the alphabet of the borrowing language letter by letter. In an ideal case of transliteration, there is a one-to-one correlation between foreign graphemes and transliteration graphemes, as is customary in scientific transliteration systems, e.g. in the system for the scientific transcription of Cyrillic into Latin letters of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and its national variants, see (9), and in Serbo-Croatian transliteration, see (10):

- (9) Russian Гобрачѐв > *Gorbačëv*
 Russian: Хрущѐв > ISO *Hrušëv*, German *Chruščëv*, English *Xrusčëv*
- (10) Croatian (and Serbian) *U početku bješe riječ, i riječ bješe u Boga, i Bog bješe riječ.*
 ↔ Serbian *У почетку бјеше рјеч, и рјеч бјеше у Бога, и Бог бјеше рјеч.* (Vuk 1847: John 1:1)

Such systems were first created for Prussian library catalogs (cf. Instruktionen 1899: 50–55; Superanskaja 1978: 17), which collected books written in a wide variety of writing systems that had to be compiled into a single alphabetical catalog. Libraries in countries using the Cyrillic alphabet did not need such transliteration systems, as books in Latin script were entered into a special catalog based on the Latin alphabet.

However, such transliterations, while conveying the spelling of the source, do not reflect its pronunciation. For the correct pronunciation of the surname ⟨Gorbačëv⟩, one has to know that ⟨č⟩ is pronounced as [tʃ], ⟨ë⟩ as [ɔ], etc., just as with ⟨en masse⟩ transplanted into English it is necessary to know the French pronunciation rules.

⁴ This refers to the French scholar and bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet [ʁe] (1630–1721).

2.3. Practical transcription

Practical transcription is a method for representing pronunciation rather than spelling.⁵ In this approach, the spelling of the source language is only needed for **▮ 126** “the determination of the phonemic composition of the foreign word and the translation of foreign phonemes into phonemes of the borrowing language” (“определение фонемного состава иноязычного слова и перевод иноязычных фонем в фонемы заимствующего языка”, Superanskaja 1978: 103). This adapted pronunciation must be conveyed exclusively by “the means of normal orthography” (“средствами нормальной орфографии”) of the recipient language, i.e. its own grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Reformatskij 1955: 296):

- (11) Russian *Уолфиш-беј* (Uolfiš-bej) < English *Walfish Bay*
 Serbian *Хјуман рајтс воч* (Hjuman rajts voč) < English *Human Rights Watch*
 German *Büro* ‘office’ < French *bureau*
 Slovene *pižama* ‘pajamas’ < French *pyjama*

Of course, such grapheme-phoneme correspondences exist only for the native sound system, so that in many cases the pronunciation of the original cannot be conveyed completely:

- (12) Russian: *Орвелл* [ɔ.ru.ˈɛʃ] < *Orwell* [ˈɔ:(ɪ).wəl]

Slovene *bife* [biˈfeː] ‘buffet’ < French *buffet* [byfɛ]

German *Samovar* [zamoˈvaːɐ̯] (often [ˈzamovaː]) < *Russian самовар* [səmɫˈvɑɾ]

In cases where this does not cause pronunciation difficulties, additional information about the original spelling is included in the practical transcription using the transliteration method, e.g. when reduced vowels or double consonants in English are reflected orthographically in Cyrillic:

- (13) Russian *Лондон* (London) < English *London*,
Ллойд Уэббер (Lloid Uèbber) < English *Lloyd Webber*,
Хоуард (Xouard) < English *Howard*,
Гюнтер Грасс (Gjunter Grass) < German *Günter Grass*

In her book on practical transcription, Superanskaja (1978) presents this method as a kind of compromise between transliteration, which conveys only the spelling while neglecting the pronunciation, and phonetic transcription, which delves too deeply into the subtleties of foreign phonetics, making the text incomprehensible to the average reader. Therefore, these extremes, i.e. “blind adherence to the letter” (“слепое следование букве”) and “excessive phoneticism” (“излишний фонетизм”), should be avoided (Superanskaja 1978: 131–134). However, due to the

⁵ For details on practical transcription, see Superanskaja (1978). The term has been in use for a long time; it already appears in the article “Transkripcija” in the Russian Brockhaus (Arsen'ev & Petruševskij 1901).

limitations of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences of the recipient language, it is impossible to consistently convey the phonetics, phonology, *or* spelling of the integrated words. The only advantage □ 127 of practical transcription is the organic integration of transcribed words into the borrowing language. Such words behave orthographically and phonetically like words of the recipient language. Therefore, practical transcription in all languages is an important element of secondary adaptation (cf. Filipović 1990: 28, 48) in the further integration of borrowed words, cf. the German example *Büro* in (11), which a few decades ago was usually written as ⟨Bureau⟩. However, this article is not about this second step of borrowing but about the graphic integration of foreign words that have not yet been adapted, as in the Russian and Serbian examples in (11).

2.4. Scientific transcription

An appropriate representation of the original pronunciation can only be achieved by scientific transcription. This term is used here to refer to transcription that is not oriented towards preserving the orthographic norms of the borrowing language. Outside scientific contexts (in which you might use IPA or the like), this method is employed especially for languages with a non-alphabetical writing system, such as the Pinyin⁶ system for Chinese:

- (14) Pinyin *Dèng Xiǎopíng* [tʂŋʅciəŋʅpʰiŋʅ]
 Pinyin *kūnqú* [kʰuənʅtʂʰyʅ] ‘form of Chinese opera’

In these examples, ⟨x⟩ is used for a voiceless alveolo-palatal fricative [ç], and ⟨q⟩ for an aspirated voiceless alveolo-palatal affricate [tʂʰ]. Though this transcription makes use of Latin letters, their pronunciation differs from the general pronunciation rule of ⟨x⟩ as [ks] and ⟨qu⟩ as [kw] in a target language like English.⁷ Thus, both scientific transcription and transliteration (and, of course, transplantation) introduce unfamiliar grapheme-phoneme correspondences; one might call this **graphical code-switching**. Only practical transcription makes do with the pronunciation rules (the code) already present in the native orthography.

