Hellênikê / ἑλληνική: an open-source introduction to ancient Greek

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Contents

1 Hellênikê / ἑλληνική: an open-source introduction to ancient Greek

> Encounter a historical language and culture, and engage with how that language and culture continue to shape structures of power today.

This open-source textbook is one part of a project to develop a new two-semester introduction to ancient Greek at the College of the Holy Cross in 2022-2023. It is modeled on work by several members of our department over the past three years rethinking our introductory Latin courses. Like that project, our curriculum is based on these principles:

- the course emphasizes authentic examples of language, and is organized around a target text (in this textbook, Lysias, *Oration 1: On the Murder of Eratosthenes*). Instead of composing made-up Greek, we draw on the target text as much as possible.
- we follow modern principles of language pedagogy in presenting first those features of language (syntactic, morphological, lexical) that are frequent in Greek, are inherently complex, and are most different from English forms of expression and thought.
- we determine the sequence of content on the basis of computational analysis of the features needed to read authentic content.
- throughout the curriculum, we link the study of Greek to reflection on contemporary issues.

Like the Latin project before us, our work at Holy Cross is taking place through the college's Scholarship in Action program, and we gratefully acknowledge its support.

2 About this textbook

Download a PDF of this textbook.

2.1 Content

- targetted to a specific text or corpus
- covers only features of language found in the target texts

2.2 Organization

Organized in modules aimed at 2-3 weeks; modules 1-4 together should be roughly one semester of a two-semester, full-year course.

Each module comprises:

- introduction of grammatical topics
- minimally modified passages from the target corpus
- interactive practice
- ancient Greek in action: relating topics in this module to our lives today

2.3 Additional notes for teachers

2.3.1 Sequence of grammatical topics

Topics sequenced by:

- prominence in target corpus
- unfamiliarity to English speakers
- complexity of the topic
- priority to topics enabling students to explore continuous, contextualized reading, rather than isolated sentences

> -> **teach to the synopsis, not the paradigm**

2.3.2 Vocabulary

First half of course: emphasis on a small core vocabulary (perhaps < 200 words). This vocabulary is defined by comparison with other Greek corpora, and finding shared items in the highest frequency lists of individual corpora (rather than the common practice of finding most frequent terms in a *composite* list: this effaces the differences in vocabulary from one corpus to another).

It includes:

- function words (prepositions, particles, conjunctions)
- the article and pronouns
- a small core of extremely common verbs, especially those which have a large number of compounds. In counting the frequency of a simplex verb like φέρω, we include occurrences of compounds such as ἐπιφέρω or ἐκφέρω.

It includes a relatively small number of nouns, and fewer adjectives: these parts of speech vary more from one corpus to another.

In the second half of the course, we focus on a second vocabulary tier: terms that are frequent in the target corpus and related or similar texts, but not necessarily in other Greek corpora. The goal is to have a large enough vocabulary to recognize 75-90% of the lexical items in the target text, excluding proper nouns and adjectives. For some target texts, a vocabulary of < 500 words may be adequate. This second vocabulary tier will include more verbs, a larger number of nouns, and some additional adjectives.

3 Preliminaries

3.1 The Greek alphabet

3.1.1 Overview

Notes for overview:

- the form of the Greek alphabet we use evolved over many centuries
- memorize the alphabet in alphabetical order so you can use a dictionary
- practice reading aloud until you are comfortable pronouncing Greek words you have not seen before

3.1.2 The basic letters

letter	name	pronunciation guide	practice Greek word
Α α	alpha	dr**a**m**a** (long, short)	ἀνήρ ("man")
Β β	beta	**b**ook	βιβλίον ("book")
Γ γ	gamma	**g**ood ("hard g")	γυνή ("woman")
Δ δ	delta	**d**ay	δῶρον ("gift")
Ε ε	epsilon	b**e**t	ἔργον ("work, deed")
Ζ ζ	zeta	wi**sd**om	ζῷον ("animal")
Η η	eta	**a**te; w**ai**t	ἡμέρα ("day")
Θ θ	theta	**th**ick (or ho**th**ead)	θεός ("god")
Ι ι	iota	h**i**t (short); mach**i**ne (long)	ἰχθύς ("fish")
Κ κ	kappa	**k**ind	καρπός ("fruit")
Λ λ	lambda	**l**anguage	λόγος ("word")
Μ μ	mu	**m**other	μήτηρ ("mother")

