The Usage-Based Approach to Teaching New Testament Greek

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This paper emphasizes the importance of both methodological and pedagogical dimensions of elementary Greek grammars, and then briefly surveys several different approaches found in current grammars. The paper takes what is called the usage-based approach, in which grammar is introduced roughly according to frequency of use so that students are reinforced in learning the grammar that appears most frequently in the Greek New Testament. Porter, Reed, and O'Donnell's *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek* is used as the example of such an approach. (Article)

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1. *Introduction*

There are many different ways to teach New Testament Greek to students. There will no doubt continue to be more such approaches developed and implemented in the future. Such approaches will reflect the proclivities of the individual teachers and various goals of both teachers and students. I seriously doubt whether we will ever arrive at what might be called the perfect approach to teaching New Testament Greek, because there will always be disagreement about the best ways to teach and to learn Greek. There will also be various developments in the understanding of Greek that will call for our pedagogical tools, including our textbooks, to reflect our increased understanding of both the language itself and, with it, the best practices for teaching it. Nevertheless, having said that, I also realize that the situation is not completely fluid and that there is a select number of approaches to the teaching of New Testament Greek that are

currently employed at various educational institutions. There is probably some merit to each of these approaches—if one looks hard enough. I wish to say a few things about some of these approaches at the end of this paper. Before doing that, however, I wish to present the approach that has been labeled the "usage-based approach." I am not sure who originated this title, but it in many ways is a satisfactory (if not invariably accurate) means of referring to the approach that is taken in the first-year Greek textbook that I have co-authored with two other scholars, Jeffrey T. Reed and Matthew Brook O'Donnell, entitled *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*.[1]

2. *The Usage-Based Approach*

In outlining the usage-based approach, I will inevitably touch on two major and inseparable issues. The first is one of method, and the second is one of practice or pedagogical approach. The issue of method is immensely important, though apparently often overlooked, in teaching grammars, especially as it involves two different but important concepts that I will discuss. The pedagogical approach of each grammar is indispensable as well. Application is what all grammars try to do well, and here I will talk about what is distinct about our grammar in relation to others.[2]

1.　　Porter, Reed, and O'Donnell, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*. Page numbers of this book are included in parentheses within the body of the text. See also the workbook, Porter and Reed, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek: Workbook*. I am using the term "usage-based" in some ways similar to how it is used in cognitive linguistics (see Evans and Green, *Cognitive Linguistics,* 133–46), and especially in studies of second-language acquisition, in which frequent usage of linguistic phenomena builds a framework for recognition and use of analogous patterns. On usage-based approaches to language acquisition more generally, see Ellis and Larsen-Freeman, *Language as a Complex Adaptive System*.

2.　　For other thoughts about Greek pedagogy, see Porter and O'Donnell, *Linguist as Pedagogue*, 11–42.

2.1 *General Methodological Questions*

My first-year New Testament Greek teacher at McMaster Divinity College, Dr. Lois Dow (Ph.D. McMaster Divinity College), came to me soon after she started using our grammar to tell me how the students in her first-year class were progressing as they used our new textbook. After a few brief comments, she said, "The students have learned the aorist verb, so they can actually read real Greek!" She was excited to note that their learning of not just the finite verb, but a particular finite verb, the aorist active indicative, opened up all sorts of possibilities for using their incipient Greek knowledge to read the Greek New Testament. I am certain that the students, having been exposed to the possibilities opening up before them, were not suddenly completely competent in reading New Testament Greek. Nevertheless, Lois was saying something important about the possibilities for Greek reading on the basis of teaching the aorist active indicative early in the semester, so that students were able to examine real Greek sentences and passages.

