Competency and Collaboration: An Approach to the Second-Semester Latin Course

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Abstract

This essay explains and explores how the author designed a second semester elementary Latin course in order to meet the diverse needs and preparation of students. The approach features a combination of stepped learning, which emphasizes student mastery of the material before proceeding to a new content set, and collaborative learning techniques inspired by Student-Centered Learning Environment for Undergraduate Programs (SCALE-UP), a method most often found in STEM disciplines. By moving away from a teacher-centered classroom and toward an individually paced, peer-supported model of engaged learning, the author found that students better retained information, deepened the questions they asked of the instructor and one another, began to see errors and small-scale failure as formative rather than ruinous, and became more nuanced, confident evaluators of their work and comprehension. Although this approach does present some challenges, for example those of fast and frequent grading and difficulties of student motivation, on the whole the course-specific as well as the lifetime skills (time management, self-discipline, responsibility for one's learning) that students took away from the course merit its expansion and further development.

Keywords

collaboration, competency, mastery, peer, reflection, self-paced

Language instructors at all levels must design their courses with a particular set of considerations in mind, not least of which is that students entering each course do so with varying degrees of competence and confidence in their language skills. The disparity, in both degree and extent, of student preparation is pronounced in elementary language study, as traditionally all students must begin and end at the same point of a predetermined sequence. Yet this chapter-by-chapter method does a disservice to our students: it often leaves many of them confused, concerned primarily with the short-term memorization of chapter-specific and thus highly contextually specific information, and likewise does not require them to demonstrate full mastery of any content set. Should a student fail chapter twenty, he simply moves on to

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chapter twenty-one, material which he is already predisposed to understand poorly given his inadequate comprehension of the previous set.

The purpose of this essay is to detail how pedagogical methods and course structure can account and allow for mixed levels of student preparedness and performance in a second-semester elementary Latin class at the university level. This competency-based approach draws on the fundamental principles of student learning, is rooted in the idea of subject mastery, and is committed to the ideal of authentic learning, with emphases on the tenets of open-ended inquiry, metacognition, and student-directed learning (Ambrose et al. 188-216; Cahill and Bloch-Shulman). A few notes about these ways of thinking about student learning might prove helpful here. As will be discussed below, students in this course progressed through its various components by proving their competency in the subject matter, specifically by earning a mark of 90% or above on each assessment. That this approach has advantages over other traditional approaches both to language acquisition and other courses is supported by its incorporation into classes in Psychology, Philosophy, Physics, and more (see here for a list of participating institutions and courses). At its core, the competency-based method (sometimes also referred to as mastery-based learning) maintains that learners must demonstrate their full comprehension of one set of skills before advancing to other, usually more complicated, skills. Thorough understanding at each level likewise better positions students to make new mistakes at each stage rather than repeating the old; for example, a student learning indirect statement for the first time can focus on identifying the construction and how to translate it rather than reciting all accusative case endings across the declensions beforehand.

To suggest that students can attain mastery or prove their competency entails also a reconsideration of how they learn, that is the processes and environments which cultivate deep and lasting learning rather than rote memorization, itself insufficient for long-term learning despite student belief in its efficacy (Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel 102-130). While both lecture as a pedagogical tool and memorization as a study technique continue to hold important places in language pedagogy, evidence in other disciplines indicates that student-centered classrooms in which students themselves define and take control of their learning lead to better recollection, higher test scores, and a higher transferability of learning between courses (Kregenow, Rogers, and Price; McDuff). Such a classroom is one in which the professor takes on the role of guide more than sage, students solve problems individually and

with peers, and (here) are asked to reflect upon these processes and experiences at various turns. Taken together, these curricular elements create an environment in which students also begin to engage in authentic learning, namely the awareness of the ways in which one's classroom activities are applicable to other areas of their lives as well as to their personal and professional development beyond their college career.

On the ground, a typical day in this class starts with a number of tables arranged in pods around the room. Students generally know the peers with whom they are working at any given point; there is no lectern and, in this course, no integration of technology. The instructor has already communicated to students what this day's tasks include and spends her time floating between the various groups (for a mid-term example of the groups' divisions, see Appendix I). While some groups are engaged in problem-solving (here, usually translation or low-stakes composition), others are learning new material, some are teaching another group, and yet others are taking an assessment. Should questions arise they can be answered, but not without asking the students to puzzle through their own hypotheses first. Even in more traditionally recognizable teaching moments, the material covered by the instructor depends on the questions put forth by a given group's members. In the pages that follow, I first provide some background to the evolution of this idea, the course structure and components, and how it was implemented in its initial year. Second, I discuss what I learned from the course, the benefits and challenges of employing this approach, and suggestions for future iterations. My hope is that I may encourage a conversation about active, alternative, student-centered approaches to language acquisition, both in Latin and in other languages, across all levels of study and schooling.

I. Course Conception, Implementation, and Components

For many language instructors, the second semester course looks much like an extension of the first: we continue to trudge through the textbook, marching our students onward in the hope that they will learn and love the language. Instructors who use traditional textbooks (e.g. Wheelock*'*s Latin) often complete the first twenty-five chapters and finish the bulk of the book in the spring when their students begin to read "real," unadapted Latin. In the case discussed herein, the second semester class included a remarkable range of student experience: some had completed the first semester with the same instructor who taught the second term, others

had completed it elsewhere with another instructor or at some temporal remove (e.g. one-to-three years earlier). Some had not taken a language course since they were in high school, and yet others were, for a variety of reasons, too advanced for the course. In the pilot year of this study, fifteen students were continuing from the fall, nine new students had placed into the course and had not practiced any Latin in at least eight months. Two more were seniors who had not taken any Latin in three or more years, and one other had placed into the third semester course but wanted some practice. What might initially strike someone is the question of numbers (e.g. here, how can the instructor effectively reach twenty-seven students?), yet this quickly becomes a question of individual, supported learning: how can the instructor give each student every resource and opportunity to learn and succeed in the course?

