CONTEXTUALISING ANCIENT LANGUAGE TEACHING. THE CASE OF CLASSICAL ARMENIAN*

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Abstract:

The teaching of ancient languages at university level is usually quite different from its counterpart in secondary schools: the latter will offer only a small number of such languages (e.g. Latin and Greek) as compared to the broader spectrum available at universities. At the same time, these secondary-school courses traditionally last longer and next to the introduction to the language include a basic education in its literature, culture, and history – which is not self-evidently the case at university level.

This paper argues that particularly for less-commonly studied languages, such contextualisation offers the learner much-needed insights into the workings of the language they are studying and facilitates the homogenisation of disparate learner groups. This claim is illustrated on the example of Classical Armenian: learners from different disciplines (theology, history, linguistics, etc.) take such a course, arriving with different abilities, background knowledge, expectations. Unless additional courses on Armenian history, etc. are provided, the learners' diverse interests can only be addressed as an integral part of language learning. This approach is advantageous for the maintenance of the learners' zeal and for a better understanding of literature. While the weighting of materials used should rely on the individual group's composition, a corresponding textbook should include them in roughly equal parts. Yet, all information should remain pertinent to the primary goal: language learning.

The solution proposed here is the seamless integration of such historical and cultural information in the grammatical exercises, readings, as well as the inclusion of regular excursus on relevant topics.

Keywords: language pedagogy, Classical Armenian, Latin, Ancient Greek, textbooks, university teaching, secondary education

1. Introduction

Learning and teaching foreign languages at any level, whether in primary or secondary school or indeed at university level, is a challenge for a variety of reasons, not least because every learner is an individual with personal preferences, a different (linguistic) background, particular interests and motivations, and so on. For this reason, no single approach to teaching or learning a language fits all learners; at the same time, very few settings allow for all teaching practice and teaching materials to be adapted to an individual, or for a group to consist of sufficiently homogeneous learners.

For many widely-spoken (and thus widely-taught) modern languages, these difficulties are remedied at least to a certain extent by an abundance of teaching materials (textbooks, activity books, text editions, videos, interactive web applications, etc.). By contrast, the less widely a language is or was spoken, and the further back in time it was spoken, the fewer resources there are for any one language. For Latin and Ancient Greek, for instance, the number of existing resources resembles more that of modern languages than those available for Akkadian, Classical Armenian, or Tocharian.

Apart from this dearth of resources, these 'smaller' ancient languages differ from their 'bigger sisters' in not being taught outside a university setting. The resources available for such languages, often dated, make (implicit) assumptions about the academic and linguistic background or experience of the learner. These issues, together with other, more complex factors, have an impact on the kind and quality of teaching and learning that can be delivered in these languages.

The goal of this paper is to address these issues of quality in teaching materials, particularly in textbooks, and to suggest ways in which they can be improved. Two key improvements are suggested for the creation of future resources: (a) the closer imitation of secondary-level textbooks as far as number of exercises, simplicity of explanation, integration of extralinguistic information, and gamification, *inter alia*, are concerned; (b) the adoption of an integrative constituency-based approach, viz. tailoring presuppositions made, information provided, and texts chosen not to the 'average' learner, but to a number of frequent types of learners that engage with the language in question.

To give a more detailed overview of the situation, sections 2 and 3 outline the key commonalities and differences between secondary- and university-level textbooks in ancient languages, respectively, and correlate them to the different settings and circumstances they are used in. Section 4 contrasts the learning and teaching experience in 'larger' and 'smaller' languages at university level, taking into account teaching offers, constitutional diversity, and different motivations for engaging with such languages. On the basis of these details, section 5 proposes specific guidelines for composing textbooks for such languages using the example of Classical Armenian.

2. Common features in ancient language textbooks

The key features shared by all language textbooks, whether for ancient or modern languages, is their purpose: to gradually increase the learner's competence and proficiency in the target language (TL). In order to do so, they all focus on the 'three EXs': *exposure* to a text and new grammatical feature(s) and lexical elements; *explanation* of said new feature(s) and elements; and *exercise*, that is the active repetition and training of the newly learned notions.

By necessity, there is limited variability in the order of these EXs: new content can either be introduced explicitly by exposition and then consolidated by reading and exercise (in whatever order), which constitutes a deductive approach to language learning; alternatively, the learner might be exposed to new content implicitly in a text, for the new elements then to be explained after reading and trained by exercises (in this order), which represents an inductive approach to learning.[1] In practice, both the learner and teacher can vary this imposed sequence; the choice is, however, indicative of the teachers' or textbook author's perspective on language learning and/or the expected audience.

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[1] A third possibility consists in the separation of one or all of these elements from the others, e.g. in making reference to a standard (learners') grammar, or in producing texts, exercises, and grammatical explanation in different volumes. The latter approach can sometimes be found in secondary-level books where the availability of a teacher is structurally assured (e.g. for Latin, *Cursus Continuus*, Fink and Maier (1997); for Greek, *Hellas*, Maier (1997)); the former is more common at university-level books which foreground reading over grammatical comprehension. A final category are 'textbooks' that are effectively grammars accompanied by chrestomathies which often contain no exercises as such; cf. Meillet (1913) for Classical Armenian, Wegner (2007) for Hurrian, or Salvini and Wegner (2014) for Urartian.