What Lois captured in her statement is reflected in the conceptual background to *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*, and the first methodological statement I wish to make. Every elementary Greek grammar (and even every Greek teacher) has an orientation to teaching of New Testament Greek, whether the author or teacher realizes it or not. Many do not, I fear. This is often, I believe, what makes it difficult for students learning Greek, when they are compelled to learn Greek from either the most junior member of the department, who may or may not have interest in Greek language, or even a student slightly more advanced in knowledge of the language than the students but who performs this task out of financial necessity. This situation makes having a clear method in the textbook of even more importance. Two other major approaches to the teaching of Greek are the morphological approach and the immersion approach. There are of course other approaches as well, such as the oral/aural method that is the basis of much teaching of modern languages. *Fundamentals* reflects a usage-based approach, about which I will say more below.

What Lois did not say was that the textbook introduces a particular view of the aorist tense and what it means, and that this has had an impact on what and how the students are learning about Greek. Not only does every Greek grammar have a pedagogical orientation, whether the author or even user realizes it, but every Greek grammar, and with it each teacher of Greek, has an orientation to the Greek language of the New Testament itself. As a result, there is an orientation to the teaching of Greek from which each book is written, but there is also a view of Greek itself that is reflected in each textbook. These are two distinct yet related methodological orientations. What I think is important to the discussion here is that teachers of Greek—and the textbooks that they use—have two types of methodological approach to Greek, one pedagogical and the other conceptual or linguistic. Both are important.

Without doing a systematic study of the many first-year grammars that I have on my shelves at home—who could imagine doing such a task!—as I think back on those that I have read and used, I think that few of them have an explicit methodology, and even fewer have expressed it clearly. Most of these grammars, it seems to me, fall within four different categories. The first category is descriptivism. There is a sense in many of these grammars that they believe that they have captured the language in an appropriate pedagogical format and are describing it in a useful, although probably simplified, form for the student to learn. What is not usually stated is why the description proceeds in the particular way that it does. The second category of grammar is what I would call progressivism. These grammars seem to be organized around ease of learning. They begin with the elements that they think will be easiest for students to grasp, and then progress to more difficult elements of the language. This pattern appears to be reflected in the learning both of vocabulary and of grammar. As a result, such books usually introduce the present tense-form before the aorist, because it is thought to be easier to learn, and second declension nouns are learned before first declension because they have fewer perceived irregularities. The third category is based upon English grammar. Perhaps the best-known grammar of this sort

is Wenham's grammar, now in revised form, which contains a small grammar of the English language.[3] The assumption is that one cannot learn Greek without knowing English, or at least without being refreshed in one's knowledge of English before learning Greek. Of course, the even deeper assumption is that Greek grammar and English grammar are sufficiently similar so that learning English provides the suitable linguistic basis for learning of Greek. The fourth and final category is what I will call the morphological approach—without stating the exact relationship it has to the morphological approach taken by Mounce.[4] The morphological approaches I am thinking of categorize the various components of the Greek language into morphologically based units, so that one learns second declension nouns separately from first declension nouns separately from third declension nouns, and one learns the various verb tense-forms separately, some books even dividing noun morphology from verb morphology so that one learns one—often the former—before one learns the latter.

My point here is to note that there is a whole lot of method involved in the creation of first-year Greek grammars without even knowing it. Even our simplest grammars are reflective of various approaches to the Greek language as it is conceived for pedagogical purposes.

Even more important, however, is that these grammars reflect a linguistic perspective on the Greek language itself—whether they realize it or believe that they do so. Again, much like what I have noted above, as I quickly think through the various grammars available—and in fact at one time did survey them in a more systematic way[5]—they themselves have an orientation to the language. Not too surprisingly in light of the nature of Greek language study, most of these first-year grammars for study of the Greek New Testament reflect what

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3.   See Wenham, *Elements of New Testament Greek*, 1–16; and in revised form, Duff, *Elements of New Testament Greek*, 240–49. This follows Nunn, *Elements of New Testament Greek*, xiii–xxxvi.

4.   Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*.

