



### 3. Reviving the Teaching of Dead Languages: The Case of Greek in Modern Christian Education

Reviviendo la enseñanza de las lenguas muertas: el caso del griego en la educación cristiana moderna

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#### **Abstract**

This is a paper about the use and usefulness of the Greek language in the history of the European and American education down to the 21st century. The most important questions posed in this research include: is the teaching of Greek a barren field from a pragmatic and spiritual point of view, and what are the principles of teaching and learning Greek that enhance the possibility of acquiring Greek in such a way to facilitate the holistic development of the students and prepare them for an effective service to the world? The purpose of the study is to raise awareness among the Christian teachers of Greek about how valuable Greek language is for understanding the New Testament thought and culture, and some flaws in the process of teaching which can be remedied.

The main claim of the study is that learning Greek is not more problematic to the development of practical abilities and the spiritual formation of the learners than many other fields of education. For instance, if the Greek classics seem to emanate a harmful influence over the mind, because of authors who wrote morally questionable literature, the same is true about literature in any language or about thinkers who wrote in modern languages texts of a suspicious moral quality. If dead languages do not seem to prepare well for real life beyond college, so it is true about other educational fields which are less practical than others. If learning Greek favors the development of a boastful self-esteem and create an elitist profile to be desired, it is not less true about other disciplines. As Paul said, “knowledge [in general] puffs up” (1 Cor 8,1).

The study will analyze how the Greek language is to be taught and propose ways to improve its acquisition, so that its usefulness for personal spirituality and Christian preaching and teaching become obvious.

#### **Key Word**

Greek — Dead language — Christian education — Classical languages — Pronunciation — Immersion.

## Resumen

Esta es una investigación sobre el uso y la utilidad del idioma griego en la historia de la educación europea y norteamericana en el siglo XXI. Las preguntas más importantes que plantea esta investigación incluyen las siguientes: ¿es la enseñanza de griego un campo estéril desde un punto de vista pragmático y espiritual? y ¿cuáles son los principios de enseñanza y aprendizaje de griego que realzan la posibilidad de aprenderlo de manera tal que facilite el desarrollo holístico de los alumnos y los prepare para un servicio efectivo al mundo? El propósito de este estudio es crear conciencia entre los profesores cristianos de griego sobre lo valioso que es el idioma griego para comprender el pensamiento y la cultura del Nuevo Testamento, y sobre algunas fallas en el proceso de enseñanza que pueden ser remediadas.

La declaración principal de la investigación es que aprender griego no es más problemático para el desarrollo de las habilidades prácticas y la formación espiritual de los estudiantes que muchos otros campos de la educación. Por ejemplo, si los clásicos del griego parecen emanar una influencia perjudicial sobre la mente, a causa de autores que escribieron literatura moralmente cuestionable, lo mismo puede decirse sobre la literatura en cualquier idioma o sobre pensadores que escribieron textos de calidad moral sospechosa en lenguas modernas. Si las lenguas muertas no parecen brindar una preparación buena para la vida real más allá de la universidad, lo mismo es cierto sobre otros campos educativos que son menos prácticos que otros. Si aprender griego favorece el desarrollo de una estima propia presumida y crea el deseo de un perfil elitista, lo mismo puede decirse de otras disciplinas. Como dijo Pablo: “El conocimiento [en general] envanece” (1 Cor. 8,1).

Esta investigación analizará cómo se debe enseñar el idioma griego y propondrá maneras de mejorar su adquisición con el fin de que su utilidad para la espiritualidad personal y para la predicación y la enseñanza cristiana sea evidente.

## Palabras clave

Griego — Lengua muerta — Educación cristiana — Lenguas clásicas — Pronunciación — Inmersión

## Introduction

This is a paper about the use and usefulness of the Greek language in the history of the European and American education down to the 21st century. The most important questions posed in this research include: is the teaching of Greek a barren field from a pragmatic and spiritual point of view, and what are the principles of teaching and learning Greek that enhance the possibility of acquiring Greek in such a way to facilitate the

holistic development of the students and prepare them for an effective service to the world? The purpose of the study is to raise awareness among the Christian teachers of Greek about how valuable Greek language is for understanding the New Testament thought and culture, and some flaws in the process of teaching which can be remedied. To answer the questions and accomplish the purpose mentioned the study will be undertaken in the following order. First, it will present the history of teaching Greek on the European continent and in the United States of America in its main stages. Second, it will present and analyze the objections imputed to classical education. Third, the paper will discuss the standards for classical language learning. Fourth, it ends by suggesting a number of pedagogical implications and proposals.

### **History of greek in european and american education: From Renaissance to Modern Times**

Boccaccio (1313-1375), considered the father of Italian prose, was the first Western scholar who acquired Greek. He and Petrarch (1304-1374), the morning star of the Renaissance, initiated a systematic quest for the knowledge of the past. This gave rise to a whole movement of chasing and unearthing of ancient documents which were supposed to have been hidden or lost throughout the monasteries and castles of Europe. This was the dawn of the Renaissance. The first teacher of Greek in the West was Manuel Chrysoloras (c. 1350-1415), the most renowned Byzantine scholar of the time, who accepted the invitation of the University of Florence to have the Greek letters chair between 1396 and 1400. Through his visit in Italy the enthusiasm for the Greek language flourished.<sup>1</sup> Other professors were either Europeans, who left for some years to Constantinople and returned, or Greek scholars who left Byzantium before and because of the Turkish invasion.

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<sup>1</sup> Ellwood P. Cubberley, *The History of Education: Educational Practice and Progress Considered as a Phase of the Development and Spread of Western Civilization* (Houghton: Mifflin, 1920), 244-248.

