Glossary of Greek Grammar Terms
by David P. Smith[1]

Ablative– In an eight case system this case takes the form of the genitive and denotes separation or source.

Absolute, Genitive– A participial absolute is a construction where a noun or pronoun functions as the subject of the action implied by a participle which is in the same case as the substantive. This construction is grammatically unrelated to the subject of the main clause, hence, absolute. The participle is translated as a finite verb. The most common form of this construction is the Genitive Absolute. Notice ὀψίας γενομένης, "When evening had come." But the NT also has *Nominative* (also called *nominativus pendens* or the "hanging nominative") and *Accusative Absolute* constructions. See Rev 3:12 (Nom. Abs.), Ph 1:7 (Acc. Abs.).

Accidence– The aspect of grammar that deals with the inflections of words.

Accusative Absolute– See Absolute, Genitive.

Accusative of General Reference– Also, Epexegetical Infinitive, Accusative of Definition, Adverbial Accusative of Reference. A construction with an accusative plus an infinitive where the accusative functions almost like the subject of the infinitive. Notice Ph 1:10 where δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς, is translated "that you might prove."

Agglutinative– Used to denote a compound word that is formed from two or more separate words; from *agglutinate* or "glue together." Such words as εὐ-δοκέω and παρα-κλήτος, are agglutinative compounds.

Anacoluthon– This denotes a sharp break in the structure of a sentence or the failure to complete a sentence as intended. For example, a *Suspended Subject* (a noun, pronoun, or participle "left by the wayside") or a *Digression* (where the writer "chases a rabbit") is an Anacoluthon. See Ph 1:28

Anaphoric Use of the Article– Also, Article of Previous Mention. Denotes the use of the article without an accompanying substantive where the article refers to something already mentioned or implied. See Ph 1:12; 2:9.

Anarthrous– Denotes the absence of an article in a construction where one might be expected.

Antecedent– A word previously used in a sentence to which another, later word relates.

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[1]This glossary was distributed to Greek classes at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary by James Lowell Blevins during the 1990's. For further information please contact Robert Lee Foster at rfoster@wbcoll.edu.

Antecedent Action– Prior or preceding action; e.g., an aorist participle denotes antecedent action, or action prior to that of the main verb.

Aktionsart– Refers to the kind of action of a verb as opposed to time of action. Examples are; punctiliar, durative, iterative, and perfective.

Aoristic– From ἀόριστος, the word 'aorist' means "without boundaries or limits." The term "aoristic" may be used to describe other verbal ideas, such as present, perfect, and future. That is true because greater stress is placed on kind of action with the aorist than simply on the time of action.

Apodosis– The main clause in a conditional sentence; the "then" clause. Notice the apodosis of Ph 2:2 to the compound protasis in 2:1. See Protasis.

Aposiopesis– A conscious break in a sentence due to strong emotion. Also, the omission of an apodosis after a protasis. See Mk 11:32, Lk 13:9, John 6:62, Ac 23:9. Also Rom 7:24, Rev 22:9.

Apposition– A construction where two substantives relate to one another and stand in the same syntactical relationship to the rest of the sentence. These substantives, therefore, generally share the same case. One exception to this rule is the idiom of the *Genitive in Apposition* where the genitive case is used in apposition to the nominative of the subject. This is not common in the N.T. (See II Pet 2:6, Lk 2:4).

Articular– Denotes the presence of an article in a construction. Some special constructions include: *Articular Infinitive*– Where an anaphoric article is coupled with an infinitive verb, Ph 1:21, 23,29; 2:6, 4:10; *Articular Participle*, which is attributive, Ph 3:18.

Aspiration– The use of a rough breathing mark and its accompanying *h* sound in pronunciation.

Asyndeton– The lack of particles or connecting words, especially καὶ and ἤ, in a long string of words or phrases where these might be expected. See Polysyndeton. See Ph 2:1.

Attraction– Denotes a constructive where the case of the object in a relative clause is governed by its antecedent rather than the verb. It is common for the accusative of the direct object to be attracted to genitive case of its antecedent. See Eph 1:8.

Attributive– Any word or phrase that ascribes a quality or *attributes* a characteristic to a substantive.

Augment– A preformative attached to a verb to indicate past action in the indicative mood. For words starting with a consonant the augment is an ἐ prefix. For words starting with vowel the augment is a lengthening of that vowel, e.g., ε becomes η.

