

Chapter 1

I. Grammar

1. **Conjugation.** In Latin the word "conjugation" means two things: (1) the act of joining a personal ending to a verb stem (and accoutrement), and (2) a category of verb, classed by the "thematic" vowel ending the stem (a, long e, short e, i). For lack of a better term, I call the "classifying" vowel in the stem of a Latin verb, the "thematic" vowel (a term borrowed from Greek). Unless you have a better idea, teach your students this term. You will find it useful to give this special vowel some sort of name.
2. **Grammar Terms.** All too often Wheelock buries important information in footnotes. The first example is on page 1, note 1. From the outset, students must understand the following terms: mood, tense, voice, person and number. To that end, I have constructed an outline of grammar terms (including terms for nouns and adjectives), which can be cut out and pasted inside the front cover of Wheelock or any other textbook (see below). This will give the students handy reference to grammar terms and impress on them the importance of fluency in using these terms and knowing the categories to which each term belongs. Download a printable version of that handout [here](#).
3. **Elements of the Latin Verb.** Explain what the personal endings of the Latin verb are. Write them on the board and have students write them in their notes. Explain the present infinitive ending (first and second conjugations) and the present imperative endings (singular and plural). Be sure to stress that "imperative" is a MOOD, not a tense. Compare the imperative mood to the indicative mood. At the end of the lesson, students should understand (1) all persons and numbers, (2) the indicative and imperative moods, (3) the infinitive and (4) the present tense. I include the infinitive among moods, since the term "infinitive" is exclusive of all moods, and beginning students require clear-cut categories. It also allows me later to ask the question, "What mood is X and why?", and have among possible answers subjunctive or infinitive, forcing students later in the course to distinguish between infinitive constructions (such as, indirect statement) and subjunctive constructions (such as, indirect question) without tipping them off to the correct answer by the type of question.

[Some students are bound to ask questions like, "Why is -o the sign of the first person in Latin?", not the sort of question you dream of, but not an unfair question either. A little linguistics can help you out of this bind. Wherever I anticipate such questions, I will give you some linguistic response drawn from C.D. Buck, *Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* and L.R. Palmer, *The Latin Language*, neither the latest word in linguistics but both reliable sources. You are not obliged to include such information in your class, although I often do because I find it interesting and it allows the student to see the connection between Latin and English. If you find that you need linguistic information not included here, please tell me and I will include the information in later editions. NOTE: a star (*) in front of a form means that it is reconstructed but not attested.]

1. Active Personal Endings.

- 1s. The variable first personal singular endings (-o or -m) derive ultimately from different endings in the primary and secondary tenses (e.g. the present and the imperfect), the difference between which, you will remember, is more pertinent to learning ancient Greek than Latin. Although the Latin present manifests the primary -o and the imperfect the secondary -m, the use of those forms was probably more for convenience of pronunciation than as an accurate reflection of inherited forms, cf. present tense *sum* and *inquam*.
- 2s. Primary -si and the secondary -s have conflated to -s. One basic difference between primary and secondary endings is the addition of -i to the primary endings, e.g. -si vs. -s, -ti vs. -t, -nti vs. -nt. This -i is comparable to the demonstrative iota in Greek (*hodi, tauti*, etc.). This demonstrative particle -i was

attached to the present tense and rendered the sense, "here and now". This is, in all likelihood, the origin of primary and secondary endings with reference to present and past actions, respectively.

