Close Readings in a Latin Dictionary[1]

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an assignment designed to stir students' curiosity about the relations between literary language and Roman society, and the powers of translation to clarify or obscure those relations. Though designed for a fourth-semester university Latin course, this assignment is equally appropriate for advanced high school students. Students are asked to choose a cluster of closely related words (e.g. *liber, libertas, liberalis,* and *liberalitas*) and to explore in depth what the entries offered by their own intermediate or pocket dictionaries do and—crucially—do not communicate about the uses of these words in Roman life and literature. The exercise heightens sensitivity to the ways meaning may be shaped in specific settings, both at the micro-level of word order and in relation to broader socio-economic and political contexts. It also helps students grasp their own role as translators in generating meanings. This work can therefore simultaneously sharpen awareness of a much larger cultural realm beyond students' fragmentary experiences with Roman literature, and improve their technical skills in reading and translating Latin.

KEYWORDS

intermediate Latin, AP Latin, A level Latin, vocabulary, *pietas, libertas, pudor*

INTRODUCTION

A first-year university student in an intermediate Latin course introduced an exploration of the adjectives and nouns *liber, liberalis, libertas,* and *liberalitas* with a broad observation about the function of dictionaries: "It is with these handy devic-

es that people delve into a deeper appreciation of a foreign language. However, so often it is dictionaries themselves that can lead us astray, providing only a small and static glimpse of what a word really means in that foreign culture." Her overview is telling even in its generalizations. She has discovered how much dictionaries can communicate, directly and indirectly, if used effectively. But her emphasis on the "small and static glimpse" also reflects her fresh awareness of the immense range and dynamism of how languages are used in society.

Such a blend of empowerment and sensitive caution, shared by many students in the course, surpassed my hopes when I assigned a dictionary exercise two-thirds of the way into an intermediate level reading course in Spring 2015. The exercise consumed relatively little homework or class time, but played a crucial role in the classroom, both by blending cultural competence with technical linguistic skills, and by stimulating students' curiosity about the relationship between these aspects of language learning. Students began to reflect on how vocabulary uses would vary in different sub-communities and sub-cultures even during a single era, as well as changing dramatically over time and in different cultural systems.

First I will say something about the teaching challenges addressed by this dictionary exercise. The second section outlines the pedagogical setting and closes by presenting the exercise. The third section discusses what students made of the exercise. In conclusion I share some brief reflections about the place of this exercise in students' language learning at high school and college levels.

The Trouble with Translating

Many of us who teach ancient languages run up against a central paradox about the role of translation in language teaching. Latin and Greek can offer students an extremely productive analytic distance from their own cultural assumptions. This distancing is one of the most important outcomes of introductory and intermediate language courses; these courses can help students question the social and linguistic norms they have grown up with by setting these norms in a much larger historical context. Yet we want students to become skilled translators, able to make the unfamiliar into something easily recognizable for readers in the target language. So we are asking them both to de-familiarize ancient texts and to turn them into something familiar. How can we reconcile these two goals?

When they translate Cicero and Catullus and Vergil and Caesar, students need to figure out how to bring Latin literature to life once more in English. Yet at

the same time, they are also trying to learn to read Latin in its own terms—cultural, stylistic, and syntactic. Ideally they are starting to look and listen outwards from the Latin, rather than seeing these texts as awkward puzzles that fail to match the clarity of their native language or of other modern languages they speak well. Learning to think in Latin word order is fundamental to approaching literary texts as acts of communication.

The dictionary exercise I present in this article is designed to focus students' attention not only on the relationship and disjunctions between Latin and English usages, but also on the ways Latin cognates interact with one another, through their operations in social practice and through metaphorical links. This double focus can help students think more self-consciously about the double goal of allowing Latin both to become fully accessible in English, and to communicate on its own terms. It involves taking into account what conceptual, political, and cultural associations our own English vocabulary may bring. But it is just one of many strategies to encourage post-beginners to become more flexible in their translations, so as to bring out particular contextual effects, and to become more sensitive to the multitude of elements that together generate meaning in a text.

