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Lector Intende, Laetaberis: A Research-Based Approach to Introductory Latin¹

DANIEL LIBATIQUE and DOMINIC MACHADO

Abstract: In the 2019-20 academic year, we undertook a full redesign of our introductory Latin curriculum at the College of the Holy Cross in order to provide students with a more meaningful encounter with the Latin language. We primed our students to work with real, unedited Latin texts within their first year of study by highlighting Latin grammatical concepts that were frequent, complex, and unfamiliar to English speakers, which meant introducing topics like the passive voice, the subjunctive, third-declension adjectives, and indirect statement that are foundational to the Latin language much earlier than we had previously.

Keywords: Latin pedagogy; second language acquisition; Hyginus; corpus linguistic analysis; passive voice; subjunctive; third-declension adjectives; indirect statement.

In the 2019-20 academic year, we undertook a full redesign of our introductory Latin curriculum at the College of the Holy Cross in order to provide students with a more meaningful encounter with the Latin language. We primed our students to work with real, unedited Latin texts within their first year of study by highlighting Latin grammatical concepts that were frequent, complex, and unfamiliar to English speakers, which meant introducing topics like the passive voice, the subjunctive, third-declension adjectives, and indirect statement that are foundational to the Latin language much earlier than we had previously.

Introduction

In the 1970s, foreign language teachers began to develop an approach to second-language acquisition (SLA) that prioritized the ability of their students to communicate effectively in the target language. While the factors that contributed to this change were various and vast -- including Noam Chomsky's deconstruction of structuralist views of language², changing immigration patterns in Europe and the United States that resulted in the need for millions to learn a different language³, and the democratization of education⁴ -- the so-called communicative approach revolutionized second-language pedagogy and quickly replaced the grammar-translation model that had dominated language teaching since the 18th century. One of the major curricular changes implemented as a result of the communicative turn was

¹ The work underpinning this article began in Fall 2019 when the two of us were charged with teaching and reworking our introductory Latin sequence, and we presented our initial findings at the 2020 CANE Annual Meeting. The work that appears here has been enhanced significantly through our conversations with Neel Smith and the tremendous insights provided by the anonymous reviewer. We are also thankful to Aaron Seider and the editorial assistants at *NECJ* for their careful review of the manuscript at various stages in the process.

² Chomsky (1965), 3-4, criticized more traditional models of language learning by drawing attention to the difference between linguistic competence and performance. Hymes (1972) offered an important modification to Chomsky's division, asserting that it was more fitting to speak of communicative competence rather than its linguistic counterpart (cf. also Savignon (1983)).

³ Savignon (2007) discusses the impact of the European Union and its predecessors in adoption of the communicative language teaching. The other major waypoint was the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 that led to the migration of large numbers of non-English speaking populations to the United States.

⁴ Mitchell (1988), 13-14, discusses how the shift was tied to the move away from foreign language learning as a preserve of the elite.

the organization of material around thematic and cultural topics instead of individual points of grammar.⁵ The intention of this curricular change was to give students exposure to the contexts of the language that they were learning and, thereby, provide them with knowledge of not just the rules of the language, but also the particulars of the different settings in which it was used. Grammar and syntax were left to be learned naturally, decoded as part of a larger deductive process of understanding a second language through context.⁶

However, as researchers began to study the efficacy of the communicative language approach in the 1980s and 1990s, they found that this method of grammatical instruction was inherently flawed.⁷ The assumption that key grammatical and syntactical ideas could be inferred deductively in the context of specific thematic and cultural contexts was incorrect; deductive learning only worked so far as the grammar and syntax of the second language matched expectations set by the learner's first language.⁸ To solve this problem, scholars suggested that teachers employing a communicative approach had to be more intentional about the way that they introduced the grammar and syntax of the target language and laid out three criteria for organizing such material in curricular design: frequency, complexity, and familiarity.⁹ Grammar and syntax, it was argued, needed to be introduced in a way that maximized student exposure to the most common elements of the language (frequency), those that would take the most time to learn on account of their difficulty (complexity) and differences with the learner's first language (familiarity).

As Jacqueline Carlon has recently observed, these core concepts of curricular design, however, are not only relevant for teachers taking the communicative approach to language - they have important implications for the study of historical languages as well.¹⁰ Carlon contends that if ancient language teachers intend to prepare students to read texts in the original language, they should be cognizant of the salient features of the texts they plan to read and design a syllabus that gives students ample practice with the most frequent, complex, and unfamiliar points of grammar that they will meet therein.¹¹ In the paper that follows, we demonstrate that the vast majority of current resources for Latin language pedagogy, particularly those used in introductory college-level courses which attempt to prepare students to read real Latin texts over a two-semester period, have yet to answer Carlon's clarion call. We then move on to outline the approach that we used to design a syllabus according to these heuristics of frequency, complexity, and familiarity, drawing attention to similarities between our methodology and other novel pedagogical approaches to ancient language study. We conclude by sharing the results of our experimentation and plans for the future.

Case Study: The Passive Voice

In our experience teaching Latin over the last decade, one key concept that our students have found difficult is the passive voice, particularly translating the Latin passive into English. To some degree, it is unsurprising that native English speakers struggle with translating the passive voice; 21st century English employs the passive voice less frequently than historical

⁵ Rosenthal and Sloane (1987) is emblematic of the shift towards thematic and cultural organization of CLT-based syllabi.

⁶ The most famous explication of this view of grammar is Krashen and Terrell's Natural Order Hypothesis (1983).

⁷ For a detailed discussion of these findings, see Herschensohn (1990).

⁸ Klein (1986), 3-33, provides a detailed discussion of the problems inherent in assuming that second-language acquisition occurs in the same way as first-language acquisition.