- 3s. Originally, the primary -ti became -t and the secondary -t became -d (cf. Old Latin *sied* for Classical *sit*), but later, like the second singular endings, the third singular primary and secondary endings conflated to -t.
 - 1pl. Originally in Indo-European (the parent language of Latin and Greek) the first plural primary ending was -mes/-mos, which Latin changed to -mus and used exclusively (no secondary ending). The IE (Indo-European) first person plural secondary ending is uncertain.
 - 2pl. The second person plural primary ending which Latin inherited was -te, which was expanded to -te-s (and later -tis) by analogy to the -s of the second person singular. The simple -te was retained in the imperative.
 - 3pl. Like in the Latin second and third persons singular, an original -nti in the third person plural became -nt.
 - 2s, imperative. The second person singular imperative ending may be construed as the bare stem without ending or the second person singular indicative stripped of its ending -s. Either is useful in helping the student learn the ending. I sometimes add (jokingly) that this is the form used in yelling direct orders, down the street, for instance ("Fulvia, remember to pick up my toga from the fuller's!"), and who can expect anyone to hear endings all the way down a street, so imperative forms resemble verbs without endings.
 - 2pl, imperative. The second person plural imperative ending follows the pattern of the imperative singular ending by dropping the -s, but it retains the (original) -te to create a distinction between the singular and plural. Point out this distinction between singular and plural to students who will not expect such a distinction from English.
2. **Infinitive.** Intervocalic -s- (e.g. -eso-) created problems in Indo-European languages. In Greek, it disappeared altogether, causing vowels to collapse and students to pull out their hair trying to memorize, for example, second person singular forms. In Latin, -s- did not disappear but changed first to -z- and then to -r-, a process called rhotacism. Many Latin words with intervocalic -r- originally had intervocalic -s-, e.g. *arbosem* was originally *arbosem*, *lares* was *lases*, *generis* was **genesos* (cf. Greek *genous* from *geneos* and earlier **genes/os*). Forms with -ss-, however, did not change into -r-, e.g. *causa* (originally *caussa*), *clausus* (originally *claussus*). Rhotacism occurred to a lesser degree in other languages also, among them English, cf. "were" beside "was."

The infinitive ending was originally -se-, as in *esse*, but it rhotacized to -re- in early Latin. In origin, the infinitive was a noun ending in a specific case attached to a verb stem, which makes an anomaly of its name ("in-finitive" means "(has) no ending"). The use of verbal nouns was known but not regularized in the common ancestor of Latin and Greek. Originally, the endings varied according to case and which noun stem was used to change the verb into a noun. In Latin, the present active infinitive settled into the so-called "s-stem" noun system in the dative singular case (ending = -i), rendering -si which became -se since in Latin final -i regularly changed to -e, cf. **anti* > *ante*, **mari* > *mare*.

[Finally, let me stress that you are not bound to teach the information above, unless you see a need and a benefit to be gained from doing so. You are the judge; follow your instincts. If a class is bright and curious, give them some linguistics—and later, culture, too. If they are not, stick to basics. There is no rule, since no two classes are ever exactly the same. Your only external guideline is their performance on tests. I try to make linguistic and cultural explanations a reward to a good class for having done well. It's a bit like rewarding someone for mowing a yard well by letting him rake it as well, but if most students don't see it that way—and the good ones never do!—and they learn more this way, who's to lose? Hard work really is its own reward.]

1. **Conjugations.** Students almost invariably want to know why there are different groups of verbs (conjugations) in Latin. The simplest answer is that the conjugations represent groups of verb stems ending in different vowels (a, long e, short e, i). In reality the picture is much more complex, full of assimilated forms from various sources. First and second conjugations in Latin correspond roughly to Greek alpha and epsilon contracts, respectively, but whereas second-conjugation verbs do not contract in the first person singular, first conjugation verbs do (-o, from original *-ao).

2. **Translation of the Present Tense.** On a more practical note, stress the different possible English translations of the Latin present tense. Latin has only the simple present ("I have"), lacking the continual, or in-process, form ("I am having") and the affirmative form ("I do have"), the latter of which is used primarily with negations ("I do not have"). NOTE: The voice of the continual form is easily confused; make sure to point out to students that "I am lovING" is the only acceptable translation of the continual at this point, since they do not know passive forms yet ("I am lovED").
3. **Subject-Verb Agreement.** Reinforce that a plural subject requires a plural verb ending, a singular subject a singular verb ending, just as in English, "he gives vs. they give".
4. **Expression of the Subject.** Stress to students that, since Latin verb endings imply person and number automatically, Latin does not require the use of pronouns to state person and number explicitly, as English requires. Therefore, if *laudat* does not have a subject explicitly stated, it can be translated "he/she/it praises"; if the subject is stated (e.g. *Vergilius laudat*), the English pronoun is not needed. Simply put, English always expresses the subject explicitly (be it noun or pronoun); Latin has the option of "burying" the subject in the verb. [The exception is, of course, the English imperative, which implies the second person.]
5. **Handout.** See below. Click here for a printable version of the handout for Chapter 1.

II. Vocabulary

[In general, always call to the students' attention the category to which a word belongs: the conjugation of a verb or the declension of a noun or adjective. Begin in Chapter One by asking students to identify the conjugation (first or second) of the verbs in the vocabulary. Do this without fail in every chapter. I will not repeat this direction throughout this Teaching Guide; it is assumed, henceforth, that you will always review the conjugation of verbs and declension of nouns and adjectives in new vocabulary.]

