

Something Old, Something New: Marrying Early Modern Latin Pedagogy and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory¹

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ABSTRACT

Growing interest in ‘active’ Latin has prompted much discussion regarding the role of contemporary Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory in Latin instruction. Often framed as a contest between ‘traditional’ (Grammar-Translation) and ‘new’ (SLA-informed) pedagogies, debate in the field has proceeded according to assumptions regarding the relative historicity of both frameworks with little reference to the recorded tradition of Latin teaching practices. In short, present discussions have not been situated in the timeline of actual historical developments. This article attempts to redress this apparent lack of discussion by comparing basic principles of contemporary SLA-informed pedagogy with strategies from educational treatises published between the years 1511 and 1657. It seeks (1) to demonstrate the existence of an early modern Latin pedagogy with principles like those supported by contemporary SLA research, (2) to offer a comparative reading of that pedagogy’s premises with consensus positions of current SLA-informed instruction, and (3) to reflect upon the potential uses of this comparison for present-day Latin teaching. This reading is exemplary, targeting one model for Latin pedagogy from the early modern period. Investigation remains necessary to identify both the scope and the depth of this tradition and its potential usefulness for re-imagining Latin teaching in the 21st century.

KEYWORDS

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, Early Modern Studies, Renaissance Studies, intellectual history, history of education, active Latin, pedagogy

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LEFT BEHIND?

Interest in ‘active’ Latin² and second language acquisition (SLA) pedagogy has grown significantly over the past three decades. The *Conventiculum Lexingtoniense* (a conference focused on developing Latin proficiency) has ballooned in attendance from about a dozen enthusiasts in 1996 to more than 75 individuals annually. Once the only such gathering in the United States, it has served as a model for nearly a half-dozen similar events across the country.³ K-12 Latin educators, among whom there has been an explosion of interest in SLA theory, are fueling this growth. No longer a topic of side conversations at annual meetings, discussions of contemporary SLA strategies have become mainstream at local, regional, and national Latin gatherings, supported by a boom in social networking and idea-sharing opportunities occasioned by the internet.⁴ Peer-reviewed scholarship has not gone uninfluenced by this trend. Publications in this journal and elsewhere have addressed this growing interest, contextualizing it in both theoretical and practical terms.⁵ The relationship between SLA research and classical language pedagogy has blossomed into a significant consideration for Latin instructors at all levels.

This development is not without political context or implication. Declining enrollments in Latin and closures of departments across the country have placed strain on the field at all levels (Goldberg, Looney and Lusin 2-3, 6). The turn toward alternative pedagogies perceived to be research-supported is not surprising as teachers seek new avenues to sustain and develop programs. Dr. Ted Zarrow, the 2015-2016 ACTFL Teacher of the Year, articulated this sense of urgency in his ACL Institute plenary address in 2016. Reflecting on his experiences as a national advocate

² Alternatively called ‘living’ Latin or ‘spoken’ Latin. Though the nomenclature varies, all versions assume that spoken/written use of the language is integral to the acquisition process. The focus on Latin in this paper is a product of the more developed tradition addressing Latin instructional practices throughout the Modern period. Though the community is smaller, a pedagogical movement for ‘active’ Greek has also developed, e.g. at the Polis Institute in Jerusalem and the Accademia Vivarium Novum in Italy.

³ Including (under the auspices of various groups/individuals) the *Conventicula Dickinsoniense, Bostoniense, Vasingtoniense*; SALVI’s *Rusticatio Tironum, Rusticatio Veteranorum*, and *Rusticatio Paedagogica*; the Paideia Institute’s “Living Latin in New York” program; and a wide range of shorter events and meetings occurring annually at various locations across the country.

⁴ E.g., the Facebook groups “Teaching Latin for Acquisition” or “Latin Teacher Idea Exchange” as well as listserv groups like “Latin Teacher Best Practices.” The Presidential Panel at the 2018 meeting of CAMWS-SS, “Latin Pedagogy and Active Latin,” underscores the extent to which these developments have prompted concerted professional reflection on the subject.

⁵ In this journal, vide: Carlon 2013 and 2016, Rasmussen 2015, Lindzey 2015, and Patrick 2015.

for world languages instruction, he offered the trenchant observation that “if we do not begin to embrace the lessons of modern second language acquisition [SLA], we are going to be left behind.” Framed this way, exploring the applicability of SLA research to classical language pedagogy is not just an opportunity for expanding the field’s instructional repertoire; it could be seen as existentially essential.

Alongside these developments, rhetoric in the field has depicted Latin instructional practice as a contest between two broad methodological categories: Grammar-Translation pedagogy (the ‘traditional’ model) versus SLA-informed pedagogy (the ‘new’ method). This perspective is problematic for several reasons, e.g., its dichotomous structure, a failure to consider hybridization of methods, the occlusion of long-developed alternative approaches (e.g., the Reading Method), and a hierarchy of privilege that tends to posit one set of instructional strategies as universally and ubiquitously ‘correct’ in contrast to the other. Though the specifics of these arguments are, regrettably, beyond the scope of this paper, most practitioners of both schools claim to pursue the same ends: helping students develop sufficient reading ability to engage original Latin texts with little need to rely upon lexical and or grammatical aids.

This paper seeks to address both narratives via a reading of the history of Latin instruction that demonstrates long-standing affinities with principles closely aligned to both modern SLA research and grammar-translation methods. Specifically, I will complicate the issue of the traditional/novel dyad through a comparative reading of current principles in SLA theory alongside four early modern educational treatises about Latin pedagogy. The aim of this approach is two-fold. First, I want to highlight shared (and divergent) philosophical positions between SLA research and early modern Latin pedagogy. Second, I will suggest that appeals to ‘keep up’ with modern language methods ought to be reformulated as arguments for a return to long-established traditions in classical language pedagogy adopted/adapted through the lens of modern SLA research. This should be informed by a conjunctive approach to established pedagogies and the insights of SLA theory – the answer is not either/or, but yes/and.

RELATIONSHIP TROUBLE

Three problems emerge: (1) what does it mean to speak of an ‘early modern’ Latin pedagogy? (2) Which variant(s) of SLA theory are we discussing in this context? And (3) what does it mean to ‘marry’ the two together, given the historical

gap between the early modern period and today? Is such a union feasible, and under what conditions?

The scope of post-Classical (and especially Neo-) Latin publication and its relatively unexplored condition impede speaking of **any** era in monolithic terms. As Jürgen Leonhardt estimates in *Latin: Story of a World Language*, total post-Classical Latin output exceeds extant Classical sources by a factor of ten thousand (2). Many of these sources remain completely unexamined. The breadth of post-Classical Latin publication on issues of educational theory alone presents a formidable challenge. *Répertoire des ouvrages pédagogique du XVIIe siècle* offers a survey of hundreds of works addressing all aspects of pedagogy, from teaching the alphabet to advanced composition (Buisson). Untold more address the topic without explicit indication in the title.⁶ Many of these texts remain unaddressed in publications concerning Latin education practices during this period.

I will explore four works as representative of one strand of Latin pedagogical thinking in the early modern era: Desiderius Erasmus' *Ratio studii ac legendi interpretandique auctores* (1511) and *De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis* (1523); Johannis Posselius Maior's *De ratione discendae ac docendae linguae Latinae et Graecae* (1589); and Johannis Amos Comenius' *Opera Didactica Omnia* (1657).⁷ This maneuver is not to elide competing positions on Latin pedagogy prevalent during the period or to suggest a monolithic conceptualization of Latin instruction, but to outline a general approach through the works of three important thinkers. The choice of Erasmus, Posselius, and Comenius as exemplars rests on the weight of their influence within and beyond the field of early modern pedagogy.⁸

Writing in distinctly different socio-political contexts and eras, each of these authors shares a commitment to active Latin for purposes ranging from general humanist education, to engaged participation in the *Res Publica Litterarum*, to – in

6 To offer one example of a less-obvious source, Johann Walch's *Historia Critica Linguae Latinae* contains multiple sections addressing pedagogical issues and provides an annotated bibliography directing interested readers to further sources.

