

Christina E. Kramer. *Macedonian. A Course for Beginners and Intermediate Students*. Second Edition. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. Appendices. Index. xii + 530 pp., \$39.95 (paper). 2 CD-ROM, \$29.95.

Writing a textbook for a market as miniscule as that for Macedonian is a project that few authors are willing to tackle. It is a financial risk that no major textbook publisher is willing to get into, and few authors can manage such a project without the backing and resources of a major textbook publisher. Textbooks written for the current generation of language learners include, in addition to the main textbook, a slew of ancillary materials, such as a workbook, lab manual, reader, CD-ROM, website, video, audio, overheads, test bank, and much more. To write a textbook of this magnitude usually requires a team of authors, designers and programmers. Such a project may take several years to complete and with no guarantee of a return on the publisher's investment. These are some of the benefits that cannot be enjoyed by authors of textbooks for less-commonly taught languages such as Macedonian, and consequently such textbooks, produced in a cost-saving manner, suffer shortcomings that due to the scarcity of resources. Professor Kramer's textbook falls into this category. Despite these obstacles, she has produced a pedagogically sound textbook that has alleviated the scarcity of materials for Macedonian language instruction for English speakers. I am aware of only two other textbooks for Macedonian for English speakers: *Let's Speak Macedonian*, by Ilija Čašule. Sidney, Australia: Mcquarie University, 1990, and *Do you peak Macedonian?*, by Marija Kusevska and Liljana Mitkovska. Skopje, Macedonia: Medis Informatika, 1995. I am not certain that either of these textbooks is still in print.

As the title of the textbook indicates, this is a textbook for beginners and intermediate students. Considering that the textbook covers the entire grammar of Macedonian, it is unlikely

that students other than heritage learners and graduate students with strong background in another Slavic language would be able to complete all of the lessons in one academic year.

The textbook is divided into sixteen lessons arranged by topics that cover a variety of situations in getting around in the language, such as introductions, food, education, music, healthcare, etc. These topics are the focus in the reading or dialogue at the beginning of each lesson, and they are followed by one or more reading comprehension exercises. The reading are followed by several (usually between five and eleven) grammar. The first chapter introduces the Macedonian alphabet with extensive and detailed notes on pronunciation. Interspersed within the notes there are numerous pronunciation practice exercises. The chapter ends with an introduction to the cursive writing system. The author has done excellent job in composing and selecting texts that cover realistic, everyday situations, texts from the Macedonian literary and cultural heritage as well as texts that cover developments in Macedonia since independence. The content of the readings and dialogues is culturally accurate, objective and informative. They provide large variety of conversational topics and models one-on-one and group conversations. A shortcoming of the readings and dialogues is that they lack a variety of post-reading exercises that would require students to produce similar texts.

Developing grammatical competence in Macedonian seems to be the central focus of the textbook. Therefore, there are few exercises focusing on developing reading, writing and listening skills. Grammatical explanations are clear and straightforward, but may some of them may present difficulty for students with no previous background in formal grammar. With its emphasis on grammar, the textbook excels in the number and variety of grammar check exercises. The book includes in an appendix an answer key to all exercises.

Each chapter ends with a list of active vocabulary items organized by grammatical category and followed by notes on some unique vocabulary items. More general grammar exercises follow the vocabulary list. Appendix 1 includes six supplementary readings (excerpts from Macedonian literature, two descriptions of weddings and an excerpt from a high school history book). Each of these readings includes new vocabulary, but they lack post-reading exercises. Appendix 2 consists of grammatical summaries in the form of charts. The Macedonian-English/English Macedonian glossaries at the end of the textbook consist of approximately 5000 words each.

The textbook includes two CD-ROMs that work only on Windows 98, an operating system that is rarely found on computers these days and none was available to me for this review. My assumption is that the CD-ROMs contain the audio recordings of the readings and dialogues, and perhaps some interactive exercises. The lack of audio is major shortcoming of the textbook. However, in the introduction to the textbook the author indicates that a tape recording of the dialogues can be purchased from the author (ce.kramer@utoronto.edu). The author also makes the audio available on a website at the University of Toronto (<http://www.utoronto.ca/slavic/macedonian/>). These audio files contain recordings of the readings and dialogues from each chapter. The audio is in .mp3 format. The quality of the audio recordings is acceptable, though the noise level on some of them can be distracting. On the same web page the author indicates that the CD-ROM is in the process of being updated for compatibility with Windows NT, 2000 and XP, with a release time of mid-summer/early fall 2004.

Despite the obstacles mentioned earlier in this review, the author is to be congratulated for producing a comprehensive textbook for beginning and intermediate students. It's strong

points are the grammar check exercises, the exhaustive grammar explanations and the variety of readings and dialogues. An experienced teacher of Macedonian will still need to guide the beginning student with simpler grammar explanations and will need to supplement the text with additional communicative exercises. Graduate students and advanced speakers of Macedonian will find the textbook to be the best Macedonian reference grammar available today.

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