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GENDER AND DECLENSIONAL CLASS IN BULGARIAN

1. Introduction

Although a rare topic in recent linguistic literature, or perhaps exactly for that reason, Modern Bulgarian morphology, and especially declension, presents many challenges. The Bulgarian noun system depends largely on phonology, and “this feature is unique among the languages of the world” (Foley 1986: 85). However, in contrast to the complex ‘unfamiliar’ (Aronoff 1994: 89) inflectional morphology of those African languages which may illustrate phonologically determined systems, Bulgarian as an Indo-European language reveals another ‘familiar’ type of morphological organization.

This contribution will concentrate on gender, inflection and phonological form in Bulgarian. It can be seen as a sequel to some other articles on inflection: Dressler & Thornton (1996); Dressler, Dziubalska-Kolaczyk & Fabiszak (1997); Pöchtrager et al. (1998). We will situate our analyses within the framework of Natural Morphology and its three subtheories: 1) the subtheory of universal preferences / markedness, 2) the subtheory of typological adequacy, 3) the subtheory of language-specific system adequacy (Dressler 1989, 1997b, 1999; Dressler et al. 1987; Kilani-Schoch 1988; Dressler & Karpf 1995).

The approach, we apply, is input-oriented, i.e. we take the most unmarked form (the basic form of a paradigm), in our case – the singular indefinite form, as basis for the analyses.

All traditional studies on Bulgarian morphology are descriptive. Excluding Kucarov (1999) and to some extent Maslov (1956, 1982) and Pašov (1989), the other sources (Stejanov 1983, 1993, De Bray 1980, Scatton 1993, Feuillet 1996), we will use, can be characterized as mainly descriptive as well.

1 Abbreviations: augm. = augmentative, BAN = Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, colloq. = colloquial, def. f. = definite form, dim. = diminutive, f. = feminine, LW = loanword, m. = masculine, n. = neuter, OB = Old Bulgarian, pl. = plural, RBE = Rečnik na bǎlgarskija ezik (Dictionary of Bulgarian Language), sg. = singular, V. = Vocative, WF = word formation.

We will start with some general information about Bulgarian and its declensional system illustrated by adjective agreement (section 2). Section 3 is devoted to major definitions and concepts. Section 4 reveals some peculiarities of Bulgarian noun categories and serves as an introduction to section 5, where a detailed account of the noun classes is given. Thus, section 5 is central and a basis for the investigation. It examines primarily number; this is the category which we, in contrast to all traditional studies, will relate, first, to phonological shape of the singular form and only afterwards to gender. In the final section 6, we will attempt to connect the results of our investigation and to draw conclusions.

2. Bulgarian

Bulgarian is a South Slavic language. All its noun categories are synthetic forms; of those only Gender (masculine, feminine, neuter), Number (singular vs. plural, and count plural for masculine non-humans in consonants) and Definiteness (expressed by a postponed definite article) are productive. Vocative is an unproductive form, classified by Bulgarian linguists under ‘Remainders of case forms’. Gender and Number are the basis for agreement, both cumulatively signaled on the noun, as in the following examples:\(^3\):

\[\begin{align*}
(1) & \quad m. \text{учител} - \text{учител}-i (\text{pl.}) \text{‘teacher’;} \text{учител-ja/-j} (\text{def. f.}) - \text{учител-ja/-j-i} (\text{pl.}) \\
& \quad f. \text{жена} - \text{жен}-i (\text{pl.}) \text{‘woman’;} \text{жен-а/-а} (\text{def. f.}) - \text{жен-а/-а-i} (\text{pl.}) \\
& \quad n. \text{село} - \text{сел}-a (\text{pl.}) \text{‘village’;} \text{село-to} (\text{def. f.}) - \text{село-to-i} (\text{pl.})
\end{align*}\]

Adjective agreement\(^4\)

The three genders of Bulgarian can be demonstrated by the agreement patterns of adjectives. Adjectives occur in attributive and predicative positions but always trigger the same inflectional suffixes, as illustrated in the next examples:

\[\begin{align*}
(2a) & \quad \text{nov учебник ‘new(m.) textbook(m.)’ – учебникът е нов ‘the textbook(m.) is new(m.)’} \\
& \quad \text{нова книга ‘new(f.) book(f.)’ – книгата е нова ‘the book(f.) is new(f.)’} \\
& \quad \text{ново писмо ‘new(n.) letter(n.)’ – писмото е ново ‘the letter(n.) is new(n.)’}
\end{align*}\]

Definite forms:

\[\begin{align*}
(2b) & \quad m. \text{нов-}i/-jа/-j-e учебник – нов-i-te учебници (pl.) \\
& \quad f. \text{нов-a-та книга – нов-i-te knigi (pl.)} \\
& \quad n. \text{нов-o-to писмо – нов-i-te pisma (pl.)}
\end{align*}\]

Masculine singular forms can also terminate in -i, for example, български ‘Bulgarian’, the other forms are, as expected, parallel to the forms given above: българска (f.), българско(n.), български(pl.). After soft consonants, feminine singular adjectives take -ja.

Adjectives which have alternative neuter forms, complete the set of gender suffixes: e.g. гаши (m.), гаши (f.), гашио / гаши (n.), гаши (pl.) ‘goose’; виси (m.), виска (f.), виско/виско (n.), виси (pl.) ‘high’.

Kucarvov (1999: 370)\(^6\) also argues that for adjectives, Bulgarian develops a formal system which is a basis of the gender oppositions, i.e. “nouns without a special gender suffix tend to be masculine (elen ‘deer’ formally resembles зелен ‘green (m.)’ and goes into masculine nouns), nouns terminating in -a go into feminines (стена ‘wall’ formally matches зелена ‘green (f.)’ and is feminine, but in French le mur (m.)); nouns terminating in -о or -е are neuter, e.g. село ‘village’ formally matches зелено ‘green (n.)’ and goes into neuter nouns; in contrast, the French noun le village is masculine but the Russian деревня and Czech vesnice are feminine.”