7 Interested individuals can access editions of each of these texts through Google Books.

8 Erasmus' *De ratione studii* was published in 11 editions across Europe between 1511 and 1645. His *De pueris institutendis* saw at least 15 distinct editions between 1523 and 1556. All told, over 300 editions of Erasmus' pedagogical works were published within a century of his death. Posselius' pedagogical texts were published in nearly 20 editions between 1585-1620. Portions of Comenius' *Opera Didactica Omnia* were first published beginning in 1627, with the whole work seeing its first edition in 1657. Hundreds of printings of Comenius' various educational treatises were run across the western world.

Comenius' case – preparation for the second coming of Christ. Of the three, only Comenius explicitly endorses a universal model of education like the one common today.⁹ All three authors assume the primacy of Latin in the school curriculum and its daily utility for students as the international vehicle language for important work in politics, law, medicine, theology, philosophy, and (nascent) science. To that end, their pedagogies aimed at developing spoken and written Latin skills, especially for reading classical, medieval, and contemporary Latin texts.¹⁰ Despite the substantial gap between early modern and present-day educational environments, the shared goal of reading proficiency offers substantial justification for the continued relevance of early modern Latin pedagogies.

Specifying a variant of SLA theory is no less fraught with difficulty, due to its relative novelty and the lack of consensus on key issues regarding processes and methods of acquisition. Rather than ground my argument directly in any specific theoretical framework, I will contextualize it in terms of the essential components of SLA-informed instruction provided in Shrum & Glisan's *Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction* (5th ed.), an ACTFL-endorsed foreign language pedagogy textbook.¹¹ Though their perspective is oriented in/by the Sociocultural Theory of language acquisition, the components of language teaching that they outline are, with the exception of Zones of Proximal Development, supported by many of the most popular SLA theories. Their work therefore serves as a reasonable ground for investigating relationships between SLA research *in toto* and early modern Latin pedagogy as outlined in the selected texts.

The metaphor of marriage is apt for addressing the final challenge. The object is not to suggest that early modern pedagogy in any way represents intuitive knowledge of the positions that current SLA theory has reached. Nor is it to suggest

9 On which, see Sadler 2013. Erasmus' position is much less obvious. He links education to the human condition throughout DPI but appears to treat it only in the context of male students. Whatever we might glean from his *Abbas et Erudita*, Erasmus' position on gender in education remains unclear. Posselius offers no position different from his contemporaries. To my knowledge, none of these authors indicate any substantial consideration of other minority groups generally excluded from education during the 16th and 17th centuries.

10 For a more thorough look at this history, readers should consult Tunberg 2014 and Minkova 2014. Concerning methods for learning to speak Latin during the early modern period, readers should see Tunberg 2012.

11 My choice to rely upon Shrum & Glisan is strategic. As the ACTFL endorsed/aligned instructed SLA text, it offers the best introduction for teachers to the application of SLA theory and includes bibliographies of major articles on the key issues addressed in this paper. Given these facts, it proves the most convenient single reference text for language instructors.

that current positions in SLA are the teleological consequence of roots laid down in the 16th-17th centuries. Instead, I will bring the two traditions into a conversation with one another by reading early modern Latin pedagogy with/against contemporary SLA theory and vice versa. This emphasizes their points of intersection while highlighting their differences in perspective(s) and assumptions. The goal is to generate comparative reflection, not to subsume either perspective within the other. It unifies distinct intellectual traditions while maintaining their individual natures and the contexts in which they developed, i.e., it marries early modern Latin pedagogy and SLA Theory.

KEY CONCEPTS IN SLA THEORY

Shrum and Glisan outline eight points that constitute the field's consensus regarding SLA-informed language instruction. According to them, such teaching provides:

1. Comprehensible input in the target language that is directed toward a larger communicative goal or topic;
2. An interactive environment that models and presents a variety of social, linguistic, and cognitive tools for structuring and interpreting participation in talk;
3. Opportunities for learners to interact communicatively with one another in the target language;
4. Conversations and tasks that are purposeful and meaningful to the learner and that parallel real-life situations in which they might expect to use their language skills;
5. Explicit instruction in strategies that facilitate language awareness, learner autonomy, and making meaning when interpreting the foreign language;
6. A nonthreatening environment that encourages self-expression;

7. Opportunities for learners to work within their Zones of Proximal Development [ZPDs] in order to develop their language and transform their knowledge;
8. Opportunities for language learners to participate in setting the agenda for what they learn. (36)¹²

These points address the types of communication that ought to occur in the language-learning classroom (1, 3, 4, and 5), the nature of the classroom as a place of language acquisition (2 and 6), and the role(s) of the student and instructor in the language-learning process (7 and 8). Shrum and Glisan also highlight consensus on issues like the use of authentic resources in instruction and the qualities of an effective language teacher – both essential topics for SLA-informed language instruction (passim, esp. 188-94). These ten issues (1-8 above plus [9] ‘authentic resources’ and [10] qualities of an effective teacher) form the backbone of my analysis.

I will proceed by theme, addressing the points as outlined in the categories above. In each instance, I offer a summary of related SLA research, followed by an evaluation of relevant selections from each of the early modern texts. The citations operate illustratively, providing a sense of the scope of this pedagogic tradition. They are not exhaustive either within the work(s) cited or across the various texts presented for analysis here.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION: COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT

Stephen Krashen’s five hypotheses of second language acquisition set the stage for current discussions in SLA beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Shrum and Glisan 16-18; Krashen). Though much critiqued on theoretical grounds, the terms outlined by Krashen constituted many of the key research directions for SLA over subsequent decades. Central to his five hypotheses is the concept of Comprehensible Input (CI), which states that “we acquire language that contains a structure a bit beyond our current level of competence ($I + I$). This is done with the help

¹² As one reviewer astutely observed, this list offers no further comment on the priority, relative weighting, or the interrelationships of these instructional components. Though substantial research supports, e.g., the necessity of comprehensible input, various schools of language acquisition address that fact differently in relation to the other criteria listed. For that reason, a full review of the literature discussing the topic is beyond the scope of this paper. Readers interested in a general overview and comparison of the various prominent schools of SLA theory should consult VanPatten and Williams 2014.

of context or extra-linguistic information” (Krashen 20-30). Theoretical consensus holds that CI is a necessary component of effective second language instruction. Students acquire a second language via comprehensible input delivered in the target language.

Engaging students with understandable messages in Latin is a primary point of instruction for our early modern sources. Posselius expresses the futility of asking students to deal with language that is incomprehensible to them: “What does it accomplish that boys, like parrots, repeat words they don’t understand and are burdened with busywork?” (138).¹³ The expected answer is obvious: little-to-nothing. He assumes that students will be engaging meaningfully with Latin at a level that they find to be intelligible, if challenging. The minimum standard for second language study in contemporary SLA theory and this line of early modern pedagogy is, in principle, the same: input must be comprehensible.

A key part of maintaining comprehensibility is ensuring that topics of discussion are conceptually accessible to learners. Regardless of the linguistic simplicity of the message, if its content is unintelligible, the exercise is moot. Comenius, who is concerned primarily with the Latin education of younger children, emphasizes this reality:

Nothing is retained with youth except what their age and disposition not only admit but even seek out. Let them be ordered to memorize nothing except what is properly understood Let nothing be given over to practice except that whose form and standards of imitation have been sufficiently demonstrated. (1: 84)¹⁴

¹³ *Quorsum enim attinet, pueros, psittaci more, verba non intellecta reddere, & eos inutili labore onerari?* N.B.: Citations of Latin text in this paper follow the conventions of the editions referenced. Readers unfamiliar with 16th c. orthography and punctuation will note some variance from present-day, Anglophone editorial practices, e.g., a pronounced tendency toward comma-insertion and capitalization. Interested parties should refer to Bloemendal & Nellen 2014 and Deneire 2014.

