A Reference Grammar of Borlish

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Contents

Introduction and Context

Borlish is a Romance language, the primary language spoken on the island of Borland. It is the only surviving member of the Insular Romance languages.

Throughout this reference we will use 'Borlish' to refer to the standard variety of the language, which is based on the educated speech of the capital Damvath.

Chapter 1

Phonology

1.1 Phonemes

Consonants

Borlish has a consonant inventory of middling size. Notable is the presence of /ʒ/ without its voiceless counterpart /ʃ/, due to a relatively recent sound change which backed the latter to /x/.

	Consonants			
m		n		
p b		t d	k g	
		ts		
f v	θ ð	s z	ʒ	x h
w[1]		l	j	r[2]

[1]In native vocabulary the phoneme /w/ appears only after /k/. This, along with alternations like

(1) *voc*   *voccar* | *bocq* *bocquar*
     /vɔk   vɔˈkar | bɔk   bɔˈkwar/
     [†]summons to summon | fee   to charge

 have led some to analyse /kw/ sequences as a single phoneme /kʷ/ which merges with /k/ in coda position.

[2] The rhotic is uvular in urban speech, but for ease we will denote it by /r/ in phonemic transcription.

Vowels

Borlish has eight monophthong vowel phonemes, typical of neighbouring Germanic and sister Gallo-Romance languages.

Vowels		
i	ɪ	u
e		o
ɛ	a	ɔ

Borlish also contains the diphthong /au/, as well as vowel + /j/ sequences that may be analysed as diphthongs.

The segments /m n r/ can appear as syllabic consonants.

(2) *batesm*   *cohernt*   *outrscac*
/baˈtɛz.m̩ koˈhɛr.n̩t   ˌut.r̩ˈxak/
baptism   consequent   brazen

The syllable preceding a syllabic consonant acts as a closed syllable, and the segment before a syllabic consonant acts as part of the coda of the previous syllable. Hence, it is usually considered most elegant to syllabify so that syllabic consonants have no onset.

1.2 Stress

The final syllable is usually stressed.

(3) *scadom*   *tatover*
/xaˈdɔm   ˌta.toˈvɛr/
tomato   potato

In words of four or more syllables, secondary stress is usually assigned in iambs, although anapaestic patterns do occur when the interior syllables are sufficiently light.

(4) *deborsellar   haubrjoranç*
    /deˌbɔr.sɛˈlar ˌhob.r̩.ʒoˈrants/
    pickpocket   advertisement

There are some exceptions to final stress. Syllabic consonants reject stress onto the previous syllable. Moreover, the suffixes *-(e)nt* (forming present participles of *-r* conjugation verbs), *-(e)nç* (forming nouns from the same verbs) and *-essem, -errem* (forming comparatives) also enforce penultimate stress.

(5) *casn   pardenç   pessem veðerrem*
    /ˈkazn̩   ˈpar.dɛnts ˈpɛ.sɛm veˈðɛ.rɛm/
    oak   loss   worse   elder

In many dialects these suffixes are parsimoniously analysed as instead containing syllabic consonants, pronounced as /-n̩t -n̩ts -ɛs.m̩ -ɛr.m̩/.

1.3   Phonotactics

There are several restrictions on where in a syllable or a word certain segments can appear. The consonants /v s ʒ h/ do not occur in coda position, and /ð/ does not occur word-finally. When morphology would place /ð s ʒ/ in a forbidden position they are replaced with /θ z x/ respectively.

(6) *na ð-ar   na ð* | *fass-ar   fas* | *naj-ar   nascn*
    /naˈðar   naθ | faˈsar   faz | naˈʒar   ˈnax.n̩
    swim-inf swim.s | wrap-inf wrap.s | sail-inf sail.3p

When morphology would place /v/ in a forbidden position, either /f/ replaces it or the preceding vowel is altered.

(7) *cav-ir caf* | *bav-ar   bau*
    /kaˈvɪr kaf | baˈvar   bo/
    get-inf get.s | bark-inf bark.s

Syllabic consonants do not occur in stressed or initial syllables, and the 'lax' vowels /ɪ ɛ ɔ/ do not occur in stressed open syllables.

Onsets

Any vowel can begin an initial syllable, but under most analyses non-initial syllables must begin with a consonant.

(8) *al   enç aiç il   eir onc   aust ou*
     /al   ɛnts ets ɪl   ir   ɔnk   ost   u/
     wing start ease they go hook east egg

 Any single consonant may constitute an onset. Two-consonant onsets are of three kinds: for the first, the second segment is a liquid (one of /l j r/; the case of /w/ is dealt with above), preceded either by a stop or a fricative. The liquid /l/ does not occur after the segments /t d θ ð ʒ/, and the liquid /r/ does not occur after the segments /ð s z ʒ/.

