

The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek. A new reference grammar for Classical Greek: aims and principles

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We are grateful to the editor of *JCT* for offering us the opportunity of outlining our views on the need for a new Greek reference grammar, to discuss our methodological principles, and to offer some thoughts on how the book may be useful as a teaching resource.

Why and for whom?

As we detail in our preface, the book's syntax chapters began (although in very different form) as teaching materials aimed at first-year undergraduates in Oxford. For the final product, our target audience remains, in the first instance, undergraduate students, but we had school teachers very much in mind as well in working up the book towards publication. We see the grammar as a resource that can offer teachers (and the more adventurous among their pupils) the chance to refresh and deepen their knowledge of grammatical topics, and to engage with a treatment of such topics that reflects current thinking on the language.

Why there was, in our view, a need for a new work of this kind is perhaps best discussed with reference to the 'competition' (none of which, it should be clear, we recommend consigning to the dustbin). The most obvious counterparts in English, in terms of scale and level of coverage, are the reference works of Smyth (*Greek Grammar*), first published in 1920 (revised by Messing 1956), and Goodwin (*A Greek Grammar*), first published in 1879

(revised and enlarged 1892). Both these texts, then, are now fairly old. They certainly do not always betray their age — Smyth's grammar in particular can feel remarkably 'fresh' — but in truth they no longer reflect the current state of our knowledge about the Greek language.

That language itself has, of course, not changed in the intervening period (although text editions of most major authors and texts certainly have!); but our insights about it and methods of describing it have evolved significantly. This is true even for such seemingly cut-and-dried aspects as pronunciation and accentuation. The first edition of W.S. Allen's *Vox Graeca* (1956; 3rd ed. 1987) postdates Smyth's book by half a century (further work has been done since, and more generally the science of phonology has made great strides in the past century). Continued work in the field of comparative philology has also led to significant discoveries in phonology and morphology. Laryngeal theory — to mention a very technical point — hadn't been invented yet by the time Smyth published his book; thus he had to describe, for example, the relationship between pairs such as $\theta\eta$ - and $\theta\epsilon$ - (in e.g. $\tau\theta\eta\mu\iota$ and $\tau\theta\epsilon\mu\epsilon\nu$) and $\sigma\tau\eta$ - and $\sigma\tau\alpha$ - (in $\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota$ and $\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu$) in very different ways than are possible today (compare his §§35-36 with *CGCG* §§1.51-56; Smyth's discussion indeed obscures some of the regularities of such pairings).

The advances made in the areas of semantics and syntax are even more far-reaching: we will discuss a few relevant

examples below. And several other relevant subdisciplines within linguistics did not yet exist when our predecessors wrote: linguistic pragmatics, functional grammar, discourse theory, cognitive linguistics, etc., all developed in the second half of the 20th century (even though they all have precursors, sometimes dating back to antiquity): these have each in different ways spurred on significant thinking about Greek grammar, and much of this is reflected — although usually implicitly — in our approach.

With respect to grammars for school use, another category to consider is that of smaller-scale texts such as Abbott and Mansfield's *Primer of Greek Grammar* and the late James Morwood's *Oxford Grammar of Classical Greek*. These works are obviously not in direct competition with ours, and at any rate do not fully reflect the progress made in Greek linguistics either. We would argue, moreover, that school teachers — and indeed their pupils — are often better served by something that offers more in-depth explanation of why forms look the way they do, what the differences in meaning between certain constructions are, and so forth.