5.   Porter, "Tense Terminology."

might be called the rationalist (and temporal) view of the language. This is the approach that is often attributed to the nineteenth-century scholar Georg Benedikt Winer in his grammar, and is found in many if not most first-year Greek grammars to the present.[6] One of the major characteristics of their rationalism is expressed in internal consistency throughout the language. This is often manifested in its view of the meanings of the tense-forms, where they are taken to be strictly temporal, so that present tense-forms indicate present time, future verbs indicate future time, and hence by extension (as their English names do not necessarily indicate this), the aorist tense-form indicates past time, and the perfect tense-form indicates, well, the perfect is a problem, so let's say it reflects a combination of the present and the aorist, and so it maintains consistency with the others. This view of Greek is probably heavily influenced by conceptions of German and English as time-based languages, features of comparative linguistics, the kinds of rules of language promoted by the Neogrammarians, and related ideas.[7] It is only reasonably recently that some first-year grammars of New Testament Greek have made serious attempts at and inroads into altering this view of the Greek language.

Let me conclude this section by simply stating that questions of method are, I believe, important for the study of Greek in at least two ways. The first involves how we conceptualize and execute our first-year Greek grammars. The second is how we conceive of the language itself that is going to be taught in the grammar. One cannot assume either and, I believe, must be explicit about both.

2.2 *The Methodological and Pedagogical Approach of* Fundamentals

Fundamentals of New Testament Greek has an orientation toward each of these methodological questions, as well as a pedagogical

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6.   Winer, *Treatise on the Grammar*.
7.   See Porter, *Verbal Aspect,* 51–56.

approach. The pedagogical approach is called here the usage-based approach. This usage-based approach essentially states that—so far as is possible within certain constraints—the various phenomena of the language, including both its grammar and its vocabulary, are introduced to the student according to frequency of usage, with the most frequent introduced first.

Let me clarify several of the presuppositions of this approach. (1) One of the major assumptions is that students should be introduced earliest to those things that they will encounter most frequently in the language as it is used. The early introduction of these items ensures that students will receive continued practice in using them throughout the rest of their time of learning Greek, including the repeated encounter of these items in the exercises. Thus, the aorist active indicative tense-form—so crucial in narrative—is introduced as the first verbal paradigm in the fourth chapter with other aorist forms to follow, so that from the fourth chapter to the end of the book (ch. 30), reflecting the kinds of frequencies and patterns found in the Greek New Testament, the student will continue to be exposed to and read and use aorist verb forms. (2) A second assumption is that grammatical elements are placed together so that common elements are systematically introduced at the same time (even if this results in deviation from a strict usage-based approach). In this regard, morphology is important to this approach, but so are larger structural units, such as word groups (phrases) and clause components and clauses. Thus, we try to treat all of the most frequently used conjunctions at the same time, even though the frequency of appearance is not the same. We do this instead of introducing the most frequent conjunctions in one chapter and the rest of the conjunctions in another, or spreading them throughout the book. (3) We do not believe that vocabulary and grammar are as independent of each other as many grammarians do, so vocabulary is introduced in the same usage-based way, but also in conjunction with recognizing parts of speech and morphological types. Hence, if the chapter is emphasizing a noun declension, the vocabulary list will contain nouns that are found within that declension, emphasizing the nouns that are found most frequently (our book essentially covers all of the

vocabulary of the New Testament down to 12 times or more, so the students are exposed to over 950 vocabulary items to facilitate their reading). (4) A fourth assumption is that all of these elements should be repeatedly and frequently exemplified in the exercises. The exercises that we have created for this textbook include a number of different types of tasks for students. Many require manipulation of the Greek forms, either by changing them to other forms or using them in relation to other words. There are usually two or three types of exercises that rely upon such manipulation so that students again reinforce what they are learning through their own use of these phenomena. The Greek sentences for translation and the New Testament Greek passage that are found in each chapter from ch. 2 on are (occasionally simplified) sentences that draw upon and reinforce the phenomena that are being studied in the particular chapter. (5) A fifth and final assumption to quickly mention is that we place an emphasis upon parsing. We have included at the beginning of the book a clear and explicit parsing scheme to enable students to identify the formal features of the individual words that they encounter. These parsings are used in conjunction with word formation formulas that are introduced for each paradigm that the student learns, so that students learn both how to identify and how to form each declined word. This emphasizes morphology, but it also reinforces the formal features of particular linguistic elements in relation to the formal features of other elements.