The textual material used in textbooks commonly changes over the course of the book, with original texts, unadapted or with only limited adaptations, constituting the goal. Texts used at the very beginning of the learning journey are either composed by the author or so heavily adapted that they might as well have been; those books relying on unadapted texts from the beginning achieve this by abandoning the reading of coherent texts in favour of single (abridged) individual sentences.[2] Where necessary, these texts are accompanied by an apparatus providing additional information, e.g. on cultural and historical background, lexical items beyond the core vocabulary, or syntactic aids; these allow for the early inclusion of material and constructions that the learner has not yet mastered. The choice of text depends on multiple factors, the most important of which in this context is the occurrence of the particular grammatical feature a chapter deals with;[3] in like fashion, composed texts seek to include these features, but do at the same time run the risk of over-representing them in the given passage.[4]

On the level of explanations, details about the formation of morphological paradigms and the syntax of particular constructions can be expected. Depending on the complexity of the language or the paradigm in question, morphological matters are commonly laid out in tabular form, with brief notes explaining matters like stem variation and the particularities of a specific inflectional class.[5] Questions of syntax are laid out differently, depending on their resemblance to metalanguage (ML) structures: where parallel constructions exist in target and metalanguage, they can be exploited and equated, limiting the need for additional description or explanation beyond the delineation of encoding differences.[6]

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[2] Cf. for instance *Wheelock's Latin* (2011).

[3] Other factors include the time period or set of authors chosen for the textbook; the inclusion (or not) of texts of a particular genre, esp. poetry; and the content of the text in that more recognisable, interesting, or memorable texts are likely to be more effective than those fulfilling none of those criteria.

[4] A classic example of this is the emphasis and time devoted to the *ablativus absolutus* in Latin; owing to its particular and disproportional frequency in some authors which feature heavily on syllabi (e.g. Caesar, where it occurs ten times more frequently than in, e.g., Cicero; cf. Adams (2005, 75)), much more space is given to this construction than others.

[5] So, for instance, an introduction to Latin first-declension nouns in -*a* might note that their stems do not change due to inflection, and that, barring few exceptions, nouns in this class are grammatically feminine; by contrast, an exposition of third-declension nouns would have to underline that the stem is not entirely predictable on the basis of the nominative form, wherefore it needs to be learnt for each lexical item, that the same goes *mutatis mutandis* for its grammatical gender, and that a number of other factors like prosody contribute to the complexity of certain endings, such as the difference 'regular' and '*i*-stem' endings.

[6] Taking the example of the syntax of a simple clause, for instance, German and Latin encode subject and object similarly as nominative and accusative respectively; the key difference is the greater flexibility of Latin word order. In English, by contrast, further explanations of the case system will be

Where this is not the case, new concepts are introduced with the necessary technical terminology for its description. In both cases, (simplified) target language examples are provided to illustrate the new construction and, where necessary, its varieties. To aid in the process of learning such constructions, auxiliary (viz. non-idiomatic) translations and mnemonics are at times employed.[7] Further explanations may be provided on the lexical level, so for instance as regards generalisable rules on word formation, or to caution against confusing near-homonyms or homographs and 'false friends'.[8]

The exercises, in turn, serve to consolidate and apply the new lexical, morphological, and syntactic information. They can take the shape of matching exercises between target and metalanguage forms or expressions, the production of grammatical forms on the basis of metalanguage equivalents or grammatical glosses (or, vice versa, the recognition and parsing of such forms), the filling of gaps in texts or example sentences with the appropriate form, or additional translations of texts or sentences. Among the exercises, the translation direction TL⇒ML is always present; simple production exercises ML⇒TL do also occur, but are often restricted in scope and may not include composition in the TL.[9] In contrast to modern languages, these exercises do not usually include interactive elements or try to relate to everyday situations as the learning goals in ancient languages and their historical context do not tend to focus on active and spontaneous communication.[10] In addition to target-specific exercises for each

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required, as the learners' inherent understanding of a language with a CASE category cannot be leveraged.

[7] In Greek, for instance, synchronically irregular aorist imperatives with oxytone accent can be remembered by German learners with the mnemonic 'L<u>abe</u>t eure <u>Elte</u>rn <u>in d</u>er Kn<u>eipe</u>' (λαβέ *labé*, εὑρέ *heuré*, ἐλθέ *eltʰé*, ἰδέ *idé*, εἰπέ *eipé*); as for auxiliary translations, the Latin *ablative absolute*, e.g. in the phrase *his rebus cognitis*, is often translated literally to being with as 'with these things having been recognised' before a more idiomatic translation is achieved. On the efficacy of mnemonics for language learning, cf. Paivio and Desrochers (1981); for the potential of etymology-based explanations and memory aides, cf. Boers, Eyckmans, and Stengers (2007).

