

Rada Lečič. *Slovenski glagol: oblikoslovni priročnik in slovar slovenskih glagolov / Slovene Verb: A Morphological Manual and Dictionary of Slovene Verbs.* Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2004. 268 pp., SIT 4,070 [= \$21.00] (paper). ISBN: 961-6500-43-0.

The recent publication *Slovenski glagol: oblikoslovni priročnik in slovar slovenskih glagolov / Slovene Verb: A Morphological Manual and Dictionary of Slovene Verbs* will be a welcome addition to the libraries of beginning students of Slovene, assisting them in both encoding and decoding Slovene verbal forms.

The book begins with an introduction (6–7) and grammatical overview of verb classification and conjugation patterns (8–20), followed by an alphabetical listing of 2,610 accented infinitives (*aktivirati*–*žvižgati*, 21–196) with the 1st singular present, imperatives, masculine and feminine *l*-participles, and an English gloss; an alphabetical listing of present-tense forms with the infinitive and an English gloss (197–255); an alphabetical listing of irregular *l*-participles with the infinitive form and an English gloss (256–65); and a list of sources and literature (267–68). The main part of the work—the alphabetically listed infinitives—includes aspectual labels and numerical keying to the classification scheme (e.g., *blésti (impf) 2.11.2.*), an indication of frequency (e.g., *jésti **** [= very frequent]), and alternate accentual or conjugational forms (e.g., *páziti/pazíti* and *jókam + jóčem*).

The classification scheme is the same as that used in the latest normative guide:¹ a five-way division by 1st present endings (*-am*, *-em*, *-im*, *-jem*, *-m*) with subtypes for various corresponding infinitive endings, apparent insertions, and so on. The arrangement is a pragmatic one, especially given the nature of the work. The volume's construction—allowing users to look up infinitives, present tenses, or participles—satisfactorily fulfils its credentials as a manual. Its utility as a dictionary is less demonstrable: as the author admits, the English glosses (which are generally single-word equivalents) are only “the basic and most frequent meanings” (7).

The volume has a double purpose as a manual. First, with regard to encoding, it allows learners of Slovene to create correct verbal forms of

¹ Jože Toporišič et al., *Slovenski pravopis* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2001) 102.

verbs from infinitives—e.g., *prevesti: prevedem, prevedi(te), prevedel(a)*—that are otherwise inaccessible to beginners. The standard Slovene-English² and English-Slovene³ dictionaries do not provide such information (unless the forms occur by chance in contextual examples), and grammars—even excellent ones—do not (and should not) offer exhaustive lists of verbal morphology. Second, and more importantly, the volume provides learners with access to the infinitive, or “dictionary form,” on the basis of a conjugated form such as *prevedem*. As a recent Slovene review⁴ of the volume (and its subsequent translations) indicates, getting from *bereš* and *našel* to *brati* and *najti* is nearly impossible for a learner using paper dictionaries.

Nonetheless, the problem of encoding is essentially solved for learners of Slovene by consulting either the Academy dictionary (*SSKJ*)⁵ or the normative guide, both of which provide complete information on inflected verb forms. Admittedly, however, learners are less likely to use such monolingual resources. The problem of decoding has also been redressed to some degree by Derbyshire’s learner’s dictionary of Slovene,⁶ which includes inflected forms of especially troublesome verbs such as *grem, berem, sem, ženem* with cross-references to *iti, brati, biti, gnati*. On the other hand, Derbyshire’s 5,000-item dictionary is more limited in its coverage of verbs but, at the same time, not restricted to this part of speech. Learners of Slovene can also utilize electronic dictionaries such as the electronic version of the Academy dictionary to search for 1st person inflected forms such as *najdem* or *našel* in order to find *najti*. Again, however, because this is a monolingual resource it is less likely to be used by beginners.

² Anton Grad and Henry Leeming, *Slovensko-angleški slovar* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1990).

³ Anton Grad, Ružena Škerlj, and Nada Vitorovič, *Veliki angleško-slovenski slovar* (Ljubljana: DZS, 2004).

⁴ Andreja Markovič, “Glagol brez tančic” *Delo* 12 July 2006: 18.

⁵ Anton Bajec et al., eds. *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* (Ljubljana: SAZU, 2000), available at: <http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/sskj.html>.