In the first half of the 15th century, the revival of Greek spread over France and Spain, while from the second half of the same century onward, the interest for Greek burst out in England, Germany, and Austria. It must be said also that through Oxford and Cambridge, the new learning, including the passion for Greek, was handed over to Harvard<sup>2</sup> in America (in 1636), after its foundation and, of course, after the great discovery of Columbus. As it could be expected, because of the Roman legacy, Latin superseded Greek in importance in Italy, and soon, the active role in disseminating Greek was taken over by the northern countries. But these other countries inherited from Italy the humanistic course of study, which was a combination of Latin and Greek studies, alongside manners, moral and physical education. Latin expertise (including speaking) and high familiarity with Greek became the mark of an educated person.<sup>3</sup>

The center of Greek education was moved for two centuries (16th and 17th) to France, Greek being considered more important to education than Latin. In Germany, the most notable fact of the time was the classical school founded by Johann Sturm (1507-1589) at Strasbourg. It was a school with 10 years of instruction. Everything was taught in Latin, including Greek, which began in the 5th grade and had, unlike in Italy, the New Testament as an additional textbook, and virtually no preoccupations for the Italian manners and sports. The NT gained its place in the humanistic education through Erasmus' Greek-Latin New Testament (1516).<sup>4</sup>

The Greek and Roman education in antiquity aimed at preparing the student to become a good and useful citizen in the community and the State. In medieval times, the church took control of education and for

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<sup>2</sup> For more details see Roger L. Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 3. Proficiency in Latin was assumed as an admission requirement, whereas knowledge of Greek should only have been basic, only to be fathomed during college years.

<sup>3</sup> Cubberley, *History of Education*, 252-254, 264-268. There were the so-called Latin schools, wherein Latin was not only the language of instruction, but also the language of the playground, to the extent that the mother tongue was permitted only by special request.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 272-275.

about a millennium,<sup>5</sup> the main focus of education was to prepare the student for the world to come, particularly, to equip him or her with the techniques of penance, prayer, and meditation, whereby one could appease the great Judge on the dreadful Day of Judgment.<sup>6</sup> The humanistic education was a protest to this medieval educational pattern. One of the consequences was that Grammar, which in the medieval curriculum was dethroned by Dialectic / Logic, came back to prominence. Latin became the gateway of success in education, diplomacy, law, traveling, and other domains, including architecture, army, and music.<sup>7</sup> The prevalence of Latin and Greek was not always seen with good eyes. François Rabelais (1495-1553) is known for his satire entitled *La Vie très horrificque du grand Gargantua* (1535),<sup>8</sup> in which the main character, Gargantua, deplores the teaching of his time and the curriculum of his son, Pantagruel, which was full of useless information, exercising memorization, and other excesses, to the expense of losing the opportunity to develop the ability of thinking.

The teaching of the classical languages continued in the protestant secondary schools and colleges, as well as in the Jesuit-Catholic education. Soon teaching Latin and Greek became very narrow, formal, full of drills, and almost exclusively an imitation of ancient languages. When the classical studies ended being the means to teach the liberal arts and became ends in themselves, a natural reaction to it took place. The first reaction came through the implementation of Realism in education. Realism demanded education to emphasize truth and realities of life, as

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<sup>5</sup> “In 401 A.D. the Council of Carthage forbade the clergy to read any heathen author, and Greek learning now rapidly died out in the West”. Ibid., 382.

<sup>6</sup> During the 12th-15th century period, knowledge of Greek and Hebrew among the Franciscan friars was minimal. They were versed in Latin, but the two aforementioned languages were met only in the context of biblical studies and exegesis (pursued in Latin). There were exceptions, individuals with a strong interest in Greek or Hebrew. There were also friars who acquired Greek for diplomatic, apologetic, and debate with the Greek Orthodox Church purposes. Bert Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education* (c. 1210-1517) (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 150-152.

<sup>7</sup> Cubberley, *History of Education*, 278-282.

<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://coillet.eu/Site/Documents/Gargantua.pdf> (Accessed on 04.03.2015). The satire is included as the second novel in the well-known collection of five novels, known to the English public as Gargantua and Pantagruel.

opposed to the beauties of the ancient languages and civilizations.<sup>9</sup> This meant that Latin and Greek were dragged back to their original role of means to education, keys to access the knowledge of the past, and not ends in themselves.

In the 17th century there have been a series of innovations in the education methods. One of these innovations was the transformation of the vernaculars into languages of instruction. The consequence of this was that Latin and Greek were taught in the native languages of the pupils, taught for less time (in the Latin school, between the age of 12 and 18), and was to be pursued especially by those who had ability, who wanted to pass on to university level, and aspired to work either for the Church or for the State, as the Moravian educator Johann Amos Comenius believed.<sup>10</sup> Augustus Hermann Francke (1663-1727), one of the founders of Pietism in Germany, changed the purpose of Greek and Hebrew instruction to be the ability to read the two testaments of the Christian Bible.<sup>11</sup>

This was by no means the situation in the whole of Europe. In fact, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Latin and Greek were compulsory in gymnasium and university, but the impetus of realism to make these languages only tools of access to knowledge, was to a greater extent lost, both in Europe as a whole and, ironically, in Greece in particular. Up until the mid-19th century, learning grammar in Greece meant learning the grammar of classical Greek. The functional and communicative grammar of the spoken language was largely discredited. And the Greek students struggled in acquiring classical Greek just as much as their non-

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<sup>9</sup> Cubberley, *History of Education*, 397-398.

