

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.

Just for a minute, put yourself in the mindset of a learner of Slovene, struggling through a text with one of the standard Slovene-English dictionaries. A simple sentence such as *S tabo sem šel* becomes a quagmire of irretrievable lexical items, with no cross-references to *ti*, *biti*, or *iti*. Having ascertained that *oko* means 'eye', a learner may likely try to form the genitive **oka* with no information to the contrary. After diligently checking the accentuation of *jêzik*, it would be unsurprising for a learner to create the genitive **jêzika*.

A Learner's Dictionary of Slovene (LDS), written by William Derbyshire with the help of Marta Pirnat-Greenberg, sets itself the goal of helping learners overcome these hurdles. The concept is a worthy one. To date, almost every Slovene-English (and even more so, English-Slovene) dictionary has been written to aid Slovenes coping with the intricacies of English rather than the other way around. Users of the Grad/Leeming Slovene-English dictionary¹ that look up *miš* are informed, for example, that the English plural of *mouse* is *mice*, but not that the gender of the Slovene word is feminine (although astute learners can glean this from the examples).

The notion of a learner's dictionary is largely British, and publishers such as Oxford and Longman have made a steady business of cranking out "advanced," "intermediate," and "handy" learner's dictionaries of "current English," "American English," "English idioms," and a range of other specializations designed to tap the enormous market represented by learners of English worldwide. A simple experiment on the Internet search engine *Google* confirms that the format is primarily dedicated to English-language lexicography: the 34,800 hits for "learner's dictionary" dwindle to a few hundred when the English material is

¹ Anton Grad & Henry Leeming. *Slovensko-angleški slovar*. (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1990).

eliminated. Even so, with learner's dictionaries dedicated to languages such as Haitian Creole² and Payungu,³ why not one for Slovene as well?

Speakers of English learning Slovene are a small but diverse group. Within academia it is relatively rare to find someone learning Slovene as his or her first foreign language, especially without the stepping stone of a previous Slavic language such as Serbian/Croatian, Czech, or Russian. Such "informed" learners will have relatively little benefit from, say, the entire conjugation of *imeti* appearing in the body of a dictionary or the *-a*, *-o* annotation following every adjective ending in *-ski*.

However, there is a growing number of what one might call "naive" learners of Slovene. The estimated 500 Americans living in Slovenia (according to a recent U.S. embassy statement) include those here for business, diplomatic, and military purposes. Many are inclined to learn Slovene, but are frustrated by what they see as a lack of accessibility to the language. When the British and non-Slavic second-language speakers of English are added to the mix, the number of those potentially benefiting from a learner's dictionary increases substantially.

The advantages of *LDS* over other Slovene-English dictionaries on the market are several. All headwords are marked with diacritics according to the contemporary system of accentuation (indicating quantity and quality, but not pitch). This is a clear advance over Grad/Leeming in particular, which has so many accentual errors—particularly with regard to quality—that there is no point in consulting it for such information. The no-nonsense approach of including declensional and conjugational paradigms for troublesome items—such as *biti*, *ves*, *oko*, and *človek*—within the entry itself is a handy feature. So too is marking the part of speech for every item as well as noun gender and verbal aspect. Particularly for verbs, supplying aspectual counterparts within the entry is useful. Drawing on an established but all too infrequent tradition, *LDS* keys entries for nouns and verbs to paradigms on pages vii–xxiii, entitled "Reference Charts and Instructions."

² Albert Valdman, Jean-Baptiste Rozevel, & Charles Pooser. *A Learner's Dictionary of Haitian Creole*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Creole Institute, 1996)

³ Peter Austin. *A Learner's Dictionary of Payungu, Western Australia*. (Bundoora, Victoria: Linguistics Division, LaTrobe University, 1987).

In its definitions of the words, *LDS* avoids some of the old traps of Slovene-English lexicography, for example by glossing *vrtec* as ‘day-care center’ rather than ‘kindergarten’. Some old mistakes are repeated (e.g., ‘respectively’ as the sole gloss of *oziroma*), and occasionally less common definitions are given at the expense of others (e.g., *oreh* as ‘nut tree’ but not ‘walnut’ or *punčka* as ‘little girl, puppet’ but not ‘doll’). In its glosses, the dictionary is refreshingly American, with items such as *avtocesta* ‘highway’, *dvigalo* ‘elevator’, *petelin* ‘rooster’, *nogomet* ‘soccer’, and so on.