The same rules assign gender to foreign words (Kucarvov 1999:370): “At the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century we borrowed from French the noun radio (Fr. la radio (f.)), the word formally coincided with зелено ‘green (n.)’ and was assigned neuter gender instead of feminine; the word компютър ‘computer’ had no special gender suffix and joined the masculines, etc.”

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3 All examples are transliterated from the standard orthography.
4 Agreement in gender and number also occurs in ordinal numerals, pronouns and participles.
6 'i originates from the full (definite) forms of the OB adjectives (Stojanov 1993:262).
All Bulgarian linguists' quotations are translated from Bulgarian by the first author.
As seen, each gender shows inflectional suffixes of its own, listed in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Sg.</th>
<th>Pl.</th>
<th>Sg.</th>
<th>Pl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>-a, -i</td>
<td>-(ij)a(t)</td>
<td></td>
<td>articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>-a / -ja</td>
<td>-i</td>
<td>-ta</td>
<td>-te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuter</td>
<td>-o / -e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-to</td>
</tr>
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**3. Terminology**

We will assume the following concepts and definitions:

1) An **inflectional paradigm** comprises all inflectional forms of one word.
2) **Classes** are sets of paradigms, with a ‘vertical’ hierarchical organization: macroclass and its successive subset classes: class, subclass, subsubclass, etc., microclass.
3) An **inflectional microclass** is the set of paradigms which share exactly the same morphological generalizations (but may differ via application of phonological processes in the sense of Natural Phonology).
4) An **isolated paradigm** is a paradigm which differs morphologically or morphonologically from all other paradigms; it does not form a microclass of its own but is considered a satellite to the most similar microclass.
5) An **inflectional macroclass** is the highest, most general type of class, which comprises (hierarchically) several classes or (sub)subclasses or microclasses. Prototypically its nucleus is a productive microclass.

6) A **family of paradigms** is a looser group of paradigms than any type of class. It captures valid morphological generalizations which the language learner is able to make not over the structure of paradigms as wholes but only over parts of paradigms.
7) **Transitional paradigms** are satellites to more than one microclass. The extreme case is represented by transitional paradigms which share properties of two different macroclasses. We use this auxiliary term just where it is unclear whether there is a (directional) class shift in course or whether two productive patterns compete for the same words.
8) **Productivity** is the capability of using morphological rules (e.g. characterizing inflectional paradigms) with new words. These may be (in order of importance) i. loanwords, ii. indigenous neologisms, iii. old words which undergo class change (prototypically from an unproductive to a productive inflectional class), iv. WF productivity – productivity of derivational suffixes (or suffixations) which belong to a given inflectional class (cf. Dressler 1997a, Dressler & Laddány 1998, Wurzel 1984). Thus a rule may be fully productive, only very productive or semi-productive, or rather unproductive (slightly unproductive) or totally unproductive (Dressler 1985: 92).
9) Defective paradigms of LWs do not reveal morphological-rule productivity; at least they cannot illustrate ‘full productivity’ of an inflectional rule. A clearly unproductive microclass (e.g. feminines in consonants – microclass 10, I) might include defective paradigms of LWs. According to Maslov (1982: § 146), a **defective paradigm** is a paradigm with lack of any main form (singular, plural or definite), for example pluralia and singularia tantum words or paradigms of proper nouns (cf. Pašov 1989: 60 who also calls such nouns ‘defective’). Semantic reasons may determine defective paradigms. For a theoretical conception of uninflectibility (be it total or partial), see Doleschal (2000).
10) An inflectional **minimicroclass** is an inflectional microclass with a very limited number of members (just two or three paradigms), cf. 4 above.

**4. Noun categories**

This part of our investigation aims not only at a detailed account of Bulgarian noun inflection, but also at arguing for the approach we will apply. Since this contribution tries to relate Bulgarian declension primarily to formal criteria, we will start with gender,
because for assigning gender all scholars adopt as a criterion the phonological form of the noun. Definiteness and Number are usually described as depending on both gender and phonological form. Only Pašov (1989) has noticed that, in respect to nouns, Bulgarian definite articles do not show gender and can be predicted formally. Accepting his conclusion, we will reapply formal rules also to plural forms.

4.1. Gender

As mentioned in section 2, Bulgarian has three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter; masculine gender is the unmarked member of the category. (Compare with the large gender systems of the aforementioned African languages (Carstairs-McCarthy 1994:783); for example, Araepsh has thirteen genders, Yimas – eleven).

Corbett (1991) proposes two types of gender assignment systems: semantic and formal, the latter comprising phonological and morphological systems. Without knowing Corbett’s study, the Bulgarian linguists Pašov (1989:55-59), Stojanov (1993:202-207) and Kucarov (1999:369-374) use the same strategy. First, they apply the semantic factors; after finding out that semantic meaning cannot account for assignment, they look for other classifying criteria.

Let us also start with the semantic assignment possibility.

Here we will cite Pašov (1989:55-56), who allots the nouns to four semantic groups: 1) animals, 2) plants, 3) concrete objects and 4) abstract notions. Of course, we find nouns from all three genders in each group. For example:

Animals: m.: kon ‘horse’, slavej ‘nightingale’
(f.: kobila ‘mare’, majmuna ‘monkey’,
n.: kuće ‘dog’, tele ‘calf’)

Plants: m.: bor ‘pine tree’, kakus ‘cactus’
(f.: roza ‘rose’, pšenica ‘wheat’
n.: zele ‘cabbage’, lale ‘tulip’)

Concrete objects: m.: moliv ‘pencil’, stol ‘chair’

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(3c) f.: masa ‘table’, kniga ‘book’
n.: greblo ‘oar, rake’, kanape ‘sofa’

Abstract notions: m.: napredak ‘progress’, boj ‘fight’
(f.: kražba ‘theft, larceny’, karanica ‘quarrel’
n.: kolebanie ‘hesitation’, peene ‘singing’, etc.

