Fight the Freak-Out!

Study Tips & Resources for Ancient Language Students

ALFA

Ancient Languages

First Aid

2016

Setting yourself up…

Can you say that in plain English please?

Forgotten what a particle, preposition, or participle is? Do you sit in bewilderment when someone asks you to *"parse"* a certain word? Well, perhaps you are one of the many people who have understandably forgotten what was spelled out to you in those murky yesteryears of primary school: ***grammar.***

Remembering English grammatical concepts can be tough; applying them to an ancient language is even tougher. That is why *Tele's Angels* has created a **guide to some of the main grammatical concepts** you will encounter in your lectures and how these translate into your understanding of modern English. This **Ancient Languages First Aid Kit** is by no means intended to answer every grammatical question, and it is important to understand that many grammatical concepts you will encounter in an ancient language no longer have, or never had, an equivalent in English.

You can download the ALFA Kit in PDF form from the *Tele's Angels* website:
http://telesangels.com/?page_id=97

Learning the basics…

Activate your memory!

Unfortunately, not all university students have the luxury of a photographic memory or the spongy receptivity of a five-year-old. So no matter what age you are, or what previous language experience you have had, when it comes to learning a language of any kind – **your memory matters!**

You will quickly find that **learning a language requires continual memory recall**. It is a common and necessary practice to be bombarded with several hundred basic **words** to learn in your first language course, along with all of the different **morphologies** (changes in the formation) of these words, and a myriad of **grammatical concepts**. Often this can overwhelm and discourage even the most passionate student. The following are some of many different methods which previous students of ancient languages have found useful when trying to overcome this barrier. It is important that you find the right one for you, so try each one out and **adapt it according to your needs**. If you invent your own and think other students could use it, please let us know!

α **Flash cards:** Some people learn best by **reading**. These portable, pint-sized pearls are one of the most common ways to drill some **basic vocabulary** or **grammar** into your brain. For example, you might simply write a single word in an ancient language on one side, e.g. *uoco* (Latin), and the English meaning on the reverse, *I call*. Palm cards also provide an excellent way to **test yourself** once you feel you have memorised a substantial amount – but don't just test yourself in the order you memorised them, **mix it up!** Only then will you gauge how much you have learnt. Further, if you catch public transport, or simply have some free time, palm cards allow you to **revise and memorise** in time otherwise wasted.

α *Write it out:* Some people remember what they have **written** more than what they have read. So writing out your weekly vocabulary or grammatical tables **several times a day** or **creating practice sentences** using those words and grammatical concepts can help make them stick. Using **colour** to help group vocabulary and grammar into meaningful patterns further stimulates your **visual memory**.

α *Shout it out:* If, after you have written and read everything you have to memorise, you still feel as if it is all slipping away, **try saying it aloud**, finding a friend to **discuss** and **practice** it with, or perhaps try creating an audio CD/MP3 of your weekly vocabulary to **listen** to at home or whilst on the move.

α *Rhyme time:* Facing a tricky word that you find impossible to remember? Say the word aloud and try to find an English word that rhymes, or sounds similar in English. Often, the quirkier the better.

α *Immerse yourself:* Sometimes being constantly faced with something you need to remember causes it to sink in all that more. In addition to using the above methods, try putting **posters**, wall **charts**, or post-it **notes** around areas of your home where you are bound to see them (especially where you study). This way the **language becomes a part of your learning environment**.

α *Test yourself:* The best way to consolidate any of these methods is to test oneself consistently. Often you will remember a word or grammatical concept better if (1) you recognise you got it incorrect, (2) you understand why it was incorrect, and (3) you try again until you get it right. **Do not get into a set pattern of testing**. By mixing up the order in which you come across a word or concept, you become better equipped to face it in an unfamiliar context, such as an exam or unseen text.

Ultimately, **studying a language is not conducive to a stop and start approach**. Unlike other courses, you cannot start studying for a language exam a few weeks in advance. Learning a language is a **weekly commitment** of time, effort, and motivation to **expand** your vocabulary and grammatical understanding, **revise** in the short term (assessments and exams), and **consolidate** your knowledge in the long term through the application of the language into other courses, research, and degrees to achieve greater and greater fluency. Be **persistent and consistent**, and you will see results!

Patterns, patterns, patterns!

English is not always logical for those learning it as a second language. Luckily, ancient languages are largely governed by **easily digestible rules and patterns**. If you make an effort to recognise these patterns you can save yourself much time, mental effort, and brain space!

Classical Latin & Greek
A large number (but by no means all) of the nouns, adjectives, and verbs you will encounter have their own unique **word stem** which is combined with a **grammatical ending** to **denote the function of that word in a certain sentence**. Often a whole group of word stems can be learnt together because they all share a common set of grammatical endings. Groupings of these words according to their grammatical endings are known as **conjugations** for verbs, and **declensions** for nouns.