[8] Taking the example of Latin, these might include notes on suffixes like *-tio* for deverbal processual abstracts (e.g. *laudo* 'praise', *laudatio* 'commendation'), the difference between *mălus* 'bad' and *mālus* 'apple tree; mast', or the false equivalence between Latin *lego* 'read' and Greek λέγω 'say'.

[9] The sense or nonsense of 'prose composition' in ancient languages is a topic that has been debated for a while, with advocates and strong arguments in both camps; cf., e.g., Ball and Ellsworth (1989) against and Saunders (1993) in favour. This argument is picked up again briefly in section 5 below.

[10] That being said, books exist that take an immersive approach and use the target language as a metalanguage, too, as might be found in some modern language textbooks; cf., e.g., the series *Lingua latina per se illustrata* edited by Hans Ørberg (1991). Equally, 'Spoken Latin' and, to a lesser extent, 'Spoken Ancient Greek' approaches and courses do exist and have their advocates, although quantitative data on their effectiveness are not yet available; cf. Coffee (2012) ; Rasmussen (2015).

section or chapter, a number of textbooks include regular revision chapters in which a number of recent grammatical concepts are revised, thus further consolidating them and, through combining them, making it somewhat less predictable for the learner which competences are meant to be tested, simulating a setting closer to the 'real world' application of acquired skills.

While much of the pedagogical aspect of language learning and teaching is, by necessity, related to the classroom or similar settings, textbooks by themselves also at least implicitly take into account certain elements of 'good practice'. The division into chapters which, as regards competences acquired and material discussed, build upon one another consequentially illustrates the notion of Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* in that new texts in a chapter, for instance, are just challenging enough that they would go beyond the learner's competences without further instruction from either an experienced practitioner (= teacher) or explanatory textbook notes.[11] In those books where structurally the new text appears before the explanations, the learner is further encouraged to engage in problem-based learning;[12] this inductive approach allows the learner to engage with the new material in a practical setting and to attempt to make sense of it on their own. This approach, taken together with the gradual build-up of competences and the presentation of new concepts and lexical items in digestible chunks, is conducive to deep-learning and thus both long-term retention of the relevant concepts and materials as well as a more thorough understanding of the language.

3. Differences in ancient language textbooks

Up to this point, textbooks targeted at secondary and university level are, within the boundaries of some free variation of order and pedagogical approach, similar. There are, however, a number of key differences on the pedagogical and linguistic level. The four most noteworthy are, in order of treatment below: the degree of gamification; the provision of extralinguistic information; the

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[11] For a modern perspective on this concept, cf. Wass and Golding (2014).

[12] This approach mirrors the 'real-life' application of translation and analytical competences well in confronting the learner with new and unknown material ('the problem') that they need to understand; ideally, the material is chosen in such a way as to allow for comprehension of most parts except for the new elements, which can be decoded either contextually, by reference to notes, or with the help of an experienced language user. On this approach, cf. Duch, Groh, and Allen (2001).

discussion of linguistic variety (diachronic and otherwise); and the degree of detail in grammatical descriptions.

Secondary-level textbooks, being targeted at a younger audience usually in their early teens, commonly contain more 'fun' elements that further language learning, e.g. word-search grids, riddles, jokes, or other game-like activities which require and encourage active use of TL knowledge.[13] The purpose of such activities is both to keep the interest of the learner, who at this age and level may possess a less developed internal motivation for language learning than their older counterparts;[14] and to engage the learner's mind and TL skills beyond the normal remit of grammatical exercises and translations.[15] The inclusion of such game-like elements lends itself to the secondary-level context, since language learning here is commonly a much more extensive process, stretching over three to five years the grammatical material that is usually covered in (less than) one year in intensive university courses.

The second difference that is, at least in part, owed to the extensive nature of secondary-level teaching is the integration of extralinguistic material in the textbooks. This includes information about the literary, cultural, and religious history of the culture(s) most closely associated with the TL as well as its reception in various forms elsewhere. This can be achieved through information panels, combining text and images, exercises on grammar or lexicon related to particular aspects of the TL's culture, or even secondary texts, chosen less for their linguistic form and more for their content. At this level, the provision of such information is imperative to ensure that the learner acquires an adequate background knowledge and holistic understanding of the culture whose language they are studying; without this information, the goal of reading and comprehending original texts would be imperilled, since the understanding of

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[13] Fink and Maier (1997, 177, 185), for instance, uses comic strips translated into Latin for a light break, but equally includes original material like curse tablets for discussion and information. More recent suggestions, admittedly at university level, include the translation of popular music as a teaching tool; cf. Kershner (2019) and the example of Taylor Swift.

[14] Motivation can, of course, differ vastly in a cohort, especially in University settings where there are particular language requirements.

