

Applying the New Standards for Classical Language Learning to Latin-Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

The *Standards for Classical Language Learning* have great utility and value for those providing instruction and training to Latin teachers. As a faculty member who contributes to the UMass MAT program I have used the Standards as a significant structure within my pedagogical methods courses. The assignments within those courses ask students to examine and apply each Standard individually and, over time, build a curriculum that incorporates all their aspects. This paper describes some of those assignments and provides examples of the creative and pragmatic ways students have applied the Standards. The Standards provide a streamlined and structured field of academic goals that allow teachers in training to understand what will be expected of them in their teaching and that provide teachers a way to defend their Latin programs if such need arises. Faculty at the college level who have students interested in a career in Latin teaching would do well to inform their students of the *Standards for Classical Language Learning* so that they better understand the standards by which the effectiveness of their future teaching will be judged and assessed.

KEYWORDS

curriculum map, district determined measures, interdisciplinarity, pedagogical methods, Second Language Acquisition, Standards, teacher training, UMass Amherst

The *Standards for Classical Language Learning* have great utility and value for those providing instruction and training to Latin teachers. It is important that future teachers, as well as those established in the field, have some familiarity with the Standards, since they reflect best practices as determined by educators themselves. The Standards encourage Latin teachers to establish goals, implement lessons aimed at diverse learners, and find means of assessment for the various pedagogical methods they apply in the classroom. The learning objectives suggested in the Standards document provide teachers and future teachers a broad view of the benefits that derive from language study. Furthermore, the document provides sample indicators

that help instructors to comprehend more fully the range of options they have in teaching Latin and ensures that future teachers better understand the value of the Latin curriculum within the spectrum of educational requirements and options. By way of example, I will explain how I use each standard to shape the direction of my students' work and pedagogical development. Then I will discuss the ways in which the Standards provide teachers an avenue of discussion about their curricular choices with their colleagues teaching Latin and other foreign languages, and with administrators who can be supportive, but who sometimes are looking for reasons to cut programs like Latin. As I hope to demonstrate, the Standards, and particularly the new Standards drafted in 2016, provide a robust defense for Latin as a twenty-first century CE (not first century BCE) curriculum.

My experience with teacher training derives from my work with the MAT program in Latin and Classical Humanities at UMass Amherst. The program, since its inception in 1970, has produced more than 200 graduates in nearly five decades, most of whom have entered the teaching profession at the elementary, middle, or high school level, with a few going on to achieve their PhDs and teach at the collegiate level. Many of our alumni have won national and regional awards for teaching, including the prestigious SCS Award for pre-collegiate teaching. I have had the privilege of directing the program for several years, and have periodically taught two seminars entitled "Teaching the Latin Language" and "Teaching the Classical Humanities."¹ In both courses I use the Standards as the basis on which I build the syllabi: by this I mean that the courses are structured to examine each of the five Standards, and that assignments for the class are designed to allow students to put into practice, and even demonstrate, the aims of each standard. I find that the Standards encourage teachers in training to see the Latin class as a multi-faceted venture that can and should incorporate a multitude of pedagogical approaches, learning goals, and assessment styles, and, perhaps more importantly, that it can accommodate a wide range of learning styles and student interests. I will explain the specific assignments I developed in my courses, each assignment being designed relevant to one of the five Standards.²

1 Here is a [link](#) to the syllabi for my courses, Teaching the Latin Language and Teaching the Classical Humanities.

2 There are twelve students in the course, and in the UMass MAT program. These are not the only assignments the students have in the course; in addition, students review, use, and survey the most commonly used Latin textbooks, and they prepare to discuss weekly readings from many sources on pedagogical methods and classroom strategies. The final project for the course is the development

1. **Communication:** The Communication goal includes three Standards based on the Framework of Communicative Modes.
 - a) Interpretive Mode: *Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is read, heard or viewed on a variety of topics.*
 - b) Interpersonal mode: *Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.*
 - c) Presentational Mode: *Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to narrate, describe, inform, explain, and persuade, on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.*

Part a of the list above is quite familiar to most Latin learners, and most often occurs in classrooms by way of the reading, translation, and discussion of texts by Roman authors. Parts b and c of that list above, however, are likely the most challenging for the Latin classroom unless one assumes that interaction and presentation of information will be significantly in English. For most of my own education (and this is, as I write this, reflected in the way I teach my college-level Latin classes) the primary language of discussion and interaction with Latin text, and presentation of work related to it, has been in English. I am aware, however, (and we all should be aware) that Second Language Acquisition, wherein the target language is a more significant means by which communication occurs, is increasing its influence upon the way Latin is being taught in the middle and high school classroom, and so I have sought ways to incorporate those pedagogical techniques into our educator-preparation program.

