

BOOK REVIEWS

SORBY, Karol R.: *Moderná spisovná arabčina. Diel I. (ta'ġīm al-luġa al-'arabīya)* (Modern Written Arabic. Part I). Bratislava, Slovak Academic Press, s.r.o. 2005. 439 pp. ISBN 80-89104-68-1.

Modern Written Arabic. Part I is a revised edition of *Moderná spisovná arabčina. I. Diel*. Banská Bystrica, Univerzita Mateja Bela 1998. The manual, backed by long experience of the college level teaching of Arabic, presents a well-organized comprehensive teaching device primarily designed for students with no previous knowledge of the language. The present edition appears in a thoroughly rearranged page setting, Arabic characters are recast in a more comfortable and easy-to-read way, a fact that will be of invaluable help quite particularly to the starting students.

The manual offers 20 graded lessons each of them containing grammatical, textual and drilling sections. It further contains a number of additional parts: Narratives (additional fully vowelised texts); Tables with conjugational paradigms; Text-related vocabulary, and, finally, Key to the exercises.

Several initial lessons introduce the students to the Arabic graphical system and writing habits. At the same time the students are acquainted with the sound system and the major pitfalls of pronunciation. A typical lesson consists of an introductory text supported by grammatical basics. Each grammatical topic is projected into various types of exercises, such as transformation, substitution, translation exercises and conversation drills. A number of special exercises are devoted to the repetition of topics already dealt with additional comments and drills.

The student is confronted with a limited number of carefully selected grammatical topics at a time. Each grammatical topic, supported by preliminary information, is presented in a simple context and is further handled in related exercises and is finally formulated as a systematized rule forming part of the basic grammatical data-base.

The grammatical part of each lesson works with a limited number of lexical items to allow the students a more thorough concentration on the grammatical

topic just analysed. The accompanying texts with progressively graded complexity include a variety of themes ranging from simple essays that reflect situations from daily life, as well as adapted texts offering basic information on the Arab social life, folklore, history and geography. As far as the grammatical part of the lesson allows it, a corresponding thematic orientation tends to reappear in related exercises and conversational drills.

In spite of the primary aim of the textbook to guide the student to master basic elements of the synthetic norm of Modern Written Arabic, due attention is paid from the very beginning to make the student aware of the complexity of diglossic situation in the present-day Arab world. A limited number of conversation exercises and drills have to introduce the student to a more realistic use of somewhat analyticized Standard Arabic with a reduced amount of inflectional indicators. Nevertheless, a more thorough acquaintance with the substandard nondialectal oral communication of the educated Arabs lies outside the scope of the present manual.

The manual, incorporating results of a research grant focused on the effectiveness of intensive language courses, can successfully be used also in various types of intensive courses for beginners. When used in this way, the Part I of the manual will efficiently support the teaching process for approximately one school-year.

Although the textbook is designed as an autonomous and self-contained unit, the students, desirous to improve their communicative skills and linguistic competence in Modern Written Arabic, are advised to subsequently use the Part II of this manual, based upon the same didactic and theoretical principles. While the Part I helps the learners to acquire grammatical fundamentals, basic reading and writing skills, and basic conversation abilities, Parts II will further deepen the grammatical knowledge, especially in the domain of syntax and phraseology, will help them to expand their active and passive vocabulary and will prepare them for the professional work of translators and interpreters.

The full-length key to the numerous exercises will considerably expand the manual's domain of application. Apart from the regular class-room teaching schedule, the manual can be used as a reliable teaching and learning device fully qualified for self-instruction with no or only a limited assistance on the part of the teacher.

The manual will find its place in various types of college-level instruction of Modern Written Arabic as a highly efficient tool appreciated by both teachers and learners.

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