

An Introduction to the Composition and Analysis of Greek Prose

Why learn to write in a dead language? Because a really good understanding of a language can only be attained by using it actively. Unlike earlier textbooks aimed at schoolboys, this work addresses modern adults who want to understand concepts fully as they learn. Drawing on recent scholarship where appropriate, and assuming no prior background except some reading knowledge of Greek, the course combines a structured review of paradigms and vocabulary with clear and comprehensive explanations of the rules of Greek syntax. Large numbers of exercises are provided, both with and without key: a complete set of cumulative exercises and another set of non-cumulative exercises for those who prefer to dip into specific sections. The exercises include, as well as English sentences and paragraphs for translation, Greek sentences and passages for translation, analysis, and manipulation. A full English–Greek vocabulary and list of principal parts are included.

ELEANOR DICKEY has taught Greek in Canada (University of Ottawa), the United States (Columbia University), and England (Oxford and Exeter), where she is currently Professor of Classics at the University of Reading and a Fellow of the British Academy. She is an expert on Greek and Latin linguistics and has published more than eighty scholarly works, including books on Greek forms of address, Latin forms of address, ancient Greek scholarship, and the *Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana* (an ancient Latin and Greek textbook). Having fought hard to get the chance to learn to write Greek in order to become a first-class scholar, and having suffered considerably in the process, she cares passionately about giving others the gift of learning this valuable skill without the suffering she endured. Over decades of teaching the subject and working out how each element can most easily be absorbed by learners, she has distilled the result into this book, which can be used with or without a teacher and will make a good understanding of how to write Greek significantly easier to acquire.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-0-521-76142-0 — An Introduction to the Composition and Analysis of Greek Prose

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CAMBRIDGE
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521761420

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First published 2016

4th printing 2017

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Dickey, Eleanor, author.

An introduction to the composition and analysis of Greek prose / Eleanor Dickey.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-76142-0 (hardback)

1. Greek language – Composition and exercises. I. Title.

PA258.D54 2015

488.2'421 – dc23 2015012662

ISBN 978-0-521-76142-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-18425-0 Paperback

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*Dedicated to all my former students,
with profound gratitude
for what I have learned from them.*

Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
	<i>Useful reference texts</i>	xiii
	Accentuation	1
I	Articles	8
II	Modifiers	16
III	Tenses, voices, and agreement	27
IV	Cases	35
V	Participles	44
VI	The structure of a Greek sentence: word order and connection	59
	Review exercises 1	71
VII	Conditional, concessive, and potential clauses	73
VIII	Relative clauses	83
IX	Pronouns	97
X	Indirect statement	106
XI	Questions	114
	Review exercises 2	122
XII	Purpose, fear, and effort	124
XIII	Cause, result, and “on condition that”	131
XIV	Comparison and negatives	138
XV	Commands, wishes, and prevention	144
XVI	Temporal clauses	151
	Review exercises 3	158
XVII	Impersonal constructions and verbal adjectives	160
XVIII	<i>Oratio obliqua</i>	169
XIX	Summary	178
XX	Consolidation	182

viii *Contents*

<i>Appendix A</i>	Errors in Smyth’s Grammar	194
<i>Appendix B</i>	English tenses and their Greek equivalents (indicative only)	195
<i>Appendix C</i>	Hints for analyzing Greek sentences	197
<i>Appendix D</i>	English conditional clauses	207
<i>Appendix E</i>	A selection of terminologies for describing Greek conditional sentences	211
<i>Appendix F</i>	Short, easily confused words	213
<i>Appendix G</i>	Partial answer key	216
<i>Appendix H</i>	The next step: prose composition as an art form	252
 <i>Principal parts</i>		257
<i>Vocabulary</i>		264
<i>Index to vocabulary</i>		292

Preface

Greek prose composition, which was once cultivated primarily as an art form, is now increasingly valued for the practical benefits it brings to those who would like to read and understand ancient Greek texts. An active command of Greek, like that of any language, brings with it an increased fluency in comprehension and a greater appreciation of an author's choices and the reasons behind those choices. In addition, an ability to compose a correct Greek sentence is essential for those who intend to teach Greek. Yet it is still very difficult to learn this skill, particularly without access to a teacher who has been well trained in this particular area – and in some places few such teachers are available.

