ON SOME RECENT CHANGES IN BULGARIAN CONJUGATION

Stela Manova

(Universität Wien, Institut für Slawistik, Universitätscampus AAKH
stela.manova@univie.ac.at)

The present paper focuses on two topics that, evidently, have not been treated
in recent literature on Bulgarian verb morphology (except in Manova 2006):

1) Since publication of the Bulgarian Academy Grammar (henceforth BAG)
in 1983, some verbs have changed their conjugation, i.e. verbs originally belong-
ing to the e-CONJ have moved to the i-CONJ, e.g. māmrja ‘(I) murmur’, māmreš,
etc. according to the BAG, but māmrja, māmreš now (cf. the New Spelling Diction-
ary of Bulgarian, henceforth NSDB, published in 2002); and

2) Since 1983, there has been a clear tendency toward preservation of the
stress pattern of the present in the aorist, i.e. PRES piša, pišes etc. and AOR písa;
pisa, etc. rather than pisáx, pisá etc, with an end-stress (cf. BAG and NSDB).

This paper examines the implications of the two changes above for the or-
ganization of Bulgarian verb inflection. I contend that these changes are evidence
for root-based phonological organization of Bulgarian verb inflection, i.e. the pa-
ter contradicts the classical stem-based classification of Bulgarian (and Slavic) verbs.

The paper is structured as follows: section 1 establishes the number and
phonological properties of the verbs with altered conjugations; section 2 treats the
stress patterns of the present-day paradigm of Bulgarian verbs; section 3 discusses
the implications of the changes accounted for in the previous two sections and sub-
sequently defines a system of inflection class assignment rules; and in section 4
conclusions are drawn.

1. Verbs in transition: from e- to i-conjugation

In Bulgarian, the citation form of a verb can terminate in -a, -ja or -m.
Generally, verbs ending in -a belong to CONJ I (e-verbs), verbs ending in -ja to
CONJ II (i-verbs), and verbs ending in -m, with very few exceptions (e.g. znam ‘(I)

1 The research reported here was supported by the Jubilee Funds of the Austrian
National Bank, grant P-10366. Their support is gratefully acknowledged.
2 I would like to thank W. U. Dressler for useful comments on a previous version.
3 Abbreviations: AOR — aorist, BAG — Bulgarian Academy Grammar, Bg. — Bul-
garian, C — consonant, CONJ — conjugation, PRES — present, IMP — imperfect, IMPER —
 imperative, IND — indicative, NSDB — New Spelling Dictionary of Bulgarian, PL — plural,
SG — singular, TM — thematic marker, V — vowel.
know', znaeš; dam ‘(I) give’, dadeš), belong to CONJ III ((j)am-verbs), cf. Table 1 below. While the conjugation assignment rule for (j)am-verbs has nearly no exceptions, the same cannot be said for the rules for e- and i-verbs. A few -ja verbs follow the e-pattern, instead of the expected i-pattern, and verbs terminating in -ža/-ča/-ša can be found in both CONJ I and CONJ II.

According to the BAG, 23 verbs terminating in -Cja belong to CONJ I (subclass 3 in BAG (Bg. razred 3)) with aorist inflection -ax, cf. the class of pijna (CONJ I, class 2 in Table 1 below). Examination of the current present pattern of those verbs, however, reveals that 13 of them have moved to CONJ II: bd‘blja ‘(I) bable’, b‘brja ‘(I) chatter’, d‘drja ‘(I) jauber’, zobja ‘(I) feed’, ḵkrja ‘(I) simmer’, m‘mlja ‘(I) mutter’, m‘mrja ‘(I) scold’, p‘plja ‘(I) creep’, trep‘rja ‘(I) tremble’, t‘trja ‘(I) drag’, f‘fljo ‘(I) lisp’, x‘xrja ‘(I) wheeze’, and c‘crja ‘(I) trickle’. Note that all these verbs terminate in -ja and are stressed on the penultimate syllable, i.e. their citation forms exhibit exactly the same phonological characteristics as those of CONJ II, class 3 (i.e. the class of mislja in Table 1 below). Thus according to the BAG, PRES bd‘brja ‘(I) chatter’, b‘breš / AOR bd‘brax and PRES trep‘rja ‘(I) tremble’, trep‘eriš / AOR trep‘erax, but PRES bd‘brja, b‘brja / AOR b‘briš / AOR b‘brix and PRES trep‘rja, trep‘eriš / AOR trep‘erix, according to NSDB (cf. the mislja aorist pattern in Table 1).