[15] This could include the integration of computer-assisted elements, which have proven effective in second-language learning; cf. Dehghanzadeh *et al.* (2021).

literature requires competences beyond the decoding of the linguistic information in a text.[16]

By contrast, textbooks directed at university-level learners tend to include more information about linguistic variation, in terms of both diaphatic (≈ stylistic) differences in particular text types and diachronic changes.[17] This difference is, at least in part, owed to the different goals at secondary and university level: where secondary-level learners' attainment is measured against a particular canon of 'classical' texts, the overarching goal at university level is the acquisition of broader, less limited or predefined competences, even though the initial stages of learning and the canon of texts might be comparable. Secondly, intrinsically motivated learners at university level *might* show more interest in (and thus patience for) such particular differences than their younger counterparts, especially in the case of 'non-standard' or 'non-classical' forms.

Finally, the degree of detail in the description of various grammatical elements or structures will often vary according to the intended audience of the textbook.[18] Certain forms, for instance, might be foregone because they do not (or rarely) occur in the relevant canonical texts.[19] Similarly, forms that pertain to a defunct or archaic category such as the locative in Latin or instrumental in Greek, will be presented as lexical items rather than as systematic (if only sporadically used or attested) forms. At a different level, certain apparent irregularities in synchronic patterns may successfully be explained on the basis of relatively simple diachronic developments, thus saving the learner from having to learn by heart a set of irregular forms which could, instead, be regularly derived by means of an additional (diachronically informed) rule.[20] Conversely, there are

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[16] Cp. the related discourse in modern language teaching which emphasises that the explicit connection of culture(s) and language (varieties) is best made while acquiring a foreign language; cf. Kramsch (1995); Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune (1996).

[17] That is not to say that such differences are not mentioned or explained in secondary-level books, but rather that they are treated less systematically there. References to variant forms such as Lat. *audīstī* vs *audīvistī* (2SG.PF.IND.ACT) or *amāvēre* vs *amāvērunt* more commonly occur as footnotes or comments upon first encounter rather than as a part of paradigmatic instruction.

[18] This does not refer to differences in grammatical terminology (e.g. the so-called 'future passive participle' vs gerundive in the grammar of Latin), but rather to the level of analysis and inclusion (or not) of marginal forms.

[19] In the case of Latin, for instance, modern secondary-level textbooks commonly do not mention the 'future imperative forms' (type *ītō, ītōte, euntō* 'thou shalt/he shall/they shall go') as such forms are barely found in the 'core' authors.

[20] A straightforward example is the formation of the weak aorist in Ancient Greek, the stem of which is formed by adding -σ- to the present stem (παιδευ- *paideu-* ⇒ παιδευσ- *paideus-*); the exception are liquid- and nasal-stem verbs, after whose stem-final consonants the aorist marker -σ- is lost in diachrony under

constructions that are treated at greater length at secondary-level books (e.g. absolute constructions or deontic verbal adjectives), perhaps since they constitute (at least at surface level) TL structures that have no parallels in the ML. This treatment at greater length does not, however, necessarily equate to greater depth, but rather to a less steep learning curve and a more gradual introduction of new elements.

These differences are the result largely of different settings, exigencies, and goals at the two levels compared. This does not mean, however, that these different approaches cannot be usefully employed in the other setting, as section 5 suggests with reference to 'smaller' ancient languages, for which the textbook offer is less abundant and, at times, less pedagogically thought-through.

4. Learning and teaching 'smaller' ancient languages

While ancient languages have a number of things in common – their relative age, a limited (if often substantial) corpus of texts, and the fact that they are no longer spoken as native languages – two broad and internally diverse sets of these languages can be distinguished both on a practical and pedagogical level. This distinction is between the 'larger' and 'smaller' languages, where 'large' and 'small' refer not to the importance of the languages, but rather to the size of the scholarly community which traditionally is interested in them.

'Larger' languages, such as Latin, Ancient Greek, or Biblical Hebrew have been studied and taught consistently at universities and often also at schools since the advent of formal education. Their study forms a significant part of one or more degree courses at undergraduate level, where they are ideally taught by experienced and/or pedagogically qualified staff specialising in language learning.[21] Teaching materials, in the form of textbooks, graded readers, and text editions with extensive commentaries, abound in these languages and are being actively (re-)developed and expanded. These languages are studied usually in

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compensatory lengthening of the stem vowel (ἡδυν- *hēdun-* ⇒ *ἡδυνς- **hēduns-* ⇒ ἡδῦν- *hēdūn-*). Learning this rule (and a small set of concomitant others), the learner escapes the rote learning of 'irregular' principal parts.

[21] This role is taken on, for instance, by lectors, teaching-stream lecturers, or in the, German system (but increasingly rarely), *Lehrkräfte für besondere Aufgaben*, who spend a significant amount of time and effort in teaching ancient languages and are often actively researching ancient language pedagogy. For a historical overview of the German system, cf. Brüssel (2018).

their own right, that is to access and work with the literature composed in them, or for closely associated purposes, such as engaging with the history, archaeology, culture, or theology associated with that language.[22] For this reason, degree courses in these subjects usually include an extensive programme of not only language classes, but also of lectures and seminars on the above-mentioned disciplines, which the learner is more or less free to choose from and to specialise in.