⁹ E.g. Canale and Swain (1980), 32: "Criteria such as degree of complexity, generalizability and transparency with respect to functions" and built-in "repetitions of grammatical forms in different functions." Herschensohn (1990), 454: "A syllabus should take into account information concerning frequency of grammatical structures...and the relative difficulty of these structures in the target language."

¹⁰ Carlon (2013), 106-122.

¹¹ Carlon (2013), 109-111, lays out in detail a set of instructional principles to follow in order to meet these goals.

Latin texts.¹² Moreover, while passive forms in Latin consist of one or two words, its English translation may feature up to four words (e.g., *amabatur* = “she was being loved”). These essential differences between the two languages bring us back to our SLA-based criteria for syllabus design: in teaching the passive voice to native English speakers, Latin teachers are dealing with a concept that is highly frequent in the target language, unfamiliar to their students, and somewhat complex.¹³ It thus makes sense from a curricular perspective to introduce the passive voice early so that students would have ample opportunity to practice with a complex and unfamiliar concept of central importance to the target language.

However, many popular Latin textbooks do not introduce the passive until nearly halfway through the course. For instance, the 7th edition of *Wheelock’s Latin* presents passive verbs in Chapter 18 (out of 40), and likewise, Shelmerdine’s 2nd edition of *An Introduction to Latin* teaches the concept in Chapter 14 (out of 32).¹⁴ If we were to map the chapter structure of these textbooks onto a two-semester introductory sequence,¹⁵ it would mean that students would not learn the passive until the end of the first semester. The delaying of the passive voice signifies on a practical level that students will work almost exclusively with the active voice in the first semester and, as a result, internalize the active voice as normative in Latin. This mismatch between presentation and the realities of historical Latin texts creates false expectations for our students about how the language works. Moreover, in these textbooks, the passive voice is introduced in close proximity with other unfamiliar and complex topics like the subjunctive, thus providing students with less time engaging deeply with how these concepts function in Latin.

A comparison to introductory Greek textbooks may prove to be useful here.¹⁶ While Wheelock and Shelmerdine postpone consideration of the passive voice to the midpoint of their respective chapter progressions, many Greek textbooks introduce the middle/passive much earlier, often within the first quarter of their total chapter loads. The inclusion of a third voice in Greek, the middle, complicates the picture slightly but negligibly. Donald J. Mastronarde’s *Introduction to Attic Greek* introduces the present middle/passive in Unit 11 of 42; Anne Groton’s *From Alpha to Omega* builds upon the present, imperfect, and future active by introducing their middle/passive or middle counterparts in Lesson 11 of 50. Hardy Hansen and Gerald M. Quinn’s *Greek: An Intensive Course* and Maurice Balme and Gilbert Lawall’s *Athenaze* bifurcate the middle and the passive but still introduce both relatively early; Hansen and Quinn explore pure passives in Unit 5 and middles in Unit 7 of 20, while *Athenaze* switches the order, introducing middles in Unit 6 and passives in Unit 10 of 30.¹⁷ The most strikingly early introduction of the middle/passive comes in C.A.E. Luschnig’s *An Introduction to Ancient Greek*, which introduces it concurrently with the active in the very first of the textbook’s 14 Lessons. In all instances, the middle/passive is introduced much earlier than in Wheelock or Shelmerdine, a fact that affords Greek students more time to practice with and internalize the voice system. This comparison seems all the more striking when we consider how Latin verbal forms exhibit only one of two voices: active or passive. All the more, a Latin approach to verbal voice that shrinks or eliminates the distance between the introduction of active and passive verbs would serve to underscore the fact that they are simply two sides of the same coin.

¹² Mahoney (2004), 103, estimates that 32.7% of Latin verbs are in the passive voice. By contrast, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary of Modern Usage (1994), 720, notes that studies of the incidence of passive voice in English-language periodicals have shown that its usage never exceeds 13%.

¹³ Carlon (2013), 109, expresses a similar general sentiment: “Providing explicit grammatical instruction (EI) can be effective in helping students cope with complex structures in the second language (L2), particularly those that have no parallel in their first language (L1).”

¹⁴ We are using Wheelock and Shelmerdine as examples because these are the textbooks that we have most commonly used in our teaching experience and because of the frequency with which they are used at the college level. We will include other textbooks in common use in introductory Latin sequences in the sections to follow.

¹⁵ See Figure 1 below.

¹⁶ Major and Stayskal (2011), 28-30, outline a similar way of treating voice in ancient Greek.

¹⁷ These 30 units are split amongst two separate books; Book I includes units 1-16, while Book II includes units 17-30.

It might be suggested that Latin textbooks delay the introduction of the passive voice to avoid overloading students with forms to memorize. We will return later in this paper to a strategy that can be employed to manage memorization of verbal forms, but for now it is worth noting that there are a number of ways that one might introduce the passive voice early without significantly increasing students' cognitive load or altering an existing curriculum. For instance, once the present active system is introduced to students, learning the forms of the present passive system represents a relatively small cognitive load - students must simply learn the system's personal endings (-r, -ris, -tur, -mur, -mini, -ntur) and some minor vowel changes.¹⁸ As the present active system is often the first verbal system taught to students, adopting the above strategy would give students very early exposure to the active/passive distinction. Moreover, as additional tenses and moods are introduced, teaching the active and passive together would offer a number of opportunities to reinforce the important differences between them throughout the course of the year.

Target Text: Hyginus' *Fabulae*

To incorporate important topics like the passive voice into our introductory Latin sequence earlier than textbooks like Wheelock or Shelmerdine would have introduced them, we decided to eschew those traditional textbooks and build our first-year Latin curriculum from scratch. Without a textbook to scaffold the progression of topics and vocabulary throughout the year, we needed to think beyond a chapter-to-chapter or module-to-module approach to understand at a macrocosmic level how we could build topics from solid foundations towards higher-level structures. As previously discussed, the order of topics matters because the more time a student spends with a concept, the more proficient they will become at applying it. We will return to this point later when we compare the timings of our presentations of other important grammatical topics with those in traditional textbooks.

