

TCL

TEACHING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

An Online Journal of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South

In This Issue:

Veni, Vidi, Vicipaedia:
Using The
Latin Wikipedia In An
Advanced Latin Classroom



Quomodo Dicitur?
The Importance Of Memory
In Language Learning



Latin At The
Middle School Level:
Who Are Our Students?
How Do We Reach Them?

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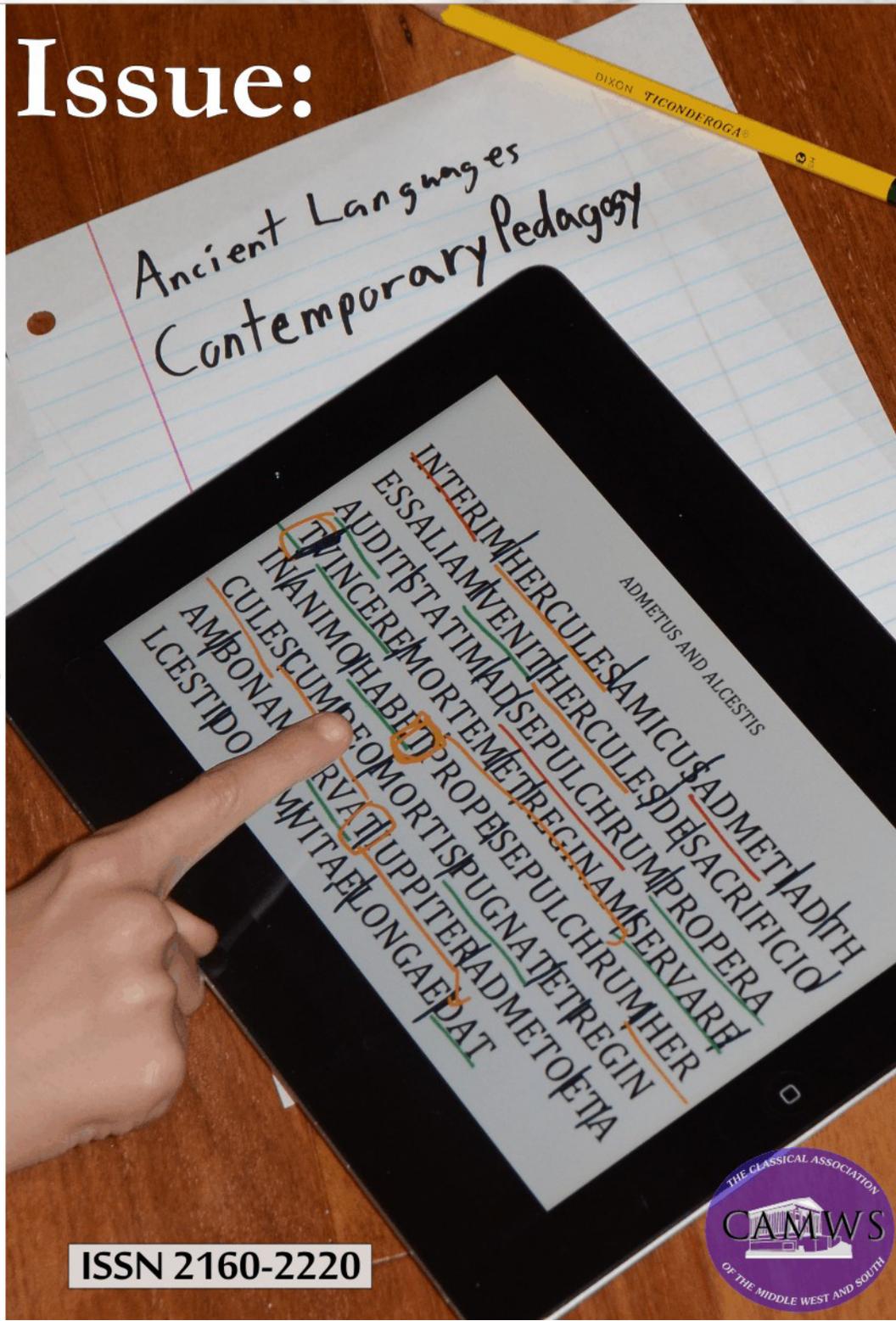


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***Teaching Classical Languages* Mission Statement**

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.

Letter from the Editor

Four Principles of Effective Language Teaching

John Gruber-Miller
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Picture these typical language classroom scenarios: Students are laughing at a story they just heard. They are quietly sitting at their desks filling out a worksheet. Students are paired up doing a mutual dictation. They are busily answering questions aloud about a story they just read. Students are asking each other about what they did last night? How would you determine that these activities are effective? What are some ways you could determine if student learning had been maximized?

In “Stack the Deck in favor of your Students by Using the Four Aces of Effective Learning,” the authors Bulger, Mohr, and Walls—none of them language teachers—point to four principles that teachers can adopt to enhance student learning: outcomes, clarity, engagement, and enthusiasm. So how might these four principles be enacted in a language classroom, from beginning to advanced?

Outcomes is one of those words that educators like to use a lot, but what does the term really mean? One way to explain the term is to say that an outcome is what I want my students to be capable of doing at a certain stage of learning. ACTFL and the new World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (and soon the revised Standards for Classical Language Learning) specifically include “Can-Do” Statements for each level of language proficiency. For example, students at the Novice High level can “write about a familiar experience or event using practiced material.” But these outcomes are much broader than what students might be able to do by the end of a class session or the end of a unit.