letter	name	pronunciation guide	practice Greek word
N ν	nu	**n**ight	νόμος ("law, custom")
Ξ ξ	xi	he**x** (= 'ks')	ξένος ("guest, host, stranger")
O o	omicron	p**o**t	ὄνομα ("name")
Π π	pi	**p**erson	πατήρ ("father")
P ρ	rho	**r**ose	ῥήτωρ ("orator")
Σ σ, ς	sigma	**s**ay	σῶμα ("body")
T τ	tau	**t**ake	τέκνον ("child")
Y υ	upsilon	p**u**t (short); c**u**te (long)	ὕπνος ("sleep")
Φ φ	phi	**ph**oto (or hi**ph**op)	φωνή ("voice")
X χ	chi	**ch**orus (or ba**ckh**and)	χάρις ("grace, thanks, favor")
Ψ ψ	psi	u**ps**et	ψυχή ("spirit, soul, life")
Ω ω	omega	b**o**ne	ὥρα ("season, hour")

3.1.3 Breathings

Another sound to add: words beginning with a vowel will have what is called a breathing mark written over that vowel. There are two kinds of breathing marks: smooth breathing looks like this ' and adds no sound to the vowel rough breathing looks like this ' and adds an 'h' sound to the vowel (words beginning with a rho also have a rough breathing, making it an 'rh' sound)

3.1.4 Diphthongs

Diphthongs are combinations of two vowels that result in one syllable. English has them, too. In Greek, diphthongs are combinations of iota or upsilon with other vowels.

diphthong	pronunciation guide	model Greek word
αι	**ai**sle	αἰδώς ("sense of shame, respect")
αυ	h**ou**se, pl**ow**	αὔριον ("tomorrow")
ει	w**ei**gh	εἰρήνη ("peace")
ευ	ε + υ	εὖ ("well," the adverb of "good")

diphthong	pronunciation guide	model Greek word
οι	c**oi**n	οἰκία ("house, home")
ου	s**ou**p, b**oo**t	οὐρανός ("sky")
υι	**wi**t	υἱός ("son")

Accents and breathing marks are written over the second vowel of a diphthong.

3.1.5 Iota subscript

When iota combines with long alpha, eta, or omega, one modern convention is to write it beneath the vowel as an "iota subscript," which look like this: ᾳ, ῃ, ῳ Some guides suggest pronouncing such combinations as a diphthong; in practice, I will not. But in writing the iota subscript is absolutely essential and cannot be ignored. [[Neel and Mary differ on pronunication]]

3.1.6 A few further details

A few details to note:

- "rough breathing" spells out when words spelled with an initial vowel start with an "h-" sound
- sigma changes form at the end of a word but is not pronounced differently
- "iota subscript" became an alternate way of spelling a final iota when the final iota began to be dropped in pronounciation. (You could think of it as similar to using an apostrophe when you write a contraction like "don't" in English, but we'll make a habit of pronouncing the iota subscript.)

Tips:

- read out loud (as the ancient Greeks did!)
- we can't precisely recover ancient pronounciation, but try to distinguish sounds that are spelled differently (e.g., o/ω ε/η), and include accent in your pronounciation. Hear the difference between ἀστραπηβόλος, "one who throws lightning" (an adjective describing Zeus) and ἀστραπήβολος "one struck by lightning". It makes a difference! English similarly distinguishes otherwise identical words based on (stress) accent. How does the way you pronounce the following English word change their meaning? content, present, object, insult, permit

Practice reading these words out loud:

- Ἐρατοσθένης (name of the murdered man in Lysias, *Oration 1*)
- Εὐφίλητος (name of the man accused of murder)
- Σώστρατος (name of a friend of Εὐφίλητος)
- Ἀθηναῖοι

3.2 Ancient Greek accents

3.2.1 General rules:

There are three types of accents: (1) acute ´ (2) grave (3) circumflex ˜

Accents are written over vowels. If a diphthong is accented, the accent is written over the second vowel of the diphthong (e.g., εὖ). In classical Greece the accent was a pitch accent: that is, the pitch of your voice would rise or lower. Because English speakers are accustomed to stress accents, we will stress any accented syllable, regardless of type of accent, when pronouncing a word.

