

Prikaz

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<https://doi.org/10.22210/govor.2023.40.05>**Luka Horjak***luka.horjak@ff.uni-lj.si*Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana
Slovenia

Hotimir Tivadar and Urban Batista: *Fonetika 1*. Ljubljana, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, 2019.

The university textbook *Fonetika 1 (Phonetics 1)* is a much-needed elementary guide for students of Slovenian who are encountering (Slovenian) phonetics for the first time. The 68-page textbook includes a theoretical and a practical part with a Slovenian-English glossary, an extensive bibliography, accompanied by a CD-ROM with recordings of the texts. The authors are university professor of Slovenian linguistics, Hotimir Tivadar and his former student Urban Batista, who teaches Slovenian as a foreign language, prepares authentic teaching materials and has written the first bachelor's thesis on phonetics in teaching Slovenian as a second or foreign language. The textbook is one of the results arising from the rich pedagogical and theoretical work of Hotimir Tivadar, who teaches courses in Slovene phonetics and phonology at the Department of Slovene Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He has more than 20 years of experience in teaching both native and foreign speakers and also works for the public broadcaster Radio-Television of Slovenia, where he is involved in the training of TV and radio presenters.

The textbook *Fonetika 1* is in fact the first such handbook for standard Slovenian pronunciation, which is not surprising, since the Slovenian pronunciation norm is traditionally described in Slovenian orthography, where it plays a subordinate role – mostly only as information about the place of lexical stress. The first textbook on Slovene pronunciation was written by Jože Toporišič, who worked as a lecturer of Slovene at the University of Zagreb. In 1961, under the supervision of the phonetician Petar Guberina he published a textbook *Slovenski jezik na pločama: izgovor i intonacija s recitacijama (Eng. Slovenian Language on Records: Pronunciation and Intonation with Recitations)*, which combines theory with exercises and records pronunciation on records. The influence of Toporišič's method can also be seen in *Fonetika 1*.

We are reviewing the 2020 2nd edition of the textbook, which is identical to the 2019 1st edition, which had some misspellings.¹ The main aim of the textbook *Fonetika 1* is to introduce students of Slovenian as a first, second or foreign language to Slovenian phonetics, usually considered a complicated subject. In the introductory chapter the authors give some basic information about the Slovenian language and its pronunciation and inform the reader about the classical and online sources where one can find information on pronunciation. This is followed by the instruction that the speaker should open his mouth more and try to articulate the vowels as clearly as possible. This is important because in standard Slovene the distinction between close-mid and open-mid front (/e/, /ɛ/) and back (/o/, /ɔ/) vowels is very important, especially because the difference is neutralised in spelling: /e/, /ɛ/ are written as <e>, /o/, /ɔ/ are written as <o>. Standard Slovene has a so-called phonological orthography, i.e. the writing more or less follows the standard pronunciation, which somehow ensures that speakers of dialect-rich Slovene can more easily speak the same orthoepic standard and easily communicate with each other.

Some common dialectal features of the central Slovenian dialects spoken in Ljubljana and its surroundings are presented to the student in order to better understand the speakers of this region, as this particular variant is considered highly influential seeing that Ljubljana is a political, economic and educational centre of Slovenia. One of the features of the central dialect is the shortening of (unstressed) vowels, which is not accepted in a public speech in standard Slovenian.

The main principle of the textbook is the repetition – the mother of learning. The student must repeat many articulatory gestures to improve the clarity of their pronunciation. Since their articulators are used to produce the dialectal sound, their production may differ from the sound of standard Slovenian. The same applies to students learning Slovenian as a second or foreign language, as their first language may affect the pronunciation of standard Slovenian sounds. In addition to repetition, self-observation and listening are also emphasised as fundamental principles of language learning. The teaching methodology of the textbook is based on the verbotonal method developed by Petar Guberina.

¹ In the review, we transcribe examples using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to make the review more accessible to an international audience. The IPA is not used in the *Fonetika 1* textbook for all phonological elements, especially not for all variants of consonants, as the Slovenian alphabet is sufficient to demonstrate the pronunciation of most standard Slovenian vowels and consonants.

