TEACHING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF THE CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MIDDLE WEST AND SOUTH

FEATURES

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Teaching Classical Languages (ISSN 2160-2220) is the only peer-reviewed electronic journal dedicated to the teaching and learning of Latin and ancient Greek. It addresses the interests of all Latin and Greek teachers, graduate students, coordinators, and administrators. Teaching Classical Languages welcomes articles offering innovative practice and methods, advocating new theoretical approaches, or reporting on empirical research in teaching and learning Latin and Greek. As an electronic journal, Teaching Classical Languages has a unique global outreach. It offers authors and readers a multimedia format that more fully illustrates the topics discussed, and provides hypermedia links to related information and websites. Articles not only contribute to successful Latin and Greek pedagogy, but draw on relevant literature in language education, applied linguistics, and second language acquisition for an ongoing dialogue with modern language educators. Teaching Classical Languages welcomes articles offering innovative practice and methods, advocating new theoretical approaches, or reporting on empirical research in teaching and learning Latin and Greek.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to issue 13.1 of Teaching Classical Languages.

This issue's feature story honors the 2022 Winner of the Ladislaus Bolchazy Pedagogy Book Award, The Passion of Perpetua. The commentary was written by students at the Stanford Online High School, under the guidance of their teachers, Thomas Hendrickson and Anna Pisarello. We have invited Tom and Anna to share their method and perspectives in this feature story for TCL.

Further, in this issue we offer three articles that argue for making Greek and Latin classrooms more inclusive, whether it be by representing more female voices to students (Vennarucci and Reeber), by using experiential and project-based learning to introduce ancient STEM (Roy), or by immersing students in ancient Greek (Cortes and Rico).

With this issue we also welcome new Editorial Assistant Katie Alfultis-Rayburn to TCL. Katie also works with CAMWS Secretary-Treasurer T. Davina McClain as the Administrative Assistant for CAMWS, in the home office in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Katie's background in professional and technical writing, as well as her Master's in TESOL, make her an excellent fit for this position, and we are lucky to have her with us.

The Polis Method: Towards an Integrative and Dynamic Language Teaching Method

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ABSTRACT

This article describes a method for teaching ancient and modern languages, the Polis Method, which was developed in recent years at the Polis Institute in Jerusalem. The method follows two main theoretical principles: Full Immersion (teaching classes entirely in the target language) and Dynamic Language Development (using the order in which the learner internalizes various features of the target language respecting the inner structure and dynamics of the language). Following these principles, the Polis Method has adopted some techniques developed in the field of Second Language Acquisition since the 1970s (TPR, TPRS, Story Building, etc.) As well, instructors at the Polis Institute are currently developing a new technique called Living Sequential Expression (LSE) inspired by the work of François Gouin (1831-1896). These practical techniques are meant to develop the language skills of grammar, vocabulary, conversation, storytelling, speech, reading and writing in holistic fashion.

KEYWORDS

second language acquisition, ancient languages, languages, linguistics, didactics, language pedagogy

The Polis Method: Towards an Integrative and Dynamic Language Teaching Method

The Polis Method of language learning and teaching is a dynamically composite, learner-centered, and usage-based method designed at The Polis Institute in Jerusalem originally for the teaching and learning of ancient languages. The characteristics of Jerusalem as a meeting point between the East and the West, the cradle of the Bible and monotheism, and a crucible of the Semitic and Hellenistic heritages have certainly influenced the pedagogical and cultural

approach of the Institute. This school offers students a full immersion in the languages that reflect the history of the city, whether these are ancient (Greek, Latin, Biblical Hebrew) or modern (Modern Hebrew, Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial Palestinian). Thus, the creation of the Polis Method must be understood against the following backgrounds: 1) the limits of the traditional methods applied to the teaching of ancient languages; and 2) the presence in Jerusalem of a team of teachers in ancient languages.