At first, emphasize English derivatives from Latin. Learning derivatives helps students remember vocabulary, and it teaches them the modern value of understanding Latin. It will also help to mention that much of our Latinate vocabulary comes into English through French thanks to William the Conqueror. For that reason many of the Latin forms in English have been "frankified", i.e. influenced by early French pronunciation and spelling, e.g. *avail*, *receipt*, *reservoir*. However, students should not rely on derivatives solely to translate words. Many English derivatives have different connotations or even meanings from their Latin progenitors. For instance, *officium* can mean "office", but "duty" and "service" cover the meaning of the Latin word more fully. Teach students to use derivatives to remind them of the correct meaning of the Latin word, not as a substitute for memorizing the true meaning.

Also, at first pronounce all words for students. If necessary, have students repeat after you. Be sure to stress the proper syllable. Students should easily equate the Latin stress accent with the same feature of English. The Latin accent was not a pitch accent as the Greek accent was. The ancient Latin terminology borrowed from Greek has caused some confusion, but the widespread use of syncope (the dropping of unstressed syllables, e.g. *undecim* from **unodecem*, *aetas* from **aevitas*) argues strongly for stress accent in early Latin.

debeo: Takes a "complementary" infinitive, "ought to . . ."

servo: Warn students that it is an easy mistake to translate this verb as "serve", not "save." Refer them to derivatives such as "conserve, preserve, reserve."

video: This verb is cognate with English *wit* (< Indo-European **wid*; cf. Greek *oida*), originally meaning "to know"; cf. the phrase "to wit" (= French *cestasavoir*, Latin *scilicet*).

III. Sentences

Call to the students' attention that Latin word order does not necessarily imitate English word order. Latin is basically an SOV (subject-object-verb) language; English is SVO. In the next chapter, where they first encounter noun declension, tell them that they will see the wider impact of Latin flexibility in word order.

English to Latin Sentences. These are the only homework assignments I pick up and grade, since I feel I can see diagnose any difficulties the students are having from these sentences alone. If in correcting these sentences I realize

enough students do not understand a concept, I make a note to myself to review the concept with the whole class when I return the papers the next day.

Grading Homework. I assign 50 points to each homework and subtract a point for each error. Egregious sins of syntax, however, sometimes warrant increased taxation; lesser errors a relieved burden. Basically, I assign a full point to each Latin word and divide the credit in half between vocabulary (did the student give the correct word?) and grammar (did the student give the correct formation of the word?). I also assign 50 points to quizzes, which takes some of the pressure off in-class performance and encourages the student to go home and figure out things for himself in the luxury of open time and book. Quizzes should serve as trial tests, and homeworks as practice for quizzes. In this way, students with test-performance anxiety can lessen their stress by performing well on homework and quizzes—which constitute half their grade!—and also have practice for tests in a less pressured format. There should be between six and ten homeworks/quizzes per section of the class (5-6 chapters leading up to a test).

Special Homework After the Second Day of Class. At the end of the second day of class, ask the students to write out the conjugation of *amo* and *debeo* in the present (active) indicative and turn it in at the beginning of class the next day (the third day). I tell my students to translate the Latin forms with all three possible English translations, too. Remind them to put their names on their papers. Grade the papers promptly and return them on the fourth day, with comments if necessary.

Example of the Grammar Terms Handout to be inserted in the front cover of the textbook

Verb

Mood

Indicative (Fact)
 Subjunctive (Uncertainty)
 Imperative (Command)
 Infinitive ("to ...")*

Voice

Active (Subject acts)
 Passive (Subject is acted upon)

Tense

Present (*is, are, am, do*)
 Imperfect (*was, were, used to*)
 Future (*will, going to, about to*)
 Perfect (*has, have, did*)
 Pluperfect (*had*)
 Future Perfect (*will have*)

Person

First (*I, we*)
 Second (*you, y'all*)
 Third (*he/she/it, they*)

Number

Singular (*I, you, he/she/it*)
Plural (*we, you, y'all, they*)

Noun

Case

Nominative: subject
Genitive: possession
Dative: reference; IO
Accusative: object (DO)
Ablative: obj. of prep.; various uses (p. 102)
Vocative: direct address

Gender

Masculine
Feminine
Neuter

Number

Singular
Plural