Two existing approaches shaped and informed the method I developed in response to the questions posed above. The first came from two Philosophy professors at my home institution and the second from a nationwide consortium of Physics professors. The philosophers' method (Cahill and Bloch-Shulman), which they refer to as a step-by-step approach, has at its foundation the belief that students must master one key skill before moving on to the next, an idea that resonates with language instructors. (Indeed, elements of this approach and the one I am about to describe share traits with game- and project-based learning, both of which have become popular not just in language classrooms but across the disciplines.) In order to create an environment conducive to this sort of stepped progress, they re-envisioned the syllabus: no longer did the entire class move along at the same pace as dictated by the instructor or the textbook, but rather each student continued to the next step as they were ready. A student demonstrates mastery of the first set of material by taking a quiz and cannot continue until that quiz has shown sufficient understanding of the material. Each step is worth a specific number of the one hundred points in the course. Students may progress as slowly or as quickly as they like; they might realize that all they want is a "C" and thus work only to that point. In their stepped model, letter grades are determined by the number of steps completed, so a student can finish the course without learning all of its planned content. They describe their course in the familiar terms of the "one-room schoolhouse" wherein each individual student is working according to their abilities and ambitions and the instructor is free to work with students one-on-one, allowing him or her to address specific student needs, give targeted feedback, and develop a bond with the student (all principles which foster and increase student learning, as noted in Ambrose et al.).

Despite some apprehension, the potential benefits of restructuring the Latin course in a similar way were apparent: it would give both returning and new students a clear sense of where they stood, allow each student to focus on the skills which needed the most work, and encouraged collaboration among peers (another steadfast hallmark of student learning, see Ambrose et al., Elbers and Streefland 480, Oxford 444). The immediate problem was how to translate this to a second semester Latin course, where instead of the philosophy course's nine steps there were dozens, steps which also had to account for the review of the material, i.e. some way to ensure that students already knew well the material covered in the previous course. Further, the model in which students could learn set amounts of material did not align fully with a language course that was meant, in part, to prepare students for the next sequential level. Consideration of these factors necessitated that, in the Latin course, grading must be structured in a way that mandated completion of all course content.

Stepped learning was an important tenet of the course; so too was the notion that no student should feel isolated or alone in their progression through the material — there remains an important distinction between self-paced and self-taught, and I wanted students to benefit from the camaraderie of their peers. Upon my colleagues' recommendation, I looked into a second approach, Student-Centered Learning Environment for Undergraduate Programs (or, as it is commonly called, SCALE-UP). This approach was originally conceived as a way to deal with high-enrollment Physics classes and especially to increase student success in such courses. Importantly, the room itself is redesigned to accommodate diverse physical spaces for learning rather than traditional rows of seats, a shift which has shown to disrupt the typical pattern of grade distribution wherein high-earners sit in front and low-earners in the back (Kregenow, Rogers, and Price 48). Students spend their time working on manageable, focused, and engaging tasks rather than sitting through a lecture and having separate, additional lab periods. Key to the SCALE-UP classroom is the focus on group-centered learning: while it recognizes that each student has a different level of foundation, interest, and aptitude, it requires students to work both individually and, crucially, with one another in mixed-level groups to solve the problems posed to them. These groups vary in size but are always arranged and monitored by the instructor(s) to promote and facilitate student success. As noted by its devotees, the benefits of this approach include increased problem-solving capabilities, increased conceptual understanding, better attitudes, lower failure rates, and increased perfor-

mance in later courses. One can achieve all of this without compromising content or rigor.

With these two models in mind, I created something that I originally called a "modified SCALE-UP" approach to the second semester course. As a blend of the two models (step-by-step and SCALE-UP), it reframed tenets central to both methods. My goals for the course structure were to incorporate elements of the focus on mastery and individual progress stressed in the former model into grading and assessment and to facilitate peer engagement and collaborative learning by adapting elements from the latter approach in the daily work of the classroom. This hybrid approach was designed to afford students the support and accountability of team-based collaborative learning while also providing ample opportunities for individually-paced learning, assessment, and reflection. It was intended to have the additional advantage of helping the instructor: without a teaching assistant or grader it would be difficult to tend to each of these students individually and for precisely equal amounts of time in each class meeting.

The original syllabus for this spring course (Appendix IIa) illustrates how the course paralleled and diverged from a more traditional class. Rather than the typical sequential progression through the textbook with accompanying homework, quizzes, and exams, the course consisted of five modules, each of which was in turn worth a set number of points (in this, it was similar to the step-by-step model). Each module consisted of a series of sub-steps, each of which again counted for a set number of points. Students would progress through each module by completing these sub-steps and moved to the next one when they mastered the previous sub-step. The five modules included: I. Previously Learned Grammar and Skills, II. New Grammar and Skills, III. Vocabulary, IV. Aesop's *Fables*, V. Cicero, *Pro Archia.*

Module I contained all the material that students had learned in the first course of the elementary sequence, most recently taught the previous fall, and that incoming students already ought to have known by virtue of having placed into this level. Through a series of evermore narrowly focused diagnostics, students whittled down their weaker skills to a core set, repeatedly working through their material until they scored a 90%, the mark upon which I settled as a sufficiently adequate indicator of competency. Upon completion of the first "review" module, students progressed to Module II, which consisted of material that was new for my continuing students and possibly new for the new students. For those who use Wheelock as we did then, this corresponds to chapters twenty-six through forty. In both Modules I

and II, most challenges covered one or a series of related chapters. Content that was similar in theme or that was otherwise relatively easily linked would be combined in order to give students a way of seeing patterns, making connections, and feeling like they were progressing at a good pace.