By contrast, 'smaller' ancient languages are taught and approached rather differently. For a variety of reasons,[23] their study often does not have the same time-depth and, at any rate, does not extend to secondary-school level.[24] When they are discovered by learners at universities where they are taught, this usually takes place in the context of an auxiliary or secondary subject – learners studying theology, for instance, and interested in the interactions between various manifestations of the Christian faith may need to study one of the languages of the Orthodox or Eastern Churches. Similar trajectories could be sketched out for students of history, linguistics, art history, literature, etc. Consequently, there is rarely an undergraduate degree associated immediately with these languages, as specialisation is reserved for Master's and doctoral level courses.[25] A corollary of this status as a non-primary subject (in the sense of undergraduate studies) is that teaching provisions are often less developed in breadth or depth and provided by a smaller number of staff who may well be teaching outside their immediate area of expertise and research. These limitations manifest themselves also in the

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[22] This sets them apart from those older languages like Old Church Slavonic, Old French, or Old High German which, at least most commonly, are studied as part of a degree in the modern variety of that language or as part of historical linguistics courses.

[23] Three key reasons are later attestation, lack of an autochthonous grammatical tradition, and a later rise in scholarly interest. Classical Armenian, for instance, was attested in lapidary inscriptions more than a millennium after Latin; beyond a 'translation' of a Greek grammar and commentaries thereon (Lamberterie 2022; Meyer 2023), a historical grammatical tradition is absent; and modern interest in the language in the West did not arise until the end of the nineteenth century with the works of Heinrich Hübschmann (1875).

[24] There are, of course, exceptions. Sanskrit, for instance, is taught even before secondary level at St James Preparatory School in the UK. Biblical Hebrew is still taught at a small number of secondary schools in Germany; as with Latin and Ancient Greek, a federally recognised attestation of language competence (*Hebraicum*) exists, paralleling similar provisions for the other ancient languages (*Latinum*, *Graecum*).

[25] Certain courses in Ancient Middle Eastern Studies constitute exceptions to this rule, since learning Ancient Egyptian and/or other languages of the period is an integral part of such courses, e.g. at the University of Oxford. Whether the goals and emphases of such a course are better compared with those in Greek and Roman language and literature or rather with those in archaeology and ancient history is, perhaps, a matter for debate.

smaller range of available teaching materials and their at times wanting pedagogical approach. Furthermore, many of these 'smaller' languages are further removed from the historical and cultural background of the learner than would be the case for the 'larger' languages; that is to say that many (or even most) students of Latin and Greek in Western Europe and North America, even if they have not acquired the language prior to commencing their university-level degree, will have been exposed to one extent or another to Greco-Roman culture, for instance, whether directly in secondary-level history classes or indirectly through the reception of Greco-Roman literature and myth in Western literature and art. For ancient languages and cultures other than these, at least in a Western European and North American context, a similar or comparable background knowledge cannot be expected.

In short, what sets learning and teaching these 'smaller' languages apart from the 'larger' ones is a combination of (at least) three factors: exoticity, constitutional diversity, and structural limitations. In other words: learners are less familiar with even the most basic aspects of the language and culture to be studied; they decide to learn this language for a variety of reasons, often coming with different backgrounds and particular goals in mind; they are faced with a more limited teaching offer and resources, and staff who need to be jacks-of-all-trades.

In the context of ancient-language teaching in general and the composition of textbooks in particular, the resolution of structural problems is, it goes without saying, out of scope; the diversity of the learners interested in such 'smaller' languages, by contrast, need not be changed but needs to be cherished. What a textbook can address, however, is the exoticity of these languages, namely by considering how the differences outlined above and the lack of background knowledge can or need to be dealt with in order to best serve the learner and teacher. With this in mind, and in view of the differences between secondary- and university-level textbooks outlined above, three guiding questions present themselves:

1. Given the structural differences between teaching 'smaller' and 'larger' languages, *how can textbooks be adapted to better compensate for them?*

2. Considering the similarities between secondary-level learners and those learning a 'smaller' language at university, *what lessons can be learnt from the make-up of secondary-level textbooks?*

3. In the light of a diverse learner constituency, *how can a textbook be conceptualised to best serve all learners?*

The next section addresses these questions on the basis of Classical Armenian, taking into account the types of learners interested in this language, the structural challenges arising where it is taught, and the issues with current textbooks.

5. The case of Classical Armenian

Armenian is an Indo-European language like Latin and Greek and shares a great number of grammatical concepts and principles with both of them.[26] At the same time, owing to (a) what Olsen (1999, v) calls the 'horror chamber of historical phonology', (b) extended contact with Iranian languages, and (c) word-final apocope in Proto-Armenian, the lexicon bears little to no surface resemblance to anything learners may be familiar with and does, therefore, require large amounts of memorisation.