One of the qualities of the textbook is a useful simplification of the diacritical marks used to mark both the lexical stress and the quality of the stressed vowel. In general, all stressed vowels are marked with an acute. Since in standard Slovenian close-mid and open-mid vowels are written with the same grapheme pair, the acute on <e> marks a stressed front close-mid vowel [e] or on <o> a stressed back close-mid vowel [o], and the circumflex on <e> marks a stressed front open-mid [ɛ] or on <o> a stressed back open-mid [ɔ] vowel. The grave is only used to mark the stressed schwa [ə] in words like *pes* [ˈpəs] ‘a dog’ or *dež* [ˈdɛʃ] ‘rain’. In traditional Slovene linguistics, the grave accent is used to mark the shortness of stressed vowels, but the authors of the textbook have made a revolutionary decision to use the grave accent only on schwa. This decision is based on extensive research into the quantity of standard Slovenian vowels since the 1980s, which has not confirmed the difference in quantity between so-called long and short stressed vowels. This simplification is an important step for the teaching of Slovenian phonetics and pronunciation to native and non-native speakers, as the quantitative difference between so-called long and short stressed vowels is not perceived by speakers and has no phonological functions. Hopefully, the method presented in *Fonetika 1* will also be used in other textbooks and materials for learning Slovenian.

1. Theoretical fundamentals of Slovenian phonetics

In the theoretical chapters, the authors introduce the Slovenian alphabet. Here students learn the pronunciation of individual letters and are given information on (online) resources where they can find information on the pronunciation of certain words.

Slovenian phonetics is explained on eight pages, important information is presented in frames so that students can easily find and memorise the important facts. The vowel system is represented with a triangle, highlighting the articulatory features (the openness and the front and back tongue position). In this way, students can relate the abstract figure to reality. A special exercise is devoted to the pronunciation of the schwa, which can appear in a stressed or unstressed position and is written with the letter <e> or <ɾ>. It has a special epenthetic feature in standard Slovenian, which is illustrated with many examples such as *vrtec* [ˈvɛrtɛts] ‘kindergarten-NOM.SG.M.’ – *vtca* [ˈvɛrttsa] ‘kindergarten-GEN.SG.M.’

The consonants are presented schematically as sonants and voiced and voiceless obstruents according to their function. The emphasis is on the pronunciation of

the sonants /v/ and /l/, since they have some allophones in standard Slovenian. The labiodental phoneme /v/ is only before vowels articulated as a labiodental sound. In other positions it is a labial sonant, in Slovenian transcription marked as [ɸ]. Similar goes for the pronunciation of the letter <l>, which is in some predictable cases pronounced as unsyllabic labial sonant [ɸ], for example *govoril* [gɔ'vɔriɸ] '(he) talked' – *govorila* [gɔ'vɔ'rila] '(she) talked'. Students can find a short list of exact positions where the phoneme /v/ and the letter <l> are pronounced as a unsyllabic labial sonant [ɸ]. In comparison to other Slavic languages standard Slovene does not distinguish between soft and strong consonants, which is why the authors also include a note on the pronunciation of the spelling sequences <lj> and <nj>.

The place and manner of articulation of each consonant are presented. The phonological process of regressive assimilation and final devoicing (which is presented as a subclass of regressive assimilation) is presented theoretically and supplemented with some exercises for training the function described.

In the chapter on stress in standard Slovene, the focus is on the dynamic accent, although the tonemic accent is also mentioned. As mentioned above, the updated diacritic system is presented and compared with the traditional system so that students can easily understand both systems and use dictionaries with the traditional use of diacritics. In this chapter, students learn about words with more than one lexical stress (mostly compounds) and clitics, i.e. words without lexical stress that (usually) join the following stressed word in the speech. The theoretical part is concluded with the information about the three pitch movements in standard Slovene.