Even the most obvious semantic assignment rule – gender: sex correlation for animates, does not function for Bulgarian. Some salient examples are given below:

1) All diminutives and augmentatives with suffixes terminating in –e are neuter:

(4) mǎž (m.) ‘man’–mǎžle (dim., n.), mǎžště (augm., n.);
lǎv (m.) ‘lion’–lǎvče (dim., n.), or lǎvště (n.) as a possible augmentative;
žena (f.) ‘woman’–ženče (dim., n.), but ženička (dim., f., terminates in –o),
žensště (augm., n.).

2) Hybrid nouns (cf. Corbett 1991:183), which have either natural male or female sex, are always neuter, e.g. momiče ‘girl’, momče ‘boy’ (both fossil original diminutives).

3) lībe ‘sweetheart’ can denote both males and females, but is a neuter noun.

4) Common gender nouns such as: rodnina ‘relative’, pijanica ‘drunkard’, zajmana ‘scapegrace’, etc. can refer to both males and females, but always with feminine morphology, e.g.:

(5) rodnina (sg.) / rodnitata (def. f.) – rodnini (pl.) / rodninite (def. f.),
cf. žena / ženata ‘woman’–ženi / ženite.

5) Even Bulgarian dictionaries disagree in determining gender of loanwords denoting male humans; Romanski (1955-59), RBE, Andrejčin et al. (1999) assign to krupie, ataše, pikolo
different genders: either m. or n., or m. & n. simultaneously. It should be noticed that the problem does not arise with nouns of native origin, for example, to bate ‘elder brother’, or to nouns in the other typical neutral marker -о, such as чико ‘uncle’, вуйчо ‘uncle’, дядо ‘grandfather’, no dictionary will assign neutral gender.

Establishing the fact that semantic criteria fail to account for gender in Bulgarian, the linguists apply the second possibility – the formal assignment. Thus, Stojanov (1993: §195) concludes that “there are no correspondences between grammatical gender of the nouns and the natural gender of the objects denoted by them”, and only “for nouns denoting humans or animals, one can point out a partial dependence between grammatical gender and sex”. But “there exists a clear and consequent dependence between grammatical form and grammatical gender of Bulgarian nouns”. It can be expressed as follows: “a) nouns terminating in consonants are mostly masculine; b) those in -а, -я – mostly feminine; and c) those in -е, -о, -и, -у, -ю – mostly neutral” (§196 a, b, v).

We will develop these observations by using the theoretical notions of default and productivity (for English cf. Pinker & Prince 1994, for German cf. Clahsen et al. 1996, for Russian cf. Corbett & Fraser 1993, Fraser & Corbett 1995, for Arapesh cf. Fraser & Corbett 1997, etc.). In some cases we will adopt two criteria: phonological form (see A. below) as a main criterion and semantics (B. below) as a secondary one, since all gender systems have a semantic core. In a few cases, in order to predict gender, we will turn to derivational morphology (see C. below).

Default as an “approach to information organization allows generalizations to be expressed once at a high level, and then automatically to apply everything which inherits from there. In this way regularities, subregularities and exceptions can be encoded with considerable ease and parsimony” (Fraser & Corbett 1995: 124).

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1 It is clear that the above-cited dictionaries confuse gender assignment with agreement pattern. Those nouns have natural masculine gender, but often realize neuter agreement because of the final -е and -о which usually signal neuter.
terminating in -e, and a few other words (Maslov 1956: 64; Pašov 1989: 56) override the semantic assignment criteria (in fact, their behavior favors the formal assignment rules).

Only feminines in consonants are problematic for our assignment system. Diachronically, they underwent a remarkable transition from the unmarked masculine gender to the more marked feminine one, e.g., var 'lime', večer 'evening'. (The greeting Dobár (m.) večer! 'Good evening!' and the idiom Bădăni (m.) večer 'Christmas eve' have retained the OB masculine gender (Maslov 1982: 135). Stojanov (1993: 203) suggests that večer changed its gender in analogy to večerja 'supper' and noiš 'night', both feminine.) Since some of the nouns, such as žar 'live coals', kal 'mud', pot 'sweat', prax 'dust' often fluctuate in agreement, we cannot say that even now they are completely feminine, cf. studena pot 'cold (f.) sweat' and studen pot 'cold (m.) sweat' (Pašov 1989: 57).

For Pašov (1989: 57), these nouns are "grammatical exceptions", because they do not denote females, i.e. are semantically unpredictable, but end in consonants which is the most important characteristic for masculines. According to Pašov, this group includes about 150 simplex nouns and about 2500 nouns derived with the suffixes -ost, -est (morphological criterion, cf. Corbett 1991: 34). Hence, in order to predict their gender, we can use a formal morphological factor:

C). Morphological assignment:

1) Nouns derived with suffixes -ost and -est are always feminine.

Thus, only 150 words, some of them with double gender, have no overt gender marker and no natural gender. These nouns originate from the OB i-stems (cf. Mirčev 1963: 154, 2000: 60-61). The OB i-stems consisted of feminine and a few masculine nouns. Feminine and masculine declensions coincided in all forms but Instrumental singular and Nominative plural. Here we find simplex nouns such as kost 'bone', vrăv 'string', réč 'speech', tvar 'being, creature', sol 'salt'; those with the OB suffix -ost, e.g. radost 'joy', skorost 'speed', mădrost 'wisdom'; abstract nouns with the OB suffix -t', such as vlast 'power, authority', vest 'a piece of information', mošt 'might', măst 'revenge', blagodat 'blessing', čest 'honor', zavis 'envy', smărt 'death', pamet 'memory', strast 'passion'.

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* A full list in Feuillet (1996: 130).

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slast 'lust', čast 'part', napast 'scourge'; words with the OB suffixes -n-, -sn-, -zn-, e.g. bojazan 'fear', pesen 'song', kazăn 'punishment', bran 'war, battle', dan 'tribute', bolest (OB boľazn) 'disease'; and nouns derived with the OB suffixes -l-, -sl-, -jal-, such as misál 'thought', gibel 'destruction, doom', obitel 'cloister', pečal 'grief', etc.