A second challenge addressed by the exercise is a really basic difficulty that most beginning and intermediate language students experience: how to choose appropriate English vocabulary for each specific use of a Latin word. Most beginners tend to treat dictionaries and vocabulary lists like vending machines: you put in a coin and out pops the chocolate bar. The temptation is to grab at any English word that will fill the gap in their translation, even if it's not nutritionally rich enough for the context.

When language-learners are drowning in unfamiliar vocabulary, even the most curious and thoughtful lose contact with their ability to analyze and contextualize (Horiba, van den Broek, and Fletcher 1993, 355, note that in some circumstances "L2 readers' limited language competence may require that much of their cognitive resources or attentional capacity be used for lower-level processing and hence insufficient resources are available for higher-level discourse processing"). Though most teachers remind students that they will learn more effectively if they use a dictionary to confirm or correct their suppositions after trying to deduce a meaning from the appearance of a word and its context, instead of rushing straight to a gloss or dictionary, students find it hard to keep that advice when almost every word seems new. Of course this mechanical way of working then makes it hard to

remember even frequently-encountered vocabulary (see Laufer and Hulstijn 2001, 11-13 for an especially useful overview of earlier research into incidental vocabulary learning), so this becomes a cyclical problem.

Involving students in even the most preliminary stages of research into Roman culture can draw them into analytical processes that help them both sift appropriate translations of Latin words and remember core vocabulary. The importance of cultural competence in reading comprehension is well acknowledged (see, e.g., Floyd and Carrell 1987); historical and literary studies can play as fundamental a role in students' reading ability as grammar drills. The initial motivation for developing this particular dictionary exercise came from my own experience as a reader of the *Aeneid* after getting interested in questions of dirt and ritual purity. A lot of things became clearer to me after grappling with the way that *pietas* in the *Aeneid* links attention to due remembrance with the aspiration to achieve cosmological order and cleanliness. Sometimes that means cleaning up actual dirt: putting dead bodies in their place with due ritual is important so that the corpses will not rot and stink—but also so that one's friends can reach their proper place in the underworld. Sometimes the emphasis is more on fulfilling obligations that have been created by affection, reciprocity, or expectations of obedience in Roman socio-political and religious hierarchies.

Good dictionaries do not exclude this way of thinking about *pietas*, by any means, but they do leave us to read between the lines. Smith and Lockwood for Chambers-Murray, for instance, do give "to purify with sacred rites" as the second subcategory for the verb *pio, piare* (under the broader definition of "to reconcile or appease by sacrifice, to propitiate). And it suits the multivalence of *pietas* and *pius* in Latin literature that the dictionary entries for adjective and noun should be more open-ended than those for the verb *pio, piare*. Smith and Lockwood tell us that that being *pius* means "being dutiful" towards a bunch of different entities, and they give their readers a lot of freedom to meditate on what being dutiful towards "gods, country, parents, or near relatives" might mean. It would no doubt seem obvious to some readers that fulfilling those obligations would be bound up with pollution-avoidance and purification methods. But since I was brought up with an almost entirely secular set of traditions, and received very little comparative religious training in my undergraduate or graduate degrees, this was not at all obvious to me until I got drawn into the topic by chance. That realization made me wonder how we could get our students reading between those lines in a similar way, even after much less experience

with Roman literature and culture. The dictionary then becomes one of the objects of analysis, rather than a mechanical vehicle hurtling a bewildered passenger towards a confused translation.

Teaching Translation

Like most Latin teachers at all K-16 levels, here at Purdue we are always looking for ways to invite students into becoming more broadly curious about Roman literature and culture. But we deal with many of the same difficulties as teachers leading a group through the intense AP curriculum. We cannot ask students to read widely in English. We cannot assume that they will have taken relevant courses with us. We cannot spend a whole lot of classroom or homework time trying to fill those gaps, because there is already so little time for analyzing, reading aloud, and translating Latin literature.