There are no major problems with the accentuation or morphology in *LDS*. Derbyshire used the *SSKJ*⁴ as an arbiter for disputed forms. Presumably the 2001 *pravopis*⁵ was not yet available to him as *LDS* was being compiled, because he mentions only its predecessor, the 1962 *pravopis*, in the foreword. Outright mistakes (such as failure to mark the non-labialized pronunciation of [l] in *gostilna*, as he does for *spol*, *kultura*, etc.) are rare. The phoneme /ɔ/ causes some difficulty. In the foreword to the dictionary, the IPA character is repeatedly printed as a backwards *e*, and in the entry featuring the full declension of *pes* there is a note that “è = /ɔ/”, which is valid for nom. sg. *pès*, but not acc. pl. *psè*. The entry for *steza* provides the headword “steza, -è” and the variant “steza, -e” with the note “all instances of both è and e = /ɔ/”. Of course, this only applies to the root vowel, not the genitive ending.

A serious deficit is the lack of entries for all non-transparent members of a given paradigm. *LDS* is commendable in referring the user to *iti*, *brati*, *biti*, *gnati*, etc. at entries for *grem*, *berem*, *sem*, and *ženem*. However, pronominal forms (*me*, *mano*, *meni*; *to*, *teh*; *vse*, etc.) are not similarly cross-referenced to their headwords. Nor will the user find any cross-referenced entries for *najdem*, *nisem*, *padem*, *pridem*, *sežem*, and other such verb forms, even though these appear under the headwords for *najti*, *biti*, *pasti*, *priti*, and *seči*.

Typographic errors are generally rare, but include extra or missing commas (e.g., 208, 210), and the repeated sporadic appearance of *inaM* for the abbreviation *INAN* ‘inanimate’ (e.g., 105, 187, 217). Outright

⁴ Bajec, Anton et al., eds. *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika*. (Ljubljana: SAZU, 2000).

⁵ Jože Toporišič et al. *Slovenski pravopis*. (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2001).

mistakes such as *lanuage* for “language” (37), *finger nail* (84), or the incorrect capitalization of *Novo Mesto* (85) are exceptions.

The layout of the volume is, frankly, unattractive. The decision to arrange entries in rows rather than two columns per page is exacerbated by the semi-columnar arrangement of the four components of each entry (headword, gloss, grammatical information, and paradigm code). The result is a great deal of white space, while spillover by longer items often violates column integrity. The apparent sparseness is deceptive, however, because *LDS* uses minimalistic conventions such as the presence or absence of parentheses to indicate whether an aspectually-paired verb has a meaning change.

Syntactic information is very limited. Specifically, there is no mention of the second-position placement of the pronominal and verbal clitics or, perhaps more surprising for most learners, the clitic nature of the conjunction *pa* or particle *le*.

A major shortcoming of *LDS* is that it is limited to 5,000 items (iii). Derbyshire admits that “some users will wish that one or another vocabulary item had been included” (iv), but even so the choice of vocabulary appears odd at times. We find, for example, the adjectives *karavanški*, the noun *pečar*, and the surname *Miklošič*, but traditional foods (*potica*, *skuta*, *žganci*, *pršut*, *gibanica*), cultural concepts (*kozolec*, *veselica*, *koline*, *kurent*), and practical items needed by long-term visitors (*prebivanje*, *zaposlovanje*, *zdravstven*, *zavarovanje*, *najeti*, *potrdilo*, *položnica*, *izkaznica*) are often missing.

Consequently, even at a relatively affordable \$25, many learners of the language will likely opt instead for the more vocabulary-rich 70,000-item Grad/Leeming bilingual dictionary. Conversely, if information on accentuation and morphology is the deciding factor, the roughly 110,000-item monolingual 2001 *Slovenski pravopis* is the clear choice for comprehensiveness. But how much does size really matter?

I selected two short journalistic and literary texts at random from materials on my desk. They are analyzed from the perspective of a hypothetical learner, assumed to be able to: handle all basic regular inflectional morphology including verbs in *-ovati*; reconstruct the infinitive from the *l*-participle and *n*-participle (in the case of *-viti* > *-vljen* this is questionable), deal with non-root mobile vowels (i.e., not of the type *ves* ~ *vse*), segment the *naj-*, *ne-*, and *pre-* prefixes, and derive adverbs in

-o from the corresponding adjectives. The learner is assumed to be unable to: reconstruct the infinitive from the verbal noun in *-je* or gerund in *-č*, segment aspectual prefixes, deal with consonant alternations requiring the eye to scan more than a line or two up or down (e.g., *najti:najdem*, *deti:denem*), and derive perfective verbs from imperfectives created with vowel changes (e.g., *opozarjati < opozoriti*). In addition, the learner is assumed to have a low ability to recognize cognates.