In following the criteria of frequency, complexity, and unfamiliarity, we decided that we wanted to foreground and draw on real Latin texts for assignments and grammatical practice rather than create artificial exercises and passages. As Carlon has argued, textbook exercises do little in terms of improving students' understanding of how the language works; rather, they highlight specific grammatical points apart from their larger context.¹⁹ This guiding principle led to our formulation of a year-long goal: we wanted our students to be able to read a real, unedited Latin text by the end of their first year of Latin with appropriate lexical and contextual help. The promise of an activity that normally has to wait until the second year of study was, we hoped, a way to engage students and perhaps improve enrollment retention from our introductory to intermediate sequence. The introduction of real Latin at an early stage gets students invested by having them directly apply the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax that they are learning to the actual words of the ancients, rather than to manufactured and self-contained textbook or workbook exercises. This approach necessarily would not begin with unedited texts right away; we planned to adapt parts of the chosen work to target specific grammatical structures and vocabulary at different stages throughout the academic year in class and in assessments. Eventually, we would build to that final assignment of reading a real, unedited text.

The choice of target text, then, was paramount. We needed an author that not only used grammar and vocabulary that was reasonably accessible to first-year Latin students but also wrote on topics that would engage and interest them. We also wanted to prioritize texts and authors that are not typically included in the Latin "canon," the type of author who would not necessarily appear in a regular intermediate Latin course or an advanced undergraduate seminar. For reference, Holy Cross' intermediate prose class has used Livy

¹⁸ See Major and Stayskal (2011), 25-26, 40, for a discussion on the value of consolidating verbal endings for student learning.

¹⁹ Carlon (2013), 108.

and Caesar in the past, among others, and our seminar offerings have included Roman letter writers, Roman comedy, Latin elegy, Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Horace, early Christian literature, and Ovid.

The choice of author and text would also dictate our ordering of grammatical topics and vocabulary. What constitutes “Latin” varies from author to author in terms of morphology, vocabulary, and syntax, so we needed specificity in our choice and a deliberate focus on using the grammar and vocabulary contained within it in its proper context. For example, the Latin noun *anime* would most likely be parsed as the masculine vocative singular of the noun *animus, animi*, m., in a classical text like Plautus. However, in manuscripts of the Latin Psalms, the *-e* ending might stand for *-ae*, which would make *anime* the feminine genitive singular, dative singular, nominative plural, or vocative plural of the noun *anima, animae*, f.²⁰ Thus, we could avoid these various possibilities by focusing on a single text or author. However, the frequency of important complex and unfamiliar topics in our target text that would largely square with the frequency of important complex and unfamiliar topics in Latin texts more generally would also give our students a solid base of knowledge if they continued into higher levels of Latin learning, like our intermediate sequence and advanced seminars.

After taking all of these factors into account, we decided to use the *Fabulae*, “Stories”, of Hyginus, the Augustan-era mythographer. The *Fabulae* are a collection of almost 300 self-contained prose units that describe various Greco-Roman myths, characters, and genealogies. The choice was ideal in a number of ways:

- 1) The work is modular by virtue of its discrete narratives. It was therefore relatively easy to pick and choose specific *fabulae* to demonstrate grammar and to adapt for assignments and assessments without losing context; our students would not necessarily need the knowledge of another passage to understand the story within the one at hand.
- 2) The majority of the stories exhibit a relatively simple narrative structure, with most at a length of less than ten sentences. In each tale, a third-person perspective narrates what happens to certain characters, with few if any deeper levels of narratological framing beyond occasional direct speech (though indirect speech is ubiquitous).
- 3) The grammar is not particularly simple, but neither is it inaccessible. It includes many important concepts that we hope to have our introductory students practice as a foundation for later language learning, including adjective-noun agreement, indirect statement, gerunds and gerundives, participles, relative clauses, and subjunctive verbs in dependent clauses.
- 4) The mythological subject matter is engaging. It might even capitalize on individual students’ prior knowledge of myth through media like Percy Jackson or Classics courses in translation.

In sum, Hyginus offered an engaging, digestible, and approachable text for our students and an adaptable and fruitful source on which to base our introductory Latin curriculum.

Frontloading Frequent Topics and Splitting Paradigms

After deciding on the author and text, we, with the help of our colleague Neel Smith, used a morphological parser²¹ to analyze the text of Hyginus and identify its most frequent vocabulary and grammatical constructions. A higher frequency for a particular topic, as well as the complexity of and unfamiliarity with its components to native English speakers,

²⁰ Smith (2019).

²¹ The tools used to analyze Hyginus are available at <https://lingualatina.github.io/analysis/> and may be adapted to any digital text that can be parsed. This link is current as of late January 2021. If it is no longer functional, please feel free to email either author for the current one; our email addresses are available on the Holy Cross Classics faculty website: <https://www.holycross.edu/academics/programs/classics/faculty-staff>

signaled that we needed to introduce that concept early in our syllabus. As suggested above, the most frequent concepts that the morphological parser identified are often left until relatively late in traditional textbooks. These concepts' belated introductions or the compression of such material in these textbooks are missed opportunities for students to spend more time practicing them.

The following table lists seven Latin textbooks in use throughout college-level introductory Latin classrooms, their total number of units, and the unit in which each textbook introduces a grammatical concept that we will discuss in the following sections of this article: passive voice, subjunctive mood, third-declension adjectives, and indirect statement. The last row indicates our approach in terms of total number of class meetings across one academic year (in the absence of a textbook with chapter divisions).