Note, however, that a prefixed noun derived from a noun above (if the prefixation is possible) is always masculine, e.g. kakva misál 'what (f.) thought', but kakáv s-misál 'what (m.) sense'; dobra cel 'good (f.) aim', but dobár pri-cel 'good (m.) target' (Pašov 1989: 57).

Pašov also remarks that feminines in consonants are an unproductive group. Only three LWs (cf. Maslov 1956: 62 and Pašov 1989: 57), all defective paradigms (without plural forms) have joined this peculiar feminine microclass: zazor 'sugar' (from Indian via Greek 'sūkcharon'), gaz 'kerosene' (cf. gaz (m.) with meanings: 1) 'gas' and 2) 'gauge'), and mebel 'furniture (collective). Like gaz, mebel can be masculine and feminine: as a collective noun it is feminine, e.g. meka mebel 'upholstered (f.) furniture'; and it is masculine as a piece of furniture, e.g. xubav mebel 'nice (m.) piece of furniture'.

Undoubtedly, Bulgarian represents a remarkably overt gender system (in the sense of Corbett 1991: 62): the right edge of the noun, i.e. the final phoneme (+ / - consonantal) almost always indicates gender unless semantic rules assign gender. In case of conflict among the assignment criteria, the gender-marked suffixes have absolute precedence. Next, for adult male and female humans, and for those animals where sex is distinguished by different words (they are usually phonologically determined), the semantic criterion is decisive. Other semantic criteria are few, are of a lexical nature, but also have precedence.

The rest (the huge majority) is determined by the phonological default criteria.

4.2. Definiteness


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8 The traditional term postposed is misleading since it seems to indicate a clitic (similar to proclitic articles in most Germanic and Romance languages).
Singular:
m. 1) in a consonant → -ät (-a) / -jet (-ja)

Only the subject and the predicative get the full forms -ät / -jet. (For Scattan 1993: 202 and De Bray 1980: 101, masculine singular forms distinguish syntactic case; Nominative vs. Objective.)

2) in a vowel
   a) in -o or -ja → -ta (see f.)
   b) in -e, -u → -to (see n.)

In order to explain the fact that masculines in vowels take f. and n. articles, De Bray (1980: 102) uses the term ‘apparent gender’.

f. → -ta (in a vowel) / -tá (in a consonant)

n. → -to

Plural: 1) pl. indefinite form in -a, -ja → -ta

2) pl. indefinite form in -i, -e → -te

Only Pašov (1989: 65) notices that “in fact, the choice of article does not depend so much on gender than on the inflectional suffix of the noun”, and that “the Bulgarian definite article does not show the gender of the noun, as it is in some European languages, for example, French, German, etc.”

Sg. in consonants: -ät (-a) / -jet (-ja) (feminines in consonants -tá)

Sg. / Pl. in -a / -ja: -ta (Here, the choice of article does not even depend on number).

Sg. in -o / -e / i / -u / -ju: -to

Pl. indefinite in -i, -e: -te

Again, only feminine singular nouns in consonants are problematic, however, let us remember that they can be defined morphologically (as established in section 4.1). Thus, we can conclude that the formal assignment of the articles according to phonological and morphological criteria works successfully for Bulgarian.

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Usually the definite forms show the stress pattern of the basic form, exceptions are some masculine monosyllables such as: vek - vek’üt ‘century’, záb - záb’üt ‘tooth’, krak - krak’üt ‘leg’, sin - sin’üt ‘son’, etc.; and all feminines in consonants which always take the stressed article -tà.

4.3. Number

Bulgarian has two numbers: singular and plural. Singular is the unmarked member of the category. Plural is always overtly signaled.

OB distinguished singular, dual and plural. Modern Bulgarian has retained some former duals but as normal plural forms. These are nouns denoting pairs of human or animal body parts (Pašov 1989: 60), e.g.: oči ‘eyes’, uši ‘ears’, râce ‘hands’, kraka ‘legs’, roga ‘horns’.

For some other nouns the language has kept both the old dual and plural forms, now doublet. Both: Pticata razperti krile / krila. ‘The bird spread wings.’ are correct; but only dvete krila na prozor yna ‘both the wings of the window’ (See Pašov 1989: 61). Obviously, the forms in -e have preserved to some degree their dual meaning (cf. Stojanov 1993: 218).

We found an interesting explanation of the plural variant and doublet forms in Stankiewicz (1986: 115-117). He argues that the loss of gender in the plural has resulted in Bulgarian (and in the other Slavic languages) in functional transformations of the old forms into contextual, stylistic or lexical variants. “The existence of numerous lexical doublets in the plural, which are matched in the singular by homonymous forms, gives the plural the appearance of an inflectional-derivational category; e.g. djadoveci ‘grandfathers, old men’ / dedi ‘ancestors’”.

For more examples and comments see section 5. Note that lexical differentiation in the plural concerns only individual items.

Stankiewicz (1986: 117) recognizes in the Slavic languages “neutral”, unmarked plural forms, and semantically marked plural distinctions of three types: (1) counted, (2) collective, and (3) emotive. “All three types co-occur in Bulgarian and Macedonian, i.e. in the languages which have completely lost gender distinction in the plural.”
In contrast to him and like Bulgarian linguistic literature, we will discuss only count forms and mention collectives where necessary. In Modern Bulgarian, emotive plurals appear as too stylistically marked (first, as archaic and second, as pejorative forms), therefore with a very restricted use (if with any at all). For that reason we will neglect them.

Count form

This is another category connected with the old duals, but still productive. Only masculines terminating in consonants (again a formal criterion, default for masculines) and denoting non-humans, take this peculiar number form after cardinal numerals and the quantifiers kolko ‘how many’, njakolko ‘some’, tolkova ‘so many’. Count form suffixes are -a / -ja:

(7) grad ‘city’ – tri grad-a ‘three cities’, pl. grad-ove;
    LWs: kompjutār – pet kompjutār-a ‘five computers’, pl. kompjutari;
    tim – deset tim-a ‘ten teams’, pl. tim-ove.

