

BOOK REVIEW

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Polish: An Essential Grammar, 2nd edition (Routledge Essential Grammars) by Dana Bielec, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012. pp. 432 (ISBN 978-0-415-59559-9).

This second edition has been published on the basis of the 1998 first edition and is also available in hardback and ebook formats. Two companion volumes by the same author have also been published by Routledge to help students of Polish practise the grammar presented in this book: *Basic Polish: A Grammar and Workbook* and *Intermediate Polish: A Grammar and Workbook* (both 2008).

The current volume is aimed at learners of Polish at all ability levels and who are learning the language for a wide range of motivations. Certainly, the compilation of grammar items is thorough and broad-based; however, the extent to which the volume's stated aims are achieved is open to question. Indeed, would it be possible to create a grammar book which would be accessible and worthwhile for learners at all stages of their language learning career? It is perhaps unfortunate that the author has chosen not to adopt the nomenclature of the Common European Framework, given that this is the route currently being followed by most European language learning publications. In my opinion, this volume is potentially aimed at A2-B2 learners, although this is not clear and is certainly not stated in so many words.

The volume is divided into three parts: the Polish language; parts of speech; and sentence elements and structure. The first part focuses mainly on pronunciation; however, it also contains a chapter on learning an inflected language. The second part offers an extremely traditional walkthrough of the parts of speech of Polish. Copious examples are provided and extensive use is made of tables to present noun declensions, for example. The author claims such a tabular format aids language acquisition (p. xiv). Whether this is in fact true is open to debate; nevertheless, there is no doubt it makes it easy to locate information and examples. The extremely short third part is concerned with the sentence level, including some brief notes on punctuation. Following this final part there are various appendices providing, inter alia, further tabular information on word classes and verb conjugations.

This volume is a solid, if unadventurous, contribution to the field of language grammars. It would be churlish to criticize the author unduly; however, in 2012 readers are here presented with a volume which could just

as well have been published half a century previously. It is doubtful that this book would be accessible to beginners, as the author claims, as the level of detail would surely tend to confuse. However, *beginner* is of course a relative term and, without reference to the CEFR, open to interpretation. Nonetheless, *Polish: An Essential Grammar* should prove itself to be a useful addition to the libraries of all those who are serious in their ambition to learn Polish.