Accents appear on only the last three syllables of a word, and almost every word will have an accent of some kind. These syllables are called the antepenult (third from last) the penult (next to last) the ultima (last)

Some small words do not carry an accent: those that do not carry an accent or affect the accents of other words are called proclitics and are short words such as some forms of the article (ὁ, ἡ, οἱ, αἱ) and prepositions like εἰς, ἐκ, ἐν. There are also enclitics, short words that affect the accents of other words in a sentence but do not have their own accent.

Placement and type of accent depend on the length of vowels in the word. Short vowels = α, ε, ι, ο, υ Long vowels = α, η, ι, ω, υ. Diphthongs are long, expect for final –αι, -οι in some forms.

An acute accent can appear on any of these syllables. It is the only accent that lives on the antepenult and can live there only if the ultima is short. Therefore, if the ultima has a long vowel or diphthong, the antepenult will not be accented.

A grave accent appears only on the ultima and only in a sentence: a grave accent replaces what would have been an acute accent on the ultima of a word followed directly (i.e., no punctuation intervenes) by another accented word in a sentence. This means that in a paradigm of noun, adjective, or verb forms you will not see or use a grave accent. It also means that the last word of a sentence does not have the change from acute to grave since no word follows without punctuation intervening.

A circumflex accent appears only on the penult or the ultima—never on the antepenult. It accents long vowels or diphthongs only. It will appear on the penult under the following circumstances: the penult is accented, the vowel or diphthong of the syllable is long, and the ultima is short—all of the conditions must be true and when they are true the accent must be a circumflex.

3.2.2 Recessive accent

The accent on finite verb forms in ancient Greek is described as recessive, meaning the accent recedes as far back from the end of the word as the possible, in accordance with the set of rules governing accentuation.

The rules that apply to these forms:

1. The accent cannot recede further back than the antepenult. Therefore, the accent will reside on one of the last three syllables of a finite verb form, even if it has more than three syllables.

2. If the ultima is long, the accent recedes to the penult and is an acute accent on the penult.

3. If the ultima is short:[reminder that final -αι and -οι are usually short]

   a. if there are three or more syllables in the form, the accent will recede to the antepenult and be an acute accent on that syllable.
   b. if there are two syllables, the accent will be on the penult. Since the ultima is short, when the penult is accented its form will depend on the quantity of the penult syllable: if it is short, the accent will be acute. If it is long, the accent will be a circumflex.

Other situations with circumflex accents on finite verb forms: 4. As we learn contracted verb forms, where two vowels have combined to one sound, we will see circumflex accents mark those contractions when possible under the rules for circumflex accents. [do we explain compound verb forms yet? a couple of examples already in Lysias I.6]

5. If the verb form is only one syllable and it is long, it will carry a circumflex accent.

Practice for recessive accents: On the following finite verb forms, determine the correct placement and type of accent in accordance with the rules of recessive accents, and then put it there. [Verb forms from Lysias I.6–11]

1. ἐδοξε
2. ἠγαγομην
3. διεκειμην
4. ἐθελῃ
5. ἐφυλλατον
6. γιγνεται
7. ἐπιστευον
8. ἐτελευτησε

9. γεγενηται

10. διαφθειρεται

11. ἐγενετο

12. ἐθηλαζεν

13. δεοι

14. κινδυνευῃ

15. διῃτωμην

16. ἀπῃει

17. ἐγίγνετο

18. ὑπωπτευσα

19. διεκειμην

20. ἥκον

21. ἐβοα

22. ἐδυσκολαινεν

4 Module 1: the Greek verb

4.1 Overview of module 1

4.1.1 Language: overview

Module 1 introduces these features of Greek:

- recessive accent in verbs
- how to recognize verb forms and identify them with person, number, tense, mood, voice
- principal parts of Greek verbs
- the aorist and imperfect indicative tenses

4.1.2 Ancient Greek in action: overview

Different languages imagine the world differently. To narrate past events, for example, English does not have a single verb tense that correspond to the ideas expressed by the Greek imperfect tense. Module 1 includes reflections of English speakers encountering a different imperfect tense in Spanish and Italian.

