**THE SLAVIC LANGUAGES**

The Slavic group of languages – the fourth largest Indo-European sub-group – is one of the major language families of the modern world. With 297 million speakers, Slavic comprises 13 languages split into three groups: South Slavic, which includes Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian; East Slavic, which includes Russian and Ukrainian; and West Slavic, which includes Polish, Czech and Slovak. This book, written by two leading scholars in Slavic linguistics, presents a survey of all aspects of the linguistic structure of the Slavic languages, considering in particular those languages that enjoy official status. As well as covering the central issues of phonology, morphology, syntax, word-formation, lexicology and typology, the authors discuss Slavic dialects, sociolinguistic issues and the socio-historical evolution of the Slavic languages.

Accessibly written and comprehensive in its coverage, this book will be welcomed by scholars and students of Slavic languages, as well as by linguists across the many branches of the discipline.

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This series offers general accounts of the major language families of the world, with volumes organized either on a purely genetic basis or on a geographical basis, whichever yields the most convenient and intelligible grouping in each case. Each volume compares and contrasts the typological features of the languages it deals with. It also treats the relevant genetic relationships, historical development and sociolinguistic issues arising from their role and use in the world today. The books are intended for linguists from undergraduate level upwards, but no special knowledge of the languages under consideration is assumed. Volumes such as those on Australia and the Amazon Basin are also of wider relevance, as the future of the languages and their speakers raises important social and political issues.

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THE SLAVIC LANGUAGES

ROLAND SUSSEX

PAUL CUBBERLEY
For Bogusia and Gladys
Matthew and Joanna
Nadine and Michelle
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Like Rebecca Posner, whose *The Romance languages* in this series was published in 1996, we have often been daunted by the size and complexity of the task. Slavic is not only a large group of languages but it is also the most written-about (see the Introduction).

Over the last decade Slavic has also been arguably the most externally unstable of the Indo-European language families. The fall of Euro-Communism was marked most dramatically by the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR, the Warsaw Pact, COMECON and the structures and infrastructures of what US President Ronald Reagan called the “evil empire”. What emerged from the political rebirth of the Slavic lands has turned out to be a linguistic landscape where some stable and persisting features have found themselves side-by-side with a dynamic, unstable and volatile cultural context. The Slavic languages are living in more than just interesting times. It has been our task to try and seize them in motion. We have spent most of our academic lives working in these languages, and this book is partly by way of thanks to the stimulus that working in and on Slavic has given us, and to our colleagues in Slavic around the world who have contributed to the discipline.

A book like this has a dual audience. On the one hand we are addressing Slavists who need to widen their knowledge about other Slavic languages – scholars who know some Russian, say, and are curious about the other Slavic languages. On the other hand are students and scholars of languages and linguistics with no particular knowledge of a Slavic language. This double focus makes for difficulties of selection and presentation. We have tried to write to, and for, both audiences.

We have also tried to meet the needs of both the consecutive reader and the reference reader, who needs to find how, say, questions are formed in East Slavic. We do tell a story of Slavic, but the text and index are structured so as to make it possible to locate specific issues, and cross-references allow navigation through such issues.

The survey is a relentless genre. In a hugely documented language family like Slavic, survey authors are constantly faced with major decisions of omission, inclusion and angle of view. We have had to weigh our favorite crannies of a language, and cherished idiosyncrasies of this corner of phonology, or that lexical
oddity, against the big picture, but at the same time a big picture with enough detail
to give a true feel for what snaps into focus when the camera zooms in, as well as a
valid panorama when it zooms out again.

We have culled the examples for what we analyze as the eleven Slavic languages
from many sources, published, web-based, oral and personal, and we are some-
times not sure where some of them originated. We apologize to previous authors if
we have borrowed their examples without acknowledgment, and invite colleagues
to use ours freely in the same spirit of scholarly investigation.
Among the many friends and colleagues who have contributed to the preparation of this book, we would like to extend particular thanks to Ian Press, who read the manuscript for the Press and made many invaluable suggestions; to Bernard Comrie, Grev Corbett, Roger Lass, John Lyons and Ron Sussex; to Judith Ayling, Kate Brett and Helen Barton at Cambridge University Press; and, most of all to our families, who have patiently supported this complex project over many reefs and through many mountain passes.