STEM   +   ENDING   =   WORD

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Of course there are also many **exceptions** to such rules, which must be learnt individually and carefully. However, over time you will find that understanding the underlying patterns in the language you are learning is essential to achieving fluency.

Middle Egyptian, Coptic & Hebrew
As members of the Afroasiatic language family, Middle Egyptian, Coptic and Hebrew work differently to the Classical languages. They can use different grammatical elements, such as **prefixes** (added to the beginning of a word) or **suffixes** (added to the end of a word), to act as **signposts** to **indicate** that the basic form of the word has changed. There are also clear grammatical rules concerning **sentence** and **clause** structure. As you become more exposed to the grammar, the easiest path is to **memorise the different formulae** and learn to **recognise** where they occur.

Extending yourself…

Reach out & resource!

It may sound clichéd, but it is true: **you are not the only one who does not understand!** In ancient languages, more than any other ancient history course, it is common to find at least 10 other people asking the same question in their heads but not voicing it. **Be that voice!** You won't regret it; instead you will be thanked for it. An important part of learning an ancient language is to **branch out from private study** with your textbook and access the many resources available to you.

In your classroom…

α **Your lecturer** is there to answer your questions, however foolish or ignorant these questions might seem to you. Each lecturer has a visiting hour, and will also respond to questions sent via email. The course convenor (or failing that, another Departmental staff member) should always be your first port-of-call concerning any type of question. If you don't understand the first time they answer, then ask again, again, and again until you do.

α Within your classroom there is also another valuable resource: **your fellow class mates**. Reaching out to your fellow class mates, discussing difficult grammatical concepts, forming study groups, and ultimately becoming friends, is one of the best ways to learn a language. If one person cannot explain a certain concept, more often than not, another can.

α **Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS):** The Faculty of Arts typically runs weekly one-hour study sessions for students of **AHIS108 Ancient Greek A**, **AHIS118 Latin A,** and **AHIS178 Egyptian Hieroglyphs A**. These sessions are run by a senior student who has been successful in the unit, and who will offer study support, skills and revision to facilitate your learning and help you succeed. One PASS session has been shown to be equal to three to four hours of solitary study at home. For more information, visit:
http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/current_students/undergraduate/peer_assisted_study_sessions#aboutPAL

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On your bookshelf…

α As well as becoming familiar with your **unit textbooks**, check out some other bibliographic resources such as **dictionaries** and **grammar books**. Not only does further reading expand your ancient vocabulary, but sometimes seeing a grammatical feature explained in a different way can assist your understanding. We recommend:

β *Classical Latin & Greek:*
  ϒ **Morwood, *Oxford Grammar of Classical Greek* (2001)***: a concise grammar book which provides generous help with grammatical terms, pronunciation, and difficult idioms common in Ancient Greek. Practice exercises, example sentences, and helpful tips are provided throughout.
  ϒ **Joint Association of Classical Teachers, *Reading Greek: Grammar and Exercises* (2007):** an introductory course in Ancient Greek which provides a detailed grammar with exercises and helpful tips in every chapter.
  ϒ **Joint Association of Classical Teachers, *Reading Greek: Text and Vocabulary* (2007):** revises grammatical concepts covered in the 'Grammar and Exercises' volume through the reading of Ancient Greek texts.
  ϒ **Internet Archive:** a digital library which includes many out-of-print ancient language dictionaries and translations, accessible at http://www.archive.org/details/texts.
  ϒ **Textkit:** offers a collection of over 180 Greek and Latin textbooks in downloadable PDF form free of charge, available at http://www.textkit.com.

β *Middle Egyptian*
  ϒ **Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (2000):** an up-to-date textbook separated into different lessons, each with exercises (and answers!)
  ϒ **Erman & Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* (1953):** an extensive dictionary. Don't be put off by the German – the entries are brief, but useful.
  ϒ **Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (1962):** a great supplement to the dictionary in Ockinga's *Grammar* – make it a staple!
  ϒ **Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (1957, 3rd ed.):** a bit dated, but very comprehensive and with extended information on each sign.

β *Coptic*
  ϒ **Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, (1939):** You won't need to use it too much in Coptic A, as the textbook has a great Coptic vocabulary at the back of the book. However, if you are serious about Coptic, this is a must-have resource.

β *Hebrew*
  ϒ **Brown, Driver & Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (2010):** The BDB is every Hebrew student's best friend!
  ϒ **Green, *The Interlinear Bible, Hebrew-Greek-English* (1976):** an important resource for both Hebrew and Greek students, with both the original Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament text) with the English equivalent.
  ϒ **Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1972):** a useful lexicon, particularly for those translating the Old Testament.
  ϒ **Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (1995):** contains invaluable grammatical tables detailing the paradigms for noun declensions, and the various verb classes in Hebrew.