Brachylogy– Also, Breviloquence. A passage where the writer's thought seems to move more quickly than his pen. The words are compressed together and some are omitted which would make the reading smoother or less obscure. Notice Mk 2:10; 14:49. See also Ellipsis.

Causal Clause– See Clauses.

Chiasm– A literary pattern involving the schema a b / b a where the order of the words or concepts of the first movement is reversed in the second. See Ph 1:15-17 and Col. 3:11.

Circumlocution– An around about way of saying something; adding unnecessary words to express an idea.

Clauses– The term "clause" can be used of any construction that contains a subject and predicate and that functions within a compound or complex Greek sentence. They can, therefore, take a number of descriptive names, depending on what word, purpose, tense, function, etc. is controlling the clause. For instance clauses can be participial, adverbial, adjectival, conditional, etc. depending on how they function in the sentence. The following is a short list of some of the more difficult clauses to define.

> *Causal Clause*– Usually these are marked by the use of *causal* ὅτι or διότι. The clause gives the reason or *cause* for the action expressed by the verb in the main clause of the sentence. The words "since" or "because" are often used to introduce these clauses. Ph 2:26; 4:11.

> *Comparative Clause*– These are clauses that modify the main clause by *comparing* or by showing the manner in which something is done. The comparative particles ὡς, ὥσπερ, καθώς, καθάπερ, etc. introduce these clauses. Ph 2:8, 12.

> *Concessive Clause*– These are conditional clauses with the addition of καὶ, either καὶ εἰ or καὶ ἐάν ("even if") or εἰ καὶ ("if also"). This is a clause that *concedes* to some degree the supposition of a previous point. Ph 3:4, 15.

> *Conditional Clause*– One of the two clauses, protasis and apodosis, that make up a conditional sentence. See Protasis and Apodosis.

> *Consecutive Clause*– See Result Clause.

> *Discourse Clause, Direct or Indirect*– These are clauses usually introduced by ὅτι (although ἵνα or ὅπως can be used) that contain the content of a speech or saying either verbatim (direct discourse where the ὅτι functions like quotation marks in English, e.g., Ph 2:11) or paraphrased (indirect discourse, e.g., 2:26).
> *Final Clause*– See Purpose Clause

Hypotactic Clause– Also Dependent, Subordinate Clause. Relative, causal, comparative, local, temporal, purpose, result, conditional, and discourse clauses are all considered hypotactic. See Hypotactic.

Local Clause– This is a Relative Clause that uses an adverb, ὅθεν, οὗ, or ὅπου, as a conjunction to introduce the clause. See Relative Clause.

Paratactic Clause– See Paratactic.

Parenthetical Clause– A clause that is inserted into a sentence without proper syntactical relationship to the sentence. It is usually used for elaboration or explanation of an idea previously used in the sentence. Ph 1:28.

Purpose Clause– also Final Clause. This clause is formed with the subjunctive and is introduced by ἵνα. The subjunctive indicates the *purpose* of the action of the main clause. It is a subordinate or hypotactic clause. Ph. 1:9. See Result Clause, Hypotactic.

Relative Clause– This clause is usually marked by the use of a *relative* pronoun, e.g., ὅς, although sometimes τίς can be used as a relative pronoun. A relative clause is used in the predicate in place of a substantive or to modify a previously used substantive. These clauses are usually translated with the words "who," "which," "what" or some other relative word. Ph 2:5, 6.

Result Clause– also Consecutive Clause. This clause is formed with the subjunctive and is introduced by ἵνα as is the purpose clause listed above. It differs, however, in that in the Result Clause the subjunctive indicates what the result of the action of main clause is. See Purpose Clause. Ph 1:27.

Temporal Clause– A subcategory of the Relative Clause, the temporal clause introduces an aspect of time or concessive action into the sentence. The words ὅτε and ὅταν, translated "when" or "whenever," and ἄξι, μέχρι, and ἕως, translated "until" or "while," usually introduce temporal clauses. Ph 2:8; 4:15.

Conative Action– Action that is just beginning or an act that has begun but is interrupted. See Inchoative Action.

