# Greek Lessons 5 and 6

The goals of Greek Lessons 5 and 6 are to introduce and discuss a few more linguistic terms (homonym, reduplication and onomatopoeia), finish our study of Greek prefixes and review the bases to be memorized here. As always I'll add a few notes about some of those forms, but you need to know them all. This video will cover only the linguistic terms; we'll discuss the other goals in the accompanying audio presentation. Please listen to that after you're done with this recording.

In Lesson 5 Mr. Ayers discusses the linguistic phenomenon of homonyms. A homonym is "a word having the same pronunciation as another word but a different origin and meaning, and often also a different spelling." There are two separate processes subsumed under this one term: homographs and homophones. Homographs ─ and you don't need to know this term, or homophone, only the term homonym ─ homographs are words which have the same spelling and sound, but a different meaning and origin, for instance, "rail" which can mean "a bar of wood" ─ in that case it comes from Latin word *regula* ("staff, rod") ─ but "rail" can also mean "utter abusive language," as in "rail against misfortune." This "rail" comes from a different Latin word *rugire* ("to bellow," like a bull).

Another example of a homograph is "counter." In one sense it betokens the "table in a shop," as in "countertop," a word derived from the Latin verb *computare* ("to count, add up"). Originally, merchants did their accounts on this surface. But *counter* can also mean "oppose, be opposed to," as in "countering the enemy's next move." In that sense it comes from Latin *contra*, which you already know means "against."

"Tense," too, is a homograph. One of its meanings is "nervous," as in "feeling tense," which goes back to the Latin word *tensus* ("drawn tight"). I'm sure you remember that one, too. If you don't, pretend you do. But "tense" can also signify "a verb form indicating time," like "future tense." This homograph comes from the Latin word *tempus* ("time"). All these homographs are really the product of random chance. Words which once looked and sounded different have somehow ended up identical in form.

Conversely, homophones are words that sound similar but share nothing else: not spelling, not meaning, not origin. English has many examples of this principle in action: I/eye/aye; do/due; some/sum; rain/rein/reign; slay/sleigh; freeze/frieze; flea/flee; there/their/they're; by/buy/bye. You should make a note that, because pronunciation can vary widely, homophones are not always homophones everywhere. What is a homophone in standard speech, in a dialect may not be. In the southern US, for instance, the homophones "hoarse/horse" sound different: (in a southern accent) "He whinnied and neighed so much, my horse (*hoss*) is now hoarse." Or "morning/mourning": "If you don't like getting up with the sun, every morning (*mahnin*) is a period of mourning (*moaning*)." Or "for/four": "I ate grits for (*fer*) four (*foar*) days straight. I cain't eat no more grits."

Let's move on, y'all, to Lesson 6. [Okay, that's annoying. I'll drop the accent.] In Lesson 6 Mr. Ayers introduces another linguistic term, reduplication, which is "the repetition of a sound or syllable within a word, often at the beginning," as in tintinnabulation. Oh, you don't that word?

Well, it’s a great word. Learn it! It means “the ringing of a bell.” The tin-tin at the beginning of tintinnabulation imitates the sound of a bell ringing. English is chockful of reduplication: tom-tom, go-go, murmur, hush-hush, hubba-hubba, same-old same-old. The replicated forms don’t always have to be exact to qualify as reduplication. They can just reflect or echo each other, as in chit-chat, fake-bake, ship-shape, monkey-junkie, bruhaha, clap-trap, helter-skelter, higgledy-piggledy.

Today reduplication is often found in nonsense words, but in older Indo-European times it was used to signal basic grammatical forms, like past-tense verbs. For example, the past tense of the Latin verb *pello* (“I push”) is *pepuli* (“I pushed”). Likewise, the Latin verb *sto* (“I stand”) has a past-tense form *steti* (“I stood”), which lost an -s- because the purer reduplication **stesti* is too difficult to pronounce. Since we did not inherit this type of past-tense form from Latin, there are no English derivatives from Latin reduplications of this sort. However, our word “memory” ─ here the reduplication is with just m- ─ is a Latin derivative built on the reduplicated base MEM- seen in words like “memento, remember.” The Indo-European root underlying “memory” is **mer*- (“ponder”) which has been reduplicated apparently to stress the recurring activity underlying the sense of the word. That is, in recalling anything you’re revisiting it. You’re going back and pondering it again. You’re “ponder-pondering” it.