The language was first committed to writing in the fifth century CE for the purpose of translating the Bible into Armenian. The earliest literature consists of a mixture of historiographical and hagiographical texts and translations of Greek religious or philosophical material.[27] It was used in more or less the same, so-called 'classical' form until at least the high Middle Ages. In this period, an extensive philosophical and poetic tradition develops, which is influenced both by (Byzantine) Greek, Iranian and Arabic thinking and imagery;[28] the ensuing Middle Armenian period sees greater diatopic, that is geographical, differentiation and further influences from other languages. These connections with other languages and cultures form one pathway leading learners to Classical Armenian.

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[26] All three are inflected languages, share a similar (but not identical) case system with parallel concepts (e.g. nominative subjects, direct objects in the accusative, etc.) and very flexible (but not unrestrictedly free) constituent order. For the question of the place of Armenian in the Indo-European language family, cf. Clackson (1994); Martirosyan (2013); for the secondary influence of Greek on Armenian translation literature and its technical vocabulary, cf. Muradyan (2012).

[27] For an overview of the Armenian (pre-)literary tradition, cf. Hacikyan *et al.* (2000).

[28] For an overview of the cross-cultural influences on Armenian art, cf. Maranci (2018); for linguistic aspects, cf. the contributions by Clackson, Meyer, and Morani in the forthcoming volume on Armenian linguistics in the series *Handbook of Oriental Studies* (Orengo, Tinti and Meyer in press).

Beyond its literature and philosophy, Armenian sources are of interest to historians of late antiquity and the Middle Ages for the role that Armenia(ns) played in the political and belligerent interactions between the great empires on which it either bordered or of which it formed part, at the intersection between Romans or Byzantines on the one hand and Arsacids, Sasanians, Rashiduns or Umayyads on the other.[29] As a result of the early Christianisation of the Armenian Kingdom at the beginning of the fourth century at the hands of Gregory the Illuminator, the autocephalous, non-Chalcedonian Armenian Apostolic Church arose and has been the Armenian national church ever since; its differences with the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and other Oriental Orthodox churches in matters doctrinal and liturgical constitute a well-developed field of study. Both of these dimensions, historical and theological, represent two further pathways to learning Classical Armenian. The fact that Classical Armenian remains the liturgical language of the Armenian Apostolic Church further leads to a certain, at least passive familiarity with the language among observant (heritage) speakers of the modern varieties of Armenian.

A fourth trajectory besides literature, history and theology is historical or Indo-European comparative linguistics, as already alluded to initially. Serving so diverse a constituency – in terms of interests as well as backgrounds – is inevitably a challenge that each language teacher will have to address by themselves and in view of the particular and changing make-up of the groups they are teaching. A textbook can, however, provide considerable support in this undertaking in two particular ways. Firstly, by ensuring that, especially in later chapters, the choice of reading texts is sufficiently diverse as to interest and inform all constituencies, at least in turn. This could, for instance, be achieved most readily by including one primary reading passage, used also for the introduction of the chapter's grammatical feature(s), as well as a secondary one, in which said feature is reinforced and which can serve a different interest than the primary one.[30] Secondly, although Classical Armenian is taught only at university-level, textbooks for this language can benefit from an approach otherwise more commonly found in secondary-level books, as outlined above, namely by including pertinent extralinguistic material that corresponds to the needs of its typical learner groups. This could take the shape of info-boxes,

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[29] For an overview of the early history of Armenia, cf. Garsoïan (1997a, 1997c, 1997b, 1997d).

[30] Assuming the four groups outlined above – literature, history, theology, and linguistics – only three need to be served *sensu stricto* since linguists learn the language for its own sake.

graphically separate from the rest of the chapter (e.g. through background shading or marginal boxes). Their content is not necessary for learning the language, but provides further background or details to a text just read or a particular event or concept mentioned therein as well as making suggestions for further reading. In this way, the learner can expand their knowledge according to their interests and beyond the confines of the language alone without this being an integral part of the language learning programme.

The inclusion of such materials has further benefits or, to put it differently, is essentially required for other, structural reasons. As outlined in section 4 above, one key difference in learning a 'smaller' ancient language such as Classical Armenian as compared to, e.g., Latin and Greek is the essentially complete absence of any background knowledge or cultural preconceptions in the learner – which even for the latter cannot be simply assumed anymore, it should be added. To ensure that they benefit most completely from the language learning experience and to give the necessary background to not only read and translate, but also understand the texts they are faced with, the provision of extralinguistic information is paramount. Especially learners outside a degree programme and thus potentially without support of an experienced teacher or language user will benefit from such an approach, which goes as far in substituting for additional lectures as a print medium with limited scope is able to. But even where Classical Armenian teaching is provided as part of a degree programme,[31] it is usually only one person who undertakes the language teaching and is, at the same time, responsible for all other elements of the curriculum, no matter whether they pertain to their research or teaching speciality.[32] In these circumstances, a textbook providing extralinguistic information can help guide the teacher in establishing the basics, in the expansion of the curriculum, or by allowing them to relegate non-linguistic instruction to the book.

