

SLOVENE

Marc L. Greenberg

Language Name: Slovene. **Alternate:** *Slovenian*. **Autonym:** *slovenski jezik, slovenščina*.

Location: Spoken in the Republic of Slovenia. Significant minorities are found in neighboring territories in Italy, Austria, and Hungary. Diaspora communities are primarily in Argentina, Australia, Canada, and the United States.

Family: Together with SERBO-CROATIAN, Slovene makes up the West South Slavic subgroup of the South Slavic group of the Slavic branch of Indo-European.

Related Languages: Slovene is related to the other South Slavic languages, particularly to the Čakavian and Kajkavian dialects of Croatian; it is less close to the Štokavian dialect, which is the basis for the Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian standard languages. Slovene is more distantly related to MACEDONIAN and BULGARIAN; it also shows correspondences to the central dialect of SLOVAK in the West Slavic branch.

Dialects: Slovene is traditionally divided into seven dialect bases, within each of which there is further dialect differentiation: (1) Littoral dialects (*primorsko narečje*), spoken partly in Italy; (2) Carinthian (*koroško narečje*), spoken largely in Austria; (3) Upper Carniolan (*gorenjsko narečje*); (4) Lower Carniolan (*dolenjsko narečje*); (5) Styrian (*štajersko narečje*); (6) Pannonian (*panonsko narečje*), spoken partly in Hungary; and (7) Rovte (*rovtarsko narečje*). Additionally, the Inner Carniolan dialect constitutes a transition between the Littoral and Lower Carniolan dialects.

Number of Speakers: Approximately 2 million.

Origin and History

In the sixth to seventh centuries A.D. Slavs began settling in the eastern Alpine regions, having employed the Danube, Sava, and Drava river systems to migrate westward, occupying lands abandoned by the Langobards; southward Slavic migrations of Proto-Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, and Bulgarians resulted in settlement of the Balkan hinterland. These settlements ultimately gave rise to the modern Slovene, Serbo-Croatian (now corresponding to the Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian standard languages), Macedonian, and Bulgarian speech territories. The Proto-Slovene territory reached as far west as the Tagliamento River, the Gulf of Trieste, Linz, and the outskirts of Vienna to the north, and the southern end of Lake Balaton to the east. Features of South Slavic provenience in the Central dialect area of Slovak point to a time when Proto-Slovene was still contiguous with West Slavic. The Slavic state of Carantania, centered around modern Klagenfurt, Austria, was established in the seventh century. In the ninth century, the state came under Frankish domination, an alliance motivated by the Avar threat. Throughout the medieval period, the Proto-Slovene speech territory has gradually diminished as speakers shifted to Friulian, ITALIAN, GERMAN, and HUNGARIAN, leaving a southern core area today that is equal to the present-day republic of Slovenia plus border areas in Italy, Austria, and Hungary.

The earliest surviving written documents from the Proto-Slovene speech territory are the *Freising Folia*, consisting of liturgical formulae in the Western rite, and a sermon, composed around A.D. 1000. These constitute the oldest attestation of any Slavic language written in the LATIN (Carolingian) alphabet. From this time until the middle of the 16th century there are a few surviving documents in Slovene, mostly reli-

gious and legal texts. The first printed book in Slovene is Primož Trubar's (1508–1586) *Catechismus* (1550), which, along with Jurij Dalmatin's (1547–1598) translation of the Bible (1584), ushers in the first era in the creation of a Slovene standard language. Trubar was aware of the already considerable dialect differentiation of the Slovene speech territory and employed elements of the Central Slovene dialects, particularly the dialect of Ljubljana and his native Lower Carniolan as the basis for his written language. The Counter-Reformation put an end to this era, while the Protestants developed a regional literary language for use in Prekmurje, in the northeast. Štefan Küzmič's (1723–1799) translation of the New Testament (1771) remains the major achievement in the local Prekmurje literary language, which is still employed in Protestant churches in the region.