This book aims to make it easier for everyone to learn the basics of Greek prose composition well, with or without a teacher. It is aimed at students of any age who have a good passive knowledge of Greek (i.e. the equivalent of several years of continuous study) but assumes no active command of the language. A thorough review of declensions, conjugations, vocabulary, principal parts of verbs, etc. is built into the book: each chapter focuses not only on a particular syntactic construction or constructions, but also on a particular set of grammatical forms and vocabulary, and (with a very few unavoidable exceptions) no forms or constructions are used in chapters before the one of which they are the focus.

To derive maximum benefit from the exercises, the relevant vocabulary and grammatical forms should be memorized before each chapter is undertaken, so that the sentences can be done without consultation of reference works. Students starting to learn prose composition are often misled into believing that no memorization is necessary, but such deception is ultimately in no-one's interests: the rules of Greek grammar and syntax are so complex that it is impossible even to know what to look up unless one has done a fair amount of memorization, and looking up all the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax required for even a single sentence takes so long that discouragement is inevitable and very few sentences can be done. The author, as a student, wasted years over the non-memorization method and later wished bitterly that someone had told her how much more efficient it would be just to sit down and learn things by heart; it would have been the single most useful tip anyone could have given her, so she hereby passes it on.

The temptation to do prose composition without memorization, of course, derives from the impression – wholly reasonable when one is presented with a grammar and a large dictionary as one's basic reference works – that it is impossible to memorize

all the necessary information and therefore pointless to begin. This book attempts to correct that problem by presenting a finite body of information, large enough to cover all the really important facts but small enough to be memorized in one semester. It is based ultimately on North and Hillard's *Greek Prose Composition*, but with a significant reduction in vocabulary (on the grounds that vocabulary, being the easiest thing to look up, is the least worthy direction in which to allocate precious memorization time) and a significant increase in the amount of explanation devoted to each construction (on the grounds that modern students prefer to understand rules rather than simply memorizing examples). I have the greatest respect for North and Hillard's work, from which I myself learned, but it is not easy to use, especially for non-native speakers of English and those working without a teacher, and it is aimed at students rather younger than and different in outlook from most of today's prose composition students. I hope that the present work will offer a more accessible introduction for modern readers. Like North and Hillard, I have presented a somewhat simplified version of the rules of Greek syntax and omitted many of the exceptions and complications mentioned in the larger grammars. Streamlining of this sort is essential in order to make it possible to master the main points in a reasonable amount of time, but readers should not assume that the exceptions I have omitted are wholly unimportant; for this reason it would be a good idea to do the recommended syntax reading from Smyth, which will give a more complete picture.

As necessary as memorization is consolidation. It is an inescapable fact that for most people, Greek grammatical forms and syntactic rules have a tendency to depart rapidly from the mind soon after being learned. One must simply accept this fact and learn the material repeatedly; to this end there are review exercises scattered throughout the book, and it is a good idea to re-memorize the vocabulary and forms of the relevant chapters before doing these exercises. One way to improve one's retention rate is to be scrupulous about correct accentuation, because once one has learned each form with its proper accent, one knows the form itself considerably more solidly than one does when one has learned only the form. For this reason a brief explanation of the accent rules and exercises in their use are provided, and all users of this book who do not already have a firm grasp of the accent system are encouraged to do these exercises before progressing to the chapters proper.

Essential as memorization, consolidation, and orderly progress are for students whose goal is to learn Greek properly, a book relying on the assumption that all its readers want to learn Greek properly can be inadequate for the needs of those who want to brush up on particular points without going through the whole course. For this reason this book also includes "practice exercises" on particular points of syntax; these exercises can be done without knowledge of the paradigms and vocabulary assumed for the main group of sentences, and (as much as possible) without knowledge of the previous

chapters in this book. Users should be aware that if they do only these exercises and do not tackle the memorization and the main exercises, they will not actually learn very much.

This book departs from traditional prose composition books in its inclusion of exercises in the analysis of “real” Greek sentences as well as sentences for translation into Greek. While analysis is no substitute for translation into Greek, examining real, complex examples of the constructions one is studying helps one understand them better. By necessity, these exercises often employ vocabulary and constructions not yet covered in the book, but the examples provided in the text are restricted to familiar forms whenever practicable, to make them as easy as possible to understand.

This work is designed to fit a one-semester course meeting twice a week; in such a setting it is assumed that one chapter will be covered at each class meeting. The first chapter has no associated memorization to facilitate its being presented on the first day of class; it is recommended that memorization of paradigms and vocabulary (as indicated at the start of each chapter) be assigned for each subsequent class meeting and tested by means of a quiz at the start of each class. If the students do this memorization properly, one can translate the sentences at a brisk pace in class (skipping the practice exercises); if the students do not memorize the vocabulary adequately beforehand, the practice exercises can be used in class and the sentences (or such of them as do not have a key provided) reserved for homework. It is recommended that several tests be given during the semester to encourage re-memorization and consolidation. The material has been squeezed into eighteen chapters because no construction can afford to be the one that comes at the end of the semester and therefore is never consolidated; the exercises presented at the end of the book are intended to be done over several weeks at the end of the semester as a way of reviewing and consolidating the material learned earlier. They are vital if this material is to be successfully retained.