In the original course design, Module III's purpose was to give students a confidence boost as well as to help with vocabulary retention. Regretfully, it had to be cut about halfway through the course, as it became clear that it was weighted too insignificantly and would have been too time-consuming for students, hindering their completion of the other material. Module IV, however, which introduced students to adapted versions of Aesop's *Fables* remained and included a brief composition and commentary project. Here I hoped to capture students' interest and help them transition to reading with a good deal of assistance, a goal which would have been further enhanced and developed in Module V. In this too, however, I had been overly ambitious. Had the final module not been removed about halfway through the course, most students would not have been able to complete the class.

Each sub-step (or marker of student mastery) required a corresponding assessment tool which could be taken up to three times. In an effort to foster a less stressful classroom environment, we called these "challenges" rather than quizzes. Ideally this system enables an instructor to give students targeted and precise feedback; a student's second (or third) attempt at a challenge would thus be precise and focused — instead of repeating the entire body of material, he would need to study and prove his understanding of only those elements that caused him trouble. To be clear, what I mean here is a question of focus and emphasis; I do not mean to imply that the student can simply forget all requisite grammar, vocabulary, and other content. For example, if a student did not conquer the challenge on the case system because he did not understand the genitive, the next version of the challenge would focus on the genitive though not to the exclusion of the other relevant material (Appendix III includes an example of a challenge with three iterations). A student could take a challenge up to three times. Student X could take Challenge I.1, score a 90%, and would then practice and prepare for Challenge I.2. Student Y could take I.1, score a 76%, and retake it another one or two times. Without exception, all challenges had to be taken in class; the possibility that students could know beforehand the material on a challenge was avoided by altering the language and order of each short answer question, the Latin words declined or conjugated, and the passages chosen for translation. One wonders, too, if the removal of grade-grubbing and the

opportunity to retake challenges helped create an atmosphere in which the focus was on learning the material, not passing through each challenge as quickly as possible.

Once students reached the final module consisting of Laura Gibb's collection of Aesop's *Fables*, they were required to translate any five fables out of each set of ten; the reader contains eighty brief to mid-length *Fables*, making for a total of forty translations per student. In response to trends noted in the students' engagement with one another (discussed below), this module was redesigned to allow for highly collaborative work. At a minimum each student had to translate one from each set of five translations with at least one other student in the course, but they were encouraged to translate all of the fables with a peer, whether during class or outside of it. 90% again marked the pass/fail point in this collaborative testing environment (on the pros and cons of which see Slusser and Erickson, Summers and Volet); translations were assessed primarily on the basis of their grammatical accuracy. (Future iterations of this course might include deeper connections to cultural and reading-based comprehension, for an example of which see Williams 1991). In order to maintain standards and motivate students to strive for excellence in this module, for each translation that did not meet the competency standard the student would have to translate an additional fable from the set. Upon successful completion of these forty translations, a student officially finished the course and was not obligated to return to class until the final day, on which course evaluations were distributed.

II. Experiencing the Course: Challenges, Advantages, and Takeaways

In what follows, I identify and discuss first the challenges and second the advantages of approaching a course in this way. On the whole, the drawbacks had mostly to do with the frequent quizzing and thus associated grading, my own overly optimistic sense of what students could accomplish in a fifteen week semester, and how to motivate students who struggled with self-discipline and procrastination. Despite these obstacles, both the instructor and students reaped great rewards from the nearly one-on-one instruction, collaboration with peers, the realization that failure is normal and productive, and metacognitive reflection on one's learning.

Contextualized through a narrative of the course experience over the pilot semester, the world of the course becomes more apparent. On the first day of class, we considered some common ways of conceptualizing language learning; the marathon analogy worked well to help students visualize the reasoning behind the course as

well as its structure — running a marathon was not unlike finishing all the modules of the course, it demanded practice, pacing, and patience. Each of the students came into the course with a different base line, but each could get to the finish line with the requisite amount of work and determination. As anticipated, all of the students were pleased that there would not be any exams, and all expressed surprise at this new approach. My fifteen students from the fall asked thoughtful questions, including ones I had not yet considered. One student, for example, wondered how many assessments could be taken per class; another inquired about potential penalties for re-taking a passed challenge in an attempt to earn a higher mark.

The course met three times a week for seventy minutes each; assessments began early and often. The first and frequently the second versions of a challenge were nearly identical in terms of the content they covered, but by the third version of a challenge, I was tailoring the assessment to the individual student (Appendix IV). If a student still did not understand that third declension nouns could be declined with second declension adjectives, but *did* understand how to decline nouns and adjectives of each declension, he knew that for this third challenge he had to focus his study and practice on that key, higher order concept of mixing and matching noun-adjective pairs between declensions, not on the declension endings themselves. On the one hand, this system helped students' studying to become more efficient and less haphazard due to the targeted nature of the assessment. Rather than feeling like they were adrift in an overwhelming sea of material, students could readily discern how to concentrate their efforts. This remained true whether the challenge consisted solely of grammar (e.g. production of forms and short-answer responses) or included translation work.

On the other hand, students were taking challenges in almost every class and thus the grading could at times feel draining. The pressure that students felt to advance quickly came back to the instructor; because students could not advance unless they had in their hands, as quickly as possible, feedback from the most recent challenge, the pressure to grade quickly and then communicate results via email often felt quite great — although this might have been more of the instructor's perception than a reality. I do not necessarily think that there was any more work of this kind to do, quantitatively, than in a traditional class, but that this method required a faster turnaround and occurred in rhythms which differed from the usual ones of the semester. I was almost always able to evaluate all student work by the end of the day (say, 9:00pm) and would email each student with targeted feedback and a

personalized plan for the next class. Students adjusted to this system of feedback and used it to their advantage in progressing through the course; one or two often admitted to not reading the emails and were often slowed down as a result. Other methods for administering the challenges and offering assessments for such a course might be imagined: one might shift the challenges to an online format (controlling in some way for honor code violations), reduce the number of challenges, and/or make assessing student work something that the students themselves do, individually or with one another.