Phonology and morphology

In drafting the chapters on phonology and morphology we had two overarching principles in mind. The first was to help students with (and train them in) the *analysis* of forms. Take the conjugation of $-\mu\iota$ verbs

(a perennial source of student befuddlement): in our experience students find it vastly easier to master these tricky paradigms if they have a clear sense of what the points of difference with ω verbs are, and what the particular building blocks are that go into forms of both types (stems, thematic vowels, endings, etc.). The crucial

thing that our book could do, we believed, was to make such points sufficiently *explicit*, so that the differences between, say, ἴσταμεν and παιδεύομεν become fairly predictable. Here is CGCG's section introducing the key differences, from the beginning of the chapter on the present stem (12):

Thematic (ω) and Athematic (μ) Presents

- 12.1 Forms built on the present stem follow either a **thematic** or an **athematic** conjugation.
- The **thematic** conjugation, comprising all verbs in ω , is much more common. With these verbs, a thematic vowel (ϵ/o) stands between the present stem and the endings: e.g. 1 pl. act. ind. παιδεύ-ο-μεν, 2 pl. παιδεύ-ε-τε.
 - The **athematic** conjugation comprises all verbs ending in μ . The endings follow immediately on the present stem (apart from some exceptions detailed below): e.g. 1 pl. act. ind. δέικνυ-μεν, 2 pl. δέικνυ-τε.
- 12.2 Apart from the thematic vowel, there are two important points of distinction between thematic and athematic presents:
- **Endings:** the endings of thematic and athematic presents differ:
 - in the present indicative singular: thematic (including thematic vowels) ω , ϵ ις, ϵ ι, athematic μ ι, ς , $\sigma\tilde{\iota}(v)$;
 - in the present third person plural: thematic (including thematic vowel) $\nu\sigma\iota(v)$ ($<^*-\nu\sigma\tilde{\iota}(v)$, →11.27), athematic $\alpha\sigma\tilde{\iota}(v)$;
 - in the imperfect third person plural: thematic ν , athematic: $\sigma\alpha\nu$;
 - and in the active infinitive: thematic (including thematic vowel) $\epsilon\iota\nu$ (= $-\tilde{\epsilon}\nu <^*-\epsilon-\epsilon\nu$, →11.31), athematic $\nu\alpha\iota$.
 - Contrast e.g. 2 sg. pres. act. ind. παιδεύεις (thematic) with δέικνυς (athematic); pres. act. inf. παιδεύειν (thematic) with δέικνύναι (athematic).
 - **Variation of vowel length in the stem:** athematic presents use a stem with a long vowel in the singular of the present active indicative, the singular of the imperfect active, and in the subjunctive, but a stem with a short vowel elsewhere. Contrast e.g. 1 sg./pl. act. ind. λύω/λύομεν (thematic) with δέικνυμι/δέικνυμεν (athematic). For details, →12.37–8.

CGCG §§12.1-2 (p. 128)

(The use of an arrow (→) here, incidentally — like everywhere else in the book — indicates a cross-reference to another section which explains a particular phenomenon in more detail.)

Our second principle was that, in order to help students penetrate the countless seeming irregularities of Greek morphology, we should provide them with just enough insight into the historical developments of the language to make sense of such irregularities. In our experience offering such information, which allows for the identification of patterns which might otherwise remain

obscure, makes life easier rather than more difficult for learners. Finding out that the genitives γένους ($<^*-\epsilon\sigma\omicron\varsigma$) and φύλακος are much more alike than they seem at first can be a real eye-opener, and being attentive to the underlying historical developments allows students to firm up not just their Greek morphology, but their understanding of other languages too.

An example from CGCG's list of 'irregular' principal parts (we call them 'Principal Parts with Peculiarities' — importantly, the chapter (22) begins with detailed discussion of *regular* principal parts) shows these principles at work:

129	πάσχω <i>suffer</i>	πενθ-/πονθ-/πᾶθ-	ἔπαθον	πείσομαι	πέπονθα	pres. $<^*πῆ\theta-\sigma\kappa-\omega$ →1.96; fut. $<^*πέν\theta\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$; them. aor.; fut. mid; stem pf.
130a	πείθω <i>persuade</i>	πειθ-/ποιθ-/πιθ-	ἔπεισα ἐπείσθην	πείσω	πέπεικα πέπεισμαι	in poetry occasionally aor. ἔπιθον
130b	πείθομαι <i>believe, obey</i>		ἐπιτόμημι/ἐπείσθην	πείσομαι	πέποιθα	them. aor.; act. stem pf. (πέποιθα: <i>trust</i>)