INTRODUCTION

The Polis Institute is one of several independent global initiatives to revive the teaching of classical languages such as Latin (Ørberg, *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata: Colloquia Personarum*; Ørberg, *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata: Familia Romana*; Desessard v; Foster and McCarthy v), Ancient Greek (Buth, "Koiné Pronunciation" 217; Balme et al. ix), and Biblical Hebrew (Dallaire 13; Buth, *Living Biblical Hebrew* ט). In addition, it also promotes the less commonly taught ancient languages such as Classical Syriac, Coptic, and Akkadian. For those who have learned these languages through grammar-translation method (GTM) and have valued their experience, a few have retained this method and have continued to champion it (Lowe). A few more promoters of ancient language teaching now have either modified it (Foster and McCarthy v–vi) or have retained most of GMT practices but have enriched it with humor, passion, and various teaching activities

(Nicoulin 129-33). However, the majority of these initiatives in the last 50 years have already moved beyond GTM altogether, employing and affirming partial or total immersion approaches, in conjunction with other strategies that can be called "communicative approaches." These are language teaching methods that focus more on interaction and the practical application of communication competencies (e.g. speaking, listening, etc.) rather than on the teaching and mastery of grammar. The underlying principle of communicative language teaching is an "orientation toward language based on a set of assumptions which are radically different from the formalistic views of the structuralist period of influence or the dominant generative model" (Berns 104). Research has found that communicative language teaching methods are more effective than grammar-based ones in engaging students in learning ancient languages (Dircksen 67; Hunt). Nevertheless, unlike other more purely communicative approaches to language teaching, the Polis Method uses a framework that guides a learner's progress in language acquisition and does not neglect the issue of correct grammar (Rico and Kopf 147).

The method's development and application began in 2001 when the linguist Christophe Rico started teaching ancient Greek using the full immersion approach (Rico and Daise XIII). The choice was prompted and supported by recent research in second-language acquisition (SLA) that have pointed to the wisdom of actively involving the language learners: encouraging them to "initiate [the] topic and talk, not just react and respond"; considering their "linguistic, extralinguistic, situational,

and extrasituational contexts; etc. (Kumaravadivelu 39) and of giving as many opportunities to learners to use the target language as early as possible and in meaningful ways (Ellis, “Frequency Effects in Language Processing: A Review with Implications for Theories of Implicit and Explicit Language Acquisition” 178; Robinson and Ellis 5; Tomasello 89–90). With the foundation of the institute in 2011 by Rico and his team, the Polis Method found a nursery in which it could be further developed. It continues to be fine-tuned to this day, being adopted for the teaching of modern languages, as well (Rico and Kopf 141; Steinberg).

Definitions and motivations

The Polis Method is "dynamically composite" in the sense that its development has led to the integration-by-design of specific approaches and strategies into one working system. These approaches and strategies complement each other and are aligned to a specific set of principles that are enumerated and explained below. Brown describes this sort of approach to language strategy integration as an “informed eclectic approach” (Brown 40; Brown and Lee 42). The Method is "learner-centered" because it is focused *both* on the use of language and the needs of its learners. It contrasts itself to methods that are "language-centered" (i.e., "concerned with linguistic forms, also called grammatical structures") and "learning-centered" (i.e., "concerned with learning processes”) (Kumaravadivelu 26). It is “usage-based” because the method prefers approaches and strategies that expose students to actual and meaningful language use that provides them primarily

with necessary authentic input and, in due time, requires occasions for meaningful output (Verspoor and Nguyen 306–07; Wulff and Ellis 37).

In designing this new method, the Polis Institute's team was motivated by two main factors. The first was the conviction that Greek and Roman literature, as well as both Jewish and Christian traditions, are the root and source of a key global culture that encompasses both the East and West (O'Brien). If only to help modern men and women gain a deeper understanding of civilization and its literary heritage (Sun), these classical cultural sources continue to be as relevant today as they were in the Age of Antiquity. Consequently, they are worth learning even now and, if possible, in the original languages in which they were written. However, even making space for the acceptability of studying these sources in translation, there is still the fact that an astonishing number of ancient, and more so medieval, texts have been left untranslated into modern languages (Rico, "A New Renaissance of Latin") or have been translated improperly such that, as a result, the translation – for instance, in the case of Galen – "may [already] reflect a slight misunderstanding…just as easily as [it is] a deliberate attempt to reformulate the original" (McVaugh 120). This means that the actual content of these important documents is accessible only to those with the ability to read them in the languages in which they were written.

The second factor that motivated the Polis team in designing its method is the realization that, while several methods have arisen to improve second or foreign

language (S/FL) learning among modern languages in the last century as a result of modern research and scholarship (Richards and Rodgers 3; Thornbury ix), not one has been systematically developed focusing primarily on the learning and teaching of ancient languages in general. This neglect is ironic considering that theories being used for modern S/FL learning and acquisition today derived a huge chunk of their research from classicists of the past (Nicoulin 5) and the fact that several initiatives have arisen to promote a revival of teaching the classical languages all over the world – from Europe[1, 2] to Africa,[3] and the Middle East[4] to North America.[5] At least Latin continues to be taught in countries such as Taiwan, China[6] and the Philippines (Cortes, "Wanted: Latin - Dead or Alive (Or Why I Choose to Teach a 'Dead' Language)" 28–31; Cortes, "Number 153: What Is Its Meaning?").

