

SECTION A



ALPHABET & PRONUNCIATION
SECOND EDITION

A PEOPLE'S SPEECH
IS THE SKIN OF ITS CULTURE.

Max Lerner,
America as a Civilization, 1957

THE MAIN DIALECTS
OF MODERN GREEK

1. *Demotic*
2. *Katharevousa*
3. *Pontic*
4. *Cappadocian*
5. *Southern Italian or Italiot*
6. *Yevanic*
7. *Tsakonian*

THE FIRST RULE
OF LANGUAGE CLUB

1. *There are always exceptions to the rules of Language Club.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

Eng	English.
GNT	Greek New Testament.
Grk	Greek.
Heb	Hebrew.
HMP-W	Holton, David, and Peter Mackridge and Irene Philippaki-Warburton, <i>Greek: An Essential Grammar of the Modern Language</i> , (New York: Routledge, 2004).
LXX	The Septuagint, Greek translation of the Old Testament and Apocrypha.
NAU	<i>The New American Standard Bible</i> , © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation.
PDSNTG	DeMoss, Matthew S. <i>Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek</i> (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

WHY I TEACH THE MODERN GREEK PRONUNCIATION

Erasmian Pronunciation Offends Greeks

The novel pronunciation of Greek published by Erasmus in 1528 originated from a practical joke played upon him by the Swiss scholar, Henricus Glareanus. When Erasmus later found out the trick that had been played upon him, he renounced his new pronunciation, and returned to the traditional pronunciation used by Greeks. However, the presumptions of European scholars and political prejudices against Greek nationalists during the Renaissance conspired to give the novel Erasmian pronunciation a foothold “in all countries outside of Greece.”¹ Erasmian pronunciation is used in most bible colleges and seminaries today, but don’t use it on your field trip to Athens! Native Greek speakers take offense at their language being pronounced according to the speculations of a Reformation-Era Dutchman.

The Only Pronunciation Known With Certainty Is Modern (AKA “Historical”)

Various “scientific” attempts have been made to establish how Greek was pronounced at different stages of antiquity, but without audio recordings from the biblical period, the only pronunciation we can know with certainty is the pronunciation used by today’s Greeks. Why use an unknown pronunciation system when we can use a known one?

We Never Teach The Ancient Pronunciation Of A Living Language

Aren’t you glad we weren’t taught in grade school to pronounce our native English according to the rules of Old English pronunciation? All languages and their pronunciation evolve, but we never go backwards and train ourselves to speak normally with an archaic pronunciation! The only reasons for teaching and learning an ancient pronunciation would be:

1. For authenticity in the performance of a historical drama.
2. For the preservation of meaning.

We are not performing a drama, however, and there are no instances in which the meaning of a biblical text is lost by our use of Modern Greek pronunciation. Therefore, let’s do as today’s Greeks do, and learn to pronounce their language their way!

¹ Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development Of Greek And The New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), p. 341, ff.

ALPHABET CHART

An * indicates a *voiced* consonant. Letter names spelled consistently with their current Greek names in HMP-W.

	Letter Name	Lower	Capital	Pronunciation
1	Alpha	α	Α	A as in <i>father</i>
2	Vita	β	Β	as British V*
3	Gama	γ	Γ	Y* before [e], [i]; else GH*
4	Delta	δ	Δ	TH* as in <i>the</i>
5	Epsilon	ε	Ε	E as in <i>met</i>
6	Zita	ζ	Ζ	Z* as in <i>zest</i>
7	Ita	η	Η	I as in <i>ski</i>
8	Thita	θ	Θ	TH as in <i>theme</i>
9	Iota	ι	Ι	I as in <i>ski</i> , Y if unaccented pre-vowel
10	Kappa	κ	Κ	K as in K ish
11	Lamda	λ	Λ	L* as in <i>latte</i>
12	Mi	μ	Μ	M* as in <i>alma mater</i>
13	Ni	ν	Ν	N* as in <i>nest</i>
14	Ksi	ξ	Ξ	KS as in <i>Sikhs</i>
15	Omikron	ο	Ο	O as in <i>port</i>
16	Pi	π	Π	P as in <i>pole</i> ; after μ = b* (<i>bee</i>)
17	Ro	ρ	Ρ	R* as in British <i>very</i>
18	Sigma	σ,ς	Σ	S ; Z* before β,γ,δ,ζ,λ,μ,ν,ρ
19	Taf	τ	Τ	T in <i>tea</i> ; d* after ν or before ζ, See p. 7
20	Ipsilon	υ	Υ	I as in <i>ski</i>
21	Fi	φ	Φ	F as in <i>fire</i>
22	Xi	χ	Χ	CH as in <i>Bach</i>
23	Psi	ψ	Ψ	PS as in <i>raps</i>
24	Omega	ω	Ω	O as in <i>port</i>