¹⁴ *Nihil cum Iuventute tentetur, nisi quod aetas et ingenium, non solum admittunt, sed et appetunt. Nihil memoriae mandare iubeantur, nisi quod intellectu probe comprehensum est Nihil agendum committitur, nisi cuius forma, et imitandi norma, sufficienter monstrata fuerint.* Later at 1: 128 – “It follows that a child’s understanding of a language chiefly ought to be formed around childish things, with adult matters set aside for a more mature age, since those who assign to students Cicero and other great authors, who write about topics over a child’s head, do so in vain. You see, if they don’t understand things, how will they grasp the art of expressing those things deftly?” *Sequitur, ut Intellectum ita Sermonem formandum esse pueris circa puerilia potissimum, virilibus adultiori aetati relictis: ut frustra sint, qui pueris Ciceronem, aliosque grandes Autores, quae supra puerilem captum*

This is substantiated by research that links student development with the SLA process at varying ages and stages of learning (Shrum and Glisan *passim*, esp. 104-135 and 140-166). Ensuring that a message is comprehensible means focusing not only on its linguistic components but also on issues like content, style, and method of delivery.

Students' language proficiencies do not always develop contemporaneously and consistently across modes. Receptive faculties of listening and reading seem to precede active faculties of writing and speaking, with extemporaneous speaking proceeding most slowly. Comenius was aware of this progressive, uneven development, and recommended that instruction begin with (comprehensible) input before proceeding to writing and, finally, speaking (1: 83).¹⁵ These suggestions align with Krashen's claims that input precedes output, and that written proficiency develops ahead of oral proficiency because of editing opportunities in the writing process (the Monitor Hypothesis).¹⁶

At least some early modern sources, then, reflect a concern for providing students with Latin input that essentially meets the criteria of the comprehensible input standard in SLA research-informed pedagogy today. These instructors advocate for the delivery of messages that are (1) understandable, (2) appropriately contextualized to be intelligible to the learner, and (3) ideally meaningful/interesting. Moreover, their pedagogies recognize the uneven development of language proficiencies, and especially the late development of active language skills (esp. speaking) relative to receptive skills like listening and reading. Though unsupported by the scientific data of contemporary research, this early modern instructional tradition anticipated the core consensus position of modern SLA theory: the need for comprehensible input in the language-learning environment.

sunt tractantes, proponunt. Si enim res non capiunt, quomodo artificia res istas nervose exprimendi capient?

15 "Let the study of a new language proceed gradually, so that at first the student learns to understand (you see, that's the easiest part) then to write (where time is given for planning), [and] finally to speak (which, because it happens on the spot, is the most challenging)." *Linguae novae studium gradatim procedat: ut nempe primo discipulus consuescat Intelligere (id enim facillimum) tum Scribere (ubi praemeditationi tempus datur) tandem Loqui (quod quia extemporaneum est, difficillimum).*

16 E.g., "The final part of the input hypothesis states that speaking fluency cannot be taught directly. Rather, it 'emerges' over time, on its own Early speech will come when the acquirer feels 'ready'; this state of readiness arrives at somewhat different times for different people" (Krashen 22). On the Monitor Hypothesis, see Krashen 15-20.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION: OUTPUT & INTERACTION

In response to Krashen, Merrill Swain has suggested that though CI is necessary for SLA to occur, it is not sufficient. In her *Output Hypothesis*, Swain proposes that, in addition to a significant quantity of CI, students also need to use the language actively to acquire it (Shrum and Glisan 22-23; Swain 1985, 1995, and 2000). Michael Long's *Interaction Hypothesis* posits the additional need for that output to occur via interaction and the negotiation of meaning (Shrum and Glisan 21-22; Long 1981, 1983, 1996). These positions offer theoretical foundations for models of instruction such as Long's Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which leverages interactions based on student interests to drive SLA.¹⁷ In TBLT, students identify a communicative task as a goal for their second language learning. The instructor then targets classroom activities to help students acquire the linguistic structures needed to successfully accomplish the task. Students' linguistic proficiency develops because of active engagement in negotiating meaning to achieve self-directed goals.¹⁸ Swain's and Long's arguments have become accepted components of many current schools of SLA-research informed pedagogy (Shrum and Glisan 21-23).¹⁹

Early modern sources are clear about the importance of active communication for language acquisition in the Latin classroom. Posselius takes the communicative use of Latin as a given for its instruction (141).²⁰ Erasmus makes a similar point in his *De ratione studii* (DRS), preferring that students begin actively speaking Latin as soon as they have acquired the basics of phonetics and orthography (125).²¹ This

¹⁷ On TBLT, see, e.g., Long 2014.

¹⁸ E.g., in a modern second language classroom students might voice the desire to learn how to rent an apartment in a country where the target language is primary. TBLT instruction would proceed by assessing students' current abilities to engage in the necessary steps for securing housing (browsing ads, communicating needs/wants, negotiating a price, reading a contract, etc.) and developing interactive activities to support the acquisition of needed skills. Proficiency would be determined by the students' ability to successfully complete all tasks in a simulated environment. Adaptation of TBLT for classical languages necessarily must be more creative, e.g., accomplishing a task-goal of "write a letter in Latin" via a study of Latin epistolary culture.

¹⁹ Reflected directly in the literature on "Focus on Form" instructional techniques prompted by Long 1991. E.g., the PACE instructional model outlined in Shrum & Glisan 206ff.

²⁰ "Concerning the exercise of speaking Latin, I'll say nothing here. You see, educated and wise men know that it is entirely necessary, and cannot be neglected or omitted without great inconvenience for the students." *De exercitio latine loquendi hic non dicam. Sciunt enim viri docti & sapientes, id omnino necessarium esse, & sine magno discentium incommodo negligi aut omitti non posse.*

²¹ "But Fabius already offered enough advice concerning the instruction of boys' mouths and the teaching of the letters' shapes, whether through play or joke. For my part, after the primary parts [of the language] have been taught, I would prefer that the boy be immediately summoned to the practice

rests on his conviction that facility in Latin is best acquired through a combination of correct (*emendate*) speaking and reading: “You see, the true faculty of speaking without error is best provided on the one hand by conversation and interaction with individuals who speak without error, and on the other by a close reading of eloquent authors” (DRS 115).²² Comenius (1: 96) and Erasmus (DRS 119) emphasize the importance of communication in the learning process, including in the form of peer-to-peer instruction.²³ All three early modern sources agree on the need for active language use and communicative tasks in Latin pedagogy, though Erasmus’ emphasis on beginning with phonetics and orthography is not necessary in the models proposed by Krashen, Swain, and Long.