Although some important contributions were made to Slovene literacy by Catholic intellectuals (notably, the monk and grammarian, Marko Pohlin, 1735–1801), the Slovene language remained secondary to the state language, German and, in the western and northeastern peripheries, Italian and Hungarian. The beginning of the modern Slovene standard language can be dated to the work of Jernej Kopitar (1780–1844), whose *Grammatik der slawischen Sprache in Krain, Kärnten und Steyermark* (1809) marks the beginning of a language constructed from selected dialect elements and based on historically supported spelling. The literary language was raised in prestige by the literary efforts of the Romantic poet France Prešeren (1800–1849) and the literary circle around Baron Sigismund Zois (1747–1819). The orthographic system that makes up the modern standard, by and large in the form it is found today, was codified in the *Slovene-German Dictionary* of Maks Pleteršnik (1840–1923), published in 1894–95.

Orthography and Basic Phonology

The Slovene alphabet (*abeceda*) is a modification of the Roman alphabet, as adapted from CZECH by Ljudevit Gaj in the 19th century: A, a; B, b; C, c; Č, č; D, d; E, e; F, f; G, g; H, h; I, i; J, j; K, k; L, l; M, m; N, n; O, o; P, p; R, r; S, s; Š, š; T, t; U, u; V, v; Z, z; Ž, ž.

Several other letters are sanctioned in standard orthography to render direct citation of foreign words, for example, Ć, ć; Ć, ć; Đ, đ; Q, q; X, x; Y, y; Š, š; Ž, ž; Ž, ž.

Table 1: Consonants

		Labial	Dental	Palatal	Velar
Stops	vls	p	t		k
	vd	b	d		g
Affricates	vls		c	č	
	vd			dž	
Fricatives	vls	f		š	h
	vd			ž	
Nasals		m	n		
Lateral			l		
Trill/Tap			r		
Glides		v		j	

Č, dž, š, and ž are pronounced roughly as the ENGLISH sounds “ch”, “j”, “sh”, and “s” as in “check”, “jeep”, “sheep”, and “pleasure”, respectively.

V is pronounced as English “v” only when it precedes a vowel; otherwise it is pronounced similarly to “w”: *krava* ‘cow’—*krav* [kraw] ‘of cows’ (genitive plural); *vlak* [włak] ‘train’; *navzgor* [nawzgor] ‘upwards’. L is pronounced as w in final position and before a consonant (with some morphologically conditioned exceptions): *brala* ‘she read’-*bral* [braw] ‘he read’; *spremljevalec* [-lɔc] ‘companion’ *spremljevalca* [-wca] ‘companion’ (genitive singular).

Obstruents are neutralized for the voicing feature before a pause, for example, *žaba* ‘frog’-*žab* [žap] ‘of frogs’ (genitive plural). Obstruents (listed in the table with the opposition vls- vd) in clusters agree in voicing with the final obstruent of the cluster, such as *sladek* ‘sweet’ (masculine singular)-*sladka* [slatka] (feminine singular). The final-devoicing rule applies first: *brizga* ‘syringe’-*brizg* [brisk] ‘of syringes’ (genitive plural).

Table 2: Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
High-mid	e	ə	o
Low-mid	ɛ		ɔ
Low		a	

The vowels *i*, *e*, *ɛ*, *a*, *ɔ*, *o*, *u* occur in long stressed syllables,

whereas the stressed *ə* is always short (*pes* [pə̀ɕs] ‘dog’). In unstressed syllables the distinctions between *e*—*ɛ* and *o*—*ɔ* are neutralized to *ɛ* and *ɔ*, respectively: *človek* [člɔ̀vɛk] ‘person’—*človeka* [člɔ̀vɛka] ‘person’ (genitive singular); *potok* [pɔ̀tɔk] ‘stream’—*potoka* [pɔ̀tɔka] ‘stream’ (genitive singular). The orthography has only one grapheme, *e*, for the sounds *e*, *ɛ*, and *ə*; it has only *o* for both the sounds *o* and *ɔ*.