In the week before the 2016 fall semester started, I had the unique opportunity, due to receipt of a teaching grant, to fund a pre-semester workshop on active Latin methods in the classroom. I enlisted T. J. Howell of Belchertown HS in Belchertown, MA, to share his considerable expertise in these methods with our MAT students so that they could (if they wish) implement these in their own Latin classes at the university.³ The emphasis of that workshop was how to convey

of a curriculum map for a first-year Latin course. Regarding teaching responsibilities for our MAT students, they begin teaching Latin at the beginner-level right away. Obviously, the combination of actual teaching and learning about teaching methods provides them key experience and knowledge about the profession before they begin their careers.

³ Thomas J. (T. J.) Howell is a 2000 graduate of our MAT program, and in the last decade he has adopted active Latin methods in his classes. He regularly attends the West Virginia [Rusticatio](#) as an

new information, both with regard to vocabulary and story content, in Latin rather than English. The student feedback I received was very favorable, and many of our graduate students regularly use various tactics learned in the workshop inside their classes.

One goal of Active Latin methodology is to help students understand a story in Latin without translating it.⁴ The key to this method is sheltering vocabulary, meaning that a teacher provides a Latin vocabulary word in an associative context enough times so that students recognize and understand it in its Latin form and without translation. When students have a bank of such words, then, and really only then, can a story be provided, but then the story needs to consist almost entirely (90%) of words they know. In recent years many texts have become available that feature commonly used vocabulary words, and these rather inexpensive novellas can be purchased for the Latin classroom and shared with students.⁵

Even texts that contain significant amounts of unfamiliar vocabulary (more than 10%) can be modified to ease comprehension without translation. Such modification can mean simplification of a story and of the vocabulary within the story, the use of Circling (which entails asking simple questions in Latin to check for comprehension and having students re-state aspects of the story in answer to those questions), and through the use of visual cues that accompany simple segments of text.⁶ I have seen student teachers use sign language to great purpose, so that students learn the meaning of a sign in English, and then when the sign is applied to

instructor and also instructs at the [Conventiculum Bostoniensis](#) in the summer.

4 Professor Jacqueline Carlon authored a [key article](#) on the justifications for using Second-Language-Acquisition methods in the Latin classroom. An excellent and frequently updated resource on these methods is the blog created by Keith Toda at Parkview High School in Lilburn, Georgia. His [blog](#) regularly features ideas for Latin stories to tell in class, assignments that are attuned to presentational Latin, and lots of encouragement for those wading into the waters of spoken Latin in the classroom.

5 For example, the books by Ellie Arnold, Andrew S. Olimpi, and Rachel Ash, to name a few authors of this emerging genre, are inexpensive, engaging, available on Amazon, and quite comprehensible, as I have witnessed myself when observing student teachers who use them in the schools. See John Piazza's review article on Beginner Latin novels.

6 For more description of Active Latin techniques, including Circling, see the Spring 2015 articles in *TCL* by [Ginny Lindzey](#), and by [Robert Patrick](#). Justin Slocum Bailey offers many resources and essays on the value of Active Latin techniques on his site, [Indwelling Language](#). The online blog [Todally Comprehensible Latin](#) hosted by Keith Toda features numerous essays on teaching Latin with SLA methods. Professor Jacqueline Carlon also provides excellent suggestions for assessing students without expecting literal translation in her 2015 article, "Rethinking the Latin Classroom: Changing the Role of Translation in Assessment."

the Latin word, the sign, rather than spoken English, mediates the meaning; after enough repetitions of the sign, the students know the word in Latin.

In my teaching methods seminars, therefore, I regularly ask the students to prepare story presentations for the rest of the class so that we can understand it without a text in front of us, and (as much as possible) without the use of English as a mediator. The assignment's goal is to help the teachers in training see that there are many ways to approach vocabulary learning and retention. It is one thing to have students see a list of vocab words and read a paragraph of text, but it is another thing to have students hear (not read) those words in a story and understand what is happening. The students then use a variety of methods (visual cues, gestures, acting, simplification, periodic questions to the audience) to make sure we are following their story and getting its meaning.⁷