Erasmus and Comenius both address the need to ensure that communicative tasks given to students are compelling and meaningful to them in their daily lives. Comenius stresses relevance in language instruction (1: 88).²⁴ Erasmus, in his *De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis*, focuses on compelling content that is age- and audience-appropriate:

In selecting these examples, the instructor will take care that he especially put forth that which he judges to be most pleasing and most well-known and beloved and, so to speak, flowery . . . to which end the teacher ought to observe what best suits each age. Joyful and pleasant things best suit boyhood. (DPI 68-9)²⁵

of speaking [it].” *Iam vero de formando puerorum ore deque tradendis ceu per lusum iocumque literarum figuris, satis praecepit Fabius. Equidem post tradita elementa prima, malim ad usum loquendi statim vocari puerum.*

22 *Nam vera emendate loquendi facultas optime paratur, cum ex castigate loquentium colloquio convictuque, tum ex eloquentium auctorum assidua lectione.*

23 Comenius: “Whatever has been taught, let it be transferred again via communication from some [of the students] to others, lest anything be known in vain. You see, in this sense the saying is true that your knowledge is nothing unless someone else knows that you know it.” *Quicquid perceptum est, transfundatur iterum aliis communicando in alios: ne quidquam frustra sciatur. Eo enim sensu verum est: Scire tuum nihil esse nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.* Erasmus: “Finally, it would not lead to a single certain end, but at once will contribute greatly to all of them, if you should also frequently teach others. You see, you’ll never grasp better what you understand, what you don’t.” *Postremo illud non ad unum aliquid, sed ad omnia simul plurimum conducet, si frequenter alios quoque doceas. Nusquam enim melius depraehenderis quid intelligas, quid non.*

24 “Let nothing be taught except that which has the most substantial use, for this life and the next.” *Nihil tractetur nisi quod solidissimum habeat usum, ad hanc et futuram vitam.*

25 *In deligendis his [exemplis] vigilabit institutor, ut quod iudicabit maxime gratum pueris max-*

Tailoring second language work to meet learners' needs and interests is a core principle of SLA instruction methods like Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) and Long's TBLT. Though TPRS and TBLT differ in their assumptions regarding the importance of learner output for the acquisition process, both emphasize the need for learners to develop meaningful connections with relevant and interesting material in the target language.

The extent to which students should engage in spoken Latin is a central discrepancy between proponents of active Latin and grammar translation approaches, and it represents an area where the historical contexts of teachers like Erasmus, Posseius, and Comenius differ substantially enough from contemporary concerns to warrant comment. As I noted above, these instructors could take for granted (a) the primacy of Latin in an educational environment where instruction in the language occupied the bulk of the school day, and (b) the centrality of (written and spoken) Latin in the international intellectual community. Neither of these conditions exists in today's educational environment, in which fortunate students receive only an hour of Latin instruction per day and are exceedingly unlikely to find themselves in a situation where they might be compelled to use it as a *lingua franca*.

That said, both SLA research and early modern intuition recognize the reciprocally beneficial relationship between active and receptive language use for developing proficiency, regardless of the amount of available instructional time or the likelihood of students' active use of a second language beyond the classroom (Shrum and Glisan passim, esp. 172-200 and 231-71). For that reason (among others), the communication standard in the *Standards for Classical Language Learning* and the *World Readiness Standards* now focuses on the types of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, presentational) in which students are likely to engage rather than specific linguistic skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) they use. Despite different historical and social contexts, an early modern approach that recognizes the importance of comprehensible input and output could offer substantial insight to instructors interested in SLA-informed Latin pedagogy.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION: EXPLICIT GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION

Krashen's work also raised a point of contention concerning the efficacy of explicit grammar instruction in the second language classroom. Developing a

imeque cognatum et amabile ac, ut ita dicam, florulentum, id potissimum proponat . . . ita praeceptori observandum est quid cuique congruat aetati. Iucunda et amoena pueritiae convenient.

distinction between language acquisition and learning, he has argued that explicit grammatical instruction has no impact on language acquisition (a ‘zero-interface’ position). For Krashen, there is a difference between *learning* a language (explicitly memorizing rules, paradigms, syntax structures, etc.) and *acquiring* one (unconsciously building mental representation and skill). According to him, explicit grammar instruction does not produce language acquisition, but at best “acts as an editor, as a Monitor, ‘correcting’ the errors, or rather what the performer perceives to be errors, in the output of the acquired system” (Krashen 83ff.).

The median position in the discussion posits a ‘weak-interface’ between instructed grammar and language acquisition (e.g., Ellis 2008). According to this argument, explicit grammar instruction can play a role in *some* SLA processes, though they are fairly limited in both scope and number. These approaches heavily emphasize the contextual nature of grammar and argue for methods based on ‘noticing’ (calling students’ attention to a specific grammatical feature in context), ‘co-construction of meaning’ (working with the students to deduce a structure’s function), and ‘pop-up’ instruction (very brief, meaning-oriented lessons on the use of grammar in a passage) that eschews linguistic jargon for a focus on contextualized pragmatics. For example, in Donato and Adair-Hauck’s (2002) PACE model of instruction, lessons proceed by **P**resenting students with a new linguistic structure in context (e.g., in a reading passage), drawing their **A**ttention to the new structure after they have engaged with their passage in other ways, working together to **C**o-construct a meaning for the structure and a ‘rule’ for its function based on the context, and then practicing the structure through exercises that **E**xtend its use to new linguistic environments. This approach directs students to focus first on the meaning of the communication, then on the form of the new grammatical structure, situating it in terms of both its communicative function and a broader linguistic context that renders it more easily comprehensible to the students.

A few theories of SLA postulate a ‘strong-interface’ between grammar instruction and student acquisition of targeted structures (e.g., DeKeyser 1995). For these models of learning, explicit identification and drilling of grammar rules and structures is an integral part of effective SLA instruction and ought not be eschewed. Skill Acquisition Theory, for example, places a premium on targeted practice and drilling to develop automaticity in language processing/use that eventually leads to acquisition. Grammar-translation strategies overwhelmingly adopt a strong-interface position, focusing on the explicit teaching of grammar rules and a ‘focus on

forms' approach to language learning. Consensus in the SLA community, however, favors the 'weak-interface' model.

Despite its strong advocacy for active, communicative uses of Latin in instruction, early modern Latin pedagogy also emphasized substantial, explicit teaching of grammar forms and rules, in contrast to a weak-interface position in current SLA research. Posselius views explicit grammar instruction as a necessary component of learning Latin. Though he recognizes that such study is not enough to be able to successfully produce the language, he affirms its general importance in the face of more inductive, reading-based approaches to the language:

Boys ought not be held up too long in the study of the rules of Grammar: in this way the argument should be disproved and rejected of those who say that free minds ought not be burdened by the work of studying rules, but that the Latin language ought to be learned only through the reading of reputable authors. You see, although rules and guidelines are not sufficient for speaking or writing well, nevertheless they ought to be learned diligently and accurately for significant and necessary reasons. (139)²⁶

Posselius' approach here is not drastically dissimilar to arguments made by supporters of grammar-translation methods of instruction – i.e., that some amount of explicit, rules-based instruction is necessary for students to learn the language – though it differs vastly from SLA-supported instructional models. Neither Erasmus nor Comenius disagrees fundamentally with Posselius. Both, however, qualify the nature and bounds of grammatical instruction.

Believing in a need for grammar instruction, Erasmus wants to control the quality and quantity of the rules to be taught as well as the timeframe in which exposure to them occurs: "Though I confess that rules of this sort are necessary, I would prefer, insofar as it is possible, that they be as few as possible, so long as they are high-quality. Nor have I ever approved of the common crowd of teachers who delay

²⁶ *Pueri non nimis diu in discendis praeceptis Grammatices detinendi sunt: sic damnanda & explodenda est illorum sententia, qui liberalia ingenia labore ediscendi praecepta, non oneranda, sed Linguam Latinam lectione bonorum autorum tantum discendam esse dicunt. Etsi enim Praecepta & Regulae Grammaticae ad recte loquendum & scribendum non sufficiunt; tamen propter maximas & necessarias causas, diligenter & accurate disci debent.*

their students for years in inculcating these things” (DRS 114-115).²⁷ He expands his position in greater detail elsewhere, noting his preference for a limited quantity of very good grammar principles that ought to be as clear as possible (DPI 72-73).²⁸ Comenius agrees and emphasizes the need for providing many specific examples to help students grasp the rules to be learned:

[I think that] every skill ought to be defined by the briefest and most specific rules possible; that every rule ought to be composed of the fewest and most understandable words; [and that] to every rule ought to be added many examples, so that the scope of the rule's use be sufficiently obvious. (1: 81)²⁹

These perspectives suggest a nuanced awareness of the risks of pursuing instruction on an abstractly formal level (especially with children), while at the same time presuming that some grammatical explanation provides a helpful framework for SLA.

