

Bulgarian is the official language of Bulgaria, where it has about eight million speakers. It is a South Slavic language. It is also considered a member of the Balkan language area (Aronson 1992). The dialect recorded here is the common literary language, known as Contemporary Standard Bulgarian.

Bulgarian Consonants:

The major contrasts are fortis/lenis and palatalized/non-palatalized. Palatization is distinctive only before back vowels (Aronson 1992). The fortis obstruents are often unaspirated, but the lenis obstruents are generally voiced. The 'r' symbol represents an apical trill. The /l/ in Bulgarian is pronounced as quite dark, except before a high front vowel, where it becomes clear. The sounds [f] and [fʲ] are rare, and may exist only in borrowed words. Stress in Bulgarian is mobile and distinctive (Scatton 1984); it is represented here by an acute accent over the syllabic nucleus.

Fortis:	p	t	ts	tʃ	k
	pʲ	tʲ	tsʲ		kʲ
Lenis:	b	d		dʒ	g
	bʲ	dʲ			gʲ
Fricatives:	f	s		ʃ	x
	fʲ	sʲ			
	v	z		ʒ	
	vʲ	zʲ			
Nasals:	m	n			
	mʲ	nʲ			
Liquids:			r	l	
			rʲ	lʲ	
Glides:					j

Bulgarian Vowels:

Bulgarian has essentially six full vowel phonemes:

i		u
e	ɐ	o
	a	

The vowel /e/ may manifest as [ɛ]. The vowel /o/ is usually pronounced rather low when stressed, like [ɔ], but occurs as [ʊ] in unstressed positions. Both /a/ and /ɔ/ generally reduce to [ɐ] in unstressed positions. In this

environment, /a/ may also retain the [a] pronunciation, especially in careful speech; I doubt that unstressed /ə/ ever manifests as anything suitably distinct from [ə] to justify being transcribed otherwise. As it is, unstressed [ə] is difficult to hear as having a quality distinct from stressed [ə] in anything other than careful speech, as the schwa in Bulgarian sounds rather higher than the Canadian English schwa.

I. Word Lists

Consonants:

1	[p]	[pop]	"priest"
2		[pəp]	"navel"
3	[pʲ]	[pʲána]	"foam"
4		[pʲurɛ]	"purée"
5	[b]	[bɔp]	"bean"
6		[bik]	"bull"
7	[bʲ]	[bʲal]	"white"
8		[bʲágəm]	"to run" <i>to run</i>
9	[t]	[tɔm]	"tome"
10		[tam]	"there"
11	[tʲ]	[tʲálo]	"body"
12		[tʲutʲún]	"tobacco"
13	[d]	[dɔm]	"house"
14		[dúma]	"word"
15	[dʲ]	[dʲádu]	"grandfather"
16		[dʲálʲə]	"quince"
17	[ts]	[tsápəm]	"I soil"
18		[tsípə]	"peel"
19	[tsʲ]	[tsʲal]	"whole"
20		[tsʲar]	"medicine"
21	[tʃ]	[tʃétiri]	"four"
22		[tʃuvék]	"person"
23		[tʃin]	"desk"
24	[dʒ]	[dʒɔp]	"pocket"
25		[dʒudʒé]	"dwarf"
26	[k]	[kum]	"godfather"
27		[kɔn]	"horse"
28		[kipʲ]	"it boils"
29	[kʲ]	[kʲɔpʊf]	"clumsy"
30		[kʲup]	"clay pot"
31	[g]	[gúfter]	"lizard"
32		[gol]	"naked"
33		[gíbel]	"downfall"
34	[gʲ]	[gʲul]	"rose"

35		[gʲuvétʃ]	"pot of stew"
36	[f]	[fəsúl]	"bean"
37		[fɛnér]	"street light"
38	[fʲ]	[fʲúrɛr]	"führer"
39		[iskufʲál]	"senile" (m. sg. participle)
40	[v]	[vɔlʲa]	"will" (noun)
41		[vɔlk]	"wolf"
42	[vʲ]	[vʲátr]	"wind"
43		[vʲárə]	"faith, belief"
44	[s]	[slɔn]	"elephant"
45		[súpə]	"soup"
46	[sʲ]	[sʲákəʃ]	"as if"
47		[sʲáŋkə]	"shadow"
48	[z]	[zɔp]	"tooth"
49		[zvəzdá]	"star"
50	[zʲ]	[zʲumbʲól]	"hyacinth"
51		[zʲápəm]	"I gape"
52	[ʃ]	[ʃum]	"noise"
53		[ʃápkə]	"hat"
54	[ʒ]	[ʒábə]	"frog"
55		[ʒəlt]	"yellow"
56		[ʒəlʲázu]	"iron"
57	[x]	[xúbuʃ]	"beautiful"
58		[xórə]	"people"
59		[xlʲap]	"bread"
60	[m]	[mámə]	"mother"
61		[míʃkə]	"mouse"
62		[mlʲáku]	"milk"
63	[mʲ]	[mʲástu]	"place"
64		[mʲax]	"wineskin"
65	[n]	[nóma]	"norm"
66		[nie]	"we"
67	[nʲ]	[nʲux]	"flair; scent"
68		[nʲámə]	"there is not"
69	[r]	[ríbə]	"fish"
70		[ret]	"order"
71	[rʲ]	[rʲádək]	"rare"
72		[rʲápə]	"turnip"
73	[l]	[lɔʃ]	"hunt" (noun)
74		[lut]	"crazy"
75	[lʲ]	[lʲáf]	"left"
76		[lʲátu]	"summer"
77	[j]	[jámə]	"hole"
78		[jázvə]	"ulcer"