For the most part, students were equally pleased at the beginning of the term ("no exams!" replied many, with glee) and at the end. The self-paced approach garnered particular acclaim; as one student commented "This structure facilitated a variety of students in a course that is not easy for everyone. It especially helped my learning process." (Additional comments on end-of-term evaluations both standard and supplemental, with the supplemental evaluation form, constitute Appendices V and VI; student progress through the modules and self-reported perceptions of the values of this approach are provided in two figures in Appendix VII.) Even the metacognitive elements seemed to register with students, some of whom noted that "If I devote time to learning, I'll be a better student," and that "I learn better from making mistakes." Such observations might seem obvious to instructors, yet they suggest an element of deeper reflection and, importantly, the articulation thereof, often absent from students' assessment of their performance. For many, feelings about their progress through the course and satisfaction at the end of the term was focused through their sense of their motivation, or lack thereof. One student remarked that "self-motivation is key," another that "I'm good at motivating myself," and another that "I have a lot of potential. I just need to find motivation."

That three students came very close to failing and that others procrastinated terribly points to the significant role that motivation plays in student learning and becomes a determining factor of student success in a self-paced atmosphere. Most students understood the idea behind the course design and the rationale for conducting the course this way, yet some lacked the motivation or self-discipline to plot, execute, and adjust their own continued progress through the course. Although I had included "suggested completion dates" for each module, these seemed to do more harm than good, as students would either panic if they perceived themselves to be a day behind or try to do all of the work in a short period of time around that date. (In the end, student feelings on this point were mixed: some wanted more structure,

others none at all.) In an attempt to encourage student thinking around planning and progress, beginning with the first full week of the class, students wrote weekly, ungraded self-evaluations in which they accounted for what they accomplished and what they did not, identified their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for the following week (Appendix IV). Here too, those who took space and time to consider the week and their work in a reflective manner were those who succeeded, those who scribbled some bullet points or rushed through it were those who fell behind.

The correlation between the quality of a student's weekly reflection and their performance in the course could be explained by a number of factors but ultimately suggests a student's willingness to engage in the work of the course, whatever the form that work takes (preparation, assessment, or reflection). For the purpose of this essay, I want to note only the challenge that such an absence of motivation brings in light of the course structure: in a traditional classroom, this student might be the one content to earn a mark of "D" or "C." In this course, however, at the risk of failing, the student had to earn a mark of 90% at each turn. Further, the course's self-paced nature meant that no one was standing over them, forcing them to work within a specific timeline. Philosophically, this is an important point, as one goal is that the course helps students learn how to plan and complete work as well as how to take responsibility for their learning and for themselves (student comments suggest that there was some success achieved in this area; Kotru, Burkett, and Jackson 269 offers an engineering-specific case study; McDuff 169 provides a theoretical sociological lens; Delucchi discusses collaborative learning in a statistics course). Yet the desire to support students' development of these skills necessitates that a delicate balance be struck.

Despite the stumbling blocks so far mentioned, as we all settled into a routine, significant rewards became evident. The highlights included working with smaller groups of students, especially as they encountered brand new material, and having students work together to solve problems and learn alongside one another (on the differences between cooperative, collaborative, and interactional learning see Oxford 1997; for a discussion of how advanced students can support elementary students' learning through structured activities see Argetsinger 2006). Further, the focus on the individual learning experience was rewarding for the students: even if they had to take a challenge two or three times in order to advance, by the time that they did we had narrowed down their problem area dramatically, and they were assessed specifically on the material on which they needed to focus the most. Student

retention of material appeared to be markedly better than it had been in the first semester course, and students could articulate their mastery of a concept over time and became more adept at catching and anticipating their own mistakes. As one student phrased it, "I was excited I could take my time and actually learn instead of cramming." Although vocabulary continued to plague many students throughout the term, especially those who had not used Wheelock before, on the whole once they demonstrated mastery of a skill, they did not slip or revert. Many students also were able to forge connections across skill sets and concepts without a great deal of help or guidance from the instructor.

Once students began to move through the challenges and the modules, they clustered into groups. Some of these groups consisted of as few as two or three students (indeed many were this small) and others grew to include as many as nine students. This development had the most dramatic impact on the class — all along they had been encouraged, repeatedly, to work with one another to study, to practice, and to advance through the course with the help and support of their peers. Now they began to do so seemingly spontaneously, with only positive results across the board. Rather than a vaguely tense classroom of students frantically taking challenges as quickly as possible (as in the first through third weeks), this became a classroom of students who helped one another, learned with and from one another, and worked on-task without constant or direct supervision for the majority of the class period. On most days, students would be working on the day's tasks in advance of the instructor's arrival and did not require prompting to get underway.

It was this collaborative environment which led to another, related benefit, namely the degree to which students taught, or more accurately team-led, one another. This happened in two ways, one intentional and one not. The intentional had to do with one of the challenges, II.2: the subjunctive (all tenses, including the hortatory as well as purpose and result clauses). When the first group completed Module I, I taught them this material. They practiced with it for a few days and then, when the next group finished Module I, the first group taught the material to the second group. The challenge for II.2 was thus to teach it to the next group ready to learn it. Rather than creating a competitive or resentful atmosphere, students benefitted from hearing their peers' explanations of material and some peer teachers themselves found that teaching others "helped me understand the material" and "has helped me to learn more myself." In response to this and other positive feedback, I changed my thinking about how to frame and assess the (reworked) third and final module (trans-

lations of Aesop's *Fables*): as noted above, although each student was responsible for submitting his or her own individual translation of the fables in any given set, he or she had to work with at least one other student on the translation of at least one fable from every set of five.

Both the assessment for II.2 and the group requirement in Module III led, I think, to the unintended instances of student-to-student teaching and mentoring. As students moved through the last Module and completed the requirements for the course, some showed a keen interest in helping their peers complete their work. While this may have been true for only a few students, and while they sometimes elected to work on translating something else, it was nonetheless astonishing and incredibly encouraging for me to see: here were students who, although they had completed the course, still came each day to help others or to continue learning Latin. Whether these students' intention was to improve their own understanding yet further or genuinely to assist other students in the class cannot be determined, but the effect that this energy and enthusiasm had on the classroom environment itself was remarkable.