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[31] Returning to the examples of Germany, the UK, and Switzerland, regular courses in Classical Armenian can only be found (or could be found until recently) at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg (Prof. Dr. Armenuhi Drost-Abgarjan) and at Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg (Prof. Dr. Daniel Kölligan); in the UK, it is only taught at Oxford (Prof. Dr. Theo Maarten van Lint); and in Switzerland only at the Université de Genève (Prof. Dr. Valentina Calzolari). In each case, the context in which courses are given varies widely, from a theological to a linguistic perspective.

[32] There are, of course, exceptions; in the Republic of Armenia and in areas with a significant diaspora community such as Paris (INALCO), Fresno, CA (California State University) or Los Angeles (UCLA), Armenian is studied in a broader context and with more staff.

The constitutional diversity of those learning Classical Armenian has another corollary, namely their different background in or experience with other ancient languages. Extant textbooks such as that of Thomson (1989) or Mondon (2012) presuppose implicitly that the learner be familiar with Latin and/or Ancient Greek, as they rely on references to similarities between those languages and Classical Armenian for the explanation of a particular phenomenon,[33] or at least assume general competence in traditional grammar.[34] Such knowledge cannot be assumed any longer, however, since not all learners will have the required background, and because it would make the book less usable to autodidacts who might have a background other than those described above. While this does not mean that no comparison to other ancient languages must be made, they cannot be relied upon for explanatory purposes; instead, an approach like that taken in Ruppel (2017), which gradually and clearly introduces and explains grammatical concepts and terminology, is needed.

Similarly, both textbooks just mentioned provide grammatical exercises to test the understanding of the morphology discussed in the chapter; Thomson (1989) abandons these quite quickly, however, in favour of simple translations into the TL, while Mondon (2012) does not employ the latter at all. In the later chapters of their books, both reduce the exercises to text-analytical tasks. While there are arguments for and against TL-directed exercises like composition, in small measure they aid in developing a bidirectional vocabulary and should be included in textbooks; their goal is not to ensure fluent active command of the TL, but rather to help develop analytical skills beyond the morphological level in raising questions concerning syntactic constructions and idiomatic expressions, better remembered through targeted active application than only by passive encounter. Morphosyntactic exercises must continue throughout the book for as long as new morphological and/or syntactic elements are introduced that the

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[33] Thomson (1989, 37), for instance, introduces the five Armenian verbal classes or conjugations without an explicit explanation of what a 'conjugation' is. As for matters of voice or valency, he writes: 'Verbs in եմ [em] which are transitive have an intransitive and passive forms in իմ [im]. Thus սիրեմ [sirem] I love, սիրիմ [sirim] I am loved; or ժողովեմ [žołovem] I gather (transitive), ժողովիմ [žołovim] I come together' (transliteration added). The notions of (in-)transitivity or active/passive voice are assumed to be familiar phenomena. Mondon (2012, 3) improves on these and produces serviceable definitions.

[34] Taking once more the case of Classical Armenian, while Mondon (2012) provides clearer definitions (or definitions at all) of some such terms, he still presupposes familiarity with terms such as 'conjugation' and 'adjective'. Given the absence of the former in English as a grammatical concept and the limited teaching of grammatical terms at secondary level outside of foreign language teaching, even such simple terms must be defined.

learner is required to have an active understanding of.[35] As concerns reading passages, both books start reading original or slightly adapted texts as early as possible, but restrict themselves to New Testament texts, which is both limiting as far as constituency is concerned as well as linguistically problematic.[36] As much as Classical Armenian grammar is, in many respects, less complex than that of Ancient Greek or Sanskrit, learners would nevertheless benefit from revision chapters as well; these could also include more applied or gamified ways of testing the acquired skills, e.g. by presenting simple manuscript extracts or inscriptions for decipherment and translation, crossword puzzles, or word grids. All of these would engage the learner creatively in language-related problem-solving and use their skills outside the grammar-translation paradigm.

In sum, the measures proposed above represent an integrative, constituency-based tailoring of Armenian lexicon, grammar, texts and extragrammatical information to as diverse an audience as can be normally expected for this particular language. At the same time, the material should be presented in such a way that autodidacts and learners with different backgrounds can access the textbook equally well. On a more general, language-independent basis, the following procedure helps to identify the best approach for such tailoring:

1. Identify constituency groups
   (e.g. students in comparative literature, history, theology, linguistics, etc.)

2. Examine intersection of competencies
   (e.g. what, if any, other language learning background can be assumed)

3. Tailor the learning goals
   (e.g. which grammatical concepts and texts are core material, which more peripheral in view of the constituency)

4. Expand the frame of reference
   (e.g. by including secondary texts, extralinguistic information for individual groups)

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[35] See Ruppel's paper in this volume on the question of what learners need active and passive understanding of.
[36] On the idiosyncrasies of biblical Armenian, cf. Coulie (1994); Meyer (2018; in press).