The methodological approach of *Fundamentals* reflected in the view of Greek itself could be talked about at great length, because it involves some of the major discussions of the Greek language that have occurred over the last over one-hundred years. I can summarize it by saying that it reflects a subtly applied linguistic approach that draws upon discourse analytical principles and emphasizes verbal aspect theory. The reader will notice that this grammar does not use much explicit modern linguistic terminology. The terminology that it does use tends to be standard nomenclature that has been used in grammars for some time, and it draws particularly upon that of comparative philology. Hence there is discussion of various phonological

variations, the components of phrases, and the elements and types of clauses. At one point in our development of this grammar, I was asked why we had not simply abandoned much of the traditional terminology and adopted modern linguistic categories throughout. There are many good reasons to do so, but there are also many even better reasons not to, we believe. The learning of Greek is difficult enough as it is—especially if one wants students to really learn Greek and not a diluted form of it. The language itself, with its declensions, variable syntax, non-temporal verbal structure, among many others, poses enough of a challenge. The addition of learning a new vocabulary of modern linguistics—no matter the linguistic school involved—would simply add to the challenge, especially in an environment where many students do not have even secure facility with their first language (or positive reinforcement of this technical vocabulary). Nevertheless, that does not mean that essential categories are not utilized—they are. As a result, students are introduced to verbal aspect, causality, and attitude early on. These categories, while introducing some new terminology, are so fundamentally important to the structure of the language that they must be used, where not just any and especially traditional metalanguage will suffice.

The result, for example, is that the three verbal aspects of Greek are explained in ch. 4 when the aorist active indicative tense-form is introduced. Also in ch. 4, the moods as grammaticalizing attitude and the voices as causality are also briefly explained, all to be reinforced in subsequent chapters. In explaining the meanings of the tense-forms, we do not emphasize their fundamental non-temporality (I think that this textbook is just about as easily usable by someone who does not accept the consensus of the last thirty years of aspectual research). We do emphasize their aspect, that is, that the aspects reflect the writer or speaker's view of the action, and in particular that they have a semantic relationship with each other. We similarly attempt to define the mood forms and their meanings. More could be said at this point, but I think that this makes clear the perspective toward Greek of this grammar.

Regarding the usage-based approach as a pedagogical method, I will first state what the book itself says about its conception, and then go quickly through the contents of the book to show how this works its way out in practice.

There are three deficiencies of other approaches to the study of Greek that led to the development of this textbook and its pedagogical approach. "In teaching Greek, we found that many of the introductory textbooks available were not as helpful for learning the language as we thought they should be and as we thought our students demanded" (ix). We believed that these books "lacked what we considered essential for learning Greek—balanced attention to dealing with the grammar and vocabulary of the language" (ix). The remediation was to address these issues in three major ways. One was to be thorough in presentation of the grammar and use a variety of exercises, including real Greek sentences and passages, to reinforce it. A second was to include more vocabulary, a total of over 950 words in the vocabulary lists, as well as other words in the exercises introduced as needed. A third was to organize all of this according to the principle of a usage-based approach. While we follow a usage-based model, we also are aware that students can get overloaded with information. As a result, we try to intersperse and interweave a variety of elements, such as hard and easy chapters, or noun and verb chapters, etc., so as to not be too overwhelming for several chapters in a row. After all, we can't introduce everything at once.

As a result, the volume takes the following shape.

After treatment of the alphabet, accents (we include them) and punctuation, we introduce in ch. 2 second declension nouns and first and second declension adjectives. Chapter 3 introduces the article and verbless clauses. Accompanying these is suitable vocabulary. Chapter 2 has 21 second declension nouns, including Ἰησοῦς and Χριστός, and twelve adjectives. There are also ten other words introduced. Chapter 3 introduces eighteen more nouns and fourteen more adjectives, as well as eight other words (these other words include some conjunctions, prepositions, and other often relational rather than content words—all introduced as needed before systematic treatment).