Table 1. Summary of textbooks, total number of units in each, and unit number in which certain topics are introduced.²²

Textbook	# of Units	Passive	Subj.	3rd Decl. Adjs.	Ind. St.
1. Wheelock	40	18	28	16	25
2. Shelmerdine	32	14	24	10	19
3. Oxford	31	16	19	5	23
4. Keller & Russell	15	3	7	8	11
5. Dickey	61	27 (dep.) 32 (pass.)	13	21	19
6. English & Irby	36	17	26	3	24
7. <i>LLPSI</i>	35	6	27	12	11
8. Our approach	80	5-8	29-32	1-4	25-28

As discussed previously, we wanted to introduce the passive voice early in our year's progression of topics. **Figure 1** illustrates in black the points at which the passive voice is introduced in each approach; the row number corresponds to the textbook's number in **Table 1**. For the sake of generalization and simplicity, we have assumed a roughly four-month semester (as illustrated in the header row, September through December) and an even split of chapters or class meetings between a fall and spring semester.²³ The fall semester then includes, for example, the first 20 of Wheelock's 40 chapters, the first 16 of Shelmerdine's 32 chapters, and the first 40 of our roughly 80 class meetings throughout the academic year.

²² For ease of reference from this point on, we will refer to each textbook by commonly used names for the series among teachers, whether by authorial last name(s) (Wheelock, Shelmerdine, Keller & Russell, Dickey, English & Irby) or textbook title (Oxford [Latin Course, College Edition], *LLPSI* = *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata*). Full citations for all textbooks can be found in the Works Cited.

²³ For textbooks with an odd number of units (Oxford, Keller & Russell, Dickey, and *LLPSI*), we included the odd chapter in the fall semester.

Consequently, we decided to focus, at first, only on the third-singular and plural of various tense, voice, and mood combinations, saving the first- and second-person until the second semester. Instead of learning six forms for each tense-voice-mood combination, students only had to learn the two third-person forms. This does not preclude showing the entire paradigm; we gave them access to all forms in any one tense-voice-mood combination but insisted on their immediate internalization of the third person. Here our approach aligns once again with that of Major and Stayskal who argue that reducing the number of verbal forms that students are required to memorize can actually enhance their learning.²⁹ Economizing person-number combinations enabled students to focus their mental energy on learning more tense, voice, and mood combinations, particularly those that were unfamiliar to them as English speakers. As a result, we were able to cover all voices, tenses, and moods by the end of the first semester, which helped us to introduce the students to a wider array of syntactic structures than they would have met at a comparable stage in other textbooks. This strategy allowed us to afford students more time with the frequent, complex, and unfamiliar over the course of the first semester.

At the beginning of the second semester, we introduced the first- and second-person in the context of reviewing these verbal forms. Students had little difficulty learning and recognizing these new forms. The speed with which they picked up these forms was unsurprising, when viewed from the perspective of frequency, complexity, and familiarity. While many of Latin’s tense, voice, and mood combinations are unfamiliar to English-language students, Latin’s person-number combinations are exactly the same ones employed in English. Moreover, the rules of formation and translation largely remain the same as for the third-person.

This splitting of the paradigm was essential for early introductions of other important topics that exhibit the trifecta of frequency, complexity, and unfamiliarity. Chief among them was the subjunctive mood. Not only are English-language students generally unfamiliar with the wide variety of subjunctive usages, but it is very frequent in Latin texts: in Hyginus, 25% of all verbs are in the subjunctive mood.³⁰ **Figure 2** illustrates the points at which the subjunctive is introduced in each approach,³¹ with the calendar shifted to the last two months of the fall semester and first two months of the spring semester (the bolded line in the middle indicates the semester split):

Figure 2. Introduction of the subjunctive mood in each approach (refer to **Table 1** for the row key).

November					December					January					February																			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30															
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24																			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24																			
5				6				7				8				9				10				11				12						
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27																	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27																	
21	25	29			33	37				41	45	49	53	57																				

Wheelock, Shelmerdine, English & Irby, and *LLPSI* introduce the subjunctive almost halfway through the second semester; Oxford introduces it a bit earlier, closer to mid-January, but still within the second semester. This timing ensures that students will have three months at most

²⁹ Major and Stayskal (2011) also extoll the potential benefits of reducing the number of principal parts that students are required to memorize.

³⁰ See <https://bit.ly/hyginus> for the data and calculation methods.

³¹ Dickey’s introduction of the subjunctive in Unit 13 places it around mid-October, just outside of the calendar slice on display here.

to internalize the forms, rules, and syntax that the subjunctive involves.

The three remaining approaches all introduce the subjunctive within the first semester, two (ours and Keller & Russell) in the second half of the first semester and one (Dickey) in mid-October. Keller & Russell progresses through the formation of the subjunctive in all tenses and voices before explaining a few independent uses (hortatory/jussive, potential, and optative) and conditional statements. Dickey offers the formation of the present subjunctive and its hortatory and deliberative uses in Chapter 13 and then regularly introduces more subjunctive topics in the following chapters (for example, imperfect subjunctive in 15 and sequence of tenses in 16).

Our approach, governed by the types of subjunctives that Hyginus tends to use, takes a similar tack but with different focuses and methodologies. By utilizing mainly the third-person, we were able to focus on how the subjunctive generally functions, rather than being bogged down by paradigm memorization. We limited our first semester subjunctive topics to the formation of each tense, identification, and sequence of tenses with one independent (deliberative) and one dependent (temporal / circumstantial clauses) use. As we began to tackle more intense uses of the subjunctive, like conditions, in the second semester, our students were already familiar with the subjunctive, and we built upon that pre-existing knowledge rather than introducing everything subjunctive-related in one fell swoop.

Further Topic Rearrangements

The framework of CBI also influenced several other curricular decisions we made. Morphological analysis of Hyginus highlighted two other major grammatical topics that we needed to introduce earlier: third-declension adjectives and indirect statement. Like the passive voice and the subjunctive mood, each of these topics also met the criteria of frequency, complexity, and unfamiliarity.