<sup>10</sup> Cubberley, *History of Education*, 406-408, 411-412. Comenius had a tremendous contribution on the method of teaching Latin. Latin was taught after the methods of Donatus, Lily, or Melancthon. Even though the last two were improvements when compared to Donatus or other medieval method, they were still difficult for pupils. So Comenius published a series of five volumes of teaching Latin, textbooks containing information from simple to complex, with illustrations and vernacular translation. The impact of these textbooks was great, to the effect that they were translated in many European languages.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

Greek counterparts.<sup>12</sup> In the context of the 1848 revolutions in Europe, learning the classical languages returned to the arid grammatical drills of old, and a strong emphasis was put on the modern languages.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the long dominance of Latin and Greek had a negative impact on the teaching and learning of modern languages, with respect to access and method.<sup>14</sup> As ancient languages were privileges of the elite, so were the modern languages at first. And these foreign languages were to be taught in the same manner as the classical.

In the United States, the education was imported from England. The Massachusetts Law of 1827 is worth being mentioned, as it stated that every town having more than 500 families had to organize a high school and where the population went over 4000 people, Latin and Greek had to be part of the curriculum.<sup>15</sup> As a consequence, every college contained in the curriculum the “Oriental languages” (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew). However, reactions against the classical education imported from Europe did not delay. Already before the Massachusetts Law, in the 1870s Benjamin Rush initiated the foundation of two Presbyterian colleges, with such an educational plan that Latin and Greek were no more part of the course plan. Though Rush had some expertise in Latin and the classics were part of his initial curriculum, he did not consider ancient languages favorable for creating the new citizen of the Republican America. Likewise, other exponents of this thinking, like Noah Webster and Samuel Miller, raised

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<sup>12</sup> Miltos Pechlivanos, “The teaching of (ancient) Greek grammar and the Modern Greek Enlightenment”, in *A History of Ancient Greek: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, ed. by A. -F. Christidis (2007; repr., Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1250-1252. Pechlivanos quotes a pioneer of the change from teaching the classical grammar to teaching the common language grammar in Greece talking about his struggles with the former in his youth: “I shudder whenever I recall those titanic efforts and those endless hours that I wasted at various gymnasia in my poor youth learning the habit of [Ancient] Greek” (p. 1252).

<sup>13</sup> Cubberley, *History of Education*, 582.

<sup>14</sup> Helene Decke-Cornill, “We Would Have to Invent the Language we are Supposed to Teach: The Issue of English as Lingua Franca in Language Education in Germany”, in *Context and Culture in Language Teaching and Learning*, ed. by Mike Byram and Peter Grundy (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003), 61. (bibliography 59-71). See also Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education*, 193.

<sup>15</sup> Cubberley, *History of Education*, 700.

up their voices. Rush, Webster, and Miller considered that Latin and Greek were not desirable for the following three reasons: knowledge of ancient languages corrupted perfection of the English language, negative exposure to the debauchery of the Greek gods and men, and the limitation of promising students from among common people, who had no previous access to Latin education before college, and hence would not be allowed to advance to higher education.<sup>16</sup>

One of the institutions with the most ardent opposition to the classical education was Oberlin College, founded in Ohio in 1833. Robert Samuel Fletcher<sup>17</sup> relates how the board of the school gradually replaced the “heathen classics” with other more acceptable alternatives. For example, Plautus, Seneca, Livy, and Horace were changed with Hugo Grotius (*De Veritate Religionis Christianae*, an apologetic textbook) and George Buchannan (*Psalms* in Latin). Primarily, it was the Hebrew and Greek scriptures to become the main ancient languages textbooks. During the years 1840-1860, though Oberlin College changed its curriculum in a very non-conformist fashion, under extreme pressure from the scholastic world drew back and returned to much of what it was before.

According to Geiger,<sup>18</sup> it was not until 1884 that Harvard College made Latin and Greek to not be compulsory any longer.

In the last decades of the century, the popular image of a college student as an effete, studious character, memorizing Greek and Latin to prepare for teaching or the ministry, was displaced by one explicitly joining manliness, athletic prowess, Christian character, and worldly success.<sup>19</sup>

According to Floyd Greenleaf,<sup>20</sup> a significant step toward this end was taken by the American congress when the Morrill Act, a document which

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<sup>16</sup> Geiger, *History of American Higher Education*, 102-103, 106-107.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Samuel Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College: From Its Foundation Through the Civil War* (Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College, 1943), 1:366-367, 370-372.

<sup>18</sup> Geiger, *History of American Higher Education*, 321. See also at 326.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>20</sup> Floyd Greenleaf, *In Passion for the World: A History of Seventh-Day Adventist Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 23-24.

granted support to the states in providing public lands for developing agriculture, mechanical training, and science projects, passed successfully in 1862. This marked the beginning of a revolution in the American education in the sense that professional and practical education came to stay on the same level of prestige as the education in the classics. Occasionally, there were colleges, which like Oberlin, dispensed of the education in the classics early. So is the case of the Battle Creek College, which from 1897 onward replaced the classics with biblical languages and biblical studies, under the leadership of E. A. Sutherland.<sup>21</sup>

### Christian objections to teaching and learning classical languages

It is in the context of the 19th that we should read the reflections of Ellen G. White over learning and teaching Greek and Latin in Christian Adventist colleges. These Christian objections came from the affinities with Hebrew education, as opposed to Greek. According to Gordon and Lawton,<sup>22</sup> between the Greco-Roman education and the Jewish education there are several important distinctions. First, the Jews had an authoritative text (the Old Testament to which the Christians added the New Testament). Second, the morality was religious and religion was interwoven with all aspects of life. Third, the Jews valued manual work. Fourth, the Jews had a pronounced historical consciousness, according to which God is involved in history and has a plan for His people.

