

# Translating Greek ô Quick Tips

Bill Snodgrass

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What follows is a very basic strategy for getting started translating Biblical Greek to English. The resulting translations will be stiff, öwoodenõ works reflecting what might be found in interlinear efforts. Once the word-by-word translation that this strategy produces is created, the translator will need to apply rules of syntax (c.f. Wallace, Mounce, et. al) to arrive at a smooth, final, translation.

The key to translation is to first determine the word's part of speech (i.e. noun, verb, etc.). Once that is determined, the next step is to parse the word further. Nouns parse into cases (e.g. nominative, accusative, etc.). Verbs parse into tense (e.g. present active indicative, future active indicative, etc.). Number and Gender also play a part in translating.

Methods for parsing the words will be left to other references. This approach assumes you already know what the word is, needing therefore to translate it into English.

## **1. Nouns**

Nouns in Greek function in five cases.

### **1.1 Nominative Nouns**

The Nominative noun needs no translative context. It is usually the subject of the clause. The Nominative specifies the person, place, or thing that is causing the action that follows.

If no article is provided, assume the indefinite ὁ ἄ. ὁ (This is true for all cases.)

λογος ὁ a word  
ὁ λογος ὁ the word

λόγοι ὁ words  
οἱ λόγοι ὁ the words

## 1.2 Genitive Nouns

Wallace outlines a vast array of uses of the Genitive. For ὁ Quick Translation, ὁ go with answering the question ὁ From where did this generate? ὁ The Genitive is specifying the source of the object on which the verb operates. Many times, this will be in the possessive form or will be represented by the ὁ of ὁ preposition.

λόγου ὁ of/from a word  
τοῦ λόγου ὁ of/from the word

λόγων ὁ of/from words  
τῶν λόγων ὁ of/from the words

### 1.2.1 Genitive Nouns with Prepositions

When a preposition is used with a Genitive noun, it generally will not be necessary to use the of/from in the final translation, but it is helpful to include them in your first, rough-pass, translation.

e.g. John 1:3

δι' αὐτοῦ

/ through / of/from-him /

through him

## 1.3 Dative Nouns

Agian, Wallace outlines a vast array of uses of the Dative. For ὁ Quick Translation, ὁ

assume a noun in the Dative case is specifying the **recipient** of the person, place, or thing that the verb is acting on. Thus, it is a handy start to translate the dative with *ōto/in/byō* as a leading idea.

λόγω ὁ to/in/by a word  
τῷ λόγῳ ὁ to/in/by the word

λόγοις ὁ to/in/by a word  
τοῖς λόγοις ὁ to/in/by the word

### 1.4 Accusative Nouns

The first way to think of the accusative is as the direct object. It is the person, place, or thing that was acted on by the verb. It does not need an introductory idea, as such. The Accusative is the person, place, or thing that receives the action of the verb.

λόγον ὁ a word  
τόν λόγον ὁ the word

λόγους ὁ words  
τούς λόγους ὁ the words

### 1.5 Vocative Nouns

The Vocative case is used for the person, place or thing being addressed<sup>ō</sup>spoken/written to<sup>ō</sup>by the sentence. No translative amendment is needed. Translate the noun directly.

In American English, you will want to follow the address with a comma to create this form:

Bob, I came to see you.

*ō*Bob<sup>ō</sup> in this example is in the Vocative case.

λόγε ὁ Word, ...

(λόγε is admittedly not the best choice to illustrate Vocative case.)

## 1.6 Summary

The Vocative case is used for the person, place or thing being addressed/spoken/written to

*In the chart below, keep in mind that "action" might be something like "visited" or it might be something like "threw." Some verbs cannot have direct objects, of course. (e.g. died)*

Nominative ô Person, place, or thing that initiates the action.

Accusative ô Person, place, or thing that is acted upon.

Genitive ô The source of the person, place, or thing that is acted upon, or the source person, place or thing that initiates the action.

Dative ô The person, place, or thing that receives the Accusative from the Nominative

Vocative ô The person, place or thing being told.

### 1.6.1 Meaningless Example

Vocative, Nominative of/from Genitive [action] Accusative of/from Genitive to/in/by Dative of/from Genitive

### 1.6.2 Less Meaningless Example

*Vocative, **Nominative** of/from Genitive [action] **Accusative** of/from Genitive to/in/by Dative of/from Genitive*

Perhaps:

Victoria, the nomad gave the account of the general to the daughter.

*Bob*, **Sally** from Boston [*sent*] **the men** from New York to Earl's Restaurant.