Concatenation of Genitives– The denotes a long series of genitives used one after another. Paul is particularly fond of piling up genitives in this way. This term is usually used for genitives although *concatenation* can refer to any series that is liked together in a chain. See Ph 2:30; 3:8.

Constructio ad Sensum– A construction in which the sense of a word or phrase is considered and not necessarily the grammatical form. For instance a singular noun which refers to a number of people, e.g., ὄχλος, will often take a plural verb. The agreement is to the *sense* of the noun and not its form. See Solecism.

Concord– Refers to the grammatical agreement between words; e.g., *case concord* is expected when a noun is in apposition to its antecedent.

Copula– A word used to connect sentences or clauses. Ἐιμί is a copulative verb which is often used as a connective rather than as the predicate in a sentence. Also, καί, τέ, οὔτε μήτε, οὐδέ μηδέ are copulative conjunctions.

Coronis– An apostrophe over a contracted syllable. See Crasis.

Crasis– The combination of two words into one word; e.g., καί + ἐγώ = κἀγώ.

Dative of Advantage– Also, *Dativus commodi.* The personal relationship established by the use of the dative is viewed in a favorable way.

Dative of Disadvantage– *Dativus incommodi.* The personal relationship established by the use of the dative is viewed in an unfavorable way.

Deictic– Demonstrative.

Deliberative Questions– Using either the subjunctive or future indicative, these questions ask about possibility, desirability, or necessity rather than asking for the facts. Ph 1:22.

Diacritical Marks– Marks made near a letter or diphthong that the letter or diphthong a phonetic value. The accents, breathing marks, and dieresis are diacritics.

Dieresis– A mark (¨) placed above the second vowel in a series of vowels to show that the combination is not to be translated as a diphthong.

Disjunctive Conjunctions– A conjunction that expresses alter native or opposing ideas between the words it connects; e.g., ἤ which is usually translated "or."

Durative– Verbal action that is linear, in progress, and may be either timeless (ἐστίς ὁ θεός) or simply present in nature.

Ellipsis– A case where a word(s) is left out of a construction where it might be expected. In Ph 4:17 οὐχ ὅτι could read οὐ λέγω ὅτι. See also Brachylogy.

Elative Superlative– A superlative that has the sense of "very" or "exceedingly," e.g., μάλιστα in Ph 4:22.

Elision– The omission of an unstressed vowel or syllable, particularly the final vowel of a word before a word that begins with a similar sound; e.g., κατ᾽ ἐμε in Ph 1:12 and δι᾽ εὐδοκίαν in Ph 1:15.

Ellipsis– The omission of a word or phrase when it is implied by the construction; e.g., ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς in Ph 4:5 where ἔστι would be expected; also, ἐν δέ in Ph 3:13 where a verb is expected.

Enallage casuum– where one case is used for another; e.g., a genitive is to be understood as an accusative.

Enclitic– Denotes a word that does not have and accent and is pronounced with the preceding word. Ph 1:20, ἐν τῷ σώματί μου; here, μου is enclitic with the accent moving to the ultima of the previous word.

Epanadiplosis– The repetition of a word to make a powerful effect on the reader; often due to strong emotion. See Lk 8:24, Mt 25:11, Rev 18:2. Also, the recurrence of βλέπετε in Ph 3:2 (although that may better be identified as paronomasia).

Epexegetic– Additional explanation or explanatory material. Often a word in apposition is epexegetic, as in Ph 3:6 where τὴν ἐν νόμῳ is in epexegetical apposition to δικαιοσύνη. An *epexegetical infinitive* clause may be added to further the thought of the main sentence, as in Ph 3:13 where ἐγὼ ἐμαυτὸν . . . κατειληφέναι provides explanation for the main verb οὐ λογίζομαι. In the epexegetical infinitive the accusative is used almost like the subject of the infinitive.

Epexegetical Infinitive– See Epexegetic and Accusative of General Reference.

Epistolary Aorist– This aorist is used when a writer of a letter views the letter as the reader will. Hence, the aorist is used to describe an action that is in fact present for the writer.

Futuristic– Usually used to describe verbs or participles with tenses other than future which have some temporal relationship to the future.

Genitive Absolute– See Absolute, Genitive.

Gnomic– Used to denote a timeless or universal truth in any of the verb tenses; e.g., a *Gnomic Aorist*. (Or Timeless Aorist).