How closely these positions hew to the specific principles for grammar instruction supported by current SLA research remains difficult to determine from their language alone, since both authors offer few direct examples of the sorts of rules they believe fit these conditions. Erasmus gestures at them obliquely in theoretical comments like the ones cited, while Comenius offers an outline of Latin grammar in *his Vestibulum* (2: 293ff.), but the *praecepta/regulae* offered in that text differ little

27 *Verum ut huiusmodi [sc. grammatica] praecepta fateor necessaria, ita velim esse, quoad fieri possit, quam paucissima, modo sint optima. Nec unquam probavi literatorum vulgus qui pueros in his inculcandis complures annos remorantur.*

28 “I confess that in the beginning grammatical rules are rather harsh, and more necessary than pleasant. But the skill of a teacher will remove a big part of the troublesomeness from these <rules>. Only the best and most simple [rules] ought to be learned first. With what sort of confusions and challenges are boys currently tortured, while they study the names of the letters before they recognize their shapes, while in <the matter> of endings of nouns and verbs they are forced to learn to which cases, moods, and tenses the same word <might> congrue... What sort of torture resounds in the classroom, when these things are demanded of students?” *Fateor grammatices praeceptiones initio subausteras esse, magisque necessarias esse quam iucundas. Verum his quoque bonam molestiae partem adimet praecipientis dexteritas. Optima tantum primum ac simplicissima praecienda sunt. Nunc quibus ambagibus ac difficultatibus excruciantur pueri, dum ediscunt literarum nomina priusquam agnoscant figuras, dum in nominum ac verborum inflexionibus coguntur ediscere quot casibus, modis ac temporibus eadem vox respondeat . . . Quae carnificina tum perstrepat in ludo, quum haec a pueris exiguntur?*

29 *[Puto] omnem artem brevissimis sed exactissimis, includendam esse Regulis. Omnem Regulam brevissimis, sed dilucidissimis, concipiendam verbis, Omni Regulae subiungenda plurima exempla, ut quam varie pateat Regulae usus sufficienter pateat.*

from what scholars today would consider normal for a grammar-translation perspective. Given this evidence and the important role of explicit grammar instruction in both medieval and early modern Latin pedagogy,³⁰ it appears that direct teaching of grammatical rules played a significant role in both Erasmus' and Comenius' visions for Latin education – even if their preferences supported *less* grammar instruction than was common among their contemporaries. This stands in distinct contrast to the 'weak-interface' position accepted by a substantial portion of the SLA community, which sees little return in strategies that focus on grammar instruction as opposed to contextualized and meaning-oriented approaches.

THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: INTERACTIVE AND NONTHREATENING

A pedagogy that accepts Swain's and Long's critiques of Krashen includes interaction and negotiation of meaning among learners as key strategies for SLA. If the purpose of learning a language is communication, students need to develop the intellectual tools, perspectives, and skills necessary to facilitate it. These extend beyond linguistic components (lexicon, syntax, morphology, etc.) to include knowledge of cultural/historical concepts that inform proper language use on a pragmatic level. An environment that helps students hone those skills through interaction in the target language is important to SLA research informed instruction.

Though none of our early modern authors frame their pedagogical theory in these terms, all of them recognize the importance of developing linguistic competency through interactions that are culturally informed and aimed at enhancing communication. Erasmus hints at one way in which this might be accomplished when he advocates for teaching stock phrases – i.e., linguistic tools that facilitate further, genre-specific communication in Latin (DRS 135).³¹ These are bound to standards of usage in a Latin tradition informed by Roman cultural practices.³²

Posselius follows Erasmus (supra n. 22), taking into consideration the source of the *formulae* in question and the teachers' own use of judgment to discern

30 See, e.g., Black 2001.

31 "Provide some stock phrases with which [students] might then be able to make a beginning of a speech, and also the end of a speech Once this has been accomplished seven or eight times, they will already begin (as Horace says) to swim on their own." *Ostendat et formulas aliquot, quibus ibi commode possint exordiri, etiam perorare Id ubi septies aut octies erit factum, iam incipient (quod ait Horatius) sine cortice nare.*

32 On this debate in contemporary terms, see Owens 2016.

appropriate turns of phrase (143-4).³³ Concerned with students' developing a 'correct' Latin style based on the received tradition, Posselius attempts to limit barbarisms by imposing the traditional bounds of the *optimi au[c]tores* – a category that itself was debated at length.³⁴ His advice here may appear overly proscriptive, but it cannot be divorced from the context in which it is offered. The core of the Latin literary tradition was relatively fixed from an early period and relied upon a canon of authors to serve as models for style and usage.³⁵ An understanding of them was integral for participation in the culture of Latin letters.

Perfect command of a received corpus of authors and texts is not, however, a point that all these writers viewed as essential for Latin acquisition. Balancing comprehensiveness and pragmatic realism, Comenius reminded readers that the ultimate needs/goals of the language learner serve as reasonable bounds for instruction:

Not everything ought to be learned in its entirety to the point of perfection, but according to need . . . no one needs an understanding of a language entirely, and even if someone got it, it would be a useless joke. Not even Cicero himself (otherwise considered to be

33 “Add to this [that students learn Latin from their teachers rather than “Cicero himself and similar good authors”] that teachers often assign to boys translation exercises [vertenda], including words or manners of speaking they have never heard before – indeed, which the teachers themselves don't know how they ought to be appropriately and correctly rendered. For which reason above all else a teacher will take care that he not permit a boy to write or to speak in any other manner than those which he will have acquired not from him [i.e., the teacher] but from the best authors.” *Accedit eo, quod saepe praeceptores pueris vertenda praescribunt, quorum vel appellationes, vel loquendi modos, numquam antea audiverunt, imo quae ipsi paedagogi, quomodo recte & proprie reddenda sint ignorant. Quare ante omnia cavebit Praeceptor, ne puerum vel scribere, vel loqui permittat, nisi istis modis & rationibus, quas non a se, sed ab optimis autoribus didicerit.*

34 Several key contributions to these Early Modern disputes are documented in DellaNeva 2007.

35 This is not intended to imply that parts of the canon did not fluctuate over time. The loss of many classical sources during the medieval period and their rediscovery in the Renaissance testifies to the flexible nature of canon-formation and maintenance, as does the eventual exclusion of prominent late-antique, medieval, and Renaissance Latin authors from the canon with the rise of the *altertumswissenschaftliche* philology. That said, the fundamental components of formal Latin style and grammar were largely fixed along Ciceronian lines quite early – likely by the publication of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. The resolution of early modern debates about the appropriateness of Ciceronian imitation only reinforces the degree to which 'good' Latin style has remained relatively ossified since the early 1st century BCE. For further argument on the fixity of Latin, see Stroh 2007.

the best teacher) knew the whole Latin language. (I: 127)³⁶

This point aligns well with recent shifts away from a fluency-oriented conception of language acquisition toward one based on proficiencies. Emphasis is placed on students' ability to perform specific language tasks, while fluency becomes a measure of the speed and accuracy with which those tasks are accomplished. This framework is significantly more dynamic, recognizing that students' skills may demonstrate proficiency in some circumstances while still requiring significant practice in others. Freed from the constraint of 'perfect' mastery, the language classroom becomes an environment conducive to a wide range of learning strategies focused on bridging gaps in students' proficiencies.

