Getting Started with Verbs

Action Words

A lesson for the *Paideia* web-app
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What Is a Verb

- What is a verb?
  - I go to the park.
  - You play baseball.
  - We need a better team.
- Don't confuse verbs with other "action words"
  - Nouns referring to a kind of action
    - He regained his sight.
    - They are asking a question.
  - Gerunds (verbal nouns)
    - The running was exhilerating.
    - The dog's begging was becoming a problem.
  - If you can put "the" in front, it's not a verb

Expressing the Subject of a Verb

- In English we show the subject of the action with a separate pronoun or noun
  - I want some coffee.
  - They are children.
  - The garden grows well in May.
- With verbless clauses, Greek also uses a nominal for the subject
  - Οὑτος Ἀλεξανδρος.
  - Ὁ ἀνηρ πλουσιος.
- But with verbs Greek shows the subject in the verb's ending
  - No separate word is needed to identify the subject.
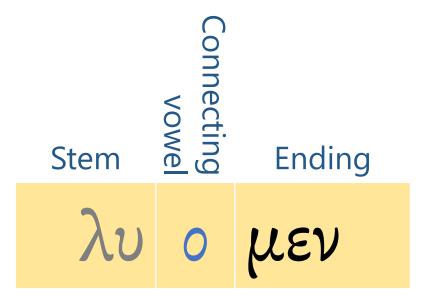   - λυω = "I set free"

Verb Endings

- There are six different endings for each verb showing …
  - The number of the subject
    - How many people are performing the action
    - One (singular) or more than one (plural)?
  - Person: The relationship of the subject to the speaking situation
    - 1st person = the speaker herself? (I, we)
    - 2nd person = someone addressed by the speaker (you)
    - 3rd person = someone/something outside the conversation (him/her/it, they)

Basic Parts of a Verb

Stem	Connecting vowel	Ending
λυ	ο	μεν

Present Tense Endings

	Singular	Plural
1st person	-ω	-μεν
2nd person	-ις	-τε
3rd person	-ι	-νσι(ν)

Endings with Connecting Vowels

	Singular	Plural
1st person	–ω	–ομεν
2nd person	–εις	–ετε
3rd person	–ει	–ουσι(ν)

Present Tense Examples

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	λυω	λυομεν
2ⁿᵈ person	λυεις	λυετε
3ʳᵈ person	λυει	λυουσι(ν)

Present Tense Examples

	Singular	Plural
1st person	βλεπω	βλεπομεν
2nd person	βλεπεις	βλεπετε
3rd person	βλεπει	βλεπουσι(ν)

The Meaning of the Greek Present Tense

- The Greek "present" tense gives us two pieces of information
  - time and aspect
- Time
  - When the action takes place in relation to the speaker's present.
- Aspect
  - The way the speaker invites us to view the action

Present Aspect

- Seeing a train from far away
    - See all the cars at once

Present Aspect

- Seeing a train from far away
  - See all the cars at once
- Seeing a train from beside the tracks
  - Approaching (inceptive)
    - Βλεπω = "I am starting to see."

Present Aspect

- Seeing a train from far away
  - See all the cars at once
- Seeing a train from beside the tracks
  - Approaching (inceptive)
  - Motion of the cars passing (continuous)
    - Βλεπω = "I am seeing."

Present Aspect

- Seeing a train from far away
  - See all the cars at once
- Seeing a train from beside the tracks
  - Approaching (inceptive)
  - Motion of the cars passing (continuous)
  - Repeated passing of cars (iterative)
    - Βλεπω = "I often see", "I see over and over."

Present Aspect

- Seeing a train from far away
  - See all the cars at once
- Seeing a train from beside the tracks
  - Approaching (inceptive)
  - Motion of the cars passing (continuous)
  - Repeated passing of cars (iterative)
  - Familiar rhythm after many pass (habitual)
    - Βλεπω = "I usually see."

Present Aspect

- Seeing a train from far away
  - See all the cars at once
- Seeing a train from beside the tracks
  - Approaching (inceptive)
  - Motion of the cars passing (continuous)
  - Repeated passing of cars (iterative)
  - Familiar rhythm after many pass (habitual)
  - Timeless picture of train passing (gnomic)
    - Βλεπω = "I see."

Present Time?

- Present tense generally means present time
- But can also be used for past events
  - In narrative passages
    - vividness
  - In prophecy

"Parsing" a Verb

- Listing the information we know about it
  - Tense (Present)
  - Voice (Active)
  - Mood (Indicative)
  - Person (1st, 2nd, or 3rd person?)
  - Number (singular or plural)
  - Dictionary form
  - Gloss (sample English translation)
- for example…
  - βλεπομεν
    - Present active indicative, 1st person, plural of βλεπω, "I see"
  - λυει
    - Present active indicative, 3rd person, singular of λυω, "I set free"

Other Moods: Infinitive

- ## The English infinitive
  - Add "to" before the word
    - "to run", "to buy", "to think", etc.
  - We often think of it as the "dictionary form"

- ## The Greek infinitive: *-ειν*
  - Don't add any other word
  - Add the ending *-ειν*
    - tip: The final ν reminds us of the "in" of "infinitive"

Other Moods: Infinitive

- A "verbal noun"
  - packing up the verb to play a noun's role in a clause
- Play the roles nouns often do
  - direct object of another verb (often)
    - Θελω βαινειν, "I want to go."
- But simpler than nouns
  - no different case forms
- We'll see more roles for infinitives later on
  - for now translate like the English infinitive or with -ing
    - βαινειν -> "to go" or "going"
    - θελειν -> "to want" or "wanting"
    - ἀγοραζειν -> "to buy" or "buying"
    - ἐχειν -> "to have" or "having"

Other Moods: Imperative

- The "imperative" is used to give commands or instructions
  - "Go to your room!"
  - "Take a bath!"
  - "Apologize to your sister!"
- Imperative verbs are also easy
  - only 4 forms

	Singular	Plural
2nd person	βλεπε	βλεπετε
3rd person	βλεπετω	βλεπετωσαν

Negating Other Moods

- To negate an indicative verb we put *οὐ* in front
  - Οὐ βαινω. "I am not going."

- To negate other moods we put *μη* in front
  - Μη βαινε! "Do not go!" (imperative)
  - μη ἀγοραζειν "not to buy" (infinitive)

- When we learn other moods later on we'll use *μη*
  - Οὐ only negates indicative verbs

Keep Learning

- You can learn more about Greek verbs and the present tense here:
  - Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (3rd edition)
    - verb basics, 15.1-15.25 (pp. 13-128)
    - present active indicative 16.1-16.16 (pp. 131-136)