

TCL

TEACHING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

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In This Issue:

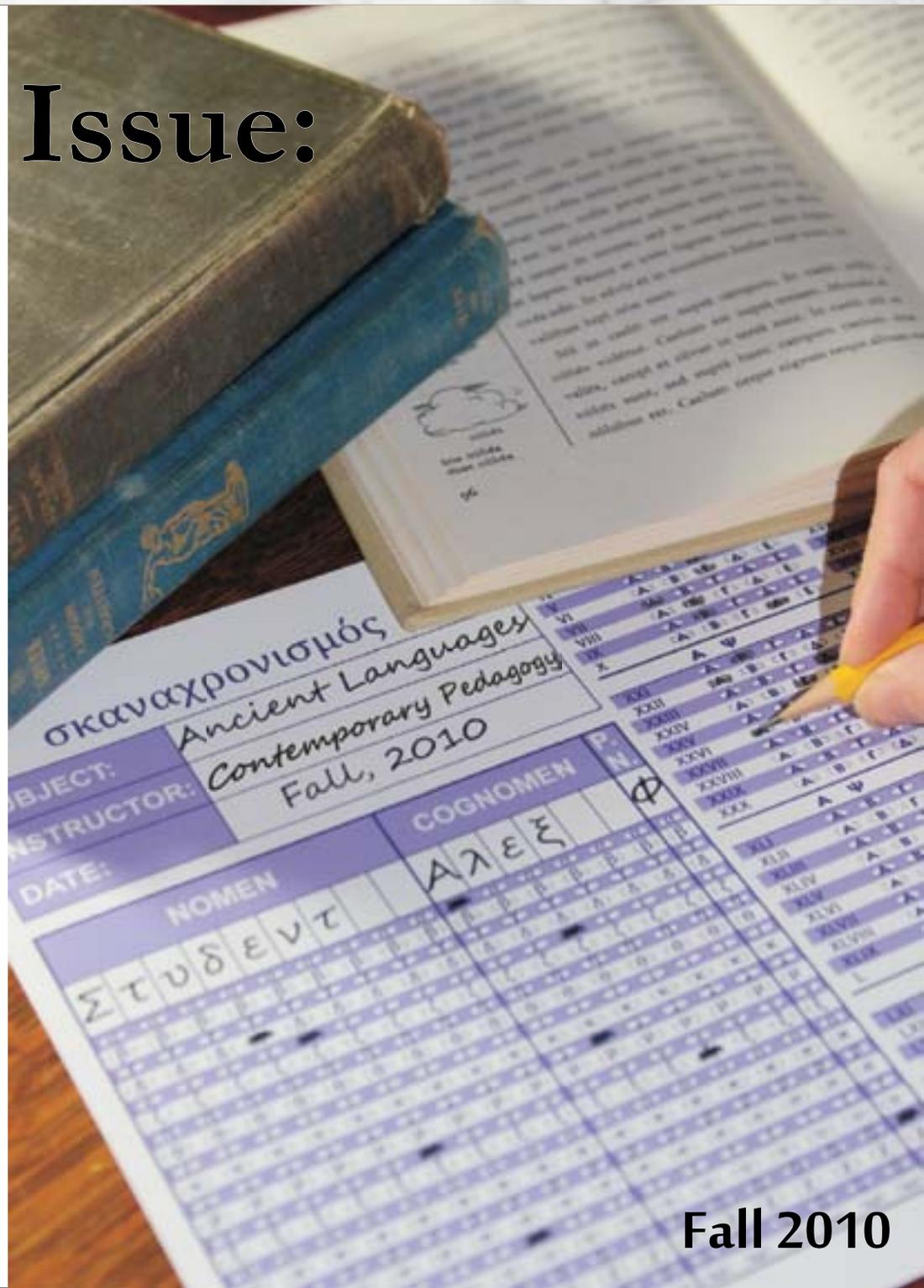
Exercises for
Developing
Prediction Skills
in Reading
Latin Sentences



Form-Focused
Teaching
for the Intermediate
Latin Teacher



The 2010
College
Greek Exam



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Teaching Classical Languages welcome articles offering innovative practice and methods, advocating new theoretical approaches, or reporting on empirical research in teaching and learning Latin and Greek.