Repetitive actions like this naturally attract reduplication. In Greek, for instance, the base for “teaching” is DIDAC-. The repeated d’s are the product of reduplication. Does teaching, you may ask, involve a lot of repetition? Oh my, it does. Did you get that? Oh, you weren’t listening? Okay, I’ll say it again. Teaching involves repetition. DIDAC! Interestingly, the same base but in an unreduplicated form can be seen in Latin DOC- (“show”). Apparently unlike Greeks, Romans expected you to learn it the first time. I guess that’s the advantage of having a big army.

Another reduplicated Greek form is LAL(A)- which referred to talking in a silly way, babbling. The sense is going “la la la” and not saying anything significant, hence the Greek verb *lalageo* (“chatter”), and the noun *lalia* (“babble”), or ─ one of my favorite Greek words ─ *lallai* meaning “stones in a brook,” a reference to the sound of running water gurgling repetitively over rocks. This reduplicated base occurs even in technical terminology such as glossolalia, literally “tongue-speaking.” What do you guess that is? Think about ecstatic religious practice. That’s right: “speaking in tongues,” the ritual of channeling long-dead spirits and, while in their possession, talking in some lost ancient language.

Repetitive action and reduplication combine also in the Latin base SIST-, as seen in “resist, desist.” You should know what that means. It’s a variant of the ST(A)- base (“stand”). The sense of SIST-, its reduplicated form, is “stop.” In other words, “stand-stand” implies that you stand and keep standing, which is stopping. Similarly, the Greek base CYCL-, which you also know, means “circle, wheel.” It comes originally from an old form **qweqwelo*- which is based on an Indo-European root **qwel*- (“to move around”). Think about it. “Move-around-move-around” is not a bad name for a wheel. This base in an unreduplicated form shows up in other words we have borrowed from Greek like “colony,” literally a settlement of people who have “moved around,” but they didn’t keep moving around so no *col*-colony.  And as we’ll soon learn when we study Grimm’s Law, /c/ changed into /h/ or /wh/ in Germanic languages, so what word in

English is cognate with the CL- part of the Greek base CYCL-? Instead of CL-, try WHL-. Of course, “wheel.”

But it’s hard for us to take reduplication as seriously as our linguistic ancestors did, since today it’s often used to represent silliness, baby-talk, for instance: mama, papa, bye-bye, boo-boo, doo-doo, pee-pee, cutesy-wutesy, palsy-walsy, lullaby. Many playful nicknames are also reduplications: Mimi, Didi, Bibi, Gigi, Fifi, Lulu, Jojo, Bubba, John-John, Bam-Bam. The eighteenth-century poet Ambrose Phillips, renowned for his very sentimental verse often addressed to children, was dubbed “Namby-pamby,” now an adjective used to describe insipidly pretty, nauseatingly sweet verses. Reduplication can also be degrading.

Indeed, it shows up in all sorts of derogatory terms, for instance:

- froufrou (a term for showy apparel often with lots of decorations and sparkly stuff on it);
- bon-bon (from the French meaning “good-good,” a bon-bon is a small piece of candy, usually chocolate);
- chichi (a term for something that’s overly style-conscious; if your dress is chic, you’re in style; if it’s chichi, you’re a slave to fashion);
- pooh-pooh (“to dismiss rudely”);
- dillydally (“to waste time”);
- and manly man … which requires no explanation.

The mocking, scornful sense reduplication has taken on in modern times suited well the mood of artists after the First World War, when things looked very bleak. At that time Tristan Tsara and his colleagues started an art movement called Dadaism. They focused on creating images which were formless and represented nothing, a bitter satire of the traditional view that art should say and teach something. They chose the name “dada” because it sounded to them like a baby’s wordless cry. That’s how they were responding to what was happening around them, a world recovering from massive casualties, trench warfare and the first widespread use of chemical weapons. So reduplication can also be a cry of desperation.

