



The AGNT Project Report—Q3 2020

As a licensee or friend of AGNT or ANLEX, we would like to update you once a quarter about our continuing work to enhance and perfect these databases and about our plans for the future.



The Project. *The AGNT Project Report—Q3 2008* introduced the team, outlined ongoing tasks, and discussed potential tasks.



On Two Views of the Same Phenomenon: New Testament Greek Voice

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ANLEX has been around since 2000 and has been commended as a useful instrument, especially for Bible translators. It was originally the work of Neva Miller. A revised version of “Revised” ANLEX¹ is currently being undertaken by Tony Pope, which aims to make it a yet more useful tool. It is available on an incremental basis through our annual AGNT and ANLEX upgrades.

The view of Greek voice presented in Revised AGNT and ANLEX is traditional but with a few refinements. No one has ever complained that we don’t fairly present the traditional view of voice, especially as it is tied to the concept of deponency.

“Innovating” ANLEX grew out of observations by Carl Conrad that Greek (and Latin) voice is increasingly being viewed by linguists and Greek experts as a reflection of “subject affectedness,” active voice verbs being generally unmarked and unremarkable for subject affectedness, while middle and passive voice verbs are marked in their voice designation as indicating that the subject of a (would-be) corresponding active verb is somehow affected in some sense additional to being its actor.

Practically, the difference between the two versions is found in our morphological tagging. The tags of our Revised AGNT and ANLEX reflect the morphological form of verbs for voice in the future and aorist tenses (where middle and passive differ in form, as is well known), whereas it reflects contextual meaning (middle or passive) in the present, imperfect, perfect, and pluperfect tenses (where the verb forms are taken to be ambiguously middle or passive, determinable for the most part by their contextual placement).

¹ “Revised” derives its name from the revised AGNT tags of the 1990s, now reflected in Revised ANLEX (revised from the original AGNT 1981) and its usefulness is strengthened by its contrast to “Innovating,” discussed in this article. We now have both revised and innovating AGNT and ANLEX. These names may yet have to be regularized!

For Innovating AGNT and ANLEX, on the other hand, verbal voice tags are entirely determined by their morphological form. It turns out that the voice of verbs in nonaorist, nonfuture tenses is middle in form. This may be a shock to traditional voice adherents, who always understood that those four tenses were ambiguous in form as to voice. This is contradicted in showing by reconstruction that historically the passive $\theta\eta/\eta$ morpheme in the future and aorist tenses was a dateable innovation over a formerly homogeneous “middle” morphology.

The value of the innovating understanding of voice is significant to the translator when it deconstructs the notion that middle (alternately, passive) verbs are to be understood as active in meaning when there is no corresponding active verb form. The alternate understanding that each nonactive voice form in all six tenses may be either middle or passive in meaning depending on context is less stressful for its consistency.

The problem we are facing in the ongoing development of Innovating ANLEX is that its worldview, let us say, (and subsequent vocabulary) is different from that of the Revised, and traditional, ANLEX in significant respects. The two versions of ANLEX, indeed of AGNT, appear to be in conflict to the degree that an uninformed user looking at both presentations may be totally confused in what is going on.

Below we name some of the challenges we are facing in making both versions of ANLEX internally self-consistent and not apparently at war with the other version with respect to terminology. We invite the reader’s input as outsider adviser and analyst. We want to do the right thing.

Form of Citation Form

Revised ANLEX gives headwords for verbs in the traditional first-person singular present active form, other things being equal. This is traditional, widely accepted, and we are happy to maintain that distinctive in Revised ANLEX.

Innovating ANLEX, on the other hand, gives relevant headwords in the present² active infinitive form, in the usual case. This is also a valid form of identification, apparently used more frequently in Europe, though what we term “traditional” usage is found there as well.

Voice of Citation Form

Revised ANLEX follows traditional practice of naming the active form the verb as headword, though it does give the middle or passive form when a present active form is absent in the literature. Thus, $\lambda\acute{o}\upsilon\omega$, $\acute{\epsilon}\rho\chi\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$.