The theoretical part may seem somewhat short, however, it is concise and informative, which is a rare quality as phonetics topics are seldom presented adequately, understandably and clearly in textbooks. Therefore, these chapters can be regarded as a great introduction to Slovenian phonetics and pronunciation for anyone interested. The authors show us how to write about scientific topics in an accessible way. The theory is complemented by numerous exercises in the 2nd part of the textbook.

2. Conversation exercises for pronunciation training

The second part of the reviewed textbook contains conversation exercises for pronunciation training, divided into nine sections corresponding to the usual topics of textbooks for Slovene as a second or foreign language, so that foreign students are familiar with the vocabulary. This makes the *Fonetika 1* textbook suitable for teaching Slovenian as a foreign language, because it saves the language teacher a lot of extra work.

All texts included in the exercises have been recorded and are available on the accompanying CD-ROM and website, with the exception of the seven songs, as these can easily be found online. The texts were read by two male and one female experienced and trained speakers of standard Slovenian in a specially equipped studio. The quality of the audio recording is excellent. You can hear that each speaker reads the texts at a slightly slower pace so that the articulation is accurate and clear, making it easier for students to hear the nuances of articulation and to repeat the text.

The first exercises include general greetings, introducing a person, vocabulary from the topics of family, home, body, feelings, at the doctor's, at the post office, at the bank, eating and drinking, in the restaurant, clothes, in the shop etc. The exercises with the basic vocabulary are followed by seven well-known Slovenian popular song texts, carefully selected to improve pronunciation and especially fluency. Among them are the Slovenian version of the originally French children's song *Frère Jacques*, adapted as *Mojster Jaka*, and the Slovenian version of a well-known German song *Biene Maja* (sung by the legendary Czech singer Karel Gott), adapted as *Čebelica Maja* (sung by Janko Ropret). The melody of these songs might be familiar to learners of Slovenian, making it easier to learn and understand the lyrics in advance. The authors of the textbook argue that singing is a great way to train articulation because singing is slower than normal speaking, so you can pay more attention to the exact articulation of the sounds. Music is also relaxing.

The lyrics are followed by additional exercises that emphasise the pronunciation of consonants and their variants. The stress place is marked so that the student can concentrate on the correct pronunciation of consonants and their phonological phenomena, such as the regressive voicing assimilation of obstruents, the final devoicing of obstruents, the allophones of the labiodental sonant /v/ and the pronunciation of the letter <ɫ>, which in certain positions in standard Slovene is pronounced as a non-syllabic bilabial (or better labio-velar) sonant [ɥ].

In Chapter 5, students will find all the recorded texts transcribed with marked intonation, place of stress and quality of stressed vowels. Chapter 6 contains a one-page Slovenian-English terminological glossary with basic phonetic terms. In Slovenian, it is inaccurately titled as a dictionary, which could mislead the reader, as the terms are only translated and not explained or defined.

There is a rich bibliography in the appendix intended to promote further reading of referenced 47 bibliographic units, followed by a longer summary in Slovenian and English, which concludes with the quote: "*Phonetics is a part of everyday life and it is from phonetics that knowledge of the living language grows*", which underlines the importance of phonetics for language learning and linguistics in general.

The textbook contains some illustrations by Nuša Štiglic, which have no other function than a visual one. They mostly resemble the themes of the text in the second part of the textbook. On the inside cover, the reader will find a schematic illustration of Slovenian vowels, the so-called vowel triangle, as well as three sentences and a surname, which help the students to remember the voiced obstruents (*Žaba gode džez*, Eng. *The frog plays jazz*), voiceless obstruents (*Ta subi škafec pušča*, Eng. *This dry little bucket is leaking*) and sonants (*Moj nori lev*; *Mlinarjevi*, Eng. *My crazy lion; the Mlinar family*, i.e. “*The Millers*”) of standard Slovenian.

The textbook *Fonetika 1* by Hotimir Tivadar and Urban Batista is a refreshing and accessible introduction to Slovenian phonetics for native and non-native speakers of all levels who want to learn the theory and apply it in practise with the help of excellent recordings. The authors mention in the introduction that the 2nd part is already being planned and if we dare issue a subjective statement at this point, we are already looking forward to it.

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