

American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages

Review: [untitled]

Author(s): Svitlana Malykhina

Source: *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 4, Special Forum Issue: At the Edge of Heaven: Russian Poetry since 1970 (Winter, 2007), pp. 837-839

Published by: [American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages](http://www.aatseel.org)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20459613>

Accessed: 27/01/2011 21:55

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=aatseel>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Slavic and East European Journal*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

room. In a sense, then, one might say that Press is capturing a wonderful method of learning and study for future generations, a method that few use in the present day.

In all chapters, but especially in Chapters 3 and 4, there is detailed discussion of the cultural context in which given writers worked and great attention to styles of writing, the influence of Church Slavonic, and the eventual establishment of an agreed standard by the end of the eighteenth century. The question of a “standard,” and of what is good or bad in written Russian, is the subject of Chapter 5; Press has done a marvelous job, surveying the situation in the nineteenth century in meticulous detail, leaving no stone unturned in the search for who said what about the language. Given the focus of this work, the title of the book might have become “A History of the Russian Language and its *Writers*”—but writers are people too! It must be said that the attention to the nineteenth century is gratifying, because linguists often take it for granted, seeing it as a period of large-scale lexical borrowing from West European languages rather than focusing on internal developments and the linguistic arguments of the day.

One of the beauties of this work—and this is typical of the author’s outlook on academic writing in general—is the extremely self-effacing character of the approach. All historical linguists draw on the work of others, but Press almost goes so far as to say that he has written nothing new at all: this is, of course, completely untrue; he gives credit (far too much sometimes!) where credit is due, but the book is his and his alone. Finally, the appendices, especially the morphological tables, are extremely valuable as reference tools for those interested in the nuts and bolts of the historical grammar, and the bibliography alone should be in every linguist’s library.

In short, this is a book that is fresh, different, and an outstanding contribution to the study of Russian linguistic history.

Stefan M. Pugh, University of St. Andrews

R. DeLossa, R. Koropecy, R. Romanchuk, and A. I. Mazon. *Rozmovljajmo! (Let's Talk!): A Basic Ukrainian Course with Polylogs, Grammar, and Conversation Lessons*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2004. Appendices. Glossary. Index. xvi + 521 pp. \$49.50 (paper).

It is hard to find a comprehensive Ukrainian textbook for beginners with a focus on the contemporary, colloquial language and with cultural commentary on recent events. Those in the teaching field will find that *Rozmovljajmo! (Let's Talk!)* has both.

The organization and content of the textbook reflect the authors’ extensive experience in teaching all aspects of Ukrainian. *Rozmovljajmo!* provides various language teaching methods and strategies that help instructors make language lessons less draining and more interesting and effective. The twenty-two topical lessons, into which this book is divided, are supported by fourteen *Rozmovnyky* [Conversation Lessons] (404–62) and a chapter on “Ukrainian for Russian Speakers” (391–403). The main body of the book is followed by a two-way glossary (480–518) and a grammatical index. There are also six reference appendices (463–77).

One of the strongest features of the textbook is the skillfully compiled “polylogs” (conversations among more than two interlocutors) that are designed to teach grammar in context, in this case, among Ukrainian speakers in Kiev. The authors do an excellent job of selecting a large variety of conversational topics and models for group conversations. The polylogs are followed by effective post-reading exercises, such as questionnaires, interviews, pair drills, assignments for skits, etc. The textbook excels in the number of assignments that require students to produce similar texts, which gives them the chance to experience many social variables based on the “roles” they play.

The grammar is presented as a necessary tool for communication and introduced systematically throughout the lessons. The meaning-based assignments of the textbook play an important

role in helping motivate students to increase their everyday vocabulary. The vocabulary is carefully chosen and presents cultural topics relevant to “real-life” situations. Glossary entries indicate morphological information and stress patterns (all the Ukrainian in the textbook is marked for stress). Students have numerous opportunities to use words repeatedly and to see how a given word assumes different meanings in different contexts. Of particular interest in this respect are the commentaries that can be used to stimulate discussion about literature and traditions. Each lesson contains a concise *Kultura* section with cultural and sociolinguistic information offered for several lexical items. However, the vocabulary needed for discussing such topics as kitchen items or furniture is noticeably limited.

The authors provide a relatively thorough account of complex grammatical concepts using terms from theoretical linguistics. For example, treatment of the most general and obvious phonological alternations (e.g., set mutations for conjugated verbal forms, noun stem-final mutations, or the phenomenon called “vowel-zero” alternation) is particularly good for its coverage of phonological and morphological features of Ukrainian. Close attention is paid to exceptions. The section “A note on the Ukrainian names of the months” (243) includes particularly interesting material on lexical derivation. Whenever relevant, the authors offer comments on dialectical features (footnote, 280) and of the possible results of the “interference” of Russian (footnote, 192). The section “Telling time” (285–87) is clear, short, laconic and targeted at American students. The voluminous section “Prefixed verbs of motion” (319–24) provides an impressive amount of grammar mostly from the standpoint of collocation and structural differences between Ukrainian and English.