VOWELS & DIPHTHONGS

NAME	SIGN	SOUNDED AS
Alpha	α, α̇	a as in father
Epsilon	ε	e as in met
Ita	η, η̇	i as in ski
Iota	ι	i as in ski
Omikron	ο	o as in port
Ipsilon	υ	i as in ski
Omega	ω, ω̇	o as in port
Alpha-Iota	αι	e as in met
Epsilon-Iota	ει	i as in ski
Omicron-Iota	οι	i as in ski
Ipsilon-Iota	υι	i as in ski
Omicron-Ipsilon	ου	ou as in through
Alpha-Ipsilon	αυ	ahf before voiceless consonant, else ahv
Epsilon-Ipsilon	ευ	ehf before voiceless consonant, else ehv
Ita-Ipsilon	ευ	eef (or if) pre-voiceless cons., else eev (iv)

GREEK VOWEL SOUNDS

SOUND	LETTERS
a as in father	α, α
e as in met	ε, αι
i as in machine	ει, η, η, ι, οι, υ, υι
o as in port	ο, ω, ω
ou as in through	ου

CONSONANT COMBINATIONS

Pairs of identical consonants are pronounced like a single consonant, except for the following:

LETTERS	SOUND
γγ	<i>ng</i> (but before e sounds, roughly <i>ng^y</i>)
γκ	<i>ng</i> , but g at the beginning of a word
γξ	<i>nx</i> as in <i>lyn<u>x</u></i>
γχ	<i>nch</i>
μπ	<i>mb</i> , but b at the beginning of a word
ντ	<i>nd</i> , but d at the beginning of a word
τσ	<i>ts</i> as in <i>bit<u>s</u></i>
τζ	<i>dz</i> as in <i>red<u>s</u></i>

THE TAF > D SHIFT

Generally, the Greek letter Taf (Τ,τ) is pronounced as an unaspirated English T, as in *tea* or *stop*. However, when in the combination ντ the τ is pronounced as **d** in *dean*. The combination is sounded **nd** in the middle of a word, but **d** at the beginning of a word. Thus, the familiar NT word, **αντίχριστος**, is pronounced: *andēchristos*. This same shift of **t** sound to **d** sound for the τ, in the combination ντ, occurs at word boundaries (where there is no pause due to a period, semicolon, comma, etc.). Thus, **τὸν τόπον** is pronounced: *tōn dōpōn*.

The τ is also pronounced with **d** sound when it precedes a ζ, the combination pronounced like **dz** as in *reds*. I do not find this latter combination in the NT, but you may run into it in current words like **τζατζίκι**, pronounced, *dzadziki*.

THE SIGMA > Z SHIFT

Normally, the Greek **Sigma** (σ) is pronounced as an English S. The sigma makes a Z sound, however, when it precedes a voiced consonant, both when the combination occurs within a word and when a final sigma is followed by an initial voiced consonant in the next word. In this latter case, the Z sound is going to be more or less pronounced depending on how closely the two words are spoken together.

OTHER SOUND SHIFTS

According to <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/greek.htm>: **When κ, π, ξ, and ψ are preceded by a word that ends in ν, they become voiced and the final [n] sound turns into the corresponding nasal sound. Thus,**

ν --> κ, becomes γ --> γ (= ng).

ν --> π, becomes μ --> π, so **τον πατέρα** is pronounced: *tombatera* (see p. 5).

ν --> ξ, becomes γ --> ξ (= ngz).

ν --> ψ, becomes μ --> ψ (= mbz).

In the modern Greek recordings we're listening to, I'm only hearing the ν --> ψ to μ --> ψ (= mbz) shift consistently (see Rev 2.17; 3.15; 12.11; 13.18; 22.15 for examples).

PUNCTUATION, ACCENTS & BREATHING MARKS

Mark	Meaning
.	Period
,	Comma
;	Question Mark
:	Semicolon
' [acute]	Acute Accent
` [grave]	Grave Accent
~ [circumflex]	Circumflex Accent
' [smooth breathing]	Smooth Breathing
ˆ [rough breathing]	Rough Breathing

NOTE: Accents show the syllable to stress in pronunciation. Breathing marks are *no longer pronounced at all* in modern Greek.

A MEANINGFUL ACCENT

The enclitic¹ ἐστίν loses its character as an enclitic and becomes ἔστιν when:

1. It begins a sentence or clause;
2. It signifies existence or possibility;
3. It is preceded by οὐκ, μή, ὡς, εἰ, καί, ἀλλά (or ἀλλ'), τοῦτο (when elided² as τοῦτ');;
4. It is strongly emphatic.³

Thus, in Revelation 17.18 where we find, ἡ γυνή ἣν εἶδες ἔστιν ἡ πόλις, the acute accent on ἔστιν not only marks the stressed syllable, but also emphasizes to the reader that “the woman ... **IS** the city ...”