⁶ This system is used in many languages and also within China. In Russian, the most common transcription system is that of Father Palladij (legal name: Pëtr Ivanovič Kafarov; cf. Serdjučenko 1967: 236), which, like the Pinyin system, conveys almost all the distinctive oppositions of Chinese phonology (except for suprasegmental ones), but does not go beyond the means of Russian orthography. For more details on this system, cf. Serdjučenko (1967: 231–257).

⁷ In the Russian Palladij system, the pronunciation of the corresponding letters *c* ⟨s⟩ and *u* ⟨c⟩, [sʲ] and [tʂʰ], is much closer to the Chinese sounds [ç] and [tʂʰ].⁸ The endings, of course, changed for morphological rather than graphic reasons.

3. Differences between Cyrillic and Latin scripts

▣ 128 A special feature of Cyrillic writing systems as opposed to Latin ones seems to be that they completely rely on native pronunciation rules and do not allow the integration of foreign orthographic conventions (whether from a Latin, Cyrillic, or other source). Yet, this has not always been the case. Pešikan et al. (1995: 103) correctly observe that the medieval Cyrillic alphabet included all the letters of the Greek alphabet (many of which were not needed for Slavic words) and could therefore represent words of Greek origin in their original orthography. This applies especially to the following letters:

(15) Greek letters:	⟨ι⟩ ⟨η⟩ ⟨υ⟩	⟨φ⟩ ⟨θ⟩	⟨ο⟩ ⟨ω⟩	⟨ξ⟩	⟨ψ⟩
Old Cyrillic letters:	⟨ι⟩ ⟨и⟩ ⟨υ⟩	⟨φ⟩ ⟨ϣ⟩	⟨ο⟩ ⟨ω⟩	⟨ξ⟩	⟨ψ⟩
Slavic pronunciation:	[i] [i] [i]	[f] [f]	[o] [o]	[ks]	[ps]
	\ /	/	/		
modern Russian letters:	⟨и⟩	⟨ф⟩	⟨ο⟩	⟨κ⟩ + ⟨с⟩	⟨π⟩ + ⟨с⟩

Consequently, e.g. in the words for ‘incense’ and ‘Europe’, (16a), which in Church Slavonic were written strictly according to their etymology, (16b), some letters in Russian were replaced with other Cyrillic letters, (16c), which also derive from Greek letters, but different ones, (16d):

(16) a. Greek:	θ υ μ ι α μ α	Εὐρώπη
b. Church Cyrillic:	Ѡ ѡ ѣ ѡ ѡ ѡ ⁸	Ѡ ѡ ѡ ѡ ѡ ѡ ⁸
c. modern Russian:	фимиам	Европа
d. corresponding Greek letters:	*φ η μ ῆ α μ (α)	*Ε β ρ ό π α

Over time this Cyrillic alphabet, which had been designed for Old Church Slavonic, was adapted to various (Slavic and non-Slavic) national languages, and in these new orthographies the representation of foreign words immediately shifted to (practical) transcription:

“Али се са стварањем националних ћирилица угасила могућност систематског изворног писања имена, не само из грчког него и из других словенских ћириличких језика.”
(Pešikan et al. 1995: 103)

“But with the creation of national Cyrillic alphabets it became impossible ▣ 129 to write names, not only from Greek but also from other Cyrillic Slavonic languages, systematically according to the original.”

This conclusion, however, is not at all self-evident. It is not impossible in the German or English ‘national’ alphabet to write, for example:

- (17) German *Nishnij Nowgorod* (more frequently than *Nischni Nowgorod*)
 < Russian *Нижний Новгород* (Nižnij Novgorod),

⁸ The endings, of course, changed for morphological rather than graphic reasons.

German *Walesa* (not **Wauengsa*) < Polish *Wałęsa*,
 German *Washington* (not **Woschingten*) < English *Washington*,
 English *Birobidzhan* (not **Beerabeejahn*) < Russian *Биробиджан* (Birobidžan),
 English *Weiss* (not **Vice*) < German *Weiß*

Note how natural it seems to use unfamiliar grapheme-phoneme correspondences for foreign names and how unthinkable most of the alternative ‘phonetic’ representations are. However, just as unthinkable as this use of native grapheme-phoneme correspondences for foreign proper names in English or German is the use of foreign grapheme-phoneme correspondences in Russian or Serbian.⁹

- (18) Russian **Схаќеснеапе* (Shakespeare) (pronounced [ʃɛ'kspir]) < English *Shakespeare*
 Serbian **ђуффеџ* (buffet) (pronounced ['bife:]) < French *buffet*

Instead, all the Cyrillic-written languages use practical transcription to convey foreign words (including proper names):

- (19) Russian *Шекспир* (Šekspir) ‘Shakespeare’
 Serbian *ђуфе* (bife) ‘buffet’

Practical transcription is even used for words borrowed from a source language that uses the Cyrillic alphabet, although at first glance it would seem that nothing needs to be rewritten here:

- (20) Russian *Джиндџич* (Džindžič) < Serbian *Ђинђућ* (Đinđić)

- (21) Serbian *Лењин* (Lenjin) < Russian *Ленин* (Lenin)
 Serbian *Кијев* (Kijev) < Russian¹⁰ *Киев* (Kiev)

Note that the Russian words in (21) do not contain any letters not present in the Serbian alphabet.

In Andrej Kurkov’s book *Dobryj angel smerti* (*The Kind Angel of Death*, 2000), 130 even the direct speech of characters speaking Ukrainian (and the standard language at that) is subjected to practical transcription, i.e. a large amount of text is not integrated into the Russian context in any way:¹¹

⁹ This statement holds for all languages written in a Cyrillic alphabet. The name of a former Macedonian band, *Блооб шхе ђуббле* (Bloob the bubble) (cf. *Makedonija Europe*, 16–29 Nov 2001, 12), is obviously 142 an artistic deviation from the rule, making fun of exactly this restriction. With the usual Macedonian grapheme-phoneme correspondences this name would have to be read as [‘bl.ɔp tʃɛ ‘bub.blɛ] rather than like English *Bloob the bubble* [‘blɒb ðə ‘bʌ.bʌ].