There are a few drawbacks to the textbook. For example, *Rozmovljajmo!* is saturated with so much grammatical information and vocabulary that students cannot be expected to cover it in one year. Occasionally, grammatical explanations are overly detailed, such as the “Compulsion/Necessity” section (172–73). Even those experienced in linguistics find it difficult to distinguish between constructions with verbs *musyty* [to have to] and *maty* [to intend, to mean] (183). The sequence of grammatical presentation is of great importance for low-level learners. Thus, it would be preferable to provide grammar materials that increase gradually in complexity instead of trying to present everything all at once. An example of this may be found in the over-condensed lesson 6, which contains descriptions of the basic verbal categories of aspect, tense, and the imperative. While the lesson focuses on important grammar points, it offers a somewhat simplistic explanation of aspectual use. In the same lesson, the authors offer a succinct overview of the formation of perfective verbs with a marked lack of reference to the group of verbs that have only imperfective aspect.

Conversely, the treatment of cases is one of the textbook’s greatest strengths, in particular the sections on the Genitive (65–70, 83), the Accusative (62–65), and the Instrumental (220–24). Nevertheless the authors could have done a much better job in developing a scope and sequence for introducing certain grammatical structures. So, for example, the uses of the Dative case are covered first in lesson 9, but the construction with the Dative “How old are you?” is introduced tangentially in the section *Kultura* (164) with a note that the case will be examined fully only in lesson 20. Similarly, the discussion on the cost of food in lesson 5 (81) would have been organized better if there were a reminder that the chart on numerals and counting could be found in a later chapter.

Students need ample opportunities to work with audio recordings in conjunction with any textbook. Audio and video compact disks are announced in the foreword to the textbook. Yet, to my knowledge, neither a CD with listening comprehension texts nor a package for practicing phonetics and intonation is available for students. Possibly they will be added in future editions.

The strength of this textbook lies in its rich variety of oral and written assignments as well as its dynamic assortment of classroom activities. However, while the textbook has a very clear and consistent chapter organization, it would benefit from more detailed and explicit statements of objectives for each lesson in order to help students better organize their learning experience.

In the same vein, both students and instructors need more suggestions on how to implement the strategies of the book.

Overall, the textbook is well organized and effectively presents often complex grammatical material. The authors display a fine sense of humor that will keep students smiling and curious. *Rozmovljajmo!* will prove useful either for the classroom setting, which is its primary purpose, or for self-learning.

Svitlana Malykhina, SUNY at Albany

Greville G. Corbett. *Agreement*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. xviii + 328 pp. \$95.00 (cloth); \$45.00 (paper).

Corbett's most recent addition to the well-known Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics series comprises nine chapters: Introduction: canonical agreement (1–34); Controllers, targets and domains (35–70); The morphology of agreement (71–113); Features (114–42); Mismatches (143–75); Conditions (176–205); The Agreement Hierarchy (206–37); Resolution (238–63); and Other perspectives (264–84). There are, in addition, a list of references, and three indices (author, language, and subject).

Corbett begins by establishing a descriptive framework defined by four primes: *controller* (the element which determines agreement, either *syntactically* or *semantically*, i.e., according to its formal features or its meaning, with *feature* the unit of syntactic agreement), *target* (the element whose form is determined by agreement), *domain* (the syntactic context in which agreement occurs), and *condition* (a constraint on agreement). He associates each prime with a set of *canonical* characteristics (e.g., the controller is canonically present, has overt expression of features, etc.). Examples of agreement which conform to the canonical characteristics are termed *canonical*, and serve as a point of departure for discussion as well as a reference point for phenomena which do not conform. Thematically, therefore, the book has two main units: canonical agreement (Chapters 1–3) and complications (Chapters 5–8, which discuss deviations from canonical agreement). These units are separated by one on grammatical theory (Chapter 4, which introduces *features* and *feature values*, Corbett's terminology for *grammatical/morphological category* and *feature*), and followed by a concluding unit that treats sundry matters (Chapter 9, treating diachrony, the function of agreement, etc.). The data are from many languages, but Corbett identifies three, each differing in typologically significant ways (e.g., *ergative* versus *accusative*) from the others, as playing a more central role for purposes of exemplification (30–32): Russian, Tsakhur, and Kayardild representing, respectively, divisions of the Indo-European, Caucasian, and Australian families.

I have no criticism to make of this book as such. It is a fine example of organization, clarity, thorough investigation of its subject matter, and thoughtful as well as illuminating commentary. Following the model of its predecessors in the series, it is not a textbook in the conventional sense of the word. It is scholarship set forth in a manner which makes it relatively accessible to students, and therefore is usable in the classroom, while serving those with more advanced interests as well. Like all good scholarship, and unlike conventional textbooks, it provides, in addition to the data, original analysis as well as discussion of previous treatments. It is therefore informative and thought-provoking, sometimes to the point of disagreement with the author, or uncertainty regarding his conclusions. Limitations of space permit only one example, for which I will turn to Corbett's discussion of the *agreement hierarchy*, the topic of Chapter 7. Corbett's primary goal in this chapter is to present and discuss the hypothesis that the distribution of *syntactic* versus *semantic* agreement with a nominal controller in subject position varies according to the target, and specifically, that semantic agreement becomes more likely as we move in tar-