Generally, third-declension adjectives are introduced as a discrete concept at varying points throughout the first semester (Figure 3; note the fall semester headings): late in Wheelock and Keller & Russell; around mid-semester in Shelmerdine, Dickey, and *LLPSI*; and relatively early in Oxford and English & Irby. The key word, however, is “discrete”; in all of these approaches, third declension is separated from consideration of the first and second declensions by at least one chapter designation. The closest, English & Irby, introduces first and second declension nouns and adjectives in Lesson 2 but then third declension nouns and adjectives in Lesson 3. The largest separations occur in Wheelock and Keller & Russell; the former introduces third-declension adjectives in Chapter 16 but first-second declension adjectives in Chapters 2-4 (a space of 11 chapters and about two and a half months), while the latter’s separation spans from Chapter III to Chapter VIII (a similar span of about two and a half months).

Figure 3. Introduction of third-declension adjectives in each approach (refer to Table 1 for the row key).

September					October					November					December															
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20											
1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8																
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18													
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18													
1		5		9		13		17		21		25		29		33		37												

In our approach, we introduced third-declension adjectives within the first four

class meetings and at the same time as first- and second-declension adjectives. While a similar objection may be posed here as to the passive voice, namely overloading students with forms to memorize, similar methods of amelioration can be applied: for example, splitting paradigms; beginning with only the nominative and genitive forms of adjectives in each category; and adding the accusative, dative, and ablative forms into the mix when concepts like direct objects, indirect objects, and ablatives of agent are introduced later in the semester.³²

An adjective must agree with its noun in gender, case, and number, and we decline adjectives in a few different ways to form a match depending on the adjective’s dictionary entry (and thus declension grouping, like third-declension, and sub-group, like three-termination). When we framed third-declension adjectives as simply a component of this larger concept of adjective-noun agreement, students were receptive and able to practice with the larger concept rather than focusing solely on its individual manifestations.³³ It was especially important to introduce and foreground the larger concept of adjective-noun agreement given English speakers’ unfamiliarity with adjective declension and noun matching. The concept of frequency also dictated this approach, as our students would naturally see noun-adjective agreement in virtually every Latin sentence that they will read.

Similar considerations apply to indirect statement. **Figure 4** illustrates the points at which the concept is introduced in each approach (note the fall-spring semester split):

Figure 4. Introduction of indirect statement in each approach (refer to **Table 1** for the row key).

November					December					January					February						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
5		6			7			8		9		10			11		12				
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29		
21		25			29			33		37		41		45			49		53		

While Wheelock, Shelmerdine, Oxford, Keller & Russell, and English & Irby introduce indirect statement in the second semester, we, along with Dickey and *LLPSI*,³⁴ introduce it around the midpoint of the first, after our students acquire the requisite knowledge to form each construction or conjugation. An indirect statement pairs an accusative with an infinitive after a verb that indicates an action performed with the head (saying, thinking, and so on). So, after our students learned how to conjugate main verbs, decline into the accusative case, and identify infinitives from a verb’s dictionary entry, they were equipped to learn and practice with indirect statement. The introduction of the topic in the first semester also leverages the recent acquisition of the requisite material; if we postponed indirect statement until the second semester, after the interval of a winter break in which concept retention is often difficult, we would have had to review the distinct components of indirect statement before introducing the concept as a whole.

Again, the guiding principles of frequency, complexity, and unfamiliarity dictated this early introduction of indirect statement, a very frequent construction whose terminology and formation are largely foreign to English-speaking students. An English indirect statement maintains the same structure as a regular main clause and is often introduced by “that”

³² Mahoney (2004), 102, has shown that Latin cases show up with somewhat similar frequency (the dative is the least common at 11.4% and nominative is the common at 23.9%).

³³ Carlon (2013), 110, for instance, eschews the teaching of 3rd neuter i-stem nouns due to their infrequency.

³⁴ We will analyze this point of coalescence along with others at the end of this section.

(e.g., “He says **that she is happy**”); the shift into an accusative-infinitive structure (*dicit eam lactam esse*) requires a reconfiguration of expectations that a student must practice both recognizing and composing. So, this early introduction of indirect statement allows them to practice working with this frequent, complex, and unfamiliar construction for a longer amount of time than they would have received in many of the existing textbook approaches.

At this point of the article, it is clear that our approach has more in common with some textbooks than with others. In particular, Dickey, Keller & Russell, and *LLPSI* also frontload some of these important concepts.³⁵ Comparisons of our methodologies or goals may prove illustrative. Dickey bases her textbook on ancient colloquia, “short dialogues and narratives for [Latin] reading and speaking practice ... composed by native speakers of Latin specifically for learners;”³⁶ thus, both of our approaches prioritize the language as written and spoken by the ancients themselves. But while she patterns her progression of topics on how Latin was actually taught in antiquity, our approach relies more on insights gained from SLA. Keller and Russell take an approach more similar to ours: “We have tried to create a beginning Latin book that relies primarily on the ancient authors themselves as the means by which students may learn about Latin syntax and style.”³⁷ Our approach, however, delineates the source material more narrowly, to the level of a single author, since what constitutes “Latin syntax and style” can change from author to author.³⁸ Reading Pliny the Younger, for example, does not necessarily prepare a student for the idiosyncrasies of syntax and vocabulary in Cicero, though, of course, any practice with the language is better than none. *LLPSI* takes an inductive approach that illustrates grammar through narrative. While our narrative-based assessments, like long-form translation assignments,³⁹ serve to reinforce rather than inductively introduce grammar and syntax, the concept of working through coherent narratives (in our case, ones extremely close to or unedited from Hyginus) rather than disparate sentences in textbook exercises aligns our approaches. On a broader level, as more secondary school Latin programs utilize the tenets of CBI, especially through textbooks like *LLPSI*, our college-level curriculum offers a Latin learning environment that may be more familiar to students with a high school background and that could provide an entry into pedagogy that draws on CBI concepts without a fully communicative approach (i.e., instruction entirely in Latin).⁴⁰