Guidelines for submission may be found at <http://www.tcl.camws.org/guidelines.pdf>.

Editor's Introduction

John Gruber-Miller

It is surely no coincidence that the three articles in this issue of *Teaching Classical Languages* address hot topics in both classical and modern language education: reading, bridging the gap between beginning and advanced level courses, and assessment. After many years focusing almost exclusively on oral communication, some modern language educators have realized that the pendulum may have swung too far and that their students have not been afforded the opportunity to receive authentic cultural discourse through the written word. In the last decade, Richard Kern, Hiram Maxim, Janet Swaffar and Katherine Arens have written key works that stress the importance of reading as a crucial component of language acquisition. Reading, they argue, is an excellent way to introduce language learners to authentic cultural discourse and to increase the range and quality of input they may receive from exclusively oral sources. Moreover, reading authentic texts is possible even in beginning language courses and does not need to be postponed until intermediate or advanced levels.

For Classicists, it may be only too easy to respond to this swing of the pendulum by saying, "I told you so." Latin and Greek teachers have long advocated reading as the primary goal for their students. But have we done a good job teaching our students to read the sophisticated texts that have been preserved for us in medieval libraries? In "Exercises for Developing Prediction Skills in Reading Latin Sentences," Rebecca Harrison offers a thought-provoking article that encourages Latin (and Greek) teachers to rethink how we teach grammatical concepts in elementary Latin. Many of us, she argues, unconsciously teach Latin grammar through English word order rather than teaching new concepts through Latin word order from the earliest stages of learning the language. Offering more than twenty different exercises, she provides Latin teachers a wealth of strategies to help students to read in Latin word order and to utilize what comes early in the sentence to predict what types of grammatical constructions are likely to come as the sentence unfolds.

A second topic that has long been an issue for language educators is the bifurcation of the language curriculum between elementary classes that emphasize grammar instruction and advanced level courses that focus on the interpretation of texts. Recently, the MLA (Report on Foreign Languages and Higher Education), Heidi Byrnes and others have deplored this divide between "skills" and "content," between "language" and "literature." In "Form-Focused Teaching for the Intermediate Latin Teacher," Peter Anderson and his student Mark Beckwith report on experiencing this same divide in the Latin curriculum at Grand Valley State University. Beckwith writes, "It was as if we could guess what the text was saying, but had forgotten why – when the meaning was obscure we did not have the resources to elicit meaning through grammar immediately at hand. By focusing on interpretation it seemed that a certain amount of grammar was lost." In order to find a balance between grammar and interpretation, the two authors developed exercises for intermediate Latin students that provide a proactive review of specific grammar and then integrate grammar within the context of reading and interpreting texts from Seneca, Catullus, and Caesar.

Finally, as pressure from the U.S. Department of Education to assess our students' progress filters down to the Higher Learning Commission and state and local school boards, we all reluctantly follow the lead of administrators and wonder whether all this culture of assessment will lead

to better teaching or learning. Exams such as the College Greek Exam, however, offer college and university Classics departments a tool for assessing their students' progress across institutional boundaries. In "The 2010 College Greek Exam," Albert Watanabe offers readers of *Teaching Classical Languages* a snapshot of what our students are capable of doing at the end of the first year of Greek, analyzing their strengths and weaknesses. More importantly, an exam like the College Greek Exam may also give some indication of what structures students are likely to master first and provide reassurance to learners and instructors that certain more difficult structures will develop later in their study of Greek. In short, we should not always cast the evil eye on assessment; tools like the College Greek Exam may be able to offer us insights into our own programs as well as typical patterns of progress across institutions.

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Teaching Classical Languages Mission Statement

Teaching Classical Languages 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* welcome 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.