

Greek Lesson 7

In Greek Lesson 7 there are three goals: to examine the concept of “loan words,” to discuss the nature of Greek suffixes and to review the suffixes and bases listed in this lesson. This video presentation will address the first two objectives (loan words and Greek suffixes). In the accompanying audio presentation, we’ll review the suffixes and bases to be memorized here. Don’t forget to listen to that audio presentation.

First, let’s discuss the linguistic principle of the “loan word.” A loan word is “a word borrowed from another language in more or less its original form.” A good example is *jihad*, the Arabic word for “a holy war which can be but is not always military.” Most English speakers are familiar with this word but use it only in reference to Moslem tradition. We don’t export it to similar Christian movements like the Crusades.

From that it should be clear that the word *jihad* is limited in both its definition and use, and that’s often true of loan words. They retain a “foreign” flavor and are associated with things we might see as a new part of our culture but not from it, things like “reggae, zen, hubris, sushi, fiesta.” An exotic spelling and pronunciation help reinforce the non-native nature of loan words as with *ciao*, *autobahn*, *savoir faire*, *apartheid*, *c’est la vie*, *mardi gras*. But once the word along with the thing to which it refers settles happily into the routine of our regular lives, it becomes a part of our vocabulary and we no longer treat it as foreign, for instance, *pizza*, *taco*, *fondue*, *macaroni*.

A “loan word” is, in fact, a foreign term which has not quite yet become a derivative. The typical pattern is that a foreign word often representing a new thing or idea for which English doesn’t have a term enters English as a “loan word.” If that thing or idea remains part of our culture, eventually it becomes main-stream and we see and use the word for it as a normal element in English. Now it’s a derivative. Here’s a good example. The French phrase *venez m’aider* means “come help me.” It was used as a call for assistance particularly when a ship at sea was in distress. Eventually this very French-sounding and -looking alarm was clipped down to only its second half: *m’aider*. Now it’s a loan word, because at this point its pronunciation and spelling still seemed foreign to English speakers. But when it was respelled and pronounced “mayday,” the word became fully English in every way, which is when it became a derivative. Were we to start regularly saying “*ciao*” (the Italian word for “hello” or “goodbye”) pronouncing it “chow” and spelling it that way, “*ciao*” would move from loan word to derivative, too.

Besides loan words, Mr. Ayers also discusses Greek suffixes in Lesson 7. As you’ll soon discover, Greek suffixes operate the same way their Latin counterparts do. Some are even identical in form to Latin suffixes. Indeed, in Greek you’ll meet some very familiar-looking ones like *-al*, *-ic* and *-tic* and they have basically the same meanings as they do in Latin. The reason for this is that Latin and Greek belong to the same Indo-European language system. Some overlap in forms is to be expected.

Greek suffixes also fall into the same categories as their Latin cognates, primarily noun-forming and adjective-forming. Just like Latin, Greek gives us very few verb-forming suffixes because many bases are verbal in sense to begin with. In fact, you’ll learn only one Greek verb-forming suffix in this whole course: *-ize* (“to make”).

There is, however, one important difference between Latin and Greek suffixes. Latin has imported into English a large number of *adjective*-forming suffixes; Greek has bestowed on us more words with *noun*-forming suffixes, in particular, ones with specialized meanings, for instance, *-phobia* which is used to denote “an abnormal fear of (something),” or *-ology* meaning “the science or study of.” English also abounds in Greek-based medical terminology which naturally features all sorts of specialized suffixes, like *-ectomy* (“a surgical operation for removing [some part of the body — ouch!]”). The same is true of political language where suffixes like *-crat* (“one who advocates or practices rule by”) rule. All of these are part of the larger tendency in the modern age to cobble together new technical language out of Latin and — more often! — Greek elements.

And that’s it for the video presentation covering Greek Lesson 7. Next you should listen to the audio presentation which will address the suffixes and bases to be memorized here. You’ll find a link to that audio presentation on the course web site. Happy etymologizing!

ASSIGNMENT

This is the audio presentation covering the assignments in Greek Lesson 7. Please open your textbook to page 198 where Mr. Ayers introduces the first set of Greek suffixes for you to memorize.

And he starts off with an easy one, *-ic/-ac/-tic* (“pertaining to, like”), easy because you already know it, or should. It’s identical in form and meaning to its Latin counterpart *-ic/-tic*, the only substantive difference being that the Greek suffix changes from *-ic* to *-ac* if the letter before it is an *-i*, as in “maniac,” and this raises another important point about this suffix. Just like its Latin counterpart, it’s prone to creating substantives. Do you remember what a substantive is? Good! An adjective which functions as a noun. Even though a word like “maniac” ends with an adjective-forming suffix that means “pertaining to,” “maniac” is not used as an adjective really ever. Instead, it’s a noun, as are its close kin, epidemic and quadriplegic and other *-ic/-tic* words, of which there are many! So get used to defining this suffix as “(someone or something) pertaining to.”

The next suffix *-ics/-tics* (“the art, science or study of”) is in origin the plural of the prefix we just discussed (*-ic/-tic*). In ancient Greek *-ics/-tics* is actually the plural of *-ic/-tic*. In this case, however, the Greeks didn’t use the ending *-s* to form the plural but *-a*, creating *-ika/-tika*, meaning literally “things pertaining to ...,” as in *physika* (“physics”), originally “things pertaining to nature,” that is “the study of the natural world.” Also, to Ayers’ meanings “the art, science or study of” might be added the meaning “activities of,” like “gymnastics” and “acrobatics.”

Note that the last prefix *-oid* (“like, having the shape of”) sometimes carries a derogatory (i.e. insulting) sense as in “factoid,” a statement without clear context or relevance. It’s often used in reference to an insignificant or trivial comment, something that may not even be a fact.

Now let's review the bases you should learn here, starting at the top of page 199 with the third base ARCHA(E)-/ARCHE- ("ancient, primitive, beginning"). [Remember that I'm not going to discuss all the bases you are required to memorize in this lesson, just those about which I have something to say, but you do need to memorize them all. I don't need to keep saying that, do I? Good! If you do it, I won't.] Returning to the point, to ARCHA(E)-/ARCHE- add the simple form ARCH- which often has a sense "head," that is chief or first, as in "archangel, archbishop."

Skipping the next base which you still need to memorize, make a note that GEN(E)-/GON- has a number of other senses worth learning. Besides "to produce" it can mean "be, beget," as in theogony ("the birth of gods"). It also has a scientific sense "create, reproduction," often used in reference to reproductive organs, as in "gonad, gonorrhea."

To IATR- ("physician, medicine") add the meaning "care" in the sense of medical care, as is seen in the word "geriatrics" (the medical care of the elderly).

To PEP(T)- ("digest") add the form PEPS-, a variant which is seen in Pepsi, a drink that was originally intended to aid digestion. Because how well food sat on a person was often seen in the past as an indication of how good that person felt, digestion came to be associated with mental state, so add the meaning "attitude" to this base. Indeed, you'll need that sense to interpret the word in sentence 16 of the exercises in this lesson. "Eupeptic" people have good digestion which makes them, according to this logic, happy or optimistic, which is what "eupeptic" means.

And that's all I have to add to Mr. Ayers' lesson here. Study hard and be ...

Eupeptic Etymologizing!