¹⁰ In Ukrainian the name of the capital is *Київ* (Kyïv) (correctly pronounced [‘kijju]), but most languages have borrowed it either from Russian or from an older stage of East Slavic, where the pronunciation must have been *[‘kijɛw].

¹¹ According to the author, this peculiar method of conveying the Ukrainian language is a reaction to the same treatment of Russian words in Ukrainian by Ukrainian purists

- (22) — Завтра мы з Галєю йїдємо в Кыйив, — наконец произнес он. — Вы за-
лышытєсь тут, я з батькамы вжє поговорыв. Якцо щось узнаю — подзвоню!...
— Хорошо, — кивнул я. (Kurkov 2000: 264)

In Ukrainian orthography:

— Завтра ми з Галєю їдемо в Київ [...]. Ви залишитесь тут, я з батьками вже поговорив. Якцо щось узнаю — подзвоню!... [...]

“Tomorrow, Halja and I are going to Kyiv,” he finally said. “You stay here, I’ve already talked to my parents. If I find out anything, I’ll call you!”

“Okay,” I nodded.’

3.1. Serbian

Serbian has a rather peculiar orthographic situation: It uses not only the Cyrillic alphabet (as seen above) but *latinica* and *ćirilica* equally. These alphabets are mutually transliteratable on the basis of biunique correspondences between the graphemes.¹² Transliteration tables can be found at the beginning of every grammar, orthography, dictionary, or textbook, and the two alphabets have absolutely equal rights. In this respect Serbian seems to be unique in the world.¹³ However,

(personal communication, Cologne, 3 October 2003). To emphasize their incorrectness, they are often transcribed, e.g. “Канєшно, знають, но, понїмаєш, они на то, наведено, вніманїя не обрацають...” (Hnatkevyc 2000: 6), where the Russian words *конечно*, *понимаешь*, *наверно*, *внимания*, etc. are used instead of the Ukrainian “Звичайно, знають, але, розумієш, вони на це, напевно, не звертають уваги” (“Of course they know, but, you understand, they probably don’t pay attention to that”).

¹² The only exception is that the Cyrillic letters ⟨љ⟩, ⟨њ⟩, and ⟨џ⟩ correspond to the Latin digraphs ⟨lj⟩, ⟨nj⟩, and ⟨dž⟩, respectively. However, the latter are also valued as single letters (even in post-1990 Croatian orthographies) and appear as separate entries in dictionaries and other alphabetical lists (because they represent the distinct sounds [ʎ], [ɲ], and [dʒ]): *a b c č ć d dž đ e f g h i j k l lj m n nj...*

¹³ Similar situations can only be observed in history when there was a slow shift from one writing system to another (e.g. from Glagolitic to Cyrillic in Old Church Slavonic). Nowadays the literacy of large parts of the population and a public school system demand for quick changes sanctioned by official laws. The alphabetic dualism in Serbian is a vestige of Illyrism and Yugoslavism, which wanted to merge Serbian and Croatian traditions. Today the situation is not resolved because this would be a decision between ‘eastern’ Serbian national traditions (Cyrillic) and a clearly ‘western’ European orientation (Latin). Nikčević’s new “Montenegrin” orthography (1997; 2001: 19) has inherited this problem (although Nikčević himself apparently only uses the Latin alphabet in his books). Officially the same holds true for Bosnian, which in practice, however, is written only in the Latin alphabet.

Other contemporary languages with two parallel writing systems are not comparable to Serbian: In China, Korea, and Japan, the Latin alphabet is not at equal rights with the

the preference of one or the other of the two scripts can be a political choice rather than one of taste: until 1990 the state encouraged the use of the Latin alphabet in the ‘eastern variant of Serbo-Croatian’ to stress the unity of Yugoslavia, whereas with the rise of Milošević’s nationalism the Cyrillic alphabet has become more fashionable.

Therefore there is only *one* Serbian orthography, which can be realized in *two* alphabets, with the Latin realization being at the same time the official transliteration of the Cyrillic realization, and vice versa. The most influential newspaper of Serbian diaspora, *Vesti* (or *Вестѝ*), for example, appears every day in two editions with completely identical text, one in Latin and one in Cyrillic script.

▣ 131 Consequently, in both Cyrillic and Latin Serbian texts, all foreign words (including names) are transcribed according to their pronunciation in Serbian:¹⁴

(23) *Cirih* or *Цѝрѝх* < German *Zürich*

Brisel or *Брѝсел* < French *Bruxelles* or Dutch *Brussel*

In 1950 the Serbian linguist Aleksandar Belić (1950: 110) stated this as a rule in his *Serbo-Croatian orthography*:

“Према основном принципу нашег правописа – да се речи пишу онако како се изговарају – треба и речи страних језика писати онако како се изговарају.”

“According to the general principle of our orthography that words are written as they are pronounced, words from foreign languages must be written as they are pronounced as well.”

After the 1954 Novi Sad Agreement, which officially declared Serbian and Croatian one language, the unified orthography of 1960 (cf. Pravopis 1960a, 1960b), as well as subsequent orthographies, accepted both transcription and transplantation for foreign names in a Latin text; this is true even of the newest Serbian orthographies, e.g. Pešikan et al. (1995: 103):

“Туђа властита имена пишу се у српском стандардном језику на два начи-

Foreign proper names are written in two ways in Standard Serbian: adapted spell-

respective East Asian writing system [the original unpublished English version of 2002 added: “which is implied by the term *digraphia*”—D. B. 2026]. The equal use of roman type and blackletter (or ‘Gothic’) in German and other languages until World War II or of civil and church Cyrillic in Russian and other languages were a question of typeface and not of writing system: Obviously ⟨*abcdeḡhi...*⟩ and ⟨*abcdefghi...*⟩ or ⟨*абвгдежзи...*⟩ and ⟨*абвгдежзи...*⟩ are no more different alphabets than, say, ▣ 143 ⟨*abcdeḡhi...*⟩ and ⟨*abcdefghi...*⟩ are. [This seem to have been my very first published thoughts about the topic later treated extensively in Bunčić 2016.—D. B. 2026]

¹⁴ This rule is sometimes followed in Latin script even when the need for clarification is so obvious that the original spelling is given in brackets: “Enterprajz Ajrland (Enterprise Ireland)” (Radomirović 2001: 7).