Irrespective of this philosophical change, student affect remains a key consideration in language learning. Krashen's theory of the 'affective filter' emphasizes the ways in which language learners' emotional and psychological comfort and investment impact the acquisition process (30-32). Subsequent challenges to Krashen's formulation have produced more complex and robust theories regarding student affect and motivation in the classroom, rejecting the concept of a general 'affective filter' in favor of a more nuanced understanding of the interactions between learner, environment, content, and instructor.³⁷ Nevertheless, broad consensus accepts that students who are relaxed and enjoying their work acquire a language more quickly than those under stress. This did not escape Posselius, who emphasized the teacher's influence in generating a positive learning environment (142).³⁸ Comenius concurs and extends this observation, recognizing the role that pedagogy plays in

³⁶ *Discendae sunt non omnes totae, ad perfectionem usque, sed ad necessitatem . . . nemini totius alicuius Linguae cognitionem necessariam esse, et si quis eam captet, ridiculum fore et ineptum. Nam ne Cicero quidem totam Latinam linguam (cuius alioquin summus Magister habetur) scivit.*

³⁷ On which, e.g., see [Zoltán Dörnyei's blog](#).

³⁸ "However much the kindness of an instructor and refinement of the interest and love of literature bring to the table, to that same degree savageness and cruelty destroy tender and feeble spirits and scare them off from learning. For which reason teachers should remember that they ought to be disposed toward their students as if sons, and that they ought neither with excessive harshness or beatings, or dire curses, extinguish that little flame given by nature, but rather excite and inflame it with fatherly tenderness." *Quantum vero humanitas praeceptoris & alacritatis & amoris erga bonas literas adfert, tantum saevitia & crudelitas teneros & imbecillos animos frangit, & a studiis deterret. Quare meminerint Praeceptores, se erga discipulos, ut erga filios, affectos esse oportere, nec vel nimia austeritate, vel plagis, vel diris execrationibus, igniculum illum a natura datum, extinguere, sed potius comitate paterna excitare, & inflamare debere.*

the process (1: 79).³⁹ To this end, Erasmus suggests pedagogic strategies that engage and entertain students, e.g., games (DPI 70).⁴⁰ In both early modern and contemporary SLA-informed second language teaching sources, the instructor's ability to influence affect (positively or negatively) is a shared concern impacting students' language acquisition and development of proficiency.

ROLES: STUDENT & TEACHER

One important area of divergence between current SLA research and early modern pedagogical theory concerns the relative roles of student and teacher in setting classroom priorities and, consequently, their relationship to one another in the language acquisition process. Across these early modern sources, the shared assumption is that the teacher remains the focal point of instruction, both in terms of classroom management and learning activity. This perspective is expressed implicitly in the verbal expressions used by all of our authors to describe the activities of both parties: teachers *proponere*, *ostendere*, *docere*, etc. while students *se exercere*, *exercitia facere*, *discere*, etc. For example, Posselius writes, *praeceptor . . . pueris monstret* (139); and *prudens magister omnia dextre & explicite proponet, & discipulos in illis . . . utiliter exercebit* (141-2). Although all three writers advocate specific linguistic exercises to promote the development of fluency, their underlying presumptions about regular classroom operations appear normative for the period.⁴¹

39 "The love of knowledge learning must be kindled in boys however possible. Let the method of teaching diminish the toil of learning, so that there is nothing which might impede the students and frighten them away from continuing their studies." *Sciendi et discendi ardor quacunq[ue] ratione in pueris inflammandus est. Docendi methodus discendi laborem minuat, ut nihil sit quod discipulos offendat, et a studiorum continuatione deterreat.*

40 "Repetition does not offend, if it is moderate, if it is tempered at once with variety and pleasantness, and finally if things are taught in such a way that even the imagination of work is absent – that the boy thinks everything is conducted as a game." *Non offendit assiduitas, si moderata sit, si varietate simul et iucunditate condiatur, denique si sic tradantur haec, ut absit laboris imaginatio, sed puer existimet omnia per lusum agi.*

41 Similarly, while none of our authors advocate extreme violence, classroom discipline is a central concern and, when affective appeals don't work, corporal punishment remains the go-to contemporary option: e.g. Posselius (142-3) *Fideli praeceptori, qui parentum vicarius est, & eorum partes sustinet, in institutione discipulorum iisdem mediis utendum est, quare nec virgae, nec aliae opportunae animadversiones, ex Scholis tolli aut debent aut possunt . . . sed in his omnibus modus servandus est, & ira removenda.* Erasmus castigates *ad nauseam* excessive severity on the part of the teacher, e.g.: *[hi praeceptores ignoti, agrestes, frequenter lunatici, praesident ludum literarium, ita ut] dicas non esse scholam, sed carnificiam, praeter crepitum ferularum, praeter vigarum strepitum, praeter eiulatus ac singultus, praeter atroces minas nihil illic auditur. Quid aliud hinc discant pueri quam odisse literas?* (DPI 54ff.).

Current work in SLA theory, especially research premised on a Socio-cultural model of acquisition, takes a different perspective, emphasizing the important role students should play in setting learning agenda and classroom priorities (e.g., in TBLT).

Much of this difference is a consequence of recent developments in educational and psychological theory. For example, the Socio-cultural Theory of language acquisition relies heavily on Vygotsky's formulation of "Zones of Proximal Development" (ZPDs) for formulating a model of the language learning process. ZPDs frame the development of language proficiency according to a three-part trajectory: (1) what students are unable to accomplish; (2) what students can accomplish with assistance; and (3) what students can accomplish on their own. Vygotskian theory concerns itself with the relative relationship between these areas. Its central tenet is that students will one day be able to do what they currently require assistance to accomplish. It operates by controlling the amount of aid provided to students, slowly removing unnecessary supports as proficiency develops. The amount of assistance necessary is determined by student-teacher interaction during task performance.

Early modern thinkers did recognize both the importance of establishing connections between acquired material and new content, and the variation in rates of learning among students. Erasmus suggests that instruction proceed slowly and in manageable, connected steps lest students become overwhelmed by demands beyond their capabilities (DPI 65-6).⁴² Comenius likewise stresses the need for the progression of materials to be self-reinforcing, with both newer and older information supporting one another in a reciprocal relationship (1: 93).⁴³ Finally, Posselius

42 "So just as thin little bodies are nourished by even a little food provided repeatedly, likewise boys' natural abilities by means of familiar subjects, but provided gradually and as if through a game, little by little become accustomed to greater topics, nor in the meantime is fatigue perceived, because incremental progresses thus deceive the sense of toil, so that their [progresses] nevertheless bring them [students] to complete success . . . while they (the teachers) take no account of age and they measure the boys' capabilities according to their own powers. Right away they press bitterly, right away they demand mature work, right away they wrinkle their brow[s] if a boy should reply less than expected, and they are disturbed as if they are engaging with an adult, obviously having forgotten that they were once boys." *Ut igitur exiguis cibus ac subinde datis aluntur tenera corpuscula, itidem ingenia puerorum cognatis disciplinis, sed sensim ac ceu per lusum traditis, paulatim assuescunt maioribus, nec interim sentitur lassitudo, quod minutae accessiones sic fallant laboris sensum, uti nihilo secus ad profectus summam conferant . . . Verum sunt qui postulant, ut ilico pueri fiant senes, dum non habent rationem aetatis, sed ex suis viribus illorum ingenia metiuntur. Protinus instant acerbe, protinus exigunt plenam operam, protinus corrugant frontem, si minus puer expectationi respondeat, et sic moventur, quasi cum adulto rem habeant, videlicet obliti se fuisse pueros.*

43 "Let all subjects be thus distributed, so that subsequent principles always be based upon the prior ones, and that the prior principles be strengthened by the subsequent ones." *Studia omnia sic dis-*

notes the importance of differentiating student work to meet learners wherever they may be in the acquisition process (138-39).⁴⁴ Despite the lack of a developed theoretical model for conceiving students' role in the classroom, early modern pedagogy demonstrated awareness of the need to take into account developmental and learning differences in instruction.