In Innovating ANLEX, however, we recognize that a nonactive form of the verb may indeed be basic, either because the active is altogether missing or because it is highly restricted in usage, say causative. In some verbs we give two forms: the nonactive as basic and frequent is named first; the active following. Thus, $\lambda\acute{o}\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota/\lambda\acute{o}\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$. Alternately, we are considering the advantage of showing this as “ $\lambda\acute{o}\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ (active $\lambda\acute{o}\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$)” or “ $\lambda\acute{o}\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ (active causative $\lambda\acute{o}\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu$).” Or even to put this active at the head of the principal parts listing. The exact display

² Other proposals suggest rather that the aorist infinitive be employed as headword.

form chosen will mainly be determined by maximal benefit to the user. We wouldn't want him to wonder why some headword verbs lack this alternating display, or something worse yet.

Principal Parts

In Revised ANLEX we list relevant principal parts in their traditional order, that is, present active, present middle/passive, imperfect active, imperfect middle/passive; future active, future middle; aorist active, aorist middle; perfect active, pluperfect active; perfect middle/passive, pluperfect middle/passive; aorist passive, future passive.

In Innovating ANLEX we generally follow the same order, but with this note. Since the principal parts are given in the infinitive form, we do not list the imperfect or the pluperfect secondary tenses, except when an augment is other than expected and then we indicate it as a break from the infinitive pattern.

We also are reviewing the extent to which principal parts listing is useful and are very open to input from readers.

- a. All major principal parts given.
- b. Principal parts relevant to New Testament and other Christian literature (including LXX).
- c. Principal parts only found in the Greek New Testament.
- d. No principal parts.

Principal parts listings in Revised ANLEX note differences between first and second aorist, etc. In Innovating ANLEX we are moving toward deleting those contrasts and substituting a more comprehensive noting of tenses that may be thematic or athematic, -κα or -α perfects, or -θη- and -η aorist passives.

Word-Building Information

This remains the same in both versions with the exception that the first person singular vs. infinitive form distinction is maintained when pointing to a lemma form.

Write-Up Content, Including Definitions and Glosses, etc.

This will be identical in both versions. It may be as we go forward with the revision of both versions that we give a reordering of write-up content, say, between λούω and λούεσθαι/λούειν, that is, putting the discussion of middle before active in the Innovating ANLEX, while in the reverse order in Revised ANLEX; but at this point that is only possible and undecided.

Designation of Subject-Affectedness Category

The list of subtypes of subject-affectedness is valid only in the Innovating ANLEX. The Revised ANLEX currently has no such systematic designation, though occasional reference to “reflexive,” etc. is found. Rutger Allan's original list, taken from Carl Conrad's ANLEX Appendix 4, lists the following:

Passive, Spontaneous Process, Mental Process, Body Motion, Collective Motion, Reciprocal, Direct Reflexive, Perception, Mental Activity, Speech Act, Indirect Reflexive.

The unresolved question here is where to place these designations in the lexical entries. The possibilities considered to date include: in the list of principal parts, following the correct and relevant principal part; following the principal parts (or following the word-building information); within the write-up itself.

At this moment we expect to work through the Innovating ANLEX database, determining as we go where it is best to place this information. The matter is that a priori we do not know for a given middle-passive verb whether the verb as a whole is described by one or another of the eleven categories above or only subparts of its usage. Determining this for the set of middle-passive verbs in the Greek New Testament will be a scholarly contribution in itself, and be weighed against other known efforts to enumerate the categories by actual verb.

Actual Morphological Tags

As noted above, the two versions in their analysis of voice in Greek verbs are different in their assignment of middle (M) and passive (P) tags.

Those two tag choices in the Revised AGNT and ANLEX are assigned by morphological form when the verb in question is either future or aorist. That is, future and aorist middles and passives are morphologically differentiated in those tenses. This is an automatic assignment; there is no room for subjective analysis.