CGCG §22.9 (p. 250)

Rather than simply providing the forms, we first give (in smaller type) the different forms of the verb stem (e.g. πενθ-/πονθ-/πᾶθ-) that are used in different principal parts, and then, in a column with 'Further Particulars' (also in smaller type), sufficient information to allow comprehension of why the principal parts look the way they do. It becomes clear this way that (e.g.) πάσχω and πείσομαι are much more closely related than they might at first appear (and, accordingly, that there are comprehensible reasons why πάσχω and πείθομαι have 'the same' future πείσομαι). The point here is not that students no longer have to commit these specific principal parts to memory (they still do), but rather that learning them may become easier, and that if they see the relevant patterns at work often enough (e.g. the $-\sigma\kappa-$ suffix in the present stem; o-grade ablaut in stem perfect πέπονθα and πέποιθα; zero-grade in the thematic aorist; e-grade, disappearance of θ before σ , and disappearance of the nasal with compensatory lengthening in πείσομαι $<^*πέν\theta-\sigma-\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ — these changes are all elaborated more fully in the book's opening chapter), such aspects will become familiar.

We have sought to present such explanatory material in a clear way: throughout the morphology chapters forms and paradigms are presented first in tables, and then explained in greater detail. We recognise that there is sometimes a need only for the paradigms, without the additional material, and for this reason we have made available complete overviews of forms (with references to the relevant sections of CGCG) on the book's webpage at the CUP website.

The part of the book on phonology and morphology concludes with three chapters — on word formation (23), accentuation (24), and dialects (25) — that further our overall aim of increasing students' insight into the inner workings of the language. The intended effect could be described as 'force multiplication': a little effort expended to learn some of the principles of derivation (the formation of words by suffixes) and composition (the formation of compound nouns and verbs) will exponentially improve students' knowledge and retention of vocabulary. Similarly, with respect to accentuation, as

Philomen Probert remarks (citing Eleanor Dickey) in the preface of her *A New Short Guide to the Accentuation of Ancient Greek* (2003), '[l]earning the rules of accentuation for the Greek declensions and conjugations ... forces one to learn more thoroughly the declensions [and] conjugations ... themselves' (p. xiii).

Our chapter on Ionic and other dialects is meant primarily to equip students to read the Ionic prose of the classical period (e.g. Herodotus) and the lyric portions of Attic drama, but our discussion may, indirectly, also help them in approaching Homer, archaic lyric, and (at the other end of the chronological spectrum) literature written in the *Koinē*. To keep the book's scale manageable we decided against offering a more comprehensive discussion of Homeric Greek and the dialects (as the book's title makes clear, *CGCG*'s main aim is to describe the Classical Greek of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE); instead we refer, in our selective bibliography at the end of the book, to fuller treatments by others.

Syntax

The syntax chapters and sub-sections have, for the most part, a structure similar to those in the morphology: they start with brief introductions aimed at clarifying terms and concepts (e.g. case usage, tense and aspect, voice, mood) and outline the basic principles of a given construction's use. Those principles are then at once illustrated with some initial examples. Unlike our predecessors, we were able to benefit from electronic search engines like the online *TLG* to look for appropriate examples rather than resorting always to examples copied from older grammars. The result is that *CGCG* contains many fresh examples which truly illustrate the points at issue. We often use 'minimal pairs': very similar examples that differ mainly with respect to the phenomenon under consideration — e.g. §38.41, where the aspectual difference between the use of present and aorist optatives in wishes is elucidated using two examples from Aristophanes' *Peace*, one with **φάγοι** (Ar. *Pax* 3, 'may he eat') and one with **ἔσθιοι** (Ar. *Pax* 449 'may he eat', too, but aspectually different). We have translated all examples ourselves, and

have liberally added clarifying notes with individual examples. More nuanced considerations and exceptions are presented in notes and sometimes in separate sections (often in small type).