Along the way, the student is introduced to the case system, grammatical gender, and number, attribution and predication, and the article. At this point, the student can already do a number of things. The student can not only construct verbless clauses, but can form a number of different types of phrases and clauses, using a meaningful variety of vocabulary.

In ch. 4, the verb is introduced. This is an important chapter, because it introduces the verb, and especially the indicative verb, by means of the first aorist active indicative, along with the first aorist active infinitive. As I mentioned above, here is where verbal aspect is introduced, along with the notion of tense-forms, and voice, mood, and related ideas. In this chapter, twenty-nine verbs are listed in the vocabulary, in both the present and aorist active indicative forms. Even though we introduce the aorist first, we also introduce the lexical form of the verb (the present active indicative, usually), so students are already reinforcing their knowledge of both and seeing both forms together. This chapter also introduces nine other words. Some of the other elements treated in this chapter include, of necessity, augmentation and prefixed prepositions, negative particles, and the use of the infinitive in indirect discourse. By the end of ch. 4, students are able to deal with the single most frequently found Greek verbal tense-form (aorist), especially important in Greek narrative, know the basis for its derived forms, have an introduction to the second most frequently found Greek verb (present tense-form), and can express positive and negative forms of clauses. They also know enough words—something approximating 120 words—to have the beginnings of a reasonable range of functionality. (One grammar I checked does not reach this many words until ch. 11; the entire book introduces around 340 vocabulary items. By contrast, one first-year modern German textbook I consulted introduces students to somewhere around 1200–1500 different vocabulary items in total in its vocabulary lists.) If students are using the workbook, they have also, besides translating twenty-five real Greek sentences, translated John 1:1–10 and 3:16–19. In the usual academic year, this means that by the end of the first month of the school year, students are already well-advanced in their learning, gaining

confidence in what they can do with Greek because they are already doing it, and beginning to see its possibilities for textual understanding.

In ch. 5, we return to nouns, this time the first declension, along with relative pronouns, which are closely related to the article. This chapter introduces thirty-two nouns and two other words. This chapter also gives some occasion for consolidation, while building vocabulary and reinforcing what has been learned as students translate ten sentences and Col 1:13–18. A quick examination of these sentences and this passage indicates that all of the major elements introduced so far, including first and second declension nouns and adjectives, first aorist indicative verbs, the article, and the relative pronoun, are in evidence in abundance.

Chapter 6 introduces the second aorist active indicative and infinitive, and the imperfect active indicative. Twenty new verbs are introduced in both their present and aorist active indicative forms (as are all verbs throughout the book), as well as five other words. The line of logical and grammatical connection is from the first to the second aorist because of comprehensiveness and function, which then, because of formal similarities, moves to the imperfect, whose stem is already introduced in the verb vocabulary lists (by means of the present tense-form), as preparation for the present active indicative. Whereas the perfective aspect is reinforced here with the second aorist, the imperfective aspect—already briefly introduced in ch. 4—is now exemplified in the imperfect by way of contrast.

In ch. 7, third declension nouns and various types of adjective declensions are introduced, along with the verb εἰμι. The vocabulary includes thirty-eight third declension nouns, eight different types of adjectives, and one other word. The common patterns of the third declension and the types of adjectives are reinforced. Whereas the student has seen some of the unaugmented forms of the verb εἰμι in the vocabulary lists and exercises, now the unaugmented and augmented forms are systematically presented, along with some of its distinctives and uses.

In ch. 8, the present and future active indicative and infinitive and contract verbs in εω are introduced. Six present and aorist verbs are introduced, six contract verbs in εω, and eleven future active indicative verbs, as well as four other words. (In this chapter the number of vocabulary items now exceeds that introduced in the other grammar I mentioned above.) This may seem like an odd combination of forms to introduce, but we have found that students need to be introduced to the present form reasonably early (clearly before the middle of the year as their first verb form!), along with the future form and contract verbs with which it has close paradigmatic similarities, rather than being delayed as they often are. Both future forms and contract verbs are relatively frequent (and important!) and their delay—when the major formal and functional elements have already been introduced—handicaps students in their growing language ability. The primary active endings for both the present and future are introduced, and these are applied to these two verbal forms, as well as the contract verbs. The function of the future form is also discussed.