On your computer…

α There are also a growing number of ***electronic resources*** available on the internet which may assist you in your first semester of an ancient language. We recommend:

    β *Classical Latin*
        ϒ **Online parsers** *break down and define a word entered by the user. Many of these are not fool-proof and should always be accompanied by solid use of a dictionary and grammar/textbook:*
- **Perseus (Tufts University):** select Latin instead of Greek from the dropdown menu at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph.
- **Whitaker's Words:** a downloadable Latin-English parsing program, also available online at http://archives.nd.edu/words.html.

        ϒ **Online Dictionaries** *for quick and easy translation:*
- **Perseus (Tufts University):** use the English-to-[Language] and Dictionary Entry Lookup sections at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/search?redirect=true.

Searchable Text Databases *allow students to search entire corpora of ancient texts for certain words, comparative analysis, and more. These are essential tools for any philological or linguistic research. All are available through the Macquarie University Library electronic databases website for Ancient History, accessible through http://www.mq.edu.au/on_campus/library/. Click on the databases tab in the MultiSearch section and search for keywords to retrieve results for related databases, such as:*
- **Bibliotheca Teubneriana Latina (BTL) and Thesaurus linguae Latinae (TLL):** excellent searchable databases of Latin texts, useful for researching the use of certain words or phrases in a particular author or across the whole database.
- **Library of Latin texts - Series A & B:** contains Latin texts from the beginning of Latin literature (beginning with Livius Andronicus' first play in 240 BC) through to the texts of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

    β *Classical Greek*
        ϒ **Online Parsers**:
- **Perseus (Tufts University):** use the Word Study Tool on the right side of the page at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/search?redirect=true.

        ϒ **Online Dictionaries:**
- **Perseus (Tufts University):** use the English-to-[Language] and Dictionary Entry Lookup sections at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/search?redirect=true.
- **The Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-to-English Lexicon** http://www.tlg.uci.edu/lsj/#eid=1&context=lsj

        ϒ **Searchable Text Databases**
- **Thesaurus linguae Graecae (TLG):** currently contains almost all Greek texts from the 8th century BC to 7th century AD *(available via MQ Library Database search)*.

Perseus: also provides a corpus of Classical Latin and Greek texts which are searchable, along with English translations, and a growing selection of modern reference works at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection?collection=Perseus:collection:Greco-Roman.

In particular, Perseus links each word in a Latin or Greek text to its electronic parser and dictionaries, and shows where other occurrences of that word appear in that author/work. In this way, you can understand the function of each word as you work through a text.

- ϒ **Resource Sites:**
  - **GraecoMuse:** compiled by a past Macquarie University student, this site offers a number of resources for ancient Greek, as well as Egyptian and Latin. http://graecomuse.wordpress.com
- ϒ **Computer Fonts** *can be downloaded and installed to help make your assessments more presentable. Follow the download instructions provided on each website, install the file into the 'Font' folder (PC: Control Panel; Mac: Applications) and select from the 'Font' bar in your word processor:*
  - **SP Ionic:** refer to the associated ReadMe file for a **Keyboard Map.**
    http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/fonts/windows/ (PC) or
    http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/fonts/mac/ (Mac)

β *Middle Egyptian*
- ϒ **Online Dictionaries:**

  Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae, available at http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/, is a useful tool for the translator, using data from the *Wörterbuch* and other dictionaries, but can be a little tricky to use:
  - click on the image of the cards at the centre.
  - login as "guest," following the instructions.
  - click on 'search the list of Egyptian words'.
  - enter the transliteration of your word into the 'Lemma' field or the meaning into the 'translation' field and tick the box for English.
  - you will be given a list of corresponding words, each with a dictionary reference.
- ϒ **Computer Fonts:**
  - **Transliteration font:** available for both PC and MAC at http://www.yare.org/egypt/fonts.htm.
  - **Gardiner's Sign List font:** hieroglyphic sign font available for both PC and MAC at http://www.yare.org/egypt/fonts.htm.

β *Coptic*
- ϒ **Searchable Text Databases**
  - **Corpus dei manoscritti copti letterari:** includes bibliographies, information on Coptic grammar and development, manuscripts and texts with Italian translation. *(Available via MQ Library Database search)*
- ϒ **Resource Sites:**

  Coptica (University of Geneva): includes download links for dictionaries, Coptic documents and bibliographies at http://www.coptica.ch/ – don't be put off by the French!
- ϒ **Computer Fonts:**
  - **SPAchmim:** refer to the associated ReadMe file for a **Keyboard Map** at http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/fonts/windows/ (PC) or http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/fonts/mac/ (Mac).