At the start of each chapter are listed not only the paradigms and vocabulary that should be memorized before the chapter is studied, but also recommended grammar and syntax reading. These selections are presented on the theory that it is helpful to have read all the way through a large grammar like that of Smyth, which gives a more nuanced explanation of the rules than can be presented here: the grammar readings consist of the material relevant to the paradigms covered in that chapter, and the syntax readings point to Smyth’s treatments of the constructions covered in that chapter. Neither set of readings is essential, but students who do them will have a deeper understanding of the material and will know the limitations of the rules they learn from this book.

As this book is intended to be helpful to those who have no access to a teacher as well as to those who do, a partial answer key is provided; it is hoped that this compromise will make the book useful to the independent learner without spoiling its effectiveness in class settings. Generally speaking the answer key covers the first half of each practice

xii *Preface*

exercise, the first ten sentences in each chapter, and the first analysis exercise. In certain chapters, however, the nature of the exercises has necessitated a different distribution of answers in order to assure that a student relying exclusively on the exercises to which answers are provided will be able to learn successfully.

Many people helped in the creation of this book. My first thanks go to Mabel Lang, who taught me Greek, David Raeburn, who taught me how to teach Greek, and Jasper Griffin, who taught me Greek prose composition. All my Greek syntax and composition students, at Oxford and at Columbia, have contributed something for which I am grateful, but Pedro de Blas and Ryan Fowler were particularly generous in helping with the actual construction of this book. Steven Kennedy and his students at the Maynard School in Exeter helpfully allowed me to test portions of the work in a school setting. Many thanks are also due to David Raeburn, Helma Dik, Martin West, Philomen Probert, Elizabeth Scharffenberger, Ralph Rosen, Carlos Carter, Gregory Mellen, and the Cambridge University Press readers for reading drafts of the work and making many useful criticisms. I am also very grateful to Martin West for providing me with the passage used in Appendix H, and to the Leverhulme Trust for generous funding that allowed me to finish this work. Particular thanks are due to everyone involved in the book's production at Cambridge University Press, especially the incredibly hard-working Christina Sarigiannidou and Iveta Adams as well as Henry Maas, the best proofreader I have ever encountered.

I must also acknowledge here my debts to published sources, for these are now so woven into the fabric of this book that specific footnotes are impossible. Most chapters are derived from a combination of Smyth, Goodwin, and North and Hillard, and the ultimate basis of the vocabulary list is M. Campbell, *Classical Greek Prose: A Basic Vocabulary*, though LSJ is an important secondary source. Goodwin's *Moods and Tenses*, Rijksbaron, and Cooper/Krüger have also provided material.

Useful reference texts

Grammars

The standard grammar in the USA is H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Mass. 1920); equally good, and often preferred to Smyth in Britain, is W. W. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar* (London 1879; also a revised edition by C. B. Gulick, Boston 1930). There will soon be a new grammar, *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek*, by Evert van Emde Boas, Albert Rijksbaron, Luuk Huitink, and Mathieu de Bakker; this is currently in preparation and I have not been able to see it. More complete than any English-language work are the two massive German authorities on Greek grammar: R. Kühner, B. Gerth, and F. Blass, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache* (Hanover 1898–1904), and E. Schwyzler and A. Debrunner, *Griechische Grammatik* (Munich 1939–71). Grammars smaller than those of Smyth and Goodwin are generally not suitable for use with this book, as they oversimplify as much as I do (and in some cases more); in order to gain a good understanding of the Greek language from this book one should use it with a proper reference grammar to which one can appeal for more information to fill in the gaps I have left.

English–Greek dictionaries

The best are S. C. Woodhouse, *English–Greek Dictionary* (London 1910) and G. M. Edwards, *An English–Greek Lexicon* (Cambridge 1914), but most other printed lexica are also usable. Online English–Greek lexica are much less reliable and should generally be avoided, except for the online version of Woodhouse (www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/Woodhouse/). When doing prose composition seriously one should avoid words that only occur in poetry; in a good dictionary words are marked as belonging to prose or to poetry. It is also usual to avoid post-Classical words; a good dictionary marks these or leaves them out entirely. A general rule for using English–Greek dictionaries is that any unfamiliar word found in them should be double-checked in a good Greek–English dictionary before being used.

