

Editor's note: The following is a double review of William W. Derbyshire's *A Learner's Dictionary of Slovene: With Words in Their Inflected Forms*, with contributions from the perspectives of both a native speaker and a nonnative speaker of Slovene.

**William W. Derbyshire**, with Marta Pirnat-Greenberg. *A Learner's Dictionary of Slovene: With Words in Their Inflected Forms*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2002. 228 pp., \$24.95 (paper). ISBN: 0-89357-300-0.

This dictionary will be a welcome reference book to all that are interested in the Slovene language—from non-Slovenes that would like to learn more about the language, to native speakers that would like to present or make this language understandable to others.

The dictionary comprises approximately 5,000 entries. At first glance it does not seem very attractive: it falls into a size range between pocket editions and large glossaries. Huge interspacing between individual entries in the body of the dictionary gives rise to doubts about whether this particular dictionary might offer any especially interesting or exciting fresh perspectives. However, after reading the chapter "Reference Charts and Instructions" (vii–xxiii) users will find themselves quite satisfied. This chapter offers a great amount of information about the workings of the Slovene language.

The main portion of the volume is the body of the dictionary, accompanied by three additional sections: a foreword, abbreviations and reference charts, and instructions on how to use the dictionary. One of the advantages of this dictionary is the fact it is not a reworking or adaptation of other dictionaries, but a completely new product with a new approach, and the result of cooperation between two persons.

The author strove to compile a contemporary dictionary with a wide range of vocabulary, including all language levels, from everyday life to literary style. As a result, some of the words chosen may sound archaic today, but are a vital part of Slovene linguistic and cultural history. On the other hand, one can also find some words that have only recently appeared in the language. Because language is a living organism changing constantly, it is almost impossible for a dictionary to cover the very newest words. Nonetheless, I regretted the absence of information technology expressions, such as *računalnik* 'computer', *tiskalnik* 'printer', and *medmrežje* 'internet'.

The chapter “Reference Charts and Instructions” contains a large amount of important and practical information on types of noun declensions, verbal conjugation, and other inflection patterns. It is clearly the product of much experience in teaching or presenting Slovene to learners.

The division of the nouns is original: the masculine and neuter genders form what is called “Class 1,” and the feminine gender forms “Class 2” and “Class 3.” The subdivision of declension groups is made not only according different endings, but also by the position of the stress in the word. It shows that spoken language is very important to the author of the dictionary. Indeed, the prominence of the spoken word is very strong today and one cannot imagine a good dictionary that would not provide the user with information on the most common and appropriate pronunciation of its vocabulary. It is for this reason that the information on stress is such a welcome supplement to each entry in the body of the dictionary.

The order of cases in the tables for the grammatical explanations is as follows: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, locative, and instrumental—representing a departure from the classical presentation of the cases in Slovene grammars. Having the forms for nominative, accusative, and genitive written together is surely easier for learners of the language—and it is also the usual sequence for teaching the Slovene cases to learners. All the irregularities deviating from the patterns in the word groups described in section one are mentioned in the individual entries, which is of great value. Information is given on the word in question directly in the body of the dictionary, just below the line under the entry, saving time and energy. A bonus is the clear organization of additional forms of irregular verbs.

The only weakness of this first section is its somewhat unclear format and division into subchapters. With regard to external form and technical layout, the dictionary could be made user-friendlier. For example, it would be helpful if the section titles for the different word groups were offset in a different font, making the transition from nouns to verbs more evident. More space between the paragraphs would also signal that a new section is addressing a new grammatical category. In addition, more examples added to the explanations of the grammatical rules would make this chapter easier to read. Finally, this chapter provides information about only two grammatical categories: nouns and verbs. There is no information about the inflected forms of the other parts of speech, although the beginning of the chapter states: “Entries in this

dictionary include nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, numerals, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions and particles” (vii).

Alongside an overall positive assessment of the work, some improvements could be made in the second edition: First, why is so much space left between the entries? The only explanation I can surmise is that the author supposed the user of the dictionary would add his or her own notes, observations, or additional translations to the entries. Second, the translations of the entries are very brief—a shortcoming of small-format dictionaries. In a few cases, however, additional basic senses would be appreciated—for example, adding ‘to report’ to the definition of *poročati* ‘to marry’; adding ‘before’ (in the temporal sense) to *pred* ‘in front of’; and adding ‘to touch’ to *prevzeti* ‘to take possession of’. Given the high frequency of both terms, it would also be justifiable to add ‘Slovenian’ to the definition of *slovenski* ‘Slovene’ (163).

Finally, two examples in particular caught my eye: first the dual form of the noun *gôra*—which also serves as the paradigmatic example for declension group II<sub>f</sub>4 (Class II, feminine, fourth declension, xiv)—is given as *goré*. True, the same form is stipulated in the *Slovenski pravopis*<sup>1</sup> and it is thus on solid authority that the dictionary faithfully provides this form. Nevertheless, I do not know any Slovene native speakers that would choose this form over *gôri* as the correct one. Many variations are possible in spoken language but, in my opinion, nobody would produce it as described in this dictionary and in the *Slovenski pravopis*. The second example is the pronunciation of the word *glagol* (chosen to illustrate pronunciation of the final Slovene *l* in the foreword), where the indication is to pronounce the final *l* as /w/. Again, all the Slovene native speakers I know pronounce it with /l/ at the end (as certain other Slovene words with *l* at the end pronounced as /l/: *val*, *preval*, *predal*, etc.).

With the help of this dictionary, learners should be able to participate in everyday conversation, read newspaper articles and, to a certain extent, begin reading literary texts. Of course they must be aware of the fact that in this book they will find only a part of the wealth of Slovene vocabulary and it is likely that they may not find a particular word.

Compiling a dictionary is demanding work that is never finished or perfect, and it is work in which incompleteness is unavoidable. A justifiable assessment of any dictionary is normally possible only after a long test period for this tool of translation and communication. One can

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<sup>1</sup> Jože Toporišič et al. *Slovenski pravopis*. (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2001) 606.

nonetheless already see that this dictionary has practical value and it represents another achievement for the Slovene language as it gains new prominence with the accession of Slovenia to the European Union.

A particularly personal gesture of the author's gratitude is the dedication at the beginning of the book: "To Bengt, from whom the time was stolen." Bengt Erikson was the proofreader for this dictionary and the book is thus dedicated to him. He did his job well—the shortcomings of the volume are few. The typesetting and proofreading was done with great care, and there are no mistakes in the use of diacritical marks. If only it existed in an electronic version as well!

Many will be happy to discover this dictionary, especially those engaged in presenting Slovene to learners and helping make it understandable to them. This dictionary should be better known among lecturers of Slovene as a foreign language and among students, because it could be a truly valuable resource—either for course participants or for self-study. Some grammatical rules from the chapter "Reference Charts and Instructions" are central to the language but difficult to find elsewhere. Perhaps a learner can stumble across them after years of practice and reflection on the language, maybe a teacher or some other good soul can explain them—but if you are alone, this dictionary can do the job for you.

*Meta Klinar, European Commission*