RESOURCE & TEACHER QUALITY

The use of 'authentic' resources in the language classroom has been a recent point of concern in contemporary SLA-informed pedagogy. Authentic resources are "those written and oral communications produced *by* members of a language and culture group *for* members of the same language and culture group" (Galloway 133).⁴⁵ Since these resources are not produced with language teaching in mind, strategies have been developed to support their implementation in foreign and classical language classrooms. One common approach exhorts teachers to "alter the task, not the text" – i.e., to focus on generating classroom activities that utilize authentic resources, but in ways appropriate to the students' proficiency levels (Shrum and Glisan 84ff.).⁴⁶ For example, a teacher might use a passage of authentic Latin but ask students to address it with strategies appropriate to their proficiency levels (skimming, word/structure identification, summarizing, etc.). Though this approach also depends on effective materials selection, it focuses on engaging students with authentic instances of target language communication from the beginning.

Early modern theorists of Latin instruction assign authentic resources a central role in their instructional models. Reacting against tendencies for explicit grammatical instruction, Comenius argues that language acquisition occurs best through encounters with authentic sources (1: 74). While asserting that explicit instruction

ponantur, ut posteriora semper in prioribus fundentur; priora vero a posterioribus firmentur.

44 "Nor on account of the slow and the stupid ought the other boys of good talent be neglected. You see, often teachers – preferring to assign one and the same tasks to many students of varying levels of progress – delay and impede those of superior capacity." *Neque propter aliquos hebetes & stupidos, alii bonae indolis pueri negligendi sunt. Saepe enim magistri una & eadem opera multis, iisque diversi progressus discipulis, inservire volentes, alios, bono ingenio peditos, remorantur & impediunt.*

45 Debate continues in Latin pedagogy circles regarding the status of, e.g., post-Classical Latin texts as 'authentic resources.' I would suggest that Galloway's definition offers some resolution, provided we accept non-native speakers as capable of participating in communication within "a language and culture group" and recognize the fundamental importance of these resources as intended primarily for communicative, not pedagogical purposes.

46 Cf. Terry 1998.

plays an important preparatory role, Erasmus and Posselius also suggest that the ancient authors themselves are the most efficient tools for learning Latin (DRS 116, cf. n. 26), and the ones to which Erasmus primarily encourages recourse (DRS 120). Moreover, Erasmus recognizes the necessary balance between thoroughness of explanation, affect, and the demands of context that comes from tailoring an acquisition task to a specific group of students (DRS 137).⁴⁷ Posselius adds a note on the selection of specific resources for instruction, encouraging teachers to focus on a select set of texts offering examples of standard language use before encouraging students to expand to other resources (141).⁴⁸ For these thinkers, encounters with authentic resources throughout the learning process were essential to acquiring Latin. Their position aligns well with SLA research that finds students who engage with authentic resources as early as a few hours into their language study show substantial gains in proficiency across language skills.⁴⁹

In addition to concerns about the use of authentic resources, early modern thinkers were explicit about the qualities that a teacher needed to possess to be successful in the classroom. Contemporary literature on the traits of an effective instructor abounds, and in the context of SLA theory is discussed at length throughout Shrum & Glisan. I want to end my discussion here, however, by reflecting briefly on two key points emphasized in the sources from the “long 16th century.”⁵⁰ Both offer

47 “In lecturing upon the authors I would prefer you not do what the common rabble of teachers these days – due to some twisted vanity – does, so that you attempt to say everything about each passage, but no more than what should suffice in explaining the present portion, unless on occasion digressing seems appropriate for the sake of enjoyment.” *In praelegendis auctoribus nolim te facere, quod prava quadam ambitione vulgus professorum hodie facit, ut omni loco coneris omnia dicere, sed ea duntaxat quae explicando praesenti loco sint idonea, nisi si quando delectandi causa digrediendum videbitur.*

48 “After the crowd of distinguished authors has been driven from the boys’ schools, let one style of language, the best at that, be put forward, in which let [the students] be detained for a little while, until they are able to put forth everything in correct Latin, and to express the force and elegance of an author [i.e., Cicero] by speaking and writing in whatever way, and then they shall be safely given access to other ancient and more recent writers, whom they will study with no less utility than with taste.” *Explosa e ludis puerorum praecipue Autorum multitudine, unum genus sermonis, idque optimum proponatur, in quo tantisper detineantur, dum omnia pure & latine proferre, & auctoris vim ac elegantiam loquendo & scribendo utcunque exprimere possint, & tum ad alios veteres & recentiores scriptores tuto admittentur, quos non minori cum utilitate, quam iudicio, pervolutabunt.*

49 See Shrum & Glisan 188-94 for a summary of key findings and citations.

50 I borrow the term “long 16th century” from Immanuel Wallerstein without any intent to endorse his positions in this paper. Wallerstein’s periodization (1450-1640) focuses on the rise of a capitalist

important insight into the nature of teaching as a practice and the demands of effective Latin instruction in an SLA-informed pedagogic approach.

Erasmus addresses the core of affective concerns when he remarks: “The first step to learning is love for the teacher. It will occur with the progress of time that a boy who first began to love literature on account of his teacher, afterwards should love his teacher on account of literature” (DPI 53).⁵¹ Comenius extends this observation to the content of instruction, arguing that the importance of teaching lies less in ensuring that students acquire specific rote information than it does in stimulating their intellectual capacities:

It follows that to properly educate the youth is not to stuff their minds full of a hodge-podge of words, phrases, sentences, and thoughts collected from authors, but to open them up to an Understanding of things, so that from it itself as if from a living spring little streams scatter and as if from the buds of trees leaves, flowers, fruit bloom forth. (1: 89-90)⁵²

Combined, these perspectives suggest a holistic idea of teaching that recognizes language education as an interpersonal endeavor with wide-ranging goals and implications.

Attention to the importance of affect, however, neither neglects nor obviates the necessity for the instructor to develop a command of the language and instructional strategy. For these thinkers, the teacher’s Latin proficiency and pedagogical awareness come first. Posselius offers the best summary of the consensus position:

It is necessary that those who wish to usefully educate others be themselves educated in Latin and Greek, and grasp the most expedient paths and methods of teaching, and succeed in the gentle conduct and faculty of

world-economy but is convenient for my purposes as an approximate descriptor for the chronological period from which I draw the texts in this paper. Though Comenius’ *Opera Didactica Omnia* was not published in its entirety until 1657, it was mostly complete by 1636.

51 *Primus discendi gradus est praeceptoris amor. Progressu temporis fiet, ut puer qui prius literas amare coeperat propter doctorem, post doctorem amet propter literas*

52 *Sequitur, iuventutem recte erudire, non esse Verborum, Phrasium, Sententiarum, Opiniorum, Farraginem ex Authoribus collectam ingeniis infercire, sed rerum Intellectum aprire, ut ex eo ipso velut fonte vivo rivuli scaturiant, et tanquam ex Arborum gemmis folia, flores, fructus, progerminent.*

delighting and stimulating young men. Indeed, how is one able to teach others, who himself is unable to speak properly and without error, and cannot produce in speaking and pronouncing the very thing which he asks of his own students? (141)⁵³

Effective Latin teachers, according to these sources, need two skills first and foremost: sufficient proficiency in the language of instruction and a firm grasp of the most efficient/efficacious teaching strategies for helping students achieve their own proficiency in turn. Contemporary Latin teacher's explorations of both SLA theory and active Latin only highlight the continued centrality of linguistic and pedagogic skills in the language classroom.

SUMMATION

The relationship between this early modern tradition of Latin pedagogy and contemporary SLA research is, on balance of the evidence, complex. Though scholars like Erasmus, Posselius, and Comenius could intuit many of the core principles common to major theories of second language acquisition, in other respects their commitment to other long-established Latin pedagogical strategies sharply contrasts with current best practice in SLA theory-informed instruction. For example, while these scholars demonstrated firm support for active language instruction that would meet key criteria of contemporary comprehensible input and output/interaction models, their collective endorsement of explicit grammar instruction stakes a position contrary to data supporting a 'weak-interface' between taught grammar rules and language acquisition. Similarly, their recognition of the importance of classroom environment – expressed in terms of student affect and instructor familiarity with Latin language/pedagogy – was juxtaposed to a teacher-centered classroom management model that has few similarities with the student-centered, communicative approaches to present-day instruction supported by research and organizations like ACTFL.