It is a truism that the decline of interest in and zeal for studying classical languages has been driven primarily by a perceived lack of its practical utility and application, as is the case of Latin, for instance (Bracke and Bradshaw 1). However, a large part has also been played by the approach to teaching the ancient languages and the framework that justified this approach. This framework is well captured by a comment made by a classics educator in the 60's about his own classics education:

[1] https://www.vivariumnovum.net/en
[2] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/study/clubs-and-societies/living-latin-and-greek-society
[3] https://academic.logos.com/teaching-greek-as-a-living-language/?unapproved=346578&moderation-hash=621b4102b050223fcd74a2386b968b7a#comment-346578
[4] https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/
[5] https://thelatinlanguage.org/
[6] http://www.latinitassinica.com/

"No one ever told us that we should try to do anything with Latin but read and write it… (and) my experience in college Greek was similar" (Levy 224). Views of the sort have justified the dominance of GTM all the way to the 20th century (Bracke and Bradshaw 5). It is true that this method may have its advantages, but research has demonstrated that it also has a tendency to frustrate students (Koutropoulos 58; Richards and Rodgers 7) to the point of abandoning the endeavor to learn the classical languages. More seriously however, it appears that there is "no literature that offers a rationale or justification for [the method] or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory" (Richards and Rodgers 7).

The Polis Method is positioning itself partly as a "pedagogical response to the crisis of classical culture in the third millennium" (Ricucci 176).[7] The developers of the Polis Method are aware that a more holistic and dynamic approach to ancient language teaching and learning is needed for the 21st century learner. This includes, among the others, the usage of these ancient languages in day-to-day conversations not necessarily as an end in itself but rather as a necessary means to attain a decent level of facility in reading ancient texts faster and more effectively. The effectiveness of this approach is attested to by several linguists who have tried this approach themselves (Della Casa 2–3; Pettersson).

[7] Translated from the original Italian: "*una risposta pedagogica alla crisi della cultura classica nel terzo millennio*"

ELEMENTS OF THE POLIS METHOD

The elements that comprise the Polis Method – enumerated and explained below – encompass a variety of theoretical principles and practical techniques for teaching modern languages that have been validated by well-established research on language in the last half-century in the intersecting fields of psychology (Asher 3.113), language pedagogy (Curtain 3–4; Fortune 9; Krashen et al. 3–7), linguistics (Alagözlü and Kiymazarslan ix; Thomson; Barclay and Schmitt 811–12), and even neuroscience (Andrews 1–2; Li and Jeong 1–2). The two main innovations of the Polis Method are the precise composition of the elements that comprise the method as a whole as well as a specific understanding of the principle of Dynamic Language Development differs from how it is used by authors such as Verspoor and Behrens (31), for example.

Theoretical Principles

The following theoretical principles determine the practical strategies and techniques that are incorporated by design into the system.

Total immersion. An abundance of research supports the principle that language learning best happens in a fully immersive environment, i.e., where only the target language is heard, read, spoken, and written (Curtain 1–2; Fortune 10). This theoretical principle marks the main difference between the Polis method from traditional GTM and is the main basis for the inclusion of certain practical techniques into its methodology.

Dynamic language development. The second theoretical principle on which the Polis Method is grounded is likewise one of its distinctive features. It recognizes all language development as a dynamic and iterative process rather than a linear one (Ellis, "The Dynamics of Second Language Emergence: Cycles of Language Use, Language Change, and Language Acquisition" 233; Verspoor and Behrens 27; Verspoor and Nguyen 307). As well, it affirms with Krashen (1) that grammatical structures must be learned according to their natural order of acquisition. For this reason, the Polis Method, recognizes the learner's advancement much more holistically than on a strictly grammatical scale. While making space for learner specificity in S/FL development, which accrues to the learner's specific learning circumstances and first language (L1) (Luk and Shirai 721; Verspoor and Behrens 30–31; Murakami and Alexopoulou 396–97), the Polis Method recognizes that for the learner to internalize more effectively the various features of the target S/FL, the inner structure and dynamics of the language concerned must be respected.

