

Bosson, Georg, *Die romanischen Sprachen. Eine vergleichende Einführung*. Hamburg: Buske Verlag, 2008, 379 pp. + CD-ROM. 978-3-87548-518-9.
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This publication presents an original approach to the Romance languages in general (although *JFLS* readers will presumably be primarily concerned with its discussion of French on pp. 145–171). The different languages are discussed and compared by means of a number of specific features deemed typologically pertinent. These are both external: geographical distribution; number of speakers; status; and internal: oral system; nasal vowels; accent; gemination; palatalisation; case-system; use of prepositions to indicate object; articles; partitive; preterite; auxiliaries; clitic subjects; address forms. The advantage of this method is that it standardises the elements examined for each individual language and permits easy cross-comparisons with adjacent or distant relatives in the Romance group. The book opens with a cogent, clear and sensibly balanced treatment of the Romance languages as a collectivity (pp. 13–30) before expanding on the criteria used to classify them (pp. 31–47). Thereafter (pp. 49–271), it deals successively with Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Occitan (with a good sociolinguistic discussion of a language which has given rise to much linguistically unhelpful and indeed counter-productive politicisation), French, Rhaeto-Romance, Italian, Sardinian, and Romanian. It finishes with a comparative section (pp. 273–304), a conclusion (pp. 305–308), and a range of supporting materials: bibliography, maps, a summary list of Romance-based Creoles, a glossary of technical terms, the IPA, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in a range of languages, a short textual anthology (poems), an index of languages, and a short guide to the accompanying CD. This contains a series of recordings illustrating phonetic/phonological details (indicated in the book by the use of a marginal symbol), and versions of the Human Rights and poetic texts. The section on French has a good if brief external history and provides a convenient means of comparing (in this instance) French with other Romance languages: from this point of view, it would be a valuable additional element in a traditional history of the language course and would allow one to slip in a fairly easy and painless comparative dimension. The only drawback is the language of the book. It is written in very clear and elegant German, but it would have reached a wider (and especially student) readership around the world had it been in French. It deserves to be more widely read and I would encourage the author and publishers to consider a French version.

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