Creating a Vocabulary List

So far this article has focused primarily on our presentation of grammatical concepts, but it is also important to say a few words regarding our presentation of vocabulary. Much recent work has highlighted the importance of vocabulary acquisition to creating reading fluency.⁴¹ Attempts have also been made to quantify the lexical knowledge required to achieve reading fluency and to create vocabulary lists that fit with this data.⁴² There are, however, some problems with this approach. As we mentioned above, trying to reconstruct “Latin,” a language used in a number of circumstances over a period of nearly two thousand years, is a bit of a fool’s errand. There were numerous forms of Latin, each deployed according to the specificities of genre, context, and time period.

³⁵ The timings of topics in these three textbooks line up with ours twice each: Dickey - subjunctive and indirect statement; Keller & Russell - passive voice and subjunctive; *LLPSI* - passive voice and indirect statement. Oxford and English & Irby each have one point of temporal similarity with our approach (both in introducing third-declension adjectives), but one point of connection is probably more coincidental than two.

³⁶ Dickey (2018), xi.

³⁷ Keller and Russell (2004), xvii.

³⁸ Smith (2019).

³⁹ On which see below, pp. 48-50.

⁴⁰ We are indebted to *NECJ*'s anonymous referee for this insightful point.

⁴¹ Major (2008), 1-24; Clark (2009), 67-108; Carlon (2013), 109.

⁴² Major and Clark suggest 80% as the threshold for fluency. The most prominent frequency lists include Dickinson College's (<http://dcc.dickinson.edu/vocab/core-vocabulary>) as well as Haverford College's (<https://bridge.haverford.edu/select/Latin/>).

Preliminary research by our colleague, Neel Smith, allows us to understand the extent of this problem as it pertains to constructing frequency lists.⁴³ By looking at word frequency across distinct corpora, Smith argues that while Latin texts do, in fact, share a universal core vocabulary of 300 to 400 words (primarily consisting of prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, and a select group of verbs or nouns), the next most frequent words are highly corpus-specific. A simple example is illustrative of Smith's larger thesis. While *consul* is the 321st most frequent word in Latin according to Dickinson College's frequency list, it does not show up once in canonical texts like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or Vergil's *Georgics*. If one's goal is to read these two texts fluently, learning the word *consul*, in spite of general frequency in Latin texts, is of no value. Rather, it is more valuable when reading the *Metamorphoses* or the *Georgics* to know the meaning of *hedera*, a word that, while far less frequent in the general Latin corpus, shows up eight times in these works.

We structured our vocabulary list for the course in light of these observations. In the first semester, we introduced students to the 300 most frequent words in Hyginus' *Fabulae*, focusing particularly on words that appeared prominently in broader-based Latin frequency tables. In the second semester, we changed our tack to an even more corpus-specific approach, prioritizing words that showed up most frequently in our chosen selections of Hyginus to prepare our students to read these passages. It should be noted that our approach towards vocabulary, once again, dovetails well with the precepts of CBI discussed above, particularly its injunction to introduce new material as needed. Moreover, such an approach ensures that vocabulary that is introduced will be continuously used and, therefore, more likely to be remembered.

On a broader level, these insights offer a useful set of guidelines for vocabulary building in a college Latin curriculum. First and foremost, it reminds us of the importance that should be accorded to ensuring that students are very familiar with the core words that appear in nearly all Latin texts. Second, it suggests that our students' reading ability will be enhanced by adopting a text-specific vocabulary approach. Developing a corpus-specific vocabulary helps our students to build up "implicit knowledge" of the texts with which they are engaging, a necessary precursor to reading fluency. Moreover, this approach applies beyond the introductory level. By centering corpus-specific vocabulary in intermediate and advanced classes, we not only stand to help our students to achieve fluency with these texts more quickly, but also to rid ourselves of preconceived notions of what words students should know. By explicitly fostering student knowledge of corpus-specific vocabulary at every level, we can significantly expand the range of their vocabulary over the course of their four years in college.

The Results

How did reorganizing our curriculum affect student outcomes? To assess the impact of our curricular changes, let us have a brief look at both the nature and results of two assignments, one from the first semester and one from the second semester, that we gave to our students. Because our goal was to prepare students for reading Hyginus by the end of the second semester, one of our methods of assessment was long-form translation assignments based on various *fabulae* of Hyginus.⁴⁴ These assignments required students not only to translate the relevant passage into English but also to answer a series of grammatical questions about its contents. Of course, it was initially not possible to give students an unedited text of Hyginus, so we adapted certain passages to fit their current skill set. In adapting the passages, we followed one guiding principle: we sought to change as little as possible from Hyginus' text in order to give students maximal exposure to reading "real" Latin. As such, we favored omitting phrases that contained grammatical concepts with which students were not yet familiar rather than paraphrasing these clauses in a more simplistic manner. Moreover, we

⁴³ Smith (2020).

⁴⁴ All of our long-form translation assessments can be found at the following site: <https://libatique.info/CANE2020/>. See above, n. 21, if this link is no longer functional.

provided a number of grammatical and lexical glosses to minimize what we would have to omit from these passages.

Below is the passage that we used in the final translation assignment of the first semester, due on December 4, as well as the original passage from Hyginus on which it was based.

