Do, *Dare*, *Davi*, *Datus*: "Correct Mistakes" and Morphological Awareness in Greek and Latin

When my student offered *davi* as the perfect of *do, dare*, did he make a mistake? To my knowledge, the form appears nowhere in extant Latin, and it is certainly not in any textbook. So, yes, *davi* is wrong in that regard. However, the student was correct to infer *davi* on the model of other 1st conjugation perfects, and there is no reason to presume that a Latin speaker never said *davi*, too. The fact that the student appealed to a known morphological pattern when he proposed the form makes it what I call a "correct mistake"—a plausible and sometimes actual form of a word that, for one reason or another, is not the preferred form in the standard language.

The student who proposed *davi* should of course be taught *dedi*. However, he should also be rewarded for engaging in valid morphological word building. Indeed, it is partly with morphemes that we create meaningful statements from otherwise disparate lexical units and interpret words we encounter in our own first language. It is perhaps no surprise that morphological awareness is of growing interest in the ESL classroom (see among others Deacon and Kirby 2004, Kieffer and Lesaux 2007, Karimi 2012, Oz 2014, Badawi 2019). Regrettably, in Greek and Latin the active use of morphology for word building and analysis is generally absent, despite calls for more substantial use of it (for instance Sweet 1951, Knudsvig and Ross 1998, Wallace 2007, Major and Stayskal 2011). This is true even in more innovative approaches, which still tend to rely on already assembled final forms. Where present, morphological analysis is passive, limited to notes elucidating charts or footnoting exceptional forms as an afterthought. This paper hopes to fix this by proposing a methodological framework for using morphological analysis to accompany existing Greek and Latin textbooks, or even in place of a textbook altogether.

This paper focuses specifically on morphemes that mark aspect in Greek and Latin. In so doing, it demonstrates a morphological approach whereby students build final forms like principal parts, rely on morphemes as much as roots when reading (e.g. "I verb the nouns and the noun" is a good translation of *arma virumque cano*), and in the case of Greek interpret new tenses without formal instruction (e.g. in ἔτεμνε, the ἐ- marks past time and the nu progressive aspect: "he/she/it was verb-ing"). We may not always divine what morpheme(s) a root prefers (the perfect of *rapio* is *rapui*, not *repi*), and that is fine, for correct mistakes are welcome in this approach. Yet by uncovering morphological patterns often obscured by the traditional word-and-paradigm model, we significantly reduce the quantity of forms that must otherwise be memorized in order to read, and we read complex material with increased fluency.

The principle of the approach proposed in this paper is that all linguistic material must be pragmatic, meaning that it is immediately helpful for reading, and correct, meaning that the simplification of a rule in order for it to be pragmatic cannot result in a rule that is historically wrong. Reluctance to teach morphology is no doubt due in part to the presumption that it is beyond the capacity of a teacher without training in Greek and Latin historical linguistics. To overcome this perceived disciplinary obstacle, this paper includes the debut of a free interactive digital resource for teachers and students alike who wish to improve their morphological intuition when composing and reading Greek and Latin.

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