4.1.3 Reading: overview

In our reading in module 1, we meet Euphiletus, the speaker in Lysias, *Oration 1*. Euphiletus describes the early days of his marriage (to a wife who is never named).

4.2 The Greek verb (τὸ ῥῆμα)

Verbs express the action of a sentence: no sentence is complete without an expressed or implied verbal unit.

We will see several kinds of *verbal unit* that Greek uses to express action. In this module, we begin our study of Greek with the most important one: *finite verbs*.

4.3 Ancient Greek in action: the imperfect tense

As you've seen in this module, while the Greek imperfect and aorist tenses can both refer to events in the past, they express different ideas about how an event takes place in time. (This is sometimes called *grammatical aspect*).

4.3.1 A. Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, "Widowed NYC Teacher Studies Spanish in Mexico"

Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, poem from *Imperfect Tense*, "Widowed NYC Teacher Studies Spanish in Mexico"

4.3.2 B. Jhumpa Lahiri, *In Other Words*

Jhumpa Lahiri, excerpt from *In Other Words*, "The Imperfect" (pp. 103-114)

4.4 Reading

Practice, reading and composition based on Lysias 1, sections 6-10: the early days of Euphiletos' marriage.

5 Module 2: nouns and adjectives

5.1 Overview of module 2

5.1.1 Language: overview

Module 2 introduces these features of Greek:

- TBA

5.1.2 Ancient Greek in action: overview

TBA

5.1.3 Practice, Reading, and Composition

TBA

5.2 Nouns (τὸ ὄνομὰ) and adjectives (τὸ ἐπίθετον)

In this module, we'll learn about two further parts of speech: nouns (ancient Greek ὀνόματα, the *names* for people and things), and adjectives, words that describe nouns (Greek ἐπίθετα, literally "add ons").

Unlike English, where word order determines the role of a noun, Greek shows the function of nouns and adjective through changes in their form.

5.3 Gender identity and language

- Gender and gender diversity: draw on sources in Tom Hendrickson, "Gender Diversity in Greek and Latin"

5.4 Reading

Practice, reading and composition based on Lysias 1, 11-14: curious events in the household of Euphile-tos.

6 Module 3: participles

Practice, reading and composition based on Lysias 1, sections 16-19: an elderly woman reveals to Euphiletos that his wife is having an affair with Eratosthenes.

6.1 Overview of module 3

6.1.1 Language

Main areas of focus are:

- participles: a verbal unit
- attributive, circumstantial, supplementary participles
- absolute construction

6.1.2 Making Connections

Reading the Second Amendment

6.1.3 Practice, Reading, and Composition

- πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἀποθανοῦσα αἰτία μοι γεγένηται
- ἡ ἐμὴ γυνὴ ὑπὸ τούτου τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὀφθεῖσα, χρόνῳ διαφθείρεται
- οἰκίδιον ἔστι μοι διπλοῦν, ἴσα ἔχον τὰ ἄνω τοῖς κάτω
- …ἵνα δὲ μὴ κινδυνεύῃ κατὰ τῆς κλίμακος καταβαίνουσα
- προϊόντος τοῦ χρόνου…
- ἵνα παύσηται κλᾶον
- ὡς ἀσμένη με ἑορακυῖα ἥκοντα διὰ χρόνου.
- πρότερον δὲ μεθύων εἷλκες αὐτήν
- κἀγὼ τούτων οὐδὲν ἐνθυμούμενος οὐδ‘ ὑπονοῶν ἐκάθευδον ἄσμενος
- χρόνου μεταξὺ διαγενομένου καὶ ἐμοῦ πολὺ ἀπολελειμμένουν τῶν ἐμαυτοῦ κακῶν, προσέρχεταί μοί τις πρεσβῦτις…

6.2 Ancient Greek in action: reading the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution

> A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed

6.3 Module 3: reading

6.3.1 Chunking more complex sentences

- this display indents by level of subordination:

πάντων τῶν κακῶν

> **ἀποθανοῦσα**

αἰτία μοι **γεγένηται**

- start by reading down the left-most (principal) elements:

πάντων τῶν κακῶν … αἰτία μοι **γεγένηται**

Then proceed in one level, and work on each subordinate construction.