For a lesson to be effective, we need to set smaller goals and then articulate them to the students. For example, “at the end of the unit, students will be able to describe a visit to a Roman bathhouse.” In preparing students for that writing assignment, they will have studied a plan of a Roman bath, seen pictures of Roman baths and their decorations, learned about Roman bath culture, reviewed prepositions of coming and going, worked with verbs that describe typical actions at a bath (entering and exiting rooms, exercising, sitting, sweating, conversing, etc.), and practiced related expressions in a number of ways. In outlining such a unit, it would be useful for students to see and hear what steps they will be taking to reach

that goal, what they “can do,” and understand how language, culture, architecture, time and space intersect in describing a visit to the baths.

Clarity is a term that we may connect with writing rather than language teaching, but it has everything to do with a successful learning experience for your students. It is correct, but perhaps too easy, to define clarity as a good explanation of a new grammatical concept or reading strategy. But a single explanation might not be enough for students to fully grasp the new concept. Clarity means offering students multiple avenues for understanding how a new sound or strategy or concept works in a communicative context. For example, when introducing new sounds in the language, Hill, Crown, and Leach argue in “Latin at the Middle School Level” that it makes sense to see the building blocks that compose a word, for learners to focus on individual phonemes before progressing to how the sounds come together to form a word.

Clarity also means providing a framework or scaffold on which to hang the new idea. Such a scaffold helps language learners organize this new knowledge and remember it. This is what Jacqui Carlon in “Quomodo Dicitur: The Importance of Memory in Language Learning” means by “contextualized word knowledge,” knowing what collocations or other words are frequently found with them. In short, clarity means breaking down a concept into its parts, connecting a new concept to a known framework, and building up the meaning through many different activities.

Engagement in learning is a lot like being engaged to get married. The two lovebirds share their ideas, work together on common tasks, enjoy spending time together, and sometimes struggle to reach consensus. In the classroom, Latin students learn best by doing, by testing hypotheses, by applying their knowledge to new situations. Learning is a two way experience. The teacher sets up opportunities to introduce new concepts to students and provides meaningful tasks that involve communication, not just rote practice. The students respond by using the language productively, communicating ideas, exploring relationships, and solving problems. Engagement is what Jacqui Carlon means when she argues that “active involvement is vastly more effective in fostering long-term [vocabulary] retention than passive reception.” In learning vocabulary, this means recycling vocabulary in all four modes (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and elaborating word knowledge through the study of derivatives, semantic mapping, synonyms and antonyms, and collocations. Engagement, moreover, is what David Oosterhuis in “Veni, Vidi, Vi-capaedia: Using the Latin Wikipedia in an Advanced Latin Classroom” asked of his

students when they were expected to compose Latin that could be understood by a larger community of readers on Vicapaedia.

Finally, enthusiasm is often overlooked as a key for deep learning. Teachers who have taught a particular grammatical point or reading passage a dozen times or more or who may be struggling with extra-classroom challenges might see their enthusiasm flag when they get to teach their least favorite text or difficult grammar point yet again. One way to maintain enthusiasm is what Dave Oosterhuis did when he designed a new assignment, one that would challenge him and his students to learn a new digital resource and to communicate with a broader Latin reading community. Another is to push oneself to try to use more Latin in the classroom with one's students, perhaps describing a picture in Latin or retelling a familiar passage from a new point of view or translating a beloved children's story into Latin. Enthusiasm is contagious, and the confidence and sense of playfulness that a teacher models translates into increased student motivation and learning.

So to return to the beginning of this essay. If you are observing a colleague's classroom or your own, how can you tell if the four principles of effective learning are in fact happening? If the students are laughing because they are grasping the meaning, if the students filling out a worksheet are preparing to follow up and do a more communicative activity, if the students doing the mutual dictation or answering questions about a passage are truly listening to each other and paying attention to the meaning of the text, if the students asking and answering questions about what they did last night are doing it in Latin, then they understand the learning outcomes and realizing what they "Can Do," they are gaining clarity and connecting new ideas to familiar ones through scaffolding, they are engaged and involved in meaningful communication, and they are developing a sense of confidence as language learners.

The three articles in this issue exemplify what *Teaching Classical Languages* does best. The articles address a wide range of learners from middle school to advanced college students and explore the role of memory, sound, context, and purpose in crafting activities and assignments. The first by Jacqui Carlon, "Quomodo Dicitur: The Importance of Memory in Language Learning," reviews the literature on the role of memory—both working memory and long-term memory—in learning Latin. She not only defines the key terms, but also presents the major takeaways for language teachers. Finally, in an appendix she offers practical activities to enhance memory through meaningful communicative activities.

The second is a collaborative effort by researcher Barbara Hill, long-time middle school teacher Rickie Crown, and Baker Demonstration School middle school teacher Tyler Leach. Their article, “Latin at the Middle School Level: Who are our students? How do we reach them?” helps teachers understand the cognitive and developmental issues that middle school learners face while emphasizing the importance of phonemic and morphological awareness and breaking Latin words and sentences into their constituent parts. Throughout the article, readers will find a wealth of successful classroom activities.

The final article by Dave Oosterhuis, “Veni, Vidi, Vicapaedia: Using the Latin Wikipedia in an Advanced Latin Classroom,” takes us on a journey through the process of developing an online project that involves research, writing in Latin, and explaining the contents and significance of Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*. In the process, students become members of a larger Latin community and fulfill not only the Communications Goal but also the Communities Goal of the Standards for Classical Language Learning. In short, even though each article has a different target audience, reading all three will help teachers be more sensitive to learner needs and capabilities at different stages of the language learning process and offer creative ways to help students progress from novice to advanced Latinists. You can find these articles and more at tcl.camws.org.

WORKS CITED

Bulger, Sean M., Derek J. Mohr, and Richard T. Walls. “Stack the Deck in favor of your Students by Using the Four Aces of Effective Learning.” *Journal of Effective Teaching* 5.2 (2002). Web. <<http://www.uncw.edu/jet/articles/bulger/>>.

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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