With common nouns denoting male humans the usual plural forms are preferred, at least in explicit norms, e.g.:

(8) 35 vojnici ‘35 soldiers’, not vojnika; 50 učiteli ‘50 teachers’, not učitelja;
    dvama studenti(pl.) ‘two students’, not studenta.

Dvama is a special form for male humans, only the cardinal numerals from 2 to 6 possess such a form.

Nouns which undergo vowel alternations in the plural, show no such changes when forming the count forms, e.g. kosm ‘single hair’ – dva kosmă (count f.) – kosmi (pl.).

Thus, the rule ordering is for count plurals: first, phonological epenthesis, second, suffixation. Exceptions are lităr ‘liter’, metăr ‘meter’ and the words derived from them:

(9) metăr – dva metra (count f.) – metri (pl.).

Since count forms are always preceded by numerals, they take no articles.

A full account of the plural inflection is given in section 5.

4.4. Remainders of case forms

In contrast to the other Slavic languages which retain a rich set of cases, Bulgarian and Macedonian show near complete loss of case.

The category of case is unproductive in Modern Bulgarian. Only masculines in consonants and feminines in -a / -ja (both cases of default, see section 4.1) use Vocative forms. Vocative suffixes are: -e, -o (m. and f.), and -ju (m., root-final soft consonants), as illustrated in the following examples:

    f. Ivanka – V. Ivank-e, gospožica ‘miss’ – V. gospožic-e, žena ‘woman’ – V. žen-o, 
    duša ‘soul’ – V. duš-o, but Marija – Marijo(old, impolite) / Marija.

Some Western linguists consider the distinction of full and short article forms with masculines as a case opposition between Nominative and Objective (Scotton 1993: 202); Nominative vs. Oblique (De Bray 1980: 101), see section 4.2.

5. Noun classes

Up to this point we have assumed that almost all Bulgarian nouns can be distinguished among the three genders by phonological assignment; a few nouns are assigned by complementary semantic, morphological and phonological rules; and in the few cases

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10 De Bray (1980) calls the category ‘Secondary plural’.
11 After duzina ‘dozen’, stozić ‘hundreds’, sijladi ‘thousands’ and milion ‘million’ (all nouns) the explicit norm requires the usual plural forms.

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12 We would like to thank Prof. Heinz Miklas (Institut für Slawistik) for his valuable comments.
where these clash, it is the semantic rules which usually take precedence; formal rules determine article use as well. In the beginning we declared that our investigation of declensional classes will be based primarily on phonological criteria and only secondarily on gender. Of course, phonological form can be seen as a link between gender and inflectional class; however, as has been established for articles, the phonological rules which determine declension differ from the rules responsible for gender assignment. For gender assignment, only one form is of importance, but for declensional class assignment we should connect three forms (singular indefinite as input, plural indefinite and singular definite as output). Thus in contrast to the three-member gender category, we recognize two macroclasses (= 27 microclasses) according to the feature +/− consonantal realized in the singular form (see table 2). Both macroclasses show different types of inflection: usually word-based in Macroclass 1, and root-, stem- and word-based in Macroclass 2. Inflectional meanings can be expressed by suffixes only or by suffixes and modifications (such as morphological palatalizations, epentheses, metatheses, elisions and root-vowel changes), and in one microclass (1I, I) by subtraction.

LWs are often adapted phonologically or morphologically, they are assigned to one of the macroclasses on the basis of their final segments (Scatton 1993: 242). Gender is, in general, morphologically irrelevant for LWs. Clippings and acronyms also belong to both macroclasses.

The traditional Bulgarian grammar (Stojanov 1983, 1993) lists the plural suffixes for each gender and, if necessary, makes comments about the phonological shape of the singular forms. The other aforementioned linguists organize the data in the same way. Monosyllables vs. polysyllables is also a traditional criterion for masculines.

The full list of suffixes we propose, is organized first, according to the above-given criteria and second, according to the principle of distinguishing between general and exceptional (cf. the Elsewhere Condition Principle in Kiparsky 1973 and the Blocking principle in Aronoff 1976). At the beginning of a macroclass we put the unproductive microclasses, i.e. paradigms of limited number (which can be listed). After their ‘elimination’, the remaining nouns, usually default instances, will be produced by productive rules. The elimination of the unproductive classes is important for the correct function of the formal rules we apply. Note that the singular (basic) forms of a macroclass usually exhibit the same phonological final segment, and thus phonological factors cannot determine the exceptions (unproductive microclasses). If we begin with the productive microclasses, the plural of, for example, măb should be *małove or *măsi and this of răka *răki (see table 2). In contrast to gender assignment, Fraser and Corbett (1995: Note 18) postulate for declensional class assignment: “It is a plausible hypothesis that in declensional class assignment generally, formal factors will take precedence over semantic.” It is difficult to find semantic rules in declensional class assignment, although if existing, these could be helpful. We will also notice regularities of that kind, for example body parts or pejoratives can often form microclasses.

I. Macroclass: terminating in consonants, definite article (default) -ă (−a) / -ăt (−a), overridden only by feminine -ă.

High diagrammaticity and morphological transparency (cf. Dressler 1987, 1999).

Default: suffixation without additional modification, i.e. base (sg. indefinite form) + (1)plural suffix or (2) definite article.

A. Class: unproductive plural suffixes

Subclass: stressed suffixes

1. Minimicroclass: m., plural suffix -ă:


(12) nomer – nomeră ‘number, size, trick’ is an old loanword from West European languages via Russian (Maslov 1956: 70).

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13 Our LW examples and analyses are based on Mladenov (1941), Romanski (1955-59), Mīlev et al. (1978), Rusinov & Georgiev (1996: 69-103), RBE (I-IX), Popov et al. (1998), and Andrejčin et al. (1999).

14 The plural suffix -ove, e.g. grade – gradove ‘small town’, list – listove ‘small leaf’, etc. (Maslov 1962: 144 (pt. suffix -ove + dim. suffix -ove); Stojanov 1993: 212), occurs only in diminutives for diminutivates. Here it is seen as archaic and not taken in consideration.
The suffix -a is unstressed in the count forms dva kraka ‘two legs’, tri rõga ‘three horns’, pet nömera ‘five numbers’.