Vowels:

1	/ɪ/	[íməm]	"I have"
2		[ístinə]	"truth"
3		[íme]	"name"
4	/e/	[éftin]	"cheap"
5		[ezík]	"language"
6		[elén]	"deer"
7		[prólet]	"spring"
8	/a/	[kámək]	"stone"
9		[iskrá]	"sparkle" (noun)
10		[kəkóf]	interrogative pronoun (m. sg.)
11		[kal]	"mud"
12	/ə/	[ógəl]	"corner"
13		[vólnə]	"wool"
14		[vəlná]	"I wave"
15		[grəp]	"back"
16		[góləp]	"pigeon"
17		[gəmé]	"pot"
18	/o/	[ósem]	"eight"
19		[usá]	"wasp"
20		[uftsá]	"sheep"
21		[uglədálu]	"mirror"
End of Tape 1			
22	/u/	[um]	"mind"
23		[suróf]	"to be raw" (m. sg.)
24		[lulá]	"pipe"
25		[pújək]	"turkey"

Palatalization contrasts:

The following are minimal pairs which contrast only by means of palatalization on a consonant. The contrast for velars only occurs in words of foreign origin (Scatton 1984).

1	[kúpə]	"bowl"
2	[kúpʲə]	"I buy"
3	[bálə]	"bail of yarn"
4	[bʲálə]	"white" (f. sg.)
5	[tam]	"there"
6	[tʲam]	pronoun (3p. dat. pl.)
7	[dálə]	"to give" (f. active participle)
8	[dʲálə]	"to cut away (wood)" (3p. sg.)
9	[tsar]	"tsar"
10	[tsʲar]	"medicine"
11	[kup]	"heap"

12	[k'up]	"earthen pot"
13	[gɔl]	"naked" (m. sg.)
14	[g'ɔl]	"pond"
15	[právnə]	"right"
16	[právnə]	"I do"
17	[kusá]	"hair"
18	[kus'ɔ]	"I mow"
19	[səlzá]	"tear" (noun, from the eyes)
20	[səlz'ɔ]	"tearing (eyes watering)" (1p. sg.)
21	[kuzá]	"goat"
22	[kɔz'ɔ]	"comes from a goat"
23	[máxə]	"he waves"
24	[m'áxə]	"the wineskin"
25	[zvənó]	"the ringing"
26	[zvən'ɔ]	"I ring"
27	[dərɔ]	"the gift"
28	[dər'ɔ]	"I give (a gift)"
29	[lávə]	"lava"
30	[l'ávə]	"left"

Stress contrasts:

The following pairs contrast by means of stress placement. Note the change in some of the vowel qualities when the stress value changes.

1	[kɔlə]	"quire (a printer's sheet)"
2	[kulá]	"car"
3	[párə]	"steam"
4	[pará]	"coin"
5	[rɛfə]	"I comb"
6	[rɛf'ɔ]	"I decide"
7	[jákə]	"strong" (f. sg.)
8	[jaká]	"collar"
9	[bílo]	"ridge"
10	[biló]	"to be" (neut. active participle)
11	[kálɛn]	"muddy" (m.)
12	[kalén]	"tempered" (m. sg. perf. participle)
13	[ródɛn]	"birth, native" (m. sg.)
14	[rodén]	"born" (m. sg.)
15	[jádɛ]	"he ate" (3p. sg. aorist)
16	[jádɛ]	"he eats" (3p. sg. present)
17	[pɪfɛtɛ]	"you (all) write" (2p. pl. present)
18	[pɪfɛtɛ]	"write" (2p. pl. imperative)
19	[krəká]	"legs" (pl.)

20	[krákə]	"legs" (numeral)
21	[tʰulén]	"seal" (noun, animal)
22	[tʰúlen]	"tulle"

II. Spontaneous Speech

III. Reading Sample

References:

- Aronson, Howard I. (1992) "Bulgarian," in International Encyclopedia of Linguistics, Oxford: Oxford U. Press.
- Scatton, Ernest A. (1984) A Reference Grammar of Modern Bulgarian, Columbus, Ohio: Slavica.