

useful for spell-checking, since it incorporates recent orthographic rules as published by Dzhamalxanov (1992). The English translation of the definitions and examples is in progress.

2. Phonology

2.1. Vowels and Consonants

Chechen is characterized by having an intricate system of vowels that includes the distinction between long and short, as well as between plain and diphthong. The phonemic vowel inventory is shown in Table 1, and it is based on Nichols (1994; 1997) as well as Komen (2007a; 2007b).

Table 1. Chechen vowel inventory

	Front				Back				Diphthong		
	unrounded		rounded		unrounded		rounded		Coda		
	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	plain	rounded	
Close	plain	i [i]	i: [i:]	ü [y]	ü: [y:]			u [u]	u: [u:]	(ui)	
	diphthong	ie [iɛ]	ie: [iɛ:]	üe [yɛ]	üe: [yɛ:]			uo [uɔ], [uɜ]	uo: [uɔ:], [uɜ:]	(uoi) [^u ɔ ⁱ]	(ou) [o ^u]
Mid	plain	e [ɛ], [æ ^s]	e: [ɛ:]					o [ɔ]	o: [o:]	(ei)	[ø ^y]
Open	plain					a [ɜ]	a: [æ], [a:]			(ai)	[ɜ ⁱ], [e ⁱ]

The short /a/ phoneme is realized as an almost schwa-like [ɜ] that is considerably shorter than that in e.g. English or Dutch. The long /a:/ phoneme is realized in two allophones. The first allophone occurs in closed syllables, and is longer than the short /a/, but it is much shorter than the second allophone [a:], which occurs in open syllables. The sound [æ] in Chechen has traditionally been written with a separate grapheme, but phonemically it is either a long /a:/ phoneme in a closed syllable (e.g. /da:q:ina/ ‘has come’ is realized as [dæχqinɜ]) or a short /a/ phoneme in a syllable starting or ending with a pharyngeal (e.g. /cʁena/ ‘together’ is realized as [cʁæ^snɜ]).

The long diphthongs in the ‘front’ and ‘back’ columns, /ie:/, /üe:/ and /uo:/, can occur in variants stressing the first or the second part of the diphthong, e.g. [i^ːɛ:] versus [i^ːɛ]. This is free variation. The difference between the short and long diphthongs in closed syllables is neutralized. The short diphthongs are phonetically realized as [i^ːɛ], [y^ːɛ] and [u^ːɔ]. There are a few cases where short diphthongs occur word-finally where they contrast with short plain vowels.

The diphthongs in the rightmost column are analyzed as separate phonemes (instead of sequences of a vowel phoneme followed by a semivowel phoneme). There are nasalized vowels, but nasalization does not seem to be phonemic; it occurs word-finally as the result of an underlying following consonant /n/.³

³ Detailed research on nasalization remains to be done.