Finally, Mr. Ayers ends the linguistics portion of Lesson 6 by highlighting one more term, the next-to-last one you’ll learn in this class, and without doubt, the hardest one to spell, onomatopoeia, “the formation of words through imitation of natural sounds associated with an object or action involved.” Etymologically, onomatopoeia means “word-making”: ONOMATo- “word” + POE- “make” ─ cf. poetry, literally “the act of making (verse).” English contains many examples of onomatopoetic words ─ yeah, that’s the adjective form of the term ─ like snort, harumph, grunt, va-room, bonk, splat, squish, swish, snap, slurp, champ, chomp. The humorist Dave Barry introduced a vivid onomatopoeia into English when he wrote: “In 3rd grade, I *ralphed* all over Peggy Simmons’ new pencil case.” “Ralph” does indeed recall the sound of vomiting, and I apologize for this neologism to all Ralphs worldwide. Animal sounds are often the product of imitating what we hear them saying: moo, meow, woof, baa, caw, coo, buzz. Combining onomatopoeia with reduplication produces charming concoctions like “ping-pong” and “hurdy-gurdy” (the musical instrument played by an organ-grinder who uses a rotating crank to pump out repetitive melodies).

English does not hold a monopoly on onomatopoetic creations, and it's interesting to see how other languages interpret and reflect the noises around them. For instance, while English-speakers hear dogs saying "bow-wow," dogs in France go "oua-oua." Of course, French poodles make front rounded sounds. By contrast, Italian hounds go "bu-bu," Korean ones say "mung-mung," and their Japanese counterparts bark back "wan-wan." Ancient Greek dogs said "how-how." And how-how do we know that? There's a classical play, *The Wasps* by Aristophanes, in which a dog ─ an actor in a dog costume ─ is called into court and, when the dog speaks, he says "how-how." Ancient Roman dogs said "car-car." Shouldn't that be "chariot-chariot"?

But the influence of onomatopoeia stretches far beyond the imitation of animals. We tend to associate certain sounds with certain connotations. The consonant cluster /sp/ often betokens wetness, as in splash, spray, spit, sprinkle, splatter, spatter, spill, spigot, whereas /cr/ signals breaking or buckling: crack, crumble, cramp, crash, cream (into), cringe, crinkle, crumple, crooked, crouch. Another such association is /fl/ with quick or frantic movement: flail, flap, flip, flop, flicker, flounce, flee, fly, flutter, flash, fleet, flinch, flurry. All these words are clearly at least in part the product of onomatopoeia, on the simple logic that /sp/ sounds like splashing or splattering, /cr/ sounds like cracking, and /fl/ sounds like flapping or fluttering.

Enough such words exist to tempt some linguists into positing a "bow-wow" theory about the origin of language itself, that is, that human speech goes back ultimately to the imitation of natural sounds. Indeed, there is a sizeable portion of vocabulary across the globe which obviously derives from this sort of mimicry, birds' names, for example: crow, whippoorwill, bobwhite, and even the Welsh word for "owl," goody-hoo. While it's abundantly evident that sp-words and bird names as well as many other terms arise from the natural instinct of all humans to copy the sounds they hear around them, it's much harder to make the case that language itself stems from onomatopoeia and the drive to imitate. While onomatopoeia is and almost certainly always has been a force in shaping language, it's impossible to assert conclusively that it gave rise to the initial impulse to speak. And even if it is a generative force, it's only one of many. Symbolic thought, reasoning, and the benefits of working collectively and passing on information all import strengths which surely played a role in the early formation of language. People have only one pair of parents; things can have many progenitors.

And that's it for this video presentation covering Greek Lessons 5 and 6. Next you should listen to the audio presentation on the prefixes and bases in these lessons. You'll find a link to that audio on the course web site. Happy etymologizing!

ASSIGNMENT

This is the audio presentation covering the assignments in Greek Lessons 5 and 6. Please open your textbook to page 188. At the bottom of the page is the prefix *dys*-, meaning "bad, disordered, difficult." To those meanings please add "not" as in dyslogistic ("not favorable"). Also, add the meaning "unlucky" as in disaster, which was originally spelled "dysaster."

The next prefix, at the top of the page 189, is *ec*-/*ex*-. Either variant is the standard form, but the first (*ec*-) should not be confused with a Greek base EC- ("house, dwelling, niche") from which

we get words like economics and ecology. This is an important base. Please learn it! I'm adding it to the canon of bases you should memorize and will be tested on.

To the next prefix *en*- ("in, into") add the sense "on." The *em*- variant will appear when a base begins with b- or p-, as in embolism or empathy. The *el*- variant only occurs in front of l-, as in elliptical.