A syllable nucleus represented by the grapheme *r* is pronounced as a sequence of the sounds *ə* + *r*, for example, *vrt* [vɔ̀rt] ‘garden’, *srce* [sɔ̀rce] ‘heart’.

Accent. Standard Slovene pronunciation has two accentual norms, one characterized by pitch accent (based on the pattern of the Upper and Lower Carniolan dialects), the other by stress and vowel length. In the pitch-accent system, any long stressed syllable is characterized by either a low tone (traditionally, “rising” or “acute”) or a high tone (traditionally, “falling” or “circumflex”). Excluding unstressed particles, prepositions, conjunctions, and certain pronouns (such as *se* [reflexive particle], *pri* ‘by, near’ *in* ‘and’, *ki* ‘which’, *en* ‘a’), words that do not have a long stressed vowel are short stressed (redundantly high) on the final syllable. Examples are: *bráti* ‘to read’ (low), *brát* ‘to go read’, *brát* ‘brother’ (short); *poskòk* ‘hop’ (short). In the non pitch stress system, the distinction between low and high tone is not realized. Pitch and stress marks are not included in Slovene orthography.

Basic Morphology

Slovene is an inflecting language. Nouns, pronouns, and adjectives agree in case, number, and gender. The cases are nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, locative, and instrumental. The locative and instrumental obligatorily occur with prepositions. In addition to plural and singular, Slovene has separate forms for dual. The genders are feminine, masculine, and neuter.

Singular

Case	Feminine	Masculine	Neuter
Nominative	punca ‘girl’	fant ‘boy’	mesto ‘city’
Genitive	punce	fanta	mesta
Dative	punci	fantu	mestu
Accusative	punco	fanta	mesto
Locative	(pri) punc	(pri) fantu	(pri) mestu
Instrumental	(s) punco	(s) fantom	(z) mestom

Plural

Case	Feminine	Masculine	Neuter
Nominative	punce	fant	mesta
Genitive	punc	fantov	mest
Dative	puncam	fantom	mestom
Accusative	punce	fante	mesta
Locative	(pri) puncah	(pri) fantih	(pri) mestih
Instrumental	(s) puncami	(s) fanti	(z) mesti

Dual

Case	Feminine	Masculine	Neuter
Nominative,			
Accusative	punci	fanta	mesti
Genitive	punc	fantov	mest
Locative	(pri) puncah	(pri) fantih	(pri) mestih
Dative,			
Instrumental	puncama	fantoma	mestoma

In Standard Slovene, definiteness is not expressed by an article, as it is in English. Rather, the masculine adjective in the nominative and accusative case shows this distinction, for example, *lep paradižnik* ‘(a) beautiful tomato’—*lepi paradižnik* ‘the beautiful tomato’. However, in the colloquial language, a definite article has developed from a demonstrative pronoun (in all genders and numbers): *lep* ‘beautiful’ (generic or indefinite)—*ta lep* ‘the beautiful (one)’. An indefinite article has developed from the numeral ‘one’ (*eden*), as in *en lep paradižnik* ‘a beautiful tomato’.

Slovene verbs distinguish imperfective and perfective aspect, roughly, incomplete versus completed action. Basic or simplex (unprefixed) verbs are generally imperfective (*misliti* ‘to think’) or bi-aspectual (*roditi* ‘to give birth’). Prefixation creates additional, usually perfective meanings, such as *premisлити* ‘to think something through’, *prinesti* ‘to bring’; imperfectives are derived by suffixation, as in *premišljevat* ‘to be in the process of thinking something through’, *prinašati* ‘to bring (repeatedly), to be in the process of bringing’.

The present tense of the verb distinguishes person and number. Pronouns are usually dropped unless the person is emphasized or reference is switched in the discourse. Second-person plural is used also as an honorific for a single addressee. The personal pronouns are given in parentheses in the chart; where two are listed, the first is masculine, the second feminine.