**Isolated paradigm:** plural suffix -ja\(^\text{13}\) (unstressed):

(13) **brat – bratja** ‘brother’.  
The form bratja originates from the OB feminine collective noun brat’ja (Stojanov 1983: 104).

2. **Microclass:** m., plural suffix -ē (only 5 nouns, cf. Stojanov 1993: 211):


**Subclass: unstressed suffixes**

3. **Microclass:** m., plural suffix -išta (only 5 nouns):


Class shift to the productive microclass 8, e.g.

(16) **kup – kupišta / kupove** ‘heap, pile’, plet – pletišta / pletove ‘hedge’ (the forms with the suffix -išta are stylistically marked, see Stojanov 1993: 210).

**Isolated paradigm:**

(17) **säd / sādilišta – sādilišta** ‘law-court’ (cf. säd – sādove ‘vessel, utensil’ in microclass 8).

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7. **Microclass**: m., plural suffix -ove, ja : e alternation in the plural and in the singular indefinite form (a few words only), e.g.:


No linguist but Feuillet (1996) mentions the alternation as important for plural forms. Cija occurs if the alternating syllable is stressed and not followed by: 1) a palatal or alveo-palatal consonant; 2) a consonant cluster containing such a consonant; or 3) a syllable containing a front vowel; otherwise Ce. Note that this rule has many exceptions.

**Family of paradigms:**

(22) zvjar – zverovè – zvjárdáti ‘beast’;

vjáti – vetrovè – vjátrári ‘wind’;

djal – djálove – del ‘at ‘share’.

8. **Microclass** (productive): m., plural suffix -ove:


sád – sádove ‘vessel, utensil’, etc.

In OB, only a few -stem masculines had plural forms with the suffix -ove, but later the suffix -ove became productive for masculine monosyllables and largely replaced the plural suffix -i (Mirčev 1963: 146, Stojanov 1993: 209), see the instances of class shift in microclasses 12 (35) and 14 (42).

LWs (about 250 nouns, see Stojanov 1993: 211):


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9. **Microclass**: f., with metathesis in the plural (cf. minimicroclass 6 (20)), e.g.:


grád, gárda – gárdi ‘breast, bosom’ is an exception with a stress change.

10. **Microclass**: f., e.g.:


Some feminines show a phonological change, i.e. vowel : zero alternation, in the plural:


sáblazán – sáblazni ‘temptation’, etc., cf. (45).

LWs (all defective paradigms):

(30) zaxar ‘sugar’, gaz16 ‘kerosene’ (both singulaires tatum, i.e. partially non-inflected, take only a definite article, e.g. zaxarti, gazati), mebel ‘furniture’.
Subsubclass: masculine, polysyllables by default

11. Microclass: m., suffix -in (unstressed) is lost in the plural, i.e. subtraction:

   (vs. domakin – domakini ‘householder, host’, ispolin – ispolini ‘colossus’, both
   with a stressed -in, thus belonging to the productive microclass 14).

Isolated paradigm: in spite of the stressed suffix -in, subtraction; plural suffix -i:

(32) gospodin – gospodà ‘Mister’ (cf. Gospod ‘God’ – Gospodi (V.)).

Isolated paradigm:

(33) türčin – türči ‘Turk’.

12. Microclass: m., palatal alternations, exceptions especially in loanwords, i.e. unproductive microclass: g. k, x : z, c, s:


But cf., e.g.: uspex – uspechi ‘success’, trak (rare) – traki ‘Thracian man’, both belong to microclass 14.

Class shift to microclass 8:

(35) zvuk – zvuci (poetic) / zvukove ‘sounds’, vrag – vrazi (old, poetic),
   vragove ‘enemy’, etc.

LWs:

(36) matematik – matematički ‘mathematician’, biolog – biolozi ‘biologist’ (WF
   productivity of -ik and -log), bjurek – bjureći ‘cheese pasty’, etc.

However:

(37) ajšberg – ajšbergi, miting – mitingi, suing – suingi, bolshevik – bolsheviki, etc., which

Isolated paradigm: metathesis and palatalization,

(38) grâk – gârci ‘Greek man’.

13. Microclass: alternation e: ø (-e– is usually part of a suffix), if a stressed -e–, then a stress shift:

   den – dni ‘day’, šânc – šânci / šâncove ‘ditch, trench’.

However, no elision (thus microclass 14) in the cases of -C+ suffixes -rec or -lec, e.g.:

(40a) mâdrec – mâdreci ‘wise man’, podlèc – podlecì ‘scoundrel’;

or when e: (epenthetic) ą change as in:

(40b) beglèc – begâloci / beglæci ‘escapee’, mârtvèc – mârtvæci ‘dead person’.

14. Microclass (productive): m., e.g.:

(41) učitel – učiteli ‘teacher’, ovèar – ovèari ‘shepherd’;
   monosyllabic nouns: záb – zábí ‘tooth’; monosyllables for national affiliation: čex –
   česi ‘Czech’, šved – švedi ‘Swede’, etc.

Class shift to microclass 8:

(42) dvor – dvori (archaic) / dvorove ‘yard’, dar – dari (old) / darove ‘gift’,
   prät – prätì / prätove ‘stick’, etc.

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12 According to RBE, guž with this meaning, can also be masculine (rare).
17 About 30 masculine monosyllables of native origin have plural forms with the suffix -i (Stojanov 1993: 211).
Phonological alternations:

1.) Alternation ž : ž (synchronic phonological rule, see Maslov 1982: 142):

2.) Alternation e : j (postvocalic -e- from the suffix -ec):
(44) boec – bojei ‘solder’, evropec – evropejei ‘European’,
avstriec – avstrijci ‘Austrian man’, etc.,
začek – zaćezi ‘rabbit’ – with palatalization, thus to microclass 12.