¹ For the definition of Enclitics, see page A-14.

² For the definition of Elision, see page A-13.

³ D. A. Carson, *Greek Accents: A Student's Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 50.

MORE ABOUT DIPHTHONGS

Strictly speaking, a diphthong is two vowels in sequence, pronounced as a unit but retaining two sounds:

δι = “two” + φθόγγος = “sound”

However, in modern Greek, most ancient diphthongs have blended into one sound. Hence, all of the following make a single sound:

αι	e as in met
ει	i as in ski
οι	i as in ski
υι	i as in ski
ου	ou as in through

Normally only αυ, ευ, and ηυ retain two vowel sounds, though not the normal sound of the υ. On rare occasions, though, and particularly with foreign words, αι and οι, as well as αη will be pronounced as true diphthongs in which the sounds of each vowel will be heard. So, pronounce and glide together the following consecutive vowels:

Κ <u>αι</u> ρο	Cairo
Ρο <u>οι</u>	Watch (from Rolex)
Ἰ <u>σραη</u> λ	Israel
Κ <u>αι</u> μός	Longing

THOSE CRAFTY *ι*'S AND *γ*'S!

In spoken Greek, we sound out each vowel, unless it is part of a diphthong, OR an unaccented *iota* followed by a vowel. The *iota* (ιώτα) generally makes a long [e] sound, like the *i* in *machine*. However, when it is unaccented and followed by a vowel, it takes on a consonantal character and makes a [y] sound, as in κύριος, pronounced *kíryos*.

Among the consonants lurks the even more crafty *gama* (γάμα). While it generally makes a [g] sound as in *go*, it makes an [ŋ] sound when it precedes another *gama*, *kapa*, *ksi*, or *xi*. The really tricky fact, though, is that for the combinations *γγ* and *γχ* the [ŋ] sound is optional! So, for example, the word for *English*, Αγγλικά, is pronounced (by some Greeks) *Aglēká*. Furthermore, when *gama* precedes an [e] or [i] vowel, it makes a [y] sound, as in the name for *iota* (ιώτα) above!

THE IOTA SUBSCRIPT

Historically the vowels ε and ο are considered *short*, while η and ω are *long*, while α can be either short or long. Whenever a *iota* follows one of the long vowels, including the alpha when it is long, the *iota* becomes a **iota subscript** forming what is called an “improper diphthong”: α, η, ω. An exception occurs when the long vowel preceding a *iota* is written as a capital; then the *iota* is written in the line. This exception occurs with the proper name Hiram in 1Chronicles 8.5: Ωιμ; with Ἡιδει at the beginning of John 18.2 (in some editions); and also with ἦιδειν in 1Samuel 22.22, whether capitalized or not, since it is the beginning of a direct quotation.

In the improper diphthongs, α, η, ω, the pronunciation of the *iota* is lost, and so the diphthongs are pronounced simply as α, η, ω. Nevertheless, the **iota subscript** is important grammatically and lexically. In the *endings* of articles, pronouns, nouns, and participles, the **iota subscript** always indicates the **dative case**.

ELISION

Elision is the omission of part of a word, whether in speech or writing. In the GNT it is marked by an apostrophe, and normally occurs with prepositions and particles that are written before a word that begins with a vowel. Thus we have (for examples):

ἀπ' for ἀπό before αὐτῶν (Rev 9.6)

δι' for διά before ἐπιστολῆς (2Th 2.2)

ἐπ' for ἐπί before ἐμὲ (Rev 1.17)

κατ' for κατά before αὐτοῦ (Jude 1.15)

μετ' for μετά before ἐμοῦ (Rev 1.12)

παρ' for παρά before ὑμῖν (Rev 2.13)

ὑφ' for ὑπό before ὑμῶν (Act 4.11)

ὑπ' for ὑπό before ἐμοῦ (Gal 1.11)

CRISIS

Crisis (from χρᾶσις, “mixing”) occurs frequently in the Bible. It is the merging of a two-word sequence by the omission or contraction of vowels. Thus we have:

καὶ + ἐγώ → κἀγώ (Revelation 2.6, etc.)

καὶ + ἐμοί → κἀμοί (John 17.6)

καὶ + ἐμέ → κἀμέ (John 7.28)

καὶ + ἐκεῖ → κἀκεῖ (John 11.54)

καὶ + ἐκεῖνος → κἀκεῖνος (John 6.57, etc.)

καὶ + ἐκεῖθεν → κἀκεῖθεν (Mark 9.30)

καὶ + ἐάν → κἄν (John 8.14, etc.)