Chapter 9 presents pronouns, including intensive, indefinite, and interrogative, as well as questions. The vocabulary includes four verbs, five pronouns, and four other words. This chapter effectively reinforces the nominal system endings for the pronouns, in preparation for participles, besides discussing their various uses.

In ch. 10, we introduce participles. These include the first and second aorist, present, and future active participles, along with the genitive absolute. The third declension and the pronoun have paved the morphological way for the participle, as has discussion of the verb. We begin with the participle of εἰμι and then extend to the other tense-forms mentioned, including εω contract verbs. This chapter also introduces eight verbs and two other words.

Chapter 11 introduces the middle voice for the first and second aorist and future middle indicative and infinitive. The form and function of the middle voice are discussed. Vocabulary includes nine nouns of all declensions, twelve active voice verb forms, and ten middle voice verbs, that is, verbs without active

voice forms, four adjectives, and five other words. This treatment does not strictly follow usage, except that it does give an opportunity to discuss issues surrounding the middle voice and deponency (a notion we dispute).

Chapter 12 discusses prepositions with one case and demonstratives. It may seem strange to discuss prepositions here for the first time. However, six of the eight have already been introduced individually earlier, some as early as ch. 2. Here prepositions are discussed together as a unit and their functions and use are systematically treated. The vocabulary introduces nine nouns, nine verbs, five adjectives, three pronouns, and five other words, besides the two completely new prepositions.

In ch. 13, the passive voice, including the present middle/passive indicative and infinitive and imperfect middle/passive indicative, are introduced, along with agency. Vocabulary includes nine nouns, seven active voice verbs, and five middle voice verbs, one adjective, and fifteen other words (including some verbs that don't fit above). Chapter 14 continues with verbal material, introducing the subjunctive for the aorist and present active and middle(passive), and with it hortatory, deliberative, and purpose clauses. This is the first extensive discussion of non-indicative mood forms. The subjunctive form of εἰμι is used as a model for the active voice subjunctive. The vocabulary includes fourteen nouns, eleven verbs, six adjectives, and eight other words. The meaning of the subjunctive is explained and the three types of clauses are exemplified.

Chapter 15 treats prepositions with two or three cases, and personal and possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives. Four of the ten prepositions have been introduced previously, but now all are presented in relation to their cases and their use reinforced. The pronouns all share common features of nominal paradigms, but are less frequent than some others, and so are introduced here. The vocabulary includes ten nouns, seven verbs, two adjectives, eight pronouns, and four other words.

At this point, we have covered half of the chapters of the book. I note that many of the most frequent grammatical elements have been covered, along with about 560 lexical items. Besides a number of different types of other exercises, students

have also translated 172 sentences from the Greek New Testament, and, besides the passages mentioned above, John 1:11–28; 2:7–11; 12:44–49; Matthew 4:18–25; 26:–5; Mark 7:24–29; and 1 John 1:5–10, all reinforcing in various ways what has been learned in the respective chapters.

I will merely summarize quickly the contents of the rest of the book. Chapter 16 includes contract verbs in αω and οω, conjunctions and adverbs, with eight nouns, twenty-three verbs, four adjectives, and six other words. This completes the contract verbs, just over halfway through the book—a worthwhile accomplishment in light of their usage. Most of the conjunctions have already been individually introduced but are reinforced here and explained more fully.

Chapter 17 treats aorist and future middle participles and present middle/passive participles. The emphasis here is on morphology, as the concepts have already been introduced. Vocabulary includes nine nouns, eleven verbs, three adjectives, and four other words. In ch. 18, we treat μι-verbs (especially ἵστημι and δίδωμι). Again, the major issue here is morphology, not the semantics of these words. We also introduce eleven new nouns, twenty-one verbs including μι-verbs, four adjectives, and three other words.