This makes it important to find efficient, even speedy ways of motivating students to think investigatively about the role of Latin as a living language in Roman society. "Speedy" is key. Most of our students here use Latin to fulfill a degree requirement or as an extra-curricular bit of fun (often something of both); very few take more than one classics course per semester, and even the most enthusiastic are often committed to extremely demanding majors in areas far removed from the humanities, which limit how much time they can spend on Latin. Purdue is a large public land-grant university (39,409 undergraduate, professional, and graduate students in Fall 2015), which is self-consciously STEM-centered due to a traditional division of functions between the two largest state research universities in Indiana. Among the 20 students in this particular fourth semester group, only one intended to major in classical languages. To add to the hurdles, particularly for the many non-classics majors, there is increasing pressure to graduate very fast with remarkably heavy course-loads each semester, taking electives only if the courses count directly towards degree requirements.

The particular fourth semester Latin course under discussion here was a conventional two-parter, split between selections from Catullus (using the Bolchazy-Carducci *Legamus* reader edited by Kenneth Kitchell and Sean Smith) and from Cicero's *Pro Caelio* (using the Focus Classical Commentary edited by Elizabeth Keitel and Jane Crawford). Movement forward in the language at this stage usually consists of lots of little hops. But this motion, though stumbling, can become as satisfying as a great leap forward when students realize that *their* insights are what

animate the imaginative realms of the literature they are reading. Our challenge is to find as many ways as possible to make students conscious that this extraordinary power lies in their own perceptions, provided they sharpen those perceptions effectively through steady effort and precise observation.

A key priority is to help students internalize Latin word groupings. Breaking up analytical work by word group (e.g. asking students to offer provisional translations along the way once smaller units of meaning are resolved) can clarify how sentences are shaped, but more direct acquisition work is also needed. So from the third week in the semester all the students began preparing to recite their favorite lines of Catullus up to that point. All were invited to office hours to become more secure with reconstructed classical pronunciation and appropriate syllabic stress. Very few students were proficient in scansion at that point, but most of the group began to feel metrical effects even before we reviewed and enlarged skills in metrical analysis more formally. Some students absorbed bodily their understanding of the texts and managed to share that deeper understanding through expressive performances. (The class later repeated this with selections from Cicero, which they found much harder to memorize—an experience that also taught them something about Catullan meters).

This embodied sensitivity to stylistic effects in turn sparked some students' interest in important questions raised by translating Latin into English. I frame one of these central questions as a choice between "grammatically literal" (finding ways to replicate directly the sentence structure of the Latin), and "stylistically literal" (finding ways to convey the tone, ambiguities, and emphases shaped by Latin word order and other stylistic effects). Students are asked to give both "grammatically" and "stylistically" literal translations on quizzes, whenever these choices would diverge. But both these visions of what it means to be "literal" appear through interpretive investigation rather than decoding. When students realize this, they see that even as novices they can participate actively in the creation and recreation of knowledge about ancient literature, language, and culture.

The students learned to stop seeing sentences primarily as puzzles. Until this course most had formed the habit of pairing all nouns and adjectives that "agree", and hunting subjects, verbs, etc., *before* approaching the Latin in its own order. Only a few had been learning to read Latin "from left to right," but most students gradually became more skilled at reading in the Latin order; they discovered how to break off manageable nuggets of a complex sentence by grasping the ways meaning is

organized sequentially in word groups. (For a set of exercises designed specifically to develop this skill at the introductory level, see Harrison 2010.) This in turn made them more confident in the distinct task of reordering the sentence when translating into English, because they grasped better the relationships among words, word groups, and clauses.

Students began to pay attention to the multitude of different ways in which meaning is shaped by context—narrative, formal, syntactic, and social/political contexts. They therefore became increasingly sensitive to the nuances involved in vocabulary choices; they began to collaborate on finding the most expressive English words to suit the particular usages we encountered, which sometimes involved switching on what we called the "innuendo alert" (a device that also comes in handy for *Pro Caelio*).

Throughout the course we took a distinctly conversational approach to otherwise fairly standard analysis and translation work. After analyzing each word group in the Latin order and working out provisional translations of word groups along the way, we almost never stopped at one potentially "correct" translation of a whole clause or sentence. We would weigh up together small but important interpretive questions, such as which adjectives seemed merely attributive in function, and when the weight or hinge position shaped by word order might tilt us towards a quasi-adverbial usage expressing circumstances (if a student initially translated 7.10 *vesano satis et super Catullo est*, e.g., as "is enough and more for crazy Catullus," we also pondered the merits of "even in his madness is really enough for Catullus," and other variations of the same line). We explored the colors and possibilities of vocabulary in particular contexts. If a student went straight to "we played" for *lusimus* in 50.2, merely lifting without thought the textbook vocabulary suggestion, I pointed out some of the other English word choices offered by published translations, like "we fooled around." And then how to convey the many levels of *delicatos* in 50.3? We read the whole poem with our collective "innuendo alert" switched on, which provoked a conversation about metaphor, the eroticization of poetic creation, and ancient sexualities.