#### Content objections

The influence of reading about the vices and the licentious behavior of the pagan characters was considered a hindrance to the Christian

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 27, 42, 45, 55. Interestingly, Battle Creek College had in its leading board Goodloe Harper Bell (1832-1899), formerly working at Oberlin, but during his time the classics were still studied, since he came to Battle Creek after Oberlin re-included the classics in the curriculum.

<sup>22</sup> Denis Lawton and Peter Gordon, *A History of Western Educational Ideas*, Woburn Education Series (London: Woburn, 2002), 32.

character development.<sup>23</sup> There might be callings requiring the knowledge of Latin and Greek, but this knowledge should be appropriated without the corrupting literature of the classics.<sup>24</sup> It seems that the replacements of the usual ancient authors that Oberlin College implemented for a while had not remained without effect, but had an impact far off.

### Practical objections

The learning of Latin and Greek has to be secondary to developing practical abilities.<sup>25</sup> This is especially related to the great amount of time necessary to be spent in covering the Latin and Greek curriculum. Time could be more judiciously used in preparing to be workers for God and Christ-like and responsible parents. Related to practical objections, there are the duties to society which seem sometimes jeopardized by the learning of the classical languages. Jaroslav Pelikan<sup>26</sup> relates an interesting apocryphal story, which in spite of its unsure character is reflective of a reality. In the context of World War I, a group of patriotic English wo-

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<sup>23</sup> “In the colleges and universities thousands of youth devote a large part of the best years of life to the study of Greek and Latin. And while they are engaged in these studies, mind and character are molded by the evil sentiments of pagan literature, the reading of which is generally regarded as an essential part of the study of these languages. Those who are conversant with the classics declare that “the Greek tragedies are full of incest, murder, and human sacrifices to lustful and revengeful gods”. Far better would it be for the world were the education gained from such sources to be dispensed with. “Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” Proverbs 6,28. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one”. Job 14,4. Can we then expect the youth to develop Christian character while their education is molded by the teaching of those who set at defiance the principles of the law of God?” Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing* (1905; repr.; Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 443.

<sup>24</sup> “There are callings in which a knowledge of Greek and Latin is needed. Some must study these languages. But the knowledge of them essential for practical uses might be gained without a study of literature that is corrupt and corrupting”. Ibid. 444.

<sup>25</sup> “And a knowledge of Greek and Latin is not needed by many. The study of dead languages should be made secondary to a study of those subjects that teach the right use of all the powers of body and mind. It is folly for students to devote their time to the acquirement of dead languages or of book knowledge in any line, to the neglect of a training for life’s practical duties”. Ibid. By practical duties, White refers in the near context to the ability of the students to be fathers and take care of their families.

<sup>26</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of University – A Reexamination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 137. Pelikan speaks about three types of societal duties: local, national, and international.

men were heading to and fro to recruit soldiers. Arriving at Oxford, they found a young man reading Thucydides in Greek. One of the ladies asked him: “And what are you doing to save Western civilization, young man?”. He replied lofty: “Madam, I am Western civilization!”

### Not for everybody

The study of Latin and Greek should not involve everybody,<sup>27</sup> for their acquisition is not foundational to education. Schools should rather put an emphasis on the native language abilities (reading, writing and speaking) and accounting, which assures success in business and pastoral ministry.<sup>28</sup>

### The danger of pride

The aforementioned apocryphal story highlighted already the temptation of pride on the part of those instructed in the classics. What White states about those specialized in Latin and Greek is true of any other field of knowledge, but it was especially picturing the then state of affairs: “Generally those educated in this way have much self-esteem. They think they have reached the height of higher education, and carry themselves proudly, as though they were no longer learners.”<sup>29</sup> All these objections imputed to the classical education are requisite to the formation and implementation of a balanced curriculum and relevant teaching methods.

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<sup>27</sup> “There are times when Greek and Latin scholars are needed. Some must study these languages. This is well. But not all, and not many should study them.” Ellen White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), 468.

<sup>28</sup> Ellen White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (1913; repr.; Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 218.

<sup>29</sup> White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 467.

## Standards for classical language learning

The standards for classical language learning is a document<sup>30</sup> framed as a result of a project that brought together The American Classical League, The American Philological Association, and Regional Classical Associations. It is one of the outgrowths of the Educational reform in US, which took a different destination in 1989. As it is stated in it, standards for classical language learning show the destination at which students must arrive. This destination is expressed by five goals: (a) communication in Latin and Greek (reading, oral use, writing, and listening), (b) acquisition of the Greco-Roman culture, (c) connections to other disciplines, (d) gaining insights from Latin and Greek into one's own language and culture, and (e) participation in wider communities of language and culture. These goals ought to be adapted to the level of proficiency of each student.

These standards are applicable to the acquisition of any modern or ancient language. Applying them to the Hellenistic Greek of the New Testament, would lead to the following specifics. The first goal —communication— would be based on the New Testament text primarily, but also on other κοινή Greek texts, ranging from the non-literary papyri to the literary Polybius and Epictetus. Two things should be further developed here: speaking and listening, and the issue of pronunciation. First, the “oral use” does not stand for “speaking” and it is actually a phrase designed to avoid the term “speaking” so as not to infer that the oral ability implies conversation.<sup>31</sup> However, I should say that simple oral drills would

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<sup>30</sup> *Standards for Classical Language Learning* (Oxford, OH: American Classical League, 1997), 1-52.