The group-centered approach to learning served a motivational purpose in the class; as reported by students, they wanted to keep up with their groups, and would frequently work harder to catch up to one or two peers or wait a day for others to catch up and rejoin a group. A student-centered structure also fundamentally changed the sorts of questions that students asked both of me and of one another in any given class period. As a fellow faculty member who observed the course wrote,

> *The groups worked exceedingly well independently and I could hear students helping one another to understand the concepts. Almost all the groups I could hear were comparing sentences and checking each other's work. I often heard sentences such as, "Why is it this ....?" or "How did you decide it was X structure?" Again, such focused questions struck me as unique and powerful because the students weren't comparing answers ("What did you answer for such and such?" kind of thing), but rather asking each other about method or thought process . . . Instead of focusing on the answers or end product, students were*

> *clearly focusing on the process of learning and making sure that others in their group were also learning. Beyond what the students can do in Latin, they've acquired a skill, sense of responsibility to one another, and a larger perspective about learning that has the potential to change their academic careers and life.*

While the number of students in the class often made it difficult for me to spend equal time with each group — on any day I had to teach new material to two or three groups, review and practice with two or three others, and monitor another one or two — but precisely because students knew that I could not always be available they themselves took responsibility for their learning. As the same observer noted, "students were demonstrating a skill that the vast majority of students struggle with: independent learning within community."

In addition to helping students become reflective, independent learners, the frequent and multi-assessment elements of this approach communicated to students that errors and failure are normal and unremarkable other than for the very valuable information they provide about comprehension, something which individuals are characteristically poor at identifying on their own (Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel 121; similarly Bain 23-24). Unlike a typical classroom in which a hush falls over the room when tests are returned, in this class students both knew their mark before coming to class and knew the areas in which they must improve; and more than one student remarked that "I learn better from making mistakes." Likewise, the in-class conversation is then transformed into one about the "hows" and "whys" of their errors rather than a fixation on finding the right answer, and involves not just individual students and the instructor but also students working on the same modular unit. In short, the interaction is learning-centered, non-judgmental, and collaborative. This particular benefit was somewhat surprising—as the course structure could have created a competitive, secretive atmosphere — and perhaps offers some evidence for the type of engagement to which students might rise when grade-grubbing and competition for grades are removed.

III. Final Reflections

Although I have covered the salient points above, a few noteworthy items remain. Early on, I could see that the range of levels was even greater than that for

which I had originally accounted, with some students who still struggled with simple concepts and others who swiftly moved through the more advanced material. In this regard, the course revealed additional practical and pedagogical points: (1) our placement exam had to be rewritten; (2) a student's progress through the modules was based partly on ability, but seemed a more accurate reflection of their work ethic and effort; and (3) I would need to find a way to reduce the number of modules, or the number of assignments per module. One significant trend that emerged is that the first five challenges of Module I (the review) were the hardest and most labor-intensive; once students moved beyond these they progressed quite quickly; this was also the module that students most often regretted "wasting time" in and that they advised future students to move through swiftly. A not unrelated point is that the majority of students found the same things to be more or less difficult, an observation which allowed for future iterations to build in time around such bottlenecks.

Based on the experience of the pilot course as described herein, five opportunities to improve and expand the course suggest themselves. The first is to export this model to the first semester of the elementary sequence. Students in the first semester are nearly as varied as those in the second, with some never having encountered Latin before and others bringing to the course a wealth of knowledge from previous classes. A second innovation involves the addition of a peer mentor, namely a student who has been through the sequence, whose linguistic skills are sufficiently strong, and who can relate to students at the peer level, working like a coach to encourage and guide them through the course. With the help of a peer mentor (a role different from that of a teaching assistant), the instructor is better able to maneuver effectively between learning groups and groups themselves would benefit from increased time with an expert (see again Argetsinger 2006). Third, once this method has been adequately tested with a traditional textbook like Wheelock to the point that most of the glitches are either easily anticipated or easily handled, one might consider adopting a more inductive, reading-based book. Indeed, in later iterations of the course I experimented with both *Latin for the New Millennium* and Oerberg's *Lingua Latina*. Options are of course numerous, but a text that stresses the interconnectivity of language and culture through the act of reading Latin with minimal if any paradigmatic grammatical assistance (as does *Lingua Latina*) presents a fascinating challenge; that cultural content was not a more integral, and more explicitly so, component of the first iteration of the course was unfortunate.

For those instructors especially who do not use oral Latin in the classroom, a fourth area of expansion presents itself with composition. Whether in short, focused, low-stakes assignments or in a larger-scale composition project, the act of writing in the target language not only compels students to grapple with and hence reconsider and reflect upon their skill levels in a more active, intensive way than translation alone, but also creates additional room for the exploration of cultural material in a way that is clear to students. Most students in this course thoroughly enjoyed the composition and commentary project, noting that it helped them to connect to the language and culture in a different way and to gain a heightened understanding of their grasp of the course material. Finally, a course that incorporates elements of a "flipped" classroom by presenting strictly instructional material exclusively outside of class would also free up time for in-class work that engenders yet more engagement with problem-based, peer-supported engagement with the material.

With no comparison available to other sections or previous offerings of the second semester course — this was my first time teaching it and I am the only Latin instructor — no data is available to support a numerically-based claim that this method did not harm student learning. Yet anecdotal evidence in the form of student engagement, student performance, and student retention of material both at this level and beyond suggests that it not only maintained a status quo but perhaps supported and arguably deepened student learning. Further, it offered students a fifteen week-long period of time during which students learned about themselves, their learning styles and work habits, as well as their aptitude in planning and prioritizing their tasks and other academics (see Appendix VII for student perceptions of how this course's benefits weighed against that of a traditional course). Through daily and weekly practice in the language, engagement with peers, and focused work with the instructor, as well as weekly metacognitive reflection, students acquired and honed skills that served them in the immediate context of this Latin course as well as in the broader contexts of their lives outside of the classroom and, one hopes, beyond the walls of the university.