5. Rinse and repeat

   (e.g. by including revision chapters, sufficient exercises of different types)

With the specific example of Classical Armenian and these general steps in mind, it turns out that the questions posed at the end of section 4 do not have individual answers, but one somewhat more complex one: 'smaller' ancient languages are learnt by students with a less developed background knowledge of the target culture, not dissimilar to learners at secondary-level; they come with different interests and pre-existing knowledge. Both of these differences can be addressed through the provision of well-chosen texts for reading and supplementary extralinguistic information, as would be the case in secondary-level books. This approach equally compensates for the less amply developed staffing and teaching structure of such 'smaller' languages.

Likewise, these elements are useful from a pedagogical perspective. The inclusion of constituency-targeted extralinguistic material helps with the maintenance of motivation and self-regulation esp. of self-directed learners.[37] At the same time, the ensemble of information provided ensures that in perusing the textbook, the learner develops not only linguistic competences, but also acquires an extended set of relevant concepts and a pertinent vocabulary to successfully integrate into the relevant scholarly community and its discourse.[38] In doing so, this approach equally fosters deep-learning in coordinating the grammatical concepts and lexical material with texts pertinent to the various learner constituencies, thus making them more relevant, and in minimising rote learning in favour of rule-based understanding.[39] The perception of language learning as a relevant and indeed necessary skill is also showcased by the inclusion of such practical elements as learners might find useful in their academic or professional practice (e.g. as regards the reading of 'real-life' inscriptions); given the academic setting, the inclusion of references for further reading after the presentation of specific extralinguistic topics further underlines the relevance of the language and

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[37] On the value of motivation and the benefits of self-regulated learning, cf. Cassidy (2011).

[38] On the creation of communities of practice and subject-specific literacy, cf. Wenger (1998). Regarding the importance of helping students to learn how to 'decode their discipline', cf. Middendorf and Pace (2004).

[39] On deep-learning in ancient languages, cf., e.,g., Houdt (2007) on teaching Latin. For the pedagogical potential of diachrony-based explanations, cf. Arteaga and Herschensohn (1995; 1998) on French and Lightfoot (2007) on German.

culture studied and thus may help in affirming the learners' resolve.[40] In short, this approach to language learning does its utmost to ensure that as wide an audience as possible is addressed in as compelling a fashion as possible to maintain or indeed increase learning motivation and create a subject-literate community of practice that can rely on the textbook as its primary source of information, even in the absence of a skilled practitioner.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to illustrate the differences between university- and secondary-level textbooks for ancient languages and those between 'smaller' and 'larger' ancient languages as regards their typical students and contexts. While the differences between textbook types came down largely to differing levels of details as regards the description and discussion of grammatical structures and the provision of extralinguistic material, the difference between learner groups and their backgrounds was more fundamental: for 'larger' ancient languages, access to text in the original language is the main goal (with language learning the necessary tool), while 'smaller' languages are often approached with more specific or practical goals by a more diverse group of learners, whose main interests may be more focused and for whom language learning is more of a tool.

A further difference consists in the structural provisions made at university level for 'smaller' languages, which less commonly constitute a degree course or major subject by themselves at undergraduate level and, in terms of staffing, are often taught in their entirety by a single post holder. This person is often in charge not only of teaching the language itself, but also a variety of associated other introductory courses, no matter their personal speciality. Such courses or equivalent provision of historical, literary, and cultural background is strictly necessary in the context of 'smaller' languages since learners are unlikely to be acquainted with the target language in a fashion comparable to the basic familiarity with, e.g., Latin or Greek culture as part of basic secondary schooling in the West.

To address these structural differences and deficiencies, this paper has argued that university-level textbooks for 'smaller' languages need to be modelled more

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[40] On the advantages of coordinating teaching and research interests, cf. Griffiths (2004); Leston-Bandeira (2013); Fink (2013, 45).

closely on their secondary-level equivalents in providing a broader range of background information. This aids both the autonomous learner without access to supplementary lectures as well as university staff having to teach beyond their immediate expertise. The background information provided needs to be tailored to the core constituency of learners, viz. their purpose for learning the target language, both as regards the type of extralinguistic information introduced (historical, literary, theological, etc.) and the texts chosen for translation exercises. Likewise, other elements common to secondary-level textbooks such as plain-language, jargon-free explanations of grammatical features, revision chapters, and copious (as well as partly gamified and/or applied) exercises need to be provided.

In the particular case of Classical Armenian discussed here, such a book remains a desideratum. While the textbooks currently in use are serviceable, they lack many of the above features. In the context of a limited offer of courses at few universities in Europe, such a textbook would significantly enhance the ability of learners to get acquainted with the language and its cultural background, thus potentially freeing up classroom time for more advanced topics and discussions. Additionally, a pedagogically more developed approach as presented here may be hoped to result in a better understanding and retention of the language by learners.

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