Chapter 19 includes adjectives and adverbs, especially comparatives and superlatives and some unusual adjective declension patterns that are less frequently found. Vocabulary includes nine nouns, eighteen verbs, twelve adjectives, and three other words. This material covers some variations on patterns already learned, and discusses function.

In ch. 20, we introduce the aorist and future passive indicative and infinitive. The passive voice has already been introduced so this offers morphological knowledge. Besides twenty nouns, seven verbs, four adjectives, one pronoun, and two other words, there are two extensive lists, one of aorist passive and another of future passive verb forms found in the Greek New Testament. Chapter 21 treats the remaining μι-verbs (τίθημι and ἵημι) and aspectually vague verbs. There are fifteen new nouns, twenty-two verbs, two adjectives and three other words introduced. This chapter also reinforces concepts learned earlier, while learning

new forms. In ch. 22, the aorist passive subjunctive and participle, future passive participle, and proper nouns are introduced. As one might expect, the vocabulary includes eighteen nouns (proper nouns), four verbs, two adjectives, and two other words. The chapter also includes lists of aorist passive subjunctives and participles in the Greek New Testament.

Chapter 23 covers liquid verbs in the future and aorist, and reflexive and reciprocal pronouns. The vocabulary consists of fifteen nouns, seventeen verbs, four pronouns, and six other words.

In ch. 24, we introduce the imperative mood in the present and aorist forms in all voices, and along with it prohibitions. This is the second non-indicative mood introduced, after the indicative and subjunctive. The formal and functional characteristics are explained, including such forms as contract and μι-verb forms. The vocabulary consists of twelve nouns, fourteen verbs, three adjectives, and one other word.

Chapter 25 introduces the third and final tense-form, the perfect, in the active indicative and infinitive, as well as the pluperfect active indicative. This chapter reinforces and describes more fully the third Greek aspect, the stative.[8] The vocabulary includes thirteen nouns, sixteen verbs, two adjectives, and four other words. The chapter also includes lists of perfect and pluperfect active forms in the New Testament. Chapter 26 follows on with the perfect middle/passive indicative and infinitive, and the pluperfect middle/passive indicative. The vocabulary consists of nine nouns, fifteen verbs, six adjectives, and three other words. Lists of perfect and pluperfect middle/passive indicative forms are included. This builds on morphology, as the semantics have already been introduced. Chapter 27 completes the information on the perfect by treating the perfect participle, imperative, and subjunctive. There is minimal evidence for some of these forms, so they are treated late and for completeness. The vocabulary includes nine nouns, twelve verbs, two adjectives, and one other word.

8.   See Porter, *Linguistic Analysis*, ch. 12.

In ch. 28, periphrastic and catenative constructions are discussed. Since these consist of combinations of previously discussed elements, they reinforce what has already been learned while exemplifying how these synthetic forms are constructed and function. The vocabulary includes eleven nouns, eight verbs, three adjectives, and two other words.

Chapter 29 goes beyond basic grammar and syntax, and introduces conditional statements and numerals. The five classes of conditional are exemplified, using syntactical constructions consisting of previously learned elements. The vocabulary consists of sixteen nouns, nine verbs, ten adjectives, and four other words. A list of cardinal, ordinal, and adverbial numerals is also included.

The final chapter, ch. 30, treats the optative mood in all of the tense-forms and voices, and offers a brief syntax of clauses. The small number of different optative forms means that this form is introduced last. The syntax of clauses treats the major types of dependent clauses. The vocabulary consists of thirteen nouns, thirteen verbs, three adjectives, and two other words.

At this point, the student has been introduced to all of the major grammatical categories, plus extra material on conditional clauses, dependent clauses, and numerals. The vocabulary now totals over 950 individual items, and, using the workbook, the student has translated 213 more individual sentences from the New Testament and, besides the passages already listed, 1 John 1:1–5; 5:1–5; Mark 3:20–24; 3:26–29; 9:33–37; Acts 1:1–5; Matthew 2:1–6; 6:9–13; 13:10–14; John 8:12–15; and Phil 1:3–26.