In recent years, I have seen many demonstrations of these techniques at workshops and in the classroom, and when done competently, they work effectively, and it is a pleasure to watch students enjoying their ability to listen to Latin in a story without a text in front of them. Once students have greater confidence in their ability to listen to and process Latin, they will have more confidence in their ability to produce it – thus leading students more naturally into the newly configured aspects of the Communication Standard in the 2017 document. It is also important to note that the presentational mode can take many forms and need not be interpreted to refer solely to spoken Latin. A recent addition to Latin pedagogy is the “timed write” that I have seen recent graduates from our program using in their first-year Latin classes. “Timed writes” expect students to write in Latin with a limited amount of time about something they have seen. It can be simply a picture on PowerPoint, or a short video on YouTube with the sound off or in a language they do not know. The students are free-writing, using the vocabulary they know, and (to the best of their ability) the grammar they have internalized. The results of this vary from student to student, but some students are producing 150-word compositions in periods of five to ten minutes designed for response to these prompts.⁸ This happens after weeks

⁷ I am providing, by way of example, an assignment created for my Ovid seminar where I asked students to provide similar activities for intermediate-level readers in a Latin classroom. One student provided a PowerPoint presentation using images and simplified, shortened text-passages to tell the story of Pyramus and Thisbe using some of Ovid's vocabulary (*Meta.* 6.121-153), available [here](#).

⁸ Allyson Bunch, a 2014 MAT graduate, and Latin teacher at John F. Kennedy Middle School in Northampton, MA, uses a “timed-write” assignment as her District Determined Measure assessment for her Latin students. By this method, she can demonstrate to her district the improvement in all her students' abilities to use the Latin language in response to a visual prompt over the course of a year

of regular vocabulary usage, story-telling, and auditory and visual interpretation of the language. Another, even simpler exercise is the *dictatio* in which a teacher reads slightly altered sentences from a text students have been recently reading, to see how well they have absorbed the sounds, spellings, and endings of the Latin words they have been reading and hearing read aloud in class. I do this exercise with my college students in their intermediate poetry class, and after reading the passages (three times each), we go over the areas they had difficulty to discuss what they should listen for, or what kinds of endings should appear on adjectives versus nouns or in varying declensions. Thus, the *dictatio* frequently becomes an effective grammar and vocabulary lesson.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, the Communication Goal, as stated in the new document, both encourages traditional practices and accommodates the new pedagogical methods that are circulating among the community of pre-collegiate educators. Goal one, as now configured, allows future teachers to consider the options they have for helping their students analyze, communicate, and present the language they have selected for study, and incorporate those practices that seem best for them and their students.

2. **Cultures** expects that all students can demonstrate an understanding of the *perspectives* of Greek or Roman culture as revealed in their *practices* and their *products*.
 - a) Learners use Latin or Ancient Greek to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.
 - b) Learners use Latin or Greek to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.

For this standard, I have the graduate students create cultural lessons with the aim of having their students learn and consider both the practices and products of a culture. This presentation consists first of a PowerPoint presentation on a particular cultural practice, and then includes a description of a hands-on project whereby students produce something relevant to the ancient world.

One group discussed the significance of vase painting among the ancient Greeks to convey mythology, history, culture, religion and aesthetics. They provided

of academic study; the assessment is given in October and May.

pottery “shards” to the class (they had broken a cheap terracotta vase into several large pieces), and asked students to select a scene from myth or religion and depict part of it on their shard. The idea there was to get students to think about how even a small piece of a picture can provide us a lot of information, and to get them to think about the craft of painting a vase with images that are significant to a culture. Another group discussed book-making in the ancient world, and informed us about the process of writing, of binding sheets together (into a scroll or codex), and the value and utility of the product in ancient Rome. They then provided the materials for creating a scroll and students were expected to write a story in Latin and create their own text on their scroll. There were many creative, wonderful ideas that came out of this assignment, and because all students created culture lessons to be shared with their peers (most resources were shared via Google Drive), each student received the instructions and materials for cultural presentations they can use in their future classrooms. I thought it was important to allow these future teachers to think through a cultural project in my class, since the development of such projects can easily fall to the wayside when the realities of teaching and grading consume their precious time.

3. **Connections** expects that all students further their knowledge of other disciplines and expand their knowledge in general through their study of classical language and ancient cultures.
 - a) Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.
 - b) Learners access and evaluate information and diverse perspectives that are available through the language and its cultures.