<sup>31</sup> The oral drills are not innovative, but are found in some old grammatical studies: “Language does not, in strictness of speech, express thought, it only suggests. It is helpful, never adequate—except in the names of abstract numbers, and the terms of pure science. It requires in its single words that the student use imagination and reflection. “Without these he may learn the Dictionary and the Grammar, but he will not understand. As we have not the Greek feeling and instinct, we must endeavor by reflection, by questioning our results, and by repeated trials, to gain for ourselves something of the feeling which the Greeks had by birthright”. F. A. Adams, *The Greek Prepositions Studied From Their Original Meanings as Designations of Space* (New York, NY: D. Appleton, 1885), 2-3.

not be much different than written drills. Speaking in κοινή Greek would not imply to be able to use this dead language for daily life, as it was the case with Latin the previous centuries. It does imply however, that conversation (eventually borrowed from or based on the New Testament and other texts studied) is present inasmuch as it helps the acquisition of the other language communication abilities: listening, reading, and writing.

The second aspect of oral communication is related to both speaking and listening: the pronunciation. By the time of the fall of Constantinople, the best Greek teachers in Europe were native Greeks. The pronunciation they used was the one used in the Byzantium, which was adopted by Reuchlin in Germany. With the passage of time, these Greek professors were gone, so the correctness of their pronunciation became subject to doubt. There are two accounts about the shift in pronunciation.

The source of the first one is Voss (Dutch scholar, 1577-1649), whose testimony is recalled by A. T. Robertson and Chrys Caragounis. During the time when Erasmus lived at Louvain, someone by the Latin name of Henricus Glareanus, a Swiss humanist, came to him from Paris and apparently invented a story about how some certain educated native Greeks came to Paris and taught a different pronunciation of Greek. Soon after Erasmus wrote his *Dialogue*<sup>32</sup> on the correct pronunciation of Greek and Latin. This was a pamphlet in which a bear dialogizes with a lion. The bear is the one who introduces in the discussion the new way of pronouncing Greek, which was basically in the fashion of the Dutch, German, and French languages. The second account is given by Sidney Allen in his *Vox Graeca: A Guide to the Pronunciation of Classical Greek*.<sup>33</sup> He states that Erasmus was not fooled by anybody, but he was influenced by Antonius Nebrissensis (Spanish scholar), Aldus Manutius (Italian), and Jerome Aleander, all three concerned with the pronunciation of ancient Greek.

<sup>32</sup> See Desiderius Erasmus, *De Recta Latini Graecique Sermonis Pronuntiatione* (Lytetiae: Ex Officina Rob. Stephani Typographi Regii, 1547).

<sup>33</sup> W. Sidney Allen, *Vox Graeca: A Guide to the Pronunciation of Classical Greek*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 141-142.

At first, Erasmus' proposal was strongly rejected, as he himself refrained from implementing it,<sup>34</sup> but after a while it was introduced to various universities<sup>35</sup> and came to be accepted as standard. This is by no means to say that the Modern Greek pronunciation remained without advocates.<sup>36</sup> John Pickering is one of the older scholars with keen reasoning about these matters, as he endeavored to evaluate the arguments of Erasmus and discusses the pronunciation of every single letter and diphthong of the Greek language.<sup>37</sup> His conclusion favors the pre-Erasmian pronunciation, which is very similar to the one of Modern Greek. Pickering's *Essay* was assessed one year later by Nathaniel Moore<sup>38</sup> who concludes the opposite, that the Erasmian pronunciation is older than the Reuchlian and hence it should be kept in esteem and use. Some grammarians of the time hesitated to enter the dispute and preferred to follow the analogy of their own language.<sup>39</sup> The truth of the matter is that, at first, most of the discussion revolved around Attic Greek and the arguments were based on Attic writers. However, in anticipation of Modern Linguistics approaches to

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<sup>34</sup> John Alfred Faulkner, *Erasmus: The Scholar* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings and Graham, 1907), 232-235.

<sup>35</sup> F. Brittain describes the situation in England and how through Thomas Smith and John Cheke the new pronunciation of Greek was introduced at Cambridge and prevailed in spite of a decree that strictly forbade the use of the new Erasmian style. F. Brittain, *Latin in Church; Episodes of Its Pronunciation Particularly in England* (1934; repr.: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 32-33. See also John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship: From the Revival of Learning to the End of the Eighteenth Century in Italy, France, England, and the Netherlands* (1908; repr.: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 233.

<sup>36</sup> For names of some scholars on both sides of the argument in the 19th century see Carl A. P. Ruck, *Ancient Greek: A New Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Archive, 1968), 5-6.

<sup>37</sup> John Pickering, *An Essay on the Pronunciation of the Greek Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1818), 26-67.

<sup>38</sup> Nathaniel Fish Moore, *Remarks on the pronunciation of the Greek Language* (New York, NY: Eastburn and Literary Rooms, 1819), 7-47.

<sup>39</sup> Such was the case of the British scholar Moses Stuart. See Moses Stuart, *A Grammar of the New Testament Dialect* (Andover: Allen & Morrill, 1841), 20. Friedrich Blass, who supported Erasmus' view, ends his work on the pronunciation of ancient Greek prompting the reader not "to be pedantic, as though the ancient Greek might some day rise from their graves and call us to account for murdering their beautiful language". Friedrich Blass, *Pronunciation of Ancient Greek*, trans. W. J. Purton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1890), 134.

languages, already in the 19th century G. J. Pennington,<sup>40</sup> drawing attention to the weight of the arguments of Modern Greek pronunciation, argued that phonology is reflective of the speech habits of the common people, and not only of the learned or educated.