Student passage:

Cum Achivī decem annōs Troiam capere nōn possent, Epeus equum mirae magnitudinis ligneum fēcit et in eō sunt collecti Menelaus, Ulixēs, Diomedes, Thessander, Sthenelus, Acamas, Thoas, Machaon, Neoptolemus. et in equō scripsērunt “DANAI MINERVAE DONUM DANT”, castraque transtulērunt Tenedo. Cum id Troianī vidērunt, arbitratī sunt hostēs abisse; Priamus imperāvit equum in templū Minervae ducī. Cum vātēs, Cassandra, diceret equum habere hostes, fides et data non est et equum pro templō posuērunt. Achivī ex equō apertō a Sinone exiērunt portarūmque custodēs occidērunt et Troiam sunt potiī.

Cum clause with subjunctive

Passive verbs

Indirect statement

Hyginus, *Fabulae* 108 (*Troianus Equus*)

Achivi cum per decem annos Troiam capere non possent, Epeus monitu Minervae equum mirae magnitudinis ligneum fecit eoque sunt collecti Menelaus Ulixes Diomedes Thessander Sthenelus Acamas Thoas Machaon Neoptolemus; et in equo scripserunt DANAI MINERVAE DONO DANT, castraque transtulerunt Tenedo. Id Troiani cum viderunt arbitratī sunt hostes abisse; Priamus equum in arcem Minervae duci imperavit, feriatique magno opere ut essent, edixit; id vates Cassandra cum vociferaretur inesse hostes, fides ei habita non est. Quem in arcem cum statuissent et ipsi noctu lusu atque vino lassi obdormissent, Achivi ex equo apertō a Sinone exierunt et portarum custodes occiderunt sociosque signo dato receperunt et Troia sunt potiī.

Position or word change

Word deleted

As the annotations demonstrate, the passage that the students translated was minimally edited. We excluded parts of the original passage that included grammatical and syntactic structures that students had not yet met, such as fourth declension nouns (*monitu Minervae*), indirect command (*feriatique...edixit*), and the ablative absolute (*signo dato*). The majority of editorial changes were small changes to reduce confusion and test vocabulary: we moved *cum* to the initial position to reduce confusion regarding the newly introduced concept of temporal clauses; we added punctuation marks to give students a better sense of sentence structure; and we replaced a few words (*arcem, vociferaretur, inesse*) with synonyms that students had recently learned (*templum, diceret, habere*). We also changed the case of one noun (*Troiam*) for ease of identification, given the variety of cases that the verb *potior* can take as object. There were two grammatical glosses included: we noted that the list of names (*Menelaus...Neoptolemus*) in the first sentence were all in the nominative case and provided a translation for the ablative participial phrase (*ex equō apertō a Sinone*).

To perform well on this assessment, students needed to display a mastery of a wide array of frequent, complex, and unfamiliar grammatical and syntactic structures. Students had to be able to identify and translate regular and periphrastic passive forms (bolded in the

above passage), including those that were separated by an adverb (*data non est*). Moreover, they had to be able to differentiate these forms from similar-looking active forms of deponent verbs (*arbitratī sunt; sunt potitī*).⁴⁵ Students also had to identify and translate indirect statements (marked in black highlighter above) within the context of a larger sentence and work with dependent *cum*-clauses featuring subjunctive forms (italicized above).⁴⁶

Across three sections of twenty students, our students showed mastery of these concepts; they scored an average of 93.4% in Dominic's 20 person section and 88.23% among Daniel's 40 students.⁴⁷ We should note that these scores reflect the average grade of our students after they were allowed to revise their initial translation assignment.⁴⁸ If they so chose, students could earn back half the points they lost on the assignment by correcting their mistakes.

We assigned long-form translation assignments every two weeks throughout both semesters. While most assignments exhibited the low-level or minor changes and adaptations described above, the overarching goal of the redesign was to have our students engage with unedited Latin texts by the end of the year. As a means of further reinforcement, we used passages from Hyginus that we assigned as compositions in the first semester as the basis for translation assignments in the second semester.⁴⁹

For their final assignment due at the end of the spring 2020 semester, we tasked our students with translating an almost completely unedited passage from the *Fabulae* that combined the end of 106 (the ransom of Hector's body) with all of 107 (the Judgment of the Arms):

Achillēs Hectorem occidit, **astrictumque ad currum** traxit circā mūrōs Troiānōrum. quem **sepeliendum** cum patrī nōllet dare, Priamus, **Iovis iussū, duce Mercuriō**, in castra Danaōrum vēnit, et filiī corpus, aurō repensum, accēpit, **quem sepultūrae trādidit**. Hectore sepultō, cum Achillēs circā moenia Troiānōrum vagārētur ac dīceret sē solum Troiam **expugnāsse**, Apollō irātus, **Alexandrum Parin sē simulāns**, talum, **quem mortalem habuisse dicitur**, sagittā percussit et **occidit**. Achille occisō ac **sepultūrae** trāditō, Ajax, quod frāter patruēlis eius fuit, postulāvit ā Danaīs ut arma **sibi** Achillis darent; quae eī **irā Minervae** abiurgāta sunt ab Agamemnone et Menelāo et Ulixī data. Ajax, furiā acceptā, per insāniam pecora sua et sē ipsum occidit eō gladiō, quem ab Hectore **mūnerī** accēpit, dum cum eō in aciē contendit.

Notes

astrictum ad currum = “bound to the chariot” (**astrictum** = perfect passive participle from **astringō**; supply “him” as direct object of **traxit** for this participle to modify)

sepeliendum > supply **ad** before **sepeliendum**

Iovis iussū = “at the order of Jupiter”

duce Mercuriō > ablative absolute (with an understood form of **esse**)

quem sepultūrae trādidit = “whom Achilles handed over for burial” (take **filiī** as the antecedent of **quem**)

expugnāsse = **expugnāvisse**

Alexandrum Parin sē simulāns = “pretending that he was Alexander Paris”

⁴⁵ Students were explicitly asked in the grammatical analysis of the assignment about *arbitratī sunt* and its characterization.

