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FLARR Pages #19: Developing Students' Understanding of Latin Grammar through Sentence-Structure Analysis Sheets

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ing order

**"Developing Students' Understand-
ing of Latin Grammar through
Sentence-Structure Analysis Sheets"**
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Latin teachers well know that students
are often overwhelmed when they are
making the transition from English, a
word-order dependent language, to
Latin, which is not and thus is highly
flexible.. "Sentence-Structure Analysis"
("SSA") is a technique of mine that has
been used successfully to help students
make the transition to Latin's word
order and develop an understanding of
its syntax. Let us begin by considering a
basic principle underlying Sentence-
Structure Analysis Sheets.

Most Latin teachers would agree that
Latin should be taught as a language.
Nevertheless, teachers all too often in-
struct their students to first find the sub-
ject, then the verb, and finally the ob-
jects. This technique treats a Latin
sentence as a puzzle that has to be
solved, not as a language. However, as
Knudsvig and Ross note, the Romans
read from left to right in a linear fashion,
just as we do; thus we should teach our
students to read sentences in the same
way, as intended (Knudsvig and Ross
32).

The sample Sentence-Structure Analy-
sis Sheet below is designed to prompt
students to process a Latin sentence
linearly. It follows the "typical" Latin
word order very commonly found in the
early readings of first-year texts: 1. the
subject and its modifiers, 2. the indirect
object and its modifiers, 3. the direct
object and its modifiers, 4. the verb and
its modifiers. This particular version is
intended to be used early on in Latin
study for use with declarative sentences
having only one transitive verb with an
expressed subject, nouns modified only
by adjectives, and no subordinate
clauses, or any of the more complex
grammatical concepts. It can be revised
easily on a computer to accomodate
other types of sentences, other gramma-
tical structures, and variations in
"typical" Latin word order.

> **See an example of the
> "Sentence-Structure Analysis
> Sheet" on the reverse side of
> this page.**

In summary, Latin is a language in-
tended to be read linearly and not some
strange form of mathematics to be
deciphered. Sentence-Structure Analysis
(SSA) Sheets can assist students in de-
veloping an understanding both of
Latin's word-order patterns and its
syntax. Learning to read Latin is
challenging and rewarding; SSA is one
way to help make it easier and less
frustrating.

Sentence-Structure Analysis

Sentence: Cicero Pliniusque viris claris epistulas saepe scribebant.

I.   Preliminaries: Read the sentence above several times <u>from left to right</u> and come to a basic understanding of it, but do not translate yet. In the questions which follow, supply the information requested <u>in the order in which it appears in the Latin</u>.

II. The Subject and Its Modifiers - Nominative Case:
   A. State the complete subject, including any adjectives modifying it and any conjunctions.*__Answer__: Cicero Pliniusque.
   B. Indicate the part of speech of each word and, if appplicable, its gender and number. Also indicate the word that each adjective modifies and the words each conjunction joins.
      *__Answers__: <u>Cicero</u>: noun; masc., sg.; <u>Plinius</u>: noun; masc.,sg. ; <u>-que</u>: conj.; joins <u>Cicero</u> and <u>Plinius.</u>

III. The Indirect Object (Dative Case), the Direct Object (Accusative Case), and Their Modifiers:
   A. State the indirect and direct objects, including any adjectives modifying them and any conjunctions. *__Answer__: <u>viris claris epistulas</u>.
   B. Indicate the part of speech of each word and, if applicable, its gender, number, and case. Also indicate the word that each adjective modifies and the words that each conjunction joins.
      *__Answers__: <u>viris</u>: noun; masc., pl., dat.; <u>claris</u>: adj.; masc., pl., dat. - modifies <u>viris</u>; <u>epistulas</u>: noun; fem., pl., acc.

IV. The Verb and Its Modifiers:
   A. Supply the verb and any adverbs modifying it.
      *__Answer__: <u>saepe scribebant</u>.
   B. Indicate the verb's tense, voice, mood, person, number and the reason for the mood.
      *__Answer__: imperf., act., indic., 3rd, pl.; statement of fact.

V.   Translation:
   A. Read the whole sentence again from left to right and use the information in II. - IVk. above to confirm or revise your understanding of it, as necessary.
   B. Write out a translation of the sentence in good English, remembering that English declarative sentences typically follow this pattern: 1. subject, 2. verb, 3. objects (SVO).
      *__Answer__: "Cicero and Pliny often wrote letters to famous men." (Other answers acceptable.)

__Work Cited__: Knudsvig, Glenn M. and Deborah Pennell Ross. "The Linguistic Perspective." <u>Latin for the 21st Century: From Concept to Classroom</u>. Ed. Richard A. La Fleur. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley, 1997. 25-35.