⁶ See: William W. Derbyshire, with Marta Pirnat-Greenberg. *A Learner’s Dictionary of Slovene: With Words in Their Inflected Forms* (Bloomington: Slavica, 2002); reviewed in *Slovene Studies* 24.1–2 (2002): 116–25.

At the same time, the monolingual sources cited above offer certain advantages over *Slovenski glagol*.⁷ First, the *SSKJ* contains nearly 16,500 verb entries, or over six times as many as *Slovenski glagol*. Thus, a learner that fails to recognize that *seženem* is related to the infinitive *gnati* will not find *segnati* using *Slovenski glagol*, but can use the string “sežen*” to find the infinitive in the *SSKJ*. The same applies to encoding using both the *SSKJ* and the normative guide. Second, there are additional forms that *Slovenski glagol* does not provide. For example, beyond *bráti bêrem bêri beríte brát brála* there are also 3 pl. *beró*, the present gerund *beróč*, the supine *brát*, the *n*-participle *brán*, and the verbal noun *bránje*. It would take a considerably more complicated layout to present all of these forms, such as that in Barron’s “501 Verbs” series.⁸

An additional deficiency—one that is shared by the *SSKJ*, Slovene normative guides, and the available bilingual dictionaries—is that *Slovenski glagol* does not provide the learner with imperfective and perfective verbal aspectual pairs (as in the Barron’s guides). These are an essential element of Slovene, like all Slavic languages. Thus, there is no cross-reference between *pisati* and *napisati*, let alone less transparent pairs such as *delati* and *narediti*. Finally, as mentioned above, the glosses of the verbs are extremely basic: thus one has *brati* ‘to read’ (but not ‘to gather’), *slikati* ‘to paint’ (but not ‘to photograph’), and so on.

Unconnected to the Slovene content of the book—but, regrettably, likely to make a negative impression on most users—is the lamentable quality of the accompanying English text. Given that the “[p]riročnik je namenjen predvsem tujcem” (7), this is especially unfortunate, because it is a hindrance rather than an aid to those for whom the volume is intended. Indeed, the English version of the title itself—*Slovene Verb*—is a grammatical error. The lack of the definite article is not explained by the book’s cover art,⁹ with a large stylized *S* beginning the title in both languages, because the German and Italian

⁷ Because *Slovenski glagol* is a manual, it is necessarily less comprehensive than larger works such as the *SSKJ* or the normative guide. Thus the observations in the following two paragraphs are given for comparative reasons rather than as criticisms of the work.

⁸ E.g., Thomas R. Beyer, Jr. *501 Russian verbs* (Hauppauge: Barron’s Educational Series, 1992).

⁹ For the cover design, see: <http://www.zrc-sazu.si/www/pc/rada.html>

versions of the book (*Das slowenische Verb, Il verbo sloveno*)¹⁰ both include the article. The problems persist on the colophon, where we read that the title of the volume is *A Morphological Manual and Dictionary of Slovene Verbs*—reminiscent of the playful use of English that we find in contexts such as Magnifico’s song “Hir aj kam hir aj go.”¹¹ Fortunately this mistake is not repeated on the cover page itself.

The errors in the introductory text (7) and grammatical information (9–20) include stylistic problems (e.g., *Priročnik je nastal na pobudo slušateljev slovenščine...* ‘This manual was written at the instigation of students of Slovene...’, 7), factual mistranslations (e.g., *Ker imajo tuji uporabniki težave z razpoznavanjem nedoločnika glede na oblike v sedanjiku...* ‘With foreign users often incapable of distinguishing between the infinitive and the present tense forms...’, 7), terminological errors (*podaljša ... osnovo* ‘prolongs its basis’, 9), and gross spelling and grammatical errors (e.g., *z devma in s tremi zvezdicami* ‘with two or tree asterisk’, 7; *mpf* = an imperfective verb, 20). One wonders what service the “English-language editor” listed in the colophon actually performed.

Despite these last shortcomings, the book will be helpful to those beginning Slovene, as a companion volume to teaching grammars and bilingual dictionaries. More advanced learners will find less need to consult the book as they increasingly rely on monolingual resources, especially those in electronic format.

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¹⁰ Rada Lečič, *Das Slowenische Verb* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2006); Rada Lečič, *Il verbo sloveno* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2006).

¹¹ Magnifico & Turbolentza, *Export Import*. Recording 38310238150022. (Ljubljana: Menart Records, 2003).