τὸ + ὄνομα → τοῦνομα (Matthew 27.57)

τὸ + ἐναντίον → τούναντιον (Galatians 2.7)

Note: the breathing mark of the second word is retained at the point of union, revealing the crisis!

ENCLITICS

Enclitics are words that depend upon the preceding word in a sentence for their accent (the preceding word, therefore, may *or may not* carry a double accent). The principal enclitics in the NT are:

μου, μοι, με, σου, σοι, σε
 τις, τινές, τινῶν, etc.
 που, ποτε, πω, πως
 εἰμί (in its present indicative forms)
 γε, τε

Thus, in Revelation 7.14 we see, οὗτοί εἰσιν, and in 11.5 and other verses, εἶ τις. Rarely in the Bible, and never in the Revelation does μου carry its own accent. Instead, we will usually see it depend upon a preceding word for its accent, as in Revelation 7.14: κύριέ μου.

PROCLITICS

Proclitics (from προκλίνω, “lean forward”) are words that never have an accent of their own, but depend upon the following word for accent. The principal proclitics are:

ὁ, ἡ, οἱ, αἱ, εἰς, ἐξ, ἐν, εἰ, ὡς

Also, the adverb *not*, οὐ, οὐκ, οὐχ (not to be confused with the relative and accented pronoun, οὗ) is a proclitic unless it means *No*. Thus, in Revelation 13.8 we see, οὗ οὐ γέγραπται, where οὐ depends upon γέγραπται for its accent. Likewise, οὐκ ἔχουσι, in Revelation 9.4, and οὐχ εὐρέθη in Revelation 14.5.

It is important to note that the proclitic articles, ὁ, ἡ, οἱ, αἱ, are followed by an enclitic, such as τε, they take an accent and must not be confused with the relative pronouns, ἡ, οἱ, αἱ, and ὅ. For example, ἡ τε θάλασσα, in Joh 6.18, where ἡ is the definite article for θάλασσα.

COMBINING, MERGING AND LENGTHENING VOWELS & DIPHTHONGS

In word formation and inflection, single adjacent vowels typically combine or merge according to this diagram:

	α	ε	η	ι	υ	ο	ω
α	α	α	α	αι	αυ	ω	ω
ε	η	ει	η	ει	ευ	ου	ω
η	η	η	η	η	ηυ	ω	ω
ο	ω	ου	ω	οι	ου	ου	ω
ω	ω	ω	ω	ω	ωυ	ω	ω

Likewise, single vowels adjacent to diphthongs typically combine or merge according to this diagram (two diphthongs are boxed because they are spurious diphthongs formed by a contraction) :

	αι	ει	ει	η	οι	ου	ω
α	αι	αι	αι	αι	ω	ω	ω
ε	η	ει	ει	η	οι	ου	ω
η	η	η	η	η	ω		ω
ο	ω	οι	ου	οι	οι	ου	ω

See more on the rules of contraction for regular verb endings on p. B-48.

Greek vowels are referred to as either **short** or **long**. These designations originally had to do with the *duration* of the vowel's sound when uttered, but now have to do only with the vowel's quality as articulated.

Forming the **Imperfect**, **Aorist** and **Pluperfect** verbs involves **augmenting** the verb stem with a prefixed epsilon (ε) . If the verb already begins with a vowel, the augmented epsilon and initial vowel merge to *lengthen* the initial vowel in the following ways:

α, ε, η lengthen to η

ι, υ, ω remain the same (when the vowel is long, you will not see the augment)

ο lengthens to ω

Initial diphthongs also merge with the epsilon augment and *lengthen* in the following ways:

αι and ει lengthen to η

αυ and ευ lengthen to ηυ

οι lengthens to ω (notice that when diphthongs with a *iota* are lengthened, the *iota* moves to become subscript)

Forming **Perfect** and **Pluperfect** verbs *generally* involves **reduplicating** the initial sound of the verb. If a verb begins with a consonant that is a plosive, λ or ρ, that initial consonant is doubled, and an epsilon is placed between the initial consonant and its prefixed double. Thus, the first person singular perfect of λύω becomes λέλυκα (the initial lamda of λύω is doubled, and an epsilon placed between the two lamdas; see p. B-50 for a fuller explanation). However, if the consonant to be reduplicated is φ, χ, or θ, the prefixed consonant of the reduplication will become a π, κ, or τ, respectively in a conversion called "deaspiration."

If the syllable to be reduplicated begins with a vowel or diphthong, then, rather than being doubled, the initial vowel or diphthong of the verb is lengthened, in harmony with the lengthening rules above.

Remember the first rule of Language Club: 1. There are always exceptions to the rules of Language Club.

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BIBLICAL GREEK



RODERICK GRACIANO, INSTRUCTOR