Another important element of the pedagogical setting was that just over a quarter of the students were doing extra unprepared reading and translation of Catullus with me once a week for an Honors option (the college offers a contract system for incorporating Honors work into regular courses). Their increased enthusiasm and curiosity and confidence radiated outwards so as to benefit the students who were

not in those reading groups, too. And with such alert readers, even tiny amounts of extra exposure to Latin literature goes a long way. They were interested in making connections between their unprepared honors readings and the other ideas and texts they encountered in the course. A student who wrote especially vividly about *pudor* and *pudicitia* vocabulary (see the third section), for instance, had sharpened her curiosity by reading and discussing the (notorious) threats of sexual violence of Catullus 16 in the Honors group a few weeks before we turned to *Pro Caelio* for the regular course reading.

The *Legamus* Catullus we used in the first half of the semester proved effective for both predictable and unexpected reasons. The obvious advantages of this contribution to the Bolchazy-Carducci "Transitional Reader" series lie in the excellent format of the readers. Each chapter prepares students for reading a small chunk of unadapted Latin literature by integrating grammatical, syntactic, and more broadly interpretive preparation. Students are re-introduced (or sometimes introduced) to constructions with exercises directly related to the material they are about to cover—so the relationship is conceptual and imaginative as well as grammatical.

The book offers prosaic rewrites of each poem, labeled "Making Sense of It." That label, and the Preface's description of these as "reading aids" could imply that the prose versions communicate precisely the meaning of the poems. This would obscure the importance of word grouping, emphasis and other stylistic effects in *shaping* meaning. I feared students would rely on these rewrites too much, and that the prosaic previews would get in the way of learning to listen to Latin in its own order. The "Making Sense of it" versions in the Catullus *Legamus* usually throw off balance the weight poised in the original phrasing, and temporarily close down productive ambiguities. However these rewrites proved very fruitful, and not only because they enact key recommendations stemming from second language acquisition research (see Patrick 2015, 120-22). The textbook gradually starts to emphasize the effects of the verse in contrast with the prose versions, before weaning students off the adaptations altogether. Teachers may make the most of the contrast to help students appreciate exactly why it is essential to begin and end their encounters with literature by reading (analytically and aloud) in the Latin order. I would regularly read aloud the "what Catullus wrote" version, breathing slightly over-emphatically to heighten students' awareness of phrasing. Once students start physically hearing the shape of the Latin, it is less tempting to move immediately to the mental reorder-

ing that is usually needed for translating an entire sentence of classical Latin into English.

The effects of drawing attention to contrasts between the poems and their prosaic rewrites became apparent quickly. Two or three weeks into the course I asked students to list the rhetorical/stylistic effects of Poem 7 in its prosaic adaptation and in the verses (in each chapter the unadapted poem is optimistically titled "What Catullus Wrote"). A few students focused entirely on explaining why a teacher would have written the prose version to facilitate basic comprehension; the whole group grasped this pedagogical logic quickly. But most were also ready to begin stylistic analysis of the Catullan verses; they could show what the poem gained (in its ambiguities, verbal economy, and imaginative power) when contrasted with the "Making Sense of It" rewrite.

So the dictionary exercise that I assigned in week 9 was just one of many means to help students think more deeply about reading and translation. The students chose one of three vocabulary clusters to mull over: *libertas*-related words, or *pudor* and *pudicitia* words, or *pietas* vocabulary. Our three vocabulary clusters occur early in the *Pro Caelio*, so students carried out their dictionary exercise soon after turning to Cicero. I asked them to think really hard about a few short entries, to work out what further questions were raised by the information they found, and to articulate these thoughts in a short piece of writing. The prompt questions were broad, along these lines:

- Why do dictionaries offer so many different English words that may seem to our ears to lead in very disparate directions?