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Appendix I: Sample Lesson Plan, mid-semester

1. Challenges:

6a: Adam, Peter
6b: Arthur

7a: Chad
7b: Amy

8a: Megan, James, Lucy, Thomas
9a: Jane, Anthony, Emily A.

3a: Andie, Lindsay, Kera, Essie, Cynthia
4a: Sam, Heather
5a: Crystal
6a: Emily F.
7a: Mark, Ben

2. Stations:

Mark, Ben Crystal, Emily F.	1	TEACH: rel clause char ASSESS: conditions; TEACH: iussives
Essie, Cynthia, Andie, Lindsay, Kera, Amanda	2	TEACH + ASSESS: indirect questions
Sam, Heather	3	TEACH + ASSESS: *cum* clauses + fero
Chad, Adam, Peter, Arthur	4	ASSESS: participles; ablative absolute
Anthony, Jane, Emily A.	5	ASSESS: passive periphrastic; TEACH indirect stmt.
James, Lucy, Thomas, Megan, Amy	6	ASSESS: passive periphrastic; REVIEW ind. stmt.

Appendix IIa: Original Course Syllabus (edited for most pertinent information)

LAT 122: ELEMENTARY LATIN II
MWF 9:25-10:35 :: ALAM 207

Course Description and Goals

This will not be your average second semester Latin class. Many of you have heard me say that learning a new language is like learning a new sport or other activity: you need to start small, progress little by little, and master the basic skills before you can move on to the next level. At the same time, all of us know that we learn and master those skills at different rates; each of you has come to the course with different strengths and each of you has different areas in need of review and improvement. Yet, by the end of this course, each of you will be able to:

- demonstrate complete grasp of previously learned grammar and skills;
- demonstrate complete grasp of new grammar and skills;
- demonstrate an increased vocabulary bank and speed of word recognition;
- translate Latin with ease and fluidity with an appreciation of the issues involved; and read an ancient Latin text in an interpretive and reflective manner.

In the pages that follow, you'll see how this is going to work.

Expectations

Although this course will be run differently than those to which you are accustomed, the basic expectations that we have of one another will remain the same. I expect that you, *the student, will be prompt, actively present in class, respectful of your peers, diligent and thorough in your work, as well as timely in your completion of assignments*. You can expect me, *your instructor, to make every attempt to help you along, to evaluate your work fairly, helpfully, and as quickly as possible, to challenge and support you, as well as to create and maintain a classroom environment conducive to the exchange of ideas*. You will also find that I will be solicit-

ing your feedback at multiple points in the semester, whether directly or indirectly, e.g. through Elon's Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL). These assessments are meant to guide us as we navigate this new approach to learning the language; the more forthcoming you are the better the course can be, both now and in the future.

Requirements and Grading

We will be experimenting with a type of learning familiar to students in the sciences but relatively new to students in the humanities and, especially, languages. Most importantly for you, this means that *you will be working at your own individual pace*. Below you will find the various 'tasks' that you must complete to advance through the course. Your success in the course depends first and foremost on you, and second on your peers; many of our class meetings will involve work in groups of varying size. You will collaborate with peers to develop and increase speed and skills, drill forms and vocabulary, discuss and compare translations. Further, you will note below (Step IV) that there is a class project: together, we will create a collection of fables (more details follow below). Upon the successful completion of a task, you will earn a certain number of points in the course. The table below details the total point value for each module:

Module I: Previously Learned Grammar and Skills	11
Module II: New Grammar and Skills	15
Module III: Vocabulary	6
Module IV: Aesop's Fables (translation development)	30
Module V: Cicero, Pro Archia (reading Latin)	38

Each module can be further subdivided as follows:

NB: Each module includes a 'suggested completion date.' These are merely suggestions but should be taken seriously; although each person will progress at a different pace you'll want to be conscious of them as the semester progresses.

Module I: Previously Learned Grammar and Skills

For those of you who took 121, this will be a review of previously covered material; for those of you who are coming in from various levels of experience, this may or may not be familiar. Once you have shown mastery of these basics, you'll be ready to move on to the next set of material. All of the grammar and constructions

listed below come from chapters 1-25 of Wheelock and all assessments will contain vocabulary culled only from those chapters.

Suggested completion date: 18 February

Cases + functions thereof	1
Nouns	1
Adjectives	1
Regular verbs	1
Pronouns	1
Participles	2
Ablative absolute	1
Passive periphrastic	1
Indirect statement	2
total	[11]

Module II: New Grammar and Skills

Although some of you might remember this material from high school Latin or another course at Elon, for at least half of you, the grammar, syntax, and concepts below will be new (or perhaps only distantly recognizable). The material can be found in chapters 26-40 of Wheelock, but note that we won't finish the textbook (rather, we'll address minor points as they come up in translation); all assessments will use vocabulary from only the chapters you've studied. There are some difficult items in this list but rest assured that you'll soon understand them. Be patient, study hard, and practice, practice, practice!

Suggested completion date: 11 March

Comparison of adjectives	1
Subjunctive, all tenses, w/ constructions	4
Indirect questions	2
Cum clauses	2
Conditions	2
Iussives	2
Relative clause of characteristic	2
total	[15]

Module III: Vocabulary

This is just what it sounds like: a devoted and concentrated module to the review, reacquisition, and mastery of all of the vocabulary that you should have at your disposal by this point. (By 'at your disposal' I mean that you don't need to look it up.) We'll reflect on tips, tricks, and tools for the memorization and retention of vocabulary and you'll be given three, separate assessments that will be based on three vocabulary lists, to be distributed the first week of class.