This standard speaks to the need for inter-disciplinarity. In this age of curricular alignments and varied interest in a so-called “Common Core,” the Latin class needs to be viewed by students and administrators alike as relevant to the other subjects in a school’s curriculum. For this assignment, therefore, I asked students to prepare a presentation on how Latin or Ancient Greek (or Roman or Greek culture) has made an impact upon another field, such as Social Studies, English Language Arts, STEM fields, and the arts. One student explored the origins of the periodic table and explained that many elements on it derive not only from Latin words (*aurum* (Au) for gold, *plumbum* (Pb) for lead), but from mythology and religion as well. For

example, if you ever wondered why the element Niobium is named after Niobe: it is because its properties are so close to the element Tantalum, named of course after her divine father Tantalus.⁹ After a presentation each student unveils an assignment designed to encourage students to use Latin in another disciplinary context. The assignment on the periodic table asked students to name a new, made-up element after some aspect of Roman myth or religion and designate the element's properties to match. The students had a lot of fun developing these Connection assignments, and now they have gathered, from each other, ideas for lessons that build bridges between Latin and other disciplines and departments. Imagine a new Latin teacher coming in to a school with the motivation to collaborate with a teacher in a different department. It is my hope that such collaborations and discussions will make Latin more visible and more viable to an entire school community. The third Standard sets up an appropriate expectation that future teachers will consider the relevance of their material to the overall education of the student.

4. **Comparisons:** Students develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence.
 - a) Learners use Classical languages to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.
 - b) Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

The fourth Standard expects that students will learn something about the comparisons between Latin and their own language. Of course English, Spanish, and other languages' inheritances from Latin are a key piece of what most teachers do in the Latin classroom. For this assignment, therefore, I asked students to think about etymological linkages between Latin and English. For one assignment, they looked at prefixes that come from Latin prepositions and reported on how they affect the meanings of Latin verbs, and English meanings too. I had students count in a Latin dictionary the entire number of verbs that use prefixes like *ab*, *cum* (*con*), *de*, *post*, and *trans* (assigning only one prefix to each student). I had them present to the class a few verbs where they found the prepositional prefix to give particular

⁹ The students in that class presented three of these inter-disciplinary culture projects at the Annual Conference of the Massachusetts Association of Foreign Languages in Springfield, MA in October 2017. The slides and other materials from their presentation can be downloaded [here](#).

nance to a verbal meaning. Many students, despite their many years of Latin study, had never realized the impact these little words had upon vocabulary and meaning. For other assignments, students read excerpts from *English from Latin and Greek Elements*, by Donald Ayers, on both the changes that occur in the meanings of words over time and on Latinisms in Shakespeare. I focused less on the cultural aspects of these language-comparisons, but I appreciate that the Standard points us in that direction as well: what ancient people named things is an important thing to consider, and the Standard encourages teachers to look for ways to discuss that with their students.

5. **Communities** expects that students use their knowledge of Latin and Greek in a multilingual world, and that students use their knowledge of Greco-Roman culture in a world of diverse cultures.
 - a) Learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world.
 - b) Learners set goals and reflect on their progress in using languages for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement.

This standard expects that students will build community with the world beyond the classroom through their knowledge of Latin and ancient cultures. My assignment was simply to encourage the graduate students to share with me and each other resources that they found online that would be useful in the classroom, and useful in building communities beyond the classroom. One of the best online resources my students have introduced me to over the years is [ORBIS](#): The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World which, as its website states, “reconstructs the time cost and financial expense associated with a wide range of different types of travel in antiquity.” Students can map a journey anywhere on a map of the ancient world using a variety of means of travel and figure out the viability and expenses of a trip from Rome to Londinium, from Nova Carthago to Tomis, or from Antiocha to Avaricum (in Gaul). The graduate students in my courses have made good use of this site for a number of cultural projects over the years. For example, one student did a study of the relationship between China and Rome and showed how the ORBIS application allowed students to see the distances, modes of transportation, and costs of travel from one point to another. Another recent student did a project on the Silk Road, demonstrating the existence of global trading partners in the period of the

Roman empire. She used the [UNESCO interactive map](#) to demonstrate the networks of cities and peoples who participated in trade across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.¹⁰ Communities are built when connections between diverse cultures become visible, and ORBIS allows abstract points on a map to become more comprehensible as destinations from a variety of positions within the Roman empire.

Community can also refer to organizations that encourage school participation in Classics activities that occur regionally or nationally, such as those sponsored by the [National Junior Classical League](#), or periodic *Certamen* competitions. It is appropriate here to mention my profound gratitude to our professional colleagues (collegiate and pre-collegiate) who take the time to organize, host, and support the Classics organizations that serve young people. In western Massachusetts, a Classics day takes place in January, organized by the [Classical Association of Massachusetts](#) and Professor Bruce Arnold at Mt. Holyoke College. Two hundred middle and high school students attend this every year. The UMass MAT graduate students spend the day there running workshops, supervising *Certamina*, and judging oratory, art, and costume contests. The Communities Standard encourages such activities. The Latin classroom will continue to draw young people in as long as there are opportunities for social and academic engagement beyond the classroom and the school building.