Present:

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>	<u>Dual</u>
First person:			
(jaz) misli-m ‘(I) think’	(mi) misli-mo	(midva, medve) misli-va	
Second person:			
(ti) misli-š	(vi) misli-te	(vidva, vedve) misli-ta	
Third person:			
(on, ona) misli	(oni, one) misli-jo	(onadva, onidve) misli-ta	

The past and future are compound tenses, made up of an auxiliary verb that inflects for person and number and a participial form that distinguishes gender and number. The past-tense auxiliary is *sem, si, je...*; the future is *bom, boš, bo...* (see chart). For example, *Premislil sem to* ‘I thought it through’, *Premislil bom to* ‘I shall think it through’. The conditional mood is made up of an uninflected particle *bi* + the same participle, thus, *Presmisli bi to* ‘I/you/he should/would think it through’.

Auxiliaries:

	<u>Singular</u>		<u>Plural</u>		<u>Dual</u>	
	Past	Future	Past	Future	Past	Future
First person:	sem	bom	smo	bomo	sva	bova
Second person:	si	boš	ste	boste	sta	bosta
Third person:	je	bo	so	bodo	sta	bosta

Participles (third-person past used as an example):

	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>	<u>Dual</u>
Masculine	mislil	mislil-i	mislil-a
Feminine	mislil-a	mislil-e	mislil-i
Neuter	mislil-o	mislil-a	mislil-i

Slovene also distinguishes the infinitive from a secondary infinitive, called the “supine”, a form expressing intention to perform an action. The supine occurs after verbs of motion. Thus, *Moram kositi* ‘I must mow’ (infinitive)—*Grem kosit* ‘I am going to mow’ (supine).

Basic Syntax

Slovene word order is basically SVO, but word order is said to be free in that the elements may be rearranged for emphasis, as in the following examples:

Gospod je dve uri čakal.
man be:3S.AUX two hours waited
‘The man waited for two hours.’ [emphasizes “waited”]

Gospod je čakal dve uri.
Man be:3S.AUX waited two hours
‘The man waited for two hours.’ [emphasizes “two hours”]

Na postaji je čakal gospod.
At station be:3S.AUX waited man.
‘There was a man waiting at the station.’ [emphasizes “man”]

Generally, clitic elements follow the first verb or noun phrase in the main clause:

Bojimo se ga vznemirjati.
be.afraid:1p REFL.PART him:GEN.SG disturb:INF
‘We are afraid to disturb him.’

In noun phrases the normal order is demonstrative + numeral + adjective + noun. Subordinate clauses are typically begun by *da* ‘that’, *ki/kateri* ‘which’, *ker* ‘because’, *ko(t)* ‘as’, *če* ‘if’:

Vem, da je pametna punca.
know:1s that 3S.AUX smart:FEM.SG girl:NOM.SG
‘I know that she is a smart girl.’

Tam stoji vlak, ki smo ga čakali.
There stands:3SG train: which 1p.AUX it:ACC.MASC.SG
NOM.SG

čakali.
waited:PL
‘There is the train for which we were waiting.’

Contact with Other Languages

Slovene as a substratum language and as a language in contact has left its mark on Friulian, German (especially the Bavarian and Tyrolian dialects), Hungarian, and Croatian. Influences

on Slovene have come from the same languages, as well as Venetian Italian, Dalmatian, and Istrian Romance. A number of languages, including Illyrian and continental Celtic, may have made up substrata to Proto-Slovene (or the Romance dialects that preceded it) and are recognizable as trace elements in the vocabulary, for example, from Celtic *Karavanke* 'Karawanken Alps', *Kranj(ska)* 'Carniola'.

From Romance: *pogača* 'cake' (cf. Ital. *focaccia*), *jota* 'type of thin soup' (< Friulian *jote*, in turn ultimately from Celtic)

From Italian: *briga* 'worry', *punca* 'girl'

From German: *reva* 'poor person' (< Old High German *riuwe*), *brihten* 'smart', *puška* 'shotgun'

From Hungarian: *gazda* 'landowner, boss'

From English: *gangster*

Common Words

man:	človek	small:	majhen
woman:	ženska	yes:	da (colloq., ja)
water:	voda	no:	ne
sun:	sonce	good:	dober
three:	tri	bird:	ptič
fish:	riba	dog:	pes
big:	velik	tree:	drevo
long:	dolg		

Example Sentences

(1) Vsak, ki jo je poznal,
everyone which her:ACC.SG.FEM 3S.AUX knew:MASC.SG

jo je imel rad.
her:ACC.SG.FEM 3S.AUX had:MASC.SG glad:MASC.SG
'Everyone who knew her liked her.'