- What else would readers need to know more about if they want to understand more deeply the terms they're looking at?

- What kinds of things are left out of their dictionaries?

- What relationships do they see between the Latin words in their chosen cluster?

The assignment (see Appendix) gave a lot of latitude in presentation, but I advised them to organize their response as a mini-essay, with a clear sense of direction. They were to prioritize clarity, precision, and thoughtful exploratory depth. So the structural prompt questions I gave were simple, too:

- What are your main observations?

- What questions are raised by those observations?

- What (provisional/preliminary) answers does your analysis offer?

Student Experiences

During a preparatory discussion two days before the dictionary exercise was due it became clear that something exciting was happening. The students were required to bring to class detailed notes and drafts; as I had hoped, they stimulated each other's curiosity and confidence. Sharp questions came even from people who (due to their shaky grammatical foundations) were making almost no visible progress as Latin translators. Several had thought about whether *pietas* might involve quite different expectations for people of different classes. How might we discover what *pietas* would mean for a slave, or for others whose voices we don't usually hear in literature from the late republic? Many were already musing on the ways their understanding of Latin is colored by the specific resonances of English words in the 21st-century U.S.. Several had found "patriotism" and "justice" as suggested translations for *pietas* and were particularly struck by how steeped both those terms are in very specific elements of American political culture.

The written work that students handed in two days later was uneven. A few students seemed unwilling to think independently and observantly (it is harder work). A few others put in considerable effort, but were a bit over-cautious in their responses, not trusting their own analytical skills to provide something fruitful; these had recourse to google-driven snippets of information (or occasionally misinformation).

But at least half of the students had found the confidence really to *think* on paper. At the end of the semester, several chose to build on this exercise for their final projects. Some extended their analysis to the other vocabulary clusters. Others wrote essays exploring in specific texts the questions they had developed using their dictionary exercise; for these final essays they read closely sections of *Pro Caelio* in Latin and other relevant texts in English (e.g. *Pro Milone*), as well as the dictionary.

One final essay explored how Christian thought has molded notions of chastity that might interfere with our understanding of *pudicitia*, particularly for young men. This was written by a first-year majoring in Computer Science. Based on what she had seen in Catullus and in the early chapters of *Pro Caelio*, she decided "*pu-*

dicitia relates more to living within the bounds of predefined expectations of one's social rank than the Christian ideal of sexual exclusivity and purity." Outlining the importance of "social obligations" in being *pudicus* also proved helpful when she turned to *pudor*: "there are infinitely many different reasons for receiving or feeling [shame], and all of them essentially boil down to not living up to the standards placed before oneself, be it by society, family or other forces." She had introduced her reflections by puzzling over the variety of translations offered for *pudor* by a pocket dictionary: shame, sense of shame, decency, modesty; sense of honor, propriety; cause for shame, disgrace; blush. She concluded that *pudor* "is not simply one of these words, but all of them together, coupled along with a very deep and complex concept that was woven into the very fabric of Roman society over the course of hundreds of years."

Other students were less interested in rhetorical strategies, and instead used the exercise to develop what amounted to preliminary research agenda in Roman social history and socio-linguistics. A first-year student examining the *libertas* cluster offered various hypotheses about the social dynamics involved in the vocabulary. *Liberalis* and *liberalitas* "represent the words used to describe the upper class, their version of freedom." She explained that "instead of the more literal freedoms an ex-slave or a member of a lower class might have," *liberalis* and *liberalitas* "could be used to describe someone's social freedoms."

