

Language Translation Helps

As you start to study a Language, you should sound words in your mind as you read them, so that they become part of the aural memory in your brain. As you continue reading and studying your analytical skills will develop.

As your studies progress, there will be less emphasis on writing out and speaking aloud the Latin or Greek passages.

You should start to develop the following means of working with Latin or Greek passages :

1. Read a passage straight through (as if you were reading a story in English), either aloud or sounding the words in your mind. When you have read the passage through, you will have a good idea of the main story-line, but probably will not have worked out just what every word means and how it fits into its sentence.
2. Read through the passage again, one sentence at a time.
Analyze what the sentence says, and how each word fits into the sentence - is it the verb? the subject? the object? if it is an adjective, which noun does it qualify?
Ask yourself - Who is doing what?, to whom?, with what?, where?, when?, why?, in what manner (how)?
3. If the sentence is long and involved, a good way of getting to its meaning is to go through the sequence:
 - i. Break the sentence up into clauses (which should contain a finite verb) and phrases, and identify the main clause. Then for each clause :
 - ii. Find the main verb (is it active or passive, singular or plural, 1st, 2nd, 3rd person?)
 - iii. Find the subject of the verb.
This will probably be a noun in the nominative. It could also be a pronoun or an adjective standing in for a noun, which agrees in number and person with the verb.
Remember that the subject could just be contained in the verb itself.
 - iv. If the verb is transitive and active - look for the Object of the sentence (probably something in the accusative, though some verbs take other cases).
If the verb is transitive and passive - look for the Agent :
In Latin (Wheelock, chapter 18), usually an ablative with "**ab**" ("by")
In Greek, usually a genitive with "**ὄπο**".
If the verb is intransitive - there will not be an Object or Agent.
 - v. Look for an Indirect Object - usually a dative
 - vi. Find any adjectives that agree with the Subject, Object or Agent, or Indirect Object.
 - vii. Find any adverbs.
 - viii. Identify and translate any adjectival or adverbial phrases and fit them into the structure of the clause.
 - ix. Repeat for all the clauses in the sentence.
 - x. Fit the clauses of the sentence together, and you will have the complete sentence.
4. Look up any words you don't recognize, and if it helps you to learn them, write them out or add them to your flash-cards.
If I am working with a passage, I make a list of the words I don't know, analyze their grammatical form, and write out the dictionary form of the word and its meaning. I usually make notes of related words, roots, and English cognates. Then I file the pages of notes in a binder for that text, and they are ready for the next time I read the text.

Example : Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 1-4

This sentence is quite complicated - you will not have to deal with this degree of complexity until the 400-level language courses. I am using it as an example to show how even long and complex sentences can be analyzed and translated.

English :

God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Greek :

Πολυμερως και πολυτροπως παλαι ο Θεος λαλησας τοις πατρασιν εν τοις προφηταις επ' εσχατου των ημερων τουτων ελαλησεν ημιν εν υιω, ον εκεν κληρονομον παντων, δι' ου και εποιησεν τους αιωνας · ος ων απαυγασμα της δοξης και χαρακτηρ της υποσατασεως αυτου, φερων τε τα παντα τω ρηματι της δυναμεως αυτου, καρισμον των αμαρτιων ποιησαμεωνος εκασεν εν δεξια της μεγαλωσυνης εν υψηλοις, τοσουτω κρειπτων γενομενος των αγγελων οσω διαφορωτερον παρ' αυτους κεκληρονομηκεν ονομα.

Latin :

Multifariam, multisque modis olim Deus loquens patribus in prophetis: novissime, diebus istis locutus est nobis in Filio, quem constituit haeredem universorum, per quem fecit et saecula; qui cum sit splendor gloriae, et figura substantiae eius, portansque omnia verbo virtutis suae, purgationem peccatorum faciens, sedet ad dexteram maiestatis in excelsis: tanto melior angelis effectus, quanto differentius prae illis nomen haereditavit.

i. Clauses : look for relative pronouns to help find clauses :

"who . . . prophets" (The Greek and Latin passages use an Aorist or Past participle ("having spoken") instead of a Relative Pronoun - English uses a Relative Pronoun, "who", - "who" is the nominative, so is describing the Subject of the sentence)

"whom . . . (all) things" "ον . . . παντων", "quem . . . universorum" - the Relative Pronoun is in the accusative, so this phrase is describing the Object of the sentence.

"by whom . . . worlds" "δι' ου . . . τους αιωνας" "per quem . . . saecula" - the Relative Pronoun is qualified by a preposition indicating "the agent by which someone did something"

"who . . . sat down . . . on high" "ος . . . εκαθισεν . . . εν υψηλοις" "qui . . . sedet . . . in excelsis:" A long clause, containing a subsidiary clause and several subsidiary phrases, describing "Son" "being made so much better than the angels" " τοσουτω κρειπτων γενομενος των αγγελων" " tanto melior angelis effectus" - this is a phrase rather than a clause (no finite verb) containing a participle (being made, γενομενος, effectus). When the main structure of the sentence has been worked out, it will be easier find which noun this phrase describes. The masculine singular nominative endings of γενομενος and "effectus" tell us to look for a masculine singular noun.

"as he hath . . . than they" "οσω . . . κεκληρονομηκεν ονομα" "quanto differentius prae illis nomen haereditavit" - "as" "οσω" and "quanto" indicate that this is a subsidiary clause. When the main structure of the sentence has been worked out we will be able to fit this clause to the correct noun. The verb in the clause is 3rd person singular, so we will need to fit it to a singular noun or pronoun.

Putting the subsidiary clauses aside, we are left with the main statement of the sentence :

"God . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"

"ὁ Θεὸς . . ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ"

"Deus . . novissime, diebus istis locutus est nobis in Filio"

Even if one cannot translate any more of the sentence, one has its main idea.

ii. To go further with this clause (or any clause) - look for the verb.

"hath spoken" "ἐλάλησεν" "locutus est" :

Third person singular active (and the Latin tells us "masculine")

"to speak" can be either transitive eg. "he speaks good words" or intransitive eg. "he speaks", and it can have an Indirect Object eg. "he speaks to the crowd"

iii. Look for the Subject - this is easy in all the languages - "God", "Deus", " Θεὸς "

Greek even uses "ὁ" with "Θεὸς" - this is one of the easiest ways of finding the Subject in Greek.

Now we have **"God has spoken"**

iv. None of the words is in the accusative, so we probably do not have a Direct Object.

v. There is an Indirect Object (dative)

"unto us" " ἡμῖν" "nobis"

Now we have **"God has spoken to us"**

vi. There are no adjectives to fit with the Subject or Indirect Object

vii. Adverbs to describe the verb - Latin uses "novissime" (lastly, at the end, in the last place).

English and Greek use an adverbial phrase (see viii.)

viii. Adverbial phrases :

"Time when" -

"in these last days"

"ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων" (at the end of these days)

"novissime, diebus istis" (lastly / in the last place / at the last time, in these days)

and "Means by which" -

"by His Son" "ἐν υἱῷ" "in Filio"

English adds "his" to describe "Son", but neither Latin nor Greek do this.

ix. One can now work through the other clauses in a similar manner, until the whole sentence is translated. Even if the other clauses do not "fall into place", we still have the main statement.

This sentence is an example of how Paul and other writers might get carried away by the thought of Jesus, and add a string of phrases and clauses expressing thanks and glory.