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Introduction to Greek, Second Edition. By CYNTHIA W. SHELMEKDINE. Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2008. Pp. xiv + 317. Paper, \$36.95. ISBN 978-1-585-10184-9.

The second edition of Shelmerdine's *Introduction to Greek* is in many ways a solid textbook. It has a pleasing layout, a detailed and helpful table of contents and a straightforward approach. But a few issues make me unable to recommend the book fully, and I hope that the concerns expressed below can be taken into account when the next revision is completed.

First, in almost every chapter of this book, there is vocabulary or a grammatical point used in the exercise sentences which has not yet been presented; sometimes this comes from the next chapter, sometimes from several chapters ahead. Including a form or word taught in one chapter in the paragraph of Greek for reading included at the end of the preceding one is an acceptable way of looking forward to the material to come. The constant presence of unfamiliar ideas in the exercises, on the other hand, is more easily understood as a lapse of editing which simply confuses students, who begin to doubt the textbook as much as their own memory as they struggle with the exercises. The revision and reordering of this text thus seems to have been somewhat carelessly carried out.

Second, when forms are mentioned in the body of the text as not discussed elsewhere, it would have been helpful could those forms (e.g. the future perfect, mentioned as excluded in Chapter 2) at least have been included in the appendix. Because they are referenced at all, nervous and overeager students will likely ask for them to be explained; and if the forms were in the appendix, a teacher could refer students there, if they came up in supplementary readings. In addition, students would also be able to use the text as a grammar in the transitional phase from textbook to extended primary readings.

Some additions and changes in the second edition will be particularly beneficial for teachers and students. The chart on p. 8 is a very clean introduction of the concept of an inflected verb form. The new exercises, like the fill-in-the-blank exercises which focus on endings, are also excellent; it would be nice to see more of them throughout. Giving the uncontracted form beside a chart also helps students comprehend the linguistic explanation of the finished forms. There are nonetheless problems here as well. Some explanations of noun forms are likely to overwhelm students. If in Chapter 3, for example, the 1st-declension nouns are to be grouped as types A to D, it would be helpful to group the vocabulary list within the chapter in the

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same order, so that students do not have to wade through a mixed list at a time when their understanding is at its shakiest. An enormous amount of time is also spent explaining the 3rd-declension nouns. If the groups into which these nouns are divided could be approached as lists of vocabulary with slightly different spellings for each (almost always covered by looking at the dative plural, an oversimplified explanation many teachers use), perhaps students would not freeze up at the concept of stem-changes. But breaking the 3rd-declension nouns up over **eight** chapters, with new charts at every introduction, is overwhelming.

Another revision puzzles me: Why break up the vocabulary into groups? If some words are non-essential, it would be better to omit them altogether and simply say that some words must be looked up in the end-material when the exercises are done; or perhaps such words should not be included in the exercises at all. To be honest, it is hard enough for a teacher to remember which words are part of the students' vocabulary lists at any point, when making up worksheets or tests, without also requiring them to remember which words the students are not expected to know. The students too are more likely to be confused by the presence of words which they have encountered but which they do not have to know.

There are also some problems with the order in which concepts are introduced. Leaving a chunk of *-mi* verbs until the final chapter, for example, amounts to inviting these forms to be dismissed and forgotten, while the perfect tense is introduced much too late (in Chapter 31 of 34); among other considerations, students would better understand the aorist if they had the contrast of the perfect close at hand. Enormous emphasis is placed on nouns in the first third of the book, as if an attempt was being made to get them out of the way. More work on the verb system, for example by introducing the perfect tense, would make a manageable addition to the stream of nouns, as students usually find the verb system easy to grasp in any case. As it is, so many verb forms are piled on at the end that students are bound to be confused by forms which should be manageable, a problem compounded by the heavy conceptual elements in the same chapters.

Part of the idea in this revision seems to have been to leave some easier concepts and forms (e.g. reflexive pronouns in Chapter 24, and indefinite pronouns in Chapter 30) until close to the end, in order to offer a rest in the section of the book that covers the more difficult constructions dependent on the subjunctive and optative moods. As noted above, however, shifting a few more challenging concepts

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forward would have been useful to the classroom teacher. Likewise, breaking up the acquisition of the principal parts means that the same verbs are introduced several times. It might seem that doling out the principal parts piecemeal would make learning them easier. But my students, at any rate, consistently find this more confusing than seeing the full set of forms early and knowing from the start what exists for each verb. Because the principal parts are given in spurts, I now hear, "Wait—don't I already know this verb?"

A final issue with the organization of this book, and one that would be easy to address, is the inclusion of traditional construction charts only in the appendix, on the ground that they are helpful for English-to-Greek rather than for reading. But this is a grammar-based text, and hiding these charts in the appendix does not make it any less so. Repeating them within the relevant chapters would not take up much more room, and would help students better understand the material at hand. Moreover, there are as many exercises requiring students to work from English to Greek as from Greek to English. As English-to-Greek is the more difficult, adequate attention should be given to the techniques involved.

Several of my complaints thus have to do with the revision and expansion of this textbook. Many concepts are over-explained within the chapter in a quest to simplify the ideas involved. It is as if the book was designed for independent study or to train the teacher along with the student, whereas if the more complex explanations were moved to a teacher's manual, the chapters would not be as overwhelming for the student. To be clear: the explanations offered are thorough and potentially useful, but they are excessive for a student's initial encounter with the material in a classroom setting. It would be better to give the teacher a chance to give the linguistic background of a concept when appropriate, rather than piling all this on at the initial encounter of the form or construction.

Shelmerdine's *Introduction to Greek* is thus a useable textbook, but seems to have hit some snags in the second edition. What the text needs, however, is not a rush to a roughly corrected third edition, but a careful reconsideration and thorough editing before the next printing. The general concept and plentiful exercises here are what I seek in a beginning textbook. But the finished product does not live up to its promise. [[1]]

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[[1]] I also note my personal distaste for the growing convention of having a tilde stand for the circumflex throughout, although I recognize that this may be a decision by the press that rests outside the author's individual control.