Suggested completion date: 18 March

Nouns and pronouns	2
Adjectives and adverbs	2
Verbs	2
total	[6]

Module IV: Aesop's Fables

Aesop wrote in Greek, but his *Fables* were translated into Latin over and over again. As we work through the fables (individually, in small groups, and collectively), we'll have the opportunity to discuss issues relating to the topics of cultural exchange, philosophy, and education, among others. Some of these will be assigned as homework, some will be translated in class, and others will be used in different ways; you will have ample time to complete all forty that are required (and to practice with the remaining forty, if you so desire!).

The 'composition and commentary' project (clearly) has two components: you will be asked to compose, in Latin, a fable of your very own (taking your reading of Aesop's fables as a starting point) and to generate a commentary for that fable. The commentary should be written as if for one of your peers; you should think carefully about what to include and exclude, what is helpful and what not, what cultural and contextual details to incorporate, etc.

Suggested completion date (both tasks): 8 April

The fables are arranged in order of difficulty, so note that you must translate five from each group of ten; each student must produce translations of forty of the fables (they are very, very short).

i. 1-10	2.5
ii. 11-20	2.5
iii. 21-30	2.5
iv. 31-40	2.5
v. 41-50	2.5
vi. 51-60	2.5
vii. 61-70	2.5
viii. 71-80	2.5
Composition and Commentary Project (see description above)	10
total	[30]

Module V: Cicero, Pro Archia

How do you know whether or not someone is a citizen? What are the criteria for citizenship and how can you prove them? Why should the Romans care about the fate of a Greek poet? All of these (and more) are questions to which Cicero addresses himself in *Pro Archia*, a defense of the poet Aulus Licinius Archias, who was accused of not being a Roman citizen. The *Legamus* reader assigned as a required text for this course takes us through selections of the speech and will give us the opportunity to talk about the complex and nuanced world of Roman life, law, and literature in the mid-to-late first century BCE. We will again explore questions of cultural exchange as well as the cost and consequence of political conquest; in addition we will study rhetorical theory and argumentation. This focus on a Ciceronian speech will also help you to see how 'real' Latin prose works, how it can vary, and how the grammar you've learned in bits and pieces fits together to form a substantial, and often impressive, whole.

Suggested completion date: 6 May

i. *Pro Archia* 4.2-4	[8 lines of Latin]	2
ii. *Pro Archia* 5.1-3	[8 lines of Latin]	2
iii. *Pro Archia* 5.4-6; 6.1	[13 lines of Latin]	3
iv. *Pro Archia* 6.2-3; 7.103	[12 lines of Latin]	3
v. *Pro Archia* 12; 13.1	[18 lines of Latin]	4
vi. *Pro Archia* 14.1-4	[13 lines of Latin]	3
vii. *Pro Archia* 18.4-5; 19	[18 lines of Latin]	4

viii. *Pro Archia* 23; 24.1-3	[14 lines of Latin]	3
ix. *Pro Archia* 28-29	[18 lines of Latin]	4
x. *Pro Archia* 31	[14 lines of Latin]	3
xi. *Pro Archia* 1-2	[19 lines of Latin]	4
xii. *Pro Archia* 3	[14 lines of Latin]	3
total		[38]

A final note regarding Requirements and Grading

You'll notice that there are no quizzes, no midterm, and no final examination; you will not be graded on class participation, or any of the assignments typical to a course like this. Homework will be assigned daily to each individual and occasionally (read: randomly) collected by the instructor. You are accountable to yourself, first, and to your peers, second. If you do not complete your work or contribute to the work that happens in the class, you will not be able to advance through each module. Again, in order to pass this course with a minimum of a 'D,' you must progress through all of Modules I-IV. (A 'C' requires you to get through V.v; a 'B' through V.vii; and an 'A' through V.x).

Required Texts

Wheelock, F. M. Wheelock's Latin. Sixth Edition. Revised by Richard LaFleur. New York: Harper Collins, 2005.

Gibbs, L. Aesop's Fables in Latin: Ancient Wit and Wisdom from the Animal Kingdom. Mundelein, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2009.

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Appendix IIb: Adjusted Course Syllabus
(abbreviated to highlight redistributed point values)

Module I: Previously Learned Grammar and Skills

Cases + functions thereof	2
Nouns	2
Adjectives	2
Regular verbs	2
Pronouns	2
Participles	4
Ablative absolute	3
Passive periphrastic	3
Indirect statement	4
total	[24]

Module II: New Grammar and Skills

Comparison of adjectives	2
Subjunctive, all tenses, w/ constructions	6
Indirect questions	4
Cum clauses	4
Conditions	4
Iussives	3
Relative clause of characteristic	3
total	[26]

Module IIIa: Aesop's Fables

i. 1-10	5
ii. 11-20	5
iii. 21-30	5
iv. 31-40	5
v. 41-50	5
vi. 51-60	5
vii. 61-70	5
viii. 71-80	5

Module IIIb. Composition and Commentary Project	10
total	[50]

Appendix III: Sample Assessments: 7a, 7b, and 7c

Nomen: _____
Hodie: _____

Latin 122. Assessment for Module I.7a: Adjectives

1. How must an adjective match the noun it modifies?

2. Why is this important?

3. How many declensions of adjectives exist in Latin?

4. Must an adjective's ending exactly match the ending of the noun it modifies [e.g. as in *bella puella*]?

5. Please decline the following noun + adjective combinations in every case except the vocative in the singular + plural:

bellum potens		*res utra*	
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

metus malus		*puer celer*	
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Nomen: _____
Hodie: _____

Latin 122. Assessment for Module I.7b: Adjectives

1. In what three ways must an adjective 'match' the noun or pronoun it modifies?

2. Must the endings themselves always match exactly [e.g. as in *animus bellus*]?

3. How are third declension adjectives further subdivided?

4. What function do adjectives perform [grammatically, in a sentence]?

5. Please decline the following noun + adjective combinations in every case <u>except the vocative</u> in the singular + plural:

periculum acre		*fides tota*	

sensus bonus		*ager dulcis*	

Nomen: _____
Hodie: _____

Latin 122. Assessment for Module I.7c: Adjectives

Please decline the following noun + adjective combinations in every case except the vocative in the singular + plural:

otium facile		*spes una*	

senatus avarus		*magister difficilis*	

Appendix IV: Weekly Student Self-Evaluation Form

Nomen: _____
Hodie: _____

Latin 122. Student Self-Evaluation.