Specifically, in applying the method in the early stages, pragmatic communication skills, taught through imitation, are regularly prioritized over grammatical analysis. These skills include making customary greetings, asking for and giving basic information (name, age, provenance, etc.), responding to basic commands (stand up, sit down, walk to the window, etc.), asking for clarification (what does "x" mean?), and interpreting body language and facial expressions. By

using this approach students are then not only able to comprehend more than they can produce on their own, but they are also able to use the target language meaningfully, even if they are not yet able to analyze the phrases or sentences that they are using.

As well, recognizing the dynamic connections among the four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the Polis Method uses the whole language approach in language teaching, and teaches these four "macro" skills in integrative or iterative, rather than linear, fashion (Aydogan and Akbarov 672; Burns and Siegel 2–4; Peregoy and Boyle 162–65). This approach, however, is informed further by usage-based theory to operationalize it according to the following model: a horizontal movement from language reception (input) to language production (output) and a vertical movement from oral-aural language to written language. In other words, imitating the usual order of learning languages (Sisto 324; Jorden and Noda xvii–xviii; Liperote 46–47; Peregoy and Boyle 163–64), learners using the Polis Method ideally hear a word first, then pronounce it,

read it afterwards in certain exercises, and finally write it down (the L-S-R-W or listening-speaking-reading-writing model).

The experience in the Polis Institute of teaching students in the last several

Figure 1. The interaction of the four basic language skills in the Polis Method

years has shown that the "listen-first" approach paradigm is the most effective one in terms of enabling students, even in the beginning stages of language instruction, to use their target language for actual communication. This has been especially true for languages that require learning a new alphabet or writing system (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek). Since these languages are difficult to read in the beginning stages, they can be used immediately by the beginning student only through listening and speaking.

Lastly, this theoretical principle is The Polis Method's underpinning for introducing in progressive fashion the various modes of discourse in language teaching: from dialogue to narration and description, then exposition, and

ultimately, argumentation. Corollary to the preceding idea is that, in the Polis Method, language is taught according to the pragmatic order of acquisition. Thus, students are first taught greetings followed by simple commands, then first and second person pronouns as subject, then deictics, etc.

Practical Techniques

Taking into account the two principles above, the Polis Method then deliberately integrates into itself a wide range of approaches and teaching techniques that have been developed since the 70's in the United States and Canada (Kabat 134–36). The most recent technique developed at the Polis Institute and integrated into the method is the so-called LSE (see below) that is inspired by the research of François Gouin at the end of the 19th century (In Medias Res).

Total Physical Response (TPR). Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching technique first developed by the psychologist James John Asher of San José State University. Attempting to imitate how children learn their parent language, the process relies on physical movement as a way of reacting to and reinforcing the learner's understanding of verbal input. The Polis Method uses this approach from the very first class, during which the student is required only to react physically to a series of commands given by the instructor; no verbal interaction is expected to take place (Dell'Oro and Kolde 80; Encinas Reguero 85; Marcin Loch 147; Ricucci 158).

Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling. TPR Storytelling is a language acquisition technique created in the 90's by Spanish teacher Blaine Ray, inspired by Steven Krashen's theory on foreign language acquisition (FLA) and its emphasis on the role of "comprehensible input," i.e., sentences whose meaning students fully grasp. To provide students with a learning environment where "comprehensible input" could take place, Ray developed a series of stories or narrations that correspond to the students' linguistic level and that actively engages them. Through the narration new vocabulary is introduced (Kiymazarslan 12). In adapting this strategy of storytelling to its system, the Polis Method completely excludes translations and explanations in any language other than the one being taught (Steiner). As well, in the process of navigating the story and grappling with the explanation of the instructor, students are encouraged to ask or respond to questions using complete sentences. It is through this approach that The Polis Method cultivates the internalization of speaking skills.

Story Building. The main idea in Story Building, a technique developed by Greg Thomson (University of Alberta) in 2007 within his Growing Participator Approach (GPA), is to present successive images that, when taken together, form a consistent story. The technique reinforces vocabulary and grammar retention, and permits the teaching of new grammatical structures as students are invited to describe the images presented using the vocabulary they already know (Mas and Baiguatova 170–71). Within the Polis Method, the Story Building Technique is

often used to practice the switch from present to past tense (O'Malley 35; Rico and Kopf 145–47).