In the present, imperfect, perfect and pluperfect tenses, however, the forms by traditional reckoning are taken to be ambiguously either middle or passive. Context alone provides the clue necessary in choosing either M or P. In fact, about thirty Greek New Testament instances of verbs in these tenses were thought to be indeterminable (in AGNT), and so we assigned the symbol E (Either middle or passive) in our exhaustive analysis of New Testament verbs. This is not to say, however, that New Testament authors or readers would necessarily agree with our determinations, whether M or P or E.

On the other hand, tags for voice in Innovating AGNT and ANLEX are assigned an A, M or P entirely on the basis of the morphology of analyzed verbs. There is no need to consult context. This is based on the determination by historical analysis that all verb forms in the present, imperfect, perfect and pluperfect are in fact middle in morphology, quite apart from the distinct passive morphology introduced to some future and aorist forms.

That being the case, a verb in Revised AGNT and ANLEX, say, ἐγείρονται, bears the tag VIPP--3P, meaning (in the fourth slot of the tag) that it is analyzed as passive (along with being indicative, present tense, third person plural). That passive assignment, the second P in the tag, is based on the contextual behavior of this verb form, as determined by the analyst.

On the other hand, in Innovating AGNT and ANLEX that same verb form bears the analysis tag VIPM--3P. The middle voice tag slot M is a strictly morphological determination, no subjective or expert analysis needed. But although both middle and passive forms in the innovating analysis

can potentially take the sense of any of the list of eleven subject-affected categories, probably no one is going to say that this verb's semantic sense in Matthew 11.5 is other than passive.

Granted the contrast between the two versions with respect to this (and many other) verb, that is, P in Revised analysis and M in Innovating analysis, the user may be confused. It is for this reason we are putting this forward on the hope that we can have thoughtful input from our faithful readers, especially teachers of Greek but not limited to such.

One consideration is to use a completely different set of labels for the two versions. Thus, revised ANLEX would continue to use A, M, D, E, P, O, N, while the innovating version would use something for the moment simply labeled as “X,” “Y,” and “Z.”

“X” in the New Testament

Finally, we simply comment that both versions of ANLEX write-ups frequently say “middle in the New Testament” or again “passive in the New Testament.”

It would not do for a user to read one statement in Revised ANLEX and the other in Innovating ANLEX. Whereas we assume that these designations are based on larger considerations than merely a nose count, we want to be sure that each designation is again evaluated in terms of the different tagging approaches to make sure it says what we want it to say.

Concluding Remarks

The content of this AGNT newsletter is intended to show a number of parameters inviting action on our part as we continue with the preparation of Innovating ANLEX. In many respects it depends on the revision being made on the Revised ANLEX, but the items discussed here especially are in need of careful evaluation.

We want to make sure that all our terminology is clear and self-consistent within a particular version, especially for that of the Innovating ANLEX. We also want to make sure that a toggling back and forth between Revised and Innovating versions of ANLEX does not cause confusion to the user. In some places, like the contrasting tags VIPP--3P and VIPM--3P above, there seem to be conflicting systems and, given the nature of each worldview of voice, there can be no compromise. In other places, we may be able to make adjustments to ease the burden on a switch-user of ANLEX.

We invite your comments on any and all matters discussed above, to include how we might formulate terminology within a given approach so that it doesn't cause confusion for users that might switch back and forth between approaches, and to include what we may say in the introductions (which we understand are rarely read in any case) to make each of the two systems clear in summary and with respect to crossover using of the versions.

Please realize that your comments on the above are more than just welcome.



As always, we remain open to developing AGNT and ANLEX in ways that are most useful to the needs of students and readers of God's Word.

Thank you for your continued support of *The AGNT Project*, for faithfully marketing the AGNT and ANLEX databases, and for making these state-of-the-art tools for studying the Greek New Testament available to students, scholars, pastors, translators, and laymen worldwide.

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