(2) Sedeli smo za mizo in smo
sat:MASC.PL 1p.AUX behind table:INSTR and 1p.AUX

se pogovarjali.
REFL CONVERSED:MASC.PL
'We sat at the table and conversed.'

(3) Prinesla sta očetu
brought:MASC.DUAL 3.DUAL.AUX father:DAT.SG

star časopis.
old:ACC.SG.INDEF newspaper:ACC.SG
'The two of them brought father an old newspaper.'

Efforts to Preserve, Protect, and Promote the Language

After the incorporation of the Slovene speech territory (minus the Carinthian area, which remained in Austria, the littoral area in Italy, and the Porabje region in Hungary) into the kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918 (named Yugoslavia in 1929), Slovene was no longer a regional language subordinate

to German, but now became subordinate to Serbo-Croatian, the de facto lingua franca of the Yugoslav state. The legal status and prestige of Slovene within the reconstituted, Socialist Yugoslavia, was raised after World War II. Its rights as the official language of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia as well as an official Yugoslav state language were reaffirmed by the Yugoslav Federal Constitution of 1974, in which it was declared to be on par with Serbo-Croatian. However, the real situation was markedly asymmetrical, with Slovene enjoying limited rights in Yugoslav state functions as well as some matters within the Republic of Slovenia itself (in particular, the military). In the 1980s leading Slovene intellectuals took issue with the discrepancy between the constitutionalized protection of Slovene and the encroachment of Serbo-Croatian, which they felt a threat to their national identity. Events leading up to the 1991 secession of Slovenia from Yugoslavia frequently centered on language issues, including a staged trial of four Slovenes accused of treason and sedition. This trial was held in Serbo-Croatian within the Slovene Republic, in violation of the sovereignty of Slovene in its own state and of the constitutional rights of the accused. Slovene is now the state language of the independent Republic of Slovenia. Additionally, Italian and Hungarian are accorded official status for administration and education in the coastal region and Prekmurje, respectively.

Slovenes continue to be concerned with the plight of Slovene-speaking minorities in Italy, Austria, and Hungary, where they have attempted to encourage the respective governments to accord language rights and foster Slovene-language education. These efforts have met with limited success.

In recent years, some intellectuals perceive a threat to the survival of Slovene from major world and European languages, especially English. This has led to some successful attempts to introduce native coinages and loan translations, for example, *strežnik* 'server', *svetovni splet* 'the World Wide Web', *zgoščanka* 'compact disk'.

Select Bibliography

- Greenberg, Marc L., ed. 1997. *The Sociolinguistics of Slovene* (= *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 124). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- _____. 2000. *A Historical Phonology of the Slovene Language* (= *Historical Phonology of the Slavic Languages*, VII). Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.
- Lencek, Rado L. 1982. *The Structure and History of the Slovene Language*. Columbus: Slavica.
- Priestly, T.M.S. 1993. "Slovene." In *The Slavonic Languages*. B. Comrie and G. Corbett, eds. London: Routledge, 388–451.
- Rigler, Jakob. 1986. "The Origins of the Slovene Literary Language." In J. Rigler, *Razprave o slovenskem jeziku*. F. Jakopin, ed. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 52–64.
- Stankiewicz, Edward. 1980. "Slovenian." In *The Slavic Literary Languages*. Alexander M. Schenker and Edward Stankiewicz, eds. New Haven: Yale Concilium on International and Area Studies, 85–102.
- Thomas, George. 1977. "The Impact of Purism on the Development of the Slovene Standard Language." In *Slovenski jezik—Slovene Linguistic Studies* 1, 133–152.