When you're done, reread it like a printed text:

πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἀποθανοῦσα αἰτία μοι γεγένηται

Another example…

ἡ ἐμὴ γυνὴ

> ὑπὸ τούτου τοῦ ἀνθρώπου **ὀφθεῖσα**,

χρόνῳ **διαφθείρεται**

7 Module 4: subordination

7.1 Overview of module 4

7.1.1 Language

Main areas of focus are:

- first subordinate clause (introducing subordinating conjunctions, use of μή)
- sequence of tenses
- morphology of subjunctive and optative moods, all three voices, 3S and Pl (aorist, imperfect tenses)

7.1.2 Making Connections

- Phuc Tran on the power of a non-indicative mood

7.1.3 Practice, Reading, and Composition

- Continuing with Lysias 1, sections 20-22(?)
- Can express purpose in two different ways

7.2 "The dark side of the subjunctive"

- Watch Phuc Tran's TED Talk, "The Dark Side of the Subjunctive."

  Our discussion of Tran's talk will examine the power of verbal moods (other than the indicative), and how they expand the universe of ideas we can describe.

8 Practice

Studying a language requires practice.

8.1 Verbs: practice

- drills identifying verb forms?
- drills on principal parts?
- drills on singular<->plural?
- drills on imperfect<->aorist?
- drills changing voice?

8.2 Module 2: assignments

8.3 Nouns and adjectives: practice

TBA

8.4 Module 2: assignments

8.5 Participles: practice

8.6 Module 3: assignments

8.7 Subordination: practice

- drills on identifying verb forms of subjunctives/optatives
- drills on creating verb forms of subjunctives/optatives

- drills on translating purposes clauses
- drills on composing purpose clauses, running through various parts of sequence of tenses

8.8 Module 4: assignments

9 Reference and review

- review material by module
- reference material for entire textbook (paradigms, synopses)

9.1 Module 1: reference and review

9.2 Module 1: vocabulary

9.2.1 Conjunctions and connecting particles

- ἀλλά
- γάρ
- καί
- μέν…δέ…δέ
- οὖν
- τε

9.2.2 Verbs

- ἀδικέω
- γίγνομαι
- δείκνυμι
- δοκέω
- ἔρχομαι
- ἔχω
- κελεύω
- λέγω
- ποιέω

Other:

- ἔστι(ν)

9.3 Module 1: summary of forms and grammar

To form the **imperfect indicative** in all three voices:

- use the *first principal part*
- find the stem by dropping **ω** or **νυμι**

To form the **aorist indicative** in **active or middle** forms

- use the *third* principal part
- find the stem by dropping **α** from "first" aorists, or **ον** from "second" aorists

To form the **aorist indicative** in **passive** forms

- use the *sixth* principal part
- find the stem by dropping **ην**

9.3.1 Paradigms

The aorist indicative in the third person. (Forms highlighted like this are not required to be memorized in module 1.)

The aorist indicative of δείκνυμι

person/number	Active	Middle	Passive
Singular			
1st singular	ἔδειξα	ἐδειξάμην	ἐδείχθην
2d singular	ἔδειξες	ἐδείξω	ἐδείχθης
3rd singular	ἔδειξε	ἐδείξατο	ἐδείχθη
Plural			
1st plural	ἐδείξαμεν	ἐδειξάμεθα	ἐδείχθην
2d plural	ἐδείξατε	ἐδείξασθε	ἐδείχθησαν
3rd plural	ἔδειξαν	ἐδείξαντο	ἐδείχθησαν

9.4 Module 2: reference and review

9.5 Summary of forms and grammar

9.6 Vocabulary

9.7 Module 3: reference and review

9.8 Module 4: reference and review

10 Postscript

- many questions