HOW IT COMES TOGETHER

At the end of the semester, in my Teaching the Latin language class, I ask the students to map out an entire curriculum for Latin One. The students select a textbook or other platform (they could, for example, select [Operation LAPIS](#), a game-based learning system created by the Pericles Group). They state their particular teaching approach and the types of methods and assessments they will regularly use to convey information and encourage learning. As they build their plans, they match their learning activities to relevant Standards – both the ACL/SCS Standards and the state-mandated Massachusetts standards for teaching foreign languages (that are very closely linked to these Standards). Thus the students know from the beginning that I look for activities that allow students to interpret and analyze Latin text, as one would expect, but also activities that ask students to create and present something in Latin, such as the aforementioned “timed writes,” or story-boards where students select text from the story represent it with images they create. I expect the learning

¹⁰ This presentation is in the folder available at note 10. The student demonstrated uses of the interactive map and other features found at the UNESCO site on the [Silk Road](#).

activities to convey cultural practices, to make inter-disciplinary connections, to encourage linguistic comparisons, and to build communities. For this reason, the Curriculum Maps my students created included trips to a local museum, the creation of mosaics, timed-writes in Latin, storytelling in Latin, vocabulary retention exercises, *dictatio*, the use of gestures to represent syntax and functions of words, and a host of other activities that the Standards all encourage. Such close examination of the *Standards for Learning Classical Languages* for an entire semester made these future teachers more aware of their options as teachers, and better prepared for their careers.

HOW THE STANDARDS CAN RESPOND TO ADMINISTRATIVE GOALS

It is important for future Latin teachers to know about the Standards because they provide defenses of the Latin program vis-à-vis modern foreign languages. The Standards demonstrate the ways that Latin effectively meets the objectives of foreign language instruction in general. The recent and significant acronym in public teaching is DDM, or District-Determined Measures. These are tests given at the beginning of a course and at the end of a course to measure student learning and thus prove to a bean-counting administration that Latin teaching is effective and valuable. The Standards provide guidance to teachers who wish to demonstrate that their students demonstrate proficiency and improvement. Perhaps more importantly, the Standards provide such a wide spectrum of accomplishment, that a teacher can thus defend their program if their students are (for example) writing Latin stories, reporting on Roman cultural phenomena, speaking in Latin conversations, or translating Caesar. Just as the modern languages have a wide array of activities that can count as justifiable objectives in the classroom, the Standards as articulated in this document grant Latin instructors a great amount of leeway. Whether a teacher's goal is teaching Vergil or Harrius Potter (and I have seen that done very successfully in a particular school in our region), those who need to defend their programs to administrators, or who wish to begin new Latin programs, will find many helpful formulations of the value of learning Latin in the new ACL/SCS Standards. This is because the Standards allow that a wide range of capabilities and functionalities be developed. In the ever increasingly diverse and multi-level learning environment that exists in the pre-collegiate learning environment, it is essential for the teachers in training to know of this range so that they can meet their students where they are

and pull them into the world of Latin at the appropriate rate, and with the methods best suited to that student population.

CONCLUSION

As I hope I have shown, it is important to regularly review and implement the ACL/SCS Standards within a teacher-training program, and it is important at least to provide the Standards to undergraduates who may be considering a career in Latin teaching. The private school market, as you know, does not demand that Latin teachers receive dedicated teacher-training, and even the public schools allow teachers to work on a preliminary basis (usually five years) by simply passing an exam.¹¹ By presenting these Standards to students in college-level Classics programs, teachers of and mentors to these future teachers set an excellent example by indicating that teaching involves many aspects of craft, methodology, and the identification of goals. The Standards provide teachers in training with a range of options for teaching in the modern classroom.

In essence, the *Standards for Classical Language Learning* provide the framework for a philosophy of teaching that seeks a many-faceted approach to teaching language where culture, material culture, history, interdisciplinarity, reception, audience, linguistic influence, and communication all have their place for consideration within a Latin program. Moreover, the Standards articulate the value and applicability of these aspects to the wider community in which a teacher operates, and thus provides the Latin teacher with the language and aspirational goals that he or she can use to communicate the value of their program to administrators, parents, and students – wherever they end up teaching.

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¹¹ On the many and varied expectations for teacher training in the United States, see [here](#). Since I produced that article, the U.S. Department of Justice has added the requirement that all teachers receive SEI (Sheltered English Immersion) certification by taking a course on methods for teaching English Language Learners. The requirements for teacher-training continue to complicate the process toward a career in teaching. It is therefore all the more important that college faculty have a conversation, at least, with those who intend to enter a pedagogical career about teacher training options and resources that can guide their teaching methods.

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