Moreover, the choice is not, strictly speaking, between Erasmus' pronunciation and the Modern Greek alternative at any time in the history of the Greek language. If it were so, then one should probably embrace a proposal such as Caragounis'<sup>41</sup> in recent times, which argues that the laws of Greek phonology and phonetics remained virtually unchanged in the entire history of the language down to classical Greek (5th century). Such a tenet, however, seems untrue to the facts.<sup>42</sup> But evidences seem to suggest that the pronunciation in the New Testament times was much closer to the one in modern times Greece. Three authorities I recall here: Geoffrey Horrocks, Evangelos B. Petrounias, and Constantine Campbell.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> "But I think that valuable information respecting the Hellenic language may be derived, not only from the writings and the conversation of learned modern Greeks, but from the language as it is now spoken in the streets and the fields". G. J. Pennington, *An Essay on the Pronunciation of the Greek Language* (London: John Murray, 1844), 283.

<sup>41</sup> Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission* (2004; repr.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 339-396.

<sup>42</sup> See the review of Caragounis' monograph in Mosés Silva, "Biblical Greek and Modern Greek: A Review Article", *Westminster Theological Journal* 67 (2005): 397-400. Silva finds several fallacies in Caragounis' treatment of Greek phonology, and unlike Caragounis, he states that the modern pronunciation has indeed roots down to the 3rd and 4th centuries BCE, but not in every region. The New Testament era was a transition period, but the actual pronunciation of modern Greek was stabilized in the medieval times. For the fairness of my argument I should mention that Caragounis defends himself against Silva in Chrys C. Caragounis, "The Development of Greek and the New Testament: a Response to Dr. M. Silva", *Westminster Theological Journal* 67 (2005): 410-412. To this, Silva adds a few more notes in Mosés Silva, "Some Comments on Professor Caragounis's Response", *Westminster Theological Journal* 67 (2005): 417-418.

<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 117-120, 160-167, 187. Evangelos B. Petrounias, "The pronunciation of Ancient Greek: Evidences and hypotheses", in *A History of Ancient Greek: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, ed. A. -F. Christidis (2007; repr., Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 545-555. Evangelos B. Petrounias, "The pronunciation of Classical Greek", in *A History of Ancient Greek: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, ed. by A. -F. Christidis (2007; repr., Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 556-570. Evangelos B. Petrounias, "Development in pronunciation during the Hellenistic period", in *A History of Ancient Greek: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, ed. by A. -F. Christidis

All three of these contemporary authors argue for the fact that there are differences between the pronunciation in the Classical and Hellenistic times, and that the latter draws near to the modern pronunciation.

Returning the goals of teaching Greek, the second is related to culture. Language is culture,<sup>44</sup> so acquiring κοινή Greek would mean to become familiar with the Hellenistic Greek culture. The third goal is interdisciplinary. It means that the knowledge of Greek facilitates the effective interaction on the part of students with the fields of New Testament exegesis and textual criticism, as well as Greco-Roman history, religion, and philosophy. All these backgrounds are extremely informative for the New Testament studies, as they illuminate about the world in which the New Testament was born. The fourth goal is getting insights from Greek into one's own language.<sup>45</sup> This goal runs also the other direction. When it comes to the difficulties of Greek for a foreigner, the student's own language irregularities may minimize the feeling of Greek weirdness.<sup>46</sup> The fifth goal is the participation in wider communities of language and culture,

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(2007; repr., Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 599-609. Evangelos B. Petrounias, "The pronunciation of Ancient Greek in modern times", in *A History of Ancient Greek: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, ed. by A. -F. Christidis (2007; repr., Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1266-1279. Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 192-208.

<sup>44</sup> This is a datum of modern linguistics, where language and culture are seen inseparable and interdependent. See Karen Risager, *Language and Culture: Global Flows and Local Complexity* (Cleveland: Multilingual Matters, 2006), 1-6. Joseph C. Mukalel, *Linguistics for the Teacher* (New Delhi: Discovery, 2003), 9-10. Soni Sharma, "Multilingual Teaching and Learning Programs Leading to Wider Acceptability in Personality Development", in *Global Practices of Language Teaching: Proceeding of the 2008 International Online Language Conference*, ed. by Azadeh Shafaei and Mehran Nejati (Boca Raton, FL: Universal Publishers, 2008), 97-99.

<sup>45</sup> The following example is applicable to Romanian students of Greek. The name of Jesus (Ἰησοῦς) is spelled in Romanian in two ways: "Iisus" (the Orthodox way) and "Isus" (the protestant way). The Orthodox make a strong case from the writing of the name with two "I"s. Provided that Ἰησοῦς is pronounced as in modern Greek, than the spelling "Iisus" seems natural. It must also be recognized that the spelling "Isus" is a stylistic variation. This is because in the Romanian language there exists no double "ii" at the beginning of a word. So writing "Iisus" or "Isus" is equally correct. But knowing Greek informs this debate.

<sup>46</sup> Jonathan M. Watt, "Talking to the Dead: Linguistics and Pedagogy of Hellenistic Greek", in *The Linguist as Pedagogue: Trends in the Teaching and Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, ed. by Stanley E. Porter and Mathew Brook O'Donnell (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 20-22.

which would mean to benefit of a large exposure to languages and cultures, both ancient and modern.