Hebraism– A Greek construction that shows the obvious influence of Hebrew grammar, vocabulary, or thought.

Hendiadys– This is the coordination of two ideas, one of which is dependent on the other. This is used in the NT to avoid a series of dependent genitives. See Acts 23:6, 14:17, 1:25; I Pet 4:14; Ja 5:10; Lk 2:27; etc. See Hypotactic.

Heteroclisis– Also, Metaplasm. The use of irregular forms in the declensions of nouns.

Hiatus– The presence of two vowel sounds together when a word begins with a vowel following a word that ends in a vowel; e.g. ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς, in Ph 2:27. See Crasis, Elision.

Hortatory Subjunctive– Also Volitive Subjunctive. The use of a subjunctive to express a strong desire on the part of the speaker for something to take place. It almost has the force of an imperative except that the necessity is located in the speaker rather than in those addressed. In Ph 3:15, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν should be translated "let us (or 'we should') think in this fashion."

Hyperbaton– An artificial placement of a word that breaks a natural word order. Hyperbaton is usually used of adverbs. See Prolepsis.

Hypocoristic– This denotes an abbreviated personal name. For instance, Ἐπαφρᾶς, Col 1:17 and 4:12 is a hypocoristic form of Ἐπαφρόδιτος, Ph 2:25 and 4:18, although they are not necessarily the same person.

Hypotactic– From ὑπόταξις. The placement of a word, phrase, or clause into syntactical subordination to another by the use of subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns. See Paratactic.

Inceptive– Also, Inchoative, Ingressive. Denotes emphasis being placed on the beginning of the action or state of a verb.

Inchoative– Also, Inceptive, Ingressive. Denotes the beginning of the action or state of a verb.

Ingressive– Also, Inchoative, Inceptive. Denotes the beginning point of an action.

Intransitive– This denotes a verb or verbal construction that does not have or contain a direct object. See Transitive.

Iterative– Verbal action that is repeated over and over.

κ.τ.λ.– καὶ τὰ λοιπά = "and the rest". This is an abbreviation used for Greek text similar to the English "etc."

Latinism– The obvious influence of Latin grammar or vocabulary on a New Testament Greek construction.

Linear– See Durative.

Metaplasm– See Heteroclisis.

Nominatus pendens– See Absolute, Genitive.

Oblique Case– Any case other than the nominative and vocative. In the five case system these are the genitive, dative, and accusative.

Objective Genitive– This denotes a genitive phrase where the genitive functions as the object of the construction. The substantive it modifies functions as the subject. In Ph 3:9 πίστεως Χριστοῦ can be translated "faith *in* Christ" where Christ, the genitive in question, is the object of faith. See Subjective Genitive.

Onomatopoetic– A word that imitates the sound of its phonetic origins. For instance, "buzz" or "bark" (what dogs say to each other) are words that are derived from the sounds of the animals.

Oratio variata– This denotes the use of a heterogeneous structure (the lack of parallel) in a sentence. For instance, in Ph 1:23-24 the participle ἔχων is used with the infinitive in verse 23 but not in the parallel clause in verse 24. Often *oratio variata* is marked by the inclusion of a word that causes a break in the sentence structure but which is deemed necessary by the author for clarity. See Anacoluthon.

Parechesis– Recurrence of the same sound with different words in close proximity to one another. Similar to assonance. See Rom 1:29, 31.

Parenthesis– See clause, Parenthetical.

Paronomasia– The recurrence of the same word or word stem within a sentence. More strictly this is defined as the same root being used as both a verb and a substantive. See Ph 3:2-3 and 4:2; also Mt 21:41: I Tim 1:18.

Paratactic– From παράταξις. The coordination of two parallel words, phrases, or clauses, sometimes without connecting conjunctions or particles. See Hypotactic.

Partitive Genitive– The genitive serves to indicate the whole of which a part is taken.

Pendens– See Absolute, Genitive.

Perfective– A condition or state that is the result of past action.

Periphrastic– This denotes the use of a participle coupled with a form of εἰμί, both with the same tense. Hence, a *periphrastic imperfect* is an participle following an imperfect form of εἰμι. Although the periphrastic imperfect is the most common usage of this construction the other tenses are used in the NT as well. For example, Mk 5:5 ἦν κράζων, "He was crying out," and Mk 5:41 ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον, "Which is interpreted." *Periphrases* means the use of lengthy construction where a shorter form might be expected. (Sometimes μέλλω is used in place of the εἰμι form in periphrastic constructions).