на: прилагођено писање (применљиво у ћирилици и у латиници, нпр. – *Минхен, Шекспир* – *Minhen, Šekspir*) и изворно писање (применљиво у латиници, нпр. *München, Shakespeare*.)”

ing (applicable to the Cyrillic and Latin script, e.g. *Минхен, Шекспир*—*Minhen, Šekspir*) and original spelling (applicable to the Latin script, e.g. *München, Shakespeare*.)”

However, in practice foreign proper names in Serbian texts have always been transcribed, cf. *ibid.*:

“У нашој пак двоазбучној пракси прилагођено писање широко се примењује и у латиници [...]. Пишући прилагођено страна имена, аутор може припремати свој рукопис не условљајући да ли ће се штампати ћирилицом или латиницом.”

▮ 132 “Yet in our bialphabetic practice the adapted orthography is widely used also in the Latin script. [...] Writing foreign names in an adapted way, an author can prepare a manuscript with no implication of whether it will be printed in the Cyrillic or Latin alphabet.”

Only in commercial advertisements can some exceptions be spotted, e.g. the words *pizza* and *pizzeria*, which are often transplanted, even on posters with otherwise Cyrillic inscriptions. In coherent Serbian texts, however, one finds almost exclusively *pica* and *picerija* if the text is Latin¹⁵ and *пица* and *пицерија* if it is Cyrillic. Foreign abbreviations are usually transliterated according to the scheme for native Serbian words:

(24) ЦХФ (CHF) (for ‘Swiss Franc’)

VHXЦP (UNHCR) (for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

Note that for being transliteratable such abbreviations must not contain the letters *Q*, *W*, *X*, and *Y*, since they are not used in Serbian, so that there is no Cyrillic equivalent for them. If an abbreviation does contain these letters, the long form is translated into Serbian and then this translation is abbreviated (as is also customary in Russian):

(25) C30 = SZO < *Светска здравствена организација* < WHO < *World Health Organization*

3.2. Croatian (for comparison)

It remains to be proven that this difference between Cyrillic and Latin-based languages is indeed a matter of alphabet rather than of language type. This becomes obvious when comparing Serbian with Croatian: The two languages have essentially the same grammar and the same orthography—and were indeed viewed as varieties of one Serbo-Croatian language until very recently. Moreover, many

¹⁵ See footnote 17.

linguists would still agree with ▯ 133 Miloš Okuka's (1998: 130) statement about Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian:

„Drei unterschiedliche Bezeichnungen stehen vom linguistischen Standpunkt her betrachtet für ein und dieselbe Sprache, suggerieren aber gleichzeitig vor allem das Unterschiedliche, obwohl ‚die Verschiedenheiten so gering sind, daß man sie wirklich suchen muß‘ (J. Raecke)¹⁶.“

“From the point of view of linguistics, three different names denote one and the same language, while at the same time suggesting first of all difference, although ‘the differences are so slight that you really have to look for them’ (J. Raecke)¹⁶.”

This is why Croatian linguist Snježana Kordić (2001: 237), unlike many of her compatriots, quite correctly insists on the possibility of using the adjective *Serbo-Croatian* today as a linguistic term that unites the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian “political languages” as national varieties into a single “linguistic language.”

The most obvious difference between Serbian and Croatian is that Croatian is *never* written in Cyrillic letters. This is why in contrast to the Serbian examples (11), (18), (19), and (23), in Croatian some foreign words and especially proper names are spelled as they are spelled in the source language:

(26) *Human Rights Watch, buffet*¹⁷, *Zürich, München, Shakespeare, pizza*¹⁷, *pizzeria*¹⁷

¹⁶ This quotation, though without further references, is obviously taken from Raecke (1996: 21), who concludes (ibid. 22): “[Daraus] ergeben sich [...] Probleme, die ein Slavist nur beschreiben, aber nicht lösen kann.” (“This causes problems that a Slavist can only describe but not solve.”)

¹⁷ Although Anić (1991, 1994) and Barić et al. (1999) only give *bife*, Ćirilov (1994: 18) correctly describes the orthographic reality: “U Hrvata je pravilno *buffet*.” (“Among the Croatians, *buffet* is correct.”) The same applies to the words ‘pizza’ and ‘pizzeria’: Barić et al. (1999) present ⟨picerija⟩ as a better option than ⟨pizzeria⟩, and give only ⟨pica⟩, which is explained as “‘pizza’”. Anić (1991, 1994) only gives ⟨picerija⟩, but the definition of this word contains the word *pizza* (which in the second edition of 1994 is given in the form “pica (pizza)”, whereas in the first edition of 1991 it does not appear as a headword at all). An internet search using the *Google* search engine (conducted on 17 July 2003) finds the following number of pages whose language the search engine has identified as “Croatian” and “Serbian”:

	Croatian		Serbian	
<i>buffet</i>	1180	83%	40	6%
<i>bife</i>	236	17%	585	94%
<i>pizzeria</i>	1980	89%	198	29%
<i>picerija</i>	239	11%	476	71%

(Searching for the word ‘pizza’ is pointless, as *Google* does not distinguish ⟨c⟩ from ⟨ć⟩, i.e. *pica* ‘pizza’ from *píca* ‘drink(s)’. In addition, the word *pica* [pronounced [‘pi:ʎtsa], in contrast