Prose composition textbooks

Almost all the books that exist were designed for British schoolboys of a bygone era. Probably the best, and by far the most popular today, is M. A. North and A. E. Hillard, *Greek Prose Composition* (London 1898), followed by A. Sidgwick, *Sidgwick's Greek Prose Composition* (London 1876); both these books are still in print, and there are published

xiv *Useful reference texts*

answer keys to both. Most others are out of print. A perhaps more interesting option than North and Hillard is L. W. P. Lewis and L. M. Styler, *Foundations for Greek Prose Composition* (London 1934). A set of very easy sentences for translation by beginners (but with no rules or explanations) is provided as an introduction to North and Hillard by A. E. Hillard and C. G. Botting, *Elementary Greek Exercises* (London 1949); a similar work based on Xenophon's *Anabasis* is W. C. Collar and M. G. Daniell, *The Beginner's Greek Composition* (Boston 1893). A few tricky topics are covered in more detail in the highly respected work of A. H. Nash-Williams, *Advanced Level Greek Prose Composition* (London 1957). Radically different in approach and more recent, but unfortunately full of errors, is S. A. Stephens, *Greek Prose Composition* (Bryn Mawr 1996). A. T. Murray, *Greek Composition for Colleges* (Chicago 1902), contains no rules but offers a useful sequence of Greek passages for reading paired with closely related English passages for translation into Greek. H. W. Auden, *Greek Prose Phrase-Book* (London 1949), provides a list of idiomatic Greek expressions from Thucydides, Xenophon, Demosthenes, and Plato, classified by topic and listed under their English equivalents.

Specialized works

- W. W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (Boston 1890): wonderfully clear presentation with well-chosen, comprehensible examples; still the standard reference.
- A. Rijksbaron, *The Syntax and Semantics of the Verb in Classical Greek* (3rd edn., Amsterdam 2002): one of the few accessible works that take into account recent research on Greek syntax; very comprehensible, but much less detailed than Goodwin. Sometimes the rules presented here are significantly different from the ones found in older works, and it is not clear that the older works are necessarily wrong in such cases.
- G. L. Cooper after K. W. Krüger, *Attic Greek Prose Syntax* (vols. I and II, Ann Arbor 1998): enormous and comprehensive, but difficult to use and less authoritative than Goodwin; contains many misprints.
- B. L. Gildersleeve and C. W. E. Miller, *Syntax of Classical Greek from Homer to Demosthenes* (New York 1900–11).
- Y. Duhoux, *Le verbe grec ancien: éléments de morphologie et de syntaxe historiques* (2nd edn., Louvain 2000): fascinating study, not restricted to Attic prose.
- J. D. Denniston, *Greek Prose Style* (Oxford 1952): illuminating on many specific topics.
- J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (2nd edn., Oxford 1950): the Bible on the subject of particles; indispensable.
- K. J. Dover, *The Evolution of Greek Prose Style* (Oxford 1997).
- K. J. Dover, *Greek Word Order* (Cambridge 1960): a respected work on this subject, but by no means the last word.

- H. Dik, *Word Order in Ancient Greek* (Amsterdam 1995): a new and exciting approach, but not universally accepted.
- E. Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address* (Oxford 1996): more than you ever wanted to know about the use of the vocative.
- H. W. Chandler, *A Practical Introduction to Greek Accentuation* (2nd edn., Oxford 1881): the standard English-language reference work on accentuation.
- P. Probert, *New Short Guide to the Accentuation of Ancient Greek* (London 2003): an excellent introductory textbook on accentuation, with many more rules than are given here and exercises to match.
- W. S. Allen, *Vox Graeca: A Guide to the Pronunciation of Classical Greek* (3rd edn., Cambridge 1987): a clear explanation of how Greek sounded at various periods and how we know about pronunciation.
- B. Jacquinod (ed.), *Études sur l'aspect verbal chez Platon* (Saint-Etienne 2000): an alternative view of verbal aspect.
- J. Bertrand, *La grammaire grecque par l'exemple* (Paris 1996): really a beginners' Greek book, but useful for more advanced students as well because of its collection of authentic ancient sentences illustrating each construction.

IMPORTANT NOTE

ALMOST EVERY RULE PRESENTED IN
THIS BOOK HAS EXCEPTIONS, MOST OF
WHICH ARE NOT MENTIONED.