Writing the chapters on syntax posed many methodological challenges. Here in particular decisions had to be made about how recent advances in the semantics and pragmatics of classical Greek generated by functional and discourse-analytical linguistic frameworks could be incorporated without compromising the book's readability. One question we pondered was whether we should follow the older grammars' focus on morphological and lexical divisions, which results in chapters on e.g. 'prepositions', 'the participle', 'result clauses' (**ὥστε** + infinitive/indicative), 'purpose clauses' (**ἵνα/ὅπως** + subjunctive/optative), 'causal clauses' (introduced by **διότι/ὅτι**), etc. The alternative would be to devise chapters around broadly

semantic categories, outlining, for instance, the different ways in which 'purpose' or 'causality' may be articulated in Greek. In the end, we decided that it was best to follow time-honoured habits and offer teachers and students something they could recognise. Readers will therefore find a familiar division into chapters on agreement, nominal forms (the article and the pronoun, cases and prepositions, comparison), the verb (tense and aspect, mood, voice), the standard categories of subordinate clauses, and the infinitive and participle.

Nevertheless, we did not abandon a more integrated approach altogether. Thus the chapters on the various subordinate clauses each contain a section outlining (with ample cross-references) other ways of expressing similar meanings. The first section in the chapter on causal clauses provides a good example of how *CGCG* goes about doing this:

48.1 To communicate for what **reason, motive** or **cause** the action expressed by a verb takes place, the following expressions are regularly used in Greek:

- modifiers in the dative (→30.45), or, with verbs of emotion, in the genitive (→30.30);
- preposition phrases, especially with **διὰ** and **ἐνεκα** (→31);
- circumstantial participles, especially when modified by **ὡς** or **ἄτε** (→52.38–9);
- certain types of relative clauses (→50.23);
- **causal clauses**, introduced by **ὅτι** or **διότι**, or by one of the conjunctions used in temporal clauses (**ἐπεί**, etc.); these are treated below.

CGCG §48.1, p. 546

It is hoped that students are encouraged to compare these alternative expressions, which may enhance both their understanding of the subtle nuances of Greek and their appreciation of stylistic differences between various texts and authors.

We also sought to achieve other types of integration. Just as the part on morphology contains chapters dedicated to explaining the 'building blocks' of nominal and verbal forms, so the part on syntax includes introductory chapters on the elements of simple sentences (26), complex sentences (39), and finite subordinate clauses (40). These chapters set out the main principles of Greek syntax, highlighting how the various constructions hang together. Many grammars explain constructions like the use of the optative in secondary sequence or the use of **ἄν** + subjunctive in 'indefinite' constructions every time they crop up in different types of subordinate

clauses. By contrast, *CGCG* makes clear that the use of these constructions is governed by a number of basic principles that hold across the board. In this way, the number of 'rules' which students have to learn dwindles considerably. Furthermore, at the end of the syntax a number of overviews reveal at a glance how the various constructions, moods, and the particle **ἄν** are used.

In a small number of cases, finally, we felt that a more radical break with tradition was required. A good example concerns the terminology used to describe voice distinctions (chapter 35). It is well known that the standard morphological distinction between 'active' (**ἐπαίδευσσα**), 'middle' (**ἐπαίδευσάμην**), and 'passive' forms (**ἐπαιδεύθην**) cannot be transferred to the syntactic and semantic planes without baffling students. How, after all, does one explain that frequently occurring forms like **ἐβουλήθην** 'I wanted' or **ἤσθην** 'I

enjoyed’ are ‘passive’? In this case, then, there were pressing reasons to take a ‘top-down’ approach and to identify a number of distinct middle-passive ‘meanings’ and then describe the forms they tend to attract. For instance, as Rutger Allan has shown in *The Middle Voice in Ancient Greek* (2003), so-called ‘change-of-state’ verbs, which signify a change of the subject’s physical state or position, tend to show up $\theta\eta$ -/ η - morphology (e.g. $\pi\omicron\rho\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ ‘travel’, ‘go’, aorist $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omicron\rho\epsilon\upsilon\theta\eta\nu$), while so-called ‘reciprocal verbs’ tend to show up aorist forms in $-\sigma\acute{\alpha}\mu\eta\nu$ (e.g. $\mu\acute{\alpha}\chi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ ‘fight (each other)’, aorist $\acute{\epsilon}\mu\alpha\chi\epsilon\sigma\acute{\alpha}\mu\eta\nu$).

