

CarPe Latinam II

The Standards for Classical Language Learning, which can be purchased from the American Classical League Resource Center or downloaded from <http://department.monm.edu/classics/cpl/standards.pdf>, describe the Five C's: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. Communication is defined as "[t]he student communicates in a language other than English using the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing." I prefer Rick LaFleur's clever acronym, SANDALS (Spectate Audite Nunc Dicite Agite Legite Scribite), which embodies and expands upon the same ideals. (SANDALS is on p. xv of *Latin for the 21st Century* by Rick LaFleur; chapter 5 focuses on National Standards and Latin instruction.)

In my last column I wrote about developing writing skills at the beginning level. In this column I would like to address developing reading skills from the beginning. No matter whether we use something like the Cambridge Latin Course or Wheelock's Latin, nor whether we teach middle school or college, we all have the same goal in mind: teaching our students to read Latin. Young students (though certainly older students as well) often have difficulties truly reading Latin and develop less efficient habits that amount to decoding the language.

Reading skills need to be developed from the outset. Many professors erroneously assume that their students who have already studied Latin for several years in high school know how to read. Many, however, will only be good decoders, as I was.

Over the last decade or so I have found several approaches beneficial in developing reading skills. First and foremost among these is the use of a reading card, such as those developed and used at the University of Michigan. To make your own reading card, take an index card (I prefer a larger one) and cut from the top left corner a rectangle that is about 2.5 inches wide and .5 inches long. Then in the middle of the card write:

- 1) quid video? What do I see? (part of speech, morphology)
- 2) ergo, quid habeo? Therefore, what do I have? (syntactic function)
- 3) ergo, quid exspecto? Therefore, what do I expect? (morpho-syntactic expectations)

Cover up the text with the card so that you cannot see the end of the sentence you are reading—only the word you are currently on and those that came before. This will force you to consider what you have so far and teach you to read with expectation, as we do in our own native language. It will also break the reliance on English word order for figuring out the meaning of the Latin passage.

Reading in this way can be augmented by the use of metaphrasing. A basic metaphrasing sentence will be something like this: Someone verbed something to someone (covering nominative, accusative and dative). Having this metaphrased sentence in mind allows the student to "hang" the information he/she knows already on a familiar framework while he/she awaits the

rest of the information in the sentence. For instance, in the sentence *amicus servo pecuniam tradidit*, you would paraphrase the sentence in this manner as you meet each word:

The friend verbed something to someone. The friend verbed something to the slave. The friend verbed money to the slave. The friend handed over the money to the slave.

By doing this students soon learn that they do not have to see the verb as soon as they know what the subject is. This in turn helps them to understand that Latin is truly a language that can be understood in a normal fashion (reading from left to right) and not a secret code to be deciphered.

Paraphrasing is also useful in drills, adding meaning to transformations. When doing a transformation from, say, accusative singular to plural, add this last step:

amicum > *amicos* > Someone verbed the friends.

This last bit of paraphrasing reminds the student that he/she is not just swapping off endings but that these endings have vital meaning.

When I am not using a reading card, which does slow down the pace, or paraphrasing, I try to utilize at least the first five of Dexter Hoyos's ten "Rules for Reading Latin" from *Latin: How to Read it Fluently*, published by CANE (<http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~glawall/cane.htm>). I can do nothing better than to list these rules here and encourage people to get the book, which is marvelous and changed my whole perspective on reading Latin. Hoyos's rules are particularly useful when moving from made up Latin to real prose authors.

Rule 1 A new sentence or passage should be read through completely, several times if necessary, so as to see all its words in context.

Rule 2 As you read, register mentally the ending of every word so as to recognize how the words in the sentence relate to one another.

Rule 3 Recognize the way in which the sentence is structured (its Main Clause[s], subordinate clauses and phrases). Read them in sequence to achieve this recognition and re-read the sentence as often as necessary, without translating it.

Rule 4 Now look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary; and once you know what all the words can mean, re-read the Latin to improve your grasp of the context and so clarify what the words in this sentence do mean.

Rule 5 If translating, translate only when you have seen exactly how the sentence works and what it means. **SUB-RULE:** Do not translate in order to find out what the sentence means. Understand first, then translate.

Rule 6 a. Once a subordinate clause or phrase is begun, it must be completed syntactically before the rest of the sentence can proceed. b. When one subordinate construction embraces another, the

embraced one must be completed before the embracing one can proceed. c. A Main Clause must be completed before another Main Clause can start.

Rule 7 Normally the words most emphasised by the author are placed at the beginning and end, and all the words in between contribute to the overall sense, including those forming an embraced or dependent word-group. A word-group can be shown by linking its first and last words by an “arch” line.

Rule 8 The words within two or more word-groups are never mixed up together: “arches” do not cut across one another. But an “arch” structure can contain one or more interior “arches”; that is, embraced word-groups.

Rule 9 All the actions in a sentence are narrated in the order in which they occurred.

Rule 10 Analytical sentences are written with phrases and clauses in the order that is most logical to the author. The sequence of thought is signposted by the placing of word-groups and key words.

What I have discussed so far with reading cards, paraphrasing and Hoyos’s “Rules for Reading” address issues related to intensive reading, where we feel the need to know the meaning of every word, phrase, aspect of meter, etc. What I would like to suggest here is that as teachers we should also explain to our students the concept of extensive reading, where one reads for main ideas, general concepts and basic information. When reading extensively one does not need to know every single word, nor understand every single construction.

I am experimenting with extensive reading now with my 8th graders. Every few weeks I assign them several passages in old *Ecce Romani* texts (we use the Cambridge Latin Course) and ask them to practice their reading skills. I tell them to use pre-reading skills such as looking at the title, the illustrations and the supplemental vocabulary. I have them write a brief summary of what they expect the story to be about before actually reading the passage. After they have read the passage they write a couple more sentences summarizing the story for a post-reading exercise. They are not allowed to translate any of it. In class we read the passages again, discuss the story and any aspect of the story they wish to discuss. We do not as a rule discuss any grammar. We are reading extensively for pleasure.

The whole concept of extensive reading as applied to Latin is often not met until college and even then not until graduate courses. Up until that time we too often read intensively, word by word, line by line, crawling through those great passages of ancient literature. I can only wonder how much more students could read at one sitting if they were exposed to the concept of extensive reading earlier in their Latin studies.

My final thoughts are simple—teach your students this little motto: *TOLLE, LEGE!* Pick it up and read! --Ginny Lindzey, Chair, Committee for the Promotion of Latin