

Title: Does Bulgarian Have Motion Verbs?
Author: Traci Lindsey, University of California, Berkeley

Bulgarian, unlike most Slavic languages, has no formal or lexical class of verbs that can be called motion verbs. Bulgarian, with only a single exception, does not distinguish between determinate and indeterminate motion, nor is there a necessary distinction between motion by vehicle or by foot. There is no single root which regularly takes a wide variety of prefixes to describe different directions of motion. Moreover, many of the most common Bulgarian motion verbs are based on roots not found as motion verbs in other Slavic languages. These differences represent a systemic difference between Bulgarian and most other Slavic languages.

Bulgarian exhibits yet another distinction in its motion verb typology. While most Slavic languages make wide use of verbs of motion expressing manner, in combination with prefixes indicating path, Bulgarian focuses more on verbs which express only the path of motion. Among the most common are идвам/дойда ‘come’, тръгвам/тръгна ‘set out’, and излизам/изляза ‘go out, exit’. These verbs are often prefixed, but the prefixes may be fused to the root so that an unprefixed form of the verb does not exist, and prefixation with these verbs is no longer a productive process. For example, излизам/изляза ‘go out, exit’ is one of only three common verbs based on the now meaningless root лизам/ляза. Though the typology of the Bulgarian motion verb has not shifted to such an extent that Bulgarian should be classified as a verbframed language like its neighboring Turkish and Romanian languages, Bulgarian has developed more in that direction than other Slavic languages. In this paper I will demonstrate how this change in focus from manner verbs with variable prefixes to path verbs in which the root provides less meaning than the path prefix is connected to wider systemic changes in the Bulgarian motion verb system.

tlindsey@berkeley.edu