Skipping *endo*- ("within") ─ which you still need to memorize! ─ put a star next to the following prefix *epi*-. You'll see it a lot. It will then come as no surprise that it has a number of connotations. Besides those which Mr. Ayers cites ("upon, to, in addition to"), please add:

- "on top of": the epidermis lies on top of other skin layers;
- "after," as in the name of the character from Greek myth Epimetheus ─ Epimetheus means literally "after-thought" ─ he's the brother of Prometheus ("fore-thought");
- "against," as in epithet, a name or slur used against people to characterize them, almost always negatively.

There are other connotations this prefix can take too ("in, into, over") but I think the list is long enough for now.

Now to the bases in Lesson 5 on the same page. As always, you're responsible for memorizing all of them, though I'm going to comment on only some, the first of which is CENTR-. Please add the form CENTER- which gives us the word "center." Won't be hard to memorize that one, huh? The base itself is fascinating. The Greek word from which it comes, *kentron*, didn't originally mean "center" but "sting," like the sting of a bee, i.e. a sharp point. The reason the meaning changed is, the easiest way for the ancients to make a circle was to stick a sharp point which they called a "sting" into the surface you were writing on and move a stretched-out piece of string around that point. The sharp point keeps the string stable and if you attach a writing tool to the end of the string, you get a circle. So the "center" of the circle was to the Greeks its "sting," the sharp point anchoring the string.

Moving on, you should know that the base GAM- ("marriage") has a scientific sense, too: "reproduction, propagation." From that comes a closely related base also used in science, GAMET- meaning "an agent of reproduction," like sperm or eggs. Words like "gamete" and "gametophyte" come from this base.

The next base H(A)EM-/H(A)EMAT- is sometimes spelled with an -A- before the -E- ─ more often in Britain than America ─ and if it's preceded by a prefix, it loses its initial H-. Later in this class when we study medical terminology, we'll see this base used as a suffix -*emia* ("a condition of the blood"). In other words, it shows up in medical terminology so much it becomes a suffix.

Skipping down to (H)OD- ("way, road"), don't confuse this base with the one we've studied already OD- ("song"). Usually it's pretty clear whether a word is using the song- or road-base. During the exodus, the Hebrews were on the road, not at the opera.

Notice the vowel grades in the next base STOL-/STAL-/STLE-: an o-grade, an a-grade, and do you remember the term for the last variant STLE-? That's right: a zero-grade.

Finally, to the next-to-last base TAPH- ("tomb") add the meaning "bury." The base often comes into English with a verbal sense.

Now on to Lesson 6 on page 193 where Mr. Ayers gives you another batch of prefixes. What's the collective noun for prefixes? A passel of prefixes? An extension of prefixes? A hyperextension? A super-hyper-preter-dys-extension? Nah, that's just annoying. That's it! An annoyance of prefixes!

Be careful with the first two prefixes, *hyper*- and *hypo*-. They look alike but they mean the opposite of each other. *Hyper*- is "over" and *hypo*- is "under." It might help to note how much they look like their Latin counterparts *super*- and *sub*-. As to the meaning of *hyper*-, there's a modern convention seen mostly in technical terminology that Greek *hyper*- is "more over" than Latin *super*-. Thus, if you're going at supersonic speed, you're moving above the speed of sound; if you're going hypersonic, that's five times the speed of sound.

The next prefix *met*(*a*)- has a complicated history. Basically, it means "after," but because this prefix was associated often with the Greek base for shape MORPH-, as in the word "metamorphosis," it came to have a sense of "change." An "after-shape" implies there was a "before-shape," which in turn implies change. From this change-sense *meta*- came to mean "different," and then "beyond." To wit, the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote a book that was called *The Metaphysics*, because it discusses phenomena that are not part of the natural (physical) world. They are "beyond physics." From that *meta*- has developed yet another sensibility, "transcending," as in metatheatre. A drama which is metatheatrical "transcends" the stage on which it is being played and calls attention to itself as a drama. There are many famous ─ and quite a few of them impromptu ─ metatheatrical moments in theatre history, such as when the famous actor John Barrymore is said to have picked up a cocktail during a play ─ it was a prop, of course, and didn't have any alcohol in it ─ and said, "If only this were real."

