

DEAR READER,

THE SLAVIC LANGUAGE SPACE OF THE BALKANS

Languages always fascinated me, therefore my library contains numerous language books, dictionaries, and grammar books. These traditional learning tools are supported nowadays by a plethora of additional resources, e.g. audio material on CD, video material on DVD, online dictionaries and so on.

As I was building my own library of language resources for the larger Balkan area, I came across two massive language volumes, complemented by CDs and a DVD for the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages; Ronelle Alexander & Ellen Elias-Borsać: *BOSNIAN CROATIAN SERBIAN: A Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar*, and Ronelle Alexander: *BOSNIAN CROATIAN SERBIAN: A Grammar, with Sociolinguistic Commentary* (<http://www.bcsgrammarandtextbook.org/>).

As I started to peruse this massive language package I instantly realized that this material was far the best I have ever come across, for any language. The two authors of this package created something that is academic and practical, up-to-date, complete, and peppered with history, culture, and wit. It arms the keen learner with an extensive knowledge of the languages, their historical background, and interesting insights into the history and culture of the peoples who are using them.

In my view the method chosen by the authors is the only possible one when dealing with the complexities of this region, i.e. the territories of the current states of Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Montenegro. They masterly tackle the seemingly contradictory situation, i.e. Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are on the one hand one language and on the other hand three different ones. This contradiction is resolved throughout the two books by constantly pointing out to the common base, which lies at the core of these three languages, and then presenting the differences. In fact we are learning three languages in parallel! If I were to use the language of advertisement: buy one and get two for free...

To me the highlight of the material is the sociolinguistic commentary. I wish it were even longer, I could read it for ever! It not only positioned the three aforementioned languages in a proper context, it explains also the larger Slavic language space of the Balkans. It shows through examples how this space, which extends from Bulgaria at the south-eastern corner to Slovenia at the north-western corner, can be seen from a linguistic perspective as a continuum. A fascinating reading!

This language package was published by the University of Wisconsin Press. Luckily they also published similar material for two other Slavic languages of the Balkans, namely Bulgarian and Macedonian.

Ronelle Alexander is also the author of the two-volume course titled *Intensive Bulgarian* (<http://intensivebulgarian.org/>). Complemented by excellent audio material, it contains all the goodies that its Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian exhibits. In a similar fashion the third language covered by the University of Wisconsin Press is Macedonian. The book *Macedonian - A Course for Beginning and Intermediate Students* (<http://sites.utoronto.ca/slavic/macedonian/index.html>) is authored by Christina E. Kramer and Liljana Mitkovska, accompanied by audio material on CD.

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All in all, my sincere admiration towards the authors and the University of Wisconsin Press that made all this possible. One only needs to add a course material of the Slovene language and the whole Slavic language space of the Balkans is at our disposal, at both the highest academic level and at the same time at a practical level as well.

Flórián Farkas

Editor-in-Chief

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