### Pedagogical implications and proposals

Before delineating the concrete pedagogical implications and proposals relative to the goals just discussed, I would like to briefly state some general things that define the teaching-learning process of Greek, as they have been acknowledged by Watt. First, the global interest and influence of English drastically reduced the interest for other foreign languages. Expectedly, the situation seems worse in the case of the arcane studies of ancient languages. Second, the reason why students take Greek may make a difference in its acquisition. They usually form three categories: those aspiring to become classical university teachers, those preparing for pastoral ministry (the majority), and some who take Greek only as part of the foreign language requirements. The great majority of all these groups cease the use of Greek after school. Third, students learn in a different way, so emphasizing all four learning strategies (auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic) is desirable. Fourth, in order to stimulate the students' engagement, the Greek pedagogue must be creative.<sup>47</sup>

From the five goals mentioned above, I derive the following pedagogical implications and proposals, which together would probably form what Constantine Campbell refers to as “the immersion method”,<sup>48</sup> which should intentionally be aimed at in the teaching of Hellenistic Greek, which includes the grammars of the Septuagint and the New Testament, as well as those of any extra canonical writer of the same era.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 13-20. Watt mentions for example that he calls prepositions “bullies” because “they demand the case of the noun they govern”. He sees participles to be “fickle” because “they decide whether to be adjectival or substantival only after they have surveyed their lexical environment”. Adjectives he names “conformists” to the effect that “they always agree with the nouns they modify”. These are as effective as learning the Greek alphabet on a tune like “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (p. 20).

<sup>48</sup> Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek*, 2010-2017.

### Content-based instruction

The method of teaching Greek should be based on Greek (that is the content). In other words, instruction should as much as possible be in the target language: Greek.<sup>49</sup> Acknowledging that most of the Greek teachers are not native Greeks, it would be desirable, to say the least, that those teaching Greek use conversation as much as possible related to the biblical text, but also to real life. In this way, the students feel more attracted to proficiency, knowing that through it they come closer to the language and culture of the first Christians and, on the other hand, they make a significant step toward learning a modern (in use) language, the Modern Greek.

Conversation is proposed and used also in the case of Classical Greek. It is however, rather introductory than a companion in teaching all the way through the process. Conversation in Ancient Greek is proposed by Paula Saffire<sup>50</sup> as a first two weeks exercise, later to be phased out and disposed of completely. She is right however that oral communication enhances the reading abilities, reduces an eventual learning intimidation, generates satisfaction, increases confidence in progress, provides opportunity for interaction, gives humorous interruptions, generates rapid and secure vocabulary acquisition, and favors the appropriation of important quantity of grammatical information without making reference to rules of morphology and syntax. As to methodology, she proposes genuine conversation as opposed to drills, variation, liveliness (the connection between the symbol-word and the reality it stands for), bodily action, tactful correction of mistakes, all-students participation, repetition, and the use of scripts. Other methods may be tried like memorization-recitations, or read and speak. It is clear that what Saffire proposes makes much more sense for the Greek, where the conversation in the proper pronunciation brings with itself the connection with the current Greek language.

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<sup>49</sup> Roy Lyster, *Learning and Teaching Languages Through Content: A Counterbalanced Approach, Language Learning & Language Teaching* 18 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 6-7.

<sup>50</sup> Paula Saffire, "Ancient Greek in Classroom Conversation", in *When Dead Tongues Speak: Teaching beginning Greek and Latin*, ed. by John Gruber-Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 158-179.

### Modern pronunciation

Considering the things mentioned above, that the pronunciation in New Testament times was very close to the modern pronunciation, I hereby propose the teaching of κοινή Greek with the pronunciation used by the contemporary native Greeks. The following benefits are envisioned, according to B. H. Mclean:<sup>51</sup> (a) κοινή Greek becomes a living and real language with much more contact with Modern Greek, (b) a first-hand experiencing of the sounds, worship, and prayer of 1st century Christianity, and (c) understanding of many textual variants, which were generated by homophony. The adherents to the Erasmian pronunciation make no distinction between the phases of the Greek language. “Consequently they are compelled to read both the New Testament and patristic texts with a pronunciation which would have been incomprehensible at the time these texts were written”.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, speaking of the New Testament times, the modern pronunciation, which approximates the late hellenistic one is to be followed. A concise presentation of the modern pronunciation is found in Wendy Moleas’ *The Development of the Greek Language*.<sup>53</sup> This should be helpful and used in reading, listening,<sup>54</sup> and oral practice.

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<sup>51</sup> B. H. Lean, *New Testament Greek: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4-5. Mclean adds also the fact that Erasmian pronunciation is both artificial and varying from language to language, whereas the modern pronunciation “is entirely regular”.

<sup>52</sup> Petrounias, “The pronunciation of Ancient Greek in modern times”, 1278. Petrounias presents the advantages and disadvantages of both the Erasmian and modern pronunciation of Greek. Writing initially for a Greek audience, his final contention is that if the Greek students cannot know for sure the classical pronunciation, hence they cannot imitate it because it would sound artificial, they should at least be informed and become aware of the Ancient Greek phonological and phonetic system.

<sup>53</sup> Wendy Moleas, *The Development of the Greek Language*, 2nd ed. (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2004), 125-126.

<sup>54</sup> At this point, I would like to mention that softwares like BW and Logos have audio files with both Erasmian and modern pronunciation, so the latter could be accessed and used though these means. It could also be added an audio DVD containing the whole Greek NT recited by a native Greek such as Koine Greek New Testament, narrated by Dr. Spiros Zodhiates (AMG Publishers, 2010).

