

BOOK REVIEWS

<https://doi.org/10.29038/2617-6696.2022.5.78.81>

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Review

The main features of the Ukrainian grammar: a reference textbook for foreigners / Nina Danyliuk, Tetiana Masytska, Douglas O'Brien, Oksana Rohach; managing editor Nina Danyliuk. Lutsk: Nadstyrja, 2022. 128 p.

Every year a significant number of international students come to study in Ukraine, and the period of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the COVID-19 epidemic was no exception. It is quite difficult to compile a textbook for international students that would meet the requirements of the time, could be used in conditions of distance, asynchronous and independent learning during the pandemic, as well as at the time of restrictions caused by hostilities, the realities of the war.

Despite the fact that the practice of teaching Ukrainian to international students has been implemented for many years, the number of textbooks on Ukrainian as a foreign language is quite limited.

For a long time, different methods of teaching recommended teaching this discipline only in Ukrainian, which led to certain difficulties in

understanding the rules of the language. The matter was that such approach required students to have a somewhat intuitive perception of the material based on the development of a significant amount of illustrative material, and also designed speech and cognitive dissonance.

Recently, however, we have been witnessing the emergence of reference and educational literature in English about the Ukrainian language or with its involvement in teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language, which is obviously due to the generally accepted status of English as an international language, and, therefore, known by the majority of foreign students.

According to the typological classification, the Ukrainian language is an inflectional synthetic language, while foreign students speak mainly analytical-type languages, which greatly complicates the process of mastering Ukrainian as a foreign language. It happens so due to the fact that it is a language of an unusual structure for them, and its grammar differs significantly from the morphology and syntax of their native languages.

As noted in the abstract, the peer-reviewed textbook “summarizes the basics of theoretical information on the morphology of the modern Ukrainian language, selects tasks and exercises that will contribute to the acquisition of the material”. The explanation of the theoretical data is made in English, which will facilitate the understanding of key grammatical terms and concepts by English-speaking students who study Ukrainian as a foreign language. This brief abstract successfully represents the content and main direction of the textbook.

The textbook has a clear structure, begins with a short preface, which notes that foreign students “must possess the norms of Ukrainian phonetics and orthoepy, have sufficient vocabulary, know grammar to use the language for studying and in their professional activities”.

The textbook consists of 10 chapters: nine of them are devoted to notional (a noun, verb, adjective, numeral, pronoun, and adverb) and functional (a conjunction, preposition, particle) parts of speech and correspond to the traditional classification of parts of speech; the tenth section characterizes the exclamation as a special class of invariant words that have no grammatical indicators but may play a significant functional-semantic role in the communicative activity.

The textbook harmoniously combines theoretical and practical aspects, which provides a better acquisition of the material. Such layout of the material is a good combination of diverse elements of theory and practice, which can be successfully used during the study of the course of Ukrainian as a foreign language.

Theoretical information is presented in English quite widely, logically and easily, as well as supplemented with illustrative material in Ukrainian. We

consider the designation of stress in every Ukrainian word of the manual to be apt, since the accentuation norms of the modern Ukrainian literary language are not easy for foreigners to learn.

The main part of the textbook contains 55 tables, which, according to the authors, “make it possible to summarize and visualize the information that will help to better remember them”. We agree with the authors of the publication, since tables and diagrams contribute to the activation of visual memory and better assimilation of the material.

The *Nouns (Іменники)* section has a brief introduction that provides the definition of a noun as part of speech and indicates its morphological characteristics, and is internally divided into 4 subsections: (1) *The Category of number (Категорія числа)*, (2) *The Category of Gender (Категорія роду)*, (3) *The Category of Case (Категорія відмінка)*, (4) *Declensions (Відміни)*. Each of the latter is supplemented with practical tasks that allow to consolidate the studied theoretical material. The tasks of the exercises are based on working with individual lexemes, sentences, excerpts from the texts, and they are supplemented with reference material. At the same time, a translation of individual lexemes into English contributes to a deeper understanding of what has been learned, as well as the assimilation of the vocabulary of the Ukrainian language.

The *Adjectives (Прикметники)* section does not contain an internal division into subsections. It introduces the student to the definition of an adjective, its grammatical categories, the declension of adjectives of a hard and soft group, the peculiarities of spelling of individual adjectives, the declension of which is an exception to the rule. However, the authors of the textbook do not mention the division of adjectives into qualitative, relative and possessive, and also bypass the question of degrees of comparison of adjectives, although they are inherent in adjectives in most languages of the world.

The *Numerals (Числівники)* section covers 4 subsections that describe the morphological categories of numerals, quantitative, ordinal, and fractional numerals and their conjugations. Particular attention is paid to the parallel endings of adjectives, as well as the rules for their combination with nouns. However, given the overall complexity of the topic and the difficulty of its assimilation, it seems appropriate to significantly increase the number of exercises proposed in the section.

The *Pronouns (Займенники)* section is structured into an introduction and 10 subsections, which provide the definition of pronouns, their classification, and features of conjugation depending on the class. At the same time, it is advisable to pay more attention to the spelling of complex pronouns, which are actively used in their functional plane.

The *Verbs (Дієслова)* section is the largest in terms of volume. It describes (1) the grammatical categories of the verb, (2) the present, (3) the past and (4) the future tenses, (5) the formation of the perfect form, (6) the grammatical forms of the verb, (7) the conjugation of verbs, and (8) the athematic verbs.

A particular attention is paid to the alternation of vowels and consonants in the conjugation, and the mobility of stress. Probably, the grammatical forms of the verb required a greater concentration of the attention, especially the aspect formation, the correlation of the forms of tense and mood, the derivatation productivity by prefixation, suffixation, and other methods. It would also be advisable to present a greater number of practical tasks to such big amount of the theoretical material.

Sections *Adverbs (Прислівники)*, *Prepositions (Прийменники)*, *Conjunctions (Сполучники)*, *Particles (Частки)* and *Interjections (Вигуки)* are the smallest in volume and provide the generalized theoretical information about the relevant category classes of words, and their classifications. The material on the forms of degrees of comparison of adverbs is presented quite succinctly, the spelling of complex and compound adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and particles is not mentioned at all, although their writing always causes difficulties even among native speakers.

At the end of the textbook, there are tests to consolidate the material studied, keys to the exercises, a brief thesaurus, which repeats the basic definitions from the textbook, and a list of recommended literature.

The relevance of the textbook is beyond doubt, because, as practice shows, at the present stage, foreign students feel an urgent need for textbooks and manuals of the new generation.

Obviously, it will complement the existing educational and reference materials on the discipline, will be actively used by foreign students, deepening their knowledge of the Ukrainian language, will be useful to teachers of Ukrainian as a foreign language, will help in organizing the educational process.

An accessible way of presenting theoretical material and tabular design of illustrative material will definitely expand the circle of users who want to deepen their knowledge of the Ukrainian language.