

Getting to grips with Greek in the real world

They don't teach the local equivalent of the famously unhelpful phrase "The postillion has been struck by lightning" but few course books for Greek as a foreign language reflect the reality of their target group. A new book, the first in a planned four-volume series, teaches language that foreign-born residents in Greece can use in everyday life. Someone who starts from scratch with "Ellinika A: Methodos ekmathisis tis ellinikis os xenis glossas" (Greek I: Method of Learning Greek as a Foreign Language), published by Patakis, will soon be able to read signs, follow directions, fill in forms, and seek jobs and accommodation. And they'll get a solid foundation for further progress, as the book is designed to prepare learners for the new language proficiency tests that are prerequisites for Greek citizenship and for some residence permits.

With years of theoretical and practical experience under their belts, authors Giorgos Simopoulos, Eirini Pathiaki, Rita Kanellopoulou, Aglaia



The basics: Looking for work and accommodation.



Pavlopoulou and editor Spiros A. Moschonas employ the latest methods to get fast results. They draw on real texts such as maps, signs, advertisements, bills, menus and receipts for lessons that have been thoroughly test-driven in classes for adult learners. The aim is to foster simultaneous development of comprehension, speaking and writing skills.

The purpose is serious and the methodology rigorous but the material is fun to use, with extra stimulus from amusing illustrations by Christos Papanikos and two CDs of dialogues and exercises, featuring clear, attractive voices. Each unit introduces and practices communication skills such as making introductions, asking questions and giving directions as well as grammar and phonetics.

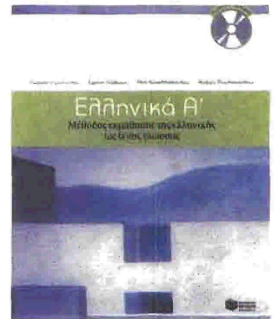
Beginners jump in at the deep end as modern language teaching theory recommends but with a lifebelt for those with zero knowledge of Greek. The introduction to the alphabet eases the novice in gently through the

names of countries and cities that are similar in many languages, a comparison of the Latin and Greek alphabets, and some reading practice with bilingual store signs. Reading famous foreign names and learning numbers from the jerseys of soccer players injects fun into what can be mechanical tasks. Phonetics? Emulate the cartoon figures shouting "AAA" in fear, "EEE" in rage and "OOO" in admiration.

An exercise in transcribing metro station names from upper to lower case is one of many that does double duty, teaching language skills and providing local information. Three tests review progress and help prepare candidates for the language proficiency examinations.

Though intended for use in class, the book will also suit those flying solo.

Moschonas, who is an assistant professor of linguistics and the philosophy of language in the communication and media studies faculty at Athens University, acknowledges that the book has some shortcomings. He



attributes them partly to both the contradictory official designation of language proficiency levels and the type of exams set up to test them. The authors invite feedback, which will doubtless be used for the next three volumes.

One appealing aspect of the book is that the writers have consciously used material showcasing "an inclusive image of Greece's multifaceted contemporary reality." Learners of Greek as a foreign language will welcome that and the lively approach.