Text grammar

The third and final part of *CGCG* treats ‘Textual Coherence’ and is in some ways the most innovative. Some older grammars, including that of Smyth, contain sections on ‘style’ or ‘rhetorical figures’, but the connotations of subjectivity and optional embellishment attached to those terms obscure the fact that, owing to concerted research efforts in recent decades, we now know much more about the structure of Greek (and of language in general) beyond the level of the clause and sentence. The chapters in the third part aim to convey some of this change in the weather (so to speak) in Greek linguistics. It homes in on general aspects of textual coherence (58), particles (59), and word order (60); the latter is a particularly vibrant field, where much remains to be done, and we hope we have presented the guiding principles of Greek word order as we see them, not as a ‘straitjacket’, but in such a way as to invite further inquiries and investigations on the part of students. The final chapter (61) offers four passages that are representative of distinct text types (narrative, description, argument, and dialogue) together with a detailed linguistic commentary. As the last chapter of the book, it also aims to show how the close study of linguistic features pays off in terms of broader interpretative questions.

The spirit which animates this part of the book is perhaps most clearly shown in the treatment of particles. Rather than succumbing to the temptation to provide a range of English

equivalents (discrete ‘meanings’) for each particle, we aim to explain how they function to mark various kinds of relationships between text segments or spoken turns, and between speakers and hearers. For instance, the frequent particle $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ is assigned the basic general functions of ‘substitution’ and

‘correction’: ‘(an element of) the new text segment introduced by $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ – the “host segment” – replaces (an element of) the preceding text segment’ (§59.10, p. 665). We then explain how this basic function manifests itself in a range of specific uses of the particle. Three of the examples given are:

- (1) $\delta\omicron\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon \dots \mu\omicron\iota \nu\eta\phi\epsilon\iota\nu. \omicron\upsilon\kappa \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\tau\rho\epsilon\pi\tau\epsilon\omicron\nu \omicron\upsilon\nu \acute{\upsilon}\mu\iota\nu, \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha} \pi\omicron\tau\epsilon\omicron\nu.$ (Pl. *Symp.* 213e)
You seem to me to be sober. You must not be allowed this: rather you must drink. *Substitution of an explicit element: $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ replaces one explicit alternative ($\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\tau\rho\epsilon\pi\tau\epsilon\omicron\nu$) with another ($\pi\omicron\tau\epsilon\omicron\nu$); it is frequently so used in the formula ‘ $\omicron\upsilon$ X, $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ Y’ (= ‘not X, but (rather) Y’), in which case $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ is a co-ordinating conjunction.*
- (2) $\Phi\iota. \delta\iota\alpha\tau\acute{\rho}\omega\varsigma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota \tau\omicron\iota\nu\nu\nu \omicron\delta\acute{\alpha}\xi \tau\omicron \delta\iota\kappa\tau\upsilon\omicron\nu. :: \beta\Delta. \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda' \omicron\upsilon\kappa \acute{\epsilon}\chi\epsilon\iota\varsigma \omicron\delta\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\varsigma.$ (Ar. *Vesp.* 164–5)
(Philocleon:) Then I’ll gnaw through the net with my teeth. :: (Bdelycleon:) But you don’t have any teeth! *Substitution of a presupposed element: Philocleon’s assertion that he will use his teeth presupposes that he has any to begin with; $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ corrects this presupposition.*
- (3) $\text{Εἰπέ, ὦγαθέ, τίς αὐτοὺς ἀμείνους ποιεῖ; :: Οἱ νόμοι. :: Ἄλλ' οὐ τοῦτο ἐρωτῶ, ὦ βέλτιστε, ἀλλὰ τίς ἀνθρώπος;}$ (Pl. *Ap.* 24d–e)
(Socrates:) Tell me, sir, who makes them better? :: (Meletus:) The laws do. :: (Socrates:) But that’s not what I’m asking, my dear sir: which man makes them better? *Substitution of an implicit element: $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ corrects the notion (implicit in Meletus’ reply) that Socrates’ question has been satisfactorily answered. The second $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ replaces an explicit element, as in (1).*