Images and props. The Polis Method presents new vocabulary using pictures and props in order to enable students to directly associate a new word with a sensorial experience rather than words that are not of the target language (Dell'Oro and Kolde 91). This practice is based on the principle that human memory is largely dependent on sensory experience (Facella et al. 212–13; Wong et al. 2).

Conversation in pairs or small groups. Conversations between students in class is a common and important feature in modern language teaching (Fisher et al. 5–20; Loyola; Speidel 100) which Polis applies to the teaching of ancient languages (O'Malley 35). In more advanced classes involving two to five students at a time, these encounters provide more opportunities for authentic speaking experiences as well as for correcting possible errors.

Living Sequential Expression (LSE). The newest element in the Polis Method is a technique called Living Sequential Expression (LSE) (In Medias Res; López de Tejada Irizo 4–8) and is another of its distinctive features. Inspired by the work of the French educator and foreign language teacher, François Gouin (1831–1896), LSE is a language teaching strategy developed in the Polis Institute to enhance a student's ability for storytelling and narrating experiences. LSE combines Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR) approach with a modified

version of Gouin's Series Method of language acquisition (Gouin, *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages*) . Two ideas emphasized in Gouin's Series Method have inspired LSE: a) the importance of sequentiality in the learning process, and b) the importance of expressing basic human experience into the language that the learner is in the process of acquiring.

By exploring the crossroads of SLA / FLA research and memory science, LSE intends to enhance the rhythm of the acquisition process by modifying language instruction to accord with how the memory works (Ellis and Sinclair 234; Brill-Schuetz and Morgan-Short 260–61; Wen et al. 1; Corballis 5; Mascelloni et al. 168–69; Mickan et al. 103). For instance, Roger Shank's theory of Memory Organization Packets (MOPs) appears to support the ideas on which LSE is based. If memories, according to this theory, can be found in "scenes" which are then organized into "packets" that, in turn, are made up of "a set of scenes directed toward the achievement of a goal" (Schank, "Memory Organization Packets" 123) and "record the essential parts of the similarities in experience of different episodes" (Schank, "Language and Memory" 273), then it makes sense to put a premium on the use of images, on making reference to day-to-day activities, and on emphasizing sequentiality in language teaching.

LSE is carried out on a practical level by first identifying what might be considered as "regular" tasks and events for the "average" learner. These are then listed down to cover, as far as possible, the whole spectrum of commonly done

activities. The idea behind this approach is that learners who can express as many of the activities they regularly do in the specific target language would have attained a certain degree of fluency in that language.

Regular tasks that cover the average learner's experience are classified into usual (e.g., stand up, walk, stop, etc.), daily (e.g., wake up, take a shower, have breakfast, etc.), weekly, monthly, and yearly tasks. Some rare but significant lifetime events are also included. For each task and event, one or several sequences that consist of four to seven actions – consistently related to one another – are then articulated. For example, the task "taking the bus" could include the following sequence of actions:

1. Walk to the bus stop. Βάδιζε εἰς τὸν σταθμόν. Ī ad statiōnem.
2. Wait for the bus. Ἀνάμεινον τὸ λεωφορεῖον. Opperīre raedam longam.
3. Enter the bus. Ἔμβηθι εἰς τὸ λεωφορεῖον. Ascende in raedam.
4. Go towards the driver. Πρόσελθε τῷ ἁμαξεῖ. Adī ad aurigam.
5. Buy your ticket. Ἀγόρασον τὸ σύμβολον. Tesseram eme.
6. Sit down. Κάθισον. Cōnsīde.
7. Get off the bus. Κατάβηθι ἀπὸ τοῦ λεωφορείου. Dēscende de raedā longā.

At this point a comment ought to be made regarding neologisms. The dynamism of the Polis Method is shown, among others, by its ready admission of vocabulary referring to concepts that did not exist in the ancient world. On a

pragmatic level, this step is necessary if one were to effectively use an ancient language as a day-to-day language. Such is the case for using λεωφορεῖον in the example above to mean "bus," which is derived from the Modern Greek word of that meaning, λεωφορείο. In Latin, that modern means of transportation would be rendered as "*raeda longa*," which literally means "long wagon with four wheels" (Minkova and Tunberg 189). The word for "X-ray" would be "*radiographica imago*," that is, "image written by rays" – presumably radio waves (Cortes, "Wanted: Latin - Dead or Alive (Or Why I Choose to Teach a 'Dead' Language)" 31). A bomb would be "*missile ignivomum*" (Egger and Giannangeli 101) which quite literally means "a weapon for throwing that spews out fire."

