

Any discussion of the difficulty of learning Greek inevitably mentions two obstacles for even the well-intentioned student: the myriad of forms and the plethora of syntactic oddities. Consequently, this paper offers proposals for stripping down the initial training in Greek without hindering, and indeed enhancing, beginning readers' comprehension of full Greek texts.

**Vocabulary:** One area where Greek is quantifiably easier than other languages is vocabulary. Greek texts use a smaller core vocabulary (less than half the size of comparable core vocabularies for English or Latin, for example). Regardless of the textbook used, teachers can privilege high frequency lexical items. For example, our program maintains a core vocabulary for the two-year Greek sequence, and students in the first year are responsible only for vocabulary in their textbook which also appears in this core vocabulary. Because active use of Greek is so helpful to beginners, teachers can have students write in Greek using exclusively, or as close as possible, high frequency core vocabulary, to reinforce these useful and helpful words. cf. <http://www.artsci.lsu.edu/classics/greek/>

**Morphology:** A student who is comfortable with the forms of  $\acute{\omicron}/\acute{\eta}/\acute{\tau}\acute{\omicron}$ ,  $\acute{\omega}\nu/\acute{\omicron}\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha/\acute{\omicron}\nu$  and  $\pi\acute{\omicron}\lambda\iota\varsigma$ , along with an understanding of sound combinations (e.g.,  $\kappa + \sigma \rightarrow \xi$ ,  $\varepsilon + \alpha \rightarrow \eta$ ), can accurately identify a very wide array of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. Other paradigms, which illustrate isolated variations and rare types, can be delayed or learned with appropriate clusters of vocabulary. Comfort is the key, however. A student will read better with two or three paradigms learned solidly than with ten to twenty that are confused. For verbs, Anne Mahoney's survey of forms in the Perseus database (CO 81 [2004] 101-105) shows how a limited number of tenses (present, imperfect, and aorist) and moods (indicative, participle, and infinitive) generate a solid majority of the verb forms used in Greek texts. Moreover, beginning instruction can better organize the presentation of the conjugation of Greek verbs. The  $-\omega$  conjugation generates the active forms of the tenses from the first three principal parts (present, imperfect, future, and aorist) while the  $-\mu\iota$  conjugation generates the other forms (perfect, aorist passive), along with the notorious  $-\mu\iota$  verbs. In the middle voice, Greek verbs are remarkably stable; the subjunctive and optative are lower frequency moods and easy enough to recognize once readers are comfortable with the more common forms.

**Syntax:** Conjunctions and prepositions rank among the most common words in Greek and merit attention and study as builders of meaning rather than just transparent lexical items. The vast majority of subordinate clauses, however, and forms restricted to these constructions (e.g., future optative) should have their introduction deferred until reading a text which makes meaningful use of them. Such constructions include purpose, result, indirect questions, all but simple conditions, and all but the most basic indirect statement. Surveying these complex subordinating constructions in the abstract and then encountering them irregularly does not build comfort and confidence in reading.

Readers in their native tongue or acquiring additional languages grow accustomed to increased complexity by continued reading, even of texts they do not yet fully comprehend. With the proper priming, beginning Greek students can advance similarly, and not have been discouraged when their attention, interest and energy are at their peak.