(9) *plait   droug   gien   thron*
     /plet   druj   ʒjɛn   θrɔn/
     pleased contribution cheek   throne

 The second class of two-consonant onsets are a heterorganic stop followed by one of /s θ t d/; these usually derive from Greek.

(10) *xyron   chthonic   ptyssoscia bdella*
      /ksiˈrɔn   kθɔˈnɪk   ˌpti.soˈxja bdɛˈla/
      scalpel   subterraneous glaucoma virus

 The remaining two-consonant onsets comprise /s/ followed by a nasal, a stop, the two liquids /l j/ or the two fricatives /f v/.

(11) *smout skore   sdegn slanc siesc sforç svam*
      /smut skoˈre sdɪjn slank sjɛx   sfɔrts svam/
      riot   urgent scorn thin siege strain sponge

 All the possible three-consonant onsets are formed by the combination of /s/ + consonant and consonant + liquid onsets.

(12) *splorar spien sdruçol sfrey*
       /splo'rar spjɛn sdri'tsɔl sfri/
       explore hope lubrication horror

No more complex onsets are permitted.

Codas

Empty codas are permitted, including word-finally. However, the 'lax' vowels /ɪ ɛ ɔ/ do not occur in final open syllables (as these would necessarily be stressed).

(13) *idone   nijomm-au*
       /ˌi.do'ne ˌni.ʒɔ'mo/
       suitable   bind-pst

Any single consonant except /v s ʒ h/ may be a coda. There are several types of two-consonant coda. A liquid may be followed by any non-liquid that can appear in codas at all; a nasal by any such non-liquid and non-nasal.

(14) *sculd   tragç corf lucern | hamt coyenç   ans*
       /xɪld   trɛjts kɔrf li'tsɛrn | hamt ko'jɛnts   anz/
       obligation clue raven lantern | live.s prevention handle

The fricative /s/ may precede a voiceless stop; /f/ may precede /t/ specifically.

(15) *cosp   fest   masq | haft*
       /kɔsp   fɛst   mask | haft/
       bee sting banquet disguise | busy

Conversely, /s/ may also follow any voiceless stop; after /t/ this is identical to the affricate phoneme /ts/.

(16) *laps   ouç   jex*
/laps   uts   ʒɛks/
mistake silence bullseye

Finally among two-consonant codas, the cluster /kt/ is also permitted.

(17) *abject*
/abˈʒɛkt/
despicable

The few three-consonant codas that appear are a nasal or /j/ with a licit two-consonant cluster.

(18) *boist   deunx   defonct*
/bɔjst   daunks   deˈfɔnkt/
box   near miss deceased

No more complex codas are permitted.

1.4   Allophony

Throughout this section, the phonetic transcription approximately reflects the mesolectal speech in the capital city of Damvath.

Assimilation

The phoneme /n/ is pronounced [ŋ] before velars.

(19) *blanc   viking   mensc*
/blank   viˈkɪŋg mɛnx/
[blaŋk   vɪˈkɪŋg mɛŋx]
white   raid   honour

Regressive voicing assimilation affects /s/ before any voiced obstruent, nasal or /l/.

(20) *sboc svanið   pasnagl bruslaç*
      /sbɔk sva'nıθ   pa'snɛjl bri'slats/
      [zbɔk zvɐ'nıθ   pɐ'znɛjl bʀɪ'zlats]
      smirk unconscious parsnip breakfast

Palatals

The phoneme /x/ surfaces as [ç] when adjacent to a front vowel.

(21) *scið   esc*
      /xıθ   ɛx/
      [çıθ   ɛç]
      possible bait

 The phoneme /ʒ/, along with /j/ either word-initially or between an unstressed and a stressed vowel (in that order), is pronounced [ʝ].

(22) *jast   yon   çuyal*
      /ʒast jɔn   tsa'jal/
      [ʝast ʝɔn   tsɐ'ʝal]
      zinc   where cicada

Non-rhoticity

Syllabic /r̩/ surfaces as [ɐ]. Furthermore, for some speakers syllabic /m n/ surface as [ɐm ɐn] respectively.

(23) *issambr   ðesmbal   visn*
      /ı'samb.r̩ ˌðɛz.m̩'bal   'vız.n̩/
      [ı'sam.bɐ ˌðɛ.zɐm'bal   'vı.zɐn]
      massacre   dodgeball   knot

 Coda /r/ surfaces as length on a preceding monophthong, or as [ɐ] after a diphthong or /j/. The vowel's quality may also be altered, with /ar ir ur/ becoming [ɐː ɪ ʊː] respectively.