These self-evaluations are intended to help you chart your progress through the course and, especially, to help you see where you need to focus your time in and outside of class. They won't be graded, but you'll get out of these what you put into them so be honest and thorough.

1. What did you accomplish this week?

2. Is there anything that you planned to accomplish but didn't? If so, why?

3. Have you identified any strengths (re. Latin, study habits, work habits... anything)?

4. Have you identified any weaknesses (re. Latin, study habits, work habits...anything)?

5. What are your goals for next week?

6. What can you, the instructor, and/or your peers do to help you reach those goals?

Appendix V: Selected Student Comments from Course Evaluations, Regular and Supplemental (for the questions asked on the supplemental evaluation, see Appendix VI)

"Lots of individual help if needed."

"Helped me learn through individual teaching."

"I liked that we could go at our own pace and had to get an A on exams because it made sure we knew the info."

"Good idea to help students learn."

"I was excited. I don't like language so I was excited I could take my time and actually learn instead of cramming"

"More suitable for students who are motivated and can work by themselves….the structure of the class worked well for me"

"I felt that we need to have actual deadlines to reach."

"If only I'd been more proactive!"

"Self-motivation is key."

"Still loved it. This structure facilitated a variety of students in a course that is not easy for everyone. It especially helped my learning process."

"I learn better from making mistakes"

"I don't handle time well"

"I don't really do well with self-motivated learning"

"Small groups help me a lot."

"I need to study in different ways. I can't study everything the same way or I won't retain the information."

"I need to set small goals for myself in order to reach my large goals."

"[My Latin] improved greatly. Much more comprehensive and 'proficient'."

"I can actually translate Latin and I really enjoy it." "I know more than I believed."

"I am good at concepts and grammar constructions."

"[Course structure] makes learning easier"

"Easy to get frustrated but a comfort to have others to help and work through things with."

"[Teaching others] helped me understand the material"

"Teaching others has helped me to learn more myself."

"I'm good at motivating myself."

"I am disciplined and a good independent learner when I apply myself."

"If I devote time to learning, I'll be a better student."

"I like my time management skills."

"I have a lot of potential. I just need to find motivation."

"I need to learn to stay focused."

"I need to give myself more credit as a student"

"I really liked the structure of this course. I had to be self-directed and I had the time to spend on certain things I didn't understand intend of rushing to keep up."

"I think getting through the material was more rewarding since I took full responsibility for it."

"[Teaching my peers] helped me get a better grasp of the concept."

"I like being able to feel like I helped and contributed."

"I was excited to move at my own pace, because I knew my level of Latin was not the same as everyone else's."

Appendix VI: Supplemental Evaluation Form

Latin 122
Supplemental Evaluation

Please respond openly and honestly to the following questions. Your responses will be typed up by a student worker before the instructor sees them, so your anonymity will remain protected.

gratias tibi ago!

1. Average number of hours you spent studying outside of class each week:

0-1 2-3 i 4-5 6-7 8 or more

2. Tools you used to help learn and retain vocabulary included (circle all that apply):

none flash cards online tools other: _____

3. Did you seek assistance from the tutor or instructor outside of class? If not, why?

4. What did you think when you first heard about the structure of this course?

5. What do you think of this type of course now that you've reached the end?

6. What would you have done differently in this course this semester?

7. Is there anything that you would change about the course? If so, why?

8. What have you learned about …
    a] your style of learning?

    b] your Latin abilities?

    c] how you work with others?

    d] your ability to teach your peers?

    e] your attitude towards teaching your peers?

    f] your strength as an independent learner?

    g] your role -- and potential -- as a student more generally?

9. What advice would you give to a future student in this course?

Appendix VII: Student Progress and Perceptions of Course Benefits vs. a Traditional Course

Figure 1. Student Progress through the Course by Week and Module

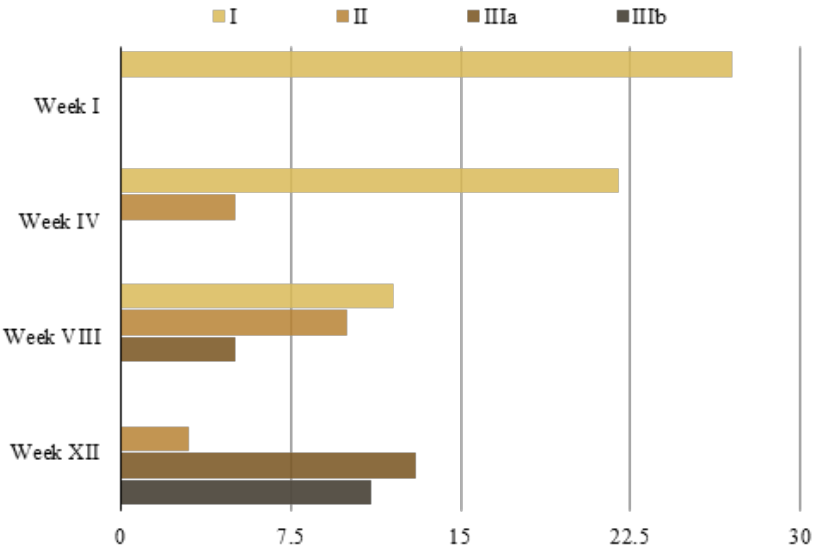

Figure 2. Student Perception of Benefits of this Course over Traditional Course