The interactions between social and political hierarchies, ethical conventions, and the challenges of language-learning proved fruitful for another student. In his initial response to the exercise, he wondered about what role emotions play in expectations of *pietas*, in comparison with institutionalized relationships. What kind of *pietas* is expected between lovers, for instance?[2] In his end of semester project, this student continued his close reading of the dictionary with all three word clusters, and itemized the aspects of Roman life he now felt driven to understand better as a result of pursuing this thought. Some examples: knowing more about the Roman

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2 This student did not cite *Aeneid* Books 1 and 4, and he had made no mention of reading Vergil in high school on his start-of-semester information sheet (though possibly a memory remained submerged). But here he articulated some of the key questions raised by Dido (e.g. in 4.323 "*cui me moribundam deseris hospes / (hoc solum nomen quoniam de coniuge restat)?*" "To whom are you abandoning me–death-bound–my guest (since this name alone is left over from "husband")?" and in 4.382, where she anticipates Aeneas' punishment "*si quid pia numina possunt*"—"if mindful divine forces have any power"). Are Aeneas' *pietas*-obligations reducible to the institutionalized reciprocity of guest and host, or have passion and affection forged new divinely-endorsed ties during his stay?

hierarchical system would help him better understand Latin vocabulary and usage "because after looking [...] at the vast number of translation options each word has it makes me wonder if different classes used different meanings" of the same word; he also wants to know whether "because people were from different social classes they were taught certain words to mean certain things." He asks a similar question about the gendered use of certain vocabulary (striking in his dictionary because "gentlemanly" is offered as a translation for *liberalis*). And having meditated on the relationship between ethical vocabulary and social status, he says, "I want to know how honor and freedom connect. [...] Obviously, the higher you are in the system, the more honor you can have, and your family can play a large role in your honor. In addition to this, from what we have read, your freedom seems to play a huge role in your honor, but I want to know if slaves, or those who aren't free can have honor. Say a slave saves the life of a young child, can he be honorable even though he's a slave, and even if he could be honorable as a slave, does that mean anything, could it help him become free?"

This student was using a little pocket dictionary, and he started to notice what those mini-dictionaries lack; they have no citations of Latin texts to explain the suggested English translations. He commented, "Say for instance, *pietas* was used to mean respect, instead of affection or love, in a particular passage, there's not a way to clearly show this in a dictionary entry unless you record where it happened and the context around that occurrence. Maybe that's what happened with justice and patriotism, maybe those were special case translations [...]." All these lucid (though informally worded) questions came from a third-year student majoring in Hospital-ity and Tourism Management, who had expressed his lack of confidence about his Latin skills at the start of the semester; he had worked steadily for a few weeks, and then entirely lost focus; he temporarily regained his earlier commitment for the dic-tionary work in two spurts (the first short assignment and the extended final essay).

Another third-year student was interested working out what one would need to know in order to grasp different ranks' experience of being or striving to be *liber* or *pius* in the ancient world, and how religious functions would have shaped and been shaped by social and political power. This student was taking Latin alongside pre-med work and a major in Creative Writing. He was intrigued by the question of how far the more explicitly religious activities (appeasing the gods, ritual cleansing) expressed in the verb *pio, piare* are also involved in the adjective *pius*. He speculates that "*pius* may even be the state achieved with *pio*, but the dictionary does not relay

that information." The webs of metaphor that link the different English word choices offered by Chambers-Murray also led him (in his final essay) to make interesting connections between the use of *libertas* vocabulary and concepts in *Pro Caelio* and some of the specific translation suggestions in the dictionary, such as "freely growing" for *liber* and "the power of doing as one pleases, freedom from restraint" for *libertas*. These connections prompted him to observe that "freedom can be given or taken away with simply being born in the right place at the right time," and that the effects of birth status might well extend to freedom of speech, thought, behavior, and legal accountability.

A more advanced student in the same course (a senior minoring in Classics, who will continue Latin during his graduate studies in medieval and renaissance literature) meditated on cultural variations within the Roman world as well as translation problems for English speakers in his exercise. Drawing on Catullus 43.6 ("*Ten provincia narrat esse bellam?*"), in which "the question of the *provincia* perceiving something different from the inhabitants of Rome proper seems to be addressed," he decided that "it would be unwise to assume any sort of uniform cultural homogeneity in the ancient world, no matter how far Rome reached"; this variation would also apply, surely, to "abstract cultural concepts" like *pietas*. He also pointed out that "in *Pro Caelio*, Cicero uses the word *pius* almost exclusively to refer to familial obligations and duty. There isn't necessarily a sense of religiousness about it, simply profound reverence for the parents." This observation addressed the role of cultural analysis in translation, so I will give him this section's last word: "If we were to include familial piety in the offered definitions, it places the relations of the family amongst religious duties. Would this deify parents to any extent? I don't exactly have an answer to that," he said, "but I can note that no definition listed could possibly apply to every situation neatly without pulling our perception of the overall meaning of the sentence in one direction."