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ꞵ *Hebrew*
    ϒ **Resource Sites:**
        - **University of Alberta – Ehud's Assisting You to Learn:** includes a link to Biblical texts and their translations, as well as a wealth of other resources for beginners and advanced students of Hebrew at http://www.ualberta.ca/~ebenzvi/Assist/Hebrew_Bible/index.html.
    ϒ **Computer Fonts:**
        - **SPTiberian:** refer to the associated ReadMe file for a **Keyboard Map** at http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/fonts/windows/ (PC) or http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/fonts/mac/ (Mac).

On your mobile…

α Ancient language assistance is at your fingertips with a range of *mobile applications* available for download. We recommend:

ꞵ *Classical Latin*
    ϒ **Lexidium Latin Dictionary:** produced by Harry Schmidt, available in normal internet form on Perseus, and based on Lewis and Short's *Latin Dictionary* (also includes a useful parser).
    ϒ **Collins Latin Dictionary:** produced by Mobile Systems, with search assistance and colour-coded results.

ꞵ *Classical Greek*
    ϒ **Lexiphanes Greek Dictionary:** produced by Harry Schmidt, available in normal internet form on Perseus, and based on the 1924 edition of Liddel & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon.
    ϒ **Greek-English Lexicon:** produced by David Finucane, and based on the 1924 edition of Liddel & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon.

ꞵ *Middle Egyptian*
    ϒ **Aaou Hieroglyph Dictionary:** produced by Jean-François Dumon, with over 20,000 words.

Go the extra mile!

When it comes to ancient languages, the old saying "**the more you put in, the more you get back**" holds absolutely true. The only way to grow as a budding student of ancient languages is to extend your learning **outside of the course curriculum**. Exposing yourself to other texts not explored in class, and continuing to read your chosen language in the holiday periods, will ensure that you (1) do not forget a large part of the semester's work, (2) consolidate your understanding in the long term, and (3) improve your vocabulary and your grasp of grammatical concepts. This can be pursued in various ways; a few suggested avenues are listed below.

α *Independent reading:* Equipped with a Loeb or Urkunden (or any original critical text with separate translation), a reliable commentary, and a good dictionary, you should be able to **explore other texts of your choice** after your first semester of study. Often it is best to **consult your course**

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convenor as to which texts would be most suitable for your level of proficiency (because, as you will find as you progress, some authors are just plain hard, and may do more to discourage than encourage you in continuing to study the language).

α **Macquarie Ancient Languages School (MALS)** at Macquarie University (within the Ancient Cultures Research Centre) offers an intensive winter and summer school in between each semester, covering all levels of Classical and New Testament (Koine) Greek, as well as Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Coptic, Sanskrit, Scottish Gaelic, Old Irish, Etruscan, Akkadian, Armenian, Syriac, Classical Arabic, Modern Greek, and further courses on specific topics including Greek and Roman numismatics, epigraphy, and Greek papyri. More information can be found at
http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/faculties_and_departments/faculty_of_arts/department_of_ancient_history/macquarie_ancient_languages_school/.

α **Sydney Latin Summer School (SLSS)** at the University of Sydney provides an intensive summer school in Classical (and Medieval) Latin, catering for all levels of proficiency, with the aim of exposing students to a wider range of texts and authors, and reinforcing or building upon their grammatical understanding. More information can be found at
α http://www.latinsummerschool.com.au/.

α **Learn a modern language** to experience other grammatical systems, and to acquire the necessary skills to read secondary literature, grammars and dictionaries published in other languages. Macquarie offers a variety of modern European and Asian languages. Of particular relevance for ancient history students are French and German.

Why you *should* hang in there!

Let's face it: ancient languages do require a lot of **commitment**, **perseverance**, and **mental gymnastics** for those who wish to master them. But it is important to realise that learning a language never ceases. Even your lecturers are confronted by the complexities of language on a daily basis. Everyone is in the same boat—the trick is getting over the initial sea sickness!

So do not be discouraged if you find it is an uphill struggle in your first year of study – in the long term, an understanding of ancient languages will quickly become a **crucial asset in your degree repertoire**. Instead of depending upon (often unreliable) translations of ancient texts, you will be able to **access the texts directly** and discover a whole new and empowering aspect of studying the ancient world. This will add a **new dimension to your research** and result in a greater depth to your essays. Furthermore, knowledge of one or more ancient languages (and modern languages) is also an added advantage in postgraduate studies, and a *necessary* skill if you wish to pursue an academic career in the field of history through higher degree research.

The path to a satisfactory understanding of your chosen ancient language/s may be a challenge at first, but Tele's Angels hopes this guide has been of some assistance in overcoming your initial language woes. If you find any question baffling you upon reading this guide, or at any time during the semester in your courses, then we would be happy to answer any of your questions.

Send your questions to: telesangels@gmail.com

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