CGCG §59.10, p. 666

Some may wonder whether such explicit analyses are truly necessary, on the view that students, when told that ‘ $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ ’ means “but” and more generally that they should use their ‘intuition’, should be sufficiently equipped to face most cases they come across in their reading (including our three examples). Yet such an approach in our view is more likely in the long run to make students ‘give up’ on particles altogether. It is only by digging into the deeper (sometimes fairly abstract) textual relationships that particles can express, that comprehending (and translating) more difficult particles such as $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\tau\omicron\iota$, $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\iota$, $\tau\omicron\iota\nu\nu\nu$, $\delta\eta$, etc. — not to mention $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ when it does not mean ‘but’ — becomes feasible.

Underlying this treatment, then, and indeed most other aspects of *CGCG*, is a consistent concern with *explanation* (instead of a ‘bare’ presentation aimed at rote memorisation): the book seeks to acquaint students with a more abstract way of looking at the language without losing sight of the actual linguistic phenomena encountered in our texts.

This should greatly facilitate and enhance comprehension and make Greek texts seem like organic, meaningful wholes rather than impenetrable ‘puzzles’.

A school grammar?

Finally it may be useful to return briefly to the question of how suitable the book is for use in schools. We readily acknowledge that a full-scale reference work, weighing in at 811 pages, may not be the first one would think of to present to school pupils. We are nevertheless happy in the conviction that confronting pupils, especially those further advanced in their study of the language, with chapters or sections from *CGCG* will repay the effort. Teachers themselves, of course, are a very different target audience, and here there would seem to be a much more natural fit. We very much hope that teachers will find our work helpful as they give shape to their own explanations of the intricacies of Greek grammar.

Three aspects of *CGCG*'s design deserve brief further attention with respect to its utility in schools. One, already mentioned briefly above, is the use of smaller type for less central or frequent features of the language, and for notes with further clarification, exceptions, etc. This visual partition can serve as a guide for teachers and students, who may more readily wish to skip the small-type sections.

Secondly, we thought long and hard about how to make it easier for students to wade through what we describe in our preface as the 'terminological morass' of Greek grammar (p. xl). Wherever confusion about terms is possible, we ensure that alternatives to our own usages are given. For instance, we speak of 'result' and 'purpose' clauses, but note that many textbooks use the terms 'consecutive' and 'final' clauses. Verbal terminology was, of course, an area of particular concern (as was that of conditional clauses), and we often set out the reasons why a certain term is preferable over another one with which students may be familiar.

A formatting issue of a very different kind, finally, but one also relevant to school teaching, is the order in which cases are presented in tables in the morphology chapters. We have preferred the option nominative-genitive-dative-accusative (over nominative-accusative, which we recognise is the standard in British schools and coursebooks). The reasons for this

choice partly have to do with our target markets, but also include didactic ones: especially in the third declension, genitive forms are more likely to provide useful morphological information. This order matches, moreover, what pupils will find in dictionaries and vocabulary lists. For those with a strong attachment to the nominative-accusative ordering, we have made a variant of the overview of forms mentioned above, but using the order nominative-accusative, available on the book's website. Incidentally, the same 'Resources' page contains a (regularly updated) list of corrections and additions to the book — we very much welcome and appreciate suggestions for more of those (and other suggestions, criticisms, thoughts) from teachers, and indeed from students!

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- The 'Resources' page for the book can be found at <https://www.cambridge.org/gb/academic/subjects/classical-studies/classical-languages/cambridge-grammar-classical-greek?format=HB#resources>