3.) Alternation ā : ə, a phonological rule inserts in the singular an epenthetic ā between two consonants (one being sonorant):

Exceptions when a stressed ā or when k : c alternation (Maslov 1982: 142), e.g.:
(46) sat’ār (Turkish satır) – sat’āri ‘chopper’, kat’ār (Turkish katır) – kat’āri ‘mule’ (ā is not epenthetic here).

-ā- in the suffixes -āk, -lāk is not epenthetic, but underlying (Stojanov 1993: 214):
(cf. momāk and potomāk – both isolated paradigms below (51)).

Note that no alternation occurs with definite articles, e.g.:
(48) kosām – kosāma / kosāmāt, vopāl – vopāla / vopālāt, vosāk – vosāca / vosākāt,
tigār – tigāra / tigārāt, i.e. the rule of phonological epenthesis is ordered before suffixation of the article; exceptions only in derivation with the suffix -izām, e.g.:
socializām – socializma / socializmāt, neologizām – neologizma / neologizmāt.

LWs:
(49) monosyllables (7 nouns only): jon – joni, tane – tanci, fakt – fakti, film – filmi, nerv – nervi, štrix – štrixi, ximm – ximmi; and with class shift: bas – basi /باس / basi, alt – alti / åtov; (from Italian basso, alto, pl. bassi, alti).


Clippings (Stojanov 1993: 157), e.g.:
(50) izpālkom – izpālkom ‘from izpālniteien komitet ‘executive committee’.

(51) kamāk – kamāni ‘stone’;

bodl – bodli ‘prickle’ / bodli ‘thistle’, here regularized with a different meaning;
mednik – menci / mednici (rare) ‘copper’, the latter form can be assigned to microclass 12 with palatalization;
čovek ‘man, human being’ – xora ‘people’ / čoveči ‘men’ (rare) / ljude (archaic)
(the only suppletive paradigm).
Elision and k : c alternation in the suffix -āk (cf. (47)):
potomāk – potomci ‘heir’,
momāk – momci ‘young man, lad’, the latter with a stress shift as well.

We cannot agree with Maslov (1980: 145) who classifies brat – bratja here (see minimicroclass 1 (13)).

Stress patterns: For polysyllabic stems the stress is usually fixed on the stem; exceptions:
the monosyllables of native origin often change the stress pattern, e.g.: lăc – lăci ‘ray’, țrec – țreci ‘priest’, zăb – zăbi ‘tooth’.

II. Macroclass: terminating in vowels.
Macroclass II is less transparent morphologically than Macroclass I.
Default: truncation without additional modification for 1.) plural forms, and suffixation for 2.) definite articles.

A). Class: singular forms in -a, -jar; definite article -ta
Stress patterns: The class shows no stress change in the plural, exceptions are: gospoža – gospozi ‘Mrs’, duša ‘soul’ – duši ‘souls’ vs. duši ‘persons’.

1. Minimicroclass: f., body parts, plural suffix -e with morphonological palatalization g, k : z, c:
(52) răka – răce ‘hand’, noga – noze ‘leg’.

Isolated paradigms:
(53) ovca – ovce / ovci ‘sheep’, svinja – svine / svini ‘pig, swine’ (the forms with -i are dialectal, see Popov et al. 1998: 726).

Subclass: plural suffix -i

2. Minimicroclass: m., Christian clergymen of high rank; k : c palatalization in the plural:

3. Microclass: f., alternation ja : e in the plural form, e.g.:

4. Microclass (productive): f.& m., e.g.:


In contrast to the masculines in consonants (microclass 12, I, (34) & (36)) and to minimicroclass 2, this microclass shows no palatalization in the plural (Stojanov 1983: 109), e.g.:


LWs, f.:


(59) m.: aga –agi ‘aga, master’ (Turkish aga), komšija – komšii ‘neighbor’ (Turkish komša), delija – delii ‘madcap’ (Turkish deli), derändžja – derëndžii ‘miller (old)’, darakčija – darakčii ‘carder’, čenčadžija – čenčadžii ‘money-changer (colloq.)’ (WF productivity of -čija and -čija, also borrowed from Turkish, see Stojanov 1993: 176), maxaradža – maxaradžii, xodža – xodžii ‘imam’ (Turkish hoca), papa – papi ‘pope’ etc. (see Milev et al. 1978).

18 Stojanov (1993: 216) gives both leli and lelini as plural forms of lelja; for us, leli is the plural, and lelini has only the meaning ‘(as) my aunt’s’.
B). Class: another vowel; definite article -to (many variant plural forms, remainders of OB declension classes).

5. Microclass: m., singular forms in -o, -e, male humans, only nouns of native origin, plural suffix -vei (-e)vei after -e and -o(vei after -o):


Subclass: words with semantically undifferentiated gender (n.) + some borrowings for humans

Subsubclass: pl. suffix -i

6. Minimicroclass: n., singular forms in -o, body parts, palatalization k, x : č, š:


7. Microclass: n., substantivized adjectives terminating in -n-o, -n-o, -n-o:


Isolated paradigm:

(63) vlečugo – vlečugi ‘reptile’ (cf. vlečuga – vlečugi (common gender, pejorative) in microclass 4).

Subsubclass: plural in -a

8. Minimicroclass: n., singular forms in -o, plural suffix -es-a:

(64) čudo – čudesa ‘wonder’, dårvo ‘tree’ – dårvesa (old, poetic) / dårva ‘trees’ / dårva ‘wood, firewood’ with class shift to the productive microclass 11; slovo – slovesa (old) / slova ‘word, speech’ with class shift to the productive microclass 13.

Microclass in dissolution, i.e. the old forms X-es-a have been largely replaced (class shift) by the productive -ta and -a.

Isolated paradigms:

(65) tišalo – telesa (old) / tela ‘body’ with class shift to microclass 12; nebe – nebesa (poetic) / nebete ‘sky’ with class shift to microclass 11.