Pleonasm– a habit of speech where an idea is repeated in a sentence. For instance, Mk 13:33, βλέπετε, ἀγρυπνεῖτε, "Watch Out! Be aware!"

Polysyndeton– The repeated use of the particle, especially καὶ, in long strings of words or phrases. Notice the use of καὶ in Ph 4:12. See Asyndeton.

Postpositive– This denotes a word that never begins a sentence. Ἄν, γὰρ, δὲ, and οὖς are examples of postpositive words in the NT.

Pregnant Locative– This denotes the use of ἐν in a locative construction where εἰς, would be more likely. The term pregnant can also be used of other situations where the meaning or concept is not fully expressed by construction.

Proclitic– A word, usually a personal pronoun, that loses its accent to a following word and is pronounced as a unit with it. See Enclitic.

Prolepsis– Simply put, prolepsis is the placement of a word, usually a substantive, out of its right place. For instance when a word is prematurely placed in a subordinate clause (II Cor 2:4 τὴν ἀγαπὴν ἵνα γνῶτε) or when the subject of a subordinate clause is anticipated by making it the object of the main clause (Acts 13:32-33- τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν . . . ὅτι ταύτην) this is Prolepsis. See Hyperbaton.

Pronominal– Relating to pronouns.

Protasis– The preliminary, or conditional, clause to the main clause in a conditional sentence; the "if" clause. Notice the combination protasis in Ph 2:1. See Apodosis.

Psilosis– The lack of aspiration, or rough breathing, at the beginning of a word.

Punctiliar– Verbal action that is momentary. The emphasis is placed either on the beginning (ingressive) or ending (effective) of the action or on the action as a whole (constantive).

Relative Clause– See Clauses.

Result Clause– see Clauses.

Rhetorical Question– A question ask for *rhetorical* effect with no answer expected.

Schema Atticum– A construction retained in NT Greek from the ancient *Attic* where a neuter plural subject takes a singular verb. See *Schema Pindarikon*.

Schema Pindarikon– A construction where a compound subject takes a singular verb. See *Schema Atticum*.

Solecism– From Soloi, a city in ancient Cilicia where a substandard form of Attic was spoken. A solecism is any substandard form of grammar; grammatical mistakes. The book of Revelation has a great number of these. See *Construction ad Sensum.*

Subjective Genitive– In this construction the word in the genitive case functions as the source, or subject , of the construction. The substantive it modifies is viewed as the object; e.g., ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ in Ph 4:7 is probably a subjective genitive, "the peace of (from) God." Also, Ph 3:14. See Objective Genitive.

Substantive– Denotes a word or phrase that functions as a noun within a sentence.

Syncopated– A word that has lost a sound or letter by contraction or by dropping away.

Syntax– From σύνταξις. The orderly arrangement of words into sentences to express ideas. The study of syntax involves both the construction of single words and the way those words are used in meaningful constructions.

Temporal– Having or relating to the element of time. See clause, Temporal.

Tendential– Denotes action that has been attempted but not completed or action that has been interrupted.

Textus Receptus– The text of the Greek NT that is base on the editions of Erasmus' Greek text. Although considerably flawed, it was accepted as the standard, or commonly received, text. It became the text of scholarly translation (including the KJV) and debate for about four centuries.

Transitive– This denotes a verb or verbal construction that has or contains a direct object. The verb denotes a *transition* from one substantive to another. Transitive can belong to any voice in Greek, not just the active. See Intransitive.

Transliteration– Representing the letters of a Greek word into English equivalents without an attempt at translation. For example, ἄνθρωπος is transliterated into English as *anthropos.*

Volitive– Denotes an expression of a wish, command, or the use of the will. For instance a future may be a *volitive* future. In I Cor 14:15 προσεύξομαι and ψαλῶ, "I *will* pray" and "I *will* sing" express more than just the future reality. They also express volitional emphasis.

Zeugma– Denotes two words put together that do not properly go together. In Rev 1:12, ἐπέστρεψα βλέπειν τὴν φωνὴν "I turned to *see the voice*," the zeugma is that one does not see a voice.