(24) *vert   hagr   tourm*
     /vɛrt   ˈhɛj.r̩   turm/
     [vɛːt   ˈhɛ.jɐ   tʊːm]
     green linchpin squadron

When a word beginning with a vowel immediately follows, the [ʀ] is resurrected as the onset of the next syllable.

(25) *l'hour   uncos*
     /lur   ɪnˈkɔz/
     [lʊː‿   ʀɪŋˈkɔz]
     df=time something

Reduction

In syllables without primary or secondary stress, the vowel /a/ surfaces as [ɐ], the vowels /ɛ e i/ as [ɪ] and the vowels /ɔ o u/ as [ʊ].

(26) *tovaresc   taisson torvegl*
     /ˌto.vaˈrɛx   teˈsɔn   tɔrˈvɪjl/
     [ˌto.vɐˈʀɛç   tɪˈsɔn   tʊːˈvɪjl]
     homosexual badger whirlwind

Before an obstruent or after /n/, a coda /ts/ is pronounced [s].

(27) *amaçgat   fenç*
     /ˌa.matsˈgat fɛnts/
     [ˌa.mɐsˈgat fɛns]
     nursery   split

The sequence /kts/ is realised as [ks].

(28) *acceir   faççon*
     /akˈtsir   fakˈtsɔn/
     [ɐkˈsɪː   fɐkˈsɔn]
     approach party

1.5   Orthography

The primary letters in the Borlish alphabet are ordered as in the table below.

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Alphabet and Letter Names

a	a	h	hac	q	cu
b	be	i	i	r	ar
c	ce	j	jot	s	es
ç	cedil	k	ka	t	te
d	de	l	el	u	iscon
ð	eð	m	em	v	ve
e	e	n	en	x	ex
f	ef	o	o	y	oy
g	ge	p	pe	z	zet

</div>

The character ‹ w ›, which is used in foreign words and some names (like *Willaum* 'William'), is pronounced like ‹ v › and called *vescon* 'second-vee'. There are also some compound characters. The ligatures ‹ æ œ ›, primarily used in Classical loanwords, are called *æsc* and *œthel* respectively and pronounced as if written ‹ e ›. The character ‹ ï › is referred to as *i jammel* 'twin i' and pronounced as if written ‹ yi ›.

In the following we will consider ‹ y › to be a vowel when written between consonants and/or word boundaries, and a consonant otherwise.

Consonants

The following letters regularly denote a single phoneme.

<div align="center">

b	/b/	m	/m/
ç	/ts/	n	/n/
d	/d/	p	/p/
f	/f/	q	/k/
j	/ʒ/	r	/r/
k	/k/	v	/v/
l	/l/	z	/z/

</div>

Of these, the letters ‹ b d f l m n p r › may appear doubled, which usually does not affect their pronunciation.

(29)   *abbað   joddy   affis   ollom   commet   bannir   çoppin   arrum*
        /aˈbaθ   ʒɔˈdi   aˈfɪz   ɔˈlɔm   kɔˈmɛt   baˈnɪr   tsɔˈpɪn   aˈrɪm/
        abbot   cuppa   tip   relic   ban   start   toffee   cosine

 The only exception to this is that ‹ mm nn rr › may denote a single consonant followed by a syllabic consonant. This is the reading when ‹ mm nn rr › occurs word-finally or before a consonant.

(30)   *yem-m   grin-n   car-r*
        /ˈjɛm.m̩   ˈɡrɪn.n̩   ˈkar.r̩/
        get-1p   judge-3p   seek-inf

The letter ‹ ð › is pronounced /θ/ word-finally and /ð/ otherwise.

(31)   *arð   naðr   ðeu*
        /arθ   ˈnað.r̩   ðau/
        steep   viper   buttocks

 The letter ‹ x › regularly denotes the phoneme sequence /ks/.

(32)   *xivol   euxon   incox*
        /ksiˈvɔl   auˈksɔn   ɪnˈkɔks/
        waltz   quartz   digestion

 Consider the final six letters ‹ c g h s t y › when they occur alone (not part of a digraph). In this case, the letters ‹ t y › regularly denote /t j/ respectively. The letter /t/ may be doubled, without any effect on its pronunciation.

(33)   *tien   yoc*   │ *cattin*
        /tjɛn   jɔk*   │ kaˈtɪn/
        yours   husband │ kitten

 The letter ‹ c › is pronounced /ts/ before ‹ e i y › and /k/ otherwise. The doubled ‹ cc › is pronounced /kts/ before ‹ e i y › and /k/ otherwise.