All Croatian typewriters contain keys for the letters *q*, *m*, *x*, and *y*, although they are not needed for native words, and Croatian computer keyboards even provide key combinations for such symbols as *ß*, *ü*, *é*, etc. Of course, they are used only for foreign words that are not yet integrated and for foreign proper names. When loanwords are integrated, they adopt a more native spelling:

- (27) *paviljon* < French *pavillon*
koledž < English *college*

3.3. Russian

▣ 134 In contrast to Serbian, Russian is written exclusively in Cyrillic letters. However, in the years after the revolution, the Latin alphabet seemed more modern, so that some seventy languages of the Soviet Union were given a Latin-based orthography, and in 1929 a Subcommittee on the Latinization of the Russian Language was established under the Main Committee on Science of the People's Commissariat of Education, headed by Nikolaj Jakovlev (cf. Alpatov 2001, Ašnin & Alpatov 2001). However, by the time the subcommittee had finished their work, the enthusiastic belief in a quick world revolution was over and Stalin's policy then included a Russification of the whole country. Therefore, in 1937–1941 all the newly latinized languages of the USSR were cyrillicized.¹⁸ Thus, the only changes in Russian orthography implemented by the communists were those drawn up by the Academy of Sciences on 11 May 1917 and confirmed by the Provisional Government's Ministry of People's Enlightenment on May 17. This reform retained the identical representation of morphemes (regardless of regular morphonological alternations) but removed the differentiation of homonyms, thus abolishing some

to ['piʋʃa] 'pizza'; cf. also Šipka 2008—D. B. 2026] is also a Serbian and Croatian slang word meaning 'cunt'; cf. Andrić 1976, Sabljak 2001). Of course, such a search cannot be considered a scientifically sound corpus analysis, but these numbers still give some idea of the linguistic reality. [In 2026, the absolute numbers are much higher, e.g. 475,000 vs. 87,600 for Croatian *buffet* vs. *bife*, but the relations are roughly the same, at least for Croatian. For Serbian, *pizzeria* has risen to 47% and *buffet* even to 65% in the Google hits (even with an additional restriction to websites from Serbia), but this seems mainly due to multilingual websites that were identified as Serbian and to article names like the brand *Buffet Crampon* for wind instruments.—D. B. 2026]

¹⁸ For example, Azerbaijani, which had had a long literary tradition in an Arabic writing system, was written in a 'Socialist' Latin alphabet from 1925/29 to 1939 and in a Cyrillic alphabet from 1940 onward. In 1991/93 the language was re-latinized, but this time on the model of the Turkish orthography (rather than the Azerbaijani orthography used prior to 1939). The Moldovan language underwent even more ▣ 144 alphabet changes: 1924–1928 Latin, 1928–1932 Cyrillic, 1933–1937 Latin, 1937–1988 Cyrillic, since 1989 Latin again (cf. Vilku-Pustovaia 2001: 395).

alternative graphical representations for one and the same sound (cf. (15)). As a result, the base of words like the following is now spelled identically:

- (28) *миръ* ⟨mirʹ⟩ ‘peace’, gen. sg. *мира* ⟨mira⟩ → *мир* ⟨mir⟩, *мира* ⟨mira⟩
миръ ⟨mirʹ⟩ ‘world’, gen. sg. *мира* ⟨mira⟩ → *мир* ⟨mir⟩, *мира* ⟨mira⟩
миро ⟨mÿro⟩ ‘chrism’, gen. sg. *мира* ⟨mÿra⟩ → *миро* ⟨miro⟩, *мира* ⟨mira⟩

Another difference between Serbian and Russian is that there is no unified transliteration for Russian, neither from Cyrillic to Latin nor vice versa. In contrast to Japan and China, in Russia there does not seem to be any need for such a system. Instead, a transliteration is used for international telegrams written in Russian, an English transcription for international passports, and a French (!) transcription for naturalization documents in Germany, whereas western libraries and scholars use various □ 135 transliteration systems (all of them inspired by Czech orthography), e-mail transcriptions are chaotic, and the official ISO standard is almost never used.¹⁹

Despite all these differences, however, in Russian, just as in Serbian, foreign proper names are always transcribed according to native orthographic rules (cf. (11), (12), (19), (20); for details on the rules of adaptation, cf. Giljarevskij & Starostin 1985). But the phonological basis of practical transcription is often mingled with elements of transliteration, e.g. in the case of double consonants and English vowels. Double consonants are pronounced either as long or short consonants, and English vowels are often pronounced as they are written in English (rather than as they are pronounced, as suggested in the transcription):

- (29) *Уолл-Стрит Дџорнал* ⟨Uoll-Strit Džornal⟩ for *Wall Street Journal*
 **Уол-Стрит Дџернл* *⟨Uol-Strit Džernl⟩ < [ˈwɔːlˌstɹiːtˈdʒɜː(ɹ)nəl]

This combination of transcription and transliteration and the change of transcription traditions through time has produced many doublets:

- (30) *Юккер, Уэккер, Уеккер* ⟨Jukker, Uëkker, Uekker⟩ < (Günther) *Uecker*
Хоуард, Хауард, Говард ⟨Xouard, Xauard, Govard⟩ < (Sir Ebenezer) *Howard*

¹⁹ Several transliteration and transcription systems were compiled in 1957 by A. A. Reformatskij (Superanskaja 1978: 22ff.), and in 2001 by Lydia Winschel and Andreas Prilop, on the website <https://web.archive.org/web/20030605095123/http://www.unics.uni-hannover.de/ntr/russisch/umschrifttabelle.html> (last checked 22 Mar 2026). [Nowadays, the Wikipedia article “Romanization of Russian” (<https://w.wiki/Giar>) gives a very good overview. — D. B. 2026.]

Although the ISO system is indeed somewhat clumsy in practice, Superanskaja’s criticism (1978: 20) is completely unjustified: She claims that the Russian surnames Ёлкин, Елькин, and Элькин are not distinguished in the ISO system and are transliterated identically as ⟨Elkin⟩, although Reformatskij’s table (ibid. 22ff.) clearly shows that according to the ISO system, these surnames are written as ⟨Ělkin⟩, ⟨El’kin⟩, and ⟨Ěl’kin⟩, respectively.

Уолпол, Вальпол (Uolpol, Val'pol) < (Robert) Walpole

Хадсон, Гудзон²⁰ < English (Henry) Hudson (and the river, bay, and strait named after him)

Occasionally, however, foreign words are transplanted into Russian texts in their Latin orthography: On the one hand, there are foreign quotations (especially in scholarly texts, where even Greek is usually latinized!). On the other hand, transplantations especially from English have recently become more and more frequent in popular texts. Consequently, the *Dictionary of the Russian Language of the End of the 20th Century* (Skljarevskaja 1998: 697–700) contains an appendix of computer terms frequently used in Latin orthography.²¹ Outside of advertising, electronics and science, however, Latin letters nowadays seem to be even rarer than they were in the 19th century.

4. Reasons for differences between Cyrillic and Latin scripts

All in all, it seems to be a fact that Cyrillic alphabets tend to resist the integration of foreign grapheme-phoneme correspondences, whereas Latin alphabets much more readily accept them. What is the reason for this difference? One might connect it to the observation that, taken as a whole, in Cyrillic orthographies the phonological principle is more important than it is in Latin-based orthographies. In Cyrillic there is a range from the moderately ‘morphological’ Russian to the radically ‘phonetic’ Serbian orthography, whereas aside from the rather perfect ‘phonetic’ representation of Finnish, Latin orthographies include almost ‘logographic’ examples like English or French and a lot of intermediate cases like German, Danish, or Polish.

Examining this question with regard to the rather phonological Spanish and the etymological French orthography, Meisenburg (1989: 251) tries to show “that the different structures of their writing systems are mainly caused by the specific phonetic evolution that took place in each language after it had first been recorded in writing” (“daß diese unterschiedliche Strukturierung vor allem durch die jeweilige lautliche Weiterentwicklung nach der ersten schriftlichen Fixierung der Sprache bewirkt worden ist”), i.e. a language which has had a long history since it

²⁰ The last example, ⟨Гудзон⟩, is cited by Vinogradov (1977: 149) as an “incorrect” transcription because it does not sufficiently reflect the original pronunciation. Despite his condemnation, it is this spelling that is still traditionally considered the main one, e.g. by Proxorov (1997).

²¹ Before, entries in the Latin script had only existed in dictionaries of foreign words (if at all); there is even a two-volume dictionary that contains exclusively foreign expressions in their original spelling (Babkin & Šendecov 1966). The last universal Russian dictionary with a Latin appendix was Ušakov (1935–40: vol. 4, 1473–1484). It contained words and expressions like *conditio sine qua non* or *bon mot* (with a reference to *бонмо* ⟨bonmo⟩), some of which are illustrated by quotations from Puškin, Tolstoj, and Lenin.

began to be written tends to have a more etymological orthography than a more recently alphabetized language.

As for Cyrillic compared to the Latin alphabet, Meisenburg's approach might indeed explain the way Serbian behaves, although it would come rather short of Vuk Karadžić's deliberate choice of the radical phonological principle ("Пиши као што говориш!"—"Write as you speak!"). But Russian orthography is an unbroken continuation of the Old Church Slavonic one, with several slight corrective reforms. For example, the Russian letters *ѣ* and *ѥ* are used to this day, although the sounds they □ 137 used to represent vanished in the 14th century. So Meisenburg's argumentation cannot explain the fundamentally different integration of foreign words (especially names) in Cyrillic and Latin orthographies.

However, when looking at 'intra-Cyrillic' transcriptions such as (20) and (21), one can come to the conclusion that our question might be explained by the typographic structure of the Cyrillic alphabets: As Kempgen (1993: 29) observes, the "diacriticity" ("Diakritizität") of Latin orthographies is higher than that of Cyrillic ones, i.e. Latin orthographies make much wider use of diacritical marks to represent sounds not covered by the canonical 26-letter Latin alphabet. They also use many more digraphs and trigraphs (so their 'digraphicity' is higher, too), whereas Cyrillic orthographies usually invent completely new letters:²²

²² The only exceptions I know (apart from languages very recently alphabetized on the basis of the International Phonetic Alphabet) are on the one hand the Latin letters ⟨þ⟩ (the 'thorn' rune) and ⟨ð⟩ (a slashed Insular ⟨d⟩) in Icelandic and ⟨ß⟩ (originally a ligature of ⟨f⟩ + ⟨s⟩ or ⟨f⟩ + ⟨ſ⟩, i.e. ⟨sz⟩ or ⟨ss⟩) in German. On the other hand, there are a few diacritics in Cyrillic: the breve above Russian ⟨ѣ⟩ (and later also Belarusian ⟨ѣ̆⟩) has its origin in Church Slavonic accent notation (cf. Keipert 1999: 253–255), which in turn is an imitation of Greek suprasegmentals. Russian ⟨ѥ̆⟩ was invented by Karamzin (a definite 'westerner') in 1797 but is still mostly replaced by ⟨ӗ⟩ without the diaeresis. [We now know that ⟨ѥ̆⟩ was invented in 1783 by Princess Ekaterina Daškova, up to now the only ever female president of the Russian Academy of Sciences (cf. Pčelov & Čumakov 2000: 13–16) and that the two dots are not a diaeresis but an umlaut (cf. Bunčić 2017: 25f.).—D. B. 2026.] Ukrainian ⟨ї̆⟩ was introduced only in 1873 (cf. Bilodid 1958: 314); previously, the number of dots above the ⟨i⟩ had played no role, so that there had been three allographs: ⟨i, ĭ, i̇⟩. Macedonian ⟨ĭ, k̆⟩ and 'Montenegrin' ⟨z̆, c̆⟩ □ 145 (cf. Nikčević 1997, 2001: 19) were obviously designed on a Latin (namely, Polish) model in the 20th century. Kempgen (1992: 128) also mentions "diacritical elements" *within* the letter structure, e.g. the 'tails' in Russian ⟨ш̆⟩ vs. ⟨ш⟩ and ⟨ъ̆⟩ vs. ⟨ъ⟩ or in Serbian ⟨й⟩ vs. ⟨и⟩ and ⟨ђ̆⟩ vs. ⟨ђ⟩. However, such elements are part of the letter itself and therefore differ significantly from diacritical marks in the strict sense.

(31) orthography	based on	diacritics	digraphs	new letters
Slovene	Latin	č š ž	—	—
Polish	Latin	ą ć ę ł ń ó ś ź ż	cz ch dz dź sz ²³	—
Hungarian	Latin	á é í ó ö ő ú ü ű	cs gy ly ny sz ty zs	—
English	Latin	—	ch ck ee ea gh ng oo oa ou sh th wh ...	—
French	Latin	à â è ê é ë î ô û	au ch eau gn ou oi ...	—
German	Latin	ä ö ü	ch ck ie ng sch ...	ß
Old Church Slavonic	Greek	—	Ѡ	Ѣ Ѥ Ѧ Ѩ Ѭ ѭ Ѯ ѯ Ѱ ѱ Ѳ ѳ Ѵ ѵ Ѷ ѷ Ѹ ѹ Ѻ ѻ Ѽ ѿ ѿ ѿ ѿ ²⁴
Russian	Cyrillic	ѐ, ѡ	—	ѣ
Serbian	Cyrillic	—	—	ђ ј љ њ Ѣ ѣ (ђ)
Kazakh	Russian	Ғ Ҕ Ҥ	—	ә ө ұ ү һ

It is not hard to see that transplantation is easier if the only foreign elements you have to cope with are digraphs and trigraphs (which do not cause any problems) and diacritics (which can be combined, added by hand, or just left out, cf. (4)). But how should the Serbian name *Јовановић* ⟨Jovanović⟩ be transplanted into a Russian text if the letter case, typewriter, or computer keyboard²⁵ does not contain the letters *J* ⟨J⟩ and *ћ* ⟨ć)? Furthermore, even in a consistent transliteration you will have to use diacritics or at least digraphs if you want the transliteration to be complete. Cyrillic has never used digraphs for the primary Slavic languages,²⁶

²³ Before a vowel, the acute above the palatal consonants *ć, dź, ń, ś, ź* is replaced by a postponed diacritical *i*, e.g. *dzien* ‘day’, not **dzeń*, so that if this letter were part of graphic combinations denoting soft sounds, there would be even more digraphs in Polish orthography (*bi, ci, fi, gi, ki, mi, ni, pi, si, wi, zi*) and even one trigraph (*dzi*), which would make the graphemic model very uneconomic.

²⁴ The letter ⟨Ѡ⟩ is probably a variant of the Greek letter *psi* ⟨ψ⟩ with a new phonetic value. The traditional explanation of ⟨Ѡ⟩ as a ligature of ⟨Ѣ⟩ under ⟨!⟩ ⟨ѡ⟩ to denote the sound [ʃʲ] is implausible, especially because of the shape of this letter in Glagolitic (cf. Trunte 1997: 49, 55f.).

²⁵ With the introduction of *Windows 95*, it has become much easier to use different languages on a computer: the Russian system now includes not only an English keyboard but also options for many other languages, including Serbian. However, most users do not know (and are not sufficiently interested in) how to use them.

²⁶ The only exception are the digraphs *ҒА* ⟨ǵl⟩ and *ҒН* ⟨ǵn⟩ for [ǵ] and [ǵn] written by Franciscan friars in a Cyrillic script traditionally called *Bosančica*—without doubt on the

so there is no tradition to do so for foreign languages either. In the Latin alphabet, digraphs have already been used by the Romans to represent the Greek letters ⟨ϕ⟩, ⟨θ⟩, ⟨χ⟩, and ⟨ψ⟩ as ⟨ph⟩, ⟨th⟩, ⟨ch⟩, and ⟨ps⟩.²⁷

We are dealing here with traditions deeply rooted in culture, as Jušmanov (1933, cited in Superanskaja 1978: 26) already pointed out: “whereas for the West it is important how to write, for the East it is important how to read” (“если для Запада важно, как написать, то для Востока — как прочесть”). The cultural concepts that Jušmanov referred to as the West and the East can be correlated in the Slavic languages with the concepts of *Slavia Romana* and *Slavia Orthodoxa* (cf. Picchio²⁸ 1984, 1991), which are similar to the border between the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, so that Mikołajczak (2000) proposes replacing these terms with *Latinitas*, a term with a long tradition in the cultures of Central and Western Europe, and *Cyrillianitas*, a term which, according to him, “also focuses on the role of the Slavic alphabets” (“koncentruje także uwagę na roli słowiańskich alfabetów”).

model of Italian *gl, gn* (cf. Trunte 2001: 57). — The ‘diacritic letters’ ъ ⟨ʹ⟩ and ь ⟨ʹ⟩ in Russian originally denoted distinct vowel sounds. Consequently, although synchronically *мь* ⟨tʹ⟩ might be analyzed as a digraph for [tʹ], it has never been invented as such. Historically, *зѣ* ⟨y⟩ is clearly a digraph, but this might be due to its diphthongal pronunciation at least in some South Slavic dialects that were the basis for the Glagolitic and/or Cyrillic alphabet (cf. Mareš 1965: 70–75; furthermore, the sound has developed from a Proto-Indo-European **ū* to /i/ in most Slavic languages, and the constituent letters ⟨зъ⟩ and ⟨ѣ⟩ stand for **ū* and **i*, respectively). In contrast to the digraphs for unitary phonemes in (31), digraphic representation of diphthongs and affricates is a matter of course. — In the non-Slavic languages of the former Soviet Union, the situation is somewhat different: The Cyrillic orthographies for these languages were developed § 146 quite recently (since 1937) and mostly from scratch for languages that had been written in a Latin alphabet for a decade or two. Some of these orthographies do use combinations with diacritic letters (e.g. Abkhaz ⟨дә⟩ for [dʷ]). In 2000, a Cyrillic practical transcription for Kazakh called *Kazanovica* was developed in order to be able to write Turkic languages with a Russian character set, replacing e.g. Kazakh ⟨ә⟩, ⟨қ⟩, ⟨һ⟩ with ⟨аӕ⟩, ⟨қӕ⟩, ⟨хӕ⟩ (cf. Sergeev 2001). For a complete overview of the additional letters in sixty Cyrillic-written languages cf. Piška (1996: 96–97); Giljarevskij & Grivnin (1970: 275) enumerate 62 languages with a “Russian” alphabet.

²⁷ Diacritic marks are a bit younger: Their systematic use for the representation of the sound system of a language dates back to Jan Hus’ *De Orthographia Bohemica* (ca. 1412, i.e. more than a century before the first introduction of French accents and cedilla by Geoffroy Tory in 1529). Previously, diacritical marks had already been used to convey intonational features, e.g. in Ancient Greek, or the results of sound changes that occurred after the introduction of writing, e.g. umlauts in German (initially ⟨â, ô, û⟩, now ⟨ä, ö, ü⟩).

²⁸ According to the rules of Giljarevskij & Starostin (1985: 157ff.) for the practical transcription of Italian proper names, the surname *Picchio* should be transcribed as *Пиккьо* ⟨Pikk’o⟩, but both Russian-speaking Slavists and the author himself spell it *Пиккио* ⟨Pikkio⟩ (cf. Pikkio 2002).

Let us give another interpretation of this difference. In cultures that use the Cyrillic alphabet, the writers have great authority: they alone decide how a foreign word should be pronounced (and if there are several variants, e.g. British and American, they choose one) and how readers should adapt the original pronunciation to their own language. In Latin-script cultures, however, readers are more autonomous: they are free to choose the appropriate [▢ 139](#) pronunciation, for which writers must preserve all the properties of the word that are inherent in the source language.

5. Analytical conclusions

For all these reasons transliteration, which would have to use digraphs or diacritics, will probably never be used in Cyrillic writing systems consistently. Yet there seems to be a tendency towards transplantation of certain words especially from English (computer terminology, advertising, etc.). Whether this is just a temporary phenomenon is hard to say. It might be that as soon as everybody knows a specific term, the necessity of transplantation will disappear and it will be adapted to native orthography. Many such words already have parallel forms today, e.g. *internet* and *интернет*, *notebook* and *ноутбук*, *PC* and *ПК* in Russian, or *e-mail* and *мејл/мејл* in Serbian. However, more and more speakers of languages that use the Cyrillic alphabet nowadays have a good knowledge of English, which will probably provide for an incessant influx of English words. Due to the strictly etymological orthography of English, which contains a large number of homophones that are only distinguished by orthography, such words are sometimes hardly recognizable when transcribed according to their adapted pronunciation. Furthermore, modern computer systems make it easy to switch between different alphabets and the respective (virtual) keyboards. This tendency is likely to increase even in Serbian, where this would further reduce the optical distance between Serbian and Croatian.

So far we have looked at the differences between Cyrillic and Latin orthographies from the point of view of Latin, treating any difference as a peculiarity of Cyrillic. But maybe it is the other way round? Maybe the inclination to use digraphs and diacritic marks is a characteristic of the Latin script that distinguishes it from all other alphabets? There are, of course, many reasons for the spread of the Latin alphabet throughout the world. One of them are sociological factors, such as the fact that the alphabet of the Romans has been used for three world languages: Latin, French, and English. [▢ 140](#) But perhaps another reason is the adaptability inherent in the Latin alphabet, which makes it easy to apply it to any language using digraphs and diacritical marks and which makes graphic code-switching possible.²⁹

²⁹ Similar trends can also be observed in the languages of the former Soviet Union that

To finally resolve this issue, it is, of course, necessary to conduct a thorough study of other writing systems, which is impossible to do within the scope of this paper. However, at first glance, in relatively isolated writing systems (Greek, Hebrew, Armenian), graphic code-switching (transplantation, transliteration) and diacritical marks are either not used at all or are used to a much lesser extent than in the Latin alphabet. It is even possible to establish a certain proportionality between the use of graphic code-switching in a single writing system and the area of its distribution. For example, the Arabic script is used for many languages other than Arabic: Persian (Farsi), Urdu, Azerbaijani (e.g. in Iran), Kurdish (in Iraq), Uyghur (in China), Sindhi (in Pakistan), Pashto, etc. The additional letters needed to represent the phonology of these languages are formed using a variety of diacritical marks, e.g. Persian letters such as ⟨پ⟩ [p], ⟨ت⟩ [t̪] and ⟨ژ⟩ [ʒ], from Arabic ⟨ب⟩ [b], ⟨ج⟩ [dʒ] and ⟨ز⟩ [z], respectively (cf. Giljarevskij & Grivnin 1970: 170, Ager 1998). Borrowings from Arabic into these languages are usually transplanted in their original spelling. Similarly, the Chinese script has spread throughout much of East Asia and is used, for example, for Korean (in South Korea) and Japanese. Here, very free code-switching between Chinese characters and Korean or Japanese syllabograms is permitted; consequently, foreign words, especially from English, are often transplanted, retaining the Latin alphabet.

From these observations, it can be concluded that graphic code-switching by means of transplantation or transliteration is an important factor in the efficiency of a writing system, not **□ 141** only for the imperialistic spread of a script to other countries, but also for international exchange, especially in the era of globalization.

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adopted the Cyrillic alphabet in the 20th century. Their orthographies sometimes use diacritical marks and digraphs, and borrowings from Russian (or via Russian as an intermediary language) often retain Russian spelling (cf. Superanskaja 1978: 94ff.). This is because Cyrillic is used here outside the cultural context of Slavia Orthodoxa as the alphabet of a colonial language (cf. Stern 2003).

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