REFLECTIONS

This exercise invites students to negotiate a give and take between openness and closure, a negotiation that is equally important for fundamental reading and translation skills. By this approach I mean the give and take between openness and closure. When making their way through a clause or sentence, students need to learn to keep interpretation open until specific clues justify closing a unit of meaning (e.g. intermediate students who remember learning purpose clauses must also remember

the range of other jobs that *ut* can do—expressing comparison, indirect command, result, etc.; they need to allow context and verb mood to clarify what *ut* may be doing in any particular instance). Yet it is equally important to remain interpretively active, making the most of each opportunity to resolve syntactic suspense, and not to keep all meaning floating unfixed until the end of a clause or sentence. This dictionary exercise, too, invites a balance of interpretive openness and closure. It encourages intermediate Latin readers to question their dictionaries—not to see the information they offer as the end of the story about the way any given word functions in Latin life and literature. But it also aims to help students use that information as precisely as possible, to make the most of what dictionary entries *can* say; this is not merely a matter of increasing awareness of what dictionaries leave out.

I would love to hear from any teachers who have used similar exercises, or who decide to apply this one in their college or high school classroom. I suspect the exercise would be especially fruitful midway through a one or two year course (e.g. AP or A level), as it would then be possible to incorporate the results of new-found curiosity into reading and translation skills. One advantage of the educational context here at Purdue is that a significant proportion of the students have come to a research university because they are fully aware of their intellectual curiosity in other areas, so they already have some degree of competence and confidence in letting that curiosity lead them through their analyses. More active support would be needed for students who have not yet developed such confidence by pursuing research or research-like activities. The students in this fourth semester Latin class had developed many analytical interests and skills well before I met them, through personal enthusiasms, previous Latin teaching, and courses in other disciplines.

For teachers considering incorporating something similar into an AP or similar high school Latin curriculum, it should be encouraging that first-year undergraduates achieved some of the most thoughtful and articulate analyses. Much of their deep curiosity about the interaction between Roman language and society had evidently stemmed from high school Latin classes. Our work together simply crystallized students' awareness that seemingly technical language work is necessarily enmeshed in utterly fundamental questions about the ways human beings use words in society.

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APPENDIX. DICTIONARY EXERCISE: A FEW DETAILS OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Using your own dictionary, explore in depth one of the following groups of words:

- *liber*, *libera*, *liberum*; *liberalis*, *-e*; *liberalitas*, *-atis* f.; *libertas*, *-atis* f.

- *pietas*, *-atis* f.; *pio*, *piare*; *pius*, *-a*, *-um*

- *pudicitia*, *-ae* f.; *pudor*, *-oris* m.; *pudicus*, *-a*, *-um*; *pudet* (*pudeo*, *-ere*, but usually impersonal in 3rd sing.)

Analyze what the dictionary does and does not tell us about the role of your group of terms in Roman literature and culture.

- What questions are raised by the definitions that the dictionary does offer? What else would you need to know about Roman culture to understand fully what these definitions imply? What kinds of information cannot be conveyed merely by a brief dictionary definition?

- Are you aware of specific implied meanings/resonances (e.g. based on your knowledge of Latin literature) that are not included in the list of possible definitions/translations for this word?

- What do you make of the disconnection and/or resemblances between the varied English terms that may be used to translate each term in this group?

- How important is it to pay attention to the other terms in this group? E.g., do we need to think about the verb *pio* when considering the abstract noun *pietas*? Must we think about the noun *libertas* when considering the adjectives *liber* and *liberalis*? If so, why?

Write out your analysis as a mini-essay (you'll need at least 600 words to do this adequately, but feel free to write up to 1500 words or more). You may use continuous prose or bullet points, but make sure you shape your investigation as an essay in its analytical structure, addressing the following questions:

- What are your main observations?

- What questions are raised by those observations?

- What (provisional/preliminary) answers does your analysis offer?