A few points, however, bear reiteration in the context of current interest in SLA-informed instruction among Latin instructors and enthusiasts. First, we can

⁵³ *Necesse est eos, qui alios utiliter erudire volent, Latine & Graece doctos esse; & vias ac rationes docendi expeditissimas tenere; & humanitate ac facultate delectandi & excitandi pueros valere. Quomodo enim potest alios docere, qui ipse pure & emendate loqui non potest, nec id ipsum loquendo & pronunciando praestare, quod a suis discipulis requirit?*

clearly see a developed tradition of Latin pedagogy, supported by important educational theorists across the early modern period, that embraced active use of the language as a core instructional strategy for developing students' proficiency with the language. Moreover, their positions on the role of both language input and output on learning align closely with the research-supported understandings of modern SLA theory. Those theorists also showed an acute awareness of the importance of extra-linguistic factors on language acquisition, emphasizing the roles that cultural understanding, student affect, and teacher competency play in positive educational outcomes. Finally, all three thinkers advocate strongly for the use of authentic materials in the instructional process, stressing the benefits for language learning that accrue to students whose educational experience includes working with texts written for purely communicative (i.e., non-instructional) purposes – another argument now supported by research in SLA.

On the other hand, these same theorists commit to a model of direct grammar instruction that both anticipates current grammar-translation pedagogy and at the same time is largely unsupported by much of the literature across different theories of SLA. They situate this grammar-oriented instruction in a model of classroom management that focuses on the teacher, emphasizes discipline, and leaves no room for student input in the class' learning outcomes or the activities used to pursue them. Whatever common points can be discerned between these thinkers' pedagogies and current SLA research, they also espouse positions that differ substantially from present understandings of student development and language acquisition. Erasmus, Posseius, and Comenius may have been insightful and gifted teachers, but empiricist researchers in SLA theory and instruction they were not. Whatever we might wish to glean from their instructional strategies and pedagogical models ought to be taken *cum grano salis* and considered with and against data available from studies in instructed and theoretical SLA.

A WAY FORWARD: BACK TO THE FUTURE

The urgency felt behind Dr. Zarrow's appeal to 'catch up' with our colleagues is pressing. As the sophistication of SLA-informed instruction in modern language classrooms continues to develop, Latin risks falling behind in the race for students and funding. Research-supported pedagogy is becoming an imperative for college and university programs to remain competitive. It is no surprise, then, that the trend toward SLA strategies at the K-12 level is starting to make waves in post-secondary

education. Active Latin has long had a presence at institutions like the University of Kentucky, the University of Massachusetts at Boston, Wyoming Catholic College, and (more recently) Belmont Abby College.⁵⁴ The Paideia Institute's outreach efforts continue to grow, and it now maintains institutional memberships with many of the top PhD-granting departments in the field. Cornell University's hiring of Msgr. Daniel Gallagher as Associate Professor of Practice in Latin signaled a significant transition toward active Latin instruction in colleges designated as research-one institutions. While it remains too soon to judge the success of this endeavor, more programs seem to have followed Cornell's lead, formally supporting engagement with active Latin either via an elective course (e.g., USC's CLA 490 or Princeton's LAT 110) or through the institution of extracurricular programming like the Oxford Latinitas Project.⁵⁵

This burgeoning interest in SLA theory underlines the need for serious discussions about pedagogy throughout the classics community. In anticipation of those talks, the conflict that I described at the beginning of this paper between a 'traditional' (Grammar/ Translation) and a 'novel' (SLA) approach to Latin instruction would benefit from a reframing. Given my arguments above, the relationship between both methodologies seems more complex and durative than it first appears, and the temporal framing of traditional/novel becomes an inadequate descriptor of their positions in the history of Latin pedagogy. Though instruction reliant upon an appeal to SLA theory for its justification is necessarily new, many of the principles it deploys seem to relate to long-standing practices in the history of Latin pedagogy.⁵⁶ At the same time, appeals to early modern humanist models by active Latin supporters ought to be made carefully, since even prominent examples of that tradition maintain many positions held by adherents to the grammar-translation method. Rather than easy divisions between different approaches and eras, we are confronted with webs of intermingled practices and priorities.

Marriage remains a useful metaphor for reflection on this front. Though Latin teachers are finding much support and value in instructional strategies borrowed

54 Of these institutions, only the University of Kentucky offers a degree in Active Latin – the Graduate Certificate in Latin Studies associated with its *Institutum Studiis Latinis Provehendis*, of which the author is a graduate.

55 For more on the Oxford Latinitas Project, consult their [website](#).

56 For earlier 20th century Anglophone examples of various parts of this tradition, consider the work of W.H.D. Rouse, R.B. Appleton, W.H.S. Jones, C.W.E. Peckett, and A.R. Munday. Active Latin instructional strategies remained a (minority) presence in continental Europe, as evidenced in the biographies of many fellows of the Academia Latinitati Fovendae.

from our modern language colleagues, there exists a long tradition of teaching Latin in ways that approach or approximate now-firm premises of second language pedagogy. Many of these strategies are specifically adapted to Latin's relatively unique position as an ossified literary language – a challenge not confronted in Spanish, German, Hindi, Korean, etc. classrooms, whose priorities are, in general, oriented far more toward interpersonal engagement than strictly literary interpretation.⁵⁷ For example, early modern reliance upon *colloquia* and *fabulae scaenicae* linked active classroom use of the language with established literary genres, preparing students to engage with canonical authors like Terence and Plautus (and medieval authors like Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim) while situating instruction in the context of meaning-oriented comprehensible input. Incorporating the panoply of available early modern *colloquia* and *fabulae scaenicae* into classrooms and engaging with them through active use of the language – e.g., through student-composed (and performed) texts modeled on each genre – illustrates one opportunity for linking early modern pedagogical resources with contemporary practice informed by SLA research. Given the long tradition of teaching Latin actively, a reappraisal of the field's pedagogical resources for SLA-informed instruction along these lines seems both timely and appropriate.

An attempt to relate the early modern pedagogical tradition to current understandings of SLA processes necessarily requires that the two remain distinct. Scholars like Erasmus, Posselius, and Comenius were not engaged in a research-informed pedagogical tradition, nor did they operate under the same contextual and circumstantial constraints as today's Latin teachers. At the same time, such an approach enables us to uncover the similarities between early modern Latin pedagogy and research-supported instructional strategies, empowering us to revive approaches from our pedagogical history that are sufficiently flexible to align with current SLA theory. That project depends on an exploration of Latin's long and complex pedagogical history, teasing out often interconnected and (from a research perspective) contradictory positions and measuring them against current best practice in SLA research-informed instruction. Investigators themselves need (as Posselius notes) to be sufficiently grounded in the Latin language and SLA research to adequately judge the value and utility of the material that they find.⁵⁸ Moreover, this process

⁵⁷ See supra n. 35.

⁵⁸ And a small but growing body of literature testing established SLA principles directly on Latin, e.g., Hensley 2015, Lloyd 2017, and Oakes 2017.

will involve arguments and conflicts along the way. To be effective, we may have to divorce ourselves from some long-held beliefs about language teaching and the strategies that accompany them. Some other approaches may require separation and negotiation before they are once again practicable. Compromise will almost certainly be required, blending commitments to a spectrum of Latin pedagogical models, much like the early modern theorists explored in this paper. In every event, as we continue to borrow more and more strategies designed for living, modern languages, we would also benefit from combining something old with something new – marrying early modern Latin pedagogy with contemporary SLA theory.

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