### Four components of language acquisition

In a tradition where the major role played by the teacher of Greek is that of explaining the grammar of written texts, it is highly mandatory to consider the whole spectrum of language acquisition components: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. About the first of these four skills I have discussed in the previous two sections. Listening to speaking and listening to reading is somewhat different, as the former focuses on spontaneous comprehension, whereas the latter has the advantage of replay.<sup>55</sup> In any case, comprehension is the final goal of both listening and reading. Regarding, writing in the target language, it is often the case that the students are required to translate from their mother tongue isolated sentences with little relevance for their contexts. John Gruber-Miller<sup>56</sup> gives writing a compositional frame based on a narrative or exposition. He proposes Aristotle's and Cicero's *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* pattern, which in modern rhetoric roughly corresponds to text, writer, and audience. Writing with composition in mind will definitely develop communicational abilities, the reading skills, and solidify the grammar. Unlike the Renaissance learning of Latin, the writing abilities should not be limited to imitation of a certain author, but give the students the opportunity to write with their own purpose and style. When it comes to the New Testament Greek, writing should be based on the stories and themes found in its 27 books.

### Use of technology in teaching Greek

Many and sometimes most of our students are deeply ingrained in technology. Therefore, traditional teaching sure enough become unattractive and demotivating. Using technology in classroom environment seems compulsory as far as pedagogical success is intended for the di-

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<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Scott Morrel, "Language Acquisition and Teaching Ancient Greek: Applying Recent Theories and Technology", in *When Dead Tongues Speak: Teaching beginning Greek and Latin*, ed. by John Gruber-Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 136-137.

<sup>56</sup> John Gruber-Miller, "Teaching Writing in Beginning Latin and Greek: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos", in *When Dead Tongues Speak: Teaching beginning Greek and Latin*, ed. by John Gruber-Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 190-196.

gitalized generation of the present day students. In the case of teaching Greek, the apology for the implementation of audio-video technics is even more unavoidable. This is because κοινή Greek is for many languages far away phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically, and of course, culturally. The audio-video aids are of paramount importance.

Rodney Decker has stated his perspective on these matters in a recent article entitled “Adapting Technology to Teach Koine Greek”.<sup>57</sup> He presents the advantages alongside some precautions, both to be considered before pursuing this new level of teaching. Decker starts with issues of hardware (computer, video-projector, electronic white-board) and then moves to the software (word-processors, PDF’s which will solve the incompatibilities of fonts and platform, presentation programs, audios, videos, animation tools, internet, where he opens widely the issue of fonts). In the last part of his article he presents six suggestions. First, though the final aim may be very bold, its realization should be built step by step over several years, not only for financial reasons, but also because of the necessary pace into having a good command of technology. Second, a professor should prepare audio-video resources for his attendees, even if he or she has no plan to teach a web-based class. Third, mainstream formats should be used so that any incompatibilities of font and platform are superseded easily. Fourth, the instructor must supply all the required information to the users. Fifth, new hardware and software options should never be tried in the class setting, and the pedagogue should always have a backup plan. Sixth, technology is not a messiah and does not exempt the teacher from the other difficult and hard-working tasks of a teacher.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Rodney J. Decker, “Adapting Technology to Teach Koine Greek”, in *The Linguist as Pedagogue: Trends in the Teaching and Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, ed. by Stanley E. Porter and Mathew Brook O’Donnell (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 25-42.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-42. See also what Decker says about a successful teacher: “The key factor in successfully teaching koine Greek is not in the technology used, but in the teacher’s ability to communicate complicated, nonnative concepts to students in a manner that is both clear and compelling. Clarity and motivation are far more important than technology. Greek pedagogy will not be improved simply by throwing money at a department saddled with ineffective teachers. A good teacher, by contrast, will make the best of any tools available, whether that be a piece of chalk, a video projector, an electronic whiteboard, or any of the technologies that will surely emerge in the years to come”, (p. 28).

## Conclusions

This paper raised questions as to whether the teaching of Greek is against practical and spiritual development of the students, and how the teaching and learning of Greek should be done in such a way that its acquisition will facilitate their holistic development and prepare them for an effective service in their community. The pathway of Greek in the European and North American education during the last six centuries brought up different attitudes. By the 19th century it became more evident than before that the study of classical Greek should be adapted to individual needs of the schools and students. Thus, it gradually ceased to be compulsory and became more specialized, preparing for graduate studies. Regarding the objections derived from a Christian worldview, learning Greek is not more problematic to the development of practical abilities and the spiritual formation of the learners than many other fields of education. For instance, if the Greek classics seem to emanate a harmful influence over the mind, because of authors who wrote morally questionable literature, the same is true about literature in any language or about thinkers who wrote in modern languages texts of a suspicious moral quality. Moreover, the teaching of the LXX and New Testament Greek furnishes little to no encounter with extra-biblical material. Also, if dead languages do not seem to prepare well for real life beyond college, so it is true about other educational fields which are less practical than others. Lastly, if learning Greek favors the development of a boastful self-esteem and create an elitist profile to be desired, it is not less true about other disciplines. As Paul said, “knowledge [in general] puffs up” (1 Cor 8,1). Here we should not overlook the fact that the Aramaic speaking Jesus had a good command of Hebrew (reading, comprehension, listening, and implicitly speaking) according to the report in Luke 4,16-21. Since Hebrew was not the language of the common people, but more or less a dead (religious) language for the generation of Jesus, by implication, the students preparing for ministry today should know Greek (and Hebrew).

The present study highlights the goals of classical education, equally applicable to the teaching-learning of κοινή Greek. These goals involve all four dimensions of language acquisition (reading, writing, listening,

and speaking), which should be stimulated in the process of teaching and learning. In this vein, learning Greek becomes beneficial for spirituality for it delves into the Bible, a religious-moral text. It becomes useful for exegesis, Bible teaching and preaching. Finally, it is proposed that the teaching of Greek should not neglect the oral dimension of language acquisition, should use the modern pronunciation of Greek, and take advantage of the technology advancements.

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