To the next prefix *par*(*a*)- append a star. It's very common in Greek-based derivatives. Its basic sense is "beside," that is, "alongside," the way parallel lines run. But because something that's "off to the side" can be seen as not being in the place it ought to be, *para*- also came to mean "disordered," that is, "skewed, sideways, wrong," as in paratragic ("mocking tragedy"). And since things that are not in the right place often stand in opposition to what's more mainstream, *para*- can also convey a sense of opposition, for instance, paradoxical which means "contrary to common belief (DOX-)." But "to the side" doesn't always have to be antagonistic; it can be helpful too, the way paramedics assist doctors or paralegals lawyers. So *para*- can just mean "associated with, related to." If you want a complete rundown of the many connotations of *para*-, you'll need to add all these meanings: "alongside, skewed, sideways, to the side, wrong, contrary to, related to," which seems like a lot, doesn't it? Why don't we just leave it at "to the side, wrong"? That will get you through most derivatives that contain *para*-.

Skipping *peri*- about which I have nothing to add, be careful to distinguish *pro*- and *pros*-. *Pro*- means "before, in front of," whereas *pros*- means "toward, in addition to." They may look alike but their meanings are worlds apart. A prosthesis, for instance, is something that's been "put on (THE-) in addition (*pros*-)." It's an add-on, like an artificial limb. Conversely, a prothesis is

something that's put "in front of" (*pro-*) something else, like a religious offering on a table in front of worshipers.

And finally, Mr. Ayers cites five forms of the last prefix *syn-*: *syn-*, *sym-*, *syl-*, *sy-* and *sys-*. But the last one never appears in English. The second -s- you see in words like system, for instance, or systole is actually part of the base (STE- or STOL-). Remove *sys-* from this list. It's not a variant of *syn-*.

And that's it for prefixes in this lesson, indeed in Greek, in fact, in this whole class!! That's right. We're done with prefixes completely in Latin and Greek ─ after you've memorized the ones we just discussed, of course.

To end this audio presentation, let's look at the bases in this lesson, starting at the bottom of page 193 with BALL-/BOL-/BLE- ("throw, put"). What would linguists call those three variants? That's right: the a-grade (BALL-), the o-grade (BOL-) and the zero-grade (BLE-). To the ancient Greeks, "throwing" could sometimes convey a sense of slandering, like we say "throwing mud on someone." From that sense people who call others bad names and hurl insults at them were deemed "*dia-* ('thoroughly') *-bolical* ('slandering')," thus, diabolical. In the Christian tradition, the word "diabolical" came to be associated with Satan which makes sense. He often slanders God. Later, the diabol- stem evolved into "devil" in English, *diablo* in Spanish.

To DOX-/DOG- add the meanings "learning, observation." "Teaching" and "opinion" are often connected with those.

In the next presentation where I'll discuss a linguistic principle called "Grimm's Law," you'll see that the Greek base GNO(S)-, spelled with an initial G-, is cognate with our word "know" ─ as in "you know" ─ the "know" that starts with a k- which is now a silent letter. I'll show you why Greek GNO- and English "know" may look different but are actually related.

Be careful not to confuse the Greek base HOM(E)- ("same, similar") with the totally unrelated Latin base HOMO- ("man"). Remember: not all men are the same.

The base ONYM- has a variant form ONOMAT- which you should add here. ONYM- derives from a nominative form, whereas ONOMAT- is the more common base form.

The "go" meaning of PHER-/PHOR- ("bear") comes from the sense "bear oneself." If you bear yourself somewhere, you go there. Notice how close this is to its Latin cognate FER-, but here in Greek there's no LAT- variant. Isn't that nice?

And last on this list is TACT-/TAX- ("arrange, put in order") which also has a Latin homonym, TACT- ("touch"). As distant as these senses may seem, the Latin and Greek TACT-'s are, in fact, cognate. Underlying both is a sense of "handle, affect."

And whew! We're finally done with Greek Lessons 5 and 6. Now it's time to start preparing for Quiz 4, the first assessment in the Greek section of the class. On that quiz you'll be asked about the terms we studied from Greek myth and history, as well as the prefixes and bases we've

covered in Greek Lessons 3-6. Well, don't just sit there! Turn this presentation off and start reviewing your flashcards. Time's a-wasting! Speaking of which, what's the Greek base for "time"? CHRON-. See! You need to study.

Happy ─ if ever so stressful ─ Etymologizing!