(34) *cigl   cuivr   bac | accaç occeir*
     /tsajl   ˈkajv.r̩ bak | aˈkats ɔkˈtsir/
     darling copper twig | post   kill

 The letter ‹ g › may be pronounced as either of /g ʒ/ before ‹ e i y › and
is pronounced /g/ otherwise. The doubled ‹ gg › may be pronounced as
either of /g gʒ/ before ‹ e i y › and is pronounced /g/ otherwise.

(35) *gevou   genoil tenguð | suggesson*
     /geˈvu   ʒeˈnɔjl tɛnˈgɪθ | ˌsɪg.ʒɛˈsɔn/
     watch out knee   bauble | suggestion

 The letter ‹ h › is either pronounced /h/ or is silent (the latter only in
some vocabulary inherited from Latin and after vocalic ‹ g ›).

(36) *heu   hom   augher*
     /hau   ɔm   oˈjɛr/
     mien   person tumbler

 The letter ‹ s › is pronounced /z/ in coda position or between vowels,
and /s/ otherwise or when doubled.

(37) *bevis   bosaç   bustr | bossir*
     /beˈvɪz   boˈzats ˈbɪst.r̩ | bɔˈsɪr/
     banknote gunfire example | gentleman

Consonant digraphs

The six letters, ‹ c g h s t y ›, combine with other letters to form digraphs.
The sequences ‹ sc ch th › regularly denote the phonemes /x k θ/. The
potentially ambiguous sequence ‹ sch › is read /sk/.

(38) *sclar   chym   thral | schol*
     /xlar   kɪm   θral | skɔl/
     lightning lymph slave | school

 The sequence ‹ cq › is pronounced /k/.

(39) *jalicq   jacquot*
      /ʒaˈlɪk   ʒaˈkwɔt/
      waistcoat coat

 The letters ‹ g y › only form digraphs when combined with vowels, for which see below.

Vowels

Divide written vowels into two groups. Free vowels are either word-final or separated from the next vowel in the word by a single consonant letter (or one of ‹ sc ch th ›).

(40) *choma epu   idiocy   nothe*
      /koˈma eˈpi   ˌi.djoˈtsi noˈθe/
      gnome express stupidity illegitimate

 Checked vowels are either in a final closed syllable or separated from the next vowel in the word by at least two consonant letters.

(41) *commun   ambasctour sincer*
      /kɔˈmɪn   ˌam.baxˈtur sɪnˈtsɛr/
      ordinary emissary   genuine

 First consider the letters ‹ a e i o u y › when they occur alone (not part of a digraph). When they are free, ‹ a e i o u y › are pronounced /a e i o i i/.

(42) *cla vige   bro   cru try*
      /kla viˈʒe   bro   kri tri/
      key wealthy dude raw turn

 When they are checked, ‹ a e i o u y › are pronounced /a ɛ ɪ ɔ ɪ ɪ/.

(43) *vindron   vampyr   effus*
      /vɪnˈdrɔn vamˈpɪr ɛˈfɪz/
      vintner   vampire extensive

Between a consonant and one of the vowels ‹ a e o u ›, the letters ‹ i u › denote the semivowel ‹ j ›. The letter ‹ u › denotes the semivowel /w/ specifically after ‹ q ›.

(44) *diac   suet   quelt*
      /djak sjɛt   kwɛlt/
      mic   familiar dinner

Vowel digraphs

The digraphs ‹ au eu ou › are pronounced /o au u/ respectively. The rarer ‹ ao eo › share their pronunciation with ‹ eu ›.

(45) *taur teun   tout* | *paon   theory*
      /tor taun   tut* | paun   thauˈri/
      bull scant everything | peacock   science

The digraphs ‹ ai ei oi ui › and ‹ ay ey oy uy › are pronounced /e i ɔj aj/ respectively. Intervocalically ‹ y › does double duty, simultaneously affecting the previous vowel as stated and acting as an onset ‹ j ›.

(46) *deit   joivr* | *rayon   huyaç*
      /dit   ˈʒɔjv.ɻ | reˈjɔn   haˈjats/
      finger frost | sunbeam   corruption

The vast majority of coda ‹ g › and many other ‹ g › before consonants form vowel digraphs. Here, the digraphs ‹ ag eg ig og ug aug oug › are usually pronounced /ɛj ɪj aj ɔj aj oj uj/ respectively.

(47) *bag   deg rig   pog tug   faug   voug*
      /bɛj   dɪj raj   pɔj taj   foj   vuj/
      berry ten queue   few passion sickle wrong

However, there are exceptions where a ‹ g › in one of the above environments is read consonantally.

(48) *magr*   *magr* | *migrar*   *scigrar*
      /ˈmag.r̩ ˈmɛj.r̩ | mɪˈgrar   xajˈrar/
      rash   scarce | migrate   redistrict

Chapter 2

Morphology

2.1 Adjectives

ʔʔ