As can be seen, it is not a matter of inventing words in the ancient language from nothing and without basis. The developers of the Polis Method understand that a good number of words for modern concepts, like the ones just mentioned, have their origins in ancient languages like Latin or Greek, while a smaller number come from Arabic and Hebrew (Rico, *La Résurrection des langues anciennes l'enseignment du grec ancien à l'Institut Polis*). Thus, adopting and using these words together with the original lexicon of the ancient languages gives the teacher and students the opportunity to examine the etymologies of these words and to explore the inner sense of the ancient language.

Assuming a total of one hundred and fifty commonly done activities that may be divided into two to five different tasks, and which in turn may each contain

four to seven actions, the LSE compendium would eventually consist of some 2,500 commands and some 3,500 different words. This number of words is what the core vocabulary of any language consists of.

Although LSE is inspired by Gouin's Series Method, there are three differences between the two. First, LSE activities are focused on words more frequently used in the context of the average learner's more practical activities. These are in turn classified according to their frequency (usual, daily, weekly, etc.). In contrast, Gouin's "themes" are more general and not specified to regular practical activities. Second, LSE limits its tasks to 4-7 in contrast to Gouin's 15-20, thus enabling better retention of vocabulary. Third, LSE requires both the use of TPR and total immersion in its activities, which was not the case of Gouin's methodology (Gouin, *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages*; Gouin, *A First Lesson in French*).

Other activities and techniques. To increase opportunities for more natural immersive experiences the Polis Method encourages students to attend extra-class activities using the target language (O'Malley 35). The Polis Method also employ songs with lyrics in ancient languages as teaching tools (Rico and Daise 14) based on research findings that songs strengthen retention of vocabulary and grammar (Kara and Aksel 2740–41; Delibegovic Dzanic and Pejic 51; Busse et al. 1–2).

THE POLIS METHOD APPLIED

The Polis Method in the Classroom

Contrary to what Krashen advises, the Polis Method deems the explicit teaching of grammar essential to even immersion courses, provided that only the target language is used to this end (Fotos and Ellis 622–23). Greek and Latin offer the advantage of a grammatical vocabulary and phraseology that is almost complete. Nevertheless, grammar is always taught intuitively and made explicit only once the student has internalized it. The principles followed for the assimilation of paradigms are three:

1. Assimilating only one paradigm per lesson
2. Gradual assimilation of the paradigm (from singular to plural or 1st, then 2nd and then 3rd person)
3. Gradual assimilation in terms of the four skills (listening > speaking > reading > writing)

The class must start from what students already know about the paradigm, through a conversation or a story. Almost every lesson becomes then an LSE or TPR session that allows for the discovery and integration of new paradigms or syntactical structures.

These exercises prepare for the discovery of a text where the grammatical feature of the chapter is exemplified. The practice begins with “closed exercises” (i.e., those in which there is only one possible answer) and proceeds to more “open

exercises" (i.e., those that require creative production). The former include practice in changing phrases from the present tense to the past tense, or from the singular to the plural or some fill in the blank drills. The latter are production exercises either oral or written. The essential thing is to respect, to the extent possible during each lesson, the following progression: listening – oral production – reading – writing.

In line with it being a usage-based method, The Polis Method integrates authentic texts written by ancient language authors in the appropriate stage of the student's language learning. To get to this stage effectively, during the first two years the students approach these texts gradually. In the first phases of instruction, students are introduced to these authentic texts through dialogues and narratives in the target language. The dialogues are easy to understand and are presented through some ten illustrated characters – most of which representing students – that constantly recur throughout the narratives.

Each book used in the Polis Method introduces the same characters albeit with different names, depending on the target language being studied. The illustration captures each character's peculiar and, often, funny attributes and thus provides a context that creates comic situations and facilitates comprehension while allowing students to anticipate the outcome of a story. Like the portraits of the gallery in *Le Petit Prince* or the main characters in the dramas in Molière, those that appear in the dialogues of the Polis Method possess exaggerated attributes that facilitate the creation of humorous situations or dynamic that in turn becomes the

context for exploring a lexical theme. These stories can easily be acted out by the language learners.