⁴⁶ Students were asked to parse *possent* and explain the reason behind its mood.

⁴⁷ It should be noted that because Holy Cross frequently rotates LATN 101/102 instructors, it is difficult to compare the performance of students in 2019-20 with previous iterations of the course.

⁴⁸ Here too, our strategies align with Carlon's recommendation to make corrections a student-based process (Carlon (2013), 111).

⁴⁹ The retention rate from LATN 101 to 102 at Holy Cross is close to 100%, so we could be confident that most students had seen these passages before.

(modifying **Apollō**)

quem mortalem habuisse dicitur = “which is said to have been mortal” (take **talum** as the antecedent of **quem**)

occidit > supply “Achilles” or “him” as the direct object

sepultūrae = “for burial”

sibi > refers back to Ajax as the subject of the verb of demanding

irā Minervae = “because of Minerva’s anger”

eō > translate as a demonstrative adjective modifying **gladiō**

mūnerī = “as a gift”

The single lexical change that was made was a switch of a demonstrative *ille* to the proper name *Achillēs* in order to provide context at the beginning of the passage. There were minor editorial changes (e.g., with punctuation) to help our students more clearly understand and utilize phrase and clause boundaries. We provided glosses and grammatical help as necessary that covered unfamiliar constructions (for example, the syncopation of *expugnāvisse* into *expugnāsse*; *sepultūrae* and *mūnerī* as datives of purpose); we also provided vocabulary entries for the items that had not appeared in our various vocabulary modules throughout the year.

In all, our students were prepared to read at an intermediate level with the aid of a commentary and lexicon within their first year of study. Our students performed consistently well on this final assignment, especially if we consider the exigencies of the coronavirus pandemic and assignment assessment policies particular to each section of students. Dominic’s students averaged 80.4%; they were allowed one submission without revisions. Daniel’s students averaged 94.5%; they were allowed one submission and one revision, the latter of which would add back up to half of the points that they lost on the first submission. The average across all sections, then, was 87.45%.

The high-level performance of these students reveals the benefits of our curricular re-organization. Due to the frontloading of frequent, complex, and unfamiliar concepts, students gained experience with material by the end of the first semester that they normally would not have seen until the second semester had they followed the majority of textbook approaches. Furthermore, by learning this material, they were able to engage substantively with real Latin texts at an earlier point in the course. By the end of one year of study, they built a solid enough foundation of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to accomplish translation and analytical tasks that usually must wait until their second year of Latin.

In her framing of Latin pedagogy in light of SLA theory, Carlon has drawn attention to the importance of enhancing “implicit knowledge,” the ability to analyze and comprehend the target language quickly and easily, as a means to unlocking a student’s ability to read texts. Early exposure to and constant practice with concepts that show up frequently in Latin texts allowed our students to internalize the most common structures and forms of the language quickly and enabled them to access the text of Hyginus without significant difficulty. The introduction of new and more complex concepts represented minor modifications to an already substantial and functional body of knowledge.

Conclusion

Our redesign of the introductory Latin curriculum at the College of the Holy Cross upends traditional modes of language instruction by prioritizing and frontloading frequent, complex, and unfamiliar grammatical constructions and vocabulary, as determined by a morphological analysis of a real Latin text. As a result, our students were able to spend more time with concepts like the passive voice, the subjunctive mood, third-declension adjectives, and indirect statement, which not only prepared them to complete various long-form assignments with real, unedited Latin but also provided for them a solid foundation and knowledge base to take into higher levels of language learning.

Those higher levels of language learning, like our intermediate sequence, are

necessarily impacted by the introductory level redesign. This year, the 2020-2021 academic year, we bifurcated our first semester of intermediate Latin into two sections: LATN 213, composed of students who have completed our introductory sequence; and LATN 199, composed of students entering into our language sequences with high school Latin experience. Both fall intermediate sections focused on prose and then streamed into a single intermediate section in the spring, LATN 214, which focused on poetry (still ongoing).

LATN 213 offered us the chance to capitalize on the foundations that we laid in the introductory sequence. We were able to retain seven students from the introductory sequence, a significant improvement over past years in which generally two or three students would continue from introductory Latin into the intermediate level. We reinforced what they learned and took their knowledge in new directions with different target texts that provided practice with the concepts that were less prioritized in the introductory sequence. For example, the target text for this past iteration of LATN 213 was Pliny the Younger's *Epistulae* or *Letters*. In addition to providing fruitful source material for discussing daily life in Rome and important historical and social events like the eruption of Vesuvius and the rise of Christianity, the *Epistulae* also helped our students practice concepts like first- and second-person verbs, which were introduced in the second semester of the introductory sequence. LATN 199, on the other hand, offered students who have had some high school Latin (more than one year and less than four) an intensive version of our one-year sequence.⁵⁰ Not only did this course offer these students an opportunity to review and, on occasion, meet for the first time important grammatical and syntactic structures, but it also served to standardize to some degree the concepts, terminologies, and structures with which all of our intermediate Latin students should have had practice before entering LATN 214. We are hopeful that this model will allow us to accommodate students from all learning backgrounds into upper-level courses and to help them develop a lifelong appreciation of how a foreign language works in the future.

Now that we are in the second year of LATN 101 and 102 with this approach, we will continue to evaluate the efficacy of this approach and how students who have completed the introductory sequence fare in the years to come. We have made our grammar modules, exercises, vocabulary lists, and reference charts available at <https://lingualatina.github.io/textbook/>.⁵¹ We invite not only feedback and corrections but also widespread use and adaptation of the materials contained therein, which are available under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.⁵²

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⁵⁰ Students with AP credit or with four or more years of Latin were directed to our advanced-level courses.

⁵¹ See above, n. 21, if this link is no longer functional.

⁵² <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

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