9. Microclass: n., words terminating (formally) in -m-e, plural suffix -(e)-na, only the following nouns:


Isolated paradigm: singular form in -o, variant plural:

(67) ramo – ramena / ramene ‘shoulder’ (cf. kolfano in microclass 12 (75) and krilo in microclass 13 (77)).
The forms show different usage, that with -e has only a dual meaning concerning the human body.

10. Microclass: n., verbal nouns with the suffix -ne, plural suffix -jia:


Some verbal nouns with abstract meaning have no plural at all.

11. Microclass19 (productive): n., m. & f. in -e, -i, -u, -ju, plural suffix -(e)-ta20:


LWs (neuter, all non-humans):


Some male humans (masculine is morphologically irrelevant, even the dictionaries disagree about the gender of these nouns):

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(71) ataše – atašeta ‘attaché’ (m. & n. in Andrejčin et al. 1999, for Romanski 1955-59 only m.), dendi – dendita (RBE: m. & n. and rare m. = pl.; Andrejčin et al. 1999: m. & n.), krupie – krupta (n. - Romanski 1955-59; RBE; Andrejčin et al. 1999), kamikadze – kamikadzeta (found only in Andrejčin et al. 1999 as m.), zaptie – zaptieta ‘zaptie, Turkish policeman’ (n. in all dictionaries), guru – guruta (found in no dictionary), mosju – mosjuta (RBE: colloq.-ironical m. & n.).

Since a vowel is an unusual final segment for masculines, these nouns take instead of masculine inflectional suffixes neuter ones which fit better their phonological shape.

In this microclass we also find nouns denoting female humans, i.e. feminines:

(72) lejdi ‘lady’ – (colloq.) lejdiva / lejdito; frau – def. f. frauto (colloq.).

It seems that definite forms of feminine nouns in peculiar final vowels are more acceptable than plural ones.

Acronyms (cf. Krumova & Čoroleeva 1983):

(73) MPS (me-pe-se) – MPS-eta ‘motor vehicle’, SDS (se-de-se) – SDS-eta ‘The Union of the Democratic Forces’, DSO (de-se-o) – colloq. DSO-ta ‘State economic group’, DZI (de-se-i) ‘State insurance institute’ – DZI-ta, ESPU (espu) – ESPU-ta (colloq.) ‘high school’. All of them can be used with articles (sg. -to / pl. -ta) in colloquial speech.

Stress patterns: Usually the suffix -(e)ta causes no stress change (Maslov 1982:149).

Subsub subclass: plural suffix -a / -ja

12. Microclass: n., singular forms in -o, alternation ja : e in the plural:


Variant plural:

(75) koljano – kolena / kolene ‘knee’ (cf. ramo in microclass 9 (67) and kriko in microclass 13 (77)).

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19 According to Aronoff’s framework for Arapesh (cf. Aronoff 1992, 1994), microclass 11 should be the [exceptional case] default class and neuter the [exceptional case] default gender. See also Fraser and Corbett (1997).

20 In OB, the plural suffix -eta is used only for young of animals, e.g. agne – agneta ‘lambs’, tetel – teteta ‘calves’; however, in Modern Bulgarian, the suffix has become productive.
13. Microclass (productive): n. & m., singular forms in -o, -ce, -ište & -ie:


Variant plural:

(77) krilo – krila ‘wing’ (cf. ramo in microclass 9 (67) and koljano in microclass 12 (75)).

LWs (only nouns terminating in -o):


m.: šigoło – šigila, pikolo – pikola (see RBE), impresario – impresaria (Popov et al. 1998).

Transitional paradigms: (doublet plural forms)

(80) kolelo – kolela / koleleta ‘wheel, bicycle’, kâlbo – kâlba / kâlbeta ‘sphere, globe, ball’, târkalo – târkala / târkaleta ‘wheel, circle, slice’ (The forms with the suffix -a are more frequent).

Isolated paradigms:


21 impressaria in (79) is an exception, cf. RBE where the plural of impresario is impresarii.
In contrast to Russian (Švedova 1980: §1221 ‘Zero declension’), Bulgarian grammar has not documented any indeclinable nouns 22. Unfortunately, dictionaries point out some words as unchangeable (see, for example, RBE). It is unclear why only nouns denoting humans, i.e. with natural gender, are problematic. It seems that for Bulgarian, the opposition human : non-human is more important than the opposition animate : inanimate.

We will illustrate the problem and the possible solutions with three feminine nouns which have peculiar final segments: leđi, madam, mis:

1.) leđi – natural gender feminine, but instead of plural suffix -i / article -ta, the only possibility for feminines, it takes, at least in colloquial speech, the plural suffix -ta / article -te, like all other nouns in -i, which are usually neuter. Thus, we have: leđi / leđito – pl. leđita / leđitata. The same happens with masculine singular forms terminating in vowels, as is usual for neuter inflection (if we accept such gender specialization of the inflectional suffixes). (According to RBE, leđi can be used only as an apposition, no plural form is given; there is a second possibility: (literary) sg. leđi = pl. leđi, this we consider as an archaism of old literary texts).

2.) madam – due to natural gender, it should have gone into the unproductive microclass of feminines in consonants, but this is not the case. Since the plural of all feminines is always -i, only the definite article shows inflectional integration: madâmata, *madamâ. Thus madâmi is the plural of madama, formed, perhaps, following the pattern zabravan (m.) ‘chuckle-head’ – zabravana (f.), sâprug (m.) ‘husband’ – sâpruga (f.) ‘wife’, where -a is inflectional, since it changes only the gender of the nouns without adding any other semantic information. This is a fine example of the adaptation of an unfitting property of the original foreign form to the most productive pattern of Bulgarian feminines.

3.) Like madam, mis is feminine but ends in a consonant. Here, the solution of the colloquial speech is very interesting: the word undergoes an even stranger transmorphemization (cf. Filipović 1986), first, it gets a derivational suffix (the productive feminine -ka) and then it is already a normal feminine noun in -a: miska / miskata – pl. miski / miskite. Other inflectional forms are unacceptable, but nisi / misi (colloq.) is a hypocoristic.

22 Except proper nouns, pluralia and singularia tantum.
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Zusammenfassung