Items marked with ~~strike through~~ are not in *LDS* at all, those marked with underline have entries but lack the appropriate meanings, and those in *italics* lack entries, but a learner may be able to derive their meanings from adjacent items with the same root:

Hrvaška želja brez blagoslova Ljubljane. Hrvaško *kmetijsko ministrstvo* je na svojih ~~spletnih~~ straneh pred kratkim objavilo sporočilo, po katerem Zagreb resno ~~razmišlja~~ o ~~razglasitvi~~ *izključne* gospodarske ~~ene~~. Če bi Hrvati skupaj z Italijani *dejansko* ~~razglasili~~ takšno ~~ene~~, bi bil še ~~neveljaven~~ mejni sporazum Drnovšek-Račan postavljen na glavo, saj bi Slovenija ostala brez meje z odprtim morjem. Slovensko zunanje ~~ministrstvo~~ je včeraj sporočilo, da ~~be~~ *nasprotovalo* ~~vsem enostranskim potezam~~. Na ~~ministrstvu~~ še opozarjajo, da EU v okviru svoje skupne zunanje politike ni ~~naklonjena~~ *ustanavljanju* novih ekonomskih ~~en~~ na svojem območju, zelo jasno pa *nasprotuje* tudi ~~enostranskim~~ ~~proglasitvam~~ oziroma aktom. Hrvaška, ki je na poti do članstva v EU, ~~be~~ ta namig najverjetneje morala upoštevati. (*Dnevnik* 5 August 2003: 1)

Note. Deficient *LDS* entries: *stran* 'side', *pred* 'in front of', *kratek* 'short', *po* 'for, through, by, after', *zunani* 'exterior', *poteza* 'feature', *na* 'on, upon, onto', *še* 'yet, still', *oziroma* 'respectively'.

Cvetnik. Nekje visoko gori na Gorjancih ~~kipi~~ črno *pečevje*. Med ~~pečevjem~~ se pa širi *cvetnik*, prav majhen vrtec, ves poln najlepših in ~~najblagodušnejših~~ *rožic*. ~~Te~~ *pečevje* se težko ~~najde~~, še težje pa se ~~pride~~ *čezenj* v čudoviti vrtec. In ~~to~~ je dobro. Kdorkoli je še ~~zablodil~~ v *cvetnik*, ~~ga~~ je ~~zamaknila~~ in ~~prevzela~~ *krasota* in *dišava rožic* tako neskončno, da je nehal misliti na jed in pijačo, na ~~spanje~~ in tudi na ~~povratek~~ in je ~~poginil~~, ne čuteč nobene ~~boji~~, od predolgega ~~bedenja~~ in ~~stradanja~~. *Blagor* pa ~~si~~ ~~ga~~ tistemu, ki dobi po sreči ali ~~naključju~~ kak cvet ~~teh plemenitih~~ *rožic*. ~~Ako~~ se ženi, naj ~~ga~~ dene svoji ~~nevesti~~

v ~~venec~~ in živel ~~be z~~ nje v ~~krščanski~~ spravi in ljubezni do groba....
(Janez Trdina, from *Bajke in povesti o Gorjancih*, 1882–88)

Note. Deficient *LDS* entries: *vrtec* ‘day-care center’, *na* ‘on, upon, onto’.

Counting missing and deficient items as a full strike and possibly derivable items as a half strike, lexical identification stands at a relatively low 73% and 65% for the two texts, respectively. However, it is unlikely that learners would not have access to the other widely-available Slovene-English dictionaries, and so the two texts were analyzed for these using the same criteria. The large Grad/Leeming dictionary scored 94% and 83%, the recent Komac dictionary⁶ scored 89% and 78%, and the familiar green Komac/Škerlj pocket dictionary⁷ scored 85% and 75%. The fact that *LDS* performs three-fourths the work of Grad/Leeming with one-fourteenth the vocabulary is no mean feat. Still, it is best viewed as a complement to more complete dictionaries.

The dictionary will most likely find its niche on the shelves of those committed to learning basic Slovene, especially as their first Slavic language, and perhaps as a resource in the various Slovene language courses taught around the world. Those dedicated to the lexicography and teaching of Slovene will follow the reception of *LDS* with interest.

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⁶ Daša Komac. *Splošni angleško-slovensko in slovensko-angleški moderni slovar*. Ed. Mojca M. Hočevar. (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2001).

⁷ Daša Komac & Ružena Škerlj. *Angleško-slovenski in slovensko-angleški slovar*. 7 ed. (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1985).