The Main Skills

All the techniques mentioned so far are directed to the acquisition of the following six main skills (not enumerated in chronological order):

1. Grammatical skills – developed in any kind of enunciative situation (conversation, tale, speech, or lyricism);
2. Vocabulary skills – developed in any kind of enunciative situation;
3. Conversation skills – illustrated by dialogue, phone conversation, Skype, WhatsApp and SMS conversations;
4. Storytelling skills – narrating an experience or a dream, telling a joke, teaching a recipe, reporting a robbery or an accident;
5. Speech skills – writing a letter or mail, giving a lecture or presentation, saying a prayer, describing something, tweeting, posting a blog article;
6. Reading and composition skills – reading or writing all kind of texts, whether simple or literary, in the target language.

Conversation skills. During the time allotted to language instruction, conversation skills can be developed through conversational pair and group work. This technique has already become traditional in SLA (Kehe and Kehe v–vi). For the exercise to be fruitful and comprehensive, it is useful to map the components, modalities, and topics which are part of most casual conversations, and to train the

students on how to use or deal with them. Without being exhaustive, the following are examples:

1. usual components of conversation – greetings, assertion and negation, reference to time and place, questions, understanding and misunderstanding, agreements and disagreements, clarifying each other's assertions, taking leave;
2. logical and emotional modalities – opinion, choices and preferences, obligation and necessity, hope and discouragement, projects, likes and dislikes;
3. main conversational topics – weather, buying and selling, friendship, politics, sports, passing of time, etc.

Storytelling skills. Storytelling exercises as a means to enhance comprehension skills have been extensively developed in recent years through TPRS. Storytelling skills among students seem instead to have been paid little attention in SLA. On the contrary, The Polis Method, and LSE specifically, enables the power of the storytelling approach to improve vocabulary and comprehension skills. Each set in the LSE compendium is a mini-story threaded by a simple narrative. The simplicity of the story, its inner logic, and the logical connection among the vocabulary used facilitate the acquisition of the skills mentioned.

Speech skills. As for speech skills, one could draw many ideas from the so called *progymnasmata* of antiquity: the rhetorical exercises that trained the students

to become orators (Kennedy ix; Gibson xx–xxi). In the last few decades there has been a renewed interest in literature for these techniques (Russell v; Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* 1–12; Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* 9). In the Polis Institute, students who wish to complete the two-year program in Ancient Philology are trained to give a speech in Biblical Hebrew, Modern Hebrew, Ancient Greek, Modern Standard Arabic, or Spoken Arabic at the end of their studies. Some of these speeches have been recorded and can be watched on the website of the institute.

Reading literary texts and composing within the language. Presenting the students with a literary text without any introduction would certainly mean overloading them. In the Polis Method the instructor employs pre-reading strategies to familiarize the students with the difficult vocabulary and phrases in the text. This can be done in different ways. If the text is a story or an account, for instance, it is always possible to conduct a TPR or LSE session which will allow the students to enact the main points of the plot. The teacher gives commands related to the narrative, and the students soon grasp the meaning through the context.

If, instead, the text is more theoretical and deals, for instance, with education theory, it seems appropriate to have a preparation session in which specialized words and phrases from the fields of education, teaching, and learning are gathered and set in relation to each other. The presentation of these vocabulary

items can be extralinguistic (using images and props or performing verbal actions and little scenes) or linguistic (identifying the root of the different lexical items, the suffixes, the derivatives). These activities should help familiarize the students with around 95 percent or more of the needed vocabulary such that in their first encounter with the text itself, they can already recognize these words, if only passively.

CONCLUSION

For second / foreign language learning, Schmidt affirms that "different learners use different learning strategies" (7). The Polis Method is a way to teach ancient and modern languages that follows best practices and research in foreign language teaching (Sams 36–44), addresses more holistically the different language skills and considers a language's dynamic development in the learner. Because of its dynamically composite character, the Polis Method is an *opus imperfectum* in the sense of its not being static or "set in stone," as research in SLA / FLA continues to develop and as Polis teachers gather more feedback and new insights from the classroom. Brown affirms that this open and dynamic approach gives rise to "new insight(s) and more innovative possibilities, and the cycle continues" (Brown 40). What is clear is that, while ensuring the assimilation of grammar in an intuitive way, and then later formalizing and making its contents explicit, the Polis Method is looking to use the best communicative strategies presented by the research, as

they come, to motivate 21st century students to bring the ancient languages back to life (Encinas Reguero 9; Ricucci 176).

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