

Introduction of the Greek Verb Clause: Syntactical Values

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Syntactical Values

A verb is a word such as 'drive', 'travel' and 'swim' which says what someone or something does or what happens to them or to give information about them. In this issue, we will be looking at the ways the Greek verb clause behaves in a sentence (syntactical attitude of a verb).

Some of the most common ways you will find a Greek verb clause are the following:

1) On its own. In other words, a sentence without a subject (a doer) or an object (a recipient of the action that is done). Example: $\phi\tau\alpha\sigma\epsilon\iota$. [Back Translation: Arrived.]

2) Combined with a subject (a doer). Example: $\omicron\gamma\alpha\mu\iota\alpha\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$. [Back Translation: The John arrived.]

3) Combined with a subject (a doer) and an object (a recipient of the action that is done).

Example: $\omicron\gamma\alpha\mu\iota\alpha\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\ \mu\epsilon$.

[Back Translation: The John invited the Mary.]

4) Combined with just an object (a recipient of the action that is done). Example: $\kappa\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\ \mu\epsilon$. [Back Translation: Invited the Mary.]

5) Combined with a subject (a doer) and two objects, a direct object (word or words that denote the receiver of the action of a verb, i.e. "me" in "he hit me") and an indirect object (person or thing indirectly affected by the action of the verb, i.e. "him" in "give him the book").

Example: $\omicron\gamma\alpha\mu\iota\alpha\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \mu\epsilon\ \delta\epsilon\delta\omicron\tau\alpha\iota\ \mu\epsilon$ [direct object] $\mu\epsilon$.

[Back Translation: The John brought a gift to the Mary.]

6) Combined with two objects but not any subject (any doer), a direct object (word or words that denote the receiver of the action of a verb, i.e. "me" in "he hit me") and an indirect object (person or thing indirectly affected by the action of the verb, i.e. "him" in "give him the book").

Example: $\phi\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \mu\epsilon\ \delta\epsilon\delta\omicron\tau\alpha\iota\ \mu\epsilon$.

[Back Translation: Brought a gift to the Mary.]

7) Combined with adverbial modifiers (words such as "slowly", "often", "fortunately" etc. which adds information about the action, event or situation mentioned in the sentence, usually expressing "time", as in the following examples but also "place", "manner", "cause", "purpose" etc.). 1st Example (with a subject and an adverbial modifier-time): $\omicron\gamma\alpha\mu\iota\alpha\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \chi\epsilon\theta\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$. [Back Translation: The John arrived yesterday.] 2nd Example (without a subject): $\phi\tau\alpha\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \chi\epsilon\theta\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$. [Back Translation: Arrived yesterday.]

8) Preceding the verb clause, other particles (small words) that express tense (verbal time, words such as 'will') or negation (word that denotes 'not doing something', therefore a word such as "not"). 1st Example with a tense particle:

$\omicron\gamma\alpha\mu\iota\alpha\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \theta\epsilon\alpha\ \phi\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \delta\epsilon\delta\omicron\tau\alpha\iota$.

[Back Translation: The John will bring the gift.] 2nd Example with a negation particle:

$\omicron\gamma\alpha\mu\iota\alpha\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \delta\epsilon\delta\omicron\tau\alpha\iota\ \mu\epsilon\ \phi\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \delta\epsilon\delta\omicron\tau\alpha\iota$.

[Back Translation: The John not brought gift.]

9) Preceded by weak forms (one syllable, non-stressed forms usually combined with verbs) of object pronouns (words used to replace objects, such as "me", "him", "us", "them" etc. in English).

Example: Ο Γι~ννησf; μοn;υ ε~πεpsilon; Ιτι
-φεpsilon; ρεpsilon; τοn; δΙροn;.

[Back Translation: Τhe John me told that brought the gift.] All the above are the most common syntactical structures you will find with a Greek verb clause. It is important to mention that because Greek is a highly inflected language (addition of an ending or other element to the basic form of a word to change its meaning or function), the position of the words is quite flexible. In addition, as you have probably noticed because of the inflected verbal forms, the omission of the subject (‘the doer’) is quite common in Greek since the ending of the verb expresses which person you are referring to. In the next issue, we will be making some preliminary notes on the grammatical ways that the Greek verb system behaves. What’s encouraging about the Greek language though is that you do not have to master the inflections (i.e. the endings of words) to communicate your message. This will take time and extra exposure to the Greek language. Bear in mind that you need to set realistic goals in the learning or better understanding of the Greek language. It is the same with a non-native English speaker who hasn’t mastered the usage of prepositions. That doesn’t in any case mean that the message hasn’t been communicated which is what language usage is mostly about.