In summary, the usage-based approach means essentially three things: (1) organization is roughly and as feasible according to usage in the New Testament, so that the Greek elements seen most tend to be introduced first and provide the basis for subsequent introductions of related or derived forms; (2) reinforcement takes place over the whole of the book, so that elements introduced earliest because of frequency of use are constantly and repeatedly encountered throughout the rest of the book; and (3) the major elements of the grammar, although with some recognizable exceptions, are introduced early so that later

chapters in their reinforcement do so by treating forms that are less frequent or that in some ways build upon the previously studied pattern.

3. *Other Approaches*

By way of closing, I should probably say something about how this approach differs from some others represented in other elementary Greek grammars.

As can be seen in my presentation and description of our volume, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*, our approach has much in common with the morphological approach. Throughout our book, we emphasize the importance of morphology. We place a high emphasis upon parsing that is reinforced when new paradigms are presented so that students learn to identify the various forms of the language. We also provide thorough explanations of the morphology, especially where there are patterns that might not at first sight be obvious. We also include formulas of how forms are created to guide students in their learning of new forms. They learn to "assemble" the forms in the process of learning the paradigms. There are abundant paradigms with a range of examples included for the sake of completeness.

There are some major differences, however, from the morphological approach as I understand it. The morphological approach, at least until recently, has been less concerned with introducing and reinforcing elements of the language according to how frequently the student will confront them in actual usage, than with keeping the morphological categories distinct, so that nouns and related items are introduced first and as a whole before turning to verbs and related items. There is of course a certain clear logic to this. I have found, however, from my own experience and from the experience of others, that doing so tends to retard the student's development as a reader of Greek, because there are so many elements that are so widely used in Greek that they deserve early and repeated introduction—such as verbs, and especially certain types of verbs. I note that recently the morphological approach seems to have recognized this as well.

There is also quite a bit that our usage-based approach has in common with the immersion method. We too believe that it is very important for the various elements of the language to be used and taught as they appear and are used in Greek, and then reinforced and repeated so that the student thoroughly learns them. In order to do so, one must begin with the basic elements of the language, such as nouns, verbs, and other helpful words, and learn how these fit together and are used. Vocabulary is very important, as it provides the content for the various grammatical building blocks. A common complaint of students learning Greek is that, when they move to Greek exegesis or reading, their first-year grammars have not prepared them for the vocabulary that they will confront. We too believe that exposing students to a wide range of words and how they fit together is important.

Despite these similarities, there are some major differences from the immersion method. There is no doubt that the immersion method in some ways resembles the way that humans learn language. However, there are some major restrictions to ancient Greek so that the parallel and analogy breaks down. There are no native speakers of ancient Greek with whom students can test their language facility, there is not the opportunity to fully immerse the student in such an environment, such an environment is even less duplicable in the average college or seminary environment, there is no real test of whether the linguistic performance reflects competence unless one is merely copying what has already been written, and the immersion students, unlike children that they are imitating, already know another language, which affects their second language learning.[9] The immersion method reminds me of an exercise that used to take place in Britain, when it was considered a fashionable academic exercise to translate contemporary poems or the editorial in the *Times* back into what was purported to be Attic Greek. Yes, it looked and even sounded

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9.   For further observations on this approach, and its place within a wider linguistic framework, see Putnam, "Innateness Hypothesis," 114.

(if one can say such a thing) like ancient Greek, but everyone knew that it was not. It was clever, but not in the end authentic.

4. *Conclusion*

There will continue to be grammars of first year Greek written, and no doubt those that improve upon the ones that we currently have. I have found this exercise helpful in being able to go back and, retrospectively, analyze and conceptualize what went into the creation of our grammar, *Fundamentals*. In some ways, I was intrigued to find some of the elements that I did. In others, I was pleased to find that the underlying rationale seemed to be present at a number of different turns. Besides reflecting what we believe is an accurate perspective on the language itself, we believe that the usage-based approach has a strong foundation for providing the kind of language learning and knowledge that students of Greek in seminaries and colleges need and deserve so as to develop into competent interpreters of the Greek New Testament.

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