Somewhat related to the above case of the 23 verbs in -ja are verbs such as gloždja ‘(I) gnaw, pick’ (subclass 4, CONJ I in BAG). Originally from the first conjugation, such verbs have developed alternative forms with a semantic split (a fact noted in BAG and other sources on Bulgarian verb morphology). Consider:

(1) Old pattern: gloždja ‘(I) gnaw, pick’, gloždeš / AOR gložgax (cf. CONJ I, class 2, Table 1)

Current patterns: gloždja ‘(I) pick’, gloždiš / AOR gloždix (cf. CONJ II, class 3); gložgam ‘(I) gnaw’, gložgaš / AOR gložgax (cf. CONJ III)

As already mentioned, a problem for the above formulated -a/-ja conjugation assignment rule are verbs terminating in -ža/-ča/-ša. Since in Bulgarian *žja/ *čja/*šja are impossible for phonological reasons, -ža/-ča/-ša verbs occur in both the e- and the i-conjugations. The CONJ I -ža/-ča/-ša verbs, however differ from those in CONJ II morphologically, namely CONJ I -ža/-ča/-ša verbs depalatalize in the aorist, whereas CONJ II -ža/-ča/-ša verbs preserve ž/č/š in their aorist forms, as demonstrated in the next examples:

(2) CONJ I: PRES káža ‘(I) say’, kážeš / AOR kázx / IMP kāžex / IMPER kāži
CONJ II: PRES ležá ‘(I) lie’ / AOR ležáx / IMP ležáx / IMPER leži
The following 27 verbs (26 in BAG), terminating in -ža/-ča/-ša depalatalize in the aorist, i.e. are CONJ I verbs:

(3) ž : z: bliža ‘(I) lick’, vârža ‘(I) tie’, kâža ‘(I) say’, liža ‘(I) lick’, máža ‘(I) spread (on)’, níža ‘(I) string’, réža ‘(I) cut’, xaríža ‘(I) give away’
ž : g: láža ‘(I) lie’, striža ‘(I) cut’, stârža ‘(I) scrape’
č : k: bâuča ‘(I) bark’, dâvča ‘(I) chew’, mjâuča ‘(I) mew’, plâča ‘(I) cry’, smúča ‘(I) suck’, súča ‘(I) spin; suck’, tâpča ‘(I) tread on; stuff’

The rest of the -ža, -ča, -ša verbs belong to CONJ II. A handful of all -ža, -ča, -ša verbs, however, manifest in both CONJ I and CONJ II:

(4) CONJ I: réša ‘(I) comb’, réšes / AOR résx / IMP réšex / IMPER rešî
CONJ II: réša ‘(I) comb’, réšiš / AOR réšix / IMP réšex / IMPER rešî

NSDB lists both patterns of reša as existing in the current Bulgarian. Actually, examples such as those in (4) demonstrate the ongoing nature of the transition under scrutiny in this paper.

2. On the role of the stress in Bulgarian verb inflection
We argue that in contemporary Bulgarian there is a clear tendency for preservation of the stress pattern of the present tense in the aorist, except in the class with -ox aorist (CONJ I, class 1, cf. Table 1). The tendency for preservation of the stress pattern affects all three conjugations. Consider:

(5) CONJ I: PRES sâ’xna ‘(I) dry’, sâ’xneš, sâ’xne
CONJ II: PRES rabôtiša ‘(I) work’, rabôtiš, rabôti
CONJ III: PRES risûvam ‘(I) paint’, risûvaš, risûva

and the respective AOR forms:

(6) CONJ I: AOR sâ’xna, sâ’xna
CONJ II: AOR rabôtix, rabôti, rabôti
CONJ III: AOR risûvax, risûva, risûva

rather than:

(7) CONJ I: sâ’xna-1SG PRES and sâxna-2&3SG AOR
CONJ II: rabôti-3SG PRES and rabôti-2&3SG AOR
CONJ III: risûva-3SG PRES and risuvâ-2&3SG AOR

Cf. the forms of these verbs in NSDB.
In other words, one of the often-cited, very detailed classifications of Bulgarian verbs, that in Maslov (Маслов 1982: 220), recognizing 10 stress patterns (5 in CONJ I, 3 in CONJ II, and 2 in CONJ III) with 21 subtypes and depending entirely on the stress changes through the paradigm, is now out of date.

It should be mentioned that in contemporary Bulgarian, forms with end stress in the aorist appear stylistically marked as either archaic or dialectal. Actually, the only stress change still of importance to the paradigm of Bulgarian verbs is that in the imperative: verbs with roots terminating in a -C receive stressed inflection (2 SG -i / 2 PL -éte), i.e. regardless of the stress pattern of their citation forms, such verbs always have imperative forms stressed on the inflection (see Table 1, CONJ I and CONJ II).

Note that the stress pattern of the present tense (citation) form of a verb determines the TM of the imperfect tense, since the imperfect TM is -ja, i.e. if the inflection of the citation form of a verb is stressed, this verb has -ja TM in the imperfect and, if the root is stressed, -ja alternates with -e (cf. the imperfect forms in Table 1 below).

3. Discussion: the inflection class assignment rules of Bulgarian verbs

Thus far, we have demonstrated that since publication of the BAG, two significant changes have taken place in the inflection system of Bulgarian verbs: 1) 13 out of 23 CONJ I verbs (class 2) terminating in the-unusual-for-this-conjugation -ja have moved to CONJ II (class 3), where -ja is the typical inflection of the verb citation form; and 2) there is a clear tendency for preservation of the stress pattern of the present in the aorist (except in the class with -ox aorist). These changes/tendencies evidence a single base classification of Bulgarian verb inflection, i.e. an analysis based on the present tense root (cf. Stump 2001) rather than one which assumes (i.e. lists) two bases, present stem and aorist stem (each with a stress pattern of its own). The latter option is actually the classical description of Bulgarian (and Slavic) verbs. A root-based inflection class assignment, as offered here, differs from conventional (morphological) assignment criteria in that it is entirely phonological. Consider: 1) termination of the citation form, whether -a, -ja or -m; 2) termination of the root (= the form that remains when the inflection -a/-ja/-m is removed), i.e. whether -C or -V, and if V whether -o (cf. CONJ I, class 3 and class 4 and CONJ II, class 2 in Table 1); and 3) the stress pattern of the citation form, i.e. whether on the root or on the final syllable (cf. CONJ I, class 1 vs. class 2 and CONJ II class 1 vs. class 3 in Table 1). Thus, 1 SG PRES IND, i.e. the cita-

---

4 Some authors, e.g. Pašov (Пашов 1976: 49), speak even for three stems – present, aorist and imperfect.
5 We define inflection class with Aronoff (1994: 64) as “a set of lexemes whose members each select the same set of inflectional realizations”.

tion form of the Bulgarian verb, serves as input for inflection class assignment, but
the generation of the verb forms is root-based. (Note that citation forms are the only ones in the paradigm of Bulgarian verbs that can distinguish between the three
conjugations, cf. Table 1 below). The precise procedure includes the following steps:

3.1. According to the termination of their 1st singular present indicative forms, we distribute Bulgarian verbs into three groups, corresponding to the three
traditional conjugations, i.e. taking into consideration that -a, -ja and -m are all
possible inflection suffixes of citation forms, we automatically assign verbs terminating
in -a to CONJ I (i.e. TM -e in the present), verbs terminating in -ja to
CONJ II (i.e. TM -i in the present), and verbs in -m to CONJ III (without a TM in
the whole paradigm), see Table 1 below. These rules hold almost without exception
for CONJ III verbs but have some exceptions with CONJ I & II verbs, the
most important being:

3.1.1. that -Vja is a typical termination for a CONJ I verb, unless the vowel is -o-. Verbs terminating in -oja belong to CONJ II; and

3.1.2. that -ža, -ča, -ša verbs behave in an exceptional manner and should be listed, but stressed -žá, -čá, -šá occur only in CONJ II. (Recall that in Bulgarian
*žja, *čja, *šja are impossible);

3.2. Of importance to the further classification of the verbs are the forms
that remain after deletion of the three inflection suffixes -a, -ja and -m. In other
words, CONJ III constitutes an inflection class of its own, as the base left over after
deletion of -m remains unchanged (i.e. no thematic material is added) in all verb forms. Conjugations I and II, however, are subdivided further into inflection
classes, and every verb “detects” its inflection class depending on:

3.2.1. whether its root terminates in a -V or in a -C;

3.2.2. whether the verb root is stressed or not? (cf. classes 1 and 2 in CONJ I
and classes 1 and 3 in CONJ II), the stress pattern being preserved in the whole
tense paradigm (except in CONJ I, class 1) and determining the imperfect forms;

3.2.3. how many syllables the verb root has (cf. classes 3 and 4 in CONJ I).

The following facts support the correctness of the system of inflection class
assignment rules offered here: some of the forms in the paradigm of Bulgarian

---

6 In Bulgarian verbal morphology, -Va is always realized as -Vja. (In word-final
position, -a combines with another vowel only in loans (nouns); and of all combinations,
only -oa, as in buržoa, and -ua, as in Padua are possible, cf. Tilkov-Bojadžiev (Тилков-
Бояджiev 1990).

7 Homographic citation forms evidence the importance of stress placement as assignment criterion. Consider: vă’r’va, vă’r’viš ‘(to) string’ / vă’r’viš – AOR / vă’r’vex – IMP / vărv I – IMPER and vărvjá, vărvjìš ‘(to) walk’ / vărvjáx – AOR / vărvjáx – IMP / vărví –
IMPER.
verbs lack TMs, which favors root-based analysis; our analysis successfully accounts for the recent changes taken place in the paradigm of Bulgarian verbs; and finally, there is the evidence of a phonologically governed inflection class system, with the eight inflection classes suggested herein (cf. Table 1), generally matching the traditional stem-based systems available in the literature (Pašov (Панов 1966) with 10 classes; Andrejčin (Андрейчин 1978) with 11 classes; and the BAG with 12 classes), in particular that of Maslov (Маслов 1982: 220ff) with 7 main classes.

4. Conclusion
The present paper accounts for two recent changes in the conjugation of Bulgarian verbs: 1) the shift of verbs terminating in -Cja from CONJ I to CONJ II, and 2) the tendency for the preservation of the stress pattern of the present tense in the aorist in the whole tense paradigm, except in the -Cá class (with ox-aorist, i.e. CONJ I, class 1 in Table 1). Also, the implications of these changes for the verb paradigm have been discussed, and, consequently, root-based phonological inflection class assignment rules for Bulgarian verb morphology have been proposed. We assign a default status to the verb root but start with the citation form of the verb. Since the citation form consists of a ROOT and an inflection suffix, the verb root is extracted after removal of the inflection, the latter being -a, -ja or -m. The main assignment criteria are termination of the citation form, termination of the verb root (+/-C), stress placement and number of syllables of the citation form. The analysis straightforwardly captures the two recent changes in the paradigm of Bulgarian verbs discussed, and the postulated inflection class system conforms to traditional stem-based descriptions.

Finally, the postulation of a system of phonological inflection class assignment rules for verbs leads to unification of the inflection class assignment rules in Bulgarian. In other words, based on the phonology of the citation forms of nouns, adjectives (it is well-known that the inflection of Bulgarian nouns and adjectives is largely phonologically governed, cf. Manova–Dressler 2001; Manova 2003) and verbs, one can predict all their inflection forms.

LITERATURE

BAG 1983, i.e. – Bulgarian Academy Grammar = Andrejčin et al.

8 The different number of classes is because of the different treatment of exceptions.
NSDB 2002, i.e. – *New Spelling Dictionary of Bulgarian* = Станков, В. (отг. ред.) 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>I conjugation</th>
<th>II conjugation</th>
<th>III conjugation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRESENT</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>četá</td>
<td>piknà</td>
<td>igrája</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘(l) read’</td>
<td>‘(l) drink’</td>
<td>‘(l) play’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>četëš</td>
<td>piknes</td>
<td>igràès</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>četë</td>
<td>pikne</td>
<td>igràe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>četëm</td>
<td>piknem</td>
<td>igràem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>četëte</td>
<td>piknete</td>
<td>igràete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>četët</td>
<td>piknet</td>
<td>igràjet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AORIST</td>
<td>čétok</td>
<td>pikñax</td>
<td>igràx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>četëk</td>
<td>piknax</td>
<td>igràk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>četëš</td>
<td>piknes</td>
<td>igràès</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>četë</td>
<td>pikne</td>
<td>igràe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>četëxme</td>
<td>piknaxme</td>
<td>igràxme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>četëxte</td>
<td>piknaxte</td>
<td>igràzte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>četëxa</td>
<td>piknaxa</td>
<td>igràxoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPERFECT</td>
<td>četjâx</td>
<td>pikñex</td>
<td>igràex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>četjâk</td>
<td>pikñex</td>
<td>igràk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>četjëš</td>
<td>pikñeš</td>
<td>igràès</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>četjë</td>
<td>pikñe</td>
<td>igràë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>četjëxme</td>
<td>pikñaxme</td>
<td>igràxme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>četjëxte</td>
<td>pikñaxte</td>
<td>igràxte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>četjëxa</td>
<td>pikñaxa</td>
<td>igràxa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPERATIVE</td>
<td>četi</td>
<td>pikni</td>
<td>igràte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>četëte</td>
<td>piknête</td>
<td>igràte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shades and frames indicate coinciding patterns.
БЪЛГАРСКИЯТ ЕЗИК
И ЛИТЕРАТУРА НА КРЪСТОПЪТЯ
НА КУЛТУРИТЕ

Международна конференция
Сегед, Унгария, 21–22 май 2007 г.

том I

JATEPress
Szeged 2008
A kötet megjelenését a Magyarországi Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségekért Közalapítvány és a Szegedi Bolgár Kisebbségi Önkormányzat támogatta.

**FELELŐS SZERKESZTŐ:**
Ferincz István

**SZERKESZTŐBIZOTTSÁG:**
Farkas Baráthi Mónika
Majoros Henrietta

**LEKTORÁLTA:**
Marinela Valchanova

A borítót a *kazanlaki trák sírkamra freskórészletét* (Kr.e. III. sz.) ábrázoló fotó felhasználásával